

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

RAYMOND F. SMITH

*Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
Initial interview date: January 14, 2009
Copyright 2015 ADST*

Q: Today is the 14th of January, 2009, and this is an interview with Raymond F. Smith, and this is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, and I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. And you go by Ray, is that right?

SMITH: That's right.

Q: Okay. Alright, let's start at the beginning. When and where were you born?

SMITH: I was born May 31, 1941, in Philadelphia.

Q: Alright, let's talk about- What do you know about your- say on the Smith side of the family first.

SMITH: The Smiths, well, my father was Frank, Francis Raymond Smith. He was born in September, 1896 in Philadelphia and died in 1977 in Los Angeles. He had an eighth grade education. My mother, Catharine Miriam McGrory, was born in Atlantic City, New Jersey, February 12, 1912 and died on February 11, 2005 in St. Augustine, Florida. She had a high school education. Both sides of the family are of Irish ancestry.

Q: Alright. Do you know- Well, in the first place, what, say your grandparents on both sides, what were they up to?

SMITH: Both of my grandfathers died before I was born. On my mother's side, my grandfather was William Philip McGrory, born March 16, 1879 in Philadelphia and died May 6, 1941, just a few weeks before I was born. He had an elementary school education, ending at 6th grade. He was a delivery driver most of his adult life. In 1910, he drove a milk wagon, presumably, at that date, pulled by a horse. I can still remember those wagons from the 1940s. Later, he drove a delivery truck for the Pennsylvania railroad. Both of his parents were born in Ireland. My maternal grandmother's name was Florence Rogers McGrory. She was born in 1880 and died April 28, 1970. Her father was born in Ireland and her mother, Catherine Muldoon, was born in Pennsylvania. Both of Catherine's parents were born in Ireland. She was the only one of my grandparents I really knew. She died the year after I entered the Foreign Service. She was a housewife as was traditional then and lived most of her life with the youngest of her daughters. She had five children, three sons and two daughters, the oldest of whom was my mother.

On my father's side, my grandparents were James P. Smith and Alice Rodgers Smith. He was born in Pennsylvania in 1857 and died June 27, 1908. I believe that not long after he died my father had to leave school and begin working. Both of his parents, James Smith and Elizabeth Fogarty, were born in Ireland. My grandmother, Alice Rodgers Smith, was born in Pennsylvania in 1871. She died in 1944 in Philadelphia. Both of her parents were born in Ireland.

Q: What was your father's business? I mean, what did he do?

SMITH: My father did a lot of different things. When he was young he was in the Merchant Marines. He was actually in the Merchant Marines during World War I; he was a radio operator. But during my lifetime he only made one trip in the Merchant Marines. Most of the time he was a salesman, doing different kinds of sales. The most important fact about his business life is that he had pretty severe alcoholism. He was a binge drinker. He might go months without taking a drink, but once he took the first one he drank constantly day and night for weeks until he was either too sick to drink any more or too broke to buy any alcohol. At that point, he would go through a drying out process that took several days. Of course, he could not hold a job consistently given his condition.

Q: What sort of neighborhood did you grow up in?

SMITH: I grew up in a housing project in South Philadelphia. It was a low cost housing project and I lived there until I went in the Army when I was 17. My family was quite poor because of my father's alcoholism and his inability to make a consistent living. At that time, the housing projects were segregated. I was in an all white housing project made of cinder block two story homes that were sort of whitewashed. The black housing project was about a mile, mile-and-a-half away from us and was made of much more flimsy and even less attractive materials.

Q: How big was your family?

SMITH: I'm the oldest of four children. I had two sisters younger than me and the youngest one was my brother, who was 11 years younger than me.

Q: In your family- Was it a religious family would you say?

SMITH: My father was not religious. My mother was raised Catholic, in fact went to a Catholic private high school outside of Philadelphia called Immaculata, which is a college now. She remained a devout Catholic until her death. We went to public schools but were raised to go to church on Sundays and we had to go after school to what they call catechism training, which the Catholic school kids got in school and for which we had to go in the summer and after school, which I resented highly.

Q: So what did that do to you?

SMITH: What did it do to me? Nothing that dramatic. I was very rebellious about it for quite awhile and I refused- they had this catechism which was basically a bunch of questioning and answers, who is God, etc/, and I just refused to learn any of it and I was always like the black sheep. There was this other kid, I remember this, who was always doing well in this thing and I finally got teed off about it and started studying a little and became one of the star students.

Q: How about as a kid in this, say in a project, was there- how'd you play around? Were there either gangs or just groups of you? And I'm not using the "gang" in a pejorative sense; I'm using it in the, you know, I mean sort of a group of kids getting out and playing there and all that?

SMITH: Yes. You know, it really was a more innocent era than it became later and that extended to the housing projects too. I grew up, although I was a bit of a pre Baby Boomer, on a block that must have had 20 kids roughly around my age and there were just a whole gang of us that hung out, played; there was a playground nearby with the usual swings and that sort of thing. And you know, we made games of softball, touch football, and we were gone like from early in the morning until dark.

Q: Yes. You know, I'm quite a bit older but it was the same thing; I'd call us almost feral. You know, your mother would say go out and play and we'll be eating- don't come back until 6:00 when we eat, or something like that and you went out and played and-

SMITH: Exactly.

Q: -I mean, there was no particular problem.

SMITH: Nope. And sometimes we'd be knocking on other kids doors, before anybody else was even up and if we were in the house too much I remember one of my mother's favorite expressions was, go out and blow the stink off you. You know, just get outside and get some fresh air.

Q: As a kid were you much of a reader?

SMITH: Yes, I was. I loved to read and early in my reading life I only had a couple of books. I had "Bambi," which I must have read 100 times.

Q: Felix Salten.

SMITH: Yes. And I had "A Life of Christ," which I didn't read nearly as often but I read it. And you know, I was just reading to read. If those were the only books I had I would read them again and again. I also read tons of comic books and then as I got a little bit older, and got access to a library and stuff, I started reading a little bit more widely. I developed a fondness for science fiction; I liked to read science fiction a lot.

Q: In the neighborhood, you say there was a black section; I mean, I take it the two didn't mix very much.

SMITH: There was no interaction whatsoever except at school. Schools of course were integrated and I took a bus to my elementary school, which was called Bregy. My bus was all white and it would arrive there and then a bus would arrive from the black project and then we'd all be there together.

Q: How did you find school? Let's talk about the elementary school. How'd you like it?

SMITH: I liked school a lot, because I got a lot of positive reinforcement there. I was a smart kid like most Foreign Service officers I guess are and they had a system where you get- at that time you got O, S, I, and U -- outstanding, satisfactory, needs improvement and unsatisfactory if you failed. I never got anything less than an O, I don't think, in my entire elementary education so the teachers liked me, I liked the school. The only problem I had was fifth grade I became one of the school's safety patrolmen.

Q: Oh yes, with the belt and all that.

SMITH: Yes. And there was a kid that used to come by my corner every morning, always gave me a tough time. So finally one day I got into a fist fight with him and the mailman was going by and dragged us both into the principal's office and I got kicked off the safety patrol, which was like a huge blow to my ego.

Q: Oh, God. You had to turn in your belt.

SMITH: Sure did.

Q: Oh boy. I never was in the safety patrol; I always envied those who were. I aspired but never reached my aspiration.

SMITH: Well, I was the only person I know who ever got thrown off the safety patrols. It was like the first blemish on my otherwise perfect record.

Q: Did you find any particular courses in elementary school that particularly turned you on?

SMITH: Can't really say that I did. Like I said, I always liked reading. One of the things that was frustrating to me was that the reading books were so easy and we would do a lot of reading out loud and some of the kids could not read very well at all and I would have finished the book, in the first day and we would be working on the book in school for like a month. So that was a little bit frustrating. But other than that, at that point I don't think I had any preferences.

Q: When you had access to the library, any particular type of book or any particular books really turn you on? I mean, that you really think about now?

SMITH: Well, it was really- my fun reading at that time was science fiction, and I still remember some of the great old science fiction writers like Isaac Asimov, Robert Heinlein and some of the others, and that was kind of an escape and a look into the future and that sort of thing that I liked a lot.

Q: Well, it was a great era with sort of the pulp magazines then or were they in book form by that time?

SMITH: Well, a lot of what I did, of course, going to the library, was in book form. And some of them were collections of stuff that had been published in the '30s and '40s and early '50s in magazines like "Astounding Science Fiction" and that sort of thing.

Q: In your family was sort of the news of the day a subject of conversation or not or newspaper, radio or TV, was this an important element?

SMITH: My father kept very much in touch with the news. He read the newspapers, he would watch news on TV, once we finally got a TV, and so he was very much up on that and had strong opinions about things. He was very affected by the Depression and was a lifelong, strong Democrat and would have unkind things to say about any sort of Republican comments about what was going on in the world. I should say, by the way, that he had to drop out of school when he was in sixth grade to help support his family so he was pretty much a self-educated person. He was very smart but mostly self-educated.

Q: This is often a pattern I find. Often the mother has more, I mean, of the generation _____, you know. The mother often had a little more sheltered life and was able to go farther up in the school system and the father, because of the Depression and all and the times would drop out and work but do an awful lot of self-education. It was a great period of reading for everybody.

SMITH: Yes. My father was not a great book reader that I can recall but he liked magazines and, as I say, the newspapers; he devoured those. He was much more, as I think back on it, sort of literate than my mother was in terms of thinking about current affairs, interest in reading about current affairs and that sort of thing.

Q: Did you get any feel for Philadelphia politics while you were a kid?

SMITH: No. No, I don't remember anything about that until really probably until I was in college. I don't remember much at all except, well, my father, we had like a local committeeman and that sort of thing and if my father got a traffic ticket he'd go to get it fixed. And that's what he'd call it. He'd say I'm going to go see a committeeman to get this ticket fixed.

Q: What did they call it? In Chicago they used to say I'd go see my rabbi. Did they have any term in Philadelphia like that?

SMITH: The committeeman is what I remember. That's the only thing I remember about it. Oh, and also my father would be looking for some money when it came around to election time. He'd be looking- not for very much but oftentimes, I think, they would hand out five bucks or a couple bucks or something like that and say make sure you get to the polls.

Q: I've interviewed people including Robert Strauss who was at one point the ambassador to Russia but also was the head of the Democratic Party and he was talking about how they used to hand out what they called "walking around money."

SMITH: Yes.

Q: And that's what that was, walking around money.

SMITH: Right. Or walk to the polls money.

Q: To make sure that- Yes, you know, it's an interesting era.

SMITH: By the way, we'll get to it later but I crossed paths with Robert Strauss when he was ambassador to Moscow. I was political counselor for about a week when he first arrived there.

Q: Yes. Fascinating. He has wonderful stories about it.

Well anyway, you went to high school where?

SMITH: Well, they had junior high schools then, they call them middle schools now; I went to one called Vare Junior High School and that was a three year junior high. I only stayed there two years and then went to Central High School in Philadelphia, which was a four year high school. A lot of the high schools were three years in Philadelphia at the time. But this was a high school that you had to get into with grades or tests or a high IQ score or something like that. It's analogous maybe to Jefferson High School in Fairfax County or Bronx School of Science except it was more broadly gauged, much more of a liberal arts component.

Q: I was talking to somebody just recently who went to Boys Latin in Boston and the same, the selection thing.

So again, you were a smart kid?

SMITH: Yes. And I was really- The probably two worst years of my educational life were in the junior high school because that was really blackboard jungle type junior high school. There was violence; there was no interest in education. I mean, here's where you started to get the kids who were winding up in gangs and out on the street and that sort of thing and I was really out of place there.

Q: How did you manage?

SMITH: I managed, you know; kids manage. There were some tough moments.

Q: Keep away. Drugs weren't a problem at this point were they?

SMITH: I wasn't aware of drugs. There were fights, there were unruly classes. I was a small kid, one of the smallest ones in my class and usually you would have these pecking order things get established and once it was pretty clear that you were at the bottom of the physical pecking order people no longer had to prove that by beating the hell out of you anymore.

Q: You were in high school from when to when?

SMITH: Well, let's see. From '55 to '59. I graduated in- actually at that time you could graduate in the middle of the year too so I graduated January '59.

Q: Well high school, I take it, was quite a different thing? I mean- How did you get out of this morass of the junior high to get to a selective high school?

SMITH: Well, it was my father really. He was aware that Central High School existed, and he was aware that I was smart and he basically got, I'm not sure what the process was but he got an application for me to go and I was accepted and I started going there. It was a long trip; Central was all the way at the northern end of Philadelphia so every morning I had a long bus ride to the subway, Metro we call it now, and I actually went from the southernmost stop to the northernmost stop, so it was about, probably an hour and 15 minutes, an hour and a half each way to get to the high school.

Q: How did you find the high school?

SMITH: Difficult at first. I mean, from a scholastic point of view, first of all. It was like nothing I'd experienced before. The other kids were far- most of the other kids were far better prepared than I was and I struggled. I had read a lot so I knew a little bit about how to write just because I had absorbed enough writing in my reading that I could write a bit but I knew nothing about grammar. I didn't know a noun from a verb, a subject from an object, so I had to go through that whole learning process in high school and I struggled for awhile. I mean, not struggled in terms of failing but I was getting ordinary grades as opposed to really good grades.

And then, the other thing about it was a sort of bifurcation of my social life because at home I still loved in the project and hung out with kids in the project. At school I had school friends but I never saw them except at school because the geography and everything else was so different.

Q: Did you feel there was sort of a class difference or not? Or were you young enough not to realize?

SMITH: I don't know if I was conscious of class difference. I knew there were a lot of differences and I, over the course of high school I became increasingly less, I guess, well fitted to the environment that I grew up in. I mean, I just didn't mesh with that very well. I was just not comfortable in it. I felt increasingly like an outsider in that. On the other hand, I never felt like most of the other kids in my high school.

By the way, another difference in my high school, was that probably 80 percent of the students at that high school were Jewish. And you could tell that, especially on Jewish holidays because you'd go in there and instead of 25 or 30 students in a class there might be three or four.

Q: This of course was one of the things that you had these like, was it Brooklyn Science and Boys Latin and all. The top students today I think they tend to be Chinese or Korean or Vietnamese.

SMITH: Yes.

Q: I mean, this is where they went and it caused some problems in going on to the- some of the best schools, colleges in the country because they had quotas. They didn't want- It was an interesting period.

SMITH: Yes.

Q: How about, I'm not sure it's the right term, but culturally; what were you seeing, movies, plays or anything? I mean, were you getting a feel for things of the cultural nature while you were in high school?

SMITH: You know, the first play that I ever recall was during our high school senior trip, which I managed to go on, and it was to New York City and we went to see "Music Man." They got tickets for all of us on the trip I was quite blown away by the whole experience, the stage setting, the singing, the activity of it all. I don't remember doing- I don't remember high school plays or anything like that. That was an all boys' high school, by the way. At the time there was an equivalent girls' school. I think it's now- they've combined them into one school. But you know, of course I got to movies, you know, it cost- I remember going to movies when I was- before high school. My mother would give me 25 cents and I'd get into the movie and still have money for a candy or whatever.

Q: Sure.

SMITH: I mean, I wasn't into foreign movies or culture movies or anything like that at that time; it was popular movies that I liked.

Q: Yes. What about- Philadelphia of course is loaded with cultural stuff, art galleries and all and the various- Liberty Hall and all that; did that cross your orbit at all?

SMITH: I remember going a few times to the Franklin Institute, which is a sort of science institute and I liked that a lot. There were occasional class trips, but I they must not have made much of an impression because I cannot remember specifics. We did go to Independence Hall.

Q: They have a big ear at the Franklin Institute.

SMITH: Yes. And I remember they had a big mockup of a heart that you could walk through and that was very interesting. And they had things that showed electricity and all of that, which would be natural for a Franklin institute.

Q: Yes.

SMITH: So I did that a few times. I don't believe I ever went to an art institute or a concert of any kind while I was in high school. Art, music, no, none of that. I mean music; of course I liked pop music like most of my friends did. At the time South Philadelphia was a big center for people who became popular singers. Who came from there? Frankie Avalon, Fabian. I can't remember others right now but some of the famous singers from that time came from South Philadelphia High School, where most of my friends went. But there- You know, because I was so separated from the high school anything much in the way of cultural activities that I might have gotten from that I pretty much, I would say, missed out on.

Q: What about dating and all this? I mean, it sounds like with a three hour commute it sounds like you could- you're pretty well precluded from getting involved with the other high school, the girls' high school or anything like that.

SMITH: Yes, no contacts at all. You know, it might have been a little bit different if there'd been girls at the same high school but I didn't do much dating through high school anyway. I was small, skinny, wore glasses; you know, just was not a real popular kid from that point of view. What would be called a geek these days. If you wore glasses, you were Mr. Peepers from TV.

Q: Yes. I've just been interviewing Eileen Malloy. Do you know Eileen?

SMITH: Oh yes, sure. She used to work for me.

Q: She was saying how she was very tall and all and she just wasn't- guys didn't ask her out. I mean, it's a rough period. When anyone looks back on this how does one sort of survive in these social environments unless one was, you know, sort of a leader?

SMITH: Yes. Yes, it is. I remember I did go to my junior prom; took a girl from my neighborhood to that. We went on the subway all the way up there and back. But I had very few dates and no real girlfriends that lasted anything more than probably a couple of weeks during that period.

Q: While you were in high school did the outside world intrude at all as far as the Cold War, Israel, you know, other events?

SMITH: Well, I can remember a few things, of course. You know, I can remember how I found out that World War II was over, which was that we always used to smash down cans and save them for the collection and one day I was smashing down a can and my mother said, we don't have to do that anymore. And that was my recognition that the war was over.

I also remember that we didn't have butter. What we had were these lumps of lard, white lard with a little orange pill that you mixed together to make it look like butter.

Q: You would break the pill and then you'd squeeze it, wouldn't you?

SMITH: That was actually an advance over the first stuff we had. We had literally a block of the lard and put it in a little bowl and just mashed it up.

Q: This was all thanks to the Wisconsin/Minnesota lobbies in Congress where they didn't want margarine to compete with butter and so you weren't allowed to- I mean, normally you'd take the lard and you'd mix it with the coloring and all that but it- I'm not sure it was lard; it was close to- it's what today we call margarine but they couldn't color it and sell it and so you had to do it at home.

SMITH: Ah ha.

Q: And that was a- Senator Humphrey, who was a fine man but I think he was one of the proponents of making us all do this.

SMITH: Really. Ah, I didn't realize that was the reason for that. I assumed it might have had something to do with all the butter going off to the war.

Q: No. I mean, because that continued for awhile.

But anyway-

SMITH: Well then, of course like most kids of my age you had the ducking under the desks to-

Q: Duck and cover.

SMITH: Yes, protect yourself from the nuclear bomb that was going to go off. And then I remember in high school talking with friends, at home, not in the high school, my neighborhood friends, about which locations around us would be targets and why we would be blanketed because we had the Philadelphia Naval Yard over here and we had these power plants over here and that sort of thing.

Q: Did you get any feel for the role of Jews? Since your school was predominantly Jewish and there was still a certain amount of anti-Semitism around but also a separateness and all; did that come to you at all or did you pick up any of that?

SMITH: I'm not particularly conscious of any of that. I mean, my father had all the prejudices you would expect of somebody with a six grade education, raised in the era that he was raised in. And he used derogatory terms for just about every minority group that there was.

Q: Yes, a Polack and-

SMITH: Polacks, Kites, Wops, Spics; he knew them all. Somehow or other, that never really became part of my outlook. I always had this sort of fairness gene or something, whatever, and so, I just never absorbed that. And did I see it around me? Yes, yes. People would say derogatory things. I don't remember so much about Jewish people, we didn't have any- I had one, I remember one Jewish kid lived in our housing project when I was young and we used to go around to everybody's houses on Christmas morning to see their trees and see what they- Christmas trees and see what presents they got and that sort of thing and we'd knock at his door and the first time I remember doing that found out that they didn't have Christmas. I mean, that was a total revelation to me. And that's when I knew he was different. But he was part of our gang and he was just different in that way.

And then in our housing project the first black kid moved in when I was a teenager. The first black family moved in and they had a teenaged son but we took him into our group and he became one of our friends. So, we didn't have that- It probably got a little bit tougher when you had a lot more even balance of blacks and whites in that community but I was gone by then. You have a token black person it's fairly easy to be magnanimous, I suppose.

Q: In high school, did any courses stand out or did you specialize in anything?

SMITH: I liked the English courses. I liked the reading and writing and the English courses. Once I got past, got kind of got caught up with the grammar stuff then I liked those. I wasn't one of the top students in them, but I did okay and I enjoyed them. I always liked history, liked the history courses. Those are the chief ones that stood out to me; struggled a little bit with the math courses. Oh, and Latin. I took Latin for a couple of years and that's the closest I ever came to flunking a course. I got a D double minus one semester in my Latin course. I had a hard time with that.

Q: Again, did you get much of the outside world, international relations or whatever it might be called or not? Did that- was that important?

SMITH: I remember the Korean War very distinctly, that I followed it very closely in the newspapers. I remember, still remember the date it began.

Q: June 25, 1950.

SMITH: That's right. And I remember watching the maps in the newspapers as the perimeter of the U.S. forces shrank.

Q: The Pusan Perimeter.

SMITH: Yes. And then the landing near Seoul and all of that. So I- that was something that really had my attention. And I remember the invasion of Hungary by the Soviet Union in 1956. That made a real strong impression upon me. I was kind of aware of those things at that point. So we weren't totally isolated from what was going on in the world. I remember liking Eisenhower, not for any particularly reason except he seemed like a nice grandfatherly figure. The slogan was I Like Ike.

Q: Well then, you were what, 1958 when you graduated?

SMITH: Fifty-nine.

Q: Fifty-nine.

SMITH: Yes.

Q: Had your family- I mean, was it pretty well established that you were going on to higher education?

SMITH: No, not at all. I didn't even expect to go on to higher education. Nobody in my family ever had. We had no money and I really had no expectation of it. I was a National Merit Scholarship finalist and I was contacted by Oberlin College for a partial scholarship but I didn't even get back to them because I knew I couldn't go on a partial scholarship and I was so uninformed that the notion that I might tell them I was financially unable to attend and that they might find a work/study program for me never crossed my mind. So actually the way I wound up going to college was totally by accident. I was in the high school auditorium one day and they made an announcement that Temple University in Philadelphia had a full scholarship available and it was by test and if anyone was interested in taking the test they should sign up and take it. So I just sort of on a lark signed up and took the test and then got called in for an oral interview and thought I had not done very well on it. They asked me what I wanted to be; I had no idea. And got a phone call some months later asking me if I was still interested in going. Basically they said look, you won this scholarship but you never applied to come to the school so do you want the scholarship? Well, I had never applied to go to any school because I didn't expect to go to any school. So I said yes, sure. So I applied. So I had this full scholarship but I actually only lasted about a half a semester and I withdrew and enlisted in the Army. I was still 17.

Q: Yes well, Temple had- Temple was an interesting institution in that it really was pointed towards raising the working class or whatever you want to call it, wasn't it, compared to other schools?

SMITH: Yes.

Q: I mean, a good school but-

SMITH: It had- Its mission was to provide affordable education to the widest variety of people. It was an urban school, it was primarily a commuter school, and they did a pretty good job of that.

Q: I've interviewed Johnny Young; I don't know if you know him or not.

SMITH: He was in African Affairs, wasn't he?

Q: Yes. He was an African American from Philadelphia and went to Temple, again coming from nothing.

SMITH: I know the name but I don't- he and I never crossed paths.

Q: He was ambassador I think to three countries; the last one was Slovenia, I think, and Bahrain and another.

But anyway, so what prompted you to join the Army?

SMITH: Well my whole life was difficult. My father and I didn't get along and then going on to- right from high school to college where I was living in the same house, commuting just like I had commuted to high school and it just wasn't working and I just felt like I had to get out of there. And the Army was a convenient way to do it. So I was still 17 so I had to get a parent's permission so my mother agreed, reluctantly, but she agreed to sign the papers so I could enlist and I did. What triggered it was that I got into a fist fight with my father. During his drinking periods, he had been threatening that he was going to beat the hell out of me for years. I was afraid of him during my younger teen-age years, but finally could not take it any more. I was afraid I would kill him the next time and maybe my mother was too.

Q: Well, was the Army considered a way out and up in sort of your group?

SMITH: Nobody that I knew from my housing project really wanted to go in the Army; also nobody wanted to go to college. I mean, you were a lot more likely to go to jail than to go to college from the place that I grew up in. They just wanted to be auto mechanics or, whatever kind of a job they could get. High school education if they could finish that and a lot didn't manage that. And they got whatever job they could get. Nobody really wanted to go in the Army. To me it was just a- As I said, I was not comfortable in that environment and I just wanted to find a way to get out and the Army was a way to do it.

And obviously we were in a period between wars. We hadn't been in a war since the Korean War ended and there weren't any on the horizon at that point and time.

Q: Yes. And the draft wasn't going then.

SMITH: We had the draft.

Q: We had the draft but it wasn't-

SMITH: It was not something that people were particularly concerned about because they were drafting a pretty small number of people. But because I enlisted I had to enlist for three years; the draft was for two.

Q: What branch of the Army- Did they- Could you choose?

SMITH: No, not really. But I did well on these incoming tests and so they put me in something called the Army Security Agency, which did work similar to probably what NSA (National Security Administration) does; it was electronic intelligence. I went through basic training like everybody else but instead of going on to advanced infantry training I went off to this school where I learned Morse code and that sort of thing

Q: I graduated from college in June of 1950, which was not a great time.

SMITH: That's right.

Q: And I ended up in the Air Force Security Service. I went to the Army language school in Monterey; took Russian and spent- I had to do it for four years and was an enlisted man listening to Soviet fighters.

SMITH: Wow. I had an opportunity, perhaps, to go to the language school but there were- I had to wait for an opening. I didn't know what language I would get either. And if you had to wait for an opening you basically had to do detail work like KP, kitchen police and that sort of thing, for whatever period, a month or two months that you might have to wait. And at the time I was sufficiently young and stupid that to wait and go through that kind of scut work for a couple of months in order to get into a language school didn't seem to me a good tradeoff so I got into some specialty and ...

Q: You were what is known as the intercept operator, was that- What did they call it?

SMITH: Yes, that's right. Although I wound up in a subspecialty of that where we actually, I'm sure this is not classified after all this time, we tried to take pictures of transmissions so that you could identify the station by the-

Q: The hand or-

SMITH: By actually a physical picture of the frequency modulation.

Q: Spectroscope or whatever?

SMITH: Yes.

Q: Oh, that's interesting. I didn't know they did that.

I remember spending probably the worst week of my life; prior to going to language school they thought well, we really should learn something about Morse Code and so I- I couldn't tell a dit from a dot. And I had to spend a week listening to dits and dots and supposedly writing down and the speed got faster and faster and at a certain point it made absolute nothing. I just put random letters.

SMITH: Well I did learn Morse code and I got good enough at it but the guys who actually did that got really good at it and they could pick up stuff that was just incredible because the reception wasn't always good and the bands were different and they could pick up things that I couldn't understand at all.

Q: Where did you- Where were you assigned?

SMITH: Well, I did my basic training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, and then I went to Fort Devens, Massachusetts, for my Army Security Agency training. And then I was sent to Eritrea, which at that time was part of Ethiopia.

Q: Oh, you were at-

SMITH: Kagnew Station.

Q: -Kagnew Station.

SMITH: Oh, yes. You've heard of it.

Q: You know, some of my early interviews, for a long period of time Kagnew of course was sort of the center of our African policy, practically. And at one point I was INR (intelligence and research); I had the Horn of Africa.

SMITH: Ah ha.

Q: This was back in the early '60s. And you know, Kagnew Station was- Let's talk about Kagnew Station; what were you up to? I mean, how did you find it there?

SMITH: Well, Kagnew Station, was a little piece of America, in a way, at least a little piece of the Army's view of America. It was about three blocks by four blocks; it was all walled in. It had nice barracks; it had officers, NCO and enlisted men's clubs. It had a gym, a pool; it had a snack bar. It had a little PX (Post Exchange); sports facilities. It was really pretty nice. It was on one of the edges of Asmara, which was the capital city of

Eritrea and I suppose is now the capital of the country. I actually couldn't even tell you. It was at a pretty high altitude; I'm trying to remember whether it was like 5,800 feet or even higher but it was up on an elevation; beautiful climate because it was high enough that it wasn't really hot. I spent a year-and-a-half there.

Q: Let's stop just for one second.

You spent a year-and-a-half there. What was the time period?

SMITH: Let's see. I enlisted in the Army in March of 1959. I probably went over to Kagnew that fall, fall of '59. So I was there until early, mid '61, yes.

My work- this particular job that I had proved not to be terribly successful, I think, as a technology, and they kind of lost interest in it after awhile. And I basically wound up a good bit of the time driving a truck, which I liked. They had three shifts. Part of the time you were on a permanent shift and part of the time they had rotating shifts. And I did both. I mean, I did rotating shifts for awhile and then the officer in charge of the place decided to put us on permanent shifts and I picked a midnight shift because there were no officers around to bug you and you just had your NCO in charge and I liked that a lot better. And I drove a truck basically from Kagnew Station out to the antennae fields where we had our equipment and brought food out for the snack in the middle of the shift or meal in the middle of the shift and back and forth with messages and that sort of thing. And I was left alone; all I had to do was show up and drive the truck back and forth and I liked that.

Q: You're a good enlisted man. I speak from four years of experience myself.

SMITH: You were an enlisted man too?

Q: Yes.

SMITH: Yes. So, that was kind of the work experience. I got a lot more out of the social experience and the experience with my fellow enlisted men because actually the Army Security Agency picked people that showed up a little bit better in educational profile and intelligence profile than the average and so I had a lot of guys around me who had a couple of years of college before they enlisted and that sort of thing. And these guys- this was the first time in my life that I realized how much I didn't know so I kind of became aware of my ignorance for the first time and it was kind of a shock to me and made me want to get an education. So by the time I left there I was motivated to go back to college, something that I really hadn't been the first time around.

I taught English as a second language, although they didn't call it that then, at a local high school. I took University of Maryland classes; they had- they still do, traveling around to bases around the world. I finished almost a half year of college taking those courses. I also drank way too much with my friends, got into a little trouble here and

there, never got a court martial; got a couple of what they call Article 14s. You remember those?

Q: Yes. I'm not- can't remember- this was reprimands.

SMITH: Yes, it was company punishments and I had a couple of those. But it was an eye opening experience, being there. It got me; actually it was the first thing- first time I got interested, really, in foreign affairs and in living in other countries. Because I did get out into the city quite a bit the sights, the smells, the different languages, driving from Asmara down to Massawa, the Red Sea port, just the differences in culture and all that was something that fascinated me and that's kind of when I made up my mind that I wanted to be in the Foreign Service.

Q: Did you pick up any of the, sort of the political environment of sort of the Ethiopian sitting up in Addis Ababa and the tension with Asmara; I think they called them Shiftas at the time.

SMITH: Exactly, yes.

Q: Who were sort of blocking the road from time to time. Did this- Were you getting any feel for this sort of thing?

SMITH: I wasn't really getting any feel for the politics of it. I was aware of the Shiftas and they were considered bandits, strictly bandits. That's the way they were described to us in the Army as well. And so we had to be aware and careful about these bandits, particularly if we were driving, traveling, taking the train. I remember taking a train one time down to Massawa and they had police with- or military with guns aboard but it was not, to my knowledge then, a political movement in any sense, like a guerrilla movement or anything like that. It was described as bandits and that's what I considered them at the time.

Q: You say you taught at a local high school. How did that work?

SMITH: I guess there was an announcement, a company meeting or something like that or a platoon meeting that this high school was looking for people to teach English and did anybody want to volunteer. So I did and a couple of other of my friends also volunteered but I was really the only one that stuck it out. It was difficult because the kids were young high school students and it was a voluntary class after school and their heads were not really into it very much. So it was a kind of a frustrating experience but I'm glad I tried to do it.

Q: Was there any interaction of- I mean, thinking of the- The women of the Horn of Africa are some of the most beautiful in the world.

SMITH: Fabulous. I still remember that, yes.

Q: Was there any, I mean, were they sort of off-limits or how did this work?

SMITH: No, they weren't off-limits but they weren't terribly interested in getting involved in a dead end relationship with a soldier who was going to leave. But there were some extremely stunning women. I remember, I think we referred- they were referred to as coffalattes, it was like a coffee and cream and that was the mixture of the Italians from their occupation and the local people, beautiful women of a light brown cast and absolutely stunning, some of them. I was enchanted with one of the girls who worked at the PX, but too shy to do anything about it.

Q: The GI bill was in effect while you were doing this or had that-

SMITH: No, it wasn't. No, I had no GI benefits when I left the Army.

Q: So you left the Army and what did you do? You left the Army; this would be what, '63 or so?

SMITH: It was actually in January of '62, I believe. I managed to get out a little bit early. By the time- I'd say the first two years I spent in the Army were worthwhile for me because I had a lot of experiences, I met a lot of people, I became aware of my ignorance, as I said before. The last year was not- I mean, I had gotten everything out of it I could get out of it and I was tired of being at the bottom of the pecking order and I wanted to go back and get an education. So I got in touch with my congressman and I still had part of my scholarship left at Temple but it was fast running out; they didn't hold it for you. You had it for that four years. So I made an argument that this was a one time lifetime opportunity for this scholarship and I managed to get out in time to resume classes in spring semester of 1962. So I spent two years, 10 months and nine days in the Army. I remember that well. And it was one of the happier days of my life when I got out, although, as I said, looking back on it a good bit of it was really to my benefit.

Q: Well, I think one of the things that all of us who went through the military experience was it was a good time to sort of get out there and mix and all. I've gone though an all male, rather fancy college, although my family didn't have money but I got in; it was Williams in Massachusetts. And all of a sudden going- you know, spending four years as an enlisted man I've lived off that ever since. I mean, it' a good experience.

SMITH: Yes, yes.

Q: At Temple were you going back home and all that; I mean, living at home?

SMITH: Yes. I lived part of the time with my parents and part of the time with my grandmother and my aunt, depending on the family situation at the time. But I had- I started out having a scholarship and a little bit of money that I'd saved while I was in the Army, not much, and then basically after the scholarship ran out I was able to get loans because I had fairly good grades and then they gave me another full scholarship. But I pretty much- most of the time I worked at night.

Q: What sort of work were you doing?

SMITH: The first couple of years were tough financially. I sold encyclopedias in the summer door to door. I sold chimney cleaning for a heating company in center city Philadelphia. I did inventory work at a department store for a little while. Jobs were not easy to come by. I was very lucky the last two years I was in college. I got a job with a trucking company as a night clerk/cashier and it was four hours a night, 5:00 PM to 9:00 PM, and it paid, by my standards at that time, well. And it had the Teamsters Union, of course. Originally my job was not part of the Teamsters but they made it a union job and the union managed to get an hourly rate increase for me, a fairly nice one. So I wound up making the princely sum of like a buck sixty-five an hour or something like that for 20 hours a week and I had cash in my pocket and a full scholarship. I was getting an education and that's what I was there for, I wasn't there just to get a degree. I was taking any course I wanted to take and I loved it; I just had a great time.

Q: How'd you find Temple as an institution?

SMITH: It varied a lot. I'd say overall I wasn't impressed by the quality of students there. A lot of them were, like I was when I first went there, they were just going on from high school to college, they were commuting. There wasn't- They were more there for a degree than an education. I had some excellent courses and some that were not so good. I still remember one of my best courses was a biology course, a required course in my, I think my freshman year. But the guys who taught this, and it was a huge lecture hall, but they were like up with the latest, I mean, they were revising their lectures every week, practically, based upon the latest developments in biology and they conveyed that. And so while it wasn't the subject area that was of great interest to me these guys did a really good job. Had a great history teacher for one course, very Socratic method; kept asking questions. I majored in political science and began studying international relations there.

Q: What type of history was it?

SMITH: This was American history.

Q: American.

SMITH: And you know, the way he taught was- he kind of assumed we did the reading and he would bring in some show and tell things and he would keep asking questions. And somewhere along the line I figured out that the questions were what was important, not the answers. I later wrote him a letter, told him I really appreciated that he had taught me that. So that was great.

I got whatever jobs I could and the first couple of years were the toughest economically because there weren't the kinds of jobs there are around today. There weren't fast food restaurants and that sort of thing that practically anybody could get a job at. I was a door-to-door salesman, which I had been, by the way, in high school during the summer as

well. I sold encyclopedias in the summer; I sold chimney sweeping in some of the roughest neighborhoods in Philadelphia. I sometimes wonder what I was thinking but it was a job and I needed a job. And the chimney sweeping was basically, a lot of people still had coal furnaces and they would- it was sort of a bait and switch although I didn't fully realize it. They would sell a very cheap chimney sweeping job in the hope that they would find problems with people's furnaces and be able to sell them a new furnace and that's really where the company made the money. But my job was to get- sell the cheap chimney sweeping so somebody could get in the door. But I was, you know, it was all I could get for work and I had to pay for my books and pay for the subway and the Metro, things like that.

Q: How did, some of the events that happened at this time, one was the Cuban Missile Crisis and then the assassination of Kennedy; how did that hit you?

SMITH: The Cuban Missile Crisis, it was very intense. At the time we really believed that we were on the edge of nuclear war. I was very conscious of it, followed it very, very closely. Very proud of Kennedy for getting the Soviets to back down, although I later came to see that whole situation very much differently, but that was my reaction at the time. Like everyone else, of course, I know exactly where I was the day Kennedy was assassinated; I was in a classroom. I don't remember which class it was, but I think it was a political science class and I know that a student came into the class who hadn't- who was coming in late to the class and said I'm late because I wanted to tell you that Kennedy's been assassinated. And the first reaction of the professor was that's not funny. And he said no, this has really happened. And so the professor dismissed the class and we started watching television and watching what was going on.

Q: Although you were overseas at the time but did sort of the Kennedy call and the atmosphere towards public service strike a chord with you at all? I mean, you were in the military but the military is something almost aside, I mean, unless you're a career person.

SMITH: Well, yes. I was really tempted by his call for people by the establishment of the Peace Corps, call for people to come into that, but I never really seriously considered it because I already knew I wanted to go into the Foreign Service; I knew I had to get an education in order to do that and I figured, alright, I've already done almost three years in the military; I'm not going to also do another two years in the Peace Corps. I want to focus on getting in to the Foreign Service. But there was that enthusiasm, that idealism. I was very skeptical, personally, of some of Kennedy's foreign policy views when he was running against Nixon originally because by this time I was sort of following things fairly closely and there was the Kimoy-Matsu issue, which I didn't really believe was an issue at all, and it wasn't. You know, it was-

Q: It disappeared.

SMITH: Yes. It was a made up issue. And then there was the missile gap and there was no missile gap and that disappeared too. But those were the two chief foreign policy

issues that Kennedy used against Nixon. I liked Kennedy as a person but I did not like him on those foreign policy issues. I liked him much more after the American University speech; that appealed much more to my sense of where we should be going.

Q: This is when he put forward his, well, foreign policy agenda.

SMITH: Yes, yes. His sort of vision for foreign policy, which was very much more nuanced than kind of the- I mean, he really in the election campaign had sort of a knee jerk anti-communist stance and he was using that, of course, against the person who had been vice president for the last eight years and trying to find things that would work. I understand that but-

Q: Well you mentioned you knew you were going to go to the Foreign Service; how did the Foreign Service cross your radar? How did this happen?

SMITH: Well, as I said, I really got interested in foreign cultures and foreign affairs and stuff while I was stationed in Eritrea. And there was an American cultural center in Asmara and I used to go down there periodically just to see what was going on and you had these American cultural representatives there and I thought wow, this would be really cool, to be able to live in a foreign country, learn about its culture and be paid for doing that. And I figured out that alright, this is the Foreign Service, it's the diplomatic service that does this so that's where I wanted to go.

Q: Well, were you able while you were at Temple to get any sort of guidance or direction in courses and all or were you telling your interests?

SMITH: Well, I focused my coursework very much on political science and on international affairs. I wouldn't say I got a lot of guidance when I was there but I kind of had figured out for myself the kinds of things that I would need to- as a background and to prepare for the Foreign Service exam. So, although I took a wide variety of courses, my major was political science and international affairs. But as I said, for electives I pretty much took anything I wanted to, philosophy, whatever history courses I wanted, whatever.

Q: Well, when did you graduate?

SMITH: I graduated in '65. And I had a fellowship, what they called a National Defense Education Fellowship to Northwestern. I had applied to several schools, a couple of Ivy League schools, which I didn't get into because I told them I couldn't go without money, and then the University of Chicago and Northwestern. And Northwestern, the chairman of the department called me up and said they'd very much like me to come there and offered me this whole fellowship. And the University of Chicago initially said they couldn't provide me a fellowship. The department chairman was somebody whose research work I really liked a lot and so I decided to go to Northwestern. After I accepted I got a call from the University of Chicago and they offered to- I guess I was their second tranche of offers there but I had already accepted Northwestern and I went there.

Q: You were at Northwestern-

SMITH: Let me take a little break here.

Q: Sure, sure.

Alright.

SMITH: Northwestern?

Q: Northwestern, yes. As a poli-sci major or?

SMITH: Yes, I was a political science major, kind of international affairs as a subspecialty of political science.

Q: How stood political science sort of at that time? Because in later years I think it's gotten very quantitative and all this but at one time it used to be what I would call comparative governments and all that, the study of government.

SMITH: Northwestern's political science department was one of the pioneers I guess you'd call it in the behavioral approach to political science so they were very quantitative. Not all of the professors were but that was sort of the forward edge of the political science department; very behavioral, very quantitative.

Q: How'd you find that?

SMITH: I thought it was pretty exciting at the time. I really didn't- wasn't sure that it was going to prepare me so well for the Foreign Service but the whole idea of trying to apply a more rigorous scientific methodology to the study of politics struck me as a desirable thing to do rather than kind of the more impressionistic stuff that a lot of people had done before.

Q: So did you specialize- You were going in for a Masters I take it?

SMITH: Doctorate.

Q: A doctorate.

SMITH: Yes.

Q: So did you early on sort of end up in that area or what were you specializing in?

SMITH: International affairs. You know, I didn't- I decided that it made more sense to get a general education in international affairs sort of at a broader level because I figured once I got into the Foreign Service I'd develop more of a geographic specialty so I chose

to wait to develop a geographic specialty although I already knew that the Soviet Union was what I was interested in. But I decided to wait on that. So it was international relations theory, it was some comparative politics, things like that.

Q: My period was what you call poli-sci was, you know, how does the United Nations work or how does the government of France work and that sort of thing. Can you give me an idea how you would approach a quantitative problem of behavior?

SMITH: Let's say you wanted to try to- you wanted to develop a hypothesis and you wanted to then find data that you could use to test this hypothesis. So a lot of people at that time were collecting data on international conflicts, wars, that sort of thing. And trying to find correlations between various kinds of behaviors between countries and the likelihood that they would wind up in war. So it might be anything like how often do you vote together at the UN. So you just count up votes at the United Nations and see, alright, where are the splits. But not sort of in an impressionistic way. You'd actually say okay, for the last 10 years, how have people voted at the UN and how have those voting patterns changed. And then you try to tie it to some theory that would make sense of that data. A lot of, although this wasn't in international affairs, a lot of legislative roll call analysis. You'd look at a legislature, US or elsewhere, and you'd try to figure out how people were voting and why based upon how they actually voted on different kinds of issues and what kinds of constituencies they represented and things like that. And of course, the most obvious thing is public opinion polling. And that has still turned out to be probably the most accurate and revealing overall and if you think about the reason for that it's very clear; you've got large numbers- a large universe from which you can take a sample repeatedly and you can refine and refine. Now, when you're dealing with countries you don't have such a large universe; you've got 180 countries, used to have a lot fewer than that. So how do you take a sample from 180 and get a random sample that's meaningful. It's much more difficult to do in the international affairs area.

Q: Well, in those days you were working on, was it these cards? I can't remember the name of the cards.

SMITH: Data cards.

Q: Data cards, yes.

SMITH: Yes, you'd have a whole drawer full of them and you'd hand them to the people that ran the computer and they'd riffle through and then the computer would figure out stuff. Yes, I remember that very well.

Q: Were you taking Russian? I mean, was this-

SMITH: No. No language at that time. I had taken French in college and I did okay at it but language is not one of my top subjects. But in grad school we didn't have any language requirements. You had to meet a language requirement but I had already met that. We had required statistics course instead.

Q: Well how long did you do this?

SMITH: It was three years full time at school and the last year you're pretty much finished classes and you're just working on your thesis. I was doing a thesis where I was collecting what I called dyadic data; that is, I was looking at pairs of countries. Because if you think about how you get large numbers to compare, if you've got 180, you don't have any large numbers. But if you get 180 pairs then it's 180 by 179 by 178 and so forth, so you can get large numbers of dyads; so one dyad might be U.S. and Cameroon. Another one might be Britain and Thailand. So there are bunches and bunches of these; the problem is most of them have no data; there's no information on the interactions between the countries.

But anyway, I was collecting whatever data I could get on these pairs of countries and looking at trade relations and trade imbalances and memberships in international organizations and seeing if any of these were correlated with the likelihood that they would be involved in a violent conflict. And if you- I don't know if you remember functionalism; it was a theory of social relations and basically it says if you join more organizations that carry out functions that are mutually beneficial the more of them you have with one another the less likely you're going to get into a violent conflict because you develop habits of behavior that preclude looking to violence as a way of settling conflicts. Anyway, that's some of the stuff that I was looking at in my own work.

Q: Well did this lead to a doctorate?

SMITH: Yes it did although I didn't actually get it until after I was in the Foreign Service in 1973 because I had started to work on my thesis and then I finished my three years, I hadn't completed the thesis, I had to go out and make a living, was not particularly interested in going into academia so I went and joined the National Labor Relations Board as a labor relations specialist, investigator, and of course when you're working full-time it's hard to push forward with a doctoral thesis too.

Q: Why didn't you- Were you at all attracted to the academic world?

SMITH: Not very much, honestly, at that time. First of all because I really wanted to be in the Foreign Service and all of this education that I'd gone through was directing me toward going into the Foreign Service, or so I thought. And secondly grad school is a little bit disillusioning. I had conceived of academia as the pursuit of truth and the pursuit of higher knowledge and the politics, the backbiting, the real world stuff that you get in everything was a bit disillusioning to me. And also my undergraduate school, you had asked me what I thought of the student body and the experience there and they weren't- a lot of them were not that inspiring as students. And I thought, do I want to spend my life trying to teach a bunch of people who are only there because their mom and dad told them they had to be there. So it wasn't that interesting to me at the time.

Q: While you were at grad school were you getting any knowledge of the Foreign Service and how you get in and what they're doing? Were you getting a better fix on this as a career?

SMITH: In the sense that I was really keeping very close track of international affairs, international politics, what we were doing, what negotiations were, I was studying various situations so I was heavily into it but my political science department was not. I mean, it was very academically oriented. It was not the best fit for me in that sense although I did like the notion that you could be more rigorous and more scientific in your approach to studying these things.

Q: This is one thing that disturbs me as a former Foreign Service officer in doing these oral histories, talking to people going through the academic world and the realization of how little contact or joy in work or knowledge there is of the academic people who are looking at diplomacy, foreign relations and all that and the people who are practicing it. I mean, I don't think they read each others' articles; they're like two ships going off heading to the same port but they don't communicate with each other.

SMITH: By and large they did not then and they still don't today, as far as I can see. Different journals that they publish in, different audiences that they speak to and at that time there were some universities that were much more- and there still are today of course, oriented toward policy, toward foreign policy as opposed to international affairs as an academic discipline. I just didn't happen to be in one of those.

Q: The Vietnam business was beginning to heat up while you were there.

SMITH: Yes, very much so.

Q: How did that strike you? I mean, you were in a way saved from- you'd had your military time so that took care of that but how did you feel about that?

SMITH: My feelings changed over time. First of all, on a personal level I had the good fortune of not having- of having already done my military service and I did not choose to go into the Reserves after I was out of the Army so I didn't have any duty of that kind to do. I had fully done my military duty. I was in grad school with- I was the only one that I'm aware of that I was in grad school with who had done that and so as- I mean, there was an enormous amount of anguish about the draft and what people would do if they were called up for the draft. I had friends who filed conscientious objector status, I knew people who went into the National Guard, did six months of active duty so that they would avoid the draft that way; it was, on a personal level for people it was an extremely anguishing issue. You know, added to the fact that most people in higher education thought that the war was at best a huge mistake, at worst highly immoral. As an undergraduate and starting graduate school I felt that we were on the right side. We were resisting communism and that this was the right thing to do. As the Vietnam War evolved I came to see it differently. I came to see the South Vietnamese regime as a hopelessly corrupt regime that really didn't deserve to be in power and that we were spending whole

lot of American lives and treasure trying to prop up. Not that I had any great brief for North Vietnam but I just thought that- I came to feel that it was a huge mistake.

Q: Were you able to turn your analytical tools on the United States and Vietnam and China and the Soviet Union?

SMITH: As a graduate student you mean?

Q: Yes.

SMITH: No. I wouldn't say so, not in the academic setting. There wasn't any of the research that I did that would apply to that or anything like that. Obviously there were a lot of discussions that you had with fellow students, with professors, and that sort of thing that developed differences. I remember my first year in graduate school a guy who became one of my best friends was a conscientious objector and intensely anti-war and I was in favor of it at that time and we had many, many discussions, arguments about it. I think it was probably in the summer of '66 when I changed my view. They had some protest movements in South Vietnam involving some of the monks and that sort of thing which were just put down by force and I said this regime doesn't represent the people and it's never going to.

Q: At Northwestern were things pretty hot on that campus there while you were there, about the war or not?

SMITH: There were two things going on while I was there. One was the anti-war movement, yes, not as intense as it was in a lot of other places, and also the movement against the- what people felt was the over intrusion of the university in the lives of students, so movement toward getting fewer restrictions on dorms and that sort of thing. You know, getting away from the university as In loco parentis idea.

Q: Yes. Did civil rights, was that being played out there at all? I mean, as far the movement, obviously, this wasn't an overriding issue right there; I mean, the whole cause of civil rights.

SMITH: I personally was more involved in it as an undergraduate. I took part in marches and things like that in Philadelphia; I didn't go in the South. And at Temple University it was a pretty active subject. I don't remember it as being such a- maybe the undergraduates were more involved in it. As a graduate student I don't remember being as involved in it as I was as an undergraduate.

Q: Normally graduate students all over were sort of- they were so busy doing their thing that they didn't- that taking time out or shutting down classes was, you know, I mean, this was not looked upon with favor because you were on a tight budget and mommy and daddy weren't paying your way often.

SMITH: Yes. And I think generally Northwestern was more removed from that. I mean, it certainly was there and the general mood was anti-war, pro-civil rights and that sort of thing but not the degree of activism that you had in a lot of other places.

Q: Well, were you making moves to get into the Foreign Service while you were there?

SMITH: Well, I took the Foreign Service exam my third year and I passed the written and then I went to take the oral and actually I passed that as well.

Q: Do you recall any of the questions?

SMITH: Oh, yes. I still wonder to this day how I managed to pass the oral exam because I made a total hash of it. First of all I walked in and they threw me a softball question, how do you keep up with current affairs. And I said well, I read the "New York Times" every day, all of it except for the economic section. My committee was chaired by an econ cone officer. I pretty much spent the rest of the interview trying to recover from that. And then they threw me another question about the evolution of the Supreme Court and the U.S. system and its role in the U.S. system, which for a guy who was going for a PhD in political science you would think would be, you know, just knock that right off. But I had been pretty removed from all of that stuff for a number of years. I would have known it better as a junior in undergraduate school than I did my third year in graduate school so I didn't do too well on that one either. But I had a quite high grade in the written and I- they called me and told me I passed the oral and that I ought to pay a little more attention to economics.

Q: I got the same speech. I think it was a pretty rough speech.

SMITH: Yes.

Q: Well, were you married or had a significant other or anything like that during this period of time?

SMITH: Yes. Yes, I was married. By the way, I should say about coming into the Foreign Service that after I passed the written and the oral and all the other requirements they put a freeze on hiring.

Q: This was when?

SMITH: This would have been '68 probably. So there was a freeze on hiring at the same time that I finished my three years at Northwestern and I got a job in a political campaign of a guy who was running for senator from Illinois of the Democratic Party against Everett Dirksen. And he was running on an anti-war platform so I was very comfortable working for him and basically did research and did a little speech writing and that sort of thing and was with him until he got beaten in the election by Dirksen as most people probably would have predicted that he would have.

And then I went to work for the National Labor Relations Board, basically because I was interested in social conflict and how it was resolved and the National Labor Relations Board was involved in union management issues and I felt well, maybe I can do something with this background in this.

And then I got a letter from the State Department saying we still have the freeze on hiring but if you'll agree to come in and do your first tour in Vietnam as part of the Cords Program we'll admit you and after your first tour you'll be a full Foreign Service Officer and can serve worldwide. I really agonized over that because I was deeply opposed to the war by this time and I finally wrote them a letter back saying I couldn't accept the appointment on that basis. So I thought that was the end of the Foreign Service for me because I didn't plan to take the exam again and I was trying to figure out how I was going to make a career out of the National Labor Relations Board.

Q: How did you find the National Relations Board?

SMITH: How did I find it? It's a good question. I'm not sure I could even tell you. But I had some pro-union sympathies from the time that I was an undergraduate and I'd been a Teamster and the whole- you know, I knew something about the labor movement in the U.S. and had some sympathy for the notion that you needed an organized labor movement in order to negotiate collectively and that this was part of a social process and you could avoid more intense social conflict if you had this- if you did this right. So that's kind of how that came about.

Q: Did you find that it was more bureaucratic than you thought it would be? I mean, how did you find it?

SMITH: Actually it was interesting. I only spent about a year there but there were two types of professionals basically there. There were the attorneys who essentially prosecuted violations of the Labor Relations Act and there were investigators, like me, who carried out elections for union representation and did investigations of unfair labor practice charges. By the time I'd been there about six months I had figured out that there was no real career in being an investigator because what you did is- First of all, normally they could tell within 10 minutes of interviewing somebody who's there making a charge whether it was a charge that could go anywhere or not. And if they knew it wasn't going anywhere they would assign it to an investigator because it had to be investigated. If it looked like it was going to have some merit and possibly go to a trial they would assign it to an attorney right off. So 95 percent of the cases- of the charges you investigated as an investigator went nowhere and all you had was unhappy people to deal with because you had to tell them. And the five percent that did go anywhere, as soon as they got taken for a trial were taken out of your hands and put into the hands of an attorney. So, I knew pretty quickly that was not going to work for me as a career long-term and at the time I could not picture going back to school for another three years to become a lawyer so I didn't know what I was going to do.

Running the elections was kind of interesting and doing the preparatory work for that was interesting.

Q: What sort of elections did you get involved with?

SMITH: Oh, various plants in the Chicago area. I don't remember specific plants but basically these were secret ballot elections and a petition would be filed for union representation and if the petition got signed by enough people then the company was required to allow an election to be held. And there were all sorts of regulations governing how the election could be held and where it could be held and who could do what and that sort of thing. And so if- There were a lot of violations of things in the election process because a lot of companies were bitterly anti-union and would engage in conduct that would- that was prejudicial and against the law, basically.

Q: You say you got married. What's the background of your wife?

SMITH: My wife, we're no longer married, but I met here in undergraduate school and she was actually one year behind me so we got married before I went to grad school and she came out with me and she worked for a year at a library there and then she went back to school at the University of Illinois and finished her undergraduate work and became an editor at a local publisher. But we were divorced before I finished grad school.

Q: So, I mean, she wasn't part of the decision of going into the Foreign Service then?

SMITH: No, although she knew that that was my intention eventually.

Q: Well then, so you had a year at the National Labor Relations Board; then what?

SMITH: Well, as I say, I was kind of figuring out what to do with the rest of my life and I got another letter from the State Department saying we're willing to take you into the Foreign Service; you have to understand it's on the basis of worldwide ability and you can be assigned anywhere that we assign you. And I could- my conscience would let me do that. You know I didn't feel originally that I could agree to serve in Vietnam simply as a way to get myself into the Foreign Service but I could accept an appointment to the Foreign Service and commit myself to serving wherever the Foreign Service sent me. So I accepted the appointment and came into the Foreign Service in October of '69.

Q: Alright. Well, why don't we stop at this point and we'll pick it up next time October '69, you're in the Foreign Service, and we'll talk about your entry and all that.

SMITH: Alright. That's a good place to stop.

Q: Alright. Today is the 23rd of January, 2009. We're in the third day of the Obama regime and we still don't have peace in the Middle East. I don't quite understand what happened.

SMITH: Really. When is he going to carry out his campaign promises?

Q: Ray, okay, you came into the Foreign Service when?

SMITH: Well, I was offered an appointment in the spring of 1969 to come in either with the June or the October incoming class and I chose the October one because I was still working on my doctoral thesis and I wanted to get some of the research done. I wasn't at the writing stage yet but I was still gathering data. So I picked a later date to come in and I came in in October '69.

Q: Alright. Let's talk about your basic officer course, you're A-100, sort of what it was like, composition, gender, race, personalities; what did you think about that?

SMITH: Well, one of the striking things about it was that we had a mix of people who had come into the Foreign Service based upon their agreement to join the Cords Programs in Vietnam and a group of us who came in without that- without having made that commitment. So there was some resentment among the people who had made the commitment to come in based on the Cords Program because they were told that they wouldn't be able to come in, that appointments were frozen, unless they did that. And so they did it. As I told you last time I chose not to come in under those circumstances and yet I was offered an appointment and wound up coming into the Foreign Service at the same time that they did, under a requirement that I serve anywhere in the world but not with a predetermined assignment to Vietnam. So they were all required to go to Vietnam and actually I don't think any of the rest of us were assigned to Vietnam. They weren't mad at the rest of us; they were a little mad at the system because they felt that it had kind of screwed them over. So there was that distinction.

Now, in terms of male-female composition I think there were probably- the October class I don't think was really very big; I'm remembering maybe 25 or 30 people, let's say 30. Four or five women, a couple of black officers, a couple of people of Asian ancestry and the rest of us the usual white suspects.

Q: How'd you find the course?

SMITH: I enjoyed the course. It was all new to me and exciting, of course, to be coming to the Foreign Service, something I had been wanting to do for probably about eight years while I was in school and while I was finishing up my military tour. I was absorbing all that I could. There was a lot of classroom stuff; some of it was very good, some of it was not quite as good. There was a variety of films and lectures and overall I thought the quality was pretty good. And then we got some outside trips to factories and commercial things as well. So by and large I was not highly critical of it; some people were but I thought they did a pretty good job of it.

Q: I was wondering, this is at the height of the sort of anti-Vietnam time, just before really things started to wind down. And were you warned not to get involved or were people involved or how was this handled?

SMITH: Well, we were a group of people that were not as malleable, I guess, at that stage of our careers at least as maybe people usually are. I don't know; it's hard to speak for others. But we- a lot of us were very strongly opposed to the war. Some people wore black armbands every day to express that. Some of us, including me, took part in anti-war marches during the time that we were in the A-100 class and when the invasion of Cambodia took place we all signed, along with a number of other Foreign Service Officers, a petition against that, which was leaked to the press and caused a sort of flap and we all got called to the undersecretary's office and were dressed down for that. I don't know whether it was so much for signing the petition or for the fact that it was leaked but it was an embarrassment to the administration and we were-

Q: Well supposedly Nixon said fire them all or something and Kissinger let it- it wouldn't have been Kissinger but it would have been Rogers.

SMITH: Was it Kissinger yet? Maybe he was still over at the White House at that time.

Q: It's '69, this would be- Well actually it was '70 when the invasion-

SMITH: Yes. I came into the Foreign Service in '69; by '70 I was probably in language training at the time of the invasion so I was still training.

You know, you were getting- the Establishment was on the one hand telling people if you disagree, work for change within the system; don't go out and protest and riot. And on the other hand if people within the system weren't working for it the way they thought they ought to work for it they would tell them you ought to resign if you don't like the way things are being done. So there was that toing and frying that was going on.

Q: How did the assignments- Where were you assigned?

SMITH: Well, they came out, I think- As I recall they came out with a list of assignments, basically, what the country was, what country you would go to and what the date of your departure would be. And I requested the one that was farthest removed in date from my A-100 class because, again, I was trying to get work done on my dissertation and I wanted to take leave without pay to go back to Northwestern and do as much of my data analysis for my dissertation as I could before I went overseas, knowing it would be impossible because I was doing computer analysis. So the one furthest removed was Tunisia and so I asked for Tunisia and got it. And so I think I wasn't due to get there until something like September of '70 and before that I had to have French language training. At that time you studied French to go to Tunisia, not Arabic. And that gave me about three months which I could take leave without pay, go back to Chicago, complete my data analysis for my dissertation, which I managed to do, come back, start the French language training and then go off to Tunisia.

Q: Alright. You were in Tunisia from when to when?

SMITH: Well let's see. I can't remember the exact month of arrival but basically it was summer of '70 to summer of '72.

Q: What was sort of the political social system in Tunisia when you got there in '70?

SMITH: Well, Tunisia was being- was led by the president who had led the anti-colonial movement, Habib Bourguiba. And Bourguiba was one of that class of leaders who had been educated under the colonial power and actually really liked the culture and did not have- was not extremely antagonistic to it. And so he had close relations with France. The Tunisian dinar floated based upon the French franc. It was tied to the French franc, which helped it because it gave it kind of a steady value and the French subsidized that. Very much a capitalist economy, very moderate and pro-Western outlook politically and he was sufficiently respected because of his role in the anti-colonial movement, which was not a violent one as compared to some other countries, that there was not a lot of antagonism toward Westerners, friendly basically, and a very congenial atmosphere for American policy and for Western diplomats in the political sense.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

SMITH: Good question. And I was thinking about that and I cannot remember his name. He retired toward the end of my tour in Tunisia. I remember the deputy chief of mission was named Jim Relph and he became chargé d'affaires. But I cannot remember the ambassador's name.

Q: That's not important.

What did- what was your job?

SMITH: Well, you know the Foreign Service keeps going back and forth in how it should handle first tour officers. And at the time that I came in they had a rotation among the four cones, so to speak, consular, administrative, economic and political. So over my two year tour there I was supposed to spend six months in each section of the embassy, and in fact I did. And that has its advantages and its disadvantages. The advantage is you really do get to see a little bit about how each section works. The disadvantage is you don't get to really see how it works because they know they're only going to have you there for six months so they can't give you part of their portfolio, normal portfolio to work on because they're not going to have you there that long. So I wound up doing the annual fisheries report in the economic section; when I was in the admin section I inventoried silver at the ambassador's residence; consular work of course is consular work and I interviewed people for visas, I handled citizen welfare cases, and political, I got to do a little bit of reporting in political, more because I had developed a sort of a friendship with the political counselor and so he gave me a little bit more to do.

Q: Well how did you- In the first place, let's look at the consular side. Was there much of a tourist business at that point there or was that pretty strictly French tourism?

SMITH: The tourism was primarily French. You would get some Americans, “hippy” Americans who would have come across the ferry from Spain to Morocco and then worked their way across North Africa and run out of money about the time they got to Tunis. So they’d come in and say I’m out of money; help me, which I always found amusing because although, I mean, of course I was a bit schizophrenic myself because I was in the Establishment but very opposed to the war and all that but these guys were anti-government and anti-government policy and all that but when they ran out of money they’d come to the embassy looking for money and were surprised that we just didn’t give it to them, just didn’t hand it out to them. And none of them wanted us to wire back to their folks for money. So of course eventually they had to come to grips with reality and either get money from home or move on.

Q: Did you have- Was there much of a- Were Tunisians, I assume most of them were headed towards France or was there much in the way of going to the States?

SMITH: No, there wasn’t a lot. I don’t remember- You know, I did some non-immigrant visas so there were some people but the main tourism was definitely to France and vice versa. One of the amusing things would be every August the French- or a lot of the Tunisian government officials and sort of well placed people would send their families off to- on the ferry. There were ferries then that went to Marseilles; would send them off on the ferry to France for the month and then on the next ferry their “nieces” would start to arrive from France to spend the month of August in Tunisia. And I always thought there would be a good short story to write with the title “The August Niece.”

Q: These were the girlfriends?

SMITH: Right.

Q: Did you get any feel for relations between Algeria and Tunisia, because the Algerians by this time I think had gone pretty _____.

SMITH: Yes. No, I can’t say that I had a real good sense of that but yes, I mean Algeria was more, definitely more anti-France, sort of over on the kind of radical side of the political spectrum.

I traveled through Algeria, myself, but can’t say that I experienced any anti-Americanism or anything like that. I drove through Algeria and Morocco and kind of did the reverse tourist thing on a camping bus that I owned and then went through Europe.

Q: What about Libya? Had Qaddafi come in at that point?

SMITH: Qaddafi came to power during the time that I was in Tunisia. And in fact I went to Libya; I don’t think he was in power yet when I went there. I went there on a courier trip while I was, I think while I was in the admin section. And I remember walking along the boulevard along the seafront and thinking that this could be a really nice destination.

But then he came to power and there was an effort to raise oil prices and remember, I think it was Undersecretary Clifford who later served as secretary of state?

Q: Clifford never served; he was-

SMITH: Deputy secretary?

Q: Yes, the War-

SMITH: Warren Christopher. I'm sorry. I think his first time in the State Department he came and had a meeting with Qaddafi while I was there in an effort to come to an understanding with Qaddafi and hold oil prices down. I think it had little or no success.

Q: But there was no- Radical Islam was not a problem or anything at that time?

SMITH: In Tunisia?

Q: Yes.

SMITH: No, not at all. And as I said, I studied French before going there and, well Arabic probably would have been more appropriate even then. The fact was that French was taught to everyone who was in school, at least, and you would be walking down the street not only in Tunis, the capital, but in other major cities in the country and you would hear students of high school age talking to one another in French as their preferred means of communication. So it was really widely used there.

Tunisia was a really good place for a first post, posting, I thought. It was a great place to see because it's much smaller than the other North African countries but everything is there. If you go south you can get into the deserts and the oases. You have a lot of Roman ruins; you have Punic ruins. To the western part of the country you start to get into mountainous area. Beaches; widely varied geography. And then Tunis itself, the boulevards were right out of French city building techniques; wide boulevards, tree lined streets, a Café de Paris where you could have a coffee outside. But you also had the souks, the old city where you had the narrow streets and the vendors out all over the place so you had a really rich cultural experience there.

Q: I can't remember; were you married at the time?

SMITH: Yes.

Q: In a way did you sense- was there much interest in the United States or was it pretty much a French oriented place?

SMITH: Well, I think there was a good bit of interest in the United States but probably sort of being filtered through a French perspective. They had their own newspapers of course but everybody got French newspapers, there was French television, so you had

that kind of perspective on things. But of course the United States was a super power, the friendly super power. One of the things we would be doing all the time was going to the Tunisians and asking them to vote our way in the UN. I remember one incident where they did not and we got instructions back to tell them how unhappy we were with this and I think the DCM, Jim Relph, was chargé d'Affaires at the time and he let Washington know that he was going to carry this out, more in the spirit of sadness than in anger, and Washington came back and said never mind the sadness part, just tell them we're unhappy. He should have just gone ahead and done it in the tone that he thought; he didn't have to tell Washington what tone he was going to take.

Q: Sure. There's a tendency sometimes to get a little overly explanatory when it's best just to say yes.

SMITH: Yes, exactly.

Q: Did sort of the Arab world as from the Tunisian perspective attract you at all as far as a specialty?

SMITH: No, it did not. I was- I did study a little bit of Arabic there just because I thought I ought to but I also was continuing to study French. And I never got to where I could speak more than a few words of Arabic but I was really, even then, interested primarily in Soviet affairs as my area of specialty and hoped that that's what I'd be able to get into at some point.

Q: Was there any Soviet representation there? I mean, did you run across them or not?

SMITH: There was representation but I don't recall that we ever had any interaction with them at all during the time we were there.

Q: Not even the volleyball games, used to go on between embassies?

SMITH: Not there, as I recall, no.

Q: Well then you left in '72?

SMITH: Yes.

Q: Whither?

SMITH: I took a posting back to Washington as the Sudan desk officer, which I considered a very good posting. At the time I wanted to be a desk officer; that was kind of the route that I saw in the State Department that interested me the most. And at that time Sudan was part of the North African office, which was part of the African Bureau still. It did not move to the Bureau of Near East and Africa Affairs until later.

So I went back to the Sudan desk with a lot of really smart guys as the desk officers, most of whom were Arabists, most of whom wound up with ambassadorships if not once several times over; Bob Pelletreau, David Mack, Frank Wisner, although Frank Wisner had come out- he was a desk officer for Tunisia when I was there and he'd then come out to head the economic section at Tunis before I left. The office was headed by a guy named Jim Blake and the deputy director was a guy named Harry O'Dell, two totally different personalities. Jim was very austere, very religious, very straight laced, a bit forbidding and Harry was pretty much the total opposite, you know, congenial, hail fellow well met, much looser style than Jim. They were not well suited to work with one another.

Q: Did that cause problems for you?

SMITH: Not for me, no, except that at one point while I was there I think Jim was just trying to find something for Harry to do that would keep him out of his hair and keep him out of the areas that he was interested in. And at that time Sudan was a relatively low priority country compared to Algeria, Morocco, Libya. So he kind of made Harry the super desk officer for Sudan and I had to report to Harry, which differed me from the other desk officers who reported directly to Jim. But Jim never took his fingers out of anything very much and I really benefited a lot, actually, from working for him. He was very demanding. I'd have something to draft, I'd bring it in to him, he'd sit down and scribble all over it and rewrite it, make changes to it, and I learned a lot about how to do effective department writing by seeing how what I wrote was being changed.

Q: Let's talk about the Sudan. You were dealing it from '72 to '74?

SMITH: Yes.

Q: What was the situation when you arrived in the Sudan? I mean, dealing with the Sudan.

SMITH: Well, you had had a leader take over, and I'm afraid I don't remember his name either, right now, but he was more moderate in outlook than the previous leadership had been; it was a military coup. He was trying to reestablish some ties with the U.S. and to put an end to a longtime civil war between the north and the south. Sudan is primarily Muslim except for what were then the southern three provinces, which were primarily either Christian or animist. And there were also some distinctions, although they're not strict ones but all of the Sudanese in the south were from black African tribes; the Sudanese in the rest of the country were a mixture of kind of purely Arabic to much more of a traditional black African physical appearance.

Q: When did the Cleo Noel attack happen?

SMITH: That happened during- while I was the desk officer, and of course it became the primary issue for the rest of my time as the desk officer.

Q: Well, let's lead up to that. How stood things- Did you see the PLO, Palestinian Liberation Organization, I mean, was that a presence that we were aware of? Did it interest us very much in Sudan at that time?

SMITH: It was not something that was on my radar screen. I don't think it was considered a threat, particularly of a terrorist action against us. We knew there was a PLO office there but with this new and more modern regime we probably felt that that was under control and the main things that we were dealing with at that time were how to assist in the peace process in the south and how to provide economic assistance to the regime so as to solidify its ties with the U.S. and help it deal with its domestic problems. So, what kind of assistance should we provide, how should we set it up, food assistance or what; and I do remember that this was one of the things that Harry O'Dell did, the deputy director, because of being involved with Sudan he got- we called it the Harry O'Dell Memorial Bridge built across the Nile at Juba, southern Sudan. We were trying to bring assistance in and he said- he went down there and he said there's nothing there but a ferry. You can't bring any substantial amounts of assistance in across that ferry; it was like a one car ferry or something like that. So he persuaded people to put in a bridge across the river there and over time it's probably made a remarkable difference.

Q: Yes. Again, we're talking about when you kind of arrived on the job; did we have any policy towards Arabic Sudan and black Christian Sudan or animist Sudan?

SMITH: Well, our policy was that we wanted to see the civil war brought to an end and the leader who had taken over indicated that that was his goal too and he was taking steps to make that happen. And in fact the-

Q: Nimeiry? He wasn't- No, I'm trying to think-

SMITH: Nimeiry, that's right.

And I traveled, although it was more toward the end of my tour, I was only in Sudan once during my tour as Sudan desk officer and it was more toward the end or maybe 18 months into the job. But you could see when you went down there the effects of the policy. There were people, as you went down the road there were people growing crops on the side of the road. During the war you would not have found anyone living anywhere near the road; they were all off in the bush because of fear of the armies from the north. So people's lives changed pretty quickly when those hostilities at least temporarily came to an end.

Q: Was Darfur even a name when you were there?

SMITH: No, it was not. And the notion of splits between that part of Sudan and the eastern part of Sudan was not even on the radar screen. I mean, the real split at that time seemed to be sort of the religious and racial divide between what were then the three southern provinces and the rest of the country.

Q: Well now, as so often happens in parts of Africa, the missionary influence translates itself into real power, particularly through Congress and all that, with the Christian missionaries down in southern Sudan. Was that at all an influence?

SMITH: No, I can't really say that it was. I don't think Sudan got that much attention in Congress. I think there was a certain sense of relief that the country had become more moderate and a certain willingness to increase our assistance budget for that part of- for Sudan because of that, but other than that I don't remember much Congressional interest.

Q: Well Sudan wasn't particularly in our radar I guess, policy-wise.

SMITH: Only in the limited sense that we wanted to see an end to that civil war and that we wanted a pro-Western regime rather than a pro-Soviet regime there. But even that would not have gotten seventh floor attention to any great degree.

Q: Well were the Soviets messing around there?

SMITH: Not that I particularly know of. I think that they probably would take advantage of opportunities if they saw them but they did not have terribly good relationships with the Nimeiry regime.

Q: How about did Egypt play any role at that point?

SMITH: Well, my recollection was that Egypt was the most significant nearby player in Sudan, even at that time, and this is sort of a dim recollection but if I recall correctly Nimeiry met with the Egyptians fairly regularly, tried to establish a good relationship with them and that was probably the strongest single tie that they had.

Q: Yes. Because it had at one time been the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.

SMITH: Yes.

Q: And the Nile was the tie.

Did the Palestinian-Israeli issue, was that much of an issue from your perspective when you were there?

SMITH: When I was on the desk at that time it was not a major issue in our relationship with the government. Now, I suspect it was probably more of an issue with the previous regime because that was one of the reasons that it was more anti-U.S. but Nimeiry, as I said, was trying to attract more support, more aid and that sort of thing so I think he tried to play down that issue somewhat.

Q: How did you find the reporting and working as a desk officer, what were you doing? I'm talking before the crisis hit.

SMITH: Well, I stayed in touch with the embassy some by just personal letters that were pouched out, classified personal letters that were pouched out to different people at the embassy, and we had kind of a little exchange. Of course, it would take a bit of time for that. We weren't doing things that developed later, such as using cables for official informal exchanges and things like that at that time. I was the person who had to get the traffic, the cables from Khartoum, go through them, send anything forward that I thought needed to be sent- needed to be brought to anybody else's attention, attend meetings with AID, the Agency for International Development, to try to get them to move faster on our assistance programs. That was one of the main things; I was always walking over to the Sudan desk in AID to try to get them moving a little bit more quickly on their efforts to set up programs there. That was a major frustration, how slowly they moved.

Q: Was it there were too many people, there's too much paperwork; what do you see as the problem?

SMITH: My sense is that the quality of the bureaucracy, at least as I saw it, was not that good. They had a fairly bureaucratized way of moving forward on things. I always felt that they were doing too much of studies and demonstration projects and not enough of real projects. I felt this in Tunisia to some extent, I felt it in Sudan and later on when I served in Ivory Coast that perhaps the best thing that AID did for the development of these countries was to have people in the country that spent money and helped the local economy that way because I couldn't really see that their assistance programs were doing very much except primarily going to the pockets of contractors and expert advisors who were writing reports.

Q: Okay. Well, let's talk about the events that led to the killing of Cleo Noel and Curt Moore.

SMITH: Yes. Curt was the chargé out there until Cleo Noel was named as ambassador, because we had no ambassador because our relationship with the previous government had not been very good. And Cleo- I got to help prepare him for his hearings; traveled up to New York with him for meetings with the Business Council for International Understanding, which was a regular stop for ambassadorial appointees; accompanied him to a number of his meetings within the building, with the State Department, so I got to know him a little bit and I liked him. A real gentleman, a nice person, knowledgeable, knew his stuff, serious, but not a difficult person to deal with, pleasant person to deal with.

So we completed all of that, it went smoothly, and he went out to post. I don't remember, actually, how long he was out at post; I don't think it was very long and I'm not remembering exactly the circumstances in which I heard that he had been kidnapped. I think I probably heard it from Jim Blake but we got word that he and Curt Moore, along with a diplomat from another embassy, had been taken hostage at a reception and were being held. And so immediately a task force was set up and I was put to work on the task force. Obviously this was only my second tour of duty so my role on the task force was not exactly a leadership one; I spent a lot of time sorting papers and things like that. But I

was actively involved in the task force for the whole time it was in operation. And the effort of the task force was to try to find a way to get them freed without doing things that would look like we were giving in to terrorism and negotiating with terrorists. So it was a little bit schizophrenic but that's what we were trying to do.

Q: Were you aware that there were movements way above your pay grade which, I mean, went right up to the president and Henry Kissinger, on how to deal with this and all or was this sort of beyond what you were aware of?

SMITH: No. I mean, I knew that this was something that Kissinger was involved in because it was such major front page news. Kissinger did not have a history, as you probably know, of any intimate involvement with African Affairs. In fact, he pretty much disdained involvement in African Affairs but not on an issue like this. In fact, on the contrary; he would be so involved- he got so involved in it that nothing could be done without him personally okaying it. I don't remember who the people were who were actually heading up the task force; I think it was people other than the office director and deputy director, who had a lot of other things to deal with. But we were up in the Ops Center in the task force area dealing with public inquiries, dealing with messages back and forth between the embassy, getting messages to the Sudanese government, hearing their thoughts on how it should be handled, giving them our thoughts on how it should be handled.

Q: Well, there was a lot of controversy about we had this policy which makes good sense but still we don't always adhere to it, you know, no ransom and all that, which- Were you aware of this being a factor?

SMITH: Yes, I was. And I would have to say that my impression at the time was that we were probably more rigid on that than we should have been. I mean, I don't know if there were back channel things that were going on that showed any more flexibility. I didn't disagree with the policy but I didn't think that it made sense to make it the headline of our public statements on the subject and to appear too rigid as we were dealing with the kidnap situation.

Q: There's a lot of criticism that this was really the first time that we really got up against something like this and there was, I'd say political posturing, on the part of Nixon and Kissinger, showing they're tough when in a case like this the whole idea is you keep talking; you don't preclude anything but you might want to- there was a lot of public- I think much more of this posturing at that point than- I think later on we learned to deal with. In fact, it was a lesson.

SMITH: I would agree. The public stance that we took made it a lot harder to achieve a different outcome. That would be my opinion. I'm not certain that a different outcome could have been achieved anyway but there was no wiggle room, no room to allow some creative wiggling.

Q: I can't remember; what were the demands?

SMITH: You know, I don't remember myself. I think there was a demand for release of some prisoners; I think that was the chief one that I recall. I don't think there were really monetary issues involved in this; I think it was prisoner release. And I'm not sure that ultimately that's what we should have done but I also think there could have been some merit in dragging things out and not making it clear that we wouldn't do that. At the end of the day perhaps we wouldn't have but to say so from day one maybe wasn't the best thing to do.

Q: Were you getting much of a reading at your level on who these- what the PLO was up to and who they are and motivation and all that?

SMITH: At the time, no. Later I saw some transcripts of interrogations but I probably can't go into detail on those even now. But I think the sense was an effort to strike a visible blow against the United States in an effort to get publicity and also the choice with Sudan because the regime and power in Sudan at that time was establishing a better relationship with the U.S. was not doing as much to help the PLO and therefore would not be immune. So it was considered in the U.S. Government also as an attack on Nimeiry's regime.

Q: How did you find- At the time what were we trying to do with the Sudanese? Obviously we were trying to get them to do- get our people out. Did you find- were they- did they seem capable of doing anything or were they kind of frozen?

SMITH: Well, my recollection is that we were trying to persuade them not to storm the embassy; that that's what they wanted to do. And we were trying to hold off that, although at the same time we were not saying things that- publicly that gave any indication that there was any possibility of any compromise of any kind. And my recollection is that that was the main issue of the dialogue; should the embassy be- I think it was an embassy. Was it an embassy that they were in? I believe so.

Q: I think they were in an embassy.

SMITH: Yes. It was a diplomatic reception. And should they storm it or should they not and if so when? And we were arguing for holding it off.

Q: So how did the news come to you of what happened?

SMITH: Basically we got news from our embassy that there was machine gun fire or gunfire within the embassy and it was not firing from the embassy outside and there was no action at that time being undertaken to storm the embassy. So we knew it was strictly within and we knew it was a bad sign for the people in there. After that is when the Sudanese went in and I can't remember how long after that but it wasn't too long after that that we got the word that they had found the bodies of the three diplomats, our two people and the European diplomat.

Q: Well then, as I recall there was one bad feeling, I must say I felt it, towards Nimeiry about eventually let the PLO people go, do you think?

SMITH: Yes. This was an interesting- as I said, this was probably the main issue I dealt with the rest of my time on the desk there. I was always concerned that Nimeiry was not going to take the political heat for bringing them to trial, convicting them and either executing them or jailing them. I wasn't sure but we made demarche after demarche after demarche to his government and we were always told that they're going to do the right thing. And I remember Jim Blake tended to take it on face value and I tended to be skeptical. Nimeiry was under a lot of pressure from a lot of quarters about how to handle this and for a long time he just temporized, that's why the thing went on for so long. They didn't bring them to trial for; I want to say a year, something like that. And finally he did bring them to trial and it was a fairly short trial and the first word we got was that they had been convicted. And I remember Jim Blake walking into my office and saying see, they've been convicted. And I said great; that's a good thing. And about a half an hour later, an hour later we learned they had been convicted and then turned over to the Egyptians who had put them in house arrest somewhere in Egypt, which of course was a formal carrying out of a trial and a finding of guilty but no punishment and that caused serious problems for our relationship. And we had no- we weren't ready for that.

And this is one of the things I learned; I already knew it, actually, but it seemed clear to me throughout this entire period that you could have two outcomes. One, the outcome we wanted and the other one the outcome we didn't want. Well, if you get the outcome you want you don't have to plan a lot for that, you can just- you issue a little statement saying this is great. The one you have to plan for is the outcome- is the negative outcome and I could never do any planning for the negative outcome because it was treated, and I ran into this throughout my State Department career, that if you try to plan for a negative outcome it was like you were saying that that was the outcome that was going to happen. So that kind of contingency planning was resisted and tends to be resisted in the bureaucracy.

The other thing I learned is that in a crisis you have to resist the tendency to think you are irreplaceable and cannot leave your post to get some rest. This can work for maybe 24 hours, but not for days at a time. By the time that our diplomats were murdered, the task force heads had been working for several days with no sleep or almost no sleep. They were totally exhausted, incapable of anticipating events and basically just sitting passively watching events unfold. I was actually able to put this insight to good use many years later in Moscow during the coup against Mikhail Gorbachev.

Anyway, we had to scramble then and come up with press statements, policies, what should we do, should we provide assistance, should we not, and we'll do it all with Kissinger saying give it to me right now.

Oh, I should say too that one of the other problems that we had during this period- I had mentioned before that Kissinger got involved in this issue. Well, we sent out a replacement for Curt Moore to act as chargé, a fellow named, I believe it was Bob Frieze,

and I of course briefed him and everything before he went out there as well. And various issues came up on which he wanted guidance and what he should say to the Sudanese government about things and we were under orders from Kissinger's office that nothing was to go out to Sudan, I won't say not on any subject but on these sensitive subjects, without Kissinger's personal approval. Well, all of this of course disappeared from the headlines, three weeks, four weeks after and Kissinger went on to be busy with many other things and did not have time to deal with Sudan. But he did not- the order was never rescinded so we were in the position of our chargé out in Khartoum pleading for instructions repeatedly in what got to be the most abject terms and us not being able to give him instructions because the instructions had to be cleared personally by Kissinger, who no longer was intimately involved with the issue. Anyway, when he was intimately involved in the issue, I had the experience of watching the bureaucracy deal with things that got that kind of high level attention, where I would- I drafted the press statement and it would work its way from one level to the next, each time coming back to me with changes and then going to the next level, coming back with another set of changes which were much like my original draft and then- I mean, it must have gone through six different hands before it got to a sufficiently high level to actually be approved with every person making some change that essentially was inconsequential but which had to be adopted.

Q: Well, was there, I mean, I felt this but this was strictly as an outsider; during this time I was in Greece I guess; real disgust with Kissinger and how we dealt with this thing. Did that- and with, obviously with Nimeiry. Was that a general feeling or sort of you and others or not?

SMITH: I personally felt that it had been handled badly on several grounds, some of which we've already gone over, the rigid statements of policy that didn't have to be made, the rules that were set down that didn't let you pursue policy, the failure to plan; all in all I didn't think it was handled very well at all. But that is perhaps what you would expect when you get an issue in basically an obscure country that the secretary of state suddenly gets involved in and then loses interest in again. I don't know what you do about that except- I don't know. Perhaps Kissinger's disdain for the bureaucracy added to the problem that we had. I mean, he's famous for saying we'll take care of the real work and give the bureaucracy some papers to write to keep them busy. And so if you were dealing with countries that were too insignificant for his attention you might get some leeway to do things but if it was a country that had his attention you were not trusted to do anything much at all. Yes, I thought Kissinger had handled it dismally from start to finish, but that was not a sentiment that people were willing to express very widely in the atmosphere of the Department in those days.

Q: Well then, in '72 where did you go?

SMITH: Well, my last few months my particular country was switched from the North African office to the East African office so I moved to another office with another office director and I had the pleasant experience after 18 or 20 months of being the most junior person in an office and generally being- felt that I didn't know crap about what was going

on or how to get anything done, to being the office's expert on Sudan and somebody that was turned to for advice and listened to and it was a much more gratifying personal experience. I also acquired another country during that period; I was given Uganda as well as part of my portfolio. And I was a little reluctant to take that because it was taken away from somebody else's portfolio and given to me and I went back to the office director and said I don't want to make so-and-so upset; he said that's my worry, I want you to have this. So I took Uganda at that time as well.

And the only significant thing about Uganda that happened was before I became the Uganda desk officer we'd gone through this incident where a bunch of Peace Corps volunteers were over flying Uganda and their plane had been brought down and they were held at the airport for a number of days until we were able to negotiate their release. Well, I was doing my work, which still primarily involved Sudan, not Uganda, we just didn't have a lot going on with Uganda in those days, one of the other desk officers got a call from somebody in the Peace Corps who was getting our clearance for volunteers to fly over Uganda to another Sub-Saharan African country to go to their assignments. And this guy said to me they want to fly this plane over Uganda. I said give me that guy's name and phone number. So I called him up and I said you want us to give you permission to fly this plane over Uganda? Don't you remember that these people were brought down not too long ago and held? He said it's a lot more expensive to fly them around Uganda. I said I don't care if it's more expensive; we're not going to fly another plane over Uganda. And I said by the way, what's your name and phone number or you know, your name and title, because I'm going to take this up to a higher level and he said never mind, never mind, we'll send them a different route. But that was the one thing that I really- that really stands out at me from my time as Uganda desk officer.

Q: Well, was Uganda; was Idi Amin there at the time?

SMITH: Yes, he was, he was.

Q: Had we exfiltrated our embassy at that point?

SMITH: We may have. I'm trying to remember; I think that's why it was mostly so quiet because I don't think we had people there. Now, we did have an embassy there earlier when that Peace Corps plane had been brought down because a guy that I had worked with in Tunisia was actually serving in Uganda at the time and he was the consular officer who went out to the airport to be with these Peace Corps volunteers, which I didn't know at the time but I found out some time later.

By the way, I did want to go back and mention one more thing about that task force on the kidnapping of Cleo Noel and Curt Moore. One of the things that I learned about that task force that I never forgot was that people have to get rest, and people, particularly the higher up ones think they're indispensable. And by the second or third day of a crisis they're worthless. I saw people who would not go home, would not even leave the task force to get any sleep, basically sitting in a stupefied semi-coma by the third day of this crisis. And I said this should never happen; there ought to be somebody that enforces at

least an eight hour hiatus on these kinds of task forces. But it's not the only time that I saw it during my Foreign Service career.

Q: Well then in, it's '72 that we're talking about.

SMITH: Yes.

Q: Where'd you go?

SMITH: Seventy-two; okay, Sudan desk, I was involved in a lot of activities at that time besides the Sudan desk. I was on the board of the American Foreign Service Association; I was kind of the young officers' rep.

Q: It was the Young Turks.

SMITH: Yes. Tom Boyatt was the head of it at that time. And that was a great deal of fun.

Q: What piece of the action did you have?

SMITH: Well, I eventually- Well, what I was mostly supposed to be dealing with was concerns of younger officers because I was the youngest officer on the Board. I eventually became secretary of the Association but there wasn't much involved in that particular job. But I was constantly kibitzing at the board meetings and being more radical than Tom Boyatt, which at the time was difficult. I mean, he was a Young Turk but I remember overhearing him one day, turning to one of his colleague- friends and saying Jesus, I think I'm being outflanked on the left; I never thought that would happen.

I was involved, yes, now I recall, I was involved in negotiations on labor matters with management. I had spent, as I told you, time with the National Labor Relations Board and so I knew about what were unfair labor practices in the civilian sector and what weren't and the people on the other side of the table from me had no idea what constituted an unfair labor practice. And we had been set up as a union; we were no longer just a professional association and management had an obligation to negotiate certain issues with us and they just did not want to negotiate. They wanted to tell us what they were going to do and get us to agree to it and I wasn't about to do that and I had some really tense sessions with these guys. I remember one issue involved Vietnam where they came in and said we are going to improve the situation for our employees there by shipping by air freight instead of by sea and they're going to get things much faster. And I said well, what's the weight limitation? And so there was a weight limitation and it was a lot less than for sea shipment but they said they don't need all this stuff, everything's furnished and this will be a lot better for them. I said well how much does it cost- are you saving money by doing this? And it came out that they were. And I said look, I want you to increase the weight allowance for the air freight so that it's a wash money-wise. If you're going to do something good for the employees, fine, but don't pretend you're doing something good for the employees when what you're doing really is saving money. And

we went round and round on that and they finally, I think this was the issue in which they said we have a budgetary process here; if you don't accept this by noon tomorrow we can't- we're not going to do it. So we were forced to accept a position that we disagreed with and I persuaded the board to file an unfair labor practice charge against them because well, it is an unfair labor practice.

Q: Yes.

SMITH: You cannot require- put in an employees union, say that you're negotiating and put that kind of requirement on it. And we actually won the unfair labor practice. It's probably the only one ever been brought against the State Department by the Foreign Service Association. We won it and they were required to post a notice around the State Department and send it to all embassies saying that they had committed this unfair labor practice and would never do it again. And Larry Eagleburger was undersecretary for management at the time and he said, I heard indirectly, he said I'm not going to sign this thing. And they persuaded him that he had to sign it but he was so- he was really pissed. Anyway, that may be the only unfair labor practice charge formally filed by the employees' union against the Department in the history of the Department.

But it was a learning process for all of us and I had brought this experience with me and basically I knew obviously the civilian and the government sectors are a little bit different and they weren't identical. But I had enough knowledge that I brought with me that I could call things pretty much right on what could be done and what couldn't be done. And we did get some advantages for employees as a result of those negotiations.

Q: Well did you find that management, so-called management, you know, management is us. I mean, it's this peculiar thing where we have people who belong to the union who are opposing efforts by the union to do things. I mean, did you find that once a person put all the sort of the- got into the management side of things they were particularly responsive or appreciative of the system?

SMITH: Oh, absolutely not. I mean, people in the management side were management, hard core. And even, of course, a lot of American Foreign Service Association members did not want to be associated with a union. They're professionals, they perceive themselves as management and so there was that split as well within the Association. And some people preferred AFGE, the American Federation of Government Employees for that reason. They didn't think the Foreign Service Association could really make itself into an effective employee representative.

Q: Well one of the arguments about the Foreign Service within- going- being absorbed into AFGE was that AFGE was really interested in domestic employment and the Foreign Service would be just a little blip in this big union and wouldn't get much attention or interest.

SMITH: Yes. That was one of the arguments that AFSA made and probably had some merit.

Anyway, so that was one of the things that I was involved in. Another thing I got involved in was the Secretary's Open Forum, which had been set up as part of this whole process of giving dissent a voice within the State Department as opposed to leaking stuff to the press, going out on the streets in protest, all of that. This was supposed to be your way of working within the system. So the Open Forum Panel was established to provide a location in which outside ideas could be brought into the Department. It monitored the dissent channel, dissent messages came to it and it monitored the process of getting a response back out to dissent messages. And so I had gotten involved in it and I was asked if I would run to serve as the chair. At the time I was actually assigned to go to Poland but I didn't really want to go to Poland and I really wanted to do this; it sounded pretty interesting and exciting. And I also was going to be the first full-time chair of the Open Forum Panel, it had just been established a couple of years before and it had been done basically on a volunteer basis up until then. So I was elected to it and withdrew from the assignment to Poland. And so I spent a year doing that and it was a lot of fun. I was part of the- I was seated in the Policy Planning Staff; Winston Lord was the Policy Planning director at the time and he was- I mean, he was pretty close to Kissinger and that whole establishment but he was also a fairly open minded guy and tried to encourage this sort of thing. It was a period when there were a fair number of dissent messages being sent in and so we would- somebody would be assigned, usually in the Policy Planning staff to deal with the dissent message, to circulate around for comments, develop a response and that sort of thing. I don't remember that a dissent message ever changed policy of any kind when I was there but at least it got heard and responses were sent, maybe; some of them might have had some effect upon the way people thought. We also had a magazine that we put out called "Open Forum," and we had an editorial board for that. I wrote a number of articles for that myself. It was a classified journal; not everything in it had to be classified but it could be used as a classified journal of opinion. And we had a speaker's thing that we set up where pretty much on a weekly basis we had somebody come in and speak about some foreign policy related subject. And I remember that was another thing that Eagleburger did not like; word came back that he was unhappy; I think I got this from one of Winston Lord's staffers, that how everybody we brought in was critical of the secretary of state's policies. And of course my definition of the job was to be critical but in fact Eagleburger's view wasn't correct. So I wrote a little memo saying alright, we've had, these, these, these, these, all these different people speak who were within the Department or from other parts of government, as well as bringing people in who were very critical. And that was the last I heard of that complaint. You know, objectively I wasn't trying to be biased, actually, but because there was enough people telling Kissinger what he wanted to hear. But on the other hand, as things worked out, it was not that unbalanced either.

Q: What were some of the issues that were circulating? This would be '73 or '74 or something.

SMITH: Yes. Let's see, '72 to '74, this would have been like '74-'75 actually.

Q: Seventy-four, '75.

SMITH: Yes, because '72 to '74 I was Sudan desk. I may have to come back to that but I'll remember specifics. I do remember an article that I wrote during that period that I myself wrote that was published in the "Foreign Service Journal" on this issue of what was permissible in dissent and what was not. The director general at the time wrote an article called "The Ethics of Responsibility" and basically he wrote it because there was a lot of leaking going on in the Department at that time and the point that he was making in this article is you take on certain professional responsibilities in these jobs and if you don't like what's going on, rather than leak information you should resign. Well, once again, this is like the old thing, work within the system but, if you don't like what the system's doing, resign. I thought that was a little too pat an answer so I wrote an article that I called "Deep Throat or the Ethics of Discretion" and I posed the question, which Deep Throat poses, basically, is under what circumstances is it moral and correct for a professional to leak classified information or other information about government policies. So that was one of the things that I was interested in then. Basically my argument was clearly there are situation in which it's the right thing to do. If you were somebody who knew about Hitler's concentration camps clearly the honorable, moral thing to do would be to leak that information to whomever you could. But I did say it's not such an easy choice for those of us working in a democratic society because the moral integrity of the leaker in Hitler's Germany is evidenced not only by the issue but by the fact that they're risking their lives to do it. What we risk in a democratic society, first of all, you do have elected leadership and secondly your risk is far more limited. So the issues upon which you can do that are probably much more limited and it's your obligation to try much harder within before any- if there would be an exceptional circumstances doing that kind of a leak. But I did argue that there could be.

Q: Did you get a feel for the- the officer corps, Foreign Service Officer Corps, was there pretty solid carryover from the '60s of youth is without original sin? In other words, people who were, well, under 30, maybe getting a little bit older but the young officers were idealistic and on the right side and the older officers were put in their ways and unresponsive and probably essentially wrong and evil? Was that going- still going on?

SMITH: Yes, it was still a much more- it was kind of an activist time and the younger officers were much more critical of what was going on. None of that was helped by the fact of course that- about the way Kissinger handled the Department. I mean, it wasn't just young officers that were leaking information. People tend not to do things like that if they feel that they're involved in the process, even if they disagree with the outcome. If you're shut out of the process and you disagree with the outcome the chances that somebody is going to do stuff that would- that might be considered inappropriate go up enormously, and that's what was going on. And it was not just the junior officers who were doing that. But there was a lot of feeling that senior officers were rigid cold warrior types, that they never saw an anti-communist dictatorship that they didn't like, that defining the entire world in terms of the struggle between the U.S. and the Soviet Union was not the right way to go, that there were other issues that had to be brought into the equation, you know, the anti-colonial struggle, development efforts and that sort of thing. And I think there was a feeling that all that was swept very much under the rug or was

not swept under the rug but of so much lower priority that it scarcely existed for the senior levels.

Q: During this time I was in Athens and that was the time of the colonels there and this is one of the controversial points of SPOTS, were taking a lot of heat, particularly from the Europeans, you know, to have a dictatorship in the home of democracy was a little bit- it's a bad PR (public relations) situation.

SMITH: Yes. And how do people tend to feel about it there? At the embassy as opposed to what government, you know, as opposed to what U.S. policy was.

Q: You're basically unhappy. I mean, it was- And it was a place that was sort of beloved by, certainly by Nixon, I think, at the time.

SMITH: Yes, yes.

Q: And the CIA was heavily involved there and it was-

Okay, let's see, where were we going where?

SMITH: Well, that was my year at the Open Forum Panel. I don't know if I have anything much to add on that. You know, I was a very aggressive director of the Open Forum Panel. I was kind of mad at authority and just didn't agree with much of our policy and that sort of thing and I pushed the limits quite a bit and fortunately, I suppose, or whatever, I was able to do it. I had a pretty good board working with me, although my vice chairman at one point declined to go along with a memo that we sent forward to Kissinger about, what was it on, the level of fear in the system and people being afraid to dissent and things like that. And he just didn't like- he said look, this is not the way I understand you influence people higher up. And he may well have been right.

Q: Well did you feel that you were bureaucratically cutting your throat or not on this or was this a matter of interest, concern?

SMITH: I wasn't too concerned with it. I was doing what I wanted to do and doing what I thought should be done. So I didn't really worry about that too much.

Q: Well then, what happened?

SMITH: Well, I actually got an assignment to Moscow, which is what I had wanted all along. I had to take an assignment to the consular section rather than the political section but I was willing to do that in order to get to Moscow and so I went into language training in '75, basically a year of language training to learn Russian, and went out to Moscow in '76. Russian language training was hard; I'm not as well endowed as some of my Foreign Service colleagues with a facility for foreign languages so I struggled and left there after 44 weeks with just a 2/2 in Russian, which I wish could have been higher but it was a struggle for me. It got better later. But I spent that year, you've probably been in

language training in the Foreign Service Institute, class size no bigger than six sitting there six hours a day with a bunch of your colleagues, struggling with a new language.

Q: Yes, it's like going back to early childhood.

SMITH: Yes.

Q: I mean, it's awful.

SMITH: Yes.

Q: I've done it; I've did it with Serbian and I've done it with French and Italian, German, and I wasn't- I mean, language school is- when I was in the military I took Russian for a year so no, I went through it and I'm not a very good linguist either.

SMITH: You must be better than me. I only learned two languages in the Foreign Service, French and Russian, and I had had three years of college French before I took the entire Foreign Service course in French as well.

Q: Well, I'm just looking at the time. I think maybe this might be a good place to stop; you think so?

SMITH: Yes, probably.

Q: Because then we'll pick this up in 1976?

SMITH: Six.

Q: When you were off to the Soviet Union.

SMITH: Yes, yes. That would be an interesting place to start.

Q: Yes.

SMITH: I'll try to refresh my memory a little bit between now and next time about my first tour in Moscow.

Q: Great.

Okay. Today is the 30th of January, 2009, with Ray Smith. Ray, you want to go back a bit before we go to Moscow.

SMITH: Yes because I wanted to talk a little bit more about the time that I was chairing the Open Forum Panel, because you had asked what kinds of things we were involved in and I said I wanted to think about that some more.

I remembered that one of the things that we were particularly concerned with at the time was what we felt was sort of a knee jerk anti-communism in U.S. foreign policy, particularly as it was reflected toward support for any corrupt Third World dictator who said he was anti-communist. And obviously we were not the only people in the world that were concerned about that but it was something that we were trying to, from within the establishment, bring to the attention of our superiors and try to get them to think a little bit differently about what the more fundamental U.S. interests were and whether they really were served by that kind of focus as a dominant driver of our foreign policy.

Q: Okay, we're back on mic. You were saying you were trying in a way trying to change the conventional wisdom or reflex of if you're anti-communist you're with us, no matter.

SMITH: Yes, what we saw as sort of a zero sum outlook toward the competition between the U.S. and the Soviet Union and the Third World, which wound up frequently, from our perspective, as putting the U.S. on the side of people who obviously did not stand for the kinds of things the U.S. thought that it stood for.

Q: Were you able- what sort of people, can you think of any people you got to talk or types of people?

SMITH: You know, it's difficult to remember specifically who we had to talk. I know we had some people who had written an article in a magazine called "Psychology Today" about U.S. assistance programs and how those were not achieving their goals because of ideological involvements of various kinds, and I invited them. That was kind of controversial because a lot of our AID (U.S. Agency for International Development) participants in the Open Forum Panel did not like to see their agency criticized but that's what we were there for, to bring in critical ideas.

Q: Early on I remember going, when I was in Washington, to one of the Open Forum things, which the person that was speaking was Petra Kelly, and Petra Kelly at the time was very well known as being sort of a firebrand like Danny the Red in Germany. She was actually American-German, I think had an American father and a German mother and she identified in Germany. I remember she was talking sort of on the anti-American, anti-American is the wrong thing but we were doing the wrong things around the world at the time.

SMITH: Yes. We did not invite her during my time at the Open Forum Panel although if I thought she had something interesting to say we probably would have. But that was either later or earlier. I suspect it might have been later because the Open Forum Panel wasn't in existence a whole long time before I was chairing it.

Another thing that we were involved in was not a foreign policy thing at all but more of a personnel issue, which was getting- working on trying to get the open assignments process established. It was something that- well, you recall the assignments process in the old days; you would get a letter or something from-

Q: You remember they called it the April Fool report.

SMITH: Yes.

Q: You had to turn it in the First of April and you list where you wanted to go.

SMITH: Or when I was involved in it in my early years in the Foreign Service you got a letter from your career counselor or some other form of communication saying here are the five or six things we think you can bid on. You did not know the range of openings that there were in the world; you just knew the things that your career counselor told you were available. In that era it just seemed like the wrong way to go; we were trying to get more openness and provide more information rather than less. There was actually a lot of resistance to it, particularly at the working levels in the assignments process because they thought that the assignments process would go totally out of control if we let anybody bid on anything. So as somebody that was on the board of the American Foreign Service Association that was one of the things I pushed and I also used my chairmanship of the Open Forum Panel to push that. We had a director general who was willing to consider it and it was- there were other people pushing it. It was the right time and maybe our efforts made- helped bring it about but it was the director general who instituted it.

Q: Who was the director general?

SMITH: I don't remember who the director general was at the time. But lo and behold the assignments process did not fall apart. There were some kinks to be worked out but I think despite all the difficulties the assignment process still has I think probably people would agree that you provide people the information on what's available, give them some guidance and you let it sort itself out.

Q: And it also helps bust up some of these cozy little arrangements that are made in the personnel field or in the bureaus more than in the personnel field about let's get George into this job in Rome or something like that and so we won't make it too well known.

SMITH: Yes, yes. So I wanted to mention those two things and now I guess we could move on to my assignment to Moscow if you'd like to.

Q: Alright. I think I asked you this before but I'll ask it again; on the Open Forum and particularly the way it was it wasn't as established in those days, did you feel that you were breaking a bunch of rice bowls within the system and that this made you a marked person?

SMITH: Well I was doing my best to break a few rice bowls in the system. I was, yes, I was part of that generation, and I didn't particularly worry about the consequences, actually. I tried to do a good job and that job involved trying to bring in fresh ideas, trying to bring in critical ideas, giving people- trying to give people a voice and that's why I took the job and I just tried to do it the best I could during the year that I had it.

Q: Well then you went to Moscow and you were in Moscow from when to when?

SMITH: From 1976 to '79.

Q: Alright. Seventy-six when you arrived there, what was sort of the state of Soviet-American relations would you say?

SMITH: Well we were moving from a period of détente. During the early '70s and into the mid '70s we had a period of relatively better relationships between the U.S. and the Soviet Union and those were starting to deteriorate and continued to deteriorate throughout my three years in Moscow. The relationship got colder and more distant and more conflictual during that period.

Q: What was your job when you got there?

SMITH: My first year I was a consular officer. That was kind of the- If you were going to Moscow for the first time as a political officer that was your price of admission to the "club."

Q: It's also a good place to work on your Russian, wasn't it?

SMITH: It was a great place to work on my Russian. I, as I think I told you, was not terribly endowed as a great linguist and left FSI after 44 weeks of Russian with a 2/2 but I was- one of my jobs in the consular section was to interview people who were trying to emigrate to the U.S. There were basically two kinds of people who were allowed even to apply to emigrate to the U.S.; those were Armenians and not any Armenians, really, but those who had immigrated to Armenia from the Middle East after World War II and had in the Soviet regime's view never really adjusted to living in the country. And Jews; Jews were allowed to apply to emigrate. So I would be interviewing these people and the U.S. had pretty much an open door policy toward anyone who wanted- who was able to get permission to leave the Soviet Union and come to the U.S., with one significant exception. That is, if you had been a voluntary member of the Communist Party you were barred from admission to the U.S. Well, a lot of people had been members of the Communist Party for a variety of reasons and so one of the things we always had to ask was, were you a voluntary member of the Communist Party. And if they answered yes we had a load of problems, or rather they had a load of problems because they were barred from admission. So we would have to conduct quite extended interviews to establish the situations under which they entered the Communist Party so that a determination could be made around the issue of what really constituted voluntary membership in the Party. And during the time that I was there, for example, policy changed in the U.S. on this to consider that having joined the Party essentially for economic reasons was no longer considered voluntary membership in the Party. If you had to join it to get a better job, to have a decent life we came to interpret that as being a non-voluntary membership rather than a voluntary membership.

In any case, to go back to the initial issue, which was the language question, I had people sitting across from me who were desperate to emigrate to the U.S. I didn't speak very good Russian. They were not going to get up and leave because I didn't speak very good Russian. They were going to sit there and talk Russian to me until I understood their point of view and over time I expanded my vocabulary and got to speak Russian somewhat better. I'm sure it was quite painful for everybody concerned.

Q: Did you get any feel for Russian society at the time?

SMITH: Oh yes, yes, very much so. In fact as a result of these interviews I wrote a couple of reports on aspects of Russian society that I hadn't fully realized before. One of the things that came to my attention as a result of these interviews was the extent to which the Communist Party insisted that anyone in the society who had any authority over other people had to be a member of the Party. And this extended down to very low levels.

For example, suppose you were working the day shift at some factory and you were a good worker and you didn't show up drunk and you did a good job. The factory might want to make you the shift foreman so you might have eight or 10 guys in your little section that you would be the shift foreman of. You would have to join the Communist Party in order to be even a shift foreman in some factory out in the middle of nowhere. So this whole hierarchical structure of establishing that all authority came through the Communist Party became clearer to me as a result of that. And I'm sure from the Party's point of view they would say well, we're trying to attract the most forward thinking and forward leaning members of the proletariat into the Party but the reality was that they wanted all leavers of authority to be in Party hands and to be seen as being in Party hands. So you had people who had never thought of being in the Party, didn't want to be in the Party but they would have to either turn down the foremanship and a little bit better money and a little bit better life for their families and become sort of pariahs in the system; not total pariahs, they wouldn't lose their jobs but there would be consequences or accept Party membership as a result of getting this promotion.

Q: I would think that particularly there is a selection process. People who are planning to go to the United States obviously weren't enamored by Soviet society.

SMITH: Correct.

Q: Were you getting sort of accounts of how the party system worked for people? I don't imagine you would run across any really dedicated communists, did you?

SMITH: Well, if they were dedicated communists, no. Let me back up. First of all if they had been dedicated communists they weren't going to sit there and tell me they were dedicated communists. They were going to try to convince me that they were involuntary members of the Party and explain why they were involuntary members of the Party. Even if they had originally told me they were voluntary members of the Party once they understood what that meant they would try to explain what it meant. And we had

situations where someone would say they'd been a voluntary member, provide us some background, we would send in the case to Washington, they'd come back denied and we'd call them back in and tell them they were denied and you would have a real meltdown on your hands and for good reason. Because when someone- the first step in receiving permission to emigrate from the Soviet Union was to receive an exit visa and a passport to depart the country. Once you received that exit permission you lost your job, you lost your apartment and you were basically out in the cold and these people would leave, let's say Yerevan, travel to Moscow having sold everything and staying in a hotel, come and apply for permission to emigrate to the U.S., expecting that they'd be in the U.S. in a week or two and they'd be turned down and they would have nowhere to go. They had pretty much cut their ties. So it was a difficult situation for them. Generally we were convinced and in the course of looking into their situations carefully and conducting more in-depth interviews with them that in fact the membership was for purposes of the immigration law involuntary and we were ultimately usually able to convince Washington of that and the people got permission to go. But in the interim it could be pretty tough for them.

Q: In your first year there how was life there? Where did you live and how did you find sort of Russian society in Moscow?

SMITH: Well, of course it was fascinating to me. I had studied it in grad school and in undergraduate school and I had learned the language. I came into the country from Japan and traveled via the Trans Siberian Railway from Nakhodka on the Pacific coast to Irkutsk on Lake Baikal and then flew the rest of the way and so I had four or five days to just be on this train with all Russians as far as I could see besides myself and it was very interesting to have these initial contacts with Russians. The initial impressions, for example, that having an American on the train with the Russians gave the Russians, Soviet citizens, they weren't all Russians and they would make that distinction to me if I confused it, they felt free to speak to me because I was there on the train with them. And they were extremely curious about the outside world and always wanted to compare what they had; what their salary was, what their goods were like, what things cost, and it was like they didn't believe what they were being told and they also didn't believe what I was telling them but somehow they would try to take the two and come up with something that they would believe. I also noticed a tendency to think that their stuff was good. If somebody had a pair of binoculars, look, this only cost me 10 rubles; cost you \$150 in the U.S. and ours are just as good if not better. Things like that. But a lot of skepticism came through clearly about what they were being told by their own government about what things were like in the rest of the world.

And also learning that what was presented as reality was not and this was something the Soviet citizens knew automatically and I didn't. For example, you'd get a huge menu on the train and it was printed page after page after page of stuff you could supposedly order. Most of the things on this menu had no prices beside them and after a couple of days I came to realize if it had no price, even though it's on the menu they never have it. If it has a price they may have had it at some time, which did not necessarily mean they had it now. Third, they may not have anything that's on the menu so if you want to get

something to eat you may have to just ask them what they have or look at what somebody else has and point to that and say give it to me. That was a totally new experience for me, something I did not expect, having experience with a menu in a Western restaurant where if it's on the menu you can go in and order it. So this was one small eye opening thing among many.

Q: Where did you live when you got to Moscow:

SMITH: Well, I lived in an apartment building in what's called Leninsky Prospekt, which is a big boulevard that radiates out from a ring road that goes around sort of the inner center of Moscow. It was about halfway out between this ring road and the outskirts of town. It was an apartment building that housed only foreigners; they didn't- rarely had an apartment building in which foreign citizens lived with Soviet citizens. So you would have an apartment building that was set aside for all foreigners. They wouldn't necessarily be all Americans.

Q: Did you have problems when you were there by the KGB harassing you, that sort of thing?

SMITH: Later on I did. Maybe we can come back to that.

Q: Okay. Well, let's stick to the consular side. Did you-

SMITH: Okay. Let me mention one more thing about the apartments although everybody who has served there knows this. An apartment for a Westerner would be comprised of two or maybe three Soviet apartments. What would happen is the OVIR, which was the Office of Visas and Registration, one of the things that it did was deal with foreigners and they would tell you okay, you can have this apartment or these apartments and the first thing the embassy would do would be to hire people to go in and tear down the walls between two or three of these apartments and make it into one apartment and they'd completely redo the interior in terms of facilities so that it made a reasonable apartment by Western standards.

Anyway, coming back to consular work, it was a great way, aside from language, to begin to learn to deal with things in Soviet society because there were only three of us in the consular section at that time and the consul general. The consul general was just a figurehead; he didn't do any of the real work. So the three of us frequently were like running full speed from morning to night. There being only three it meant that we had consular duty every third week and there was also an embassy duty officer but anything vaguely consular related they immediately threw off to us. So you were on duty a lot and anything that came up you would just have to deal with. Even if you'd been there two or three weeks you were the consular officer and you were supposed to know how to deal with it or figure it out and so you figured it out.

For example, I had- you would do citizen services. I had an American, there was an American who jumped out of the eleventh floor of one of the tourist hotels downtown

and I got a call in the middle of a reception about this and I had to go sort of deal with it. And I remember meeting with the police detective, the Soviet police detective who was responsible for the case and he was totally mad about the whole thing because it was disturbing his night and also a lot of paperwork because it was a foreigner, a lot more paperwork than if it had been a Soviet citizen. And he's like, why do you Americans come all the way to Moscow to jump out of window? Why couldn't they just do it back at home. It turned out that this guy had been- had had emotional problems before and had actually been an institution but he came from a quite wealthy Texas oil family and after he was released from the institution his grandparents thought that a trip abroad would be just the thing to improve his spirits so they sent him to Moscow in the middle of the winter.

Now, this was not really thinking too far ahead because Moscow is really grim and gloomy in the middle of winter and it was even more so then. Anyway, I had to go down, look at the body in the morgue, not that I could identify the body, I had never seen him before, but an American official had to see the body and then I had to go through all the paperwork and all of that, so it was just learning to deal with things.

Another time we had a young woman, tourist, who had an attack of appendicitis and had to have an emergency appendectomy. And so I had to go visit her in the hospital and this was the best hospital in Moscow, aside from the one set aside for the Party officials and stuff that we never got into. But this was the one they put foreigners into as well as Soviet citizens with pretty good connections. And it was pretty appalling. There were ants crawling all over the bed stand; I mean, not an ant, a stream of ants steadily going up and down this bed stand. It was dirty, it was awful and to see what this kind of infrastructure was really like was, you know, a picture's worth a thousand words.

Q: I've been interviewing Eileen Malloy, I don't know if you know Eileen.

SMITH: Yes, I know Eileen.

Q: She talked about the time that she had acute appendicitis and nearly died. They finally yanked her out and got her off to Helsinki. But no, I mean Soviet medicine really, at least the delivery system, is awful.

SMITH: Yes. They had some very dedicated doctors and being a doctor in that society was not a high paid profession. You didn't go into it to make money. So they had some good doctors but like a lot of parts of the society this infrastructure was starved because they were putting so much into military infrastructure.

So those kinds of experiences for a young consular officer, I guess I wasn't that young, but for a new consular officer in the country were a great introduction to it. You also dealt with some really funny situations.

I went in one Monday morning and it was, again, if I recall correctly, it was the middle of winter, and it's like 8:00 in the morning, just arrived, sitting at my desk trying to get a

cup of coffee and get my head together and the phone rings. Pick up the phone and a guy says is this the U.S. embassy. Yes, it's the U.S. embassy; it's an American, I can tell from the voice. He said well I'm so-and-so and I'm going to be the new king of rock and roll. I said something brilliant like huh? And he said yeah, you know, Elvis Presley's dead and I'm going to be the new king of rock and roll. I said well, okay, but this is the U.S. embassy. He said yeah, I know, I want you to help me become the new king of rock and roll. I said well how can we help you become the new king of rock and roll. He said well, the KGB is keeping me from becoming the new king of rock and roll and I want you guys to talk to the KGB and get them to lay off because they're standing in my way.

Well, this is the point in a consular officer's life when he asks the \$64 question; where are you calling from? Because the connection was so good I thought he was calling from some hotel downtown. And he said Cleveland, Ohio. And I said thank God he's not in Moscow.

Q: The consular officer's prayer, Oh God, not in my consular district please.

SMITH: That's right.

So you know, I was much more relaxed on this from that moment on because I knew he was in Cleveland and not in Moscow. I finally got him off the phone, telling him we didn't have a lot of influence with the KGB and he might have to be on his own on this. But it was one of those calls where if it was 8:00, 8:00 a.m. in Moscow it was probably midnight or something like that in Cleveland. Sunday night this guy had been flying probably on something the whole weekend and this is where he'd gotten himself to by midnight on Sunday.

Q: Were you married at the time?

SMITH: Yes.

Q: How did it work out with your wife?

SMITH: My wife actually, I had met her when I was- some years- a few years before when I had been Sudan desk officer. She was an attorney working in AID on African Affairs and we were working on trying to get assistance programs set up in Sudan, one thing led to another and you know, we got married before I went out to Moscow. She left her job in AID to come out there with me, got some sort of a temporary job but actually wound up taking the Foreign Service test and passing it and while we were in Moscow coming into the Foreign Service, going back for the A-100 course and coming back to be a consular officer in my second or third year, by which time I had moved to the political section. So she adapted to it pretty well.

Q: Well then, you moved to the political section. How was the political section set up and what were you doing at that time?

SMITH: Well, while I had been in the consular section I had done some reports, for example on my Trans Siberian Railway trip, I did some reports on that and I did some reports on some of my interviews about where people were emigrating from, what their reasons were for emigrating, things like that. So people knew me in the political section a bit and also the guy who was heading one of the sections within the political section had worked with me in the Open Forum Panel back in Washington. So a job opened up there unexpectedly because one of the guys who was in the political section working on what we called pol-int, or political internal affairs, left on vacation and did not get permission to come back in because the Soviet government didn't like some of the contacts that he was having in- country. And so this position opened up and I was asked by the head of the pol-int section, the political internal section, if I was interested which of course I was. And I took it.

The political section had, if I recall correctly, nine people in it at the time. In addition to political counselor you had the pol-external and the pol-internal sections. So pol-external of course was Soviet foreign policy and pol-internal was all aspects of Soviet domestic politics. And the portfolio that I took on involved keeping track of the Jewish refusenik community; that is people who are of Jewish background and had applied to emigrate but had been refused permission, and also following the sort of non-traditional, artistic community, the artists who were not following Soviet realism. And then to some extent the human rights activists who were not trying to emigrate but were trying to promote liberalization of the political system within the country. So those were really interesting- it was a really interesting portfolio and one that had a lot of political attention.

Q: Before we get to that, I was just thinking, going back, did you get a feel for- you had mentioned two groups applied for visas; one were Jews and the other was Middle Eastern-

SMITH: Armenians from- who had been originally from the Middle East.

Q: And also other people from- who didn't quite fit into the society. What was your sort of take on one of the Armenians and then on the Jews and then on the Middle Easterners.

SMITH: Well no. I may have been- I may have confused you a little bit. You only had really two principle groups; Armenians and Jews. Within the Armenians most of the Armenians who got permission to leave had originally emigrated from various Middle Eastern countries after World War II so they were not Armenians who had been part of the Soviet Union for- since the Soviet Union took over Armenia; these were people who had more recently come into Armenia and had never adapted that well to it, didn't necessarily speak either Armenian or Russian as their native language and so the regime was willing to see them as a minority that just had not become integrated very well and was willing basically to let it go. Now, if you were an Armenian who had been born in Armenia, raised in Armenia it would have been much tougher for you to get permission to emigrate. So this was a particular subset of the Armenian population.

Q: Where were they going?

SMITH: Well all of these people of course were going to the U.S. Most of the Armenians were going to California, where there was a-

Q: Glendale probably.

SMITH: I'm not sure exactly where in California.

Q: I mean, that has the largest Armenian population outside of Armenia, I think.

Were they of a particular caliber, had they- I think if they hadn't fitted into society that they probably weren't particularly technically or educationally sort of from the upper reaches of the society.

SMITH: I think that's probably generally true. I mean, if you would compare the Jewish emigrants to the Armenian emigrants the Armenian emigrants were much more likely to be sort of the working class folks and the Jewish emigrants were much likely to be university trained or engineers or scientists or something like that. As a rule.

Q: How did the Jewish emigration work? Because there were a lot of forces in play at this particular time as far as a big effort on our part to get Soviet Jews out of the country, either to Israel or to the United States. At your level how did it play? I mean, who were they and was it mostly- were they coming asking but not getting anywhere or what?

SMITH: Well first of all, if they came to us and they already had permission to emigrate it wasn't any major problem except in the rare cases where there might be an issue of Communist Party membership. It was pretty straightforward, you know. We worked out the paperwork and they exited to Vienna. That's where everybody went. In Vienna they would then decide whether they wanted to go to Israel or to the United States. All of them, ostensibly, were exiting with permission to go to the United States. The Soviet Union was not giving permission to people to emigrate to Israel but it was turning a blind eye to the fact that 80 percent of them were going to Israel. And some went to the United States.

So that would be the usual pattern. Somebody who was Jewish would apply, they might get some local harassment and some hassles but if they stuck with it they would finally get permission to emigrate, they'd get their foreign travel passport, get their exit visa, come to us, make their application, go through the paperwork, which could take a little bit of time, go to Vienna and then go one way or the other.

Now the problems arose for people who were refused permission to emigrate and these were who we called the refuseniks. And the basic reason why people were refused permission to emigrate was that the Soviet government said that they had state secrets and they weren't going to allow people to emigrate who had secrets at least until enough time passed that their secrets would no longer be classified as secret. Of course they all insisted that they didn't have any secrets. Whether they did or not was awfully hard to

judge. As one Jewish refusenik that I got to know put it, he said when he applied for permission to emigrate and he was refused on the basis of having state secrets he said well, I work in television. We're 10 years behind the Americans so what secrets could I have? And they replied to him, well that's the secret.

So some of them may actually have had what the Soviet regime considered secrets. Obviously their definition of secrecy would have been much more restrictive than the definition of secrecy in American society would be. But the people who would apply to emigrate and be refused would be in the kind of situation that I told you, of having- because they applied, basically, cut off their ties, be sort of out on the street, not literally but figuratively, and become pretty desperate to get out. Some of them would become politically active and others would not but would keep trying to get permission to emigrate.

Q: In a way, looking at this as a society function, sort of how Jewish were these people? I mean, were they- did they go to a synagogue or is this just a- were they sort of forced into a category by their passport or what?

SMITH: Obviously a lot of variation. You know, I think a lot of Jews went through a period of being fairly well assimilated into Soviet society. I think as things developed over time and they got the impression because of the Helsinki Accords and things like that that they might be able to leave and particularly as they began hearing that some Jews were being allowed to leave they began to identify themselves much more as Jews; some in a very religious sense, some more in a national sense. So particularly as they became refuseniks, they increasingly identified themselves as Jews and as dissidents in terms of Soviet society. But there were certainly times in the Soviet Union where you had a lot of intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews. One of the famous Jewish refuseniks and political activists was Anatoly Sharansky who now uses the name Natan Sharansky and-

Q: He's very active in Israeli politics.

SMITH: Oh yes, he's minister for- has been in the cabinet there. His brother- I got to know his brother because Natan had been arrested and jailed during my first year in Moscow and when I took on the Jewish refusenik portfolio in the political section it was my job to follow things like his arrest and we got of course a lot of inquiries about how he's doing and things like that. I got to know his brother and his mother; his brother originally had no intention of emigrating from the country and did not particularly identify himself as a Jew at all. He was married to a Russian woman, a non-Jewish Russian woman and was assimilated into the society. But when his brother got arrested and sent to jail he became politically active on behalf of his brother and I gave him a lot of credit for that because he wasn't originally motivated, as his brother was, by strong religious feelings or anything like that. He was motivated by wanting to help his brother and he took a lot of risks to do it, eventually emigrated to the U.S. with his wife who didn't originally particularly want to.

But anyway, what happened with these Jewish refuseniks is a whole bunch of them came to Moscow and sort of hung out in Moscow, got to know the other refuseniks and they would all gather in front of the Jewish synagogue in Moscow on Saturday afternoons to exchange information. And basically I had gotten to know during my year in the consular section one or two Jewish refusenik families through other acquaintances at the embassy and I got into the pattern of going down to the synagogue on Saturday afternoons and hanging out on the street in front of the synagogue with this hundred or so group of Jewish refuseniks and just walking around and chatting with people and finding out what was going on. And it was always worth a report; Saturday afternoon I'd go back to the embassy and write a report on it, and it was the source of our information for responding to Congressional inquiries, family inquiries and that sort of thing. But I had to be introduced personally; it was all, you know, these people that I had gotten to know, these couple of families introduced me all around the Jewish refusenik community and that personal introduction was their way of saying this guy is okay. And they would also tell me who on the other side was okay and who they suspected wasn't.

Q: Were sort of KGB operators mixing with the crowd there and all?

SMITH: Yes. Everybody assumed that and people would point out people who they thought were the KGB folks there and that sort of thing.

Q: What was going on- Was anything particularly going on in this group outside of the fact that they were sort of- stuck out like a sore thumb in that society and were trying to get out of the country? Was that sort of the main thing?

SMITH: On the Jewish refusenik group per se?

Q: Yes.

SMITH: For most they had cut- by this time they had cut their ties to the country and they just wanted out. And for a small minority they allied themselves with the human rights movement, the Soviet human rights movement, and became sort of politically active and pressing for liberalization of Soviet society. And those tended to get into more trouble with the law than the ones who were politically active but strictly focused on the issue of emigrating. Sharansky, for example, although he was always focused on getting out of the country and always focused on the refuseniks issues also became sort of a spokesman within the refusenik community for the human rights movement generally.

Q: Did Sakharov- he of course was a full blooded Russian but was he a figure in this as a political officer or did he have sort of his own handlers within the embassy?

SMITH: Sakharov would periodically come into the embassy with his wife and he would always come initially to the consular section. So we would see him and even on occasion we'd talk to him. But usually if he was there somebody in the political section pretty quickly came down to talk to him.

Q: I would imagine so.

SMITH: Yes.

Q: Did you feel this group and the human rights, this is all, what is it, the third basket or whatever it was of the Helsinki, of course. Did you feel they were making any dent or was this sort of a hopeless set of idealists or what? What did you feel?

SMITH: The interesting thing was that the Soviet Union actually printed the full text of the Helsinki Accords as it was required to do under the terms of the accords in its major newspapers. So people had actual texts of these things and could read the actual words in this agreement the Soviet Union had signed. And they tried to push that as far as they possibly could.

Q: These are the-

SMITH: The human rights activists but also the refuseniks too because right of emigration was part of the Helsinki Accords as well. On the refuseniks, you know, they were an incredibly intelligent and gentle group of people. The human rights activists were of course totally non-violent. If you had started advocating violent stuff you would have disappeared very quickly. But they were much more alone. They had a much smaller community, they were more harassed by the regime and they had- they just had a tougher time of it. They would have a much greater chance of being arrested, being sent out to prison or to exile under difficult conditions. It was tough. And generally speaking, in terms of dealing with us American diplomats, the Soviet government was less concerned with our dealings with the refusenik community than with the human rights activists who were actually about trying to change Soviet society. If somebody was sufficiently active they could harass us diplomats in different ways.

For example, if they didn't like someone, whether it was a refusenik activist or a human rights activist- we often had these people to our place for dinner and we would have to meet them outside and escort them into our apartment building because there was a Soviet policeman outside each apartment building who would not let people in unless you did so. So we'd go out and meet them a block or so away and escort them and they would sometimes plant somebody with a camera and a lot of flashbulbs and this person would be in everyone's faces, shooting flashbulbs in their faces and pretending he was taking pictures. So that was a mild form of harassment.

I remember on one occasion me and this other guy in the political section had met with some people that the regime did not like at all and we both happened to be downtown in central Moscow that night, at different functions with our cars parked on the street. And I had three tires punctured and he had four punctured. So they must have been a little bit more angry with him than they were with me.

So that was- They had little ways like that of letting you know that they were not happy with what you were doing.

Q: Were, in the political section at the time, were you seeing this as being a thin wedge that might go anywhere or was this just something that this didn't seem to have very firm legs?

SMITH: I think that people at the time did not see any real prospect of it taking off within Soviet society at any time within the next couple of generations, at least. I mean, there may have been some belief that under time with development, with education that pressures would grow but I don't think people- People thought that we needed to support this human rights movement to the minor extent we could but I don't think people saw it as a potentially regime changing thing.

Q: Well, I would imagine that in dealing with the human rights group that you would have to be very careful that you weren't encouraging people to get themselves- get their heads chopped off or something. In other words, I mean, one gives support but not too much because it could get them in trouble. Was that a constraint?

SMITH: That was one of the constraints; the other one was being very careful that you weren't being set up for some embarrassing situation yourself. For example, we frequently took materials that these human rights activists wanted to get out of the country and sent them out in the diplomatic pouch. And in order- You were accepting materials, you didn't know what those materials were, and how to be sure that you weren't going to be in a situation where somebody you thought was okay was handing you something that looked- that was supposedly state secrets for which you could be thrown out of the country yourself, or embarrass the U.S. Government in some other way. So that was the other side of it. So we had to try to be as clear as we could with them about what we could do and what we couldn't do. We could help them a little bit around the margins by helping them gain publicity for their cause by helping get information outside about what was happening to some of the political prisoners in the country so that pressure could be put on the government and things like that. But it was limited.

Q: What about another part of your portfolio was, I take it you could call it the intelligentsia or the artistic community; was this in a way kind of a fun group but not very influential in the society or what?

SMITH: Yes. Well, it was of interest in Washington because anything that challenged the kind of cultural stereotypes of the society there was an interest in following that. And you had a lot of avant-garde artists who did painting -- and most of them were dealing with the visual arts in this area—that was very experimental and I don't know what to call it except avant-garde, just the opposite of socialist realism, and they often were not political activists themselves. More often than not they were not. They were artists who wanted to do the art that appealed to them. Because they did that they had difficulty making a living, selling their art. Their interest in knowing foreigners, at least in good part, was because we were a potential market for their work. They were interested in learning more about trends in Western art. Jazz music was another area where there was a real Soviet jazz scene that I was very interested in because I was interested- I like jazz music. But

this was not Stalinism anymore; you wouldn't go to jail for playing jazz music. On the other hand you didn't find very frequent or very profitable venues for doing it either. And you could maybe make CDs or records but they wouldn't get very wide distribution and that sort of thing. So it was a way of trying to promote intellectual exchange in ways outside of the straightjacket of Soviet realist thinking.

Q: Well on the jazz scene did- was there much- was there an ability of the people who were interested in jazz- I can't think of his name but there was somebody in the Voice of America who- tell about him.

SMITH: His name may come back to me, it's- lost my mind. But he was- I had never heard of him before I went there. He was one of the most famous persons, Americans, in the Soviet Union. Everybody knew this guy's Voice of America broadcast on jazz. I think he came there once or twice and he was like a film star in this little circle of jazz aficionados but also known to everybody who had listened to Voice of America, as well. I visited him once in Washington because somebody asked me to bring back a couple of records of a Soviet jazz group in the hope that he would play them and visited him in his little office at Voice of America and there he was, just this sort of average American. Over there he was practically the god of jazz.

Q: Was there a rising group of Soviet youth wearing jeans, listening to jazz, copying sort of the American or European teenager and up to the 20s; you know, this is a time of great emphasis on youth in the West, and was this getting reflected from the Soviet scene?

SMITH: Absolutely in terms of clothing styles and things like that and to some extent the music. Rock was popular to the extent that you could get it, get access to it, and you could sell jeans if you chose to in Moscow for four or five, 10 times their worth in the West because they were so hard to come by and there weren't any at that time made locally.

I can't remember any other particular dress styles besides jeans but there was a real craze for having Western jeans in this society, Western music of all kinds, rock and jazz. It was a way, I think, of young people expressing their interest in the rest of the world in a way that was a little bit daring but not sufficiently so that it would cause you problems with the police or anything like that. You could have, for example, you could get a jazz concert organized in an official hall of culture and it would usually lead off with some boring lecture on how Soviet jazz was really- really came before American jazz and how it really came out of Russian roots and that sort of thing. But you knew that was the price of admission and then you got to hear the music and that was what it was really all about.

Q: Were you able to go on any trips around the Soviet Union?

SMITH: Yes, lots. Lots of trips. We tried to travel as much as we could. A couple of things that we always did when we made trips to other parts of the country were we carried a list of people who might have been refused permission to emigrate, whether Armenians or Jews and of course Jews were coming from all over the country. And we

would take these lists to the local Office of Visas and Registration, which was responsible for the- for it and give them the list and say the American embassy's interested in these and we'd appreciate if you'd review these cases. It was just a way, another way of expressing interest.

The other thing we always did was make market surveys when we took these trips. Go through the local markets, see what was available, how much it cost and things like that.

There was a real interest in the Department of Agriculture back in the U.S. on that, could have effects on grain sales by the U.S. and things like that.

I visited Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, Georgia, Uzbekistan. Often traveling by train.

Q: You were there from when to when now?

SMITH: Seventy-six to '79.

Q: You were there, I guess you left in '79 before all hell broke loose.

SMITH: I left before the invasion of Afghanistan in '79, yes, and that's when- I mean, the relationship had been going steadily downhill through that period but it went off the cliff after that.

Q: How did you see and your colleagues see why was the relationship going down? I mean, Carter had come in with the idea that he could improve relations; he sent, what was it, one of the Watson family to be ambassador.

SMITH: That was actually subsequent to my time there.

Q: Eighty?

SMITH: Yes. Well, partly it was the treatment of the human rights activists and the refuseniks, the whole sense that the level of repression in the society was not going down and if anything was going up, continual conflicts in the Third World with the Soviet Union, where they were being fairly aggressive in their support of anti-U.S. groups.

Q: Africa was a particular place.

SMITH: Africa; Latin America was probably another one. So I think those were probably the principal sets of things.

You had a society at the time where Brezhnev, the leader, was becoming increasingly incapable of providing any strong leadership, but they wanted him to stay in power because if he left power that would create a whole power struggle that was kept under wraps with him in the top office. But for example, I remember we would sit in the political section at the time that he would give major speeches and the speeches could be

an hour, an hour-and-a-half, whatever, long speeches on major holidays like November 7 and what was it, Victory Over Fascism Day, things like that. Anyway, these speeches would go on and on and on and one of the things we always watched to see was whether Brezhnev was going to be able to get through the speech. He was in such bad shape. And the other hilarious thing was to watch him try to speak some of these difficult Russian words. And he was by that time losing his ability to speak fluently and he would get started on some long Russian word and get halfway through it and then he'd have to back up and start- try again and sometimes he'd try two or three times and not get through the word and we'd be cheering him on, go Brezhy, you can do it.

Q: I was wondering, do you mind if we cut this a little short.

SMITH: Yes sure.

Q: But how about, did you get to sit around in the kitchen of refuseniks or others and have real frank discussions at all?

SMITH: Yes, we did. Now for awhile that was difficult. I arrived there and Matt Stoessel- Ambassador Stoessel was the ambassador. What was his first name? I'm not remembering right now. Robert Stoessel? Anyway.

Q: Walter.

SMITH: Walter Stoessel, thank you very much. A young memory. And he left after I'd been there only a couple of weeks and Jack Matlock was the deputy chief of mission/charge for some period of time and then Mac Toon came as ambassador. Ambassador Toon was, particularly after a couple of political officers had not been allowed to return to Moscow in large part because of the kinds of relationships they had had within the human rights community and that sort of thing, he was nervous about losing more people out of his political section and also nervous about provocation so for awhile he would not let us go to the homes of these people. He would let us invite them to our homes with prior permission but we could not go to theirs under any circumstances and that put a little bit of a restriction on us. Eventually that was lifted and we could always- we were never restricted, I don't think, from going to the homes of artists who were not politically active and that sort of thing. So, I would go to peoples' communal apartments, people still lived in communal apartments where three families, four families shared the same kitchen, the same bathroom, and you would sit around the kitchen table or the dining room table, if there was a dining room, and talk, yes, for hours about whatever you wanted to talk about.

One of the things that Washington was also interested in, always interested in, was political jokes and there were great political jokes coming out of the Soviet Union at that time.

Q: I mean, this is a, you know, a sardine is a whale who's passed through all stages of communism.

SMITH: That's right, yes. So you could get these from the human rights activists, the Jewish refuseniks and every six months or so we would do a cable on the latest political jokes and that was probably the most read cable that we did out of Embassy Moscow.

Q: Yes. Well, I've seen a documentary, apparently a little earlier on, but Ronald Reagan used to collect these things and repeat them.

SMITH: Yes.

Q: I hate to cut this short but I think- Let's think about what should we talk about the next time. We haven't milked the Soviet Union dry yet.

SMITH: Alright. Well why don't we both give some thought to that rather than trying to just sort of off the top of our heads.

Q: Alright. Make some notes.

SMITH: Yes.

Q: Okay. Today is the, what is this, the 6th, 7th of February, 2009, with Ray Smith. And Ray, where did we leave off?

SMITH: Well, we were talking about my tour in Moscow from 1976 to 1979. And actually I wanted to go back to a question you asked me before, which was the issue of what people thought of, at that time at the embassy, about the future of the Soviet Union and what its prospects were. And I'd like to approach it from a little bit different angle.

As we look back it may seem obvious that the Soviet Union was in decline but if we try to put ourselves in the mid '70s it was not all that clear that it was the Soviet Union that was in decline and not the United States. We had just come out of the debacle in Vietnam with people being lifted off the rooftops in what was then Saigon and the Soviet leadership, although I'm sure they were aware of a lot of the problems that they had, might have easily been able to persuade themselves that the trend of events, particularly in the Third World, was in favor of the Soviet Union. So-

Q: And the Soviet Union was on the move in Africa, for example.

SMITH: Yes. Africa and Latin Americas; there were challenges to the United States. So this was a period when they were being fairly aggressive in the Third World and that was one of the things that was causing a gradual deterioration in détente throughout this period and a chilling of the relationship.

Another thing of course was the way that the human rights activists and the Jewish refuseniks and all were being treated in the Soviet Union. That was a major political issue in the United States. And we also need to remember who the president was at the time.

The president was Jimmy Carter and Jimmy Carter was highly interested in human rights so that was a major issue in U.S. policy and a contentious issue in the U.S.-Soviet relationship. Also I think that the Soviet leadership over time developed a certain amount of, contempt is too strong a word, but a feeling that Carter was pretty weak as a president in terms of his willingness to use effective methods to defend U.S. interests. For all of his admirable qualities as a human being Carter was someone who had a really difficult time coming to grips with situations in which it might be necessary to use force to defend U.S. interests and I think the Soviet leadership realized that over time.

They were raised on a concept that they call the correlation forces. We might think of it as the balance of power and the correlation force is a little bit different; there's some similarities. Correlation of forces, if you think about it conceptually, is a more dynamic kind of phenomenon. It's a more changing set of relationships and it encompasses the personalities of leaders as well as physical capabilities and things like that. So in looking at the correlation of forces at that point in time, with a U.S. coming out of the Vietnam War, a president who's not willing to use force to defend U.S. interests, and their own sense that movements in the Third World are going in their direction, I think the Soviet leadership was inclined to be forceful in defending its own interests and then pushing its own in the Third World.

Q: Well, from the embassy point of view, you know, I'm speaking about you as an officer sitting around talking to the guys and gals in the embassy, Brezhnev was getting a little bit doddery so who was felt to be the director, Suslov or whom?

SMITH: Suslov was sort of the eminence grise. Was it Chernomyrdin, the deputy at the time to Brezhnev, sort of - he was kind of the chief staffer to Brezhnev and so he got to organize meetings, he got to be the last one to see the papers that went into Brezhnev and that can be a very powerful position, particularly if you have a leader who's not as vigorous as he probably was earlier. So those were a couple of people that we looked at. The military leadership, I forget who was the top military leader at the time, was considered pretty influential. They were all part of that same generation, of course, that had come to power basically after World War II. They rose up to high positions in the Party as a result of the purges in the '30s and they were- by the time the war began with Germany they were in much higher positions in the Party and in the government than they would normally have been because of the purges and the fact that they were pushed up. And because of the war you didn't have another set of purges so they moved up, they felt that they had deserved the credit for the survival of the Soviet Union and its victory in World War II, which there was called The Great Patriotic War, and Stalin died before he undertook another set of major purges and after they ousted Khrushchev that generation really took power in the Soviet Union and maintained it until a series of deaths, basically in the '80s.

Q: Well, was anybody acting as- in the embassy at your time- you were there from when now?

SMITH: Seventy-six to '79.

Q: Was anybody acting somewhat as the Cassandra, saying this is all very nice but this regime, I mean, has a terrible economy and it's got a great minority problem; was that apparent?

SMITH: I remember writing one piece at that time that actually went into an airgram, which we still used in those days- it basically disappeared without a trace -- on sort of projecting trends forward and predicting some major problems for the Soviet leadership about 10 years down the road. But I think the main preoccupation of those- of folks in the political section then were this issue of the U.S./Soviet conflict in the Third World and how the U.S. ought to deal with the Soviet Union and then around the whole issue of human rights, whether we ought to be engaging the Soviet Union or whether we ought to be isolated. Those were the two sort of philosophical disagreements about how to deal with the Soviet Union.

Q: Did the Helsinki Accords- what was the feeling towards it? Because I mean, one of the most- now, today one thinks of the human or the- was that the human rights basket but in many ways it was considered sort of a _____ of solidifying the boundaries of the Soviet Union and almost a sell-out so sort of what was you all feeling about it at that time?

SMITH: I don't remember any feeling about- at the embassy or in the political section about the fact that that seemed to recognize the boundaries and the zone of influence of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe. Of course my particular portfolio was concerned with the third basket and the human rights aspect of things and, as we discussed briefly last time, that did provide a vehicle for us to use to make demarches to the foreign ministry on these subjects and also for people who were activists to use to defend their efforts to get change or to get- to emigrate, whatever their particular cause was. But of course it was a period of increasing crackdown on all of us. I think the Soviet leadership, whatever it got out of the other baskets became sorry that it had signed on to that particular part of it because it caused it a lot of headaches internally. Despite, or maybe even because of the Helsinki basket three, they were steadily cracking down on the amount of dissent that they would allow.

Q: Was the samizdat, was that something we can monitor and all? And you might explain for the reader who might not know what the term means what it was.

SMITH: Well samizdat basically means self publishing and what happened in that era of typewriters is that people would take works that could not be published in the Soviet Union, either by Russian law, there were Soviet authors who were forbidden, or by others from outside, and they would literally type the entire text of a book with as many carbon copies as they could make and these things would be passed from hand to hand. And that was a very active aspect of the human rights sort of underground in the Soviet Union, something that we monitored fairly closely. It's one of the issues that we had, is that we would accept samizdat from people for publication abroad but you always had to be careful, I mention at this time, that you were- what you were getting was actually samizdat from a legitimate person as opposed to some pseudo secret document from a

KGB plant, which would be used to embarrass you, maybe cause you to be kicked out of the country as an alleged spy or something like that. So we had to be careful about how we accepted those documents but in reality, we accepted them in bushel basketsful, practically, and shipped them out in the pouch and they were published abroad, much to the annoyance of the Soviet leadership.

Q: Before you left are there any other sort of areas we should talk about?

SMITH: Well, I did want to mention, probably, to come back again to the crackdown in the human rights area or the refusenik area period- or the refuseniks during that period. The people who became really active basically they had a slogan: You're either going to go East or you're going to go West. And the Soviet government at that time had a policy of handling dissidents that became too annoying one of two ways. They'd arrest them and send them to prison or into exile in Siberia, which meant going east, or they would just kick them out of the company, which meant going west. And any Jewish refusenik friends would be more than delighted to take the "going West" alternative but you never knew whether you were going to get the going East or the going West. And I never found, in observing this, any particular pattern to it that was discernable to me. They almost seemed to chose to do it randomly so that, almost as if they were not going to let people get the notion that by getting involved in these activities they were going to get a ticket to the West. I guess that's probably the only other thing I want to mention on this period.

Q: Were we getting any reports of Jews going to Israel? You know, Soviet Jews, I mean, was that sort of a subject that you were concerned with?

SMITH: Well of course I was very involved in the Jewish refusenik movement and the embassy as a whole was very involved in the Jewish emigration. We issued all of the visas for people to come to the U.S. and 80 percent of them or so, when they got to Vienna, which was the stopping off place, switched direction and went to Israel. So that was well known. It was something that the Soviets periodically complained about because all of these people were getting emigration permission supposedly to go to the U.S. and a lot were not going to the U.S. But the Soviet leadership pretty much chose to wink at it during this time. And we basically, politically, did not care which direction they went. Israel, which was our ally, was delighted to have all the immigrants it could get from the Soviet Union and we were prepared to accept as many as wanted to come to the U.S. So it was mostly turning a blind eye on one side and an open door policy from the other side.

Q: Were there any other embassies that were as involved with the refuseniks and all that was part of this human rights movement?

SMITH: To some extent the other embassies were; we were the most active. But the New Zealand embassy, interestingly, was a little bit active in this area. In fact, one of their diplomats got roughed up once in something involving what appeared to be a retaliation

for involvement with them. The British were to some extent and some of the other Western Europeans were to a greater or lesser, especially the Dutch, for reasons that I do not recall now, extent but we were probably by far the most active. We also had the most people, of course, so we had people who could devote pretty much their full portfolio to this and other embassies didn't.

By the way, I also got roughed up a bit once in an incident that stemmed from my involvement with the refuseniks. I had attended the trial of a prominent refusenik which ended by him being sentenced to five years of exile in Siberia. I knew the guy pretty well and liked him, so I felt pretty down about it. I was coming back to the embassy to write my report on the trial and entered through a small gate that was on one side of the two main gates to the embassy. There was a Soviet militia guard there. I usually nodded at the guards as I went in but I was feeling pretty teed off at the Soviet system at that moment so I ignored him. As I went through the gate, he grabbed me from behind and pulled me back out, ripping my jacket into the process. I resisted this and we got into a physical altercation which was pretty much a standoff until another guy, in civilian clothes, ran up behind me and pinned my arms. They dragged me back out of the gate, at which point one of the other guards recognized me and told them who I was. The plainclothes guy let me go and vanished. I went into the embassy and immediately reported the incident, which quickly became a news story. I don't know who told the press about it. It wasn't me. In any case, this led to an exchange of diplomatic protests and I wondered for a few days whether I was going to be kicked out of the country. I wasn't and did not have any other problems of that kind from then on.

And one thing on nationality movements, too. We made a real effort to get out into the other republics and to visit them and get a sense of what was going on. It was really difficult at that time to get a sense that there was a strong undercurrent of nationalism in these other republics. I remember visiting Armenia, for example, and being struck by some of the differences between how the economy was running in Armenia versus the way it was run in Russia. There was much more tolerance for small business, individual shops and that sort of thing, than there was in Russia. And to some extent this was a difference in culture and the Russians were prepared- the Soviet leadership was prepared to allow this bit of variation. One had the sense that the Armenians generally were pretty much- they were pretty okay with this. They got a slightly looser hand in terms of how they organized themselves locally and there weren't any major objections to the Soviet system, as much as you could see at that time.

There was more stuff going on in western Ukraine but the leadership, the Soviet leadership, had no tolerance whatsoever for any of that and anybody that surfaced that was pushing any kind of nationalist issue in Ukraine or in other areas wound up in Siberia with a very long and harsh prison sentence very quickly. So they crushed all of that sort of thing much more thoroughly than they did the little bit of human rights movement that was going on in the Moscow area and the Jewish refusenik movement.

One area in the human rights movement that they cracked down much harder on was if any of the human rights activists started to get involved with labor organizing as well.

Because this hit a Communist Party hot button issue, which is the proletariat, and however cynical people may have been about ideology there was still some things about it that were pretty well ingrained and the notion that you supported the laboring class or that you at least had to not allow it to be corrupted by a people with a different message was pretty strong.

Q: Well then you left in mid '79, was it?

SMITH: Yes, summer of '79, and I was assigned as political officer in Ivory Coast.

Q: How did you feel about this assignment? You could thaw out, for one thing.

SMITH: Actually I- It was an assignment that I wanted. It was one of the top ones on my list, given the things that were available, but I had spent some time in African Affairs in the African Bureau and it was a- I found in my career that it was a very nice change in many ways, after dealing with the Soviet Union to deal with a different set of issues and a different climate, both political and geographic, was very refreshing intellectually.

Q: You were there from '79 to when?

SMITH: Eighty-two. I had a tendency to stay three years with my overseas posts. I liked them.

Q: Well this is still Houphouët-Boigny, wasn't it?

SMITH: Yes.

Q: So what was the situation in the Ivory Coast when you got there?

SMITH: Well, Houphouët-Boigny was another one of the first generation leaders of the anti-colonial movement; he was also like Bourguiba in Tunisia where I served my first Foreign Service post, a person who was a Francophile, still very close to the sort of education that he had gotten in France and not at all hostile to what had been the colonial power, in fact wanting a relationship with the colonial power. The Tunisian currency was supported by the French franc, was tied to the French franc and supported by it. There was a French base-

Q: Now we're talking about Ivory Coast.

SMITH: I'm sorry. The Ivorian currency was tied, like the Tunisian had been, to the franc, and there was a French military contingent outside of Abidjan.

Q: Well now, who was our ambassador?

SMITH: I can't remember the name of the ambassador. It was one of the few female ambassadors we had in Africa at the time but I'm-

Q: It wasn't Frances Cook?

SMITH: No, it was not Frances Cook. But she was there pretty much the whole time I was there.

Q: Well then, what was your job?

SMITH: Well there was only one political officer so I was it. And that was also a nice change from Moscow because where I had one little piece of the portfolio in Moscow, I had the whole thing in Ivory Coast. So any time there was a demarche that had to be done on any issues, if it didn't require DCM or ambassador-level things, I was the one who did it. We were always, for example, asking the Ivorians to support us in the UN because they were a moderate African country and we- they were one of the ones that we could frequently persuade to support us. For example, resolutions that were anti-Israeli in the UN. And so I was frequently called upon to make demarches on those things. I covered all of the domestic politics, all of the international politics; kept an eye on the sort of student things because every once in awhile you'd get a little stirring in the student community and that was considered one of the things that could potentially be a possible threat to the stability of the regime so we kind of tried to keep an eye on that. Houphouët-Boigny had a unique way of dealing with any student disturbances; he drafted them into the military. Any students that were causing any problems had to go and do a couple of years in the military and so that usually put down any student difficulties pretty quickly.

Q: You were obviously following this; in Africa, particularly the states with essentially a one-person rule and Houphouët-Boigny was up 30 years or something like this?

SMITH: Yes.

Q: How did he govern? Was this payoff to various tribal things, balancing tribes, dominant tribe? I mean, how did this work?

SMITH: There was a tribal element to it but you have to first start with the understanding that as the leader who brought the country independence during the colonial period and did it without violence and without a lot of suffering, he was accorded a special degree of distinction, veneration if you like. As far as we could tell at the embassy pretty much throughout the country, which did have some definite religious and tribal differences, he was referred to in French as "le vieux", "the old one" by everyone, even people in the government who were his age and of his generation during the anti-colonial movement. So he pretty much could- whatever he said, went, and I don't recall ever detecting any real opposition to any decisions that he made that he came down on firmly.

Now, of course, his prestige was helped a lot by the fact that he made a lot of economic decisions, particularly earlier in his reign that were very good for Ivory Coast. Ivory Coast was one of the few success stories in Africa at this point in time. They basically adopted an economic model which was in total contrast, for example, to the economic

model adopted in Ghana right next door. Where Ghana decided that it was going to try to industrialize and provide a lot of public services by taxing its agricultural production very highly, in other words they would pay a low price for the agricultural products that they got and sell them for as much as they could get on the world market and the notion was that the difference would be used for industrialization projects, social projects and that sort of thing within the country. Ivory Coast took a totally different model. They decided that they were going to pay their agricultural producers a substantial return, take a smaller profit and in that way expand production in the country because people were incentivized. So what was the result of this? Production soared on key products like coffee and cocoa; in Ivory Coast it was smuggled in from Ghana in droves because the price was higher. Ghanaian production shriveled up and the Ghanaian economy went into a tailspin and the Ivorian economy was doing great. So the pie was growing larger in Ivory Coast; it was definitely still a developing country but it was a country where things were improving. And so that helped, obviously, his prestige. An economic success story on top of success in bringing the country to independence and it was very hard to challenge him.

That said, he clearly favored his own tribe, the Baoulé.

Q: Was this one of the major tribes or not?

SMITH: Yes, it was one of the major tribes. But he clearly favored it over other tribes. He definitely brought other tribes into government, into cabinet positions. He cannot be accused of not doing that. I'm not remembering the name of the major tribe in the northern part of the country but it was primarily Islamic so you had both a potentially tribal and a potential religious schism along the same lines in the country. A lot of money was being put into the town of Yamoussoukro, which was Houphouët-Boigny home town.

Q: Is this where they built the cathedral?

SMITH: Cathedral, palace; it was a town basically built out of nothing in the middle of nowhere and with the best of everything. And that was probably the chief criticism of his rule at the time, at least particularly among those of us at the embassy who saw it. I mean, it was lavish, it was overdone.

Q: I'm told it's the equivalent to St. Paul- or St. Peter's.

SMITH: I don't know if I'd go quite that far but it was- I guess I would make an analogy to the building of Brasilia in the hinterlands of Brazil or the transfer of the capital in Kazakhstan, from Almaty to Astana. But the idea, in both cases, was to bring the capital inland-

Q: Abuja too or something in Nigeria.

SMITH: Yes. And a lot of money was poured into it for that reason. And an argument could be made for moving the capital inland and out of the sort of commercial and port center but in the case of Ivory Coast it also happened to coincide with the home town that he grew up in and his tribal sort of center.

Q: As the political officer what did you do?

SMITH: Well, I mean, the usual things. As I said, there were always demarches to be made to the foreign ministry because we were always seeking their support on some international issue or other and they usually did support us but sometimes looked a little sad to see me coming in again, knowing that I was going to ask them to do something that would make them unpopular with their fellow Third World countries but they usually did support us. I tried to get out to see people in various other ministries. The level that I dealt with was I suppose what we would call the deputy minister level, they called them secretaries of state but they were equivalent to sort of deputy ministers. I tried to get to know those people in various ministries, to get to know some of the people involved in the university sector, to travel around the country and see what was going on, of course dealing with my fellow diplomats, getting to know some of them, particularly the French of course, because the French were the key player in Ivory Coast and the United States was actually very happy to have the French be the key player in Ivory Coast. We wanted Ivory Coast support on international issues but we didn't particularly- the French were in control of fundamental security issues there and that was perfectly okay with us. The French can be a little bit arrogant about their position in Ivory Coast; it could be a little bit difficult to deal with. We were certainly going to them for information and support and that sort of thing but they were folks that you needed to know there. Also getting to know some of the French "cooperants" who worked there. They would be like, I don't know what we would call them. It wasn't really Peace Corps because it tended to be higher level than that but these were technical advisors in a lot of the ministries. All of the ministries were run, of course, by Ivorians but many of them had technical advisors in key positions, often in offices right next door to the minister, providing financial advice, accounting advice, engineering expertise, any of a wide variety of things that Ivorian were being trained in but were not yet at the point where they could take over those things.

Q: Well did you find in the French community, I'm told this is, I guess still is, a very large community there. This is sort of the preferred place or had been until recent troubles _____ for the French who wanted to go into Africa to go, wasn't it?

SMITH: It was certainly a very congenial place for the French to be and the French, first of all, they were paid a lot better than their particular level of expertise and ability would probably get them paid back home. They lived much better, they had French clubs, there were some good French restaurants; I mean, they had the beaches so they had a very nice life there, both financially and sort of in terms of amenities.

Q: Did you find the French community was sort of open to Americans at the embassy or was it really a closed group?

SMITH: It was reasonably open, I would say. I got to know a fair number of the French cooperants and their families. We also had, working at the embassy some French as well as Ivorians so that provided another way of getting to know some of the people in the French community. Yes, it was quite possible.

And the Ivorians were very easy to get to know, too. They were less ethnocentric, it seemed to me, than for example the Tunisians were. The Tunisians were a little bit more standoffish and a little more difficult to get to know, I found, than Ivorians were. They were pretty welcoming to foreigners and ready to accept invitations, to invite you to their house and things like that. Of course they had a lot of people from abroad and abroad meaning both Europe, the U.S. but also other African countries, living in Ivory Coast. And they thought of themselves at the time as being sort of good hosts and welcoming to people. But they were a magnet, much as Germany might be a magnet for Turks who are looking for work or France might be for North Africans. Ivory Coast was a local magnet because its economy was so much better than any others in the region.

Q: Now did our stance towards South Africa and the constructive engagement and all of that, did that play much of a role in your work?

SMITH: It played a bit of a role in my work. Again it was an issue in which we would be seeking Ivorian support and actually Houphouët-Boigny was a supporter of constructive engagement. He was- It was part of his belief in dialogue, that you had to have dialogue, that you had to find ways of compromising. And so Chet Crocker, who was heading the Africa Bureau, would come through Ivory Coast periodically and meet with the president and tell Houphouët-Boigny what the U.S. was doing and why and try to keep him onboard for the policy.

Q: Was there any problem up in the north with the Islamic groups or Mali or Burkina Faso?

SMITH: No. Not in terms of domestic Ivorian politics there were some- you had some unrest in several of the countries around Ivory Coast during that period; I think during that period is when Samuel Doe overthrew the old Liberian leadership and took over there. I think you had a coup at that time in Burkina Faso; in fact, I think its name became Burkina Faso during that period, if I remember correctly. And as I said you had the tribes- a major tribe in the north that was Islamic so you had that potential cleavage along both tribal and religious lines but it was not something that surfaced at that point in time. There was representation from all of the major regions and tribes in the ministries and all of them tried to help their tribes and areas. The Baoulé, Houphouët's tribe, did the best, but the pie was growing for everyone. The top leaders did very well.

Q: Were we concerned about Libyan Qaddafi messing around there?

SMITH: That's a good question. I think the Ivorian government was concerned about it and they were concerned about it sufficiently that I believe they tossed out the Libyan

embassy during that period because they accused him of getting involved in things that they shouldn't have. So there weren't really- the Libyans did not have an opportunity to make much mischief in Ivory Coast because they were just cracked down on.

Q: How about the Soviet Union or China? Were they doing anything at that time in there?

SMITH: I don't remember China being- I don't remember having contact with their diplomats and I don't remember whether they had relations. They might not have had diplomatic relations at that time. The Soviet Union was there, we did not have much contact with them. They were carefully watched and I don't think they had any kind of assistance programs or anything like that. They were kept pretty close tabs on.

Q: Did you get any feel for French politics? I don't remember who was the- this was before Mitterrand was in, I guess. But anyway, from time to time the French politics is the payoff of one kind or another, sort of a source of corruption. Was this at all an issue?

SMITH: I don't recall it becoming an issue. The French had the economic relationship, the support for the currency which was actually a major form of assistance to Ivory Coast, supplying cooperants which was mutually beneficial because it gave the French influence, provided expertise to Ivory Coast and of course the military unit, which turned out once or twice in its little show of force when there were some disturbances of one kind or another. But there was nothing very major at that point in time that I recall. It was known they were there and it was known that they were going to support the government in power.

Q: How did Liberia fit into this? You know, it's English speaking and all and I assume there really wasn't much of a connection or was there?

SMITH: No, there wasn't a lot of- I'm remembering more sort of cross border stuff between Ghana and Ivory Coast because of the products that were smuggled into Ivory Coast because you could get more money for them. I do remember that after Samuel Doe overthrew the regime in Liberia the Ivorian government was somewhat concerned about the nature of the regime that came into power in Liberia and whether there could be any cross border things and so they took some steps to have some increased military presence on the border. I also remember that Houphouët-Boigny invited Samuel Doe to Ivory Coast for talks, which did not go very well at all.

Q: Well you know, here is Houphouët-Boigny who is really a very sophisticated Frenchman and all and Samuel Doe I think had been a corporal or something and was of a corporal's mentality.

SMITH: Yes, he definitely was. And my recollection is I think he wore a pearl handled revolver to his meeting with Houphouët and it kind of went downhill from there. So I think Houphouët hoped that he was going to be able to instill some wisdom; I'm not sure that there was ever a repeat of the meeting after the first one.

Q: How did you find sort of life there? I mean, did the embassy get along with each other?

SMITH: Life was very pleasant there, really. The climate was quite nice assuming you liked tropical climates. The city of Abidjan was an attractive city in many ways. Very nice restaurants, both French and local. It had a famous hotel that you could go to to use the pool and things. I actually learned to sail; in Ivory Coast there was a French sailing club called the Cercle de Voile, which basically means sailing club, and I bought a 20 foot sailboat and sailed practically every weekend for three years while I was there on the lagoons outside of Abidjan. There were various activities; there was an active diplomatic social life. Also, as I said, you could make acquaintances in French pretty easily with Ivorian government officials and others and invite them to dinner, they would invite you back. So it was- I thought it was quite a pleasant place to be. And as I said the Ivorians were a very nice people to deal with. I have to say in my experience there I didn't really notice sort of tribal differences in terms of my social relationships with them. You know, I was dealing with them mostly as government officials or something else and so I was seeing them as Ivorians, not as Baoulé or some other tribal group, which in retrospect may have been a bit naïve of me.

Q: Well, one thinks of Nigeria where the- very talented people but it doesn't come together very well. Did you find Ivorians- was corruption a problem and were they- I mean, did things work there?

SMITH: Well things worked there at that time. Now, to say that there wasn't corruption would probably be going way too far. For example, I remember one statistic that really struck me. One year Ivory Coast imported 10 percent of all the champagne that France exported to anywhere in the world. Now, Ivory Coast was a country of six million people if I'm recalling correctly, most of whom could not afford champagne. So if Ivory Coast was importing 10 percent of the French champagne exports you had some really wealthy people who were drinking a hell of a lot of French champagne. That's just an indicator, you know, that a lot of people were- or at least a few people were doing really well in the country.

There was- one of the things that you noticed and that the government tried to encourage was people in government to retain close ties with the towns or villages in which they grew up. And that was not difficult to encourage; people liked to do that but Houphouët-Boigny was of course the example of that par excellence but people would frequently go back from Abidjan to their village for the weekend. Often they would build a villa in their village and it would be the most imposing house in the village and they would plan to retire there when they left government service. So that tie was kept very active and people would try to help the village in various ways.

One of the things that struck me in visiting these villages was how far people traveled culturally in a period of a generation. You would meet people that would be, for example, deputy ministers and you would visit their village; the village would be truly out in the

countryside with mud and grass huts for most of the houses, a little local school in the village that kids would be going to down dirt paths barefoot and this is where they would have gotten their primary education and it wouldn't be until they would be getting into the secondary school level that they would go off to another location. So you had people acculturated in a village atmosphere who were, a generation later, or in the same generation, working at top levels in ministries.

And you could see this, these village ties in the way the ministries operated. You would have- people who would come from the village and they would go to where they had a cousin or someone who's a fellow village member and look for a job. You had a- in the operation of some of the ministries, below the top level, you had a much slower pace of life that was- that related as much to the village pace of life as it did to the pace of life in a ministry in a capital city. So things didn't get done as quickly or could be put off until tomorrow. So this was a major difference in terms of the depth of- how to put this- of Western style operating procedures. If you went into a ministry in Ivory Coast and I'm sure this would be the case probably even more so in a lot of other African ministries, you wouldn't find the same work style as you would find in a European ministry, for example. People just came- the gap that people were overcoming in one generation was just enormous.

Q: Well then, you left in '82.

SMITH: Yes.

Q: Whither?

SMITH: I went back to Washington to be the director for bilateral affairs on the Soviet desk in Washington.

Q: So they put you right back into the briar patch or whatever you want to call it.

SMITH: Well, I volunteered to go back into the briar patch.

Q: Okay. You did this bilateral- You might explain what Bilateral Affairs is.

SMITH: Yes. The Soviet desk at that time was divided into three sections; Bilateral Affairs, External Affairs I think it was called, and Economic Affairs. Okay, Economic's pretty much self-explanatory. External Affairs dealt pretty much with U.S. relations with the Soviet Union, pretty much all aspects of it. Bilateral Affairs dealt with the Washington end of Soviet domestic developments and dealt with what I came to think of as all the nitty gritty of the everyday U.S.-Soviet relationship that nobody else wanted to be bothered with. So we dealt with the Soviet embassy in Washington on any annoyances in the relationship. We dealt with, well, just to give some examples, if a Soviet diplomat got into trouble of any kind in the U.S. we were the people that the Soviet embassy would come to complain to. And we did have regular problems, everything ranging from them getting picked up for stealing from stores to parking tickets. Complaints if they felt they

were being harassed by the FBI. Suppose the FBI made a pitch to one of their diplomats and the diplomat reported it they would come in in high dudgeon to complain to me. Pretty much my job was to deal with all of those problems at my level and if I was doing my job right none of those things would ever even come to the attention of anybody above the level of my office director.

Q: One term I've heard I think comes from an article by Tom Wolff but to a flak catcher.

SMITH: Yes, pretty much, yes. I was the chief flak catcher.

Q: You did this from when to when?

SMITH: From '82 to '84.

Q: Well now, this was not a very benign period between the Soviet Union and the United States, was it? I mean, with Afghanistan and this is fairly Reagan period; what sort of things were you catching?

SMITH: Well, the whole issue of Afghanistan was part of the section that dealt with the U.S.-Soviet relationship and foreign policy issues writ large so I didn't have a lot to do with that particular issue. But this was also the period when there began to be a changeover in the leadership.

Q: They started dying.

SMITH: Yes, they started dying off pretty quickly. So we got involved- At one point that portfolio had also been in the external division's office but I managed to get that from them because I wanted at least something besides flak catching in my portfolio. So the whole issue of the analysis of the leadership changes and that sort of thing came to us.

Q: What were you seeing? I mean, we had the Andropov and then Chernenko and then-

SMITH: Chernenko, yes.

Q: -and Gorbachev. But I mean, how were you seeing this during the time you were there? Was, I mean, you had Andropov coming in and he was already on dialysis, wasn't he? I mean, was this considered a holding operation or were they really looking-

SMITH: I don't know if he was on dialysis when he came in or he went on dialysis afterwards. I'm not remembering. But I think when he first came in people saw him as a potential reformer but definitely with a small "r." This was the kind of guy that would be potentially the leader that some people thought Gorbachev was later; that is, the guy who was going to try to reform the system to make it more efficient and a better competitor to the U.S. And the beginning under Andropov of bringing some younger, more energetic people into the Politburo and giving them better portfolios; this is when Gorbachev just started to come to notice, and others, so there was some thought that he might create

reforms that would get the economy moving. There was even a fairly Pollyannaish notion, I thought, that he was a little bit of a closet liberal, because he supposedly was interested in Western culture and that sort of thing. I never particularly subscribed very much to that myself but there was that as well.

Q: Well did you feel, you'd been away, you'd been basking on the beaches of the Ivory Coast and all for three years and all of a sudden you're back in Soviet Affairs. And the Reagan Administration was really taking hold by this time; I guess Shultz was our secretary of state.

SMITH: Was Shultz there already? I can't remember but yes.

Q: But anyway, did you sense- Coming from the Carter period, I mean Ronald Reagan of course is viewed by many in a very dubious light. Here was a Hollywood actor and all that but did you sense- but Carter was a bit wishy-washy. Did you sense a change in American attitude, I mean as projected by the State Department when you came back there?

SMITH: Yes, very significant change. And you know, my own way of looking at some of the early things that Reagan did was Reagan wanted to show that the U.S. was once again prepared to use force to defend its interests and he found a small convenient little island in the Caribbean in which to do that, which was Grenada. So he sent a message to the world in Grenada that the U.S. was no longer unwilling to use its military to defend what it conceived as its interests. I'm sure it's a message that got across to the Soviet leadership and it was a very- if you want to be very Machiavellian about it, a very cheap way of getting that message across. So I think the Soviet leadership got that message but they were very disturbed by all of this. They did not like being called an "evil empire," they did not like the big increases in U.S. defense budgets, although those had actually begun under Carter, who in part because of the Afghanistan invasion came to believe that he had misinterpreted Soviet intentions. But they were really unhappy with this new set of U.S. policies and there was a lot of antagonism in the relationship. During the time that I was on the Soviet desk there was practically nothing going on in the way of negotiations on any issues between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. In fact, toward the end of my time on the desk I negotiated a new agreement on consular matters, visas, how we would handle those, various kinds of reciprocity issues in the U.S.-Soviet relationship, and it was pretty much the only negotiation that was brought to a successful conclusion during that period of time. So the relationship was really, really frozen at that time, in part because of the hostile, a pretty hostile U.S. regime but also because of a Soviet regime that was reacting very strongly toward a more assertive U.S. posture and that was going through its own internal turmoil

Q: Let's talk about the Soviet embassy, your view of that. I mean, since you'd been in the American embassy in Moscow, looking at sort of the other side of the moon what was your impression of the Soviet embassy during this period? The personnel and its activities.

SMITH: Well, I had a lot of dealings with some aspects of the Soviet embassy. I had my counterpart at the Soviet embassy who had the title consul general and he was a guy who was responsible for dealing with the same issues that I was. Broadly speaking all of this came into the realm of what we called reciprocity. The U.S.-Soviet diplomatic relationship was supposed to be built on the principle of reciprocity so what we did to them they would do to us and vice versa. And one of the things that we were trying to do and that I was particularly trying to do as director of this part of the desk was to enforce this reciprocity vigorously, but as a way of trying to demonstrate to the Soviet government that it would be better to relax some of these standards so that if we were going to have reciprocity we ought to allow more freedom of movement to both embassies, diplomats, and that sort of thing. And this could be a hard message to get across because we frequently enforced reciprocity much more loosely than the Soviet government did with our diplomats in the Soviet Union. So they could be highly restrictive on our travel, our contacts and that sort of thing and they paid less cost for it because for a variety of reasons we were not as vigorous in holding them to the same limited standard as us. So having been at the embassy from '76 to '79 I was well aware of the limits that were placed on us in Moscow and I wanted to place the same limits on their diplomats in the U.S., not just as a retaliation, but as a way of trying to get the message across that hey, let's loosen up on both sides on this.

To come back to the embassy, they had a pretty good bunch of diplomats here in Washington. A lot of them had very good English, they were well trained, it was a sought after assignment, they picked some of their best and brightest to be assigned here. They had, of course, Dobrynin as ambassador. Dobrynin had unique access to our leaders, was considered to be highly influential back in Moscow.

Q: He was actually either a cadet member or something of the Politburo, wasn't he?

SMITH: Not at that time. I think he may have become one when he came back briefly. But he was not as influential as he portrayed himself to be. He was, after all, an ambassador; he wasn't part of the political power structure back in Moscow but he portrayed himself as being influential. People liked to believe that he was influential because he was the Soviet that they could talk to and so he got much higher access to officials in Washington than our ambassador got to officials to in Moscow. And that was the way the Soviet leadership wanted the relationship to be because I think that they felt that they could control the message much better through Dobrynin than they could by delivering the message to our ambassador in Moscow. That was another thing that we tried to get changed. We tried to get our ambassador the kind of access in Moscow that Dobrynin got in Washington but that was hopeless because you could not get our leadership to restrict Dobrynin's access. They liked having access to him; he was a guy that they could talk to. They thought they were getting messages through to him that would possibly be influential in Moscow. Really wasn't happening but leaders like to believe that sort of thing. Dobrynin was allowed to take a special elevator up for his meetings with the secretary and things like that, he could drive his car into the basement of the State Department, stuff like that, and he loved those little privileges.

Q: Did you have the feeling you were dealing with a nest of spies or did that make any real difference?

SMITH: Well, maybe I'm a little cynical about this but yes, they had spies and they were doing their best to collect information and we were doing the best we could in Moscow to collect information. People, Americans tend to see this in moral terms but of course we're diplomats; this is the job. And if our only complaint is they're doing it better than us, well that's not a very good complaint. It's more a condemnation of our efforts. So I looked upon it as us doing the best we could and them doing the best they could. We did do some things while I was involved in Bilateral Affairs to make it a little bit easier to keep tabs on their diplomats. That's when we introduced the license plates, the diplomatic license plates, which ironically was something that the Soviet embassy had been asking us to do for a number of years because their diplomats were always getting parking tickets and they wanted a diplomatic plate so their diplomats wouldn't get parking tickets. They eventually came to realize that a diplomatic plate would enable us to keep track of them a lot better and got a lot cooler to the idea about the time that we introduced them.

Q: I remember when I was in Yugoslavia back in the '60s, we had diplomatic plates and all ours- the Americans' with 60; Canada was 63 and I remember the Soviet Union was 10. And then the satellite nations had 13 or 14 or something and so I used to keep a little list in my wallet just for fun; I'd sort of check off who was who all the time.

SMITH: Yes, we did that sometimes in Moscow too, yes.

As I say, the issue of reciprocity and how to deal with the embassy were some of the ones that I was frequently dealing with. Let me give you a couple of examples.

We had open and closed areas in the U.S. for Soviet diplomats just as they had open and closed areas for our diplomats. We tried to model our open and closed areas both in extent and in location very much on what they did in the Soviet Union so that we could have this reciprocity. Well, we were always getting asked to make exceptions to these closed areas and I was always resisting it or if I was asked to make an exception to ask the Soviet embassy to get an exception to be made for one of our diplomats so that diplomat could travel to a closed area as well. It was tough to do because you always had some civic group somewhere that wanted to improve U.S.-Soviet relations by inviting a Soviet diplomat to speak in what they didn't even know was a closed area but they found out after they invited this person to speak there, and they couldn't understand why we wouldn't let someone come because it was a closed area. So then they would call their congressman and the congressman would say let them go and frequently we had to let them go without getting any reciprocal travel.

I remember one where I actually caved on my own. I got a phone call from Shirley Temple, Shirley Temple Black, yes, but I thought of her as Shirley Temple. And she wanted to invite the Soviet consul general in San Francisco to Thanksgiving dinner at her home, which was in a closed area outside of San Francisco. And I was really tough on

these closed area issues and my staff knew it. And so here I have Shirley Temple on the line saying she knows about the policy-

Q: Well she had been an ambassador twice.

SMITH: Twice, that's right.

Q: Three times actually; to the UN and taught at the FSI.

SMITH: I didn't know she taught at FSI.

Q: She started the ambassadorial course for us.

SMITH: Oh, really. Ah ha. Well she was terribly nice, knew about the closed areas but it was Thanksgiving, she wanted to show the consul general what an American Thanksgiving- And I had my whole staff gathered outside my door trying to see if I was going to say no to Shirley Temple on Thanksgiving, and I didn't. I said yes, okay, well he can come. But I generally tried not to.

I remember another case where the consulate general in San Francisco had something coming in on a diplomatic pouch, as a diplomatic pouch, I think, on a boat in a port area that was closed and they wanted access to it. And I said no, not unless one of our people in Moscow can get access to a closed area. And they said we really need this access. And I said yes, fine, it's easy, I'm perfectly prepared to give it to you, just give one of our people access to a closed area as well. So after going back and forth a little bit they said alright, they would try. And they got permission for access to a closed area. And I said fine, we're going to send them the day before your shipment's due, our diplomat to this closed area. Because I didn't trust them. And it came down to the wire, you know; the diplomat could not get- our diplomat in Moscow supposedly was going to get access to this closed area but waiting, waiting, waiting and I just said, you guys in San Francisco are not getting anywhere near there unless my guy has gone to this closed area and come back. And they pushed it right up to the afternoon he was supposed to leave and finally caved so I knew it had to be something that they really wanted to get their hands on in this shipment. And if I had agreed that our diplomat would not go until after they got the shipment something would have come up and they never would have granted him the trip.

On the Soviet desk at the time we were trying to encourage a bit more flexibility in the strategy of how we dealt with the Soviet Union at the same time that we were trying to encourage a sense of being tough tactically in how we dealt with the Soviet Union. And these were some of my small ways of trying to do that.

Q: Did you have the sense that you and maybe your diplomatic colleagues in the Soviet embassy were playing against the KGB and the FBI or not?

SMITH: I'm not sure the sense in which you mean that.

Q: Were your contacts at the Soviet embassy sort of looking at you and saying, yes, I would like to do this but God I can't get around the KGB, you know, they're tough sons of bitches and all that.

SMITH: No, absolutely not; they never said anything like that to me. They don't- that would be way over the border for a Soviet diplomat. They would not even in relaxed Soviet mode say something like that.

Q: An American would, I mean, in comparable things. Yeah, I like to do this but you know the FBI, we just can't do that or something but you don't- I mean, this gives us a feel for you might say the culture, the diplomatic culture.

SMITH: Yes. The Soviet diplomats were- had an ability, and it comes out of their political culture, to say- keep saying the same thing time after time after time, if that's what their government's message was even if they personally might not agree with it. This was their job. They would not deviate from that. And then shift 180 degrees overnight with a new set of instructions. But this is not to say an American diplomat would not also be capable of that. But we would feel a little bit more cognitive dissidence about that than a Soviet diplomat would. This is what I'm told to say today, this is what I'm told to say now. Now in their personal lives they might have opinions but they had a much clearer demarcation of their personal lives and their professional lives than we might.

Q: I mean, you didn't get the thing that sometimes American diplomats have to do something because of Congress or something, sort of a shrug of the shoulders or roll of the eyes to, you know, let you know well, I mean, this is above my pay grade and I can't do this but it's kind silly or something. You wouldn't get that?

SMITH: I don't recall that at this time. You might have gotten it later during the Gorbachev period but not at this time. No.

We had a lot of interaction with the FBI and my office during this time because they had the job of trying to recruit agents and their whole counterintelligence effort and we were always trying to balance the things that they wanted to do versus other issues in the relationship. So that was one of the things that sometimes came to me; it would usually be something that I would have to kick up at least to the office director.

I should say, by the way, also that we had a very competent and well thought of office director at the time named Tom Simons who later became ambassador to Pakistan and an excellent deputy director named Dick Combs, who later was deputy chief of mission in Moscow and later worked for Senator Nunn on the Hill. We reported to an excellent deputy assistant secretary of state in Mark Palmer. Our assistant secretary was a political appointee named Rick Burt. I happily rarely had to deal with Rick Burt, because he was a jerk, not to put too fine a term on it. He was a guy who was contemptuous of the career Foreign Service and surrounded himself pretty much with people who were also

contemptuous of it, Mark Palmer being an exception, but happily I don't think I was in the same room with Rick Burt more than two or three times in my whole two years.

Q: Well, he was assistant secretary of European Affairs?

SMITH: Yes.

Q: But basically you all held him in contempt, would you say?

SMITH: I would say more he held us in contempt. We probably held him in dislike.

Q: Okay.

I might point out something to somebody who- a technicality to somebody who's looking at this and doesn't understand the workings. The CIA is allowed to go out and recruit agents or informants or something overseas but the FBI does that in the United States. Is that correct?

SMITH: Right.

Q: So I mean, there is this demarcation of agent recruiting involved, which is part of the spy versus spy game that's gone on since Noah and the flood, I guess. But anyway, we have this- the CIA can only work overseas and the FBI works in the States.

SMITH: We also had, in that connection during this period, a congressionally mandated office set up to deal with, initially primarily the Soviet Union, Warsaw Pact countries, but it was to deal with issues involving foreign embassies and I'm not remembering the name of it all but-

Q: Foreign Missions, I think.

SMITH: Yes, the Office of Foreign Missions, thank you very much. Your memory's much better than mine on some of these things.

We on the Soviet desk pretty much opposed the establishment of this because we saw it as complicating the bilateral relationship and not doing anything that needed to be done that we couldn't do. I think others looked upon it very differently and Congress mandated that it be set up and it was. This is the office that was headed by, at a later point in time, an FBI official who turned out to be a double agent. So what was supposed to be set up really for us to more effectively mount operations against the Soviet Union was itself rapidly infiltrated by the Soviet Union.

Q: Speaking of this, I mean of your work, you say you did get this piece of the pie of figuring out who the Soviet leaders, where they were going and that sort of thing; how did you find information you were getting—I don't want to get into, obviously, classified

details—but just the analysis and information you were getting from the CIA about these people.

SMITH: Well of course, they were very good at biographic stuff so you could get as much biographic information as you wanted. And how definitive the interpretation would be of biographic information, the ties and that sort of thing, one could always argue about but they certainly made an effort to figure out who was tied to whom and what it might mean and that sort of thing. We didn't always agree with their interpretations, the embassy didn't always agree with their interpretations but that's to be expected.

Q: Well then, is there anything else? You can always fill in if you recall any other sort of incident or incidents.

SMITH: I might tell you a Rick Burt story.

Q: Sure, why not.

SMITH: As I said I rarely, rarely was in the same room with him and I had no desire to be in the same room with him, his reputation was too well known. But on one occasion one of the people on my staff, John Ordway, who was later DCM in Moscow and ambassador to Kazakhstan, came to me and said there's something funny going on with a Soviet exchange student. We've just been notified by the, I think it was the consulate general in San Francisco, that he's going home and he's going to be escorted by somebody from the consulate general. And this was very suddenly. And I forget why the notification came to us; we probably- we may have required exit visas from these people because they required them of us, another reciprocity thing. Well, both John and I immediately knew that there was something odd about this and it looked like the guy could be possibly being taken back to the Soviet Union against his will. So we- they were coming through Dulles Airport and we refused to give him the exit permission until we had a chance to interview him.

So I went out there with John and someone from the Bureau of Consular Affairs, I think it was, to interview this fellow, and we had a fairly major confrontation with the guy from the consulate general in San Francisco when he got off the plane and found out that we were going to do this interview but he couldn't sit in on it and that we weren't necessarily going to let this guy leave the country. And he got in my face and said what are you going to do about it if I just put him on the plane? Well, we had set this all up in advance and I had some very large FBI guys standing across the way and I said well, you're not taking him, and I called those guys over and said be if he tries to take this guy out of this room stop him, and they said fine. So that was the end of the confrontation. But in interviewing the guy he assured us very clearly that he wanted to return to the Soviet Union and all three of us agreed that he was- we told him he didn't have to if he didn't want to, it was his decision to make, and he was- he was on U.S. territory and nobody could make him go back. And he just- he wanted to go.

So we said alright, fine, we're going to let him go. And I get a call from Mark Palmer, who's in the office with Rick Burke and they're afraid that we're going to let this guy go and they're going to be accused of letting somebody be forced back to the Soviet Union against his will. And Burt, of course, who didn't know us and all he knew was I was some Foreign Service Officer and obviously couldn't handle something like this on my own, said, leave him there, don't let him go anywhere, I'm coming out to deal with this personally. So there we sit, Rick Burt comes out, Mark Palmer comes out, I get told I can leave, I'm not needed anymore. I leave and they interview the guy and he says I want to go back. And so then they say fine, you can go back. They get him on the vehicle taking him out to the plane and they've got a couple of FBI people with them to take him out and he says no, I don't want to go back. So they take him back off the vehicle and by this time Rick Burt is getting sick of him and when he gets taken off the vehicle they talk to him again, he says well, I really do want to go back after all. And it's too late for the plane so Burt lets them take him to the embassy, Soviet embassy, because he's sick of him and he's decided- and he's told them he wants to go back. And the next thing we know he's hanging out a window at the Soviet embassy screaming he's being taken back against his will. So this whole thing blew up into a huge incident.

The guy was clearly having a breakdown of some sort and it was handled badly all around. The consulate general in San Francisco should have just come to us and said look, the guy's having psychological problems; we want to take him back to where his family is and where he can get treatment. By putting him through this rigmarole at Dulles, we just intensified the problem. Anyway, he finally wound up going back to the Soviet Union; who knows what happened to him after that. But that was Rick Burt, getting involved in something he didn't need to be getting involved in.

Q: Well this often is the problem when things get pushed to a higher level, get beyond really the, maybe not the range but get beyond essentially the competence of the people who have been dealing with it. They can screw things up.

SMITH: Well like I said, my job- if something reached Rick Burt's level as far as I was concerned I hadn't been doing my job right. If I was doing my job right nothing should get to his level because I was supposed to solve these problems; he was the policy guy. But on the other hand it would have been nice to have felt that I was working for someone who tried to have his people's backs. In this case, I think I did handle it right, but of course, Burt was more concerned with covering his political backside.

Q: Well then in '82 where did you go?

SMITH: Eighty-two, well '82, wait a minute; I was '79 to '82 in Ivory Coast, '82 to '84- It would be '84 on the Soviet desk.

Q: Eighty-four.

SMITH: And '84 to '86 I was deputy director for Southern African Affairs so I went back to working Africa stuff again.

Q: You were doing it from when to when now?

SMITH: Eighty-four to '86.

Q: Eighty-four to '86.

SMITH: Yes. And this would be a good place for me to take a break.

Q: I was thinking this would be a good place to stop.

SMITH: A place to stop?

Q: I think probably a good place to stop and we'll pick this up the next time in '84 when you're in Central African Affairs?

SMITH: Southern African Affairs.

Q: Southern African Affairs. Okay, great, we'll pick it up then.

Alright. We want to add one more thing on to this.

SMITH: As I said, on the Soviet desk I would deal with problems involving diplomats at the Soviet embassy and this could be anything from a failed recruitment attempt by the FBI to people getting picked up for taking stuff out of stores, and that did happen a couple of times actually while I was on the Soviet desk, usually with lower level diplomats who didn't get paid probably that well and were suddenly exposed to this consumer economy. I had one of these happen where I got a call from the embassy, the Soviet embassy, complaining that one of their diplomats had been arrested for shoplifting and they wanted to come in to lodge a formal complaint. Well, I had been through this sort of thing a couple of times and I knew that the way these things worked was that they would come in and lodge a formal complaint, I would then look into it and usually find that the person in fact had actually been shoplifting and then I would want to call the Soviet embassy guy that I dealt with back in to straighten this out and he would not want to come in and talk about it anymore. And I recognized, from my time in Moscow, that their foreign ministry handled our complaints very differently. If an incident involving an American diplomat occurred they would not let us come in to complain about it until they had done all of their checking and had their information together and knew what it was they wanted to say. I knew this in a very personal way because toward the- probably about a year before I left Moscow I had been involved in an incident coming into the embassy in which- we had police, Soviet police, guarding the embassy, supposedly keeping terrorists from getting in but also keeping other people who wanted to come in and talk to us from coming in and we tended- we tried to resist that and bring people in and they would keep people out if they tried to come in who didn't show the proper identification.

Well, I was walking into the embassy one time by one of the side doors that had a policeman at it and I had just come back from a trial of a Jewish refusenik who was being sent off to Siberia and happened to be someone that I knew and liked and I wasn't feeling very happy with the Soviet system that particular day or any uniformed representatives of it. And so normally when I walked through the gates they would say hello and I would say hello back and on this particular day I didn't feel like saying hello to any Soviet police so I just walked through. Well, the guy grabbed me from behind and tried to drag me back out through the embassy gate and tore my jacket in the process and I came around and started swinging at him and we had a physical altercation, which ended when another non-uniformed guy, who was obviously security, came in and grabbed me and the two of them dragged me out onto the street, at which time they established that I was a U.S. diplomat and let me go back in.

So of course our embassy wanted to protest this because I'd been grabbed from behind and physically molested and so we wanted to make a formal protest. The foreign ministry would not let us come in to protest until the following day, at which time they had supposedly hospital reports that I put this guy into the hospital and he was under intensive care and all sorts of things, none of which was true, of course. But anyway, they would not allow us to make a protest under circumstances like this until they were ready with their reports. Our usual practice in the U.S. was if they said they urgently wanted to come in and see us we would see them within the hour. On this particular day I was basically tired of getting these protests without having information about what was really involved so I refused to see him. I said my schedule's full; you'll have to come in tomorrow. Meanwhile I got my staff working quickly to get a report from the police department that had arrested this person about what had actually happened.

So Dobrynin called up Rick Burt to say that their diplomat wanted to come in and I had refused to meet with him. So Rick Burke sends the word back through our office director who calls me in and says you can't refuse to see them if they want to come in. I said I didn't refuse to see them, I just said my schedule's full for this afternoon, I'll have to see him tomorrow. And so I think I sort of prevailed on that and did not see him until the next day although Rick Burt was really pissed off and my director was like shaking his head. And what we found out was that this person had come into the store and gone back out with a large purse full of things from the store and when the person was picked up the bag was empty and it had nothing in it except items from the store, no comb, no identification, no make up—it was a woman—nothing in the purse except items from the store. So clearly here was a person, a woman, who had gone into the store with an empty purse -- you know, women don't normally go around with empty purses -- and had come out with a bagful of stuff. So by the time I called them in they made their protest and I said look, I can't accept your protest and here's the reason why, and I explained what the information was that we had collected. And they said it's all a provocation, we don't believe any of it and he stormed out.

Well, that was kind of the end of it except that a couple of days later they sent this woman and her husband back to Moscow, so by getting the information we were able to demonstrate that there really was a justified cause for this. And also I was trying to make

a point about reciprocity. If you're not going to let our people come in immediately on issues like this, we're not going to let your people come in immediately.

But- Anyway, I just wanted to illustrate that as another example of the effort to try to get reciprocity and the difficulties in getting it because they would go over your head immediately.

Q: Okay. So we'll pick this up the next time in 1986 when you go to Southern Africa- Did they have the Southern Africa desk or you're there, is that right?

SMITH: Right.

Q: Okay, great.

Today is the 13th of February, 2009, with Ray Smith. And Ray, do you want to- you'd already talked about the shoplifting lady where you were taking- Do you have anything else about this- while you were dealing retribution or to the- Were they still Soviets or were they Russians by this point?

SMITH: Soviets. Diplomats pretty much considered themselves Soviet citizens or presented themselves as such. We had one guy that I had a lot of contact with who was actually from Armenia and had an Armenian name but definitely identified himself much more as a Soviet citizen than as an Armenian national. And even if they had any particular national feelings that was not the kind of thing they would expose to us.

Just a couple of final thoughts on my two years there. One was Gorbachev was on our radar screen at that time and I believe people hoped, in a sense, that he would be the one that would succeed Andropov and there was some disappointment when it was Chernenko for a couple of reasons; one Chernenko was looked upon as a not very competent fellow and pretty stodgy, unimaginative, unlikely to breathe any new life into the relationship.

Q: Not only was he unlikely to breathe any new life but unlikely to breathe for too long.

SMITH: Well, he didn't breathe very long, no. And sort of a sense that Gorbachev, even then there was a notion that he might begin a reform process, although certainly there was no sense at the time that you were talking about anything that wasn't going to last for generations but at least a beginning of some relaxation or reform might begin under Gorbachev. So when Chernenko took over there had been a little bit of disappointment that that possibility for an opening did not occur.

Another thing was, just to mention again, I may have mentioned before, but I had three very good people that I was working under, very good career Foreign Service Officers, Dick Combs, who was the senior deputy director for Soviet Affairs-

Q: Is that C-O-

SMITH: M as in mother, B as boy, S. And if you ever get the chance to have Dick do an oral history you ought to.

Q: Where is he, do you know?

SMITH: Dick is out in California, retired out there so it may be difficult.

And Tom Simons, who was the director for Soviet Affairs and Mark Palmer, who was the deputy assistant secretary and our office, the Soviet office, reported to him as did the Office of Eastern European Affairs. Both very good career professionals and very nice people to work with, very reasonable people.

And finally, I just wanted to convey my sense that at our level on the desk I think we felt a sense that we were engaged in damage limitation during those early years of the Reagan Administration. The relationship was in really poor shape and a lot of that was due to the Soviets and the things that they had done, particularly, as we talked about before, the invasion of Afghanistan, which really sent things over a cliff in terms of even the Carter Administration's perception of an ability to do business with them. But the Reagan Administration came in with a, I think with a belief that you need to follow a much more robust policy toward the Soviet Union, and there wasn't a lot of real dialogue going on during those two years that I was on the desk.

To give you an example, when I went off toward the end of my two years, which would have been in May probably of '86, to conduct these consular negotiations in Moscow, sort of the last thing that the office director, Tom Simons, said to me was don't forget you're in charge of the only active negotiations that are going on with the Soviet Union right now and that kind of leads into the whole question of my next job and Chet Crocker and the issue of constructive engagement because it has to do with the issue of how do you deal with countries with which you're in fundamental disagreement. And what is the way to effect change in their foreign or domestic politics. Can you do it by discussions with them, by negotiating with them or do you need to take more vigorous steps even to the point of cutting off discussions and negotiations with them.

Q: Well then, so, when you left the desk, did you- how did you feel about- did you see that maybe Reagan- did you feel that Reagan was sort of set in his ways and you had an aging Politburo that wasn't going to go anywhere?

SMITH: I think at that time the relationship to me looked pretty mired, pretty bogged down, and it was difficult to see where it would go from there. We had a very experienced and talented Foreign Service Officer at the National Security Council heading European Affairs, Jack Matlock, but it wasn't clear how much influence he had at that time, at least not to me but I wasn't in a position to know how much influence he had. And Jack was very tough minded about the Soviet Union but at the same time very- a very adroit diplomat so he's the kind of guy that would look for opportunities to do

things. But at that time it wasn't clear that there was any- that any possibilities were likely to open up anytime in the near future.

Q: Well did you have a feel that the apparatus that we had to deal with the Soviets could- was it in control- I mean, were there equivalent to Reaganites who were keeping the relationship mired or was it pretty much the Soviets were just being beastly anyway?

SMITH: I think there were problems on both sides. You had an octogenarian leadership in the Soviet Union that just had no idea how to cope with either the Reagan Administration or with its own domestic problems, a leadership that had thought in the '70s that things were going its way internationally at least and was probably- I don't know whether they were starting to question that in the '80s or not but things were no longer going their way. You had a regime with the Reagan Administration that was prepared to use force in defense of U.S. interests that was developing ways to assist the Afghanistan resistance to the Soviet occupation. The Soviets didn't have any creative approaches at all to dealing with this. At the same time you had people on the U.S. side that believed that the answer was build a stronger military, do all you could to cut them down, economically, and there were degrees of that. You had a Rick Burt in the State Department and a Richard Pearl in the Defense Department and there were sort of famous battles between the two of them. Rick Burt was certainly no dove but Pearl was really way over there on the hawk side. He was called the prince of darkness in our circles.

Q: Well then, what brought about your move over to Southern Cone of Africa?

SMITH: Well, I had finished my two years on the Soviet desk so I was looking for another assignment and I had spent a lot of time in Africa; Chet Crocker knew a little bit of my work in Ivory Coast and I knew slightly some of the people in the front office in the Africa Bureau. I knew Frank Wisner slightly; he was the senior deputy assistant secretary at the time. So when the job opened up it looked really interesting, deputy director for the Southern Africa Region, and I applied for it, basically met with Chet Crocker and the new office director, his name was Bob Gelbard, and they selected me for the job.

Q: So you did that job from when to when?

SMITH: I did that from '84 to '86.

Q: What consisted the Southern Cone- of what consisted?

SMITH: Well, the Southern Cone of Africa, our office had, if I recall correctly, 10 countries in it, basically up to and including Zambia, Angola, Mozambique, Malawi; that was the northern tier for us. We did not go into Zaire or Tanzania and my particular portfolio was Angola, Namibia, Mozambique, I think Zambia was included in mine, Botswana, and there was another deputy director who dealt directly with South Africa specifically and Zimbabwe, specifically.

Q: Did Madagascar fall into that?

SMITH: Madagascar did not fall into our purview, no.

Q: What area sort of concerned you the most during the time you were there?

SMITH: Well, we had extended negotiations while I was there with both Angola and Mozambique and those were the two principle things that I was involved in. These negotiations were headed personally by Chet Crocker in large part, or by Frank Wisner. We usually would have had the desk officer who served as a note taker, we would have had the office director, Bob Gelbard and me involved in a lot of negotiations. But the talking was pretty much done by Chet or Frank.

Q: What was, let's say the situation in Angola at the time?

SMITH: Well, Angola had a regime that called itself a communist regime, whatever that might have meant in the African context of the time. It was authoritarian, it was a regime that had, after independence, basically- there was supposed to be a negotiated coalition government after independence that included UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) and the tribes that were basically the tribes that supported UNITA. And they, the Angolan regime, undertook a coup and basically kicked UNITA out of the coalition and Jonas Savimbi, who headed the coalition, retreated into the bush and set up a guerrilla movement in opposition to the regime in power. The regime in power then invited Cuban troops, a fairly large contingent of Cuban troops, to support it and they were getting military aid from the Soviet Union. So a lot of the negotiation with Angola was around the issue of trying to persuade them to send the Cuban troops home and come to a negotiated agreement of some sort with UNITA.

Q: Well the two years you were there, was the war still going on?

SMITH: Yes it was. It was pretty much, at that time, a stalemated war. Savimbi had been getting support from South Africa, which pretty much blotted his copybook thoroughly in the eyes of all the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa and to the extent the black community in the U.S. was politically involved in the issue at all with them as well although at this time they weren't very involved. But you had a military situation where each year during the dry season the Angolan government would launch an offensive against UNITA, make some headway, drive Savimbi back further into his heartland area, and then when the weather changed he would regain a lot of the territory. If things got really dicey he could call upon the South Africans for support, either with troops or with air support or whatever he might need.

Q: How did we view these two groups fighting with each other? Were we heavily on the side of the UNITA group or not or was this- were we sort of qualifying ourselves?

SMITH: Well again, you come back to the question of constructive engagement, which was Chet Crocker's sort of approach to policy. In the Angolan situation that meant

negotiating with the government in power and trying to reach a compromise agreement. I think emotionally a lot of the Reagan Administration was very well disposed toward Savimbi. He was anti-communist or said he was, and was seen kind of as a freedom fighter and a resistor to this communist government, a feeling that he had been tossed out of power unfairly, and so I think he got a lot of support. I mean when he came to Washington he got to meet with Secretary of State Shultz; a lot of heads of state didn't necessarily get to meet with Shultz.

Q: Were the Cubans sort of the, almost the deal breaker? I mean, while the Cubans were there that was almost beyond the pale in a lot of thinking?

SMITH: Yes, yes. We were not prepared to have any kind of formal relationship with Angola as long as there were Cuban troops there and we made that clear to them. And the idea was if they got the Cuban troops out of there we would help them come to some sort of power sharing arrangement with UNITA that would not threaten them and we'd be prepared to provide various kinds of assistance. And if they wouldn't we would not get in the way of support for Savimbi and there were times when we actually tried to interfere with the income that the Angolan government got from oil, diamonds and that sort of thing. I remember an effort to get our oil companies that were operating there to cutback or discontinue operations or whatever; basically the oil companies said that's not happening, they said we work very well with this regime, they treat us well and we're going to be here for the long haul and eventually you will probably be glad we are.

Q: How did we view the South Africans in this combination?

SMITH: Well, I mean, there's two issues. One is South Africa's domestic politics and the other was South Africa's foreign policy. And in terms of the foreign policy there was no one, as long as there were Cuban troops in Angola, who was going to object to South Africa's supporting- helping provide support to UNITA. And that was just a fundamental principle of the policy. In terms of the policy toward the black population of South Africa and the apartheid policy, personally I never saw that as being a high priority in terms of our dealings with the government of South Africa. Now maybe Chet Crocker from his position would have seen it differently and again, South Africa was not directly part of my portfolio. I dealt with South Africa in terms of its foreign policy in the region, particularly in Angola and Mozambique, so there may be things that I'm not aware of but I can only tell you my sense of what it was and that was that we weren't seriously putting any pressure on the South African government with regard to its policies.

And by the way, it should be said that there wasn't much pressure being put on the U.S. Government to put pressure on South Africa at that point in time. One of my jobs was to be an occasional flak catcher in the black American community with regard to our policy in Southern Africa and particularly our policy toward South Africa. And I remember one time going to, I think it was Wayne State University in Detroit, as a panel member and being greeted with less than overwhelming enthusiasm and also speaking to a group on the Hill, members of Congress and staffers on policy toward South Africa and getting hammered about the fact that Nelson Mandela was in prison and we weren't doing

anything about it. And I made a couple of points; one is how long has Nelson Mandela been in prison? Well he'd been in prison I think since the Kennedy Administration and various Democratic and Republican administrations had done little or at least little effective to get him out of prison. So there's a question about whether the Reagan Administration should be hammered any harder than anybody else on that subject, I mean, the fact that he was in prison was not the responsibility of the Reagan Administration.

But the other point I made was that we saw very little in public or Congressional input in the Southern African office with regard to the black community's concern about this. When I was on the Soviet desk we had Congressional inquiries on daily basis about the Soviet Union's policy toward Jewish refuseniks and we were constantly dealing with that and it informed a lot of our policy toward the Soviet Union. We got nothing from the black population of the country about U.S. policy toward South Africa. And I said if you want to affect policy you need to be more effective in communicating your concerns. And eventually, black Americans got more involved in those issues but at the time that I started on the desk in Southern African Affairs there just weren't those visible expressions of interest anything like that you got dealing with Soviet Affairs with the Jewish refusenik issue.

Q: How about Mozambique? How did that play out?

SMITH: Well Mozambique was a somewhat different situation. Mozambique had its own civil war going with an organization called FRELIMO. And we were- we had a better relationship with the government of Mozambique than we did with the Angolan government. We had an embassy there, we had an ambassador there and our involvement with Mozambique was more around the issue of trying to help them find ways to negotiate a settlement with FRELIMO or else to defeat FRELIMO because unlike UNITA there was no US constituency for support for, really for FRELIMO. Maybe a little bit of one but not anything like to the same extent so that was more the focus for our policy there, how can this civil war be resolved so that the country can pull itself together and start to develop. And both of those countries were really in dismal shape. Angola if anything worse. I was astounded the first time I went to Angola, to see the capital; this was a place that looked like on the day the Portuguese packed up and left every construction instrument in the country had frozen in place and never moved since. You had cranes that were rusted in place. You had buildings that had been started and been sitting there for 10 years. You had an incredible level of poverty. And this was a country that had oil revenue, had revenue for diamonds, it had sources of revenue but those resources all went into the civil war and there was nothing left over to do anything. It was a terrible, miserable situation. The capital, the best I could describe it is, it looked, in terms of infrastructure, like maybe a third tier city in most Sub-Saharan African countries.

Q: I'm trying to think about, how did you view Crocker? You know, he was sort of controversial when he was there, particularly at the beginning he seemed to be not as aggressive against apartheid and all. I mean, how did you, sort of the professionals do?

SMITH: Well personally I liked him because he was- it was more interesting working for him than almost anyone I worked with in my whole time in the Foreign Service. He made a regular practice at the end of the working day or an hour or so after the end of the normal working day, of getting together in his office with three or four or half a dozen people involved in some of the key issues that he was interested in and sitting down and talking about where we were, what our approaches ought to be, a real conceptual discussion of what was going on, what we needed to do to make things go our way, what our strategy was, what our tactics ought to be. You know, in my experience in the Foreign Service I almost never had those kinds of discussions and that's unfortunate because those kinds of discussions ought to be going on all the time. Usually you were too busy pushing paper but he made time at the end of the day to do that so I really found that intellectually stimulating and satisfying, to take part in those kinds of things.

Now, with regard to policy; you know, Crocker was not liked by people who wanted us to hammer much harder on the South Africans. I mean, he also was not liked very well by the very conservative Republicans so he was maybe fortunate to be in his job and to hold it for as long as he did because he didn't have a real strong base of support. But another part of it was in dealing with Southern Africa, in dealing with Africa generally, because it was pretty low on the priority list for the administration or for that matter in reality for any administration of foreign policy, he had a pretty free hand in handling his negotiations, a much freer hand than the assistant secretary for Near Eastern Affairs would have had, the assistant secretary for European Affairs, because those were much more high priority issues and you would have- you couldn't have done the kinds of things that he did in Africa at an assistant secretary level probably in any other region except maybe Latin America because they were lower priority, less strategically significant issues for U.S. foreign policy. But at the same time, for somebody working on that it made it more interesting.

Q: Of course. Well, was there any opening to the Cubans that you were aware of while you were there?

SMITH: I can't remember if we ever met with the Cubans. I'm thinking that I would probably remember if we had. If there were any meetings with them I think I would have to say I was not involved in them. I think- that would have been difficult. I just don't think it was part of the administration's policy to have those kinds of contacts with the Cubans and we didn't want them to think that they could negotiate their withdrawal from Angola with us. You know, it wasn't a negotiating thing between Cuba and the United States. We wanted them out of there; we weren't going to give up anything to Cuba in return for getting them out of there.

Q: How about some of the other states, Britain, Germany, France, the Dutch; were they playing much of a role, from your perspective?

SMITH: From my perspective not a whole lot. The British were present in Angola and we had contact with them and the ambassador, I can't remember his name now, the

British ambassador there was pretty well thought of, I think, by Chet Crocker, who by the way was also very positive about the British government and its foreign policy generally so he was very interested in keeping them involved, exchanging ideas with them, keeping them informed. But how active they were directly I don't have a good sense of that. I did have occasional meetings with a French diplomat who wanted to talk about our policy toward South Africa but the French policy was not very significant. I mean, they were basically in a moralistic phase toward South Africa at that point in time and this guy would come in and sort of ask me how we could support this South African government, which was practicing apartheid. And I reminded him whose jet planes they were flying and who built the nuclear plant that they had there, and his answer was well that was done by a previous administration in France. My personal opinion is as a diplomat that's not something you should say; you don't dismiss your government's policies by attributing it to a previous administration. But anyway, that was, you know, the French were not serious and I don't remember a lot of contact with them.

I do remember going to Amsterdam once for discussions with the Dutch foreign ministry because we wanted their understanding and to the extent we could get it their support for our policy and explained what we were trying to do and why we were trying to do it and they were fairly receptive at the level that I met.

Q: How'd you find the South African embassy? Were they sort of an embassy under siege or were they an _____ one to _____ out?

SMITH: I'm sure I had some contact with the South African embassy occasionally but I don't remember much about it. There were demonstrations there, of course, regularly; if not regularly at least occasionally, and they were not- I don't have a sense that they were very active but they were able to get in see Chet Crocker. But to the extent it was strictly South Africa-U.S., that would have been the other deputy director who decided on those things.

Q: Did Botswana play any role at all?

SMITH: Not much. We had a little bit more- I mean, Namibia was a little bit more of an issue because you had, oh, what was the- you had kind of a liberation movement in Namibia that we were not very friendly to and that we- we didn't think it was very competent. But I had a little bit of involvement with that but not a lot. Botswana we had- I don't think Botswana really stuck its head up very much on these kinds of key issues.

Q: How about Israel? I mean, Israel had been a strong supporter of South Africa in various _____. Did that play much of a role?

SMITH: No, not that I can recall at the time. The whole issue of constructive engagement, which was Crocker's sort of thing, it comes down to the- it's a way of getting at the question of what do you do? If you're a diplomat you start with the notion that talking is better than not talking and that you're better off negotiating with people that you disagree with than ignoring them, isolating them and that sort of thing, and in essence that's basically the- as I would take it, the principle that Crocker had with

constructive engagement, that whether you liked what they were doing or not, they were there, you had to talk to them. There might be regimes- And in a sense that was the issue with the Soviet Union, too. You might not like the regime in power, you might not like its domestic politics or its foreign policy but it was there and you needed to talk to it.

Probably there are regimes occasionally that you just- it's no use trying to talk to. I mean, could you have ever negotiated with Napoleon so that he would have been prepared to accept a status quo foreign policy for France? Could you have negotiated with Hitler any real agreement? Probably not. But when do you decide which is the policy to follow?

Q: Well did you get any feel from all the news or outside people or something that you were dealing with a policy that was under significant attack almost the whole time, right, as constructive engagement?

SMITH: Yes. It was definitely a policy that was criticized on I guess what you would call the liberal side of the political spectrum in the U.S., which was a spectrum of the U.S. that wanted us to engage with the Soviet Union but wanted us to isolate and punish South Africa. Why? Well, because South Africa's policies were so bad that you could not talk to them. You needed to punish them, isolate them and that sort of thing. Soviet policies, on the other hand, were- you might not like but they weren't so bad that you shouldn't talk to them and try to engage them. So there was some inconsistency there and as I said, a lot of the attacks on the policy were not very effectively organized in terms of representing a real challenge. There might have been an intellectual challenge but it wasn't a politically effective challenge at that point in time in the U.S. with that administration in power and with the balance of power that existed in Congress and that sort of thing at that time.

Q: Well then, did you feel that you were on the right side of things, that we were trying to do the right thing?

SMITH: Well, I would have to say that I thought we were trying to do the right thing in trying to get the Cubans out of Angola and in trying to find a way to negotiate toward a regime in Angola with which the U.S. could have a more constructive relationship. The same thing with Mozambique. Now, South African, I of course had no use at all for the apartheid policy. I did not like personally most of the South Africans that I met with we negotiated with up to and including the foreign minister, Pik Botha. They were racist, sexist, all the "ists" that you don't particularly like. And I guess it's a fair question, should we have winked as much as we did at their support for UNITA in Angola, and that was kind of a strategic question, you know. If they were helping UNITA resist the Cubans then that was okay with us. But when you come down to the fundamental of what did you do about the apartheid regime in South Africa, that was not any easier a question to resolve between '84 and '86 in the Reagan Administration that it had been for the previous 20 years under a variety of both Democratic and Republican administrations. Did we have the power to force them to end that regime? We had used sanctions against southern Rhodesians and ultimately those sanctions had been effective but it had taken about 10 years for them to be effective. And the white position and the regime power situation in southern Rhodesia was much weaker than that of the South African

government. So what exactly were we supposed to do to overthrow apartheid in South Africa? I'm not sure what it should have been.

Ultimately, in my view, what happened in South Africa was a continual pressure from the outside world, including the U.S., combined with a loss of ideological belief in the South Africans about their right to rule. And when they no longer believed that they had a right to rule and facing this outside pressure, the question became alright, how do you negotiate a settlement that lets us keep our stuff? Then that becomes an economic issue and you can negotiate economics. You can't negotiate apartheid if apartheid is a policy that's handed down from God, which the South Africans, at least the Dutch, the Boer South Africans for several generations believed. Now, I don't think very many of them believed that any longer by the '80s but that's exactly the point. Because they no longer believed that you could begin a negotiation process that was ultimately successful.

Q: Well I'm just- that whole thing of trying to balance off these, you know, we've got the Cubans, we've got apartheid, we've got all this that- sort of everything came together, didn't it, and in a small enough arena so we weren't going to go to nuclear war.

SMITH: Yes. Yes, you had the U.S.-Soviet rivalry in the Third World there. You had Cuban surrogates. You had U.S. surrogates, essentially, being UNITA. And you had us essentially in bed with a regime we didn't like very much because it was supporting an anti-communist movement in Angola.

Q: In your position was there anybody monitoring what was happening in Cuba or was it felt that the Cubans weren't likely to, I mean sort of the Cuban people, to want to pull out of there?

SMITH: Yes, we were trying to monitor what was going on in Cuba and we had periodic contacts with the Cuba desk on this. And around the issue of what this was costing the Cubans to keep these people there, what they were getting out of it, how much support were they getting from the Soviets to do this, how long were they prepared to keep it up and things like that, because it was a costly endeavor for Cuba unless they were being reimbursed by the Soviet Union for doing it and I'm not sure that we had a real sense of how much they were being reimbursed. Obviously there were arms going in to Angola, either directly or indirectly from the Soviet Union. They were sending them to Cuba, some of them were then going with the Cuban forces to Angola.

Q: Well by the time you left that job, how stood things? Had there been much progress?

SMITH: Well, none of these things were resolved during the time that I was there. Were they coming closer to resolution? I think in retrospect you could say that they were. It seemed at the time that there was a chance of persuading the Angolan government that it had embarked on a policy that was futile, that it was not going to be able militarily to defeat UNITA, even with the Cuban troops there, and that it was bankrupting itself in the process and that it needed to find a better way. But we hadn't gotten there yet.

Q: You left there when now?

SMITH: In the summer of '86.

Q: So Gorbachev was coming into power or was he-

SMITH: Yes, when did he take power? Was it in '85 or early '86 or was it in '84?

Q: But the full swing of the Gorbachev regime change hadn't happened yes.

SMITH: No. I mean, his first year or two after he came into power was a very sort of slow period of development in terms of the reforms, as things later accelerated. You know he- even after Chernenko's death there was no guarantee that they might not have found another octogenarian to replace him, and in fact there was an octogenarian, Gromyko, who nominated him, and he needed that nomination from somebody from that generation. And after he came into power and got the job as general secretary the first thing he needed to do was start to consolidate his hold on the Politburo a little bit. And he started to do that by getting rid of a couple of people who were potential threats to him or hardliners that he could get rid of for one reason or another. Romanov, who was actually from Gorbachev's generation who was the party boss in what was then Leningrad, he was able to get rid of because Romanov had embarrassed himself by destroying a lot of historic dishes in a drunken New Year's Eve party and Gorbachev sort of used that, and other things, I'm sure, to get him removed as the party boss in Leningrad. And that removed somebody from his own generation who might have been a threat. Then I think around the same period I think he got Aliyev from Azerbaijan removed from the Politburo. So he began to take steps to solidify his position there.

Q: Were you sort of keeping your Soviet credentials up, at least watching it from the sidelines?

SMITH: Yes. I would call it watching it from the sidelines more than, you know- Because I had a really- both my Soviet desk jobs and my Southern African Affairs jobs were quite intense, long hours, and there wasn't a lot of time for being in depth on anything else except what you were doing.

Q: Reagan was sort of problematic early on but particularly with Shultz. How did you feel about Shultz, the secretary of state?

SMITH: I don't know if you're asking how I felt personally or my sense of how the Department felt about Shultz.

Q: Well, let's say how the Department felt.

SMITH: I think professionals in the Department thought fairly well of Shultz. I think that they felt he had a certain amount of respect for the Foreign Service, which grew over time, but he found ways to convey that, which a lot of the rest of the Reagan

Administration did not have. And so he sort of stood out that way. And he was definitely not far separated from the rest of the Reagan Administration's overall foreign policy approach but within that spectrum he was relatively more on the moderate side.

I remember when he met with Jonas Savimbi, Savimbi gave him a walking stick and said in Africa—it was a carved walking stick, quite beautiful—and Savimbi said in Africa the leader uses this to point the way. And Shultz picked it up and said, to the right, which was, I thought, kind of funny. But he was a conservative but not- I wouldn't call him an ideological conservative. Maybe that's the difference. He didn't have a world view that was so ideological that it was not subject to change.

Q: In my interviews and with other people too, Shultz comes out very high in the ratings, whatever rating system you can think of from sort of the Foreign Service professionals.

SMITH: Yes.

Q: The secretary of state, most others during this decades long didn't come up that much.

SMITH: Yes, I would have to agree. Yes, that would be my sense too.

Q: Well then, where'd you go?

SMITH: Well, I got what's called a Una Chapman Cox grant. This is a foundation that provides funds for Foreign Service people to do things. It was used as sort of a senior training alternative and so I applied for and got a grant to write a book on negotiating with the Soviet Union and the idea of the book was sort of the Russian political culture and how it affects how they approach negotiations. So I got like a \$25,000 grant from the Una Chapman Cox Foundation to cover expenses involved in doing the research on this book and the Department treated it as senior training so I continued to get a salary from the Department.

So what I did was, I went over to Georgetown University to the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy and spent a year there, gave them part of this grant, about one-fourth of this grant, I guess, or a little bit more, for the privilege of office space and that sort of thing, agreed to teach a course- or co-teach a course on negotiations with an associate dean there, Alan Goodman, and also to provide counseling to some of the students at the School of Foreign Service.

I spent a year there doing research on the book and writing the book and I pretty much finished the research and the writing during the course of the year that I was there. And it was a good opportunity for me, having been sort of preoccupied with Southern Africa for two years to begin to get back into Soviet affairs but also to look at it in a more long-term way because what motivated me was my sense that in negotiating with the Soviet Union even my fellow Foreign Service Officers who were area specialists often did not conduct the negotiations that well and often got angry with the responses they got from the Soviet Union over things that I felt involved a failure to really fully understand the people

you're negotiating with. And I got interested in some literature which was called "Comparative Negotiating Style." Richard Solomon had done some work in this area and some other people did as well. So I wanted to look at the political culture and how that affected how people in the Soviet Union learned how to negotiate, what their expectations of negotiations were and what was important to them in a negotiation. And I wanted to write a book that would help people understand this better so that if you- so that you could either get a better outcome in your negotiations or, if you weren't getting the responses you expected you would understand a little bit better why you were not getting the responses you expected.

Q: Well, in the first place, was there a Soviet diplomatic academy where they taught this style or did this come from the Russian soil?

SMITH: I would say it came from the Russian political culture as opposed to the Russian soil and I don't think they were taught in- they were taught techniques of negotiation in their equivalent of a diplomatic academy but they weren't taught the fundamental things that they learned in their political culture about negotiating. By that I mean three of the chief things that I identified that affected their style of negotiations was what I called "authority, risk avoidance and control." And their understanding of these three things had an enormous impact on how they negotiate and Americans and probably Western Europeans in general, have a very different gut level feeling about these things than Soviet do, and specifically Russians do. And that would often lead people to go astray in negotiations.

For example, one really interesting book on this subject was called "The Russian Mind," and in that the author makes the point that the Russians view authority relationships as all or nothing. That is, you either have the authority, in which case you've got it all, or you don't have the authority, in which case you have none. So in an authority relationship you're going to be either the all or the none. And that's their expectation. In a personal relationship they expect complete equality in their relationship. So I-

Q: Can we just stop for a second?

SMITH: Sure.

Q: We're back in business. Make sure, yes. Okay, we were talking about the Russian style of negotiations.

SMITH: Yes. So, risk avoidance or no, authority. Okay. So an American goes into a negotiation and puts a proposal down on the table and wants to talk about the proposal. The Russian doesn't want to talk about the proposal; he wants to figure out what the authority relationship is going to be in this negotiation.

Q: What do you mean by "authority relationship"?

SMITH: Dominance submission. Somebody has all the authority and somebody else doesn't. And- Alright. An early stage of a negotiation with a Russian can be nothing but a frustrating series of them saying no to everything. Why? Because they're not prepared to engage on the substance because the relationship between them and you is not clear yet. Oftentimes what you have to do is move that relationship out of the formal setting into an informal setting where you can get a social relationship established because they will expect that to be a relationship of equals. And if you have that sort of social relationship established you can then carry that back over to the negotiation. Now you have a Russian sitting across from you who's no longer about his position in the negotiation being lower than yours or higher than yours. He can now deal with you as an equal and get down to the substance of the negotiation.

Q: So in other words, this is a very personal thing, you know, to begin with. I mean, it's more- Rather than an American just wants to come in, I suppose, and say here it is, let's talk about the issues and all that and not-

SMITH: Yes. And the Russian wants to talk about the shape of the table.

Q: Yes.

SMITH: Yes, exactly. They're not ready to talk about the issue. Another way of putting part of this is the distinction between a high context culture and a low context culture. I don't know if you're familiar with that.

Q: No, I'm not.

SMITH: Alright. Basically somebody wrote a book on this and I think it's an interesting concept. What this person argues is that we Americans in particular live in a very low context culture. That is, we put a lot of reliance on and get most of our information from the spoken and the written word. That's where we get our information from. That's low context. In a high context culture you get much less of your information from the spoken or written word and much more from the context in which that spoken or written word is presented. In the most trivial sense it could be body language and that's one of the things of course you're taught in negotiations to pay attention to. Americans need to be taught that. We need to be taught to get out of our low context way of thinking and pay attention to contextual issues. For Russians context is a much higher priority and they naturally, they don't have to be taught, to look at context. They can no more not look at context than we could not look at the written word.

Q: Well in some ways, and I may get my head chopped off on this-

SMITH: Not by me.

Q: -but one of the things that has been said that women are much more intuitive about body language, situations and all than men and so this seems like sort of the Russian

style has more of a touch of the female gender to it than we would ascribe to the female gender.

SMITH: I don't know if I would put it right that way but I do agree that women, for whatever reasons, tend to be higher context than men. And that results in misunderstanding at times, just as it can in negotiating between a low context culture and a high context culture.

What did you learn in the Soviet Union when you read a newspaper or listened to a television announcer? Did you get information from what you read or from what they said? Well, you would probably get some information from it but you might get just as much more from what wasn't said as from what was said. That's the context. And the whole thing of Kremlinology was to find contextual clues to what was really going on in Soviet society. Soviet citizens were natural Kremlinologists; they didn't have to be taught.

Q: Well, when you wrote this I mean, when their sort of- this would be I suppose from the American, I mean, you'd want a series of little check-places to check off; were the arms folded or were they- I mean, were there things that you could put it to the American, his way of understanding his opponent?

SMITH: Well I don't know if you could do a checkbox to tell people how to determine this. I wrote the book so people would read the book and if you read the book and absorbed it the next time you sat across from a Soviet or a Russian diplomat you would understand if you got responses from them other than the ones that you would expect from sitting across and negotiating with another American that there were reasons in their political culture that might explain why you were getting those. He might not have just been being a jerk; he was being a Russian and he was doing what his culture had taught him you do in a negotiation.

Q: Were you able to get some Russians to sit down with you and discuss this?

SMITH: I was able to get some émigrés from the Soviet Union to sit down and discuss it with me. I went to Israel and discussed it with some people there. I discussed it with some in the United States. I was not able, at that time, to get any Soviet diplomats to sit down and discuss it with me. I interviewed a lot of Americans who had negotiated with Soviets so I was able to take some of my concepts and bounce them off of them and hear their stories about negotiating and that sort of thing and refine some of my ideas and that sort of thing. And I actually was invited to the equivalent of the Soviet Diplomatic Academy when I was on a tour in Moscow later to give a presentation on my book, which I told them at the start of it that I ought to be listening to you about the Soviet negotiating style, not telling you about it. What I ought to be telling you about is the American negotiating style. But- so you invited me and the way I approached it was to try to give them some contrasts between what I saw as the American negotiating style and what I saw as the Soviet negotiating style.

Q: I would imagine, I mean, when you're looking at one style then you have to in a way contrast it to the other side which would be out side, wouldn't you? And did you see- what did you see in the- sort of the American style that was dominant?

SMITH: Well, to come back to this idea of low context. I mean, we are very focused in our negotiations on the written word or the spoken word, on what is said. We tend to try to put forth a proposal that is- that we think is fair and then if the other side is dismissive of it, contemptuous of it we get mad because we spent all this time trying to be fair before we ever got there. And so now we're mad and they're just doing what comes natural.

We don't necessarily understand how to get to closure in a negotiation with a culture different from ours. In many ways for a Russian the assumption is that if the deal is good enough for me obviously it's not good enough for them and so they have to ask for more. We get mad if they keep asking for more. There's nothing to get mad about. That is simply their way of testing what the real limits are. And sometimes you have to fold up your papers and get up and head for the door before they're convinced that this is really the final offer. And when they're going back to their superiors they have to be able to say there is nothing more we can get out of these people; I pushed it as hard as I possibly can. And they have to believe that at a gut level. How do you get them to believe that? As I said, sometimes you have to literally or figuratively fold your papers up in your folder and get up and head for the door. And then they'll call you back, more likely than not, either immediately or shortly thereafter.

I'll give you an example of that. Nineteen-eighty-seven, the stock market crashed. Supposed to have arms negotiations going on with the Soviet Union and there were some scheduled for immediately after the stock market crashed. The Soviets called them off because-why? They thought we were going to be in such a weakened position that they could come back later and demand more. We just let them call them off, went about our business and about a month later Gorbachev sent his foreign minister to the U.S. to get the talks started again. They called them off but we stuck to our guns and they realized that the fact that we had had some economic problem in the U.S. was not going to fundamentally affect our position.

Q: Well then after you did this paper for a year, did the book sort of enter the library of the American diplomat?

SMITH: Well, it didn't get published until fall of 1989, by which time I was already back in Moscow so it took awhile to go from completion of first draft through the publication process but that's not unusual. And it was well reviewed, a few copies sold. I've heard from people periodically who have said that it's been really helpful to them.

Q: Well I would think it would be. As one goes into these things so often we jump in without realizing, in a way going back to the context, you know, what are we doing rather than it's not just I know what I'm up to and so do the other guys know what I'm up to; that's the assumption.

SMITH: Yes, exactly. And the other thing is that we sit across from an African diplomat or an Asian diplomat. I mean, we know immediately that they're from a different culture because they look different. Now, we shouldn't have to be told that a Russian diplomat comes from a different culture but we don't have all those visual cues so we have to sort of shake ourselves a little bit and say wait a minute. This guy is coming from a culture that did not have the Renaissance, the Reformation or the Enlightenment. That culture is a lot different from ours and that has to be our starting point.

Q: Well then, where did you go then and when?

SMITH: Well, I finished that up and actually had a difficult experience with the personnel system, although it all turned out right in the end. I was at Georgetown and traveling and all that stuff and I had to put in my bids and I provided them to the office- You know, I couldn't put them in by cable because I had no access to anything so I gave them a written piece of paper with my bids. Well, it never got entered into the system and as a result by the time spring of '86 came around I wasn't getting any job offers. And I went back to check on it and that's when I found out that I hadn't appeared on any of the lists of people for- bidding for any of the jobs that I wanted and a lot of them were already gone. So I was scrambling around, scrambling around looking for a job and couldn't find anything that I was prepared to take and finally an opening came up on the Policy Planning Staff, to be Soviet advisor. And that was quite interesting to me so I took it and I went on the Policy Planning Staff in the summer, early fall of '87.

Q: And you did that for how long?

SMITH: Well, it was supposed to be for a year but I wound up only doing it for about four or five months because I was approached by the Soviet desk and there was a new agency being set up in the Defense Department called the Onsite Inspection Agency, which was responsible for carrying out inspections under the treaty that banned intermediate range missiles. And it was being headed by somebody from the Defense Department and there was going to be a State Department deputy director as well as one from the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and they asked me if I would do that while the agency was being set up until the summer. And I should say that one of the reasons- and I was willing to do that and one of the reasons was that I already knew by that point that I was going out to Moscow as the political counselor the following summer. During that fall, among the jobs that came open was the political counselor in Moscow in '88 and so I bid on it and Jack Matlock, who was the ambassador at the time was in town and I met with him, I had worked for him before when I was in Moscow and he basically- he and the desk supported me for the job and so I basically had the job. So the question was whether to spend the rest of the year with the Policy Planning Staff or to jump the Policy Planning Staff and spend the last six months or so with the Onsite Inspection Agency.

And the job with the Policy Planning Staff was interesting but not as interesting as I thought it would be because a lot of what the Policy Planning Staff was doing involved Soviet policy in various parts of the world and the lead on those was going to the regional

expert for that part of the world. So I could have input but I wasn't the lead person. And so being the deputy director for the Onsite Inspection Agency, particularly since it was just being established and all of this was seminal stuff and new stuff sounded interesting to me so I took that job.

Q: Well, just talk a bit about Policy Planning. This, I'm told this can be whatever the secretary of state wants it and sometimes it's essentially where you put your speech writers.

SMITH: Yes.

Q: How stood it during the time you were there? How did it fit into the State Department?

SMITH: Well Richard Solomon was the Policy Planning director at the time. I can't say how influential he was in seventh floor counsels; it's hard for me to tell. He was a- he's a serious guy, a real academic background that he brought with him to the Policy Planning Staff. As I said, he was one of the guys whose work got me interested in comparative negotiating style. Very interested in getting involved with dealing with his counterparts in the Soviet Union. Everybody, of course, was interested in dealing with the Soviet Union because that's where the sexy stuff was going on. And so he set up meetings with the Policy Planning Staff and I took part in those meetings with him.

That was one of the disappointments to me, of taking part in that, because Solomon had brought with him as one of his advisors on the Policy Planning Staff a fellow from the outside who was trained as a psychologist but not a- no real background in Soviet affairs or anything like that. And I went to a meeting with their Policy Planning Staff in Moscow where this advisor to Solomon spent 45, what to me were most excruciating minutes telling the Soviet policy planners about the Russian soul. And I mean, it was really painful to me, as a Soviet expert.

First of all, just as I told you when I was asked to talk to these diplomats about Soviet negotiating style I didn't feel comfortable about that because they ought to know a whole lot more about it than I did. I wanted to learn from them about it, although I had written a book on the subject because a book needed to be written in my opinion and I was fairly well informed of the subject, I thought. But to tell a bunch of Russians about the Russian soul-

Q: Was it Rusky Duch or something?

SMITH: Yes. If you want to know about it, ask them about it, don't spend 45 minutes telling them about it.

Well, after that it was difficult for me to take my role on the Policy Planning Staff very seriously and Solomon really liked this guy who was his advisor and just thought he

could do no wrong. And so that was another reason why when I had the opportunity to move I took it.

Q: Well, what's the background of this arms- We had just gone through the SS-20 confrontation, hadn't we? Or was that-

SMITH: I can't remember.

Q: It was during the Reagan period.

SMITH: The SS-20s were the intermediate range missiles.

Q: The SS-20s were the intermediate and then we came back with the Pershing and the ground launch cruise missiles, the GLCMs.

SMITH: Yes. Well, it was the Pershings and the SS-20s that were the principle things that were being destroyed under the intermediate nuclear forces agreement. And that was a big thing, actually, because remember, I had told you a couple of years earlier that there wasn't much in the way of negotiations going on at all and now we had come to an agreement.

Q: Because this is a major, I mean-

SMITH: Yes. To destroy an entire class of missiles, including the ones that could most rapidly hit the Soviet Union on the one side and Western Europe on the other. You had very little warning about those missiles because they weren't traveling a long distance and so they were really tricky in terms of deterrence theory because they were real-would fall into real first strike category type of thing and that you would have to react to very quickly. So it was a- they were destabilizing in terms of deterrents and getting them off the table was something that most people thought was a really good idea. And this organization was set up to carry out the inspections under this treaty and it later morphed into an agency that still exists today. What's it called? It's CTR? Yes, anyway, it still exists today.

So we had, first of all, there was a dispute about who should be running this agency to begin with. The State Department wanted to run it, ACDA, the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency wanted to run it and the decision on the part of the administration was that the Defense Department should run it. Actually, I can't quarrel with that decision. Why? Because they had six months to start inspections. They had to find- get an entire staff together, set up a structure, train people and get them started on inspections between like December of '86 and June of '87. There is no way that the State Department could have done that. We just can't manage our personnel that way. The Defense Department sent out orders to a bunch of military people to show up on such and such a date and they showed up and you had an organization. They commandeered officers.

And so it was being run by the military; they picked the guy to head it who had been a defense attaché in Moscow, Roland Lajoie, a very experienced guy in the Defense Department on the Soviet Union, good Russian speaker, had studied the culture. You know, they put their defense attachés through more time and training than we put our political people through. They have more people, of course, and more money for that sort of thing but they do put their people through a lot of training. And he was very good.

The immediate issue was conducting negotiations over implementation of this treaty and that turned into a big can of worms. I was given, initially given responsibility for these negotiations but it quickly became clear that that wasn't going to work. We had a treaty that ran several hundred pages. The Soviets, in typical Soviet fashion, immediately started negotiations trying to walk back some parts of the treaty they didn't like. I was on one side and on the other side we had our verification people who had not gotten everything into the treaty that they felt needed to be there to ensure no possibility of cheating. And we're talking about how many millimeter space there could be between the container holding a missile and the missile itself, and things like that. I mean, it was really down into precision that was beyond my belief. I did an initial trip out to the plant that produced the SS-20s in Votkinsk in Russia. I was the first American to ever have been there. And I wasn't allowed in the plant at that point; we were never allowed in the plant. What we were allowed to do was set up a perimeter around the plant and an inspection site outside of the plant where the things would come out and be inspected. So I made a circuit around the entire thing and helped decide where we actually had it set up, had barracks built for people who were there literally 24 hours a day for years, conducting these inspections.

But the implementation negotiations really got bogged down into minutiae and they were still going on when I went out to Moscow and they eventually came up with a six or seven hundred page document to explain the provisions, the verification provisions, of the two or three hundred page document that was the treaty itself. As an observer watching this I must say I was astonished that any arms control agreements were ever reached at all.

Q: I've interviewed two people I think were involved in this. One is Jane Floyd and the other is Eileen-

SMITH: Malloy.

Q: Malloy.

SMITH: Both of them worked for me in Moscow.

Q: Yes. When you got to Moscow, you got there when?

SMITH: I got there in August of 1988.

Q: How stood things?

SMITH: Well first let me say that on the Washington end there was still a lot of skepticism about what was going on in the Soviet Union. At that time the words reform were on everybody's lips and the terms perestroika and glasnost were known as principles of Gorbachev's reform effort but what these really meant in terms of whether there was going to be any fundamental change in the Soviet Union and its relationship with the U.S. was very much in political dispute in Washington. There were still very important people who believed that this was simply an effort to increase the efficiency of the Soviet economy without any fundamental change in how the country was organized so that in the end if these reforms were successful you would be facing the same threat but a threat based upon a more efficient economy. And that was the view at that time held by, for example, Bob Gates, who was the head of the CIA. So it was really held by important people.

My view before I even left was that this was a mis-estimation of what was going on in the Soviet Union. And I had been able to begin to follow it over the last two years a lot more closely while writing my book, being advisor in the Policy Planning Staff and being out there with the Onsite Inspection Agency. And to me it was clear that the Soviet government was doing some things that were fundamentally different and were going to have a major impact on the society that was not fully appreciated in Washington.

Let me give you an example. In December 1987 Andrei Sakharov, who had been in exile for several years, maybe even longer than that, in Gorky, was allowed to come back to Moscow, he was allowed to return from exile. That was a big headline story in the U.S. as well as it should have been and it was received in a very positive light by the U.S. administration because it had been a major issue of dispute between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, the way Andrei Sakharov was being treated. To me that was not the important thing that happened, because although Sakharov was probably the most prominent human rights advocate, human rights advocates were being sent into exile and being allowed to return for time immemorial in Russian and Soviet society; this was not new. What was new was that after Gorbachev came back to Moscow he was allowed-

Q: Sakharov came back.

SMITH: Sorry; Sakharov came back to Moscow, glad you corrected me on that, he was allowed to go on television without being scripted and talk about whatever he wanted to talk about. Now, this could never have happened under a pre-Gorbachev regime. Control of information was a fundamental principle of Soviet society. Remember when I talked about my book, you know, authority, risk avoidance and control as being three key principles? Here was a regime that was relaxing control on one of the most fundamental things that it always insisted it had to have control over—who was allowed to provide information to the Soviet people. And here you had them giving the most prominent dissident in the Soviet Union access to the television channels to say whatever he wanted to say. To me that was the key thing that happened because it meant not just here's another dissident coming back from exile but here is what glasnost means. It means that the Soviet people are going to be able to get information about the outside world that the

regime no longer controlled. And how do you- once you allow that kind of freedom of information, how do you control the consequences of that?

Q: Were you able to figure out the thought process of Gorbachev on letting this happen? It's one thing to have glasnost but to allow something of this magnitude to happen, I mean this is so- almost atypical, wasn't it? From what had been, as you say, from the past. Had something happened? I mean, was there a bonding between Sakharov and Gorbachev or what?

SMITH: Well that's really hard for me to say. I think it's reasonable to say that Gorbachev probably had a lot of respect for Sakharov, both as a scientist who had done great things for the Soviet Union and as a human being who had defended beliefs that he had and eminently- what most people would think would be in an eminently acceptable way. But why perestroika and glasnost? See, because allowing Sakharov to do this was a symbol of what glasnost meant. That's what its importance to Gorbachev was, in my opinion. How more visibly could you show both the Soviet people and the West that glasnost meant something different than by allowing somebody like Sakharov to go on Soviet television. Why glasnost? And why perestroika? They're two different things.

Glasnost means basically openness of information. The Soviet Union was falling steadily behind in scientific advance. Gorbachev was well aware of that. How can you not fall behind the cutting edge of science and technology in an information age if you insist on restricting the flow of information? They were doomed to fall further and further behind unless they opened up information. Yes, they tried to steal information from the West; yes, they tried to steal secrets from the West about science and technology and sometimes no doubt they succeeded. What happened to it once it got into Soviet society? Compartmentalized. It never- It got to a very few people. How do you get that information out in a way that it can be used by the community? You can't do that with those kinds of controls over information flow. So he knew those had to be relaxed.

Perestroika. What is perestroika? Perestroika says structurally we are organized in a way that is self destructive and we have got to find a way to reorganize our society so that we can be more effective and more efficient. So there are two pillars of a new policy, two separate pillars, neither one of which can work without the other. Now, some of the early efforts to do that were sort of right out of the Andropov reform book, like we're going to improve efficiency by cutting down on drinking by raising the price of alcohol and restricting access to it. Well, that had about as much success there as it did in the U.S. In fact, one could argue that it had a negative impact because if you cut back production of vodka people started making more home brew, which they called samigon, and some of this home brew could poison you, and did. And it could rot your brain a lot faster than regular vodka. So it was a well meaning attempt to use the instruments of state authority to improve efficiency that was doomed to failure.

Another one was they were going to make Soviet production more- qualitatively better so that it could compete in Western markets. And they were going to do this by setting up a quality control mechanism at the end of the production line that would not accept stuff

that didn't meet quality standards. Well guess what? A hell of a lot of stuff didn't meet quality standards and got sent back. What does that mean? Production plummets and the stuff is still not- even the stuff that passes the quality inspection line could never be sold in a Western economy. So another well meaning attempt to use a structural- a gimmick by fiat to reform the society. Those were the early attempts.

Q: Well, what were you seeing- Well, maybe this would be a good place to stop.

SMITH: I'm thinking because yes, I have to be someplace at 4:30.

Q: Okay, why don't we stop here and we'll pick this up, we've just talked about perestroika and glasnost and trying to limit vodka and all; but I want to ask and we'll get in to this, when you got there were you seeing a really new- was the Soviet Union getting ready to do something, I mean, finally to awaken or was it- were the controls such that it just couldn't get away from it? Were you seeing a rebirth? And we'll talk about it.

SMITH: That's a good place to start next time.

Q: Okay. Today is the 10th of March, 2009, with Ray Smith.

Ray, where are we and what are we up to?

SMITH: I think we were talking about my arrival in Moscow as a political counselor?

Q: From when to when you were going to there?

SMITH: I arrived the second half of August of 1988 and I was there until the first of September of 1991. So I think the question you were asking me to reflect on was when I- in the early days of my arrival there were there visible changes, could you see things going on that were different or did it seem as though it was more of the same thing going on? And I'll give you one example, actually, which I found quite striking, practically within my first couple of weeks there.

One of the things that happened a lot during that period was the difference between what was- what could be striking and what was important. And the things that were striking were not always the important things. About two weeks after I got there I went out with my wife for a walk on a Saturday morning on one of the main streets of town, a street then called Gorky Street, and we were passing by one of the main intersecting streets where there is a little park containing a statute of Pushkin, the great Russian poet. And it had been a tradition there for some years that the civil rights activists, human rights activists would periodically attempt to have demonstrations there on certain days, holidays, human rights days, things that were related to important dates in Russian history or whatever, and what normally happened was that they would either be stopped by the KGB before they ever got there or if they managed to get there they would unfold some signs and they would be engulfed in about 10 times as many KGB as there were protestors and hauled away within 30 seconds.

On this particular day we were walking down the street and saw a demonstration going on in this small park. To be honest with you I can't remember the occasion; I'd like to take credit for knowing that there was going to be a demonstration that day and having been there for that reason but I can't remember whether I did or not. There were certain days when you knew there would be an effort to do a demonstration and I can't remember whether this was one of them or not. But in any case we were there, whether serendipitously or not, and the demonstration was actually going on. There were people with signs-we were on the opposite side of the street but we could see this park there-and they were not being interfered with. That was striking. To me what was important and what was the most interesting thing was that there were crowds of Soviet citizens gathered on the street corners around there watching this. And I was curious about what they were thinking about it and what was going on. So I got into one of these little groups to kind of observe and listen. And there was a policeman there, a fairly young policeman, and he was basically trying to get the people to disperse and move on and not watch this and he was being fairly assertive and saying there was nothing there they needed to see. And they were not arguing with him but they also were not moving and finally I heard one of them say, I'm a Soviet citizen; I have a right to stand on this street if I want to. And the policeman obviously did not know how to react. He was clearly under instructions not to beat up people and haul them away. And he had no way of enforcing his will on them. And he finally wandered away himself and left the people standing there watching the demonstration.

Now, I found that significant for a couple of reasons. One, the orders had obviously come down not to interfere with the demonstration and not to arrest people. So the Soviet leadership was putting limits, self-imposed limits, on its rights to do things with its citizens. Secondly, and equally important, maybe more so, there was a Soviet citizen saying that he had rights other than the rights that the policeman told him he had. That would never have happened in the past; an ordinary citizen would not have done that. The few human rights activists might have well done that, that's what they were demonstrating for but an ordinary citizen standing in the street would not do that. Here's a person saying hey, I have rights. Those rights are not just the rights you tell me I have; I have rights separate from those. A small thing, perhaps, but a sea change in mentality.

Now, I recognized that that was important. I would not necessarily have predicted within two years you'd have hundreds of thousands of people out demonstrating. But it did represent to me an important shift and a meaningful one in terms of what was going on domestically.

Q: This was what, 19-

SMITH: Eighty-nine. This would have been the beginning of September of '89.

Q: So this is before the wall came down?

SMITH: Oh yes, considerably before.

Q: But this was- How did we view Gorbachev at the time, when you got out there?

SMITH: Well, there are a lot of differences in Washington and there were some differences in the embassy, as well, but basically if you can put it into two broad schools of thought they were, one, that he's a serious reformer and that there are things going on there that are important and that may result in changes in the Soviet Union that could make it into a country that we could have a different kind of relationship with. Two, he's pretending to reform but there's no serious reform going on and that all he's trying to do is improve the efficiency of the system and if he's successful we'll still be dealing with the same old Soviet Union, it will just be a more dangerous adversary because it will have a more efficient system. Bob Gates, for example, who headed the CIA, had that viewpoint at that time.

Q: Was there anybody sort of saying yes, a serious reform but once you open up these gates, I mean, history kind of tells us once you start on a course, you know, the flood begins to seep through the openings and all rather than- Are these serious reforms which will change things plus are these ones just to make the system more effective but then there's a third one, no matter what your intentions are, things will start happening beyond your control.

SMITH: There were very few people that were saying that at that point in time. And it's easier to look back and say that that seems obvious in retrospect but at the time, to project from one person standing on a street corner telling a policeman he didn't have to move to the overthrow of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union and the whole Soviet system was a big stretch.

Q: Oh, absolutely. I'm trying to pick up the atmosphere at the time.

SMITH: No. I think the bigger question at that time was probably whether Gorbachev would be able to continue with his reforms or whether the party would rein him in. It was not so much a question of whether the reforms would get out of control as whether there would be a reaction or a coup against Gorbachev.

Q: As political counselor obviously you had to look at this closely. Was Kremlinology still a sort of the tool used or, you know, who was standing where from papers or were you- was there a different way of viewing the leadership?

SMITH: This was a transitional phase. I had some very good people in the internal side of my political section who had come there a couple of years earlier and were very much into sort of Kremlinological analysis, as I had been earlier. And for example one of the things that they were doing early on when I was there is they would look at the Politburo and the correlation of forces in the Politburo, who stood where, try to figure it out. They would also look at the Central Committee, if there's a Central Committee meeting and try to figure out how much support Gorbachev could count on and what the chances were that he would not be able to command support of the Central Committee. But at the same

time this whole glasnost thing meant that more information was becoming available. Kremlinology existed because there was very little authentic information about the system and you had to learn to read signs, just as Soviet citizens had to learn to read signs. So you took a small amount of information and tried to understand what was significant about that and what wasn't. We were beginning to move into a situation where the information was no longer a trickle but becoming a larger and larger amount of information and eventually would become- you would be into a situation where you were no longer trying to project from miniscule amounts of information but you were trying to winnow volumes of information into what was important.

Q: How would this work, practically? Before, I mean, you had Pravda and Izvestia and news broadcasts and all but- Okay, glasnost was coming; what did this mean? I mean, as a practical political officer, tools?

SMITH: Well, you still had all those sources that you would keep on top of and more of them; because you were beginning to get some newspapers that were beginning to assert a little more independence. Pravda was still the most party line, which was natural; it was the party newspaper. Izvestia, which is the government newspaper was beginning to be a little bit different but you had other newspapers as well; Kommersant, Novaya Gazeta and others that were beginning to stake out a wider range of views and opinions. But also you were beginning to get a much broader access to people that you could talk to, in government, in institutes, and they would talk much more freely.

Let me give you another example from my early days there. There was a Politburo meeting- No, I think it was probably a Central Committee meeting in I believe October of '89 and it happened that on the day of that meeting I had an appointment with somebody at the Africa Studies Institute, a deputy director there. Those appointments, by the way, would have been a lot harder to get in the past but it was relatively easier at this point. My guys in the political section were looking at the composition of the Politburo, looking at the composition of the Central Committee, wondering what might happen. I talked to this guy at the African Institute, which happened to be directed by the son of Andrei Gromyko, the Politburo member and foreign minister. And this deputy director told me Gromyko was going to resign, or retire, at that meeting of the Central Committee. That was something that we would never have been told before. So I went back and let these guys know that this was happening. By the time we could get a cable out it had already happened. But this is an example of okay, you're doing your old methods of sort of Kremlinology at the same time you can go out and talk to somebody and he tells you something that's going to happen at that meeting that you would never have known in advance in the past.

And incidentally that was a significant meeting because Gromyko was the person who had actually nominated Gorbachev to be general secretary and he was one of the- he was probably the most significant of the older generation people who were still in the Politburo. And with his resignation at this point Gorbachev had a pretty solid majority on the Politburo. And after this he no longer really had to worry much about his ability to control the Politburo. There was still a question, ongoing question about the Central

Committee and whether that would go along with the various reforms that he was trying to put in.

Q: At the time, we're talking about '89, where was the power or power ratio or something between the Central Committee and the Politburo? And what was the difference between them?

SMITH: The Politburo had traditionally been the most significant governing body in the country. It became that really after Stalin because under Stalin you basically had rule by terror and he just eliminated people; there was really no opposition and it was just rubber stamps from top down. But beginning with his death you had a process in which leaders were chosen from within the Politburo and all of the people in the Politburo were significant. You had a Politburo of 10, 12 people with maybe up to a half dozen candidate members who were theoretically non-voting members. But these were the people who ran the country. They held other jobs as well. They could be party bosses in particular regions like the Leningrad region or Kazakhstan or Azerbaijan or wherever. They could be minister of defense, head of the KGB. So they were dual hatted but it was their role as Politburo members, heads of the party, that was the most significant because you had a power vertical going right up to the Politburo.

Now, the Central Committee, however, under Khrushchev, took on, almost accidentally, a role as the ultimate arbiter of Politburo arguments because the Politburo had voted Khrushchev out and Khrushchev insisted that the Politburo didn't have the right to do that and he called a Central Committee meeting and the Central Committee supported him and he purged about half the Politburo as a result of that. The second time the Politburo wanted him out they called the Central Committee together and made sure they had the votes in the Central Committee and then they called Khrushchev in and when he demanded a meeting of the Central Committee they marched him into the Central Committee meeting, which voted him out. Under Brezhnev you never had anything that dramatic again. Brezhnev was much more a consensus type of guy; he wasn't the mercurial personality that Khrushchev was. But that established a precedent for if you got into a knockdown, drag out fight in the Politburo the Central Committee would be the people who ultimately decide. So Central Committee meetings, theoretically, during the Gorbachev era when there was a lot of controversial stuff going on, and a lot of stuff that became increasingly to be seen as threatening to the Party, could be dangerous for Gorbachev. Gorbachev had to get the Central Committee to go along with the types of reforms he wanted to do. Now, as long as he had the support of the Politburo it was much easier for him to carry the support of the Central Committee which after all was pulled in from all over the country, you know, local party leaders from all over the country for a day or two in Moscow, wined and dined and called together into a big meeting and asked to vote. But, theoretically, it could have, at any point called a halt to the reforms that were going on. So when you looked at the Central Committee meetings as they were coming up one of the things that the people in my internal section tried to do was gauge where the Central Committee was and how it stood. And they did- there was still limited information but there was more information than there used to be so there were a lot of

unknowns but there were a lot of people that you could place in one camp or another if you did your homework carefully.

Q: Did regions play a role?

SMITH: Regions in what sense?

Q: Well I mean, support or lack of support for Gorbachev come out regionally? In other words, were the Stans off to one side or were they- I mean, was this kind of a factor or was it more personality driven?

SMITH: I'm not aware at that point of any significant Central Committee differences regionally. Gorbachev had had a potential opponent in Leningrad, Romanov, I think we mentioned him before, this was actually before I got there, and Romanov was just about the first guy that he got rid of. He also removed Aliyev from Azerbaijan from the Politburo so those were two regions with significant party bosses that were anti-reform and that he got rid of. So those could have been locations for organization of opposition to him, both in the Politburo and in the Central Committee, because these guys would have had a lot of control over who were the Central Committee members from their regions. But after that I'm not remembering any sort of regional breakdowns.

Q: There probably wasn't. Were you able to talk to people, fairly high ranking but, you know, that work with and say, sort of, what's going on here and get a feel for were the reforms really felt to be necessary or- because I assume almost everybody you're talking to has got a stake in the system.

SMITH: Yes. It was getting- it was still more difficult to talk to party officials than it was to talk to government officials because we represented a government and so you could get in to see various people in the government and talk to them. You tended still to get the party line, so to speak. Yes, of course we have to have glasnost; we have to have perestroika because that's what the party line was. Now, you had, however, increasingly other sources of information that you could seek out. You could go to various institutes; like I went to the Africa Institute and that was not to find out about Gromyko but it was to talk about policy in Africa. They had institutes for different parts of the world. There was a USA institute.

Q: The Canadian/USA one, that's the one with George- is he still around?

SMITH: Yes. Georgy Arbatov.

Q: _____ drawing a blank but anyway he was, for years he's been running this.

SMITH: Yes. And yes, he was still there at that time and you could be- The institute heads, as a rule tended to be more- the DCM or the ambassador would see them, rather than me. I'd see the deputies and then I might see various other people in the institutes.

Newspapers; we could easily see the editors and deputy editors of various newspapers and some of them would give us much more unvarnished accounts of what was going on.

And then it gradually got easier to meet with sort of regular people, as well. They wouldn't be reluctant to come to your house and they would be more open about things. So you could increasingly get a spectrum of opinion about what was going on and then of course you could see a lot, too, about what was going on, particularly in the economic sense.

Q: People who served in the Soviet Union, particularly in the later days before everything fell apart have told me that they went to these, I don't know if you call them lectures or something that would be open to anyone and to hear the questions and all. Often they got quite a good sounding of what people were talking about or were interested in.

SMITH: I used to do that myself in my first tour in Moscow. By the time of my second tour there were so many other sources of information that that was no longer particularly high priority to do that. That was one of the few things where you could go and listen to an ordinary citizen ask a question that might have political content in the late '70s.

Q: What about sort of in the papers or anywhere else, was there beginning to be a lively political process? Or was it pretty much undercover?

SMITH: Well it was getting much more lively. You had newspapers; Literaturnaya Gazeta was one, that's the Literary Gazette we would call it, where they were on the sort of leading edge of pushing for more reform. You had new newspapers and magazines coming out so you had a much wider spectrum of views from, as I said, Pravda on the most conservative side to something like Literaturnaya Gazeta, which used to be, by the way, one of the most party line- old party line publications. It was hardly even worth talking to their editor but it had transformed itself greatly. And you would even talk to editors of journals at this point who would basically be apologetic for the crap that they used to have to write and say we're not doing that anymore.

Q: Were you seeing a sort of- a young communist group developing or, I mean, people who were saying this is the way things are going, this is great but, I mean, this is- reinvigorating communism or was Marxism kind of dying, I mean, as a real ideology? It's a hard question.

SMITH: Yes, it's a very interesting question. It gets to the point about what the ruling class believed about its right to rule and what did it base its belief in its right to rule on? And there were some outside observers that believed that they were entirely cynical about Marxism, Leninism and that they were driven strictly by the desire to have power and hold power and they simply used ideology as a tool for keeping themselves in power. I think it was more complicated than that.

I think any ruling class develops a self image and a set of beliefs that justify its right to rule but that they come to believe to some extent. I believe not that many people are so Machiavellian that they are purely cynical about their belief system. So they- you have a combination of a desire to have and maintain power and perks and a belief system that justifies that right to have those powers and perks.

Now, the role that Marxism and Leninism played in that belief system was steadily decreasing and had been steadily decreasing for a long time. I think the most operative element of the ideology that gave the Brezhnev generation its belief in its right to rule was that it had led the country through the Second World War, which they called the Great Patriotic War, and that without their leadership at a fairly young age the country might well have fallen, the whole system might have fallen, the country might have broken up and so they had a right to rule in large part because of that, with some Marxism, Leninism tied up in it. Gorbachev's generation did not lead in the Second World War so that element of that right to rule no longer existed for them so what do they come up with? What do they need? What do they find as a reason, as a belief in their right to rule? For Gorbachev I think it was that we can create a humane, democratic socialism that will combine the best elements of Marxism, Leninism and produce a better society, a more just society, a fairer society, a more humane society. And I think that that is what motivated him and that's what he tried to sell to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union as a new way for it to rule. That's what reform was. He was a reformer; he was not a revolutionary. He's a reformer in the same sense that Barack Obama is a reformer. He wants to change elements of the system to make it better.

Q: Yes. Well, about this time people I've interviewed who served in- this is before the fall of the wall, served in the what we call the Eastern Bloc, were saying that Marxist Leninism was just not a factor at all, I mean, it was just- it was something to unify people but it just wasn't an ideology that got people to the barrier, to wave the banner of Leninism.

SMITH: To me there's always been a real important distinction between the countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, particularly Russia. The countries of Eastern Europe were basically European in political culture. They went through the Renaissance, the Reformation and the Enlightenment; they were touched by these things, they were part of that political culture. Russia never went through those seminal events in Western culture so you have a cultural dividing line between Eastern Europe, which is really European and Russia and countries associated with Russia, which Ukraine was at that time and had been for hundreds of years. Those are not inherently European. Marxism-Leninism was imposed upon Eastern Europe by force in 1945. Lenin's genius was that he adapted Marxism to the Russian political culture. So Marxism-Leninism as it evolved in the Soviet Union was pretty congenial to the Russian political culture; it was not at all congenial to the culture of Eastern Europe. So to me it is not surprising at all that Marxism-Leninism meant absolutely nothing in Eastern Europe but meant something in Russia.

Q: Well, during this time you still had what amounted to Marxists, not necessarily Leninists but Marxists teachers in the Western universities because Marxism in itself, you know, to each according to his needs and from each according to his abilities has a great appeal to youth. People get sort of disabused later but to youth- I'm not sure how it is today but it certainly- it kept going in the West, particularly in the universities of the theoretical side.

SMITH: Yes, I think so. I think you had a lot fewer of course by this time apologists for the Soviet system because so much had come out about what really happened during the Stalin era and you had Solzhenitsyn and his "Gulag Archipelago" and all of the things that people realized about the way the Soviet system actually worked. But you even had people though that made a distinction between Leninism and the Soviet Union as it evolved and of course whatever Lenin was he was not Stalin. I remember when I had the book that I wrote, called "Negotiating with the Soviets" in from of an editor at Indiana University Press, the editor questioned the way I handled Lenin in the book, in the sense that she felt maybe I was a little too critical of him and that he didn't- shouldn't be associated with some of the excess that later occurred. And I said look, you're welcome to your opinion but this is something we're just going to have to differ on and it is my book. So I was much more critical of Lenin and what he did and the things that he put in motion than some people in the West were.

Q: Well let's move to the fall of the wall and all that. What were you seeing, you and your- you know, as you were looking at the scene, how was the movement of East Germans into Czechoslovakia as refugees opening up the Hungarian border and all of that; how were these things see for you?

SMITH: Well, you have to start a little further back and again, here's another thing where you could make the argument that what was striking was not necessarily what was most important. Certainly the fall of the wall was very striking and very important but it was an event that had been led up to by a series of things preceding it, most important of which, I think, was that Gorbachev traveled around to all of the Eastern European countries and met with their party leaders and basically told them, you need to institute a reform process in your countries like the one that we're instituting in the Soviet Union. I can't force you- I'm not going to force you to do this but understand, the Red Army is not going to pull your chestnuts out of the fire in the future. We are not going to fight the people of your people on behalf of your party.

Q: Czechoslovakia '68.

SMITH: Exactly. If you're going to stay in power you're going to have to find a way to stay in power on your own and my advice is to do it by reforming, by beginning to reform.

Now, a lot of the Eastern European countries began a reform process which ended pretty much in the overthrow of the party in those countries. And you had Poland, you had Hungary, you had Czechoslovakia, the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia; you even

had Romania where it was not- I mean, there was violence involved in that one but you had had all of these events occur and it had become very clear that the Soviet Union was going to stand by and watch these things happen, it was not going to rescue the ruling class, the ruling clique in these countries from their own people.

So now you get to East Germany and the- basically a similar process occurs, maybe even most dramatic, but that was the end point, it wasn't the beginning point of a process. So the- Of course the real end was in sight for East Germany when people started going freely out through Hungary and if the country could no longer control its own borders how could it continue to- how could it remain- how could the government continue to remain in power? Could it use the instruments of violence to keep itself in power without the support of the Red Army? Did its leaders believe that it could? Well, the leaders of none of the Eastern European countries believed that they could and ultimately the East Germans did not either. So the tearing down of the Berlin Wall was kind of the dramatic end point but a logical end point of everything that had gone before.

Q: Okay, you're sitting in the shadow of the Kremlin, looking at this situation of Gorbachev going around and saying it's up to you fellows, in the Eastern Bloc. Were you saying that's the end? I mean, what were you all thinking?

SMITH: Well, we were not in a position- We had embassies in each of these countries. They were far better positioned to judge how things were going to evolve in their specific countries than we were.

Q: But, I mean, when this was going you were looking at the engine that was driving everything, and were you seeing this and making the calculation or getting from the embassies that, you know, the central will not hold or something like that and what was this going to mean?

SMITH: You mean in terms of possible end of the Warsaw Pact?

Q: Well, the Warsaw Pact and whatever held the Soviet Union together.

SMITH: Well again, to me, there's a real difference between the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Q: Yes.

SMITH: Much of the Soviet Union had been part of the Russian empire for hundreds of years. Eastern Europe had been a forced military ally of the Soviet Union for about two generations so no, it was not necessarily clear that the developments in Eastern Europe, although they could easily lead to totally different regimes in those countries and it was logical that they would if the people had a chance to express themselves because you had a totally different political culture. They belonged, associated with Western Europe in a political and economic sense. They always had been. From '45 on was an historical anomaly. The Soviet Union and the situation within that was not an historical anomaly,

maybe in a larger sense Marxism-Leninism was or Communism was an historical anomaly but the Soviet Union was not an historical anomaly.

Now, however, having said that, you had concurrently going on within the Soviet Union processes that did ultimately lead to its breakup. That is, as reform began to occur, as people began to believe that they had rights, nationalism in various parts of the Soviet Union began to resurface. It had never completely died but it had- any manifestations of it had been pretty ruthlessly suppressed throughout the Brezhnev era and up until Gorbachev. But now you began to see people asserting with mass movements rights to independence, most prominently initially in the Baltic countries which of course were the most recent additions to the Soviet Union and had been there the least period of time and also had more Western ties.

Q: And we'd never recognized the Soviet occupation of these countries.

SMITH: That's right, yes, that's right. The rest of the Soviet Union we had recognized as being part of the Soviet Union as a country; the Baltics we had never recognized. And you had, in Gorbachev, a leader for whatever reasons and one can discuss these and he's probably talked about them, but he was reluctant to authorize the use of force to put down these nationalist movements. Why was that? There are a couple of possible reasons.

One, he was just opposed to using the military to kill his own fellow citizens. Carter as president did not want- hated to use force; it was one of his weaknesses as president. Gorbachev was just as reluctant to use the instruments of violence within his country, or abroad for that matter. So that was a key factor, possibly. But the other one might have been that he believed that if he had authorized the use of force it would have set in motion a process that would have turned around all the reforms that had begun and sent things backwards.

Q: Were we looking at- taking a closer look at the various elements of the Soviet Union, you know, the Stans, Ukraine, Belarus and all at this time or were events, I mean, this didn't seem to be a thing that needed to be looked at.

SMITH: It did need to be looked at. Our ambassador, Jack Matlock, was very keenly aware of the nationalism issues in the country and he had argued and the embassy was pushing for opening offices in a number of the various republics around the country so that we would have people permanently on the ground there who could keep track of those issues. Basically what happened was that the department said yes to the idea but it never provided the money necessary to open the offices so it was like a pocket veto.

Q: How was the breakup of East Germany, Poland or Hungary- anyway, the Eastern Europe, how was that playing in Moscow?

SMITH: I think a lot of the military and security establishment was very uncomfortable with it. A lot of the more traditional Communist Party leadership was very uncomfortable with it. It was part of the Soviet Union's position of power in the world; it was

strategically important, it was part of their self-image of the Soviet Union as being a super power. On the other side of it you had Gorbachev and his fellow reformers saying we need a different way of living in the world. For one thing, we can't afford to prop up these regimes; we have too many things we have to do at home. We can reach an accommodation with the United States, with different regimes around the world that protects Soviet interests and allows us to carry through a reform process in our country that frees up resources to do that, that's going to enable us to take care of the problems that we've got at home. And you could get a lot of support for that, too, just as you can get a lot of support in the U.S. for don't send all this foreign aid to other countries, let's take care of our own problems.

Q: Well I would have thought that there would have been a tremendous problem for the Soviet Union; they had a really considerable army in Eastern Europe, bases and all, and then the long supplies lines that ran particularly through Poland with these countries, you know, sort of moving rapidly away from the Soviet Union and you've got your troops sort of out there at the end of a rather weak supply line. Were we looking at what are the Soviets going to do with all these troops?

SMITH: Yes, and that was one of the issues; it was one of the real problems that they had to deal with because they were bringing these troops back and they had no place to put them. They didn't have housing for the officers, they didn't have bases for the troops and they had very limited resources to construct things so this was one of the potential flashpoints; it never really became one, I mean, there was never like an army revolt over this issue but the process of bringing these people back and taking care of them was something that was on the Soviet leadership's mind and on our mind and it was part of the whole negotiation process over what period of time and under what conditions would the Red Army pull back from these countries; how quickly would they leave, abandon their bases, how would they move back and that sort of thing. And there was a lot of negotiation that went on over those issues, including with Poland about troops moving back through Poland; that was no longer a right; that had to be negotiated. But, you know, they- it was ugly for the troops and it did not derail the reform process. How tense it got it's hard to tell.

Q: Were the Soviets cutting down on the military at this point?

SMITH: Yes, they were beginning to cut down on the military. We need to go back to- We haven't talked about the withdrawal from Afghanistan. That was one of the key early steps that were taken in foreign policy by Gorbachev to demonstrate that he wanted a different kind of relationship with the U.S. and with the rest of the world. Remember, it was Afghanistan that really led to the buildup of the U.S. defense budget and really ended whatever vestiges that were left of détente in the late '70s and led to a period in the '80s of a very tense relationship until a couple of years into the Gorbachev era. So the decision to get out of Afghanistan was part of the internal reform process, part of the cutting down on the defense budget and part of the message to the rest of the world that the Soviet Union was not going to continue to be an expansionist power in the Third World. And you had other things going on in the Third World to demonstrate that as well. They were

cutting back their assistance to various clients in the Third World during this period of time because they were trying to get more resources available for their reform process back in the Soviet Union.

And I remember at one point we had a semi-vitriolic cable exchange with our embassy in Nicaragua because we had sent in a cable analyzing Soviet policy in the Third World, particularly talking about Nicaragua and saying that they weren't going to provide the kind of support for these regimes that they had provided in the past and that this might open up opportunities with these regimes. And our embassy in Nicaragua got all kinds of upset about that and basically slammed us for suggesting that we ought to talk to the Sandinistas. And I remember we were surprised to get such a vitriolic reaction because we had been just trying to do an analysis of Soviet policy in the Third World, which we saw as changing in significant ways, which indeed it was. And the ambassador saw this cable from Nicaragua and he said you can answer that cable and you don't have to be too polite about it. So we went back and told the embassy that the real problem wasn't with us, it was with the American public, which no longer supported the policy that they were advocating in Nicaragua. After that the Department kind of quietly let both embassies know that they should drop it.

Q: How about Cuba? Did we see things changing?

SMITH: You know, Cuba wasn't- I don't remember Cuba being a big issue on our radar screen there. We saw a lot more change in policies in other parts of the Third World. Cuba was a little bit *sui generis*. We did see a decrease in assistance to Cuba going on but, the notion of regime change in Cuba we had no insights into that and we just left that alone. But we did- The only thing that I can recall in Cuba was that we were aware of and made the point that the regime was not going to be getting the kind of help from the Soviet Union that it had gotten in the past. And I remember particularly that there was something about the sugar imports from Cuba to the Soviet Union and the energy that Cuba was getting from the Soviet Union in return, and that had been getting done on very favorable terms for Cuba; that exchange was artificially set so that Cuba was essentially getting a lot more oil than market prices would have justified in exchange for the sugar it was sending and the Soviet Union was trying to redress that balance somewhat.

Q: While you were in Moscow at this time, did we look at the Soviet influence in Africa as being really serious or was it- it never- maybe it's only in hindsight but it never really seemed to take very much. I mean, they were doing a lot there but where is this going?

SMITH: Well, it was clear to us that Africa was low, the lowest place in terms of Soviet foreign policy priorities except perhaps for parts of Latin America. They saw opportunities in Nicaragua and Cuba and if they saw an opportunity they would take it. But continent-wise Africa was pretty much bottom of the totem pole. They provided some help to Cuba so Cuba could provide troops to Angola but it was the last place that anybody in the foreign ministry wanted to serve, it was sort of considered not the place you wanted to be if you were an up and coming person in the foreign ministry. And it

was perhaps the first place where they pulled back on resources as they were generally cutting back on their support for Third World regimes.

Q: How were we looking at the various elements of the Soviet Union, the Stans and other, now it's called the Near Abroad, but were we looking at these and balancing off what these various elements, well republics, I guess they were called.

SMITH: Yes.

Q: Were getting out of the Soviet Central Command and what they were giving to it and all?

SMITH: It was difficult to do. Certainly the Russian view at the time was that a lot more resources went from Russia to these places than Russia got back from them. And in many cases that was probably true. Azerbaijan, which was an oil producing place, might have been one of the exceptions. Kazakhstan became an oil producer but I don't think it was really terribly a big one at that point in time; became much more significant over time.

Most of them had not a lot in the way of natural resources; Ukraine had great potential as an agricultural producing area. It also had some of the best industry in the former Soviet Union. But Ukraine was not- was in a different category for the Stans.

The nationality movements you did not see grow up very much in the Stans, at this point in time. You saw more happening in Ukraine, in Georgia; not a lot in Armenia, as I recall. A lot more in the Baltics; those are the chief ones that I recall as being active. The Stans were, and continued mostly to be ruled in a very authoritarian manner, and under Gorbachev you didn't see a lot of development of protest as I recall, in those areas, at least not nearly as prominent as in some of the others. But the whole nationality issue, of course, became increasingly prominent and became an increasing issue, you see, distinct from the Eastern European countries. There was a question about whether if Eastern Europe was allowed to break off from the Warsaw Pact could Gorbachev remain in power. Would that be seen as such a huge loss that he would be voted out of office? And it happened that he was not; he was able to handle that. But could these- could one begin to contemplate independence for these elements of the Soviet Union and still maintain- can Gorbachev still stay in office? And that gradually became a larger and larger question.

In July of 1990 I drafted a cable that we sent back to Washington that basically- the subject line of the cable was the possible collapse of the Soviet Union and what we should be doing about it. So, what we said essentially was, we're not saying that the Soviet Union's going to collapse. But we are saying it's no longer a negligible possibility that it might collapse. It's real enough as a possibility that the United States should begin to plan for the consequences of that. And we posed a various a set of things that the United States ought to do to position itself for a situation that might occur if the Soviet Union did collapse. So by July of '90 we had that very much on our radar screens.

Q Can you recall any of the things that we should be considering? And also, what was the response you were getting from Washington?

SMITH: Well, we dealt with a number of things in this cable. One of them was arms control. We said, what happens if the Soviet Union breaks up? You've got nuclear weapons in several other countries; what happens then? And we said we need to move this whole arms negotiation process forward much more quickly. We need to get much sharper reductions as quickly as we can. Nothing much happened. The process was bogged down in verification minutiae. I call it verification minutiae; I mean, to me the big picture was how do you get 20,000 delivery systems down to, whatever, 1,200 or whatever number you're going to strive to- You know, it wasn't how many angels can dance on the head of a warhead but that's where we were in our negotiations at that point. We were already there in terms of numbers and the big questions. We were negotiating such minute details of verification as to make one think that the people arguing verification on both sides were really not wanting arms control at all, that verification was an excuse for not having reductions.

Q: Well did you- I mean, maybe one didn't think- You never started to do it at the time but there are almost straight line projections; things are like this and they'll always be like this and you make motions but it's upsetting to really change the rules of the game. Did you find that, I mean, you were up against this in dealing with the Soviet Union? I mean, everybody would say well, yes but for 60 odd years, more than that, we've been dealing with it the same way and it'll pretty keep going.

SMITH: Everybody- there was a paradigm about the Soviet Union. And elements of the paradigm said that it was going to continue to exist, that if push came to shove they would use whatever degree of force that they had to to keep it in power and that if necessary Gorbachev would be overthrown so the Communist Party could stay in power. And basically the intelligence community, in reaction to our cable, said we don't think it's likely that the Soviet Union is going to collapse. That was the wrong answer- or rather, that was the right answer to the wrong question. If the question is, is the Soviet Union likely to collapse, the answer is no, it's not likely to collapse. If the question is, is there a significant possibility that the Soviet Union might collapse, then the answer becomes yes. And then question two comes, well what do we need to do to protect U.S. interests if that happens? You could not get Washington to deal with what would amount to, instead of a linear projection, a sea change in-

Q: This is always, I mean, we've working for the government for a long time and it's not just the government, it's the thinking community, the academics and all, we tend to continue, this is the way it's going to be and always and it's the people sort of at the margins who say what if.

SMITH: Yes. It's how paradigms change. You have a paradigm; it's got a bunch of elements to it and this is how you organize your thinking about the world. And that's fine in most situations. But then contradictions develop to that paradigm and at some point the contradictions become significant enough that the paradigm needs to get called into

question. And a guy named Kuhn wrote a book called “The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,” in which he talks about how that happens in the sciences. Well, it’s the same in the social sciences. When are you correct in doing linear projections and when do you enter a revolutionary situation in which you are going to see a paradigmatic shift? And we were in that situation and we sort of recognized it, the potential for that. Washington was not ready to and also it’s, you know how hard it is to get Washington leadership to deal with things that might happen down the road. They have enough trouble dealing with what’s on their plate today.

So let me give you a couple of other examples of things that we proposed. We, let’s see, arms control; well, an obvious proposal was getting a lot more cultural exchanges and educational exchanges doing. We raised again our proposal to get posts opened in different places around the Soviet Union, and this time we called it- we were going to set up circuit riders. We couldn’t get a post in every republic; it was obvious there wasn’t enough money and people weren’t prepared to think that through so we said alright, let’s set up four of them in key locations and we’ll have the people at those posts be circuit riders and they’ll be responsible for three or four republics each and get around to them. And actually that was accepted and there were actually some funds put against it and they put some people in language training to serve at those posts, in local languages. So spring of ’92 when the Soviet Union did collapse and Jim Baker said I want posts opened there like right now, we actually had a few people in language training but we had no posts open yet.

Q: Did you have any or much contact with the universities? I mean, was there turmoil or, I mean, or stirring in the universities or were they pretty much the, you might say the dead hand of the Marxist professors were on them?

SMITH: I wasn’t aware of student led demonstrations or anything like that. But you could get out to universities more, you could meet with professors more, there was a lot of intellectual ferment about what socialism meant, what kind of economy should be getting set up; so there was lot, yes, there was a lot going on intellectually during that period. I don’t recall sort of student led protests in the sense that you had in the Vietnam era here. I mean, there were protests going on-

Q: The mothers, particularly in Afghanistan.

SMITH: Yes.

Q: Had represented a significant movement.

SMITH: Yes.

Q: I guess they still are a significant movement.

SMITH: Yes. And you know, you had nationality led protests in various parts of the Soviet Union; you had human rights protests that you had a lot of young people involved

in but not only young people; you had the intelligentsia, so-call “intelligentsia,” which, I guess, I don’t know about Europe as a whole but certainly in the Soviet Union identified itself much more as a group.

Q: Much more. I mean, the intelligentsia is- sometimes I like to view it as the chattering class, is important in Western Europe, far more important than it is in the United States.

SMITH: Yes. And I think that applied- well, it had not been important as a political force, really, in the Soviet Union because it was so beaten down. But there was an active intelligentsia operating in the non-political arena and in trying to keep alive a sort of intellectual tradition but operating fairly quietly. They did “Samizdat” and that sort of thing, a lot of them anyway.

Q: That’s self-published.

SMITH: Yes.

Q: What about the Middle East and the refuseniks and all that? Was anything happening there?

SMITH: Well, during this period the refusenik situation pretty much resolved itself because the regime pretty much opened the doors to letting the Jews go. You probably had a few still outstanding cases where people were refused for having held state secrets but the grounds for this were somewhat more convincing, although they might still not seem adequate to an American with our sense of what constitutes state security and the restrictions you could put on people because of it. It was- the arbitrariness of it seemed to be decreasing so that was not so much of an issue.

It was another issue where we began to find the possibility of working with the Soviets as opposed to the old rituals. For example, the guy who was the head of the International Organization Office in the foreign ministry, was a guy that I met with fairly regularly; his name was Andrei Kozyrev. He later became foreign minister of Russia. But he was a very bright guy and he was known in the Soviet foreign ministry as the conceptualizer, because he thought conceptually. Anyway, we were going- this was probably in- It was either as we were heading into a UN session in ’89 or in ’90, and the issue of the usual Mid-East resolutions came up and the ritual had been for years that the Soviet Union would sponsor a resolution condemning Zionism and condemning Israel and we would veto and they would get a lot of support around the world and our guys- our folks would be opposed to it, their folks would be for it, and it was a big propaganda exercise. And I went to Kozyrev and I said look. We can go down this path again, you can propose the same kind of language you’ve proposed in the past; we’re going to veto it again, it’s going to do nothing for our relationship and it’s going to do nothing for the Middle East. Or, we can sit down and try to work out a resolution that both of us can support and may be somewhat constructive. And he said let me think about it. And we subsequently had a visit from Bolton, who was our assistant secretary for international organizational affairs.

Q: This is John Bolton.

SMITH: Yes. And one of his deputies, John Wolf, who later became assistant secretary for non-proliferation. And they met with Kozyrev and they actually worked out language, probably more Wolf than Bolton did the actual working out of the language. Bolton would have wanted to see people higher up, probably, than Kozyrev because Kozyrev was an office director and Bolton, you know, was a prince. But we actually did get a resolution for the first time in I don't know, decades, that both sides could support. So, it was another- one more in many indications, including Gorbachev's arms control proposals, the whole Third World thing, that he was striving for a new set of relationships with the United States and the world.

Q: Stop right here for a minute.

...Shevardnadze at this point. I mean, I realize he wasn't your contact but he was a key figure.

SMITH: Actually that's something that I was just thinking that we should talk about a little bit because it relates to another significant issue which is the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the fact that the U.S. and the Soviet Union were able to work out a cooperative relationship on how to handle that. That would have been something that we would have been automatically on opposite sides of in the past.

Shevardnadze and Baker had developed a personal relationship, which originally didn't seem too likely to happen. On Baker's first visit to Moscow his advance team told us that he didn't want any social events, he was just there for business. And as usual the Soviet side, the foreign ministry had proposed a formal dinner, which was part of the routine for treating visiting dignitaries of Baker's stature, and Baker said no. He didn't want any formal dinners. And to our surprise Shevardnadze came back and said he'd like to invite Baker was coming with his wife- he'd like to invite Baker and his wife to his home for a private dinner. And the initial word we got back was that Baker was going to refuse; he didn't want any social events. I knew this was a mistake so I went to the ambassador and I said look, we need to draft a cable explaining why he ought to accept this invitation. And the basic reason was that Shevardnadze was trying to take the relationship off of the sort of formal foreign minister to foreign minister plane and establish a personal relationship which could obviously be highly beneficial for informal discussions and talks down the road. So we basically said- I drafted a cable for the ambassador and the ambassador sent it to Baker and Baker finally agreed to do that. And he had dinner with Shevardnadze and that was the beginning of a personal relationship that developed over time.

Well, at the time- and Shevardnadze was clearly a reformer and he had made talks- given talks to the foreign ministry which became public about changes in foreign policy and about what he expected of the foreign ministry. And he was clearly one of the real reform elements and on the foreign policy side one of the people who was pushing the reform

process forward. At the time of the invasion of Kuwait Baker happened to be in the Soviet Union but he was in one of the Stans.

Q: You're shooting-

SMITH: Yes.

Q: -ghosts or something; I don't know.

SMITH: Yes, somewhere in Kazakhstan, I think. And I don't even think he was plan- I think he was fin- I don't believe he was planning to come back to Moscow. And he did come back as a result of the invasion and he had with him Bob Zoellick and Dennis Ross, who were his two key aides; very different personality types, both really smart guys but Ross very sort of an easy guy to talk to and not a whole lot of, at least, visible ego and Zoellick much more an upfront ego type of guy.

But anyway, they came back and surprising to me, Zoellick and Ross, I rode in from the airport with them, were pretty much indifferent- maybe indifferent is too strong but very sort of, you know, this isn't a big deal, the invasion of Kuwait. And I said well to me it seems like it comes pretty close to U.S. vital interests not to have Saddam in control of Kuwaiti oil. Anyway, Baker started getting back in touch with Washington and they started working with Shevardnadze on getting a joint statement that would not only condemn the action but begin to lay the groundwork for, if necessary, a U.S. military response.

It was a tough sell because Shevardnadze appeared pretty open to it but he was getting a lot of pushback within his own foreign ministry on this. Iraq was an old client and he still had a lot of the old thinking going on in the ministry. And I remember we reached one sticking point and I met with Ross and Zoellick at Spaso House with one of his aides, Shevardnadze's aides, and he said Shevardnadze told me to tell you that this particular point is difficult and he's- people in the foreign ministry are resisting this and he doesn't want to insist upon it. Anyway, the language was such that I knew what this guy was telling us was that Shevardnadze wanted to be able to go back to the foreign ministry and say Baker had insisted that this language be in the communiqué. And that's what I told Ross and Zoellick so we insisted. Baker said, I really- he didn't even have to insist; he just had to say something so that Shevardnadze could say the Americans insisted on this so I gave it to him. But, as you know, that's the kind of thing that someone who's in the country and who's attuned to the language of what people mean can pick up that otherwise be missed.

But anyway, that began a process that led to us being able to keep the Soviet Union onboard for what eventually led to our invasion of Iraq. And again, here's another example of new thinking in foreign policy that was among the steps to convince people in Washington that this was really serious.

Q: Did you feel, I mean, I think it would be almost intuitive but instinctive that you want to make sure that the United States and the Soviet Union was going through real problems and we didn't want to make problems for the Soviet Union at this time, you know, sort of we told you so or we're number one or that sort of thing. I mean, were we working very hard at our embassy to make sure that there wasn't any manifestation of triumphalism or that sort of thing?

SMITH: Yes. Yes, we were. It was really from our point of view the message we were trying to give was we can have a better relationship, our two countries. There's a lot of problems out there in the world that are going to be more susceptible to dealing with if we can find a way to do them cooperatively than to continue in the old antagonistic vein. And at this point we were pushing on an open door, pretty much, because this is what was coming from the top. As I said, there were definitely people in various elements of the foreign policy and security establishment who had a hard time thinking differently. And that's not to say that there weren't people in the U.S. who had trouble thinking differently too but there were also a lot of people who were delighted to try to find these opportunities. And there were commitments being made that- at higher levels to try to reassure the leadership that we weren't going to try to take strategic advantage of the things that were going on. For example, no NATO expansion eastward. You know, that was what we told them as part of the process of their acquiescence in the end of the Warsaw Pact and the reunification of Germany. We didn't keep that commitment but it was one of the reassurances that was given at the time.

Q: How did we feel about the reunification of Germany? I mean, what were we getting from the Soviets, actually, about- I mean, here- this is- fear of a united Germany was very much a factor in much of the Soviet thinking for 50 years or so. What was coming- was this getting revived or not?

SMITH: Well, the initial Soviet reaction to the taking down of the Berlin Wall was, I mean, the wall came down, people poured into Berlin and then they came back to work on Monday and there was a huge relief in the Soviet Union that having gone there, gone shopping, gotten to see it and all, they came back home and went back to work. You know, that this was not going to be a huge immediate conflagration in East Germany that they would have to in one way or another deal with and I'm not sure that they knew how to deal with it except they didn't want the Red Army drawn into it.

Q: Well, I was just wondering, was the idea of a united Germany being a threat still there or was this kind of dissipated?

SMITH: There was still a lot of sensitivity about Germany. I remember meeting with the guy who headed the USA office in the foreign ministry and I made the mistake of referring to the Federal Republic of Germany as Germany and he immediately jumped on me and he said there is no Germany; there is a Federal Republic of Germany and a Peoples Republic of Germany. And so that was one indication of the kind of sensitivity they had about it. And I remember going and talking to him at the time that reunification became a real possibility, things were moving that way, and he, talking about Germany as

a threat to the Soviet Union. And I said to him, look, I understand the history of this and I understand that there's a lot of sensitivity about it, but I said here's, to me, you've now got a country of- I forget what Germany was, Federal Republic was at that time, 60 million, and East Germany was like 18, I said you've now got a 60 million country, when it's united it's going to be a 78 million country, and you're a 280 million country. I said, the degree of threat does not seem that significant to me, as an outsider. But there was, I mean, it was a very, it was an emotional issue; they suffered a huge amount from the German invasion. They hadn't forgotten it and- But you know what? Surprising, at least in the short run, they got over it fairly easily. In fact, in thinking about the whole process of what occurred during that period it's amazing how peacefully it did occur.

Q: It really is.

What about the other embassies? Was there much consultation or were there any sort of differences in outlook of the various embassies there?

SMITH: Well, we had fairly frequent consultations; I did, at my level, with my counterparts in the British, the West German and the French embassies. And they all had good political counselors but they didn't the staff that I had, of course, so they were a lot thinner. I don't recall any significant differences in how we were looking at things. I remember the West German political counselor tended to come to me more to get my views on things more than to have an exchange of views. With the British and the French it was more like an exchange. But the four of us used to meet, together and individually fairly often, and then we would meet as a NATO group periodically as well, and in the NATO group, of course most of the other countries were even a lot smaller than our four embassies were and that would be pretty much the four of us sharing information with them so that they'd have something to report back home, just because our resources were so much greater.

Q: Here I want to make sure we tread very carefully and I don't want to expose anything but I'm looking for the contribution you as a political counselor felt you were getting from our intelligence services. I mean, was this much of a factor or did this sort of exist on its own?

SMITH: Well, I saw of course if not everything a lot of the stuff that they- that was being done. As I say, I thought that the intelligence community as a whole was not- was either not being asked the right questions on where things were potentially headed in the Soviet Union or was coming up not with the right answers, although it's later been suggested to me that the political leadership in Washington did not want an intelligence community assessment that said that the Soviet Union could collapse because the leadership thought that such an assessment was bound to leak and that if the U.S. intelligence community was seen as predicting the collapse of the Soviet Union it could lead to Gorbachev's overthrow and the end of the reform process. I don't know whether I really believe that or not. If so, it seems to me a pretty ostrich-like approach to things because how can you defend your country's interests if you're not prepared to analyze what's going on out

there? But we have, maybe we have ostriches in our foreign policy community, I don't know.

Q: Well, there is a problem. I mean, you take it and more going back to the, I guess, early '70s or so there was no way in the world that we could draw- have a good intelligence analysis of what was happening in Canada when there was a possibility that Canada might split into Quebec and the rest of Canada and all, and if our intelligence community had come up and said you know, it's very possible and this might happen and so and so, which would be a perfectly normal thing that you would expect the country looking at a neighbor to do but if that came out it could lead to all sorts of things and the Canadians would be all over it and it would affect things and so it's almost a question you couldn't ask.

SMITH: Yes. And that's- there are questions that you don't ask. I agree. If you don't- if you're not sure you want the answer then you better not ask the question, because if you do ask the question then you're in a situation if you get the answer you don't want, what do you do about it?

Q: And also the fact that even if you get- the question that you don't want, it's alright to get it if you feel that you can control that and take a look at it and make your mental calculations and all sort of in secrecy. But our government, being what it is, can you imagine what would happen if you came out with something; sure as hell somebody would leak it.

SMITH: Yes. Well and the cable we sent in about the possible collapse of the Soviet Union did get sent out by the CIA as part of its "eyes only" brief, top secret brief to a whole bunch of ambassadors. So they circulated it but it was as an embassy cable, not as their own analysis. But they were not reluctant to, I mean, they didn't bury it; they did send it out.

Q: Well did you find- did that leak?

SMITH: No.

Q: That's encouraging.

SMITH: No, it did not.

Q: Did the Far East, well did China play any role in what you all were doing? Because China was going through its problems at the time or was it? Tiananmen Square was later, was it?

SMITH: I can't remember the timing of that.

Q: But it wasn't on-

SMITH: I would see the Chinese, my Chinese counterpart periodically. They were- I never remember them being very fruitful discussions, very insightful. I guess the fact that they were happening at all was probably the news, rather than what he content was. I don't remember much of it.

Q: Well that is probably just indicative that there wasn't much.

SMITH: China was a little bit like Germany in the sense that it got an emotional reaction from Soviet citizens. There was a fear element in their reaction to China that you didn't get, for example, even in their reaction to the U.S. We might be at loggerheads-

Q: But we're not going to move across the river and go over and move in and take off Siberia.

SMITH: And there's a Russian history with the Mongols, the Tartars, and all of that that is part of what they grow up with. So there was that in how they looked at China. China might have been another Communist Party country and all of that but there was still that huge mass of Chinese.

Q: Yes, yes. The yellow peril.

One last question, I'm looking at the time here, was the technological age, particularly the internet, computers and the spread of information, was that- had that begun to bite into the Soviet system at all yet?

SMITH: I don't remember much about the internet but of course one of the main things that Gorbachev was doing with glasnost was trying to open up the Soviet Union to a freer exchange of information, partly because it was falling further and further behind technologically and you couldn't pigeonhole information the way they had done for decades and decades without necessarily falling further and further behind. So they were taking a variety of steps to make information more widely available, to let in foreign newspapers, to let in foreign magazines, even some that offended the puritans in their culture, like the more racy Western magazines and that sort of thing, just to allow and get people accustomed to having that information available to them about the outside world. But I don't remember- I mean, technologically they were, they really were far behind except maybe in some aspects of the military area where they put so much of their resources. But in all other aspects of their economic infrastructure their technology was really way behind.

Q: And you still, during this time it was still fairly early days, internet-wise.

SMITH: Yes. I can't even remember exactly when Al Gore invented the internet but it was- I'm not sure it was then- was very active then.

Q: Okay. Well Ray, let's stop at this point.

SMITH: Alright.

Q: Is there anything more we should cover about the Soviet Union, do you think?

SMITH: Well, we might want to cover the coup against him.

Q: Oh yes, that might be a small thing.

SMITH: August of '91.

Q: Okay, we'll do the coup of August of '91 and all that.

SMITH: And the things leading up to it, yes.

Q: Leading up to that and all next time. Great.

SMITH: Alright.

Q: Okay, today is the 1st of April, April Fool's Day, 2009, with Ray Smith.

Ray, let's talk about the political situation that led up to the coup attempt in, it's Russia, isn't it, by this time?

SMITH: No, it's still the Soviet Union.

Q: It's the Soviet Union.

SMITH: Well, I'm back up to probably September of 1990. The two key issues, it seems to me, were whether there was going to be a serious economic reform program and how the various nationality movements were going to work and how those were going to affect the viability of the Soviet Union and how they were going to be handled. The economic programs that had been put into place and revised various times by Gorbachev during his time in office up to then had never amounted to what our economic counselor at the embassy thought was a viable and serious economic reform program. There was an effort in the summer of 1990 to put together an economic reform program by a group of people who were considered, I think, by outside experts to be serious economists and capable of putting together a serious reform program, and in fact, they came up with, what was it called, the 100 Day Program, perhaps; I'm not sure if I'm remembering the title correctly now. And it looked initially as though that was going to be adopted and our economic counselor thought it was a very promising program and the first really serious reform program that had been put into place.

Gorbachev initially seemed to support it and then he basically pulled together a group of people from within the government to come up with their own reform program and tried to meld the two. And the melding did not produce anything that was- that the economic reformers or even our economists at the embassy thought had any chance of real success.

And it's always been a bit of a mystery to me why Gorbachev made essentially a reversal, basically gutting the reform plan that he had asked be put into place.

Q: Where had his original plan come from? Was this an international plan or was this a self-generated one or what?

SMITH: This was generated by a group of people within the Soviet Union who had credentials as outside economic reformers who had made various suggestions for reform, who had been critical of a number of aspects of the government's reform plan. And I'm trying to remember if Gregory Levinskiy was one of the chief ones among them; he may have been. In any case he basically told these people to come up with a plan and when they did he initially indicated support and then backed off.

There were some very strange troop movements in September of that year, or reports of troop movements, around Moscow. And shortly after that Gorbachev basically reversed his course on this economic reform plan.

Q: When you get these reports of troop movements, are these- are attachés going out and counting trucks and all that or not?

SMITH: These actually were in the Soviet press; very vague and I'm not sure how much more our attachés had on them. I don't recall anything remarkable that I saw from them during that period but there were these sorts of public reports, very vague, very strange, and it's never been demonstrated that they had anything to do with the reform switch by Gorbachev.

Q: Were we at that time, you might say on the alert for or at least concerned about a military movement against Gorbachev?

SMITH: I don't know if we were any more concerned about it. The whole situation that he was in was becoming steadily more difficult, both because of the economic problems that the country was having; this was a period of long lines, nothing on the shelves and no clear direction. And because of the nationality issues where you had, particularly in the Baltics, these movements which were looking toward independence for the Baltic republics and movements that were developing in other republics in the country as well. And it was never- It was always a question what would happen in the event that it appeared to people in the Soviet Union that the country could break apart if something forceful was not done. So we were aware of all of these destabilizing influences but there was nothing specific, aside from these sorts of vague rumors of these military movements and the timing of that in relationship to Gorbachev's about face on this reform program.

So we went through the fall basically with Gorbachev kind of tacking back and forth on the economic reform front with first saying he was going to support more and then pulling back and I think what we were hearing from Gorbachev during this period was that this was part of what he had to do, that he would be veering to one side, veering to the other side for tactical reasons but that his goal was to continue with reform. So he was

making those kinds of reassuring noises to the United States and to other Westerners but it was probably becoming increasingly less clear that his ability to control all of this was effective. And whether he was really- whether these were really tactical movements that were in his control or movements that were forced upon him in one way or another. That fall also, I think it was in October or November, we heard from one of Foreign Minister Shevardnadze's aides that Shevardnadze was under a lot of political attack and that his position was in jeopardy and with that- and these were basically attacks on the whole reform process, focused on Shevardnadze.

Q: Was there any feeling that because Shevardnadze was a Georgian that this made his position more precarious, in that particular era?

SMITH: I don't have a sense of that at that point in time. No. I'm not aware of any- He was-

Q: That was part of the equation in those days.

SMITH: As far as I could see, no. But he was one of the real out front reformers, both in terms of the kinds of things that he was favoring domestically, although that wasn't his job, particularly, but he was known to be supportive of really substantial reform, and the fact that he was associated with some of the more controversial elements of the Gorbachev foreign policy, particularly things in the arms control area where they were making enormous concessions in order to get arms control agreements, and a lot of that was coming from Gorbachev but Shevardnadze was a convenient scapegoat for that, for people that were not ready to attack Gorbachev. Shevardnadze actually then in December resigned as foreign minister and made a very dramatic speech, saying a dictatorship was coming and that I can't be associated with it.

Q: Who was he referring to and what were we thinking now?

SMITH: He was not being more specific than that.

Q: But did he think that this was Gorbachev becoming the dictator?

SMITH: No.

Q: Or somebody else? I mean, that wasn't in the cards.

SMITH: No. It was more that Gorbachev would be pushed unwillingly in a direction Shevardnadze considered undesirable or that, although he didn't say so explicitly, or that Gorbachev might be forced out and a dictatorship would replace him. Again though, what you're hearing from Gorbachev was regret about Shevardnadze's departure but reassurance that he was in control of the situation and that he might be making tactical shifts but that didn't affect his commitment to the overall direction he was going.

Q: Was it a feeling at the time things were really shifting around pretty- I mean, you know, for the political section this must have been not only a busy time collecting stuff but sort of an analytical time almost. I mean, things were moving, weren't they, or did you feel that?

SMITH: It was- Things were in so much flux that- and this went back some time before this- that we had to go through this annual post reporting plan thing that all posts are supposed to do, and actually I came to Moscow thinking that was a very useful management tool. And we put a good bit of effort into it but the fact was that by particularly my third year there, which would have begun in the summer of '90 and ended in the summer of '91, the post reporting plan was- required practically a monthly revision in order to keep up with development of events. I know in December of 1990, the same fall that we're talking about, I wrote a cable from the embassy called "Power, Authority and Legitimacy in the USSR Today," which looked at what the structures were and whether they were capable of holding the society together. And there was no real source of legitimacy at that point in time in the Soviet system. You had Boris Yeltsin, who had some legitimacy as the head of Russia but the things that Gorbachev had put into place to try to create a more democratic system had been so hedged that they really did not have that sort of public legitimacy that Yeltsin could claim. For example, they elected a new Supreme Soviet but there were a lot of reserved positions in that Supreme Soviet for appointment. So between the various ways that people got onto the ballot to be in the Supreme Soviet and these reserve positions for the party, for the military and various things, you did not have a body that could be considered legitimate in the sense that we would understand the term or that it seemed that the Russian people understood. And who had authority at that time in the Soviet Union? Very unclear. You had the instruments of power that were still intact, the military, the KGB, but the question was could those be used? If you fell back on the instruments of power to promote your policies you were falling back on the very instruments that were the least supportive of those policies. If you pushed policies without the support of those institutions it wasn't clear that you would have the power to push them through, because that legitimacy that allows an elected leadership in a democratic society or even a non-elected leadership that has an ideological base that people support in a society, those base sources of legitimacy no longer existed.

Q: Did we see, you know, when Andropov came in there was a feeling at one point, well, you know, these guys have been exposed more to the West than most and maybe they are more, you might say, sort of, it's almost like an oxymoron, but are more liberal than other elements, whereas the military is never liberal. Or not. Did that-

SMITH: Well there was some talk about Andropov at the time and how cultured he was and his interests in elements of Western culture; I don't think, this was before I was at the embassy but I was for part of this time working back in Washington on the Soviet desk, I don't think any of us who were involved in this deluded ourselves that he was going to be a real reformer because of an interest in Western culture and-

Q: Well, I mean, my question is, at the time we're talking about, was there the feeling that maybe the KGB might be an instrument of liberalism? I'm laughing at the time but-

SMITH: No. No, the only question really was whether the KGB would support Gorbachev, not that it would be a leader in any sense but would it basically continue to provide support for the party and governmental leadership. And when Gorbachev first came to office, of course, the kind of reforms that he put into place were Andropov II. It was more disciplined, less drinking, more quality control; it was control. You know, we're going to have reform through better control.

Q: Well during this time of leading up to this, to use a-

Okay. Where were we?

SMITH: Let's see. I think it was a question of whether we thought that the KGB could be a reformist element.

Q: Oh. During this time, and again this is all before, I was going to say, using the elegant expression of President Johnson, was Boris Yeltsin pissing out of the tent or pissing into the tent? You know, as far as Gorbachev was concerned; was he helping or not?

SMITH: Yeltsin and Gorbachev really did not like one another. It was a gut level dislike which stemmed from, from Gorbachev's point of view, from Yeltsin being a guy who was out of control and potentially damaging his effort to create reform by being a disruptive influence in the Politburo and basically Gorbachev got him kicked out and Yeltsin went into sort of the political wilderness for awhile after doing a sort of public mea culpa, and he always really disliked Gorbachev after that and the dislike was mutual. And then there were the personality differences too. Gorbachev was a pretty cerebral guy, a bit cold in terms of personality and very focused. Yeltsin was emotional, gut level, sort of, lots of times, out of control, too much alcohol, reputation for womanizing. These were not personality types politics aside that would mesh very well together. So both politically and personally these guys really did not like one another. Yeltsin was not being supportive of Gorbachev; Yeltsin was pushing for more power for the Russian Republic, more ability to control its own reform program, more control over its own finances, and of course this was a big issue with other republics too, and if they gained control over their finances then the Soviet government existed purely at their behest. So this was part of the struggle that was going on also.

Q: Were you also, I've asked an awful lot of questions before but it gives a feel for the times, was there almost a disintegration of the Communist Party at this time or were things happening within the Party?

SMITH: The Communist Party, Gorbachev was still trying to use the Communist Party as part of his reform program while at the same time understanding that it was a hindrance to further reform. So you have two things going on at the same time. You have the fact that the thing exists, that it's got many members with stakes in a system that causes them

to resist some of the kinds of reforms that Gorbachev and others are pushing for. But at the same time- So he's trying to marginalize it on the one hand while at the same time trying to use it as a support base on the other, putting it into a position where it could help him where he needed help but it could not block him where he didn't want it to be.

Q: Was the ideology behind the Soviet system, the communist system, was that dying or pretty well dead by this time, do you think?

SMITH: It was already dead. There was no real ideological base, if by that you mean sort of Marxism-Leninism or something like that.

Q: Yes, that sort of thing.

SMITH: There was probably among some people like Gorbachev, who was a, if you like, a conservative reformer, a sense that if you could go back to the pure roots before it had all gotten corrupted you could find things that could create a better society. But belief in the system as it had evolved, belief in it as a way forward as it had evolved and as a basis of support, I can't say that that existed. That was one of the problems in terms of legitimacy of the system. There was no longer any ideological base, there were no- very little in the way of true believers in the old ideology, and we did discuss this before but it may be worth reiterating in this context, the Brezhnev era leadership was not ideological. Its real ideology in the sense of why it believed it had the right to rule was the fact that it had led the country during World War II, during what they called the Great Patriotic War, and was primarily responsible, at a relatively early age for being so high up because of the purges in the '30s, for pulling the country through that period. And so when they harkened back to legitimizing symbols, they primarily harkened back to the Great Patriotic War and their role in it. But when you had the generational change to Gorbachev's generation you no longer had that as a base so what was Gorbachev trying to find as a legitimizing base? The creation of a reform society, a more just society, that could gain popular support through creating, if you like, a more human form of socialism.

Q: Well now, with your political section and also other officers in the embassy, was this a time of great discussions at the kitchen table, that they were going out and meeting contacts? I mean, were people, I'm talking about Soviets, sitting around and talking to our people and, it was, you know, lots of talk, lots of vodka?

SMITH: It was pretty wide open for contacts at that point in time. For most of the Soviet era Kremlinology involved trying to read tea leaves and put little scraps of information together using your background and all of that to make some sense of it. You now had, essentially, an information overload in which your challenge was to use your experience, cultural and political and historical understanding to filter out from the mass of information available to you, what was significant. So you had gone from a dearth of information to a wealth of information. You could meet with newspaper editors, reporters, people at institutes, government officials from all over and ordinary citizens as well, of course; no one was afraid to talk to you during this period of time. So you had enormous access to information.

One of the things that led me to write this cable I wrote in July '90 about the possible collapse of the Soviet Union was a foreign ministry-sponsored conference that I went to, which was not on that subject; in fact, I can't even remember what was the ostensible subject of it at the time. But they invited a bunch of foreign diplomats, they invited a bunch of Soviet historians, and in the discussions out on the margins of the conference, I had some very interesting discussions with foreign ministry people and historians, Soviet historians, about the status of the Soviet Union, where it stood, how they felt about the society, and where it was going. I heard very well respected historians talk about the question of whether the Soviet Union could continue to exist simply as a union of Russian, Ukraine and Belarus, even if all the rest was gone. And they weren't sure that even that could continue. So I said to myself, if this is what serious Soviet historians are seeing as a potential outcome of this situation clearly it's something that we ought to be paying attention to as well.

Q: Well, let's move- I guess, come on up. I mean, we're getting a lot of the background of this turmoil that was going on and so how did-?

SMITH: Well, okay, so to sum up the economic business, by the fall, by December of '90 there was no serious economic reform program and the embassy was counseling the U.S. Government to be leery about providing too much assistance to a Soviet government that had not demonstrated a real commitment to economic reform; targeted assistance, perhaps but not to believe that we were- that in providing assistance we would be promoting reform, because there was no real economic reform program in place. And that pretty much continued up through the coup attempt in August of '91.

Now, the thing that changed in the first half of the year was an intensification of the nationalities movement and particularly the independence movement in the Baltic States and some violent reaction against that by the Soviet government. And again, there were deaths in the Baltics, although not very many; there were troop movements in the Baltics and a back and forth on Gorbachev's part.

Q: But he went there, didn't he? During that time I think I recall things of trying to do something and then they sent the special operations types in to take a radio station. I mean, this was-

SMITH: Yes, yes. And I think that he tried- What he was trying to do was to persuade both the leaders of the Baltic Republics and the leaders of the other republics to agree to a new division of authority between the central government and the republics that would be acceptable to all sides. He went to the Baltics to try to talk to them about that and basically really got nowhere. They were hard over on achieving independence at that point in time, mass public demonstrations, hundreds of thousands of people. At one point they had what was supposed to be a lineup of people from like the capital in Latvia to the capital of Estonia.

After this use of force-

Q: Before we leave the Baltics, obviously we had something that no other major power had; we still had these Baltic embassies and aging baldheaded diplomats in Washington, but were you getting any particular instructions of the care and dealing with this- that particular issue?

SMITH: That was a very, as you can imagine, delicate subject. Fortunately we had an ambassador who just had his footwork down perfectly.

Q: Who is this?

SMITH: Jack Matlock.

Q: Yes.

SMITH: He had served at the National Security Council. He knew Soviet history, U.S. policy toward the Baltics; he just had it all down cold. And he, I must say I admired greatly how he handled this situation during this period. He would meet with the leaders of the Baltic republics and he would meet with the leaders of the independent movements at his residence; not at the embassy but at his residence, and discuss with them their desire for independence. He absolutely adhered to the U.S. policy of not recognizing the Soviet occupation of the Baltic republics, told them that that was U.S. policy and that continued to be U.S. policy, it was not going to change, but they were pushing for the U.S. to recognize an independent government, perhaps a government in exile or whatever, and to recognize their independence. And he took the position that there were certain elements of statehood that were required under international law in order to take that additional step, one of which is a country who wants to be recognized as a state has to control its borders and be in control of its own society. And he said we are not in a position to do that. We're supportive but that's a step beyond what we can do under international law as we interpret it.

They went away apparently satisfied with the way he approached this issue, and we had no, as far as I'm aware, negative reaction from Washington to any of this. And clearly it was tricky because the Soviet government did not particularly like the kinds of contacts that we had with these people at this point in time but he was adamant that we had a right to do this. And in fact, we were trying to set up offices in these countries at this time.

And of course the U.S. Government also had its own problems. On the one hand we had our policy toward the Baltics, we wanted to support their rights in this area; at the same time we recognized, the U.S. Government recognized, that- a desire not to undercut Gorbachev and his efforts to reform the society and a sense that if we went too far on the nationalities issue, that could undercut Gorbachev.

Q: Were we picking up anything- I mean, some of the Stans were actually the beneficiaries of being in the Soviet Union. I think of Kyrgyzstan and others; I mean, they were getting sort of largesse from Moscow, as they were off on their own they might not

do as well. I mean, was this, did you sense, were you picking up any unease out in the farther reaches of the Soviet empire?

SMITH: Well, we had people traveling quite a lot to these areas. We weren't there in a way we wanted to be because we had not been able to persuade the Department to set up offices in each of these republic capitals, which we had wanted to do. But we traveled a lot and on the one hand, the average person in the street did not believe that his republic, her republic was getting more from Russia than they were supplying to it. That was one of the anomalies of the Soviet Command economy.

Let's say, for example, you had a cement factory out in Omsk, and you sent cement to St. Petersburg. You didn't see that as a plus for your economy, your local economy. You were losing cement; you weren't gaining trade. In a capitalist system, in a market system, if you have a cement factory you want customers for it. You want to sell your cement. You don't consider that if you sold it you've lost cement. Every part of the Soviet Union considered that what it produced it should keep and if it couldn't keep it that was a net loss. So every part considered that it was giving up more than it was getting.

Q: Well, it's not completely within a demand economy that you get this feeling. I mean, the strongest anti-government feeling are in the Western states, which are almost completely dependent on government assistance and help or control over their resources in the United States. But still-

SMITH: Yes. And of course, it's a little off the subject but the extent to which we have a market economy when the federal government and the state governments spend as much money as they do is, I mean, we have a mixed economy, and it's not a purely market economy but that's another issue.

Q: Well anyway, going back, now we're moving on u and so, what was- Were, as we move towards- Well, when did the attempted coup happen?

SMITH: It happened in August. Alright, so let's move up to April; we're getting there, gradually. In April Gorbachev- Gorbachev had been promoting a referendum, basically on the nationalities issue, to create constitutional changes that would create a new structure of central and republic relationships. And the referendum passed in April and it was supposed to come into effect in August of '91. In about June of, I think in June or maybe early July, we were approached by Mayor Popov of Moscow, who said there was a coup attempt underway against Gorbachev and that, we should help Gorbachev. And there were things happening; it appeared that some of the Politburo members were moving, possibly against Gorbachev, so we had a debate, along with Washington, about should we provide this information to Gorbachev. And I talked to the ambassador about it and I took the view which I think he fully shared that if we were supporting Gorbachev's reform process and we had information that people were moving against him because they're anti-reform, we ought to let him know. And Washington agreed with us. So the ambassador went in to see Gorbachev in a very private meeting and told Gorbachev what we had learned, without naming our source, who, by the way, was later named by, I think

it was McFarlane, who we said please don't tell who our source is, this is kind of sensitive, and he just blurted it out. But anyway, that's Washington.

Gorbachev basically dismissed this. He said there is not going to be any coup attempt against me, I'm in charge, this possibility is excluded, it is not going to happen. This was in, as I say, late June, possibly early July of '91. So that's what we reported back. He seemed extremely confident, I wasn't at the meeting but this was the ambassador's read, and Gorbachev believed that he was in control of the situation. Well, as it turned out, he was sadly mistaken. He went- We might have been more alert to the situation in August than we were. I think we were perhaps a little bit too reassured by what Gorbachev had just previously told us. But August was when this new nationality policy was supposed to go into effect, these new constitutional provisions.

Q: Was this a threat to the old established order?

SMITH: It was. And there were, as it turned out or became clear in the coup attempt, there were people who believed that this new constitutional structure that would go into place would effectively mean the end of the Soviet Union. And so, for both self-interest reasons and for reasons of attachment to the Soviet Union which, a lot of them had spent their whole lives defending and supporting, they decided to mount the coup against Gorbachev. Now, we will never know, obviously, whether the constitutional structure that Gorbachev was putting into place would have created a basis for saving the Soviet Union by granting more autonomy to the republics while maintaining sufficient centralized structure, that you could still have a Soviet Union, or whether it would have collapsed anyway. But the fact is Gorbachev went off on vacation a couple of weeks before this was supposed to go into effect and during the period while he was away this group, committee of national safety, I can't remember exactly what they called themselves right now, got together, and it included the head of the KGB, a number of members of parliament, some top military leaders, and announced that Gorbachev had taken ill and that they had established this committee to govern the country during his inability to govern.

Well, I got a call at about probably 5:00 in the morning about this on a Monday morning, the 19th of August, and it was clear instantly that this was an attempt to remove Gorbachev from power.

Q: Was there sort of a constitutional vice president or a vice chairman?

SMITH: Yes, there was. It was Yanayev, I believe, and the vice president position had been established probably within the previous year; there hadn't been one before. And he was part of the coup effort. He was pretty much a non-entity.

Q: As so often is in a dictatorship or, I mean, an authoritarian government.

SMITH: Yes. I don't think Gorbachev wanted a powerful vice president but he lent his role and his support to this effort to presumably give it some semblance of legitimacy if Gorbachev, indeed, had been ill and unable to govern.

Q: So you get called at 5:00 in the morning; what does the political counselor in sort of the center of our universe, practically, do when you get a call like that?

SMITH: Well, of course I immediately got over to the embassy. We did not have an ambassador at that time, Jack Matlock had left; Jim Collins was the deputy chief of mission and acting as chargé during that period. Robert Strauss had not yet arrived. And I conferred with Jim and I said, clearly this is not what they say it is. This is a coup against Gorbachev and we need to tell Washington this is our view, and I said- and I told him I think we need to recommend that the U.S. Government have no contact with this putative government. I said- We didn't know whether it would succeed or not and we discussed what would be the impediments to its success, and basically those came down to two, which I had cited, actually, in my December '90 cable about power, authority and legitimacy, if there is an effort to move against Gorbachev or the reform process. One, will the military take orders of that kind, and two, would there be sufficient popular resistance to call into question the ability of the central leadership to assert its authority. So what I did-

And for most of the time that I was in Moscow, I should say, as political counselor, I did not draft cables. I had 30 people in my political section; my value added was to improve on their work, to provide topics for them to work on, to get their work out promptly and things like that. I liked doing my own writing a lot more but that was not where I saw my value added. But during this coup attempt I did almost all of the drafting for the political section for a couple of reasons. One, I had lost a whole bunch of my political section that summer, more than the normal turnover you would expect; it just sorted out that way. I had almost no one. I think one person in the internal side of the political section who was a holdover.

Q: Good God.

SMITH: So that was one reason. And the second reason was I'd spent most of my professional life in this; I knew what needed to be written and how to write it and I could get it done a lot faster than I could tell somebody else to do. This was not a situation in which you could give somebody instructions, have them come back with a draft-

Q: Sort of the- almost a training exercise, mentoring or whatever you want to call it.

SMITH: No, this was going to be training by them watching what was being done. So, what I could do and did do with the political section was get them out and about town, observing, talking to people and finding out as much as they could about what was going on, at the foreign ministry, at the Russian government building, but the first thing we needed to do was get a cable to giving the embassy's view on what had happened, what it

meant and what our recommendations were. And that's the first thing that I drafted, and we got that out, I don't know, by 9:00 or 10:00 in the morning or something like that.

Q: Well, what were our recommendations?

SMITH: Well, first of all, we said alright, this is what's happening. We do not believe Gorbachev is too sick to be in power. The parallels to the overthrow of Khrushchev were enormous on the surface. He was off on vacation and it happened while he was out, he wasn't being allowed to return. So we said these guys, by their backgrounds, by their positions and by their actions have shown that they are going to try to bring back the old Soviet Union and use force to do it. The U.S. Government should not be supportive of this effort so we should not have any contact with these people. What are the chances of success? This effort could fail if they begin to question that the military will act as they order it to and if the public comes out into the streets in opposition to this. So that was basically- the fundamental recommendation was no support for this- to be seen publicly as not supporting this.

Q: What about the army? You know, at that time we must have been looking very closely at the army. The army had gone through its expulsion or withdrawal from Afghanistan; it was not a volunteer army at all and I think- How did we see the army and where were we- I mean, this would be our attachés but what were we getting about the army at that time?

SMITH: Well, the army was in enormous disarray. You had had all these people pulled back, not only from Afghanistan but from all of Eastern Europe. They had no housing for these people; some of them were in pitiful housing conditions in really bad weather. The morale of the army was dismal. The professional part of the army was the officer corps; their structure, their military structure is a little bit different from ours. We rely heavily on a non-commissioned officer corps as kind of the backbone of the military and in some ways the continuity and then an officer corps over that. Their non-com structure was much more minimal and their officer structure was much more extensive and down into what our non-coms would do. The officers were the professionals, they were, in some cases not getting paid, they didn't have housing; the military was in pretty terrible shape. Now, if the question becomes where did its loyalties lie, that would be very hard to predict in advance. You were not, even in that period of time, as far as I know, it would be difficult to get military officers to talk about their support for or even more so their lack of support for the leadership in power. So I don't, I can't really say that I recall that our defense attachés were getting into it to the level that you could get that kind of information. They were probably attempting to make judgments about it but no one really knew for sure. I do know that during this whole coup effort the attaché's office was making a very strenuous effort to monitor movement of troop units in and around Moscow.

Q: Alright. Well, you sent out your telegram; then what do you do?

SMITH: Well, first of all I should say that what we got from the initial response from President Bush was not the response that we had hoped, and he made that response before our cable had gone in, but it was basically- sounded as though the success of the coup was a foregone conclusion and we'd work with whatever leadership the Soviet Union had, which was exactly the wrong message that we felt should be-

Q: You know, one of our prime Soviet experts at the time in the NSC was Condoleezza Rice. Did you get any feel for her role and also the NSC in this? I mean, were their personalities or ideas that may have brought about this?

SMITH: Can't tell you; I was too far away from it and I never had the kind of contacts with them subsequently that would have enabled me to say anything very much about it. The only thing I can say is that at the time President Bush, like Gorbachev, was on vacation, but he was in Hyannis Port, so his initial statement on this may not have been as well informed as it might have been if he'd been back in Washington.

Q: Yes, because he wouldn't have the NSC there. And this was a very quick response.

SMITH: Yes. And subsequently he took a very different position, which was that basically we supported Gorbachev, we opposed this effort, we were not going to provide economic support to it and things like that, which was good.

Q: Were there efforts by the coup leaders to reach out to the diplomatic community right away or were we sort of- I mean, basically, they had other things to do.

SMITH: That's true of the foreign ministry. They attempted to reach out to the diplomatic community and the foreign minister at the time carried out the orders of the coup leadership initially; sent out cables to all the embassies abroad saying this is what is happening and these are what your talking points are, etc.

Q: As an old consular officer, were we concerned about, it must have been full of Americans, all full of NGO types and everyone else who had been coming to the Soviet Union now that things had opened up and particularly during the summer, a lot of students; were we concerned about the safety of Americans? Did we think that there might be fighting in the streets and all that sort of stuff?

SMITH: Well, we were. I honestly would have to say that this would have been handled by our consular section and I had a lot of other things on my plate.

Q: I'm sure you did.

SMITH: I'm not remembering whether- I mean, of course we had a warning system- whether we sent out advice to people to stay off the streets or to be careful about where they were and that sort of thing. I suspect that we did but I don't have a clear recollection.

Q: I was wondering whether, I mean, this would be part of the larger equation of what would be the popular reaction, you know, I mean, well, mobs in the streets.

SMITH: Yes. And it became clear during the course of that first day that there were not going to be mobs wandering around the streets or trying to storm the Kremlin. A center of resistance in Moscow quickly developed, which was at the Russian Federation government building, which was called the White House, and people began spontaneously to show up there during the course of that first morning. And this is the famous thing where Yeltsin got back into Moscow from his dacha without being stopped and formed a sort of center of resistance to this coup attempt in the Russian Federation government building at the White House.

Q: Were there attempts on at least part of the military or the KGB or somebody to set up roadblocks and you know, sort of the normal thing that you'd expect during a coup?

SMITH: We did not- I don't recall anything in the way of roadblocks that were being set up by supporters of the coup. The barricades that were going up were going up around the White House, and they were being set up by people who just showed up.

Q: Well, in a way it does show the ineptness of the coup people, doesn't it? I mean, you know, if you're going to do something what you do is you block off the roads to the capital and try to control that.

SMITH: It depends on what your objective is. I don't believe that they saw any threat that would have to be countered by setting up roadblocks around the capital. What would be coming through those roadblocks that you would have to stop? If you're trying to stop the movement of people than you would have to shut down the metro and the bus system, which would very effectively stop that, but do you bring the entire capital to a standstill and in so doing do you create more possible disorder than you prevent?

Q: And there's a certain amount- In a way, I don't want to put words in your mouth, of group think among these people in the coup. I mean, if you're army, KGB and all, you think you've got things pretty- I mean, you stop Gorbachev from coming, you've kind of got things under control.

SMITH: Yes. There had never been popular resistance to anything the government did of any substantial size, probably since the Stalin era when he killed everybody that expressed any form of disagreement with what was going on. So the whole 1945 on period had shown almost nothing in the way of public resistance to anything that the government did; a few human rights demonstrations, a couple of nationality movements that were quickly crushed in some of the republics but judging by history up until the last couple of years, at least, they had no reason to think anybody would come out in the streets. Now, they might have thought about what had happened over the last couple of years when there had been numerous mass demonstrations, not only in the various republics for independence and that sort of thing but within the capital itself in support of reform and support of greater democracy, etc., etc., and whether they considered that a

possibility or not I don't know. I'm sure that they did have the approaches to the Kremlin protected and they would not have allowed movement toward there. But where we were, out by the Russian White House, was far enough- you can't protect everything and so they- that- it just may not have occurred to them, although obviously in retrospect it should have, that resistance would be centered around that.

Q: Okay, you've got this group and you knew the names ostensibly of who was in it to add prestige to the, you know, I mean, gravitas to the coup people; what did we think of them? I mean, were we looking at them and going through our profiles and analyzing who these people are and how good they'll be?

SMITH: Yes. We knew them fairly well. The ambassador had met with Kryuchkov a couple of times, the KGB leader; some of them had been to his residence a number of times for social events. He had called on most, if not all of them, at one point in time or another and we knew they were from the most conservative wing at that point in party, governmental or security positions. Differing views on their capabilities ranging from some respect for Kryuchkov's, the KGB head's, abilities to pretty much lack of respect for Yanayev and a couple of the others who were in this effort, and we did not, I mean, it was pretty quickly assumed that the small key leadership group did not include the putative leaders. It was Kryuchkov and maybe one or two others, the defense minister we saw as being the real leaders of this. The so-called civilian leadership was pretty weak reads, both as individuals and in terms of their ability within the structure to command any real authority.

Q: So, we're reporting this and what was- what came over your mind? Did you think this was it? I mean, we didn't want to support it but was this making the right stand although we knew the coup would probably succeed? Or what did we think?

SMITH: I don't think I put like a probability estimate in my mind at the time. If I had the probability estimate would have gone down over the course of time as the day wore on and as that and the next day wore on because you were seeing what I had said and what we believed were the things that could possibly keep the coup from being successful. You were seeing a center of opposition; you were seeing mass support for it, thousands of people gathered around the White House, barricades going up. You saw a military unit go over to the side of the Russian government and put its armored cars and I think there might have been a tank or two and some armored cars, around the White House in support of this. So you had certainly an increasing question about the capability- about the ability of these coup leaders to impose their will. Always a question about whether they had a military unit out there on the outskirts of town that they had sufficient confidence in that they could call it at any point to come in and crush this resistance around the White House. And there was no doubt on the part of our defense attaché's office that 10 minutes work would have taken care of any resistance if you had a disciplined tank division prepared to use the force necessary; it would have been a matter of moments before this would have been crushed. But time went on, no such unit appeared; the longer this went on the more questionable it became whether they could do it, the more the resistance was emboldened, even the foreign minister who had initially

done what he was told at some point, probably during the end of the first day, kind of disappeared from sight, was taken ill and never showed up again until after it was all over. And then on the first evening you had these- a lot of this leadership show up on television to talk to the people, did a dismal job of explaining themselves.

Q: Hands trembled.

SMITH: The old hands trembling thing that everyone's heard about, one of them appearing to be drunk. They appeared not to know what they were doing or why they were doing it. That did not do anything for their credibility either. During the course of the first day we were contacted by Yeltsin's office and asked if the chargé would come over to meet with him and as you know, we'd already recommended no contact with the coup leaders; the question was should we have contact with Yeltsin. The White House, by the way, was right across the street from the embassy. You literally went out the back door of the housing compound and walked across the street and you were at the entrance to the White House, so we could see all that was going on with our own eyes. So we had a new officer in the political section, who eventually becomes our Assistant Secretary for European Affairs.

Q: Well, we can fill it in.

SMITH: Yes. She was very good, and part of her portfolio was contact with the Russian government and she'd only been there about two weeks but she had already started to make some contacts over there, so she was immediately over there, wandering around, talking to everybody, and so she brought back this request that we meet with Yeltsin and Foreign Minister Kozyrev in to the chargé. He asked me what I thought, I said I think we ought to meet with him, damn it, and show that the United States is meeting with him, sends the right message to the coup leaders, sends the right message to Yeltsin. He agreed but he wasn't going to do it without Washington saying okay and got Washington's agreement to do that. I don't know who he contacted, I don't recall, but he got the okay to do that. So he and I got into the ambassador's vehicle with the American flag flying and drove over, even though it was right across the street but-

Q: I mean, that's the way you make your point.

SMITH: Yes. And the people saw us coming with the American flag and of course cheers, they pulled the barricades out of the way and we went in there, and as it turned out we did not meet with Yeltsin, who obviously had a lot of things on his plate. We met with his foreign minister, Andre Kozyrev, who I knew personally from back when he had been the head of the international organization department in the Soviet foreign ministry, before he had gone to the Russian foreign ministry as foreign minister. And he told us that he hoped for the U.S. Government's support, said that Yeltsin was thinking of sending him abroad to, if necessary, form a government in exile and basically that was it. You know, we're resisting this; we want the U.S. Government's support, thanks for coming.

Q: Was there any talk about Gorbachev or restoring the legitimacy of Gorbachev or was it-?

SMITH: Yes, yes. Kozyrev said we support Gorbachev, Gorbachev needs to be brought back to Moscow, he needs to appear before the people himself, we're not going to accept any second or third hand explanations of how he is or what he's doing, and he's the rightful leader of the Soviet Union and he should be brought back to Moscow. So that was clear. They were very supportive of Gorbachev as the rightful leader of the Soviet Union at that point in time.

Q: What was happening, particularly on TV? I mean, was- did the coup people have a pretty good hold on TV or was, I mean, news, what was happening news-wise?

SMITH: Well, of course CNN was all over this, as you would have known from- if you watched any television back here at the time, you know, it was practically 24 hour coverage and we had a feed of CNN.

Q: Now, CNN was wide open in the Soviet Union at the time.

SMITH: You had that satellite reception, I think, to get CNN; we had it at the embassy. There were other places that had it but the average Soviet viewer without a satellite, the right kind of satellite connection, would not have been able to get it but we had that on all the time. My recollection is that we were not getting much out of Soviet television that was not- that it was controlled by the coup leadership at that point in time. I don't remember if there were- you were getting, in the print media, in aspects of the print media, resistance, particularly the second and the third day of the coup attempt, and you were getting reports from various republican capitals and provincial areas of a lot of people, I mean some people came out in support, a lot of people just ducked and a few people came out in opposition.

Q: Were we looking at the group around the White House, particularly students, you know, usually- Of course this was vacation time, wasn't it?

SMITH: Yes.

Q: So this meant they weren't as organized, you might say, but were they- these ordinary citizens or were they, you know, to use the Soviet term, the workers, the proletariat or just sort of good solid middle classes or whom?

SMITH: I was over among the crowd a number of times, usually in the evening, but after Washington went to sleep, I had a little time probably between 10:00 and 11:00 at night, and could go over there. I would have to say my impression was of a fairly wide spectrum of the Moscow public. I didn't have an impression that it was predominantly students. It was more young than not and probably more intelligentsia than not than factory workers, but a wide variety of people. And surprising by the number who showed up. I mean, thousands of people out there. Now, having said that, you could walk, as I

did, three blocks away and except for the fact that the streets were probably quieter than usual and there were fewer people on them, it appeared totally normal. There were not mobs roaming the streets, there was not chaos. It was an eerie sense of normalcy once you got away from the center of resistance.

Q: I imagine for you and the rest of the embassy, your adrenaline was up about 20 points or whatever it is that adrenaline goes up, wasn't it? I mean, this is what one lives for, in a way.

SMITH: Yes, yes. Absolutely. And it was. The effect on me personally was just one of these things that you get in situations where in a way everything seems to slow down around you because I was just energized and moving and thinking very quickly and it was, it felt like I knew what to do and what needed to be done. I had a lot of people, as I said, not only from the political section but other sections that wanted to help, getting them out and around, getting them- information coming in from them about what they were seeing, what they were hearing, get that into cit reps, which we were doing continuously.

Q: I would have thought the president, President Bush I, was such a hands on guy and this was of course number one in our, you know, any of our orders a priority, I would have thought- Did he call the embassy to talk to Collins or not?

SMITH: I don't think so, no. I would have known, I think.

Q: I'm surprised because I would have thought that- How did things develop? In the first place, they had an ambassador whose name is Robert Strauss; did he come out?

SMITH: He actually showed up on the third day of the coup and I should say, the second day of the coup was pretty much more of the same until that night, when some armored vehicles were being driven through one of the ring roads in Moscow, actually the one that went right past the embassy, a couple of blocks down they went through an underpass and some resistors to the coup attempt attacked these armored vehicles with Molotov cocktails and it's not clear what the guys driving these armored cars were doing; it is not clear that they were on a mission to interfere with the resistance but this incident happened and a few people were killed in it. And there were some gunshots. I should say, by the way, on the first night after the coup when I finally was able to go over to the White House and see what was going on there, I was struck by these tanks at various corners supporting the resistance, and looking down the road in two directions these tanks were pointing down roads that went right past the embassy compound. So you had an intersection here, a tank pointing its guns down this way and another tank pointing its guns down this way. And I walked back and knocked on the chargé's door and I said, we need to think about security because if there is a violent attempt to end this resistance and tanks could- are used we could be in the middle of a tank battle here. So the ambassador got together with the security people and the military people and all that and we kind of came up with a hold in place plan which would have involved using the gymnasium,

which was in the basement in the center of the embassy compound, underneath a grass, small grass field, so it would have been relatively well protected.

Another thing I should mention is that I strongly urged the people who worked for me, and I took my own advice, to make sure that they got some sleep. You have this adrenaline going and adrenaline will keep you going for about 24 hours, maybe 30, but it will not keep you going indefinitely, and I had seen this in at least one previous case, I think we discussed it earlier when Ambassador Noel in Sudan was killed. I saw this task force made up of people who just felt like they had to be there 24 hours a day and they were pretty much incapable of any effective action by the time that the crucial moment came. So I made sure that I got at least like four hours' sleep at night and I advised my people to do the same. Some of them took my advice, some of them didn't. By the third day the ones who did were still functioning and the ones who didn't were no longer functioning.

Anyway, the second night of the coup, this was Tuesday night, is when this incident occurred, and in some ways that turned out to have been perhaps the straw that broke the camel's back for the coup leadership. Because the military said, told them, as we learned later, that they were not going to use the Red Army against the people of Moscow. And at the same time the Russian government sent people, including Alexander Rutskoy, who was, I think, the vice president at that time of Russia, and sent them down to Gorbachev's villa to bring Gorbachev back.

Q: To his villa in the Crimea?

SMITH: Yes. And so you have this happening at the end of Tuesday night, you have these people going to bring Gorbachev back. You come to Wednesday morning and it's become increasingly dicey but it appears that the coup is still going on. I was, by this time, due to leave Moscow and my wife and son, who was, at the time two years old, were actually already on an outgoing flight schedule that Wednesday, and I was reluctant to have them go out to the airport without me so I drove out to the airport with them Wednesday morning and Ambassador Strauss flew in on the same flight that they were going out on so he came in, basically we passed each other; he was coming in as I was going out to the embassy, we didn't know it. But I dropped them off and was driving back to the embassy when all the traffic came to a halt, a total halt, on the main boulevard going from the airport to downtown. And as I was watching I saw tanks begin to roll out across this side street and they turned left, which meant they were going out of town; if they had turned right they would have been going into town. And I sat there and watched this and counted the number of tanks and armored cars and watched what it looked like. Some of the tanks were opened up, the tank crews were up on top waving to people on the street; the people were cheering because everybody understood that this tank unit, which was right in Moscow, and it was a full division, was leaving Moscow, and people knew, of course, what that meant. So people were just out in the street, I mean, they just happened to be there but they were cheering and the tank crews were waving, and the whole, as far as I could tell, without being a military expert, but the whole division left, supporting vehicles, everything. And I happened to see Mayor Popov, the mayor of

Moscow, whose vehicle was also stopped, so I walked over and said what's going on? And he said well, they're leaving. And I said well does this mean the coup is over? He said yes, it's over. What's going to happen to the coup leaders? They're going on trial; they're going to go on trial. And he was elated, too, because he was a prominent reformer, a real member of the reform group there.

So I went the rest of the way back to the embassy and got into the conference room, the secure conference room, just before the end of Ambassador Strauss's initial briefing with the country team and the deputy chief of mission said do you have anything to add? So I said the most useful thing I can add is to tell you what I just saw and what I heard. So I repeated that to him and Strauss, of course, who was more of a politico than a diplomat, but he knew what a politico should do, he told Collins to get him on the classified phone to somebody in Washington as fast as he could. So Strauss got on the phone with whomever he spoke to in Washington, I don't know who it was, and relayed this and I went to draft the cable, basically saying this coup has collapsed. And that was kind of the end of it.

Gorbachev came back that- was brought back that afternoon from the Crimea, appeared before the Russian Federation the next day, made some serious missteps, initially, in his speech to the Russian Federation, went on and on about what had happened to him in the Crimea and basically demonstrated that he did not understand the fundamental power shift that had occurred in the country during those three days because power at that point was, at least in the Russian Federation and in Moscow, in Yeltsin's hands. It was no longer in the hands of the Soviet government.

Q: Was there the feeling that had Gorbachev played it differently he might have resumed his authority or something?

SMITH: If he had had a chance to do that it would have been by getting out in front where things were marching at that point in time and by -- he made some initial appointments that were questionable in terms of where the political structure really stood at that point. He was not clear enough in his denunciation of the party and its role in all of this and it took him several days to get up to speed and do the things that he really needed to do right away. And by that time it had had really damaging effects on his authority and his credibility.

Q: Well, you know, I've seen accounts, just the picture of Gorbachev getting off the plane, saying a shaken Gorbachev. I mean, it could have been a picture of a confident Gorbachev, you know, it was just a picture of him getting off. But did you- Were we getting- Did we realize that things had changed and did we feel that Gorbachev was essentially overwhelmed by what had happened?

SMITH: Yes, we knew that things had changed and we told Washington that, that there'd been a fundamental change in where power lay and where authority lay, where legitimacy lay and that- we told Washington that Gorbachev had done a dismal job at trying to, in his initial address to the country, explaining what had happened and what needed to be

done in the future and that he didn't realize how much things had changed, obviously, and that unless he could get on top of this really fast he was in serious trouble. Yes.

Q: Well, in the first place, how did you all, when you heard about it and as things developed, feel about here we have a critical time and a man, an older man of very strong and solid political credentials, Robert Strauss, a fellow Texan to George Bush; I mean, I've interviewed Robert Strauss and he talks about the appointment and going out there. But how did you at the embassy feel about this appointment? You know, this has been essentially an embassy that had been pretty much in professional hands and so when a really critical time came all of a sudden they weren't.

SMITH: I know that Strauss had had a very successful career and had great access at high policy levels in DC. A lot of people less distinguished than him have been political appointee ambassadors. However, this was Moscow and moreover it was Moscow at a particularly delicate point, particularly in its domestic developments. In all honesty, I think that Strauss had no more business being ambassador to Moscow at that point in time than the man in the moon. He had no idea what he was doing; he had to be hand carried, at least in the short time that I was there. You know, I left very soon after he arrived. I remember that there was a ceremony in honor of the people who had died on that Tuesday night that was going to be held and I wanted- I told Strauss that he should go to it, I recommended it at a country team meeting, and Strauss said I've been to enough funerals, I'm not going to it. And as we left the meeting Jim Collins, the DCM, said to me, don't worry, I'll talk to him. So Jim talked to him, I don't know what he said but he was able to persuade him that this was something he should go to to demonstrate U.S. support for this. I wrote his speech. I sent him to the meeting, to the ceremony with one of my political officers who was a very good Russian speaker. The political officer basically hand carried him there, got him to the podium and up on the podium because he hadn't been invited to speak but got him up there and got him to where he could make the speech and hand carried him back to the embassy. And Strauss was, of course, thrilled that he had taken the initiative to do all this. He took no initiative whatsoever, of course. I'm being ironic about this. But if you would hear Strauss's account of it-

Q: I have.

SMITH: -I'm sure it would be considerably different from the reality. Strauss was so happy with the speech that he wanted me to become his speech writer at the embassy, which I'm sure he considered a great honor. It was good that he had Jim Collins as his deputy in Moscow, because Jim had been a staffer a lot of his career and was used to the care and feeding of political appointees. Strauss is well known to have said that giving credit to anyone else is a sign of great political immaturity and I'm sure he continued in that vein. Collins career, however, did prosper after that.

Q: Well you left shortly thereafter?

SMITH: Yes.

Q: When did you leave?

SMITH: I think I left on September 1. The coup was started on August 19; I was there throughout the coup and for a few days afterward. The new political counselor arrived and-

Q: Who took your place?

SMITH: Louie Sell. Have you done this with Louie?

Q: I think so.

SMITH: Yes, he's up in Maine now so if you haven't done him it might be a little difficult. But anyway, we overlapped for a few days but once he was there I thought that I should get out promptly.

Q: What did you see, you know, as you were getting out did you see this, what did you think was going to happen?

SMITH: I thought that a serious reform effort and a serious democratization effort had a real chance because you had had the anti-reform coup that had always been something that was in the offing, had always been something that might occur and I had, in the spring of '91 I had told visitors to the embassy that I thought Gorbachev's chances of serving out his term in office were less than 50-50. Now, how or why that might occur, that was not so easy to predict. But looking at what was going on in the society one could not give him better than a 50-50 chance of serving out his term of office.

Now, the entire conservative apparatus was totally discredited, thrown out of power, was in no position to mount a counterattack against a serious, far reaching economic reform and democratization effort, so I left pretty optimistic about where things were going.

Q: What about the Soviet Union?

SMITH: Did I think the Soviet Union would continue to exist? The Soviet Union had already ended at that point in time as an effective governing body. The power at this point was in the hands of the individual republics. This was now a confederation and whether it would be possible for Gorbachev to cobble together enough central authority to maintain an entity that would retain a central military, a single diplomatic apparatus and a single set of relationships with the rest of the world and some budgetary authority of its own was an open question at that point in time. It was what Gorbachev was trying to do; whether he could be successful was unclear.

Q: Looking at the Soviet Union at that time and sort of projecting ahead and all, I mean, it's always been my, from my looking at it, the key to the whole thing is the Ukraine. If Ukraine is taken out of the Soviet Union, Russia, the Russian menace just isn't there, I mean, outside of a nuclear mistake or something, because it's such a critical part of the

power of Russia. Did you feel that the disassembling of high points like the Ukraine would really change the Soviet menace or the Russian menace?

SMITH: Well, by this point in time it was hard to see a Russian menace. You had- We had far reaching strategic arms reductions and conventional arms reductions in place by that point in time. You had a military that was in disarray. You had- At one point there had been a very substantial Soviet conventional military advantage which was so substantial, at least on paper and in the belief of at least some in our military, that we felt obliged to have a tactical first strike capability if necessary to use to resist it. There was a belief that it could be quite possible for the Red Army to sweep across Western Europe unless nuclear weapons could be used early on to stop it. By this time that conventional disparity no longer existed and Russia could not have prevailed or the Soviet Union as a whole could not have prevailed against NATO, even in a conventional contest with no use of nuclear weapons at all. So you no longer had a Warsaw Pact; you no longer had a communist ideology that was competing against the West. When I left you still had a Soviet Union but it was a crippled Soviet Union in terms of its authority. So I didn't- I can't say that I perceived the issue of whether Ukraine remained a part of an entity or not as being a crucial issue. Now, Ukraine is a country of 50 million people so if you add that to the, let's say the 150 at that point that were in Russia you had a country of 200 million people. So, you know, instead of 150 million-strong country you've got a 200 million-strong country. You also have in Ukraine some of the more advanced industrial capacity in the former Soviet Union, as well as some of the best agricultural area in the former Soviet Union. So Ukraine is a significant entity but I don't, I personally don't see it one way or the other as being-

Q: It wasn't really a strategic equation.

SMITH: Not in my perception. And by the way, having the most advanced industrial capacity in the Soviet Union was not necessarily an unalloyed asset because by Western standards the best industrial capacity in the former Soviet Union was pitiful, except in some areas of military construction, which Ukraine-

Q: Which no longer was-

SMITH: Yes, but Ukraine did have a disproportionate portion of that but much of that was no longer relevant and much of those missiles were now being destroyed.

Q: In many ways the oil, you know, it was like Saudi Arabia. I mean, as of today oil is probably the main sustainer of the Russian economy.

SMITH: Yes. And it plays no role in Ukraine whatsoever except as a weakening of its economy because they are- they import virtually all their energy supplies.

Q: During this whole time did China ever come up on your horizon or not?

SMITH: By this whole time you mean what?

Q: Well, I mean during the- When the Soviet Union, you were seeing things happening there, including early Gorbachev time, the time you were political counselor; did China ever- was of any consideration or not?

SMITH: Yes, we kept following Chinese-Soviet relations and speculating about how that relationship might evolve and what it might mean. I took the view and we reported to Washington that the Soviet relationship with China was a very tricky one, because of historical reasons there was a certain gut level fear, I would almost describe it, of China that didn't exist with regard to Europe. The Mongols, the Tartars, you know, all of that history, that ancient Russian history played a role in how China was viewed by average Russians and it was viewed with an element of fear that did not extend to Europe.

Another aspect of this is the Old Russian relationship, military relationship, with Europe compared to its military relationship with China. You have to remember that going on from the Napoleonic Wars on Russia had prevailed militarily, not because it had better technology or a better standing military or professional military but because it had enormous reserves of territory and population that it could use to wear down its opponents. It was actually technologically inferior to all of its opponents but it had prevailed over technologically superior opponents because of endurance and population size. Now, think about the Soviet relationship to China or the Russian relationship to China. In this relationship Russia is, or was at that point in time, the more technologically advanced but population challenged side of the equation, so there was always a nervousness about the relationship with China.

Q: Okay. Well, this is probably a good place to stop.

SMITH: Yes.

Q: And we'll pick this up in August of 1991 and whither?

SMITH: Yes. Well, we're just about at the end of my political counselor tour in Moscow and then I went back to being head of INR's office of Soviet and Eastern European Affairs so that's probably where we'll pick up.

Q: Okay, we'll pick it up then. Great.

SMITH: Okay.

Q: Okay. Today is the 3rd of April, 2009, and we've left Moscow in '91? Whither?

SMITH: Well, I came back to the State Department on assignment as director of the office of Soviet Union and Eastern European Affairs and the Bureau of Intelligence and Research. And this was actually my last Foreign Service tour. I retired toward the end of this tour.

Let me back up a little bit and say that when I came back I expected that this would be my last tour. I had, for a couple of reasons while I was in Moscow, I had decided that I probably was not going to stay in the Foreign Service a lot longer, or at least I was going to look at other options. For one thing my son was born while I was there, my first child, and it was a very different life, having a very young son; he was two years old when I left Moscow. And I basically applied for two jobs while I was in Moscow; one was director of the Soviet desk in the European Bureau and the other was this job in INR. I probably could have had the job as director of the Soviet desk if I had wanted it but I really, in all honesty, did not want the job. I did not want to leave my son; you know, see him for the last time on Sunday night and then not see him again until Saturday afternoon of the following week, which is the way it would have been.

Q: And obviously we're talking about, you know, it's pretty obvious that the disintegration of the Soviet Union was in process, wasn't it?

SMITH: Yes, yes it was. And I knew from my previous time on the Soviet desk what kind of hours were required and what kind of- what would be required of me and even though my previous tour in the Soviet desk, I probably- my average departure time from the office was 7:30 at night and there were many nights when I was only able to leave basically when the Secretariat told us that they were closed and they wouldn't accept any more papers from us. And the other part of it was that it had gradually turned into a job for me, which I really realized while I was in Moscow. It was a vocation during most of my career and the hours didn't matter, nothing mattered except really the job. And once it turned into a job and realizing that I didn't want the job that I should want, that was the upward job in terms of my Foreign Service career, I thought to myself, you know, maybe I shouldn't continue doing this if I don't feel the same way about it.

Q: Particularly something like that.

SMITH: Oh, yes. There are lots of jobs in the State Department that you can do with a lot less involvement but not the kinds of jobs that I had had through my Foreign Service career.

So anyway, I really did not take any of the steps necessary to really get the job on the Soviet desk, heading the Soviet desk, and I of course knew that I would get the other job, coming as political counselor from Moscow; they would be more than happy to have me. So I went back to the INR job, recognizing that at some point I was probably going to start to look around and see what other options were available, both in academia and in the private sector.

So anyway, that brings me back to Washington and heading this office in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research. It was a large office because it had all of the former Warsaw Pact countries still in it at that time and divided into three sections, the Eastern European section and sort of domestic Soviet politics and foreign policy. But we- during the time that I was there we reorganized the office; it had to be reorganized because of the breakup, the formal breakup of the Soviet Union. So the fall of that year, honestly the

specific issues we dealt with I don't recall in as great detail as I recall the issues from Moscow. But in terms of the Soviet Union the primary issue was, as we discussed last time, whether it was going to be possible for Gorbachev to hold together enough of a center that there would be a Soviet Union and speculation on that analysis of what was going on, what the possibilities were, what his elements of support were, how things were going in the various republics and that sort of thing. And that of course was decided in December of '91 when Yeltsin met with Nazarbayev from Kazakhstan and the- No. Nazarbayev was not there. It was the heads of Ukraine and Belarus that were at this meeting and they decided that they were going to declare their independence formally and no longer be part of the Soviet Union. Nazarbayev, who was the head of Kazakhstan was actually in favor of retaining a Soviet Union for a couple of reasons, probably because he had a large Russian population, geographically centered in the northern part of his country and there were some- might have been some question about how that territorially would work itself out if the Soviet Union broke up, and perhaps because he thought the economic intertwining and all that made more sense to have a Soviet Union. But after this happened he went along and of course all of the other republics did too and declared their independence.

Q: Was there sort of the feeling that Yeltsin was Russia's center and in a way shucking the Stans and other parts of the Soviet thing was alright by him because that was in a way strengthening his position?

SMITH: Yes. The whole effort to keep a Soviet center while devolving more authority to the republics was always going to be extremely difficult because it doesn't fit with the Russian political culture. The notion of authority in Russia is that you either have all of it or you have none of it. I don't know if we've talked about this before but there's a saying in Russian that encompasses this and basically the English translation is "if I'm the boss then you're an idiot and if you're the boss then I'm an idiot." So there is no tradition-

Q: Durak?

SMITH: Durak, yes. Hey, look at that.

Q: I got this over 50 years ago and all of a sudden the word for fool is "durak."

SMITH: Yes. And actually in Russian it's "duryak." And "nachalnik" is boss.

Q: Yes.

SMITH: The whole tradition that we have in the United States of separation of powers, balancing powers and all that, is totally alien to the Russian political culture. So how were you going to create a structure that tried to separate power and provide some to the republics and some to the center? It was always going to be extremely difficult to do. There was not even any- If you look back to Lenin, at Brest-Litovsk, what did Lenin decide at Brest-Litovsk? Give up territory in order to maintain control over the remaining territory. His options were limited, obviously.

Q: This was when he was coming to _____ the Germans.

SMITH: Yes. But the fundamental decision that he made was to give up territory in return for keeping control over the territory that he could control. So in a sense where was Yeltsin in this? Yeltsin wanted complete control in the territory he could control and he could best get that by establishing an independent Russian state.

Q: Well speaking about the dissolution of the Soviet empire and all this, in a way this is minor; the real thing is what was happening bureaucratically in the Department of State. I mean, you had the Soviet empire and the SOB in the State Department and in INR; there must have been an awful lot of wrenching and bitter feelings and all this, wasn't there? How did it work?

SMITH: Well, I'm not sure in which sense you mean.

Q: Well, I'm just saying bureaucratically-wise, it's- You're giving, you know, _____ elements are sort of giving up their expertise to somebody else and all.

SMITH: Well, in my office in INR we were the first ones really to restructure as these changes occurred. We very quickly established basically an office of Russian Affairs or a division of Russian Affairs and a division of the other countries in the former Soviet Union and then we kept our Eastern European office, so we made that switch very quickly. The Soviet desk struggled a lot longer with that issue, whether it was going to divide up into separate offices, and there were a lot of bureaucratic struggles over that. You know, in one sense people were very excited about all this, of course, because it was a monumental, historic change in the international system, which I think a lot of us recognized and the question was, one of the questions was, how would we deal with that monumental change, what kinds of policies would we follow, what kind of relationships would we have. And then you had the whole thing about the arc of instability that was, that people thought would be developing around the southern tier of the former Soviet Union, some of the issues we were also looking at all the time there.

Q: How did you find your organization within INR? Was it mostly Civil Servant or more FSOs? What sort of expertise did you all have?

SMITH: Primarily Civil Service people who had been there for a long time. A few were very good in terms of their areas of expertise. Some of them could be a little down in the weeds but very good analysts, I thought.

In the part of my office that covered former Yugoslavia I did feel that there was a certain lack of objectivity in their analysis but-

Q: You get it from the water. I mean, served in Belgrade for five years; I understand that.

SMITH: You probably understand it better than I did. Yes, there was a visceral, almost, anti-Serb attitude among my analysts, which I thought got in the way of objectivity to some degree as we dealt with those issues. And by the way, I should say that the other key issues that my office was covering during that period was the whole breakup of Yugoslavia and the situation as it evolved in the former Yugoslavia. You know, the Bosnian separation, the Croatian separation, the wars that ensued.

Q: Well did you, let's stick to sort of the Soviet part, while you were political counselor had sort of your analysis, yours, I'm talking about you and your team in Moscow, been sort of at one with INR or during the time you were there had there been distances between your analyses?

SMITH: Well I think the fundamental- the most fundamental issue, which was the issue of whether the Soviet Union could endure, we were, at the embassy, more prepared to entertain the thought that the Soviet Union could break up, and INR and the rest of the intelligence community was not really ready to look at that issue and to look at the possible implications of that. So that was probably the main area of difference and it was a significant one.

Q: Oh yes. But there is a tendency and correct me if I'm wrong but I think in any analysis, particularly the more removed you are so you're not aware of some of the visceral feelings in the field, you know, among the leadership or whatever you're looking at, but to do a straight line projection. The Soviet Union's been there, the Soviet Union will always be there, sort of. I mean, that, if you're in the intelligence thing it's very hard to call for an earth change, I think.

SMITH: Yes. I agree. And to some extent it's caused by asking the wrong questions. But I'm writing this book now about political analysis, diplomatic political analysis and one of the things that I talk about there is how you deal with paradigm shifts and the different between analysis that's basically linear, a straight line projection, an analysis that looks at qualitative changes in the things that you're analyzing. And one of the arguments I make is that you have dialectical elements in historical change, and when you're in a period of revolutionary change linear projecting no longer works, so the kinds of analysis that you do, linearity may work perfectly fine in most normal circumstances but in these periods when you're on the cusp of revolutionary change it no longer works.

Q: And I think this is where the people on the ground can understand a revolution better than, usually, than the people looking at it from a distance.

SMITH: Yes. I agree. Also though, if the question you're asked is, is the Soviet Union likely to collapse, then the answer is no, the Soviet Union is not likely to collapse. If the question you're asking is, is there sufficient probability that the Soviet Union might collapse, that the United States ought to be doing things to prepare to deal with that situation, then you come up with a totally different analysis. And when you're dealing with an event as shattering to the international system as that one, even if you think the probability of collapse is only 10 percent the impact is so great that you ought to be doing

some serious analysis about the impact, and that was not being done in Washington, as far as I could tell.

Q: Yes. There was a period maybe 20 years ago, maybe less, when there was a possibility that Canada could split and I think on that I think the intelligence and everybody else took a pass because this- the mere fact that we might think that or do any analysis on that would certainly leak and the Canadians would react to it not with joy at all. So I don't think the Soviet, we could think whatever we wanted about the Soviets, I mean, that was- we didn't have that type of relationship we had with Canada but it was the same thing going on. Not quite revolutionary but it was a close _____ at one point.

SMITH: Yes. Well another example though is the embassy in Belgrade forecast very clearly that Yugoslavia would break up in the post-Tito era. I saw one of their cables and they just laid it out. They had it and it pretty much evolved as they said. They didn't necessarily predict that you were going to have the kinds of wars that you had in the course of the breakup but they said this cannot hold together without Tito.

Q: Well let's stick to the Soviet side first. What did we think about the Baltic States?

SMITH: Well, the Baltic States of course were just about -- my recollection is that by the fall of '91 we were already essentially treating them as independent states. I don't know whether we'd set up offices there yet or not; I don't think we had diplomatic relations with them.

Q: Oh we had diplomatic relations.

SMITH: Yes, you're right, that's right.

Q: Since the '30s.

SMITH: Yes, but diplomatic relations in the sense that we set up an embassy in the country. But we did open offices basically in hotel rooms in the capitals. I think, my recollection of the Baltics was that we did not see, after the collapse of the coup, any prospect that there was going to be a move to try to force them back into the Soviet Union and that they were evolving independently.

Q: Do you recall, you've got, particularly when we're talking about the Ukraine, and as you mentioned Kazakhstan too, but you've got these significant hunks of the Ukraine and Kazakhstan that border on Russia, of Russians.

SMITH: Yes.

Q: And, you know, what to do in like Crimea, their military units, bases; I mean, did we see this thing getting settled or was there concern that this might turn into little civil wars?

SMITH: There was considerable concern about seeing the relationships work out in a way that would not lead to war, and you're right to talk about the Crimea, military bases and naval bases along the Black Sea. The difference in Ukraine between the eastern population that was primarily Russian and much more well, pro-Russian and more limited in terms of how it embraced reform, and the western part of Ukraine which basically identified itself much more with Poland and with the West, and would there be movements to break apart some of these countries. Those were among the issues. And of course the overriding issue initially was what's going to happen with the nukes. Are we going to be able to work with these countries to persuade them to transfer their nuclear weapons to Russia. And that was not something that INR was involved in as a diplomatic effort. We were involved in the periphery with some analytic work but of course that was primarily a diplomatic endeavor and it worked out successfully, of course, as we know.

Q: Did you get the feel, you're part of the intelligence community and particularly the military defense intelligence agency and the huge CIA, and yet INR is considerably smaller but has had the reputation for being much faster on its feet and basically more accurate. Did you get a feel, I mean, was there a feel that we're the first team, you know, in intelligence or not?

SMITH: No. Not at all, although there was a- I mean, there were definitely bureaucratic rivalries with other elements of the intelligence community. It was a combination of cooperation and competition and a sense that I think people felt that they could do things as well as or better than these much bigger organizations, but by the sense of the first team you mean the team that the political leadership would listen first or put out first, no, absolutely not. INR was a stepchild in the State Department. Its budget was dismal; we even had times when other elements of the intelligence community provided funds to INR so it could improve its technology so it could communicate effectively with other elements of the intelligence community. We could not- We had almost no funds for our analysts to travel out to any of the countries they covered. We would piggyback on trips. We'd get people out to the embassies in the summer to fill in gaps and their travel would be covered by the geographic bureau. Resources, bureaucratic clout, attention paid, all of those things but INR pretty much low down in the State Department totem pole, I would say.

Q: Well, you know, I'm just wondering whether, from time to time you have reporters who report on intelligence or foreign affairs and all and they usually come away speaking about how INR is right and the other agencies aren't, particularly, on sort of strategic matters. Was there anything to this?

SMITH: Well, when there were differences in the intelligence community I would have to say my impression was INR was more often right than the agencies were with which it disagreed. Why that's the case I'm not sure. Maybe it was by virtue of not being so-getting as much attention from the political leadership so there was maybe a sense of less pressure; I'm not sure.

Q: Well I think two things, and I'm not sure I've looked at it through these interviews and all, and I served in INR; one is that, particularly we're talking about the Defense Intelligence Agency worries about defense matters and there are politics there an all, but the CIA and INR supposedly are doing almost the same thing. One of the problems, I would think with the CIA is its got layering. Its got so many supervisors and we all know that if you put an extra layer of supervision on reports that come out they'll start worrying about well, will I say this or will I say that, and they begin to qualify what they're doing. I mean, this is in its nature; the more layer the less bite it has. And I think there's another problem that the CIA supposedly has the president's ear and this is both good and bad. If they have a person who briefs the president every day, the president is going to say oh God, you're always bringing me bad news or you're doing this or that, and all of a sudden the stuff gets tempered, whereas the Intelligence Bureau and the State Department, one, it's close to sort of the policymakers and there isn't so much bureaucracy and it tends to be a little more attuned to what the real world rather than the Washington political world. I don't know.

SMITH: It's possible that that's the case. That's also one of the virtues, of course, of embassy reporting, that it's out of the Washington political milieu and therefore can- which even INR is in, obviously, to a greater extent than embassies are abroad, and to the extent that you can keep the embassy reporting abroad out of that maelstrom you can get a fresh voice and a fresh input. With the technological changes that have been occurring over the last 20 years, of course, that has become a lot more difficult to do. You have now classified telephone connections, you have classified email, it's become much more common for embassies to, if they think they might be submitting something that would rub somebody the wrong way to send it in in an informal email ahead of time and, how does this look, what do you think. And now you've put yourself right in the middle of adjusting your reporting to Washington perceptions rather than providing Washington an independent perception. That's a really unfortunate trend.

Q: Well, what were we looking at that the- as the Soviet Union was breaking up of places like Georgia and Chechnya and places that later turned into sort of sore spots on the periphery of Russia? Were we aware of these places as being potential real problems?

SMITH: Yes. I mean, if you talk about Georgia and you're talking about Abkhazia and Ossetia, if you talk about Moldova then you're talking about the Transnistria region, which had a substantial Russian population. And as these things broke off the Russian population in some of these areas did not want to go with them and the Russian military was providing support in some cases, even in those early days to them. That was particularly obvious in the Moldovan case where they basically set up an independent entity with the Russian military basically saying to Moldova, don't cross this river.

Q: Yes, stay on your side of the Dniester and we'll stay on ours.

SMITH: Yes. So we were following those things and also following the kind of political maneuvering that was going on in Moscow with regard to this. What generals are out front on these issues and are they carrying out Moscow policy or are they carrying out an

independent policy and Moscow can't bring them in line. I'm not sure that we really knew which the case was but we were certainly looking at it and trying to figure it out.

Q: Was there much contact on the part of, well Europe, particularly bailiwick with the British, German, French intelligence on this?

SMITH: There was some. I remember during the time that I was on that- in charge of that office I went out with our deputy assistance secretary for our region and we met with the German intelligence folks in Munich; I think that's where their headquarters was. That's kind of a funny story, by the way. We were going out to meet them, and I told you INR had no money, and we- it was right at that time, the time of Oktoberfest, and so hotel rates were very high and there weren't very many hotels available, and in a lot of bureaus in those circumstances you put in a request for actual cost, rather than per diem, and it would have been perfectly justified under these circumstances. Well, INR wasn't prepared to try to do that and so we had to go out on per diem and the deputy assistant secretary didn't want to go out of pocket for our hotel so she told our host to find us a hotel within per diem. So we arrive in Munich and we get on a train and we ride, ride, ride, ride, ride on this train outside of Munich, we're out in the middle of the countryside, we get off at this stop and we walk down a dirt road between two sheep fields on both sides to our hotel, that was within per diem. It was just totally ridiculous.

Q: Well turning to the Balkans, particularly Yugoslavia, was this, I can't remember, was this pretty new to you as far as-?

SMITH: Yes. I had been a Soviet specialist, not an Eastern European specialist.

Q: Well this must have, I mean, you know, the history of that place, well I mean, it goes back to, what is it, 1379 or something like that; I mean, '89 I guess, but the Battle of Kosovo, but I mean, did you feel like you were in Wonderland or something?

SMITH: Well, it was an awakening to me, not just in former Yugoslavia but also in some of the other countries in Eastern Europe, to begin to get a better sense of the history and how significant that history still was to the outlooks of some of the people and the countries. I remember visiting Bulgaria and being reminded that it was- by the Bulgarians, that it was the Russians who had helped them throw the Turks out and they hadn't forgotten that and they still liked Russia for that reason. And of course, you know as well as I do or better that the history of the former Yugoslav area, it's an interesting phenomenon when you have an authoritarian regime that basically does not allow nationality issues or cultural issues or historical issues to work themselves out, that it, for ideological or whatever reasons, says they no longer exist, we're all one big happy family, and it has enough power to impose that for a period of time on a society. And the notion that those things are going to diminish during that period appears to be very questionable. This is what I learned of the former Yugoslavia. It's more like they're just frozen and as soon as that pressure is let up they just burst out. To me that's one of the differences in a society that deals with the messy elements of those kinds of things, that you deal with the manifestations of them as they arrive and it may be messy, it may be

ugly but it may not become revolutionary, whereas that's much more likely to happen when you've had a refusal to allow these differences to work themselves out in the political system.

Q: Yes, I was in Yugoslavia from '62 to '67, this is high Tito, and it was called brotherhood and unity was the watchwords and there was no, I mean, we're all aware of the difficulties but I don't think most of us realized how deep these dislikes ran, or hatreds ran. And also I think there was very much the feeling that after all, this is not a 20th Century, the end of the 20th Century. We've gone through World War II and you sure are not going to have a return to the bestiality of that so everybody's learned a lesson.

SMITH: Yes.

Q: They had it.

SMITH: Yes, right. They had it.

Q: Did you find- Where was the anti-Serb- I mean, did you have a contingent of pro-Serbs? I ran across some here. I never became a real pro-Serb; I was sort of- I was disgusted with the Serbs myself and so I find colleagues, whom I- I sort of belonged to the Serbian club, it had been awhile but they'd chat and they would be talking about, these are officers who served in the- Serbia; you know, isn't it awful the bad name that's being given to the Serbs and all, and I didn't feel that. In fact, I felt there was a very pro-Serb club. But this is an FSO club.

SMITH: That did not exist in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research. All of the analysts there were, for want of a better word, I don't think it's quite the right word for anti-Serb or maybe a better way to put it, were always ready to put the worst interpretation on anything the Serbs suggested or did. Now, having said that-

Q: Let me just-

SMITH: -the Serbs were doing a lot of really bad things during that time.

Q: I was going to say, I was sort of surprised with my, I call it the FSO Serb Club; they were excusing things that I thought were just despicable.

SMITH: Right.

Q: But it did arouse emotions. How did this- Did you- You know, we were trying very hard during this period, I've talked to people, Ron Neitzke was there, chargé in Croatia and all, and others have tried to deal with- create this policy of equivalency. The Serbs are awful but so are the Croats. The whole idea was to stay out of the damn thing and particularly this is early Clinton, I guess, but this is also late Bush, Bush I, of trying to, they're all bad so we don't have to throw our- we can stay out of it or something. Did you find any pressure on that?

SMITH: I'm not aware of that. Certainly the analysis of what was being done- I would have to say it was a struggle to try to get analysis that discussed the kinds of things the Croats were doing and the kinds of things that the Bosnians were doing on the same footing as the things that the Serbs were doing, particularly the Croats. They also engaged in their own ethnic cleansing and they did some things that are totally indefensible. And I found it kind of difficult to get them put on an equivalent level. There was much more of a tendency to see the despicable things that the Serbs were doing and to highlight those rather than to discuss the things that were going on in other parts of the former Yugoslavia. So I guess I would have to say no, I didn't see an equivalency. I saw more of an effort to side with the Croats and the Bosnians.

Q: Well, were you- How long were you in that job?

SMITH: I was in that job from September of '91 until April of '93.

Q: So you were there basically through the very early Clinton.

SMITH: Yes.

Q: Did that make any difference?

SMITH: Well yes. Yes.

Q: And I would assume it was almost too early to get a feel for Clinton's admin or not?

SMITH: Probably, although you know, I'm trying to remember if I could see a distinction at that point in policies. The election would have been in November of '92 and Clinton was so slow putting together his foreign policy team that by the time I left, Strobe Talbott was there but other than that no, I don't think I had a sense of it.

Now, what I did have a sense of was that the policy that was being pursued under Bush and that initially, at least, was continued, which was a policy of territorial integrity for Bosnia, for Croatia and for Serbia, but the particular issue was Bosnia. And our policy was that there was going to be an integral Bosnian state; there was going to be no partition. Yugoslavia could be partitioned but the other elements were not going to be further partitioned. And that was our overarching policy. Now, throughout this period a lot of people were getting killed. And we did not have- we were not prepared to bring to bear the resources necessary to achieve the policy goals that we set out. We were providing some assistance to the Bosnians, we were trying to talk to the Serbs, UN resolutions, all that sort of thing, but none of that was sufficient to maintain the territorial integrity of Bosnia against this Serbian onslaught and I was very uncomfortable as an analyst and as a foreign policy thinker with the consequences of this gap between our goals and the means we were prepared to use to achieve them. And I felt that one of two things had to happen; either we had to match our means to our goals or we had to modify our goals. There was no evidence in the time that I was in INR that we were prepared to

match our means to our goals. That would have meant getting forcefully involved. And so I thought, and I believed and tried to argue that we ought to seriously consider a partition of Bosnia as the best way to bring this warfare to a close and as the only policy objective that we had a hope of achieving with the means we were prepared to use. And I began trying to look at how you could divide up Bosnia in such a way that you could create a viable Bosnian state while part would go to Serbia and part would go to Croatia. People weren't prepared to deal with that but I felt thousands of people were being killed and we were stuck going around in circles on this. I drafted a memo called "The Case for the Partition of Bosnia," which I tried to get sent up to the secretary and I couldn't get it out of the INR front office. They basically turned it into a memo from me to the assistant secretary and that's as far as it ever got. They just weren't- the assistant secretary was not prepared to send something like that forward; just wasn't prepared to tell the people on the seventh floor that our policy objectives could not be achieved with these means and that people were getting killed.

Q: We diddle for a long, long time.

SMITH: Yes. And ultimately we did bring to bear the means necessary to, at least for now, create a Bosnian state. But in the interim many people got killed.

Q: Well then, when you left, how did you feel about, one, about the Soviet or Russia and all?

SMITH: Well, a couple of things. First of all, Russia was going through an economic mess but it had to go through a serious economic downturn. There was no country from the former Warsaw Pact countries or the former Soviet Union that had tried to reform its economy that had not gone through a depression, some longer, some shorter, and basically the ones that went through the sharpest, fastest reform process had the sharp V-shaped economic downturn and began to come up, Poland being the example. But Russia's view of the Poland example was that they're having the reform without the recovery and we can- we don't have to have the crash; we can have the reform without having that kind of downturn. Totally unrealistic and it was not going to happen. So I felt that the fact that the Russian economy was in a mess was not in and of itself surprising. The bigger question was, were there fundamental structural changes going on in the Russian economy that would set the stage for a recovery later on. I felt fairly positive and perhaps mistakenly so about the steps they had taken to privatize industry. Creating a private entrepreneurial class that had a stake in the system to me was a major step toward making sure you couldn't have a communist system come back and a command economy come back. So I felt positive about that.

Q: Well then, in Yugoslavia, what was this, the plain mess?

SMITH: Yes. I left feeling that we were pursuing the wrong policy there and a lot of people were suffering because of it.

Q: Well what did you do when you left in, what was it, '93?

SMITH: Well, I had begun to think that- Well, let me say first of all that I had actually begun to send out some resumes and stuff in the fall of '92 and I got, actually got promoted to the minister counselor level in October of '92, and I really did not expect to be leaving the Foreign Service, I mean, I was serious about looking around but I thought- I had no idea how long it might take to find something that would cause me to make a decision to leave.

Q: Well, wasn't the aroma of ambassadorships, I mean, the Soviet Union disintegrating, they needed Russian speakers. Wasn't that- Of course, with a two year old son, I mean, these are pretty awful places to go.

SMITH: Yes. A lot of places would have been really tough for me to go to. They had already done the first round of ambassadorships so those people were going to be there for a couple or three years. I was actually, if I had stayed I would have- I was slotted to go out as deputy chief of mission in Moscow so I would have gotten back out there after a two years back in the States. But having the ambassador title just no longer meant that much to me and since I was a Minister Counselor, presumably I would have expected to be an ambassador at some point but it just was not a driving factor at that time.

So I unexpectedly got an offer sooner than I expected to from the private sector and so I left, and it involved working in the former Soviet Union, and Eastern Europe, so it was my area of expertise. And I also had the feeling that there was an opportunity here to draw Russia into a more productive relationship with the rest of the world and how the economic side of that relationship worked out would have a good deal to do with whether Russia would be drawn into that kind of relationship. So I wanted to be involved in that.

Q: So where'd you go?

SMITH: Well, I went- I made what was probably the biggest mistake of my professional career at this point in time. My wife had worked in Moscow setting up a substance abuse clinic during my tour as political counselor and the financial support for that came primarily because of the interest of the CEO (chief executive officer) of a company called US Tobacco in the United States, and so I got to know the CEO and I liked him, in terms of the kinds of work that he was doing with this substance abuse center and that sort of thing. And purely by chance it turned out that there was an opening, that they were looking for somebody to head their Soviet/Eastern European operations within a month or two after the time that I started sending out my resumes. So I interviewed with them and I knew them, they knew me, and they offered me the job and I took it.

Q: How long did you do this?

SMITH: I did it for about two years.

Q: Where were you located?

SMITH: I was located in Greenwich, Connecticut, that was our home office, and I traveled a lot to the region but I worked out of the home office.

Q: When you talk about substance abuse, what are we talking about?

SMITH: Alcoholism primarily, drug abuse to some extent. But my wife has a doctorate in social work with a specialty in substance abuse counseling and treatment, and so there was no substance abuse treatment in the former Soviet Union at the time we were there, using Western techniques of treatment. They had their own techniques that basically involved shaming and work reform programs. So my wife helped set up a clinic attached to a hospital and headed the clinic for the first year of its operation. And as I said, primarily with alcoholism.

Q: Well alcoholism of course is such a huge problem in the Soviet Union and most of those northern countries, Sweden and Finland and all, I guess.

SMITH: Yes.

Q: Particularly- I assume in the Baltics too, was it?

SMITH: You know, I don't know. My impressions from being there were that the heaviest drinkers that I ran across in that part of the world were the Georgians and the Finns. I could tell you some stories about those people. But the Russians drank a lot but even they were astounded by the way the Finns drink. And the Georgians, I can remember one time making a trip to Tbilisi and sitting in a hotel at lunchtime with one other person and we were sharing a bottle of wine over lunch and somebody from another table sent another bottle of wine over to us, apparently thinking that we were too poor to afford a second bottle of wine; for two people to split a bottle of wine was just unheard of.

Q: Well how successful or non-successful; how did the thing work out from your point of view?

SMITH: It didn't work out at all. The CEO, who was very committed to expanding in the international markets, left about six months after I got there and was replaced by the COO (chief operations officer), who, like a lot of number twos, once he was number one decided he didn't particularly like anything his former boss was doing, and he had no real interest in the international area at all, and basically pretty much reorganized it out of existence about two years after I got there.

Q: So then what?

SMITH: What does any retired FSO do who's out of work? I started consulting. I set up a little consulting, one-person consulting firm called Eastern Approaches and did that for a couple of years, and then as part of that consulting I was talking to people in what was then the Bureau of Political Military Affairs, Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Fund

about one of my clients and they wound up asking me if I wanted to come onboard full-time with them on a contract basis. And I thought about it and the thing with consulting is you spend two-thirds or three-quarters of your time trawling for work and the remainder of the time while you have the work you're hourly rate is very high but you're only doing what you're good at for whatever that percentage of the time is and the rest of the time you're trawling. And I didn't particularly like trawling; I liked doing what I knew how to do, which is former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and diplomatic kinds of things. So the offer to come aboard the Bureau there looked attractive to me because the hourly rate was a lot lower but I'd be doing what I like doing all the time, so I did. I came back on there and basically stayed another 10 years and then retired, presumably for good.

Q: What type of work were you doing?

SMITH: I was called a senior advisor or senior negotiator and basically the NDF Fund, Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, called NDF, had a certain amount of money from Congress each year to carry out projects involved in keeping other countries from getting weapons of mass destruction or destroying weapons of mass destruction or their delivery systems. And basically I handled a lot of the international negotiations involved in these projects. And I could summarize it fairly briefly. We destroyed a lot of missile systems in Eastern Europe with our funds, we basically hired an American firm to go over there and do the destruction or oversee the destruction, and I would negotiate the agreement with the foreign government. We set up- we helped, along with others, set up facilities and security systems to make it less likely that nuclear materials would get diverted to terrorists and that sort of thing. Border; we helped set up portable monitors at border crossings. Just a whole range of things. We took highly enriched uranium that was in exposed positions and brought it, you know, relocated it to more secure places and things like that.

Q: Well this is basically a reshuffling of all these nuclear weapons of the Cold War, wasn't it?

SMITH: Well, we weren't involved in reshuffling the nuclear weapons. That had pretty much already been done. It was more destroying delivery systems, destroying chemical weapons facilities. We did that in Bosnia, we destroyed chemical weapons production equipment in Serbia. So it was more- but it wasn't weapons itself. It could involve weapon grade material that we'd be interested in seeing get downgraded or even, in some cases, non-weapons grade material that we wanted to get out of a place where it might be taken and enriched.

Q: Did you get involved with Pakistan or North Korea and all?

SMITH: That fund was, at least, I don't know whether it currently is, was involved with North Korea, but that project started after I left there. But remember the big thing where the cooling tower was blown up?

Q: Yes.

SMITH: That was probably their funding that was responsible for that.

Let's see; which other one did you ask about?

Q: I was asking about Pakistan.

SMITH: Pakistan, I'm not aware of anything in Pakistan. We did some work in South Africa with some of their missile systems.

Q: Did you find that your- I mean, you're not a physicist or somebody with a technical background but more understanding the political environment. Did you find this useful?

SMITH: Well, my job was to negotiate the agreements. We hired experts or we brought experts to see that the agreements were carried out appropriately but take for an example, a missile destruction project, and we did a missile destruction project in Slovakia and I had a guy with me, actually he was from the CIA as well as some State Department people, who were experts in these missile systems so they could determine whether the stuff was there that should be there and they were looking for guidance systems and stuff to make sure that hadn't been taken out. And once we were sure it was there, basically, we ran over the stuff with tanks. It wound up being about an inch high and a hundred yards around. It didn't require a rocket scientist to know it was destroyed at the end of it.

Q: What are you doing now?

SMITH: Well, now I'm- I have an article that's being reviewed now by a journal called "Intelligence and National Security," about embassy reporting and intelligence reform. I have a book that your organization here is taking into its program, called "The Craft of Political Analysis in Modern Diplomacy," which I've just finished doing revisions on. I've had several readers look at it. And I'm doing some research for another book, which will- I'm not sure where it's going to wind up but the basic- what I'm looking at is how the international system has dealt with a variety of major structural changes at key moments in history, like the peace of Westphalia, the end of the Napoleonic era, the Congress of Vienna, the rise of Germany, World War I and World War II, the resolution of that, and then looking at how we handled the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. And I want to look at kind of what were the conceptual approaches that were used to these different things, what worked, what didn't work, what lessons we could learn from these things and where we sort of have come out so far in dealing with the end of the former Soviet Union.

Q: Well this type of work, this type of writing, do you find yourself in, I'm not sure that it's the right word, competition, but it's a little somewhat competition in the academic world; I mean, you're not an academic, you know, you don't have the University of Blah Blah behind you, or something. Does that inhibit or not?

SMITH: Well, it doesn't inhibit me but it may inhibit me getting something published. Technically I have the right academic credentials; I've got a PhD in international affairs from a pretty prominent university; I've published some articles and a previous book; and I'm not- but I'm not writing from the strictly academic perspective. What I'm really trying to do is kind of find a way to combine a certain amount of intellectual rigor with practical experience and hopefully there's a market for that.

Q: Well I would hope so because I think one of the things that I've certainly discovered, I've been doing this for about 24 years, is the gap, the tremendous gap between the academic output in the field of international relations and various aspects of diplomacy and the practitioners.

SMITH: A huge gap. They read totally different things. For example, an academician who's writing in this area, where's he going to try to get published? "American Political Science Review," "Journal of Conflict Resolution," some very specialized journals that no one who's a practitioner reads. Then you have sort of the think tank type publications which to some extent bridge that gap but you've got "Foreign Affairs," you've got "Foreign Policy," but-

Q: Random.

SMITH: Yes. But "Foreign Affairs" is not a groundbreaking type journal and it's not a theoretical journal at all. They like to publish stuff by senators, candidates for president, chiefs of state, that sort of thing. All that's well and good but it's not -- there's an enormous gap between that and academic research. There are a few publications that try to bridge that gap; "International Security" is actually a pretty good one. But, I trained in a very behaviorally and quantitatively oriented doctoral program and there is just -- it's hard to make that move intellectually from that to what it means for policy.

Q: Yes.

SMITH: I probably would not understand my own dissertation if I read it today.

Q: One is struck because I do this, talking to people, I think that we've created something, this collection that's now 1,500 of these interviews online, particularly ones of the last 10, 15 years are much longer, and there's a hell of a lot of very good, practical stuff in there but how to get the people who do the writing, I mean, we're making the mother lode but someone's got to mine it and that's-

SMITH: Yes. Well, you've done a little bit of that mining of it yourself, haven't you? In fact, a friend of yours passed away recently.

Q: Yes, Bill Morgan. And we've done some of that but our idea is not to get this for us; the idea is to put it out there, of the practitioners talking about how they do it. I think we'll get there eventually. I mean, hope springs eternal. But I think it's just too good for

somebody that's looking at the Soviet period or something, they would be criminal not to go to your account and extract what they want from it.

SMITH: Yes. I'm not sure how- I have not gone onto your web site or onto the site; it's the Library of Congress, isn't it? To see what it looks like. But is it indexed at all?

Q: No, it's a little hard to get in, it's keyword and we're hoping to make it better. I mean, we're working- That's part of our business; I take a very long view when doing the collections, it's a great priority, and now to develop sort of the instruments for getting into it.

SMITH: Yes. Because, for example, if I were studying the Soviet Union during the Gorbachev period basically what I would want to get a hold of is those excerpts from all of the people who worked in Soviet Affairs in one way or another during that period and pull those out, without everything else that these people might have worked on during their careers.

Q: Well, I mean, it's doable but it's awkward now. I figure that one of the kids is much better dissecting things than we are; we belong to the, you know, quill pen is not that far away from us.

SMITH: I know. When I tell my son when I was growing up I had to listen to the radio for entertainment, "The Lone Ranger." He's like, I mean, it just doesn't compute so to speak.

Q: I know. With my grandson, I'll take a picture, he says, let me look at it. I keep thinking, for God's sake, when I was a kid, you'd push the button of your Kodak and then waited three weeks before you got the film back. And now the kid wants to see it right away.

SMITH: Yes. Well, one of the things I hope to do with this current research I'm doing, actually, is take some of the international relations theorists, like some of the real politic people, the institutional people, and see how they deal with some of these historical periods and see if I can mine that for some approaches to the sort of current period or the post Cold War period.

Q: Yes, well I hope you'll be able to go into our- and maybe deal with say the Berlin Wall or airlift or go back anyway you want.

Okay, well Ray.

SMITH: Well, I think we've done it, haven't we?

Q: Yes. This is great.

End of interview