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

AMBASSADOR ROBERT A. BRADTKE

Interviewed by: Daniel F. Whitman
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INTERVIEW

Q: Here we are, the day after tax day, April 19, 2016, I think. I am Dan Whitman interviewing Ambassador Robert A. Bradtke. And stop me if I'm wrong: B-R-A-D-T-K-E.

BRADTKE: You've got it right. Thanks for spelling my name, which is easy to misspell. No one can believe the d, t, and the k all go together.

Q: Well, we'll get to that; there may be a story behind that! Actually, are there many Bradtkes in the world?

BRADTKE: There are not that many other than my relatives. Even when I was posted in Bonn, if you looked in the phone book there were just a handful. It's a relatively unusual name.

Q: I'm sure there's a reason for that.

BRADTKE: Well, it's a good thing, because the folks at TSA when I applied for the Global Entry program said, you're lucky, we don't have a lot of Bradtkes on the terrorist list!

Q: That's very good news. Well, what we do here, ambassador, is to start pretty much at the beginning chronologically, as much as you're comfortable with. We don't have to dwell on this, but we want to know who you are, where you come from, and I'm talking childhood, parents, education, you don't have to spend a huge amount of time on this, but we do want to have a sense of your upbringing, so take it away.

BRADTKE: Well, it's not a whole lot that's exciting there. I was born in Chicago. We moved to Detroit fairly soon after I was born. I went to grade school in Detroit, then we moved and I went to high school in Pittsburgh. My father worked in business, my mother was a classic 1950s and '60s stay-at-home mother. I had a brother and sister. I went off in 1967 to the University of Notre Dame. I was an undergraduate there, and that was probably where, in terms of the Foreign Service experience, I can trace back to. I ended up being in a sophomore year abroad program. I studied in Angers, France in the Loire Valley.

Q: I love Angers. I'm already interfering in the process! Notre Dame's a Catholic school. Can you tell me anything, was that part of your upbringing by any chance?

BRADTKE: Yes, my father in particular was a very strong Catholic, and it was very much a part of my upbringing.

Q: Chicago, Detroit, and then you said high school was in Pittsburgh. The family went—

BRADTKE: Yes, as his job changed, we moved to follow his job, and then after I went off to Notre Dame, they moved yet again a couple of times.

Q: For what reason did your father have to move?

BRADTKE: Well, some of it was promotion within the company he worked in, toward the end of his career, and in an earlier case, it was he lost his job and got a new job, but for most of the moves it was moving up [and] transferring within the company. At the end of his employment, he worked for a company called Whirlpool, which still exists, an appliance company, and that was his specialty, and so when we moved from Detroit to Pittsburgh, and after Pittsburgh, he was working for Whirlpool and we finally moved to Benton Harbor, Michigan, which is where their headquarters was. So again, it was intercompany transfers, and in one case, a change of employment.

Q: Did any of your father's activities seep into you?

BRADTKE: Well, this is always a great question. I remember people saying, "Why would you want to join the Foreign Service?" I think there are things that you only come to realize later, that at the time you may or may not have understood, and the easiest thing for me was to point to the year I spent in France, but if you sort of dig back a little further, why in the world does somebody who grew up in Chicago and Detroit and Pittsburgh, who'd never been out of the United States, except to go to Canada and Windsor, on the other side [of Detroit], and maybe Niagara Falls, decide they want to spend a career or even go off and study in another country?

Q: Fascinating notion.

BRADTKE: And that's a little harder to dig out. I think it's in part because of my father's experience. Here was someone who was in World War II, served in North Africa, served in the Pacific. We had a print from Casablanca that was in the entryway of our house in Detroit, and while he didn't talk a whole lot about the war, he loved to travel. I think that experience had been very formative for him, and I think somewhere along the line I inherited either genetically or through osmosis of upbringing, this interest in travel, interest in foreign countries from my father.

Q: Actually, I read the whole Churchill war diaries in December—I'm a little crazy—and I remember the suspense of the North Africa campaign. It really didn't look good.

BRADTKE: Rick Atkinson writes extremely well in his trilogy on World War II, which for me was very interesting, and I bought the book for my father, but I read it myself.

Q: It was not only the Desert Fox part, it was also the western—

BRADTKE: Yes, we were kind of rookies at fighting in those years, and in the end were successful, in spite of not having a lot or the right kind of equipment and material. And

the generals, General Eisenhower, didn't do particularly well there. They were also learning. Anyway, so that, I think—

Q: To make it personal, you say your father didn't say much about this.

BRADTKE: No, he didn't. He was not a combatant. He was in the Seabees, which you think of as guys who were tough construction workers, and all the rest, but he was a clerk, he could type. So here's a guy from Chicago, born in Chicago, joins the navy, which is already kind of odd, but he didn't want to be in the infantry so he joined the navy, and then when they discovered he could type, the Seabees wanted a guy to be the clerk, and so he was the clerk.

Q: He was in both North Africa and the Pacific?

BRADTKE: Yeah. But not in combat, in supporting roles.

Q: And the logistics were everything actually to Eisenhower and Churchill. So he came back and you were spawned a little bit after that.

BRADTKE: Yeah, I was born in 1949, a second child. My sister was born in 1948.

Q: So you're the middle child?

BRADTKE: So I'm the middle child.

Q: So you have neither the neuroses nor—

BRADTKE: I'm not enough of a psychologist to work my way through that. We're all different. My younger brother was born eight years after I was, but you know, the influence of being a middle child, I couldn't begin to fathom that, and I'm not sure it's relevant to what I did afterwards.

Q: Let's just say it's not. No, I brutally interrupted you when you were in Angers. To get you back—

BRADTKE: There may be another noteworthy point about how I ended up going to France. I went to a Catholic high school in Pittsburgh, and there was a French teacher. You know the usual two years of Latin in a Catholic school. [Even] then I knew Latin was not going to be the wave of the future, so I took two years of French, and the teacher was a young, somewhat ungainly Frenchman who knew very little English, but that experience, as I look back, was one of these formative things that you don't think about until later. A lot of the kids used to make fun of him, but I liked him, and the fact that he didn't speak English meant that a lot of what we did was in French, and he gave me an interest in the French language and that, I think, contributed to my saying, "Geez, I think I'd like to—"

Q: Is that something like immersion because you couldn't—

BRADTKE: Right, it ended up being like that but it wasn't intentional. I don't think they were smart enough in those years—we're talking about the 1960s—to understand that that was the way to teach the language, not to use English, but to do it all in the other language, in French in this case. I think he just didn't know enough English to explain things in English so it ended up being mostly in French.

Q: This is not about me, but there are some parallels. I also took Latin a few years earlier when I thought it was the movement of the future. For me, French was an afterthought. It later became my life. What about you? What was your motivation to take French? Was it an afterthought, or did you really see it as—?

BRADTKE: It's a good question, why French and not Spanish, and not German? I don't have any answer.

Q: Why any living language?

BRADTKE: I think because I felt that I wanted to learn a language that I could actually use, although I had no immediate plans. What do you know when you're a junior in high school about using [a] foreign language, about in what kind of career you would use a foreign language. I didn't know what I wanted to do until I graduated from Notre Dame, I was a senior, and I took the Foreign Service exam. So again, why did I do that? You know it's buried in the mists of time and kind of [an] adolescent whim that you just say, "Geez, I think that would be interesting." And so you do it.

Q: That's the beauty of American education. You don't really have to know early on.

BRADTKE: Spanish would have been the more logical choice. German, because of my family background, might have been a choice, but it ended up being French.

Q: So in a pretty logical sequence you went from a Catholic high school to Notre Dame, and in the end—

BRADTKE: Yes, just outside of South Bend.

Q: Your freshman year did you know pretty quickly that you wanted to have an adventure during your sophomore year?

BRADTKE: You had to sign up because they had a special program for the students who were going to Angers. There was a regular kind of group that went. And at that point they only had two overseas study programs. One was in Innsbruck and one was in Angers. If you wanted to be in those programs, from the beginning of your freshman year you had

to enroll in a special French course, you did two hours a day, every day, which for an undergraduate is, you know—

Q: You're aware this doesn't exist anymore?

BRADTKE: I don't know what they do now for students doing this who want to go to Angers from Notre Dame, but you were put in with the group of kids who wanted to go, and it was three o'clock every afternoon, an hour with a professor, a regular classroom setting, and then you were expected to go into the language lab and you were kind of monitored for an hour listening to tapes, every day, Monday through Friday.

Q: That is already a historical—because this doesn't exist anymore.

BRADTKE: Yeah, it's probably a little unusual. Whether it was unusual at the time I couldn't tell you, but it was a good program, because you went from two years of high school French to the point where you could get on the boat to go to France, and you could get by. But you had a certain feeling, I can get myself in and out of most situations [if] I need to.

Q: Sure. So let's take you to Angers. You're there. Your previous travel had been to Windsor [and] Niagara Falls?

BRADTKE: Yeah, just on the other side of the border with Detroit.

Q: Is your first image of France unforgettable and vivid? Did you go on a boat, did you say—?

BRADTKE: Yes, we went on the *[S.S.] United States*, believe it or not.

Q: To Le Havre?

BRADTKE: Okay, it was a group of us students. All of us went together from New York, maybe twenty-five to thirty [of us], and we had a professor from Notre Dame and his wife who were kind of our chaperones for this program. We were a group that went into a course that was run at the *Université Catholique de l'Ouest* (Catholic University of the West) in Angers. They had some other non-French students, so you didn't study with the French students, you studied in specialized programs for foreign students. I can't say I remember a whole lot about the trip from Le Havre to Angers, except on the boat having a really good time. Because here you were, on your own, and you could go into the bar and have a drink, and there were lots of other young people who were going off to study, including a group of young ladies who had come from Trinity College here in Washington [DC] who were going to study in Paris. We had a great time. [We] got off in Le Havre, and then the work started right away. Our professor gave us little assignments: go and buy something, go and ask somebody how to do something. So that is as much as I remember: getting on the bus, stopping somewhere, having to order lunch, having to go

out and get a baguette, whatever the assignments were, and then ending up in Angers to start the program.

Q: This was for a year?

BRADTKE: This was a year. This was 1968, so right after the May 1968 riots in Paris until the summer of 1969.

Q: I was there one year before. And yeah, this was the day of aerograms when cell phones did not exist, and when you said good-bye to your parents you were really saying goodbye.

BRADTKE: And it was very expensive to call, and I don't know if I even called them the entire year I was there. I don't remember any phone calls. I remember writing letters, sending postcards! I don't even know what phone I would have used.

Q: You would have gone to the PTT and waited two hours for a reserved line?

BRADTKE: Right, right.

Q: You were not in Paris, which is a magnificent place, but it can be overwhelming. Angers is a nice little place.

BRADTKE: I thought Angers was a great place. Then again, it's of interest to no one.

Q: I'm interested.

BRADTKE: Well, that's good. They put us in French families and I stayed with an elderly couple and probably kept them up at nights when I wasn't coming home early, but they were very kindly, you know, they were always there, they loved to talk. It was a great experience. And they helped reinforce what I learned, because you'd go home at night and they spoke no English. They had children who were a little older than I was, I would say grown up children, and occasionally on the weekends we would do things together. But that was a really good experience.

Q: It was mainly language. Was there also—?

BRADTKE: Yes, it was language. So you did have classic language training: grammar, but then there was French literature, French history, art history, those things that were taught in French.

Q: Mais de— (laughs)

BRADTKE: Yes, I never really was a master of any of that, but yes, you'd have that and then the art history class would be taught in French, the French history class would be

taught in French, the French literature class. All the classes were taught in French. My French instructors, I can't remember any of them rarely spoke any English.

Q: No, likely they didn't.

BRADTKE: And that was the other thing about Angers—and I've been back to France many times since 1969—but those days in a provincial town like Angers, there were not a lot of English speakers. If you went into a little café or bistro or bar or whatever, and you tried to order in English, you mightn't get away with it. You really had to use your French, you were forced to.

Q: Were you able to get beyond [Angers], did you travel in Europe that year?

BRADTKE: Yes, and it was also kind of an adventurous year. I did a lot of travel in France, some of it organized, some of it on my own, [or] with my friends. But I also took a trip to Eastern Europe with something called the International Educational Exchange Programs, IEEP. It was Easter time in 1969 and I had an interest in Eastern Europe, partly perhaps because my mother's side of the family is from Poland. Her mother emigrated as a young child to the United States. So this was a trip that took us to West Berlin, East Berlin, Prague, Moscow, Leningrad [in those days], and Warsaw. And it was a two-week tour and there were a couple of us from Angers, but mostly it was American students from elsewhere in Europe. We traveled by train and spent a couple of days in each place. It was a great trip. And this is after what happened in Prague in 1968. We were there in the spring of 1969, and it had a huge impact on me.

Q: Again, I have to ask you because of my own personal [experience]. I was in Prague one year earlier, before the invasion. And I have always been interested, what was the mood there at that time?

BRADTKE: Somber, very somber. You still saw bullet- [scarred] buildings, evidence of fighting. If you walked out in the street, people would want to talk to you, but very carefully, not out in the open. There was, I think, an atmosphere of fear and depression, as much as I remember. But I remember people seeing us, Americans, down the street, and kind of taking us off to the side to talk, and you were always, even back in those days, before the Foreign Service training, always a little nervous about who is this person, really? But I do remember those kinds of conversations where people would want to tell you something about what happened.

Q: Did you love Eastern Europe pretty quickly?

BRADTKE: Yes, I came to the conclusion that I wanted to go back. I thought this was a fascinating part of the world; I had just scratched the surface, but it's something that came back to me after I joined the Foreign Service, no question.

Q: Was there a sense of romance in it being the worst period of the cold war and there you were?

BRADTKE: No, I don't think I was smart enough to have that feeling! The other trip was during Christmastime, now that I think about it, when I went with a couple friends down the Italian peninsula, by ferry across to Greece, Christmas in Athens, and then with one friend of mine back up by train through Yugoslavia, which also came back into my life in the Foreign Service.

Q: Well, this sounds like a prequel. A lot of what happened to you—

BRADTKE: Maybe not very exciting, but there are these little markers that when you stumble across them later in your life, ironically, you come back to these places.

Q: You keep saying, "Not exciting," and of course I totally disagree. Just for the record. So, you're in Angers in May or June or whenever?

BRADTKE: Right, we arrived in August.

Q: Ready to go back.

BRADTKE: Oh, August of 1969 I went back to the States.

Q: Were you smitten, did you have the bug?

BRADTKE: Oh yes. I think there is when I said, "Geez, this is a great experience, I really like this." I'd liked learning a language, I enjoyed that. I'm not a gifted linguist by any means, but I liked using a language, I liked the insights it gave me; I felt it had been one of these—it sounds trite—transformative experiences. How you saw your country, your life, your family, your religion—all these things that you had been brought up with—in a completely different light, from a wholly different perspective. And the idea that there was this whole world out there that I'd just scratched the surface of!

Q: At that time the young people in France were enraged at the American war in Vietnam. Did you—?

BRADTKE: Angers is a pretty conservative place. There was not much of that in Angers.

Q: The reason I ask, when you say you saw yourself in a different way, can you develop that notion a bit?

BRADTKE: Oh boy!

Q: Or did you— You were the outsider.

BRADTKE: I think it was more in the sense of a lot more questioning about things that you were brought up with. Being brought up as a very strict Catholic I'd never drank. I don't think I'd ever touched a beer until I got on the boat to go to France! The thinking about those things, questioning your parents. Until I went to France I had a crew cut, and then I let my hair grow, which was a source of enormous conflict with my father when I got back. So it was those kinds of things, just thinking that, looking at yourself differently, even physically looking at yourself differently.

Q: Was your long hair more important to you than harmonious relations with your father?

BRADTKE: It was a close call! Plus he still had a lot of power over me! But it was the first thing he wanted me to do when I got back, "Gotta get your haircut!"

Q: And who won?

BRADTKE: Oh, he won, yeah. I kind of edged out from there, but the initial battles were on his side.

Q: We're now in segment two.

BRADTKE: After putting everyone to sleep in segment one!

Q: No, no. It's still April 19 and it's Dan Whitman interviewing Ambassador Robert Bradtke. We've just gotten back from how they keep you down on the farm once you've seen Paris, Angers. You're back in South Bend, and thinking, "Oh my gosh, where's the baguette?" Was there actually a little bit of—?

BRADTKE: Oh gosh, it was a huge cultural adjustment. And some of it was just my own immaturity, which was feeling that you were special. You've been to France; you've lived in a foreign country, and here you are with these people who never had this experience, and what do they know? You know a lot more, you've experienced a lot more!

Q: Did you have a hard time finding the right English word sometimes, when the French word came first?

BRADTKE: Yes but you were much more sophisticated than they were. And the other thing: I didn't have good study habits. Because in France, the whole point was to get out, to talk to people, do things, to travel; not to sit in your room and study. You got back to Notre Dame, which—at least at that time and probably even today—is a bit of a grinds' paradise. You're in South Bend, there's not a helluva lot to do except hit the books and stay in the library. My first semester back I struggled with the academic side. I did not have good study habits. It wasn't that I was going out and drinking or anything else. I wasn't organized, I didn't focus enough. It was that extra hour or two that you needed to put in that I wasn't doing, and it took me a semester, into the next spring—

Q: If this was a confession, I would say, "Five Ave Marias and sin no more!" Was there a social class? I mean, you were an outsider in France? Then [suddenly] you were an outsider again?

BRADTKE: Right. The mitigating factor and something that helped me a great deal was my best friend from Pittsburgh, who was a year younger than I was. So when I was a freshman at Notre Dame, he was a senior in high school. Then I went to France. Then he went to Notre Dame and he was a freshman. So when I got back, I was a junior and he was a sophomore. We were great friends, and we roomed together. We were in with a couple other guys, and that was not easy because I tended to need my privacy. At any rate, he was a bridge between my Notre Dame friends and the friends I brought back [from] Angers. I came back with this group of people that all had the same experience that I had.

And the other thing—and again this is a sign of how things have changed—Notre Dame was all male in those days, and there was an enormous disproportion between the Notre Dame male student body and the relatively small percentage of women students at St. Mary's College just across the street. Most Notre Dame students didn't have any female friends. And here I came back, and our group in Angers had been half women and half men. Now that I think about it—again of no interest to anyone—but in the formative sense, I came back with women friends. There was no romantic relationship, but they were friends. That was something that—and maybe I'm patting myself on the back unjustifiably—but it was a little unusual in the Notre Dame environment that a woman student wasn't just someone you went on a date with, but was a friend.

Q: St. Mary's and Notre Dame did share classes, right?

BRADTKE: There were a few. For example, in the language class to prepare to go to Angers, the St. Mary's students who went with us were in that class. And there were a few who attended other classes, and a few male students went the other way, but it was a very small amount. So the social atmosphere was a little different. But it was helpful with my friends, with the people I knew from France [who] bridged all that. I had a good network of friends whom I enjoyed very much and [it] was a stabilizing factor, if that's the right word.

Q: Launching into what comes next. Would you say that the schooling and upbringing, does the word "cloistered" come to mind? Did you feel that you were restrained in some way?

BRADTKE: Cloistered is probably too strong. The word I was going to use was "unnatural." It is not a "natural" feature for men and women who are eighteen to nineteen [years old] to be completely separate. You do not learn how to relate to the other sex in that kind of environment. That's at least my conclusion. And having been in an all-boys high school and then starting out at Notre Dame, and continuing there, this was not an

environment where you were going to learn a lot about women, except to see them in a certain way, and to think, "Oh can I ask her out for a date?" Not a terribly interesting story perhaps, but it was a sign of the times perhaps that that was the way it was, and it gave some of my friends social difficulties.

Q: So you had minor reverse culture shock as a junior, and your senior [year] was this [a problem]?

BRADTKE: I had got it figured out mostly. I had my study habits in gear. I knew I had to work hard; I knew what I wanted to do. I wanted to take the Foreign Service exam but I didn't think I'd pass it. I thought for sure I'd probably not pass it, but I knew my father said, "Four years of undergraduate and you're on your own, fella. If you want to go on to graduate school, you got to pay for yourself." So I knew I needed to get scholarship money. My social life was a little more integrated in terms of my friends, so it was a year of a lot of hard study and trying to really focus on what am I going to do next.

Q: So you did nurture the idea of the Foreign Service; you saw it as a long shot.

BRADTKE: Yes, I did.

Q: But you took the exam as a senior?

BRADTKE: As a senior I took the exam.

Q: And voila? It happened?

BRADTKE: Non. No voila. And this I should have learned, because it was already an insight into the Foreign Service. I passed the exam! It was the old style exam. I don't know where I took the written. I went up to Chicago to take the oral, took the oral, and passed. I was twenty-one [years old]! And then you get a letter putting you on the roster, the waiting list, and [it said], "We'll call you when we get to you."

I made it! I made it! But I didn't make it. There was a hiring freeze; I was fairly far down on the list, and [so] I applied to graduate schools, but I'd already given my heart to the Foreign Service! My expectation was this is what I really want to do.

Q: How many months in limbo, more or less?

BRADTKE: Years, not months! They came back and said, You can be on the list for twenty-four months, thirty months. I can't remember now. But they said to me, before I graduated in the spring, We're probably not going to get to you. So I ended up doing basically a year and a half of grad work before—unexpectedly—they got to me.

Q: Well, they did get to you.

BRADTKE: I took the test a second time, passed again, but before the eligibility for the first time expired, they magically managed to get to my name. And then they wanted me right away! So I had to kind of curtail my graduate studies [for] a year.

Q: Sounds like almost a master's degree

BRADTKE: Well, yes, the first year of graduate studies was in Italy. I went to Bologna through Johns Hopkins, SAIS [School of Advanced International Studies] to be precise, trying to repeat what I did in Angers. And then I came back and I went to the University of Virginia where I was three-quarters finished with a master's degree, and then I got the call from State Department saying, "If you don't show up now, who knows, you may or may not ever get another call."

Q: Not to be too biased, but the SAIS program may be the best in the world.

BRADTKE: It was wonderful. It was a great experience. I still have a really good friend who lives here in the Washington [DC] area from that time. Different from Angers because the classes were all in English, but there were a hundred students in those days, half American, half mostly European. I think it's more of a mixed diverse group these days, but a great experience.

Q: So was there any regret that you didn't actually, you weren't able to finish your master's?

BRADTKE: Yes, it's a long story again, not of terribly great interest. I was basically told by the State Department, Who knows? Who knows when we're going to get you? And I was surviving on my scholarship money. I had finished the year at Bologna, and got in touch with a professor whom I knew at Notre Dame who had written a book about the Communist Party at Bologna, and who had happened to inspire me to go to SAIS in Bologna. [He] helped me to get an offer of a good scholarship to go to Virginia. I think if I'd gone to the second year of SAIS I'd have been in Washington [DC] and I probably could have finished the master's, but since I started over, I was in a PhD program at the University of Virginia.

Q: You were inches away from a degree.

BRADTKE: When I left Virginia I was close to a master's, but I didn't finish my thesis. I finished my course work and my exams, but you had to write a master's thesis and I never quite got—

Q: So accepting the offer from the State Department was basically a no-brainer?

BRADTKE: Basically yes, because I'd waited two years from the time I graduated—almost.

Q: And you really wanted—

BRADTKE: And that's what I wanted, no question. I'd come to the conclusion that I wasn't for academic life; that I probably wanted to do something a little more hands-on, and be out in the so-called real world, which I know is not a fair assessment for people in the academic world, but it was what I was thinking at the time.

Q: We know that the Foreign Service has many curve balls. What was your fantasy of being in the Foreign Service? How did you see yourself? Did you see yourself as [becoming] a chief of mission quickly?

BRADTKE: No, and if I did, the A-100 course in those days certainly discouraged you from thinking that you were going to make it. My recollection, at least in the first course, was we were told to look around you, because most of these people won't be here after five or ten years.

Q: Did you have some image or some idea of what you would be?

BRADTKE: Strangely enough, the answer's probably no. Did I get started in this career thinking, Now I can move overseas. Now I can travel. What am I going to do on a daily basis? What exactly is this job about? I don't think there was as much material about the Foreign Service, the things that are available on the internet today, like "A day in the life of a political officer, or a consular officer, or a management officer." There was a thin little book that made it sound pretty glamorous, but could you figure out exactly what you were going to do from that booklet? Probably not. At least I couldn't.

Q: You were smart enough to know that you would learn on the job.

BRADTKE: I was happy to have a job, because this was a great obsession of my father's as well, "My son's going to spend all his time at school. He's going to run out of money. He's going to come home. He's going to live with us. Oh my God, we can't possibly have that happen." He was a child of the Depression, so the worst thing in the world for him was to not have a job. And here I was kind of drifting along, and I'd turned down a couple of things. I could have gone to work in business, to go on to graduate school, and it was, "Oh my God, he's got a job!" So I was happy to have a job. The salary in retrospect was laughable.

Q: Compared to others?

BRADTKE: Well, compared to what it is today, but there has been a lot of inflation. But it was real money. I had a job, I had a certain amount of security. I felt pretty good! Without necessarily knowing where all of this was going and what it would end up being.

Q: We're now in segment three. Ambassador Robert Bradtke, as long as you—

BRADTKE: Well, maybe one more segment. This is the most boring part. I mean I'm amazed that you're still awake, but here we are!

Q: That's my problem. (laughs)

BRADTKE: We haven't even gotten to the Foreign Service yet!

Q: We're now in. And we finished A-100 and there was a Flag Day. So, shall we go to that day?

BRADTKE: You mean when we got sworn in?

Q: When you got your first assignment.

BRADTKE: Right, is that what they call it now, Flag Day? I remember the list of possible assignments we got. And again, this is the "Dark Ages." We came in coned, and I came in as a political officer. The March 1973 A-100 junior officer class that I was in, thirty-five of us, was a big class. There were relatively few political officer jobs. There were a couple of rotational jobs, [and] there were lots of consular jobs, but I don't think [there were] more than two or three political officer jobs.

Q: In those days political-coned officers did political assignments from the start.

BRADTKE: That's right. And that's what made it so attractive, although there were seven or eight of us political officers, but there were not seven or eight political officer jobs. The two I can remember, one was in Monrovia, Liberia, the other was in Georgetown, Guyana. But, there were other jobs, not in the political cone. There was Tel Aviv, there was Paris, but they were consular jobs. I can't remember many of the other jobs. For me the attraction was to go out as a political officer. I wanted to do reporting. I didn't even necessarily know what that was all about, but that's what I was and I wanted that kind of job. I'd never been to a tropical country. I didn't even know where Georgetown, Guyana was on the map! When I said, "Georgetown," everybody in the class said basically, "Oh you must be going over to the university!" I knew very, very little about Georgetown.

Q: So that was your assignment?

BRADTKE: Yes, you had the chance to express your preferences, [and] Guyana was my first choice. I think there was not a lot of competition. Most people were interested in, you know, Europe or someplace that sounded a little more comfortable. And so there I was!

Q: After that there was FSI.

BRADTKE: Yes, A-100 was in Rosslyn and it was like five-six weeks, but before we received our assignments.

Q: That's all?

BRADTKE: It wasn't a long training course.

Q: And out you go!

BRADTKE: Well, yes. And here too [there was] a little bit of one of the classic "curve balls" in the Foreign Service. When I left Virginia the deal was I would come to Washington to join the Foreign Service, but I would write my thesis at night at home, and finish it up, because I'd be in Washington for a while. But, [I] got to Washington in March, and I was supposed to go to Georgetown before the beginning of the summer because they were getting ready for elections in Guyana. The ambassador wanted to get this position filled. So I went out almost immediately after I'd finished the Foreign Service introductory course. There was no language training. So, good-bye, you're on your way! I think I had a couple of days or whatever of area studies and whoosh, I was gone!

Q: No consular training?

BRADTKE: No consular training. No other kind of training at all, that I can remember.

Q: No political reporting training?

BRADTKE: I don't think there was political officer training. The only training was integrated into the generalist course. I don't remember any specialized training. I could be wrong. Maybe I just blotted it out of my mind.

Q: Now, can we get into Georgetown?

BRADTKE: Maybe I need to mention one other significant element here. [In A-100] we sat in alphabetical order, and there was a woman who sat next to me whose name was Marsha Barnes, whom I didn't really get to know particularly well in that class, who had a real interest in Georgetown, because she had read a book by Gerald Durrell the naturalist called, *Three Singles to Adventure*, where "singles" meant one-way tickets. "Adventure" was a town in Guyana, but she read this book and she thought this was just going to be great! So she put that at the top of her list, and boy were they happy to get a consular officer who wanted to go to Georgetown and put it at the top of her list! So she was also assigned to Georgetown from my junior officer class. And that comes back into play later.

Q: Okay. Well then we'll do it chronologically. It's funny what the alphabet does to people.

BRADTKE: Funny, very funny. History, life is full of coincidences that could have gone any number of different ways.

Q: Okay, you're in Georgetown, a sweaty place that many people love to avoid.

BRADTKE: I'm in Georgetown—hot—sweaty. Boy, it was a real shock! Getting there was not easy, although it used to be you could fly PanAm [Pan American World Airways] all the way from New York to Port of Spain to Georgetown. The airport was to hell and back because it was an airport that had been built as a military base when we were in the Lend Lease phase of World War II. It was a base that had been swapped to us so that we could control that area. So it was built miles from town, where the land goes up a little bit. So I remember a long, hot ride after getting there at two in the morning, [and] not being met! I swore I would never let an officer come to any post that I was in charge of who was not met by another member of the staff! I was dropped off at this antique hotel called The Park, which was a British colonial place, and there I was. I had no idea what I was doing. It was just a real shock.

Q: Let me guess, there was not a welcome kit at the [hotel] reception.

B There was no welcome kit. I think there was a note saying, "The embassy's down the street, see you in the morning."

Q: I'm absorbing this.

BRADTKE: I was just totally lost, totally lost.

Q: Sounds almost perverse like they were saying, "Let's see what he will put up with." That sounds like a badly administered post, actually.

BRADTKE: Yes, well that may have been part of it. Part of it was maybe this was a new position. No one had filled this position before. I was a brand new officer. I think there may have been an expectation level that I was more experienced. I'd been in the Foreign Service less than two months at that point. I didn't have a clue. And maybe the post management, as we call them now, didn't appreciate that I was as green as grass! And I had no idea what I was doing.

Q: The size of the staff there at that time?

BRADTKE: There was the ambassador, DCM [deputy chief of mission], an economic officer, the GSO [general services officer], an administrative officer, a USAID [United States Agency for International Development] mission, and some scattered other people. And a PAO [public affairs officer] and a deputy PAO and two American secretaries and communicators.

Q: Tiny. A dozen?

BRADTKE: Yes, somewhere around there.

Q: So did you meet them the next day? Did you find the embassy?

BRADTKE: I don't remember too much about the next day, but I do remember being really lonely in the beginning, really lonely, and not connecting to anybody who was there at the time. That changed fairly quickly, although at the time it was a big adjustment. I was living in this hotel, the food was at least weird, if not inedible. They didn't have a house ready for me. I wasn't going to be moving into a house for some time. And I'm living in this—"fleabag" is not exactly the word because it was clean—but in this ramshackle British colonial hotel. In this very, very strange place where people—and again this is no rap on anybody from the time—but people just assumed you knew what to do. And I didn't. I really didn't.

Q: This was the "Dark Ages." They may not do much better now, but at least they understand that a junior officer doesn't know.

BRADTKE: The big thing that changed—to jump back slightly—was the econ officer left, and a new econ officer came out, and Marsha Barnes, who'd been sitting next to me in the A-100 class, came out, and the three of us bonded. The econ officer was just an enormous help. He was closer to my age, although maybe seven or eight years older. He'd just been through a divorce, but he was on his third tour, and he took me under his wing, and he taught me how to be a reporting officer, even though I did not report to him. I reported to the DCM, but he taught me how to be a reporting officer.

Q: Young people now are coached to go find themselves a mentor, which seems like the opposite of what reality does.

BRADTKE: They didn't call it that in those days, but I watched what he did, talked to him, and got advice on what I should be doing. And did things together with him.

Q: Was there a political chief or were you it?

BRADTKE: I was it.

Q: And how much time did you have to wait until the elections? Was it weeks or months?

BRADTKE: [It was] like two months. I remember writing the definitive airgram before the elections about the elections. And the reporting cables afterwards. It was a totally fraudulent election. This was in the days when there was, and still is, a huge problem in Guyana. There was a terrible racial/ethnic split between the descendants of the people who were brought there as African slaves, and East Indians who [were] brought there as indentured laborers, and then throw in a few Portuguese from Madeira, and Chinese,

neither of which worked out well as field laborers and eventually took over the small shops, and the small businesses. In the 1960s, there had been a violent late-colonial history of conflict, which the British didn't help [due to] some of their misguided policies, when there'd been a lot of people killed, and resulted in total racial polarization. The East Indian Party was run by Cheddi Jagan. He married a fiery communist from Chicago, whose name was Janet. And he became a communist, a genuine, committed communist.

So we and the Brits felt that it was our job to keep them out of power even though the East Indians were the ethnic majority. And we backed a lot of strange people, and did a lot of strange things, which are now in the records. This is no longer classified, but basically the result was that a man named Forbes Burnham was in power and Burnham knew that in a fair vote he'd lose, because East Indians would outvote him. So he stole the election. He stole the country's elections. And it was obvious that the elections were stolen.

Q: So we're at the peak of the cold war. The U.S. government does not want communists but we believe in elections that are free and fair.

BRADTKE: Yes, we believed in not having communists more than having elections that were free and fair. I was somewhat appalled that this had happened, and relatively naive, and this was my first exposure to all this. I remember the ambassador's view was basically, "We spent a lot of blood and treasure to get this guy in power and keep the communists out, so we shouldn't be too worried that he's still there."

Q: You mentioned the air cable, or the—

BRADTKE: The airgram.

Q: The report. Were you under pressure to massage that text?

BRADTKE: No, but he put the comments on it, the ambassador did the commenting. I did the straightforward part.

Q: Oh, I see.

BRADTKE: I said, "This election was fixed." There was no way the results added up to anything that could remotely be the way the returns came in. There were returns from districts [that] were 100 percent East Indian where Forbes Burnham would get 50 percent of the vote. So I did that kind of analysis and [had] conversations with people, but he put the comment in, which was, "We shouldn't worry too much about the fact that the election was not free and fair."

Q: So this was not a telegram, what was it?

BRADTKE: This was not a telegram. It was an airgram that was sent in by diplomatic pouch. But there were also telegrams. It was in the days when the telegrams typed on a green form and then keyed onto telex paper.

Q: So it wasn't your task to interpret what had happened.

BRADTKE: Not in the overall election sense. I did write cables where I could put comments in, and all my work was edited, but there was no effort to kind of suppress the facts. It was the analysis that was different, and it was not really suppressed. It was admitting that Forbes Burnham stole the election, but let's not get too upset about it.

Q: Did most of your colleagues agree with that approach, that they were bad elections, but the outcome is something we can live with?

BRADTKE: Yes. Who knows what I was thinking that far back in the "Dark Ages," but I had a little different approach within the bounds of what the embassy policy was. We had a no-contacts policy with the PPP [People's Progressive Party], Jagan's party. He was not invited to the Fourth of July [party], there were no contacts with him. In my time as the political officer, maybe because I was a low-enough level, I started to be allowed to reach out to some of the levels in the PPP, not the highest, at least not initially, but to talk to some of them, and particularly ones who were involved in [the] labor wing. I was also a labor officer so I got to talk to some of the people in the labor wing of the PPP. By the time I left, we had a new ambassador who actually invited Cheddi Jagan to come to the Fourth of July [party]. So the policy really did evolve over those two plus years.

Q: Two years?

BRADTKE: A little over two years.

Q: Let's get through Georgetown. Let's put a little semicolon in at that point. But did I already ask you this? Was there a sense of disillusionment, about observing a bad election and realizing that your own country didn't mind?

BRADTKE: No, I think in the circumstances of the place, there were no good alternatives, and that was more the conclusion, which was, Okay, you've got Forbes Burnham who stole this election. We've got Cheddi Jagan who would invite the Cubans and Russians in, and/or the Chinese, [and we [didn't] understand completely the depth of the Soviet-Chinese split at that time]. This was 1973–1975. So what was the choice? There was kind of a middle-class party, which was largely Portuguese, but they had no chance [in the election]. They were a fraction of the [population]. There were no good guys, so to speak, so in that sense, it wasn't that the election had been stolen from some upstanding group of individuals. It was stolen from people who would have done the same thing if they had the chance.

Q: Would the title of your autobiography be, "No Good Alternatives?"

BRADTKE: It is a lesson that probably came back many times in the Foreign Service, including when I got to Zagreb as the ambassador.

Q: Anything else about Georgetown? I want to put a nice paragraph right here.

BRADTKE: It was a great experience. It is a place where the coast is below sea level. The Dutch, who settled there first, were very clever. They built cane plantations in this part of the northeast coast of South America. They put dikes and polders and sea walls and irrigation, which are still there. But the fact of the matter is, Georgetown is below sea level. So I had the experience of thinking, "There's nowhere to go but up." I started below sea level!

Q: That may be an excellent place to put in a paragraph! Thank you, ambassador.

Today is July 7, 2016. Mr. Ambassador, we were last talking about your first assignment, which was in Georgetown, Guyana. Where do we go from there?

BRADTKE: Well, from there we go back to Washington, but I wanted an assignment in Eastern Europe. I had been briefly, I think as I mentioned, in Eastern Europe. While I had been a student in France, I had traveled to Eastern Europe, and I thought that was a fascinating part of the world. At that time, as an untenured officer, I think that's the right way to describe what we were, a single officer also, you're not a prime candidate for a place like Moscow. But the place where you could go was Yugoslavia, which I thought was a very interesting country to go to. So I managed to get an assignment to Zagreb to our consulate general. I went back to Washington where I had forty-four weeks of what FSI in those days called Serbo-Croatian, which I discovered was really a language that only existed in textbooks, because no Croatian ever said that he or she spoke Serbo-Croatian, and no Serb ever spoke Serbo-Croatian. And the language teachers reinforced this. We had a Serbian Orthodox priest who was teaching us, and we were together in the class with those going to Belgrade and those going to Zagreb. And our teacher, needless to say, was very keen that, even though the textbook had the variants for some of the words, we learn those. Even if we were going to Zagreb, we could just learn all this Serbian. At any rate, I spent the forty-four weeks in Washington studying Serbo-Croatian.

Q: Now I think they're doing it. FSI [Foreign Service Institute] goes along with that.

BRADTKE: To jump way ahead, and I don't know where it is today, but when I went out to be ambassador to Croatia and I was trying to brush up my Croatian, which I hadn't used in thirty years, the languages Serbian, Croatian, I think even Bosnian, were taught as a separate variant. But when I was out in Zagreb there was huge pushback among the leadership at FSI. They wanted to put everyone together; they said it didn't matter. I can only say the reality is it does matter. It matters not because the linguistic differences are so huge, but it's because people put a lot of importance on those variants. If you go to

Zagreb and you use Serbian words, you're going to get discounted right away. And in the class before I went to Zagreb as ambassador, we had a wonderful woman who was from Split on the Adriatic. Dealing with her was also a cultural experience; it wasn't just the language. She gave insights into how Croatians think. And the materials we used were all from Croatia.

Q: This was the later experience?

BRADTKE: This was the later experience. So I pushed back very hard from Zagreb saying, "Do not put everybody together; that's a mistake. You can do a half a week or a couple of days switching back and forth, but to teach them as one language, would be a big mistake."

Q: I would just say that at least twice, maybe three times, in language classes I've noticed that the teachers will absolutely attempt to give the cultural bias.

BRADTKE: Right.

Q: If it's Haitian, it really matters whether you're from the north of Haiti or the south of Haiti. And if it's Danish, we don't have good feelings toward other Scandinavians. And it does seep in unconsciously even when you're learning it, even though you don't want to be biased. So, we didn't get the year.

BRADTKE: So I came back to Washington in 1975. I was in Guyana for two years, 1973–1975.

Q: So 1975 back to DC for Serbo-Croatian, as they called it, and then summer of 1976—

BRADTKE: And then I went out in the summer of 1976 to Zagreb, which was an interesting time. It was a time that was right after what has been called the "Croatian Spring."

Q: And your position there?

BRADTKE: I was a political-economic officer. The consulate general was relatively small. The consul general, a deputy, two public affairs officers, two consular/admin officers, and three other staff, [and] myself.

Q: Because, of course, Belgrade was the capital, Zagreb was a consulate.

BRADTKE: Yes, a consulate general.

Q: Was this at the time considered [a] backwater compared to Belgrade?

BRADTKE: Zagreb had a lot of its own standing. In part, because, while FSI may not have recognized the importance of the differences, Washington did. And there was a lot of attention paid to Croatian politics. This was after Tito had cracked down on the Croatian League of Communists and had dismissed the senior leadership for being too nationalist, so there was a lot of interest, a lot of attention, and I wouldn't call it a backwater. We communicated [directly] with Washington; we cleared of course with the embassy, but they didn't change the things we wrote because we coordinated very closely.

Q: These are cables?

BRADTKE: Reporting cables by the consulate general.

Q: Aside from that, were budget and administrative things done through Belgrade or did you have some autonomy?

BRADTKE: I was so junior that I wouldn't be able to tell you whether there were issues or problems or how much exactly autonomy that we had—

Q: There were cables going [out] in the name of the consul general, not in the name of the ambassador, and that establishes Zagreb.

BRADTKE: Yes, we had our own direct communication with Washington and again, we weren't going to send in things that might be troublesome for the embassy without clearing them, but we didn't censor what we reported, and we had, as I said, that capability of sending messages directly.

Q: Were there a number of political-economic officers, were you one of many?

BRADTKE: No, I was the only one. There was a deputy principal officer who also did political economic work, and it was me, so just the two of us.

Q: Was there a portfolio carved out or were you doing everything?

BRADTKE: No, I did basically a little of everything. It was not an easy time because it still was essentially a communist country, and as I said, there had been a period right before then called the "Croatian Spring." There had been a crackdown by Tito, so there was a lot of hostile propaganda toward the United States. So the officials of the Croatian government were not very accessible to us.

Q: Sorry, Tito had propaganda, or Croatian propaganda against the United States?

BRADTKE: Basically Yugoslavia, directed from Belgrade, kept asserting that the United States wanted to break up Yugoslavia, the United States supporting Croatian nationalism.

So there was a lot of hostile propaganda about American policy. I also did a lot of economic commercial work as well. That was part of the portfolio.

Q: I know almost zero about this, but I think I remember during the cold war Tito was considered the most approachable of the Warsaw pact leaders.

BRADTKE: Yes. Yugoslavia was never in the Warsaw Pact.

Q: You mean communist.

BRADTKE: Communist, yes, but non-aligned between East and West.

Q: He did have a somewhat free market?

BRADTKE: Yes, they had a very strange system called "workers' self-management," which no Yugoslav understood. Essentially you had state enterprises, which had workers' councils, but they were run as state enterprises by and large. The planning systems were loose, there was more private property, and one of the most important things that existed was the freedom to travel. Yugoslavs could travel. And a lot of them at this period were working in Germany so they were sending back Deutsche Marks so their families could travel. Across the border to Italy was a weekend outing for a lot of professional people that I knew, lawyers, doctors, who were more open toward Americans. So the ability to travel was very important.

Q: If you had come in that period—the '70s—then this would be among the worst periods of the cold war, I guess. But some countries had individual identities apart from being only communist, if I remember. Romania had relations with Israel—

BRADTKE: Yes, very different relationships.

Q: Bulgaria. I mean there was some permissiveness apparently from my standpoint.

BRADTKE: There was, and I went from Zagreb back to the Office of Eastern Europe, so I maybe was a little more sensitive to some of this, but each of these countries was different. The latitude they had from Moscow, their geographic, their historical, their cultural position, the danger was lumping them all into the so-called Eastern bloc. That was certainly a term that I don't think anybody in the Office of Eastern Europe would have used because there was a differentiated approach toward each country within the scope for what latitude we sensed that they had from Moscow. And Yugoslavia probably had the most in policy terms. But, this was a period, particularly in Croatia and maybe to a degree in Slovenia, of relatively tight policy domestically inside Yugoslavia because of the fear of nationalists.

And again, Yugoslavia comes back and forth in my career, but the great fear in Washington was that Tito would die, that the centrifugal—if that's the right word—forces

of nationalism would break the country apart, that this would be the pretext for the Soviet Union then to invade and lock Yugoslavia into the Warsaw Pact, into the Eastern bloc so to speak. So there was a lot of attention at this period from Washington. Tito was already up in age, I don't remember exactly how old he was, but he was never in terribly good health, and he'd been around a lot. So everyone was on this "Tito watch," so to speak. How much longer was he going to live? What was going to happen? Who was going to succeed him? How would Yugoslavia hold together if and when he died?

Q: He just went on and on.

BRADTKE: Yes, he went on and on. He died when I was back in Washington in the Office of Eastern Europe, which was maybe four or five years later.

Q: And when we think that he was his country's leader, I think, in World War II?

BRADTKE: He was, for the greater part [of the war], their leader.

Q: And that gives him a forty-year period of influence.

BRADTKE: Thirty plus years.

Q: Do you have any thoughts or recollections or opinions, why was it and how was it that Moscow permitted some individuality?

BRADTKE: In the case of Yugoslavia, again, it was a unique set of circumstances, in large measure because Tito was a popular nationalist leader, he had led the resistance against the Germans; they almost got wiped out. The fall of Italy in September of 1943 took some of the pressure off, but Tito's partisans were an effective fighting force. And they were supported by the United States, perhaps more so by the UK [United Kingdom]. So it wasn't a case of the Soviet Union liberating Yugoslavia, although the Soviet army did come through part of the country.

By and large the Yugoslavs liberated themselves. It was part civil war, part war of liberation against the Germans because Tito was fighting a Serbian nationalist by the name of Draža Mihailović, whom we supported initially, but then Mihailović was in bed with the Germans and the Italians. We eventually put our support solidly behind Tito. We supported him during the war and then when Tito broke with Stalin in 1948, we supported him militarily. So it was a combination of a strong leader, a leader that had led a significant force, that had liberated his country, by and large, and a huge amount of economic and political support from the West. Tito also had a geographic advantage, being just that much farther from the Soviet border. So all those factors in a kind of a complicated way came together.

Q: So Moscow was somewhat sensitive to the realities. It didn't just blindly presume to be in charge of everything. They gave credit for the history of what Tito had done, and also for his popularity.

BRADTKE: I would say they were realists. They recognized that doing what they did in Hungary in 1956 or in Prague in 1968 was not going to work; that they would find people fighting back in a more sustained effort than they did in Hungary in 1956; that if you got rid of Tito, it would be an unpredictable situation; and that their influence was not as strong as it might be in some of the other places in eastern Europe.

Q: So it's worth noting that you were there less than ten years after Prague, 1968, right?

BRADTKE: And it was the period of the '68 events in Prague that led to this period of relative change in Croatia itself, what was called the "Croatian Spring," where you had communist leaders, who were the "Dubčeks of Croatia," so to speak, who wanted a more liberal, open society, wanted more genuine control over the affairs of Croatia, and who, to a certain extent were used by nationalist forces, by more radically nationalist forces, and certainly there were people in Croatia, who tried to take advantage of the situation.

Tito stomped down. It started to reach the stage where it was getting out of control, so just before I got there, '71 to '73, Tito removed, purged the leadership of the Croatian community party, it was called the League of Communists, and it was a period of relative repression in Zagreb.

Q: Was there any resentment in Yugoslavia in general? If I remember, Churchill wanted to go and liberate Yugoslavia at an earlier point in the war, [but] Roosevelt and Eisenhower were opposed to that. Was that a factor in Yugoslavia's attitudes toward the UK and the United States?

BRADTKE: I don't think so. It was a debate of historians, the people who argued whether we let Stalin go too far in Eastern Europe, that if we'd come in through the Balkans he wouldn't have gotten control of Eastern Europe. It's not something that concerned the average Yugoslav, as far as I was concerned. More important were the ethnic divisions and the religious divisions. You had a sizable portion of Slovenia and Croatia and to a degree Bosnia, which were a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. You had Serbia, which had been both independent but also under the Ottoman Empire for a much longer period of time. So you did have, maybe a little more pro-Western orientation in the north and the western part of the country, and because of the Orthodox Church connections, I don't want to say pro-Russian because that's not quite right, but more of a cultural affinity there than was the case in the north.

Q: The Eastern Orthodox Church and the Ottoman Empire, is this history only or do the Yugoslavs and the Croatians that you knew, was this a lively part of their consciousness?

BRADTKE: I think there was a very [strong sense of nationalism], even in this period when I was there in 1976–78. If you scratched beneath the surface, there was a strong sense of nationalism and a resentment toward Belgrade. You have to remember again, during World War II this was a Nazi puppet regime in Croatia, which did some horrific things. I remember going out in the countryside—I was a great hiker—and I'd hike out in the beautiful woods above Zagreb, and I remember going into a small café and sitting down with people who didn't know that I was an American diplomat. And just sitting down with some people who were also hiking who were from the local village and listening to what they would say about the Serbs, about how bad the Serbs were, what they would do if they had the chance to even the score with the Serbs, all the rest. There were bad feelings based upon what Tito did after the war. As I said, it was both a civil war and a war of liberation. And the Tito partisans settled a lot of scores, so this was a period where nationalist feelings were below the surface but still quite strong, and in many ways quite retrograde.

Q: The advantages of forty-four weeks [of language study] at FSI would be to be comfortable observing, I won't say eavesdropping, but you know, you're much more aware of what's going on around you. You mentioned the anti-U.S. propaganda on the part of the government. Can you say how much of this the normal people in the street actually bought into?

BRADTKE: I don't think it had a huge effect, not in Croatia. I think for the average person, for the educated professional class, that they looked to the West. They could travel, they could go to Italy. Slovenia and Croatia were always the most pro-Western part. Many Slovenians and Croatians had relatives in the United States. So I don't think the propaganda had a huge effect on the average person.

Q: So I take it that you had a romantic idea of Eastern Europe. You took the trouble to learn the language, you were sent to Zagreb, and it was a happy period for you.

BRADTKE: It was. It was an interesting period. It was a busy period. Our reporting was appreciated. We had a couple of significant events during my time there. One was when some Croatian Americans hijacked an airplane and tried to fly it to Yugoslavia. And this was a huge incident with the Yugoslav government. Belgrade said [it] was [an] American provocation, a U.S. attempt to try to stir up nationalism. The hijackers eventually surrendered. They wanted to fly over the country. They were locked up in the U.S., and only recently, when I was in Zagreb, as ambassador, was the last hijacker released from prison.

These are things that were so far back and have been so much superseded by more dramatic terrorist events. Croatian terrorists, there was kind of a dirty war going on between Belgrade and Croatian immigrant groups in Europe where there were assassinations and killings. It was a bit of a rough period in that sense, but it was an interesting period.

I liked Zagreb. I was comfortable there, and the time went very quickly. I had a really good boss, a man named Herb Kaiser who was the consul general. He's one of these formative figures in my career. He was extremely—how to put it—scrupulous, detail-oriented, and questioning. If you took the policy line or you said something that was kind of conventional wisdom he'd push back, he'd say, "Well, why do you think that? Why do you believe that? Is that right? Maybe that's not the way." He was always asking questions, always pushing you to question your assumptions, as well as being an incredibly decent man. But he was someone that I learned a lot from about how you should approach your work, how you should question yourself, your assumptions, whether you're doing the right thing, whether you've got the right assessment. You should never get to the point where you don't think about those things again and you just kind of keep moving more or less with your eyes closed.

Q: Was it explicit or implied what was expected of the consulate in Zagreb by the embassy in Belgrade and by Washington?

BRADTKE: Yes. This is also a period where Larry Eagleburger [who served as ambassador from June 21, 1977 to January 24, 1981] came out to be the ambassador in Belgrade and this is another great, formative figure in my career.

Q: You were there at the time?

BRADTKE: One of the other things I did in Zagreb was commercial work, trade promotion. Eagleburger had served in Yugoslavia as a junior officer. They used to call him Lawrence of Macedonia because he had helped during the period of the Macedonian earthquake. So I had a chance to see him operate as ambassador. And he was very interested in our commercial outreach, building long-term relationships. This is really an obscure story, but personally relevant. He got interested in something called the Zagreb Fall Fair, which, again, is so back in the weeds of Foreign Service.

Q: That's what we want!

BRADTKE: This was a time when in Eastern Europe one of the ways we got access to people and the ways we promoted ourselves was that USIA would do pavilions in these fairs, in the Soviet Union, in Zagreb, elsewhere in Eastern Europe because it enabled us to project American life. Well by 1976–77, USIA, particularly in a place like Zagreb, was saying we don't want to do this anymore. There are other ways to get the word out about America. We don't need to do these expensive fairs. So they said, We're out.

And we in Zagreb and Eagleburger both felt that this would be a huge blow, because lots of other countries, the Soviet Union, the western Europeans, the Chinese, all had big pavilions, all had big exhibits, all did a lot. So Eagleburger's notion, together with us in Zagreb, was that we, the embassy and the consulate, would take on creating an exhibit. Although this was always supposed to be a commercial, trade promotion fair, as I said, the cultural side was very significant. What we decided we would do was we would

promote a purely commercial exhibit in Zagreb. Now of course the Department of Commerce had no money, and was not particularly interested in this. So the embassy and the consulate took on the job of recruiting companies and putting on an exhibit. This became a pet project of Eagleburger's. And I was the guy on the ground in Zagreb who was supposed to do this, working with the embassy in Belgrade.

Q: Standard operating procedures for all pavilions. The USG [United States government] no longer puts any money into anything like this, expos, no U.S. government money any more.

BRADTKE: For me personally, it was a chance to work with Eagleburger. He cared about this a lot, and he wanted it to be a success, and we didn't do a great job, but we just got over the bar, and we created the basis for doing this on a bigger scale. At any rate, it gave me a chance to get to know Eagleburger and to see Eagleburger in action and to think, Wow, I didn't think there were people like this in the Foreign Service!

Q: We're now on our second segment.

BRADTKE: I apologize for these digressions into the dark places.

Q: There have been no digressions, none!

BRADTKE: Any rate, Eagleburger then, to foreshadow, comes back elsewhere in my career at various points.

Q: Okay. The revolver on the mantelpiece. Now Eagleburger, the familiar quote is, I think he said, "Every Foreign Service officer is a commercial officer." Didn't he say something like that?

BRADTKE: If he didn't, he certainly behaved that way. And in this period particularly, he thought that, both for political reasons and economic reasons, it was important to support American companies, to promote American products.

Q: Now, you were very impressed by him as a person. Tell me a little more about why.

BRADTKE: I confess I've tried to separate out impressions from further down the road in my career from the first impressions—his dynamism, his energy, his willingness to take on Washington, the way he spoke. You know this was a man who said what was on his mind. He was as undiplomatic in many ways as I would ever have thought a diplomat could be! For somebody who's in the Foreign Service for four years at that point, here's this guy who talks bluntly and uses language that you wouldn't expect diplomats to use. But [he] was an extremely effective diplomat. The Yugoslavs loved him, they absolutely loved him. Here was a guy who was not in the mold of the cautious, carefully spoken diplomat, but this blunt speaking, tough talking, direct language but [who] was an extremely effective diplomat.

Q: *Is it crazy to make some comparisons with Richard Holbrooke who of course was made by Yugoslavia?*

BRADTKE: Yes. Richard Holbrooke also comes back into my life. I have to think about it a little. There were some things that were similar, but I think there were other things that I would say put Eagleburger in a much different class, a much higher class, much more a person that I admire.

Q: *The readers will be very interested in this. We can get into it later. But there's intense interest in the biographies of both. And Eagleburger was acting secretary of state or secretary of state?*

BRADTKE: This came when I was in congressional affairs, where he made me the acting assistant secretary for congressional affairs, right at the end of the Bush administration. He actually was acting secretary, but then he was elevated to be secretary of state without officially being confirmed [during] the last month or so [of the Bush administration].

Q: A place keeper, I think.

BRADTKE: When [James] Baker went to the White House to help run the campaign, Eagleburger first became acting secretary of state, but then President Bush, the first President Bush, actually made him secretary. So if you look into the record books so to speak, it does count that he was secretary of state, not just acting secretary of state.

Q: He was [career] Foreign Service. Have there ever been any other career Foreign Service officers [FSO] that became a secretary of state?

BRADTKE: He's the only career officer. That's correct.

Q: That's a historic note.

BRADTKE: Yes, and unique. And this comes back to as you go through your career, I'm sure you went through yours, you should never try to model yourself on one person, but you just try to pick and choose things from different people. I could never be what Eagleburger was, but there were things he did that I learned from, things that I admired and skills that he had that I aspired to have as well.

Q: Well, you said we'll get to more stories about him later.

BRADTKE: Right. But even in the next stop, if we want to jump to the next stop. At the end of my tour in Zagreb, which was actually cut a little bit short because they were creating a mid-career officers' course in the days when the Foreign Service did not train people. So I was pulled out of Zagreb in the late spring, [just] short of two years in Zagreb, to go back to be a guinea pig in the new mid-career officers' course, which lasted

for six to eight weeks, I can't even remember. But then the follow-on assignment was to work in the Office of Eastern Europe. And partly because Eagleburger knew me. He wanted somebody working on Yugoslavia that he knew; he was happy to have me; I had a good recommendation from my boss at the consulate general, so I went to be in the Office of Eastern Europe.

At that time it was so much smaller than now, but basically there were two so-called economic officers. I did Yugoslavia, Romania, and what was then Czechoslovakia, and my colleague did Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, and I think the Baltics were in that office because we had the non-recognition policy. So I continued to work with Eagleburger, and [let me share] one more Eagleburger story. It was a lesson for me about how you work with your desk officer as an ambassador. This was a complicated time, Eagleburger was very active, he wanted to do all sorts of things.

Q: He was in Belgrade?

BRADTKE: He was still in Belgrade and I was back in Washington. This was the summer of 1976. He wanted to do all sorts of things, and he needed people to push these from Washington. I remember one case where he wanted to get the Department of Commerce to do something, because he wanted to promote the economic side at that point. At Commerce, they had an office that was in charge of the countries that were in the Soviet orbit so to speak, the Warsaw Pact countries, but Yugoslavia wasn't in that office. It was in the office with some of the central European countries. It was an orphan, because it didn't have the economic potential of say Austria or Italy or any of those countries, and yet the trade activities were all geared toward the communist countries, e.g. Poland, Hungary.

Eagleburger really pushed hard for Commerce to do more, and I remember there was some problem getting Commerce to do something. Eagleburger would call me up and he'd say, "Goddammit, Bradtke, can't you get this—" But to me it was a huge motivating thing. [Although] he was the ambassador, he didn't necessarily call the assistant secretary for European affairs or even the office director, and I think I remember saying to him, "Why are you asking me?" And he said, "Because I know those other guys won't do it and I know you well, you'll do it." And when the ambassador says something like that to you, and you're on your third tour, he was right!

Ultimately, in a lot of cases, as the desk officer if you pushed it hard enough, you could eventually get it done, and you could do more than the office director who had a hundred other problems, and the assistant secretary who had a thousand other problems. But because he was an ambassador, Eagleburger would go directly to me and my colleague on the desk. He could have picked up the phone and called anybody in Washington, but he called you. It was a tremendous lesson for me later, not only as ambassador, but as principal deputy assistant secretary and an acting assistant secretary, that sometimes the person who is going to get it done is not the person with the bigger title or the bigger job.

It's going to be the person who is motivated to do it, who has the knowledge, because they're the expert in that area. They're the ones who're going to get it done.

Q: Do you think he did this instinctively, or did he realize the enormous motivating force of a call like that, or did he just do it? You said he was impulsive, I think.

BRADTKE: Yes, I think a lot of it was instinct. I don't know that he sat back there and said, "I'm going to motivate Bradtke to do this." It was like, "Goddamn, if I call George Vest, George Vest has got fifty other problems today, so I'm going to call Bradtke."

Q: I'm going to task this to Bradtke.

BRADTKE: [Eagleburger thought,] "Bradtke's going to end up being told to this anyway, so I'm just going to call him and tell him I need this help; tell him I need him to get this thing done for me."

Q: Very smart.

BRADTKE: It was incredibly motivating and I think by and large we got a lot done. I had a guy in Commerce who Eagleburger also paid attention to, he was kind of the desk officer and between the two of us we got Commerce interested in doing more in Yugoslavia.

Q: The objective was what, to sell American goods in Yugoslavia?

BRADTKE: Yes, but also with an eye to the political side.

Trying to be ready for the post-Tito era, this was something I worked very closely with him on. It wasn't always easy. For example, there was an earthquake in Macedonia, and as I mentioned, Eagleburger had worked on an earlier earthquake as a junior officer, and his instincts this time were, "We're going to give them money. We're just going to get in there, and we're just going to help with reconstruction." And he got way out in front of Washington.

One of the things I learned from that exercise, you cannot promise aid unless you know where the money's coming from. It doesn't matter if you're the ambassador or who you are. So he got way out in front about what we were going to do, and when we looked for the money, there was none, and there was a lot of resistance at State from the budget gurus to do anything other than immediate disaster relief as opposed to reconstruction, which is totally a different pot of money, as you know! At any rate, there was this great fight—were we going to spend any money for reconstruction, or find any money for reconstruction? [It was a] huge battle.

Q: *[This was in] Skopje, right?*

BRADTKE: Yes, this was Skopje. And I remember Eagleburger sending a cable saying, "When Tito dies we are going to run around like chickens with our heads cut off trying to find ways to do things to strengthen the relationship. If we do this now, this lays the groundwork for when Tito dies, [and] we will be already doing things." I think that's the way he felt about economic relations. When Tito left, we didn't want the Soviet Union being the only economic player in Yugoslavia. We wanted to be in there, too. And so it was, McDonnell-Douglas sold DC-10s to Yugoslavia in that period, Westinghouse got a deal to build a nuclear reactor at a place called Krško in that period. Eagleburger's thinking was that when Tito goes I want us to be as well-positioned as we could possibly be [in order] to have influence in that country in the transition period.

Q: A few years later I purchased a moped in Washington, DC manufactured in Yugoslavia, so I was very much part of that trade.

BRADTKE: This was also the days of the ill-fated Yugoslavia car, whose name I can't even remember, which was a piece of junk, basically. But this was another story. On the earthquake, we eventually did get money, and I worked on a great team in Washington. I don't want to necessarily single out too many names, but [there was] Bob Barry, who had been the deputy assistant secretary for Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, Carl Schmidt who was the office director, Harry Gilmore who was the deputy director of the office. They were a great lesson in management, in creativity, [in] approaching things, and in trusting the people that worked for them. It did not bother Bob Barry, Carl Schmidt, or Harry, that Eagleburger would pick up the phone and call me.

And I know lots of bosses, and some I've had who, if somebody in the senior level reached down, they were not happy! They thought the call should have gone to them. Harry, Carl, [and] Bob never—at least as far as I could tell—ever were concerned that the calls were coming to me. And I would tell them, "Eagleburger called and said he wanted me to do this, is it okay?" But it didn't bother them that this was the way it worked.

I remember Harry, who went on to be ambassador to Armenia and who has unfortunately passed away, but basically he said, "The office was like a jazz band,"and everybody was kind of doing their own thing but it all had to come together. But it wasn't that they were being orchestrated.

I always thought he was right about that. We were all busy. There was a level of trust that you were going to do the right thing, that you were going to go to the limits of your authority, and that you knew what those limits were, but you weren't going to take every little problem and run to your boss and say, "What do I do?" You tried to figure it out; you tried to do what you could. If you got stuck and needed help, you could go to your boss and say, "I need you to call somebody, or I need you to reinforce what I'm doing at this level, can you take it up a level?"

And I would say it went for George Vest, too, who was the assistant secretary, a wonderful man. It was a strong team of people, managers, and policy people—creative,

decent—[who] cared for the people who worked for them, who trusted the people who worked for them to do the right thing. Also for me [it was] a tremendous learning experience about how I wanted to treat people if and when I got further up the line.

Q: That's a great testimonial! Well it's great to hear a good story. There are good ones and bad ones out there. [During] that period, if there was a geographic elite in USIA [United States Information Agency], it would have been East Asia and Eastern Europe. Was that also the case in State?

BRADTKE: I think there were very good people [at the State Department]. And I think good people in the field, these were sought-after jobs by and large, and they were mostly career people. There were some political [appointee] people, but in EUR [Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs] at that point—the chain of command that I reported up through—they were all wonderful career officers who were extremely competent.

Q: You were absolutely the right person in the right place. How was the system so wise as to have you where you properly should be?

BRADTKE: Yes, it's hard to know how it ends up that way, and it doesn't always end up that way. My theory of the Foreign Service is that—and we're droning on here—there are times when it isn't that way, when you are doing a good job, and either there's no crisis or it's not a particularly hot area, or you have a boss who isn't particularly active or doesn't help you up the chain, or get you engaged in things. But then there are times when these opportunities come out of nowhere. And if you're working hard and you're doing what you're supposed to do, you get noticed, you're ready for the opportunity that comes along, and things happen, and this will come back again, if we ever get any further in my miserable career!

Q: I'm so glad this happened during your first two overseas assignments. This is marvelous!

BRADTKE: No, these were opportunities that, as you say, left you feeling you were in the right place at the right time and you had the scope to do things. And not to dwell too much on this one assignment, but it was also interesting from the standpoint of Romania, which was a country I knew nothing about before working in the Office of Eastern Europe. But because Ceauşescu was conducting a relatively independent policy toward the Soviet Union, [his] relationship with Israel, for example, there was a lot of support in Washington for doing things with him on the economic side. And Commerce was engaged there. I had a very good Commerce counterpart, and he and I would work on trade promotion events, including a joint U.S.-Romanian economic commission that would meet regularly. We would be involved in the preparations and the negotiations around that. I remember going out to Romania and being horrified at how bleak and dismal it was, but it was again, an opportunity, a country that had a very repressive domestic system but was doing some [good] things and was allowing Jews to emigrate to

Israel. This was a time when the Soviet Union was shutting down emigration to Israel completely—the Jackson-Vanik legislation era.

So that was an education, as was working on relations with Czechoslovakia, where things were very, very bad. The relationship with the United States was probably the worst among those countries, a very repressive domestic system—relationship totally frozen. [It was] still the aftermath of the Prague Spring. It had not gotten any better. And we had an issue around Czechoslovak gold, which was still in the United States from World War II, which we were not prepared to send back. The relationship was totally poisonous. But it was an interesting period, three different countries, completely different levels of relationships, two active, one [with] almost no activity. But it did give me a chance to meet the third secretary of the Czechoslovak embassy who turned out to become the foreign minister of Slovakia later, when I became the deputy assistant secretary in the European Bureau, and we were trying to bring Slovakia into NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization].

Q: Wow!

BRADTKE: Things have a way of coming around. You never know who you're going to meet later that you may have worked with [earlier]. It's always a reason to be nice to people, because they do come back! They do come back!

Q: The escalator. Imagining the reader of this when they read, "Repressive domestic policies, fluid foreign and commercial policies." Was this quid pro quo, were we getting outside of a moral purity by being forthcoming with regimes like the Ceauşescu regime? I have to ask.

BRADTKE: No. It was an era where I think the judgment was that the importance of supporting Ceauşescu's relatively independent policy toward the Soviet Union, encouraging him in small areas like emigration to Israel, to continue to do that, was significant enough. It's not that we didn't raise human rights issues, but we didn't press human rights issues to the same degree.

Q: But there were discussions.

BRADTKE: Not to the same degree. This happened later. This was part of the Jimmy Carter era and the creation of the Human Rights Bureau under Pat Derian's leadership, who just passed away. So there was more and more of, "We should pay attention to these things," but what really drove the policy was we wanted to encourage Ceaușescu to be a model for other eastern European Warsaw Pact countries on how they should conduct themselves, to try to push the limits of what they could do, and we wanted to show those countries that if they [could] exercise some independence from the Soviet Union, there was something in this for them.

Q: Very clearly stated. Let's see if we can cover another domestic DC assignment before going on. Any parting thoughts on your desk assignment in the Eastern Europe Bureau, which was a different bureau from Europe, right?

BRADTKE: It was in the European Bureau. It was called the Office of Eastern Europe. When Eagleburger came back to be the assistant secretary, he made them change the name to the Office of Eastern Europe and Yugoslavia, once again to show the differentiation, because the Yugoslavs argued, Why are we in this office with all these Warsaw Pact countries? We're not in the Warsaw Pact. Yes, so it was in the Bureau of European and Canadian Affairs in those days, because we still had Canada in the bureau then.

As I said, it was a positive experience, good bosses, and interesting places. This may not be the right thing to say here, but I think everyone should be a desk officer at some point. It's a tremendous learning experience. It is a job where, at least in those days, you were at the crossroads of lines of communication. And the Eagleburger approach was he wanted you to know everything that was going on, or as much as you could, what other agencies were doing, what other parts of the building were doing. I had counterparts who did the political side of the three desks, and we worked together very well in that period. Eagleburger wanted you to follow things closely so that he would know what Commerce was doing, whether the Department of Transportation was dealing with the problems of the DC-10s that we had sold to Yugoslavia, and where we stood on getting export licenses for some of the equipment for the Krsko nuclear reactor. He wanted to know all the issues. This is the pre-e-mail days, and people in Washington weren't going to call the embassy. Communication by telephone didn't operate the way it does now. So the cable, the telegram, was the way of communicating. You, as desk officer, because you had to clear the cables, you basically sat on those lines of communication and you had a real opportunity to know what was going on, to see all the pieces. I think that's radically different now. Now with e-mail I feel sorry for desk officers, because the ambassador is probably emailing somebody on the seventh floor [of the State Department]; he or she is emailing somebody at the NSC [National Security Council]. [I did this myself, much to my chagrin when I became an ambassador.] He or she is emailing other agencies, and he or she is probably e-mailing, as I did when I was in Oslo as the chargé, the ambassador from the other country in Washington to work jointly on an issue.

It's just changed so radically that it's much harder now to have that same sense of knowing everything that's going on, because there's so many more channels of communication today than there were back in 1978–81 when I was on the desk.

Q: Last question I have to ask you. What's the future of the telegram? If any?

BRADTKE: I think it still has some relevance as the means of record communication, but in terms of policy, policy-making, in terms of keeping up with fast moving events, it's gone, it's already gone.

Q: Is that regrettable?

BRADTKE: It's inevitable. For an old timer like me, it's probably regrettable, because it means it's harder to orchestrate all the elements of policy and pull them together, because there's too much stove piping, too much back channeling. It's become much harder. But what are you going to do? You can't shut off communications. You can't stop people picking up the phone. You can't stop people from e-mailing, even if it's not on a government email system. Unlike cable distribution all over Washington, I didn't want to have twenty-five people on an email I was sending back to some senior person when I was doing the Nagorno-Karabakh negotiations, or [when] I was the chargé in Oslo. I wanted the recipient to feel this was kind of a private conversation. A lot of times I would then back-brief people. Or [there were] times where you just said, "Okay I'm only going to send this to the most relevant people and the heck with everybody else." So some of this record material is much harder to access now, and some of it was probably not shared with people who should have known.

Q: Again you've been very clear. We're not making judgments about this, but these organizational changes absolutely affect the nature of the work.

BRADTKE: No question. Sorry I'm going on way too long on two assignments where relatively little happens. They were formative assignments, but I was really not doing big policy things.

Q: Yes, you were. Ambassador Bradtke, thank you very much.

Today is July 21, 2016. The twentieth was a challenging day for many reasons. And we're now on our third series, our third conversation, and maybe the sixth tape.

BRADTKE: Hopefully this will not go on forever, but the pace we're going, it could well last a long time!

Q: I wish it would! In our last episode, as they used to say in "The Shadow," there had been an earthquake in Skopje, Macedonia, and Eagleburger, who was then the ambassador in Belgrade, was coming forth very forcefully wanting to give money to help Skopje out of their predicament. Can we take it up from that point?

BRADTKE: Yes, and I think in the last episode I said that his argument was when Tito died—and everybody was anticipating [he would] die most any day—we would suddenly be scrambling around looking for things to do to show our interest, show our engagement, show that America was a friend, and here was an opportunity before he died, to start a process that would pay off, that would have dividends, over the next couple of years when he might well be gone. And I think the other thing I said was he had thought this was a no-brainer.

Q: "He" meaning Eagleburger.

BRADTKE: He, Eagleburger, and [it] turned out that Eagleburger promised reconstruction as opposed to disaster relief.

Q: That's big money.

BRADTKE: It's a different game, and finding the money to do that was a challenge. And I think we talked about how this is one of these cases where you as an individual by just being dogged, can sometimes do things that might not otherwise have happened. This is the story of finding some Economic Support Fund [ESF] that had been programmed for a dam project in Jordan, which wasn't going to get built on time—I don't know if it's ever been built—but there was a pot of money out there that I as a desk officer managed to find, and we managed to get a piece of it.

Q: Now a couple of questions. First of all, your thoughts when you heard about this. Did this seem beyond audacious when you first heard that there would be reconstruction money? Did you feel—

BRADTKE: No, I was totally on board and so was EUR and the Front Office, everybody thought, Of course, we're going to do this! It's Yugoslavia! Post Tito era! This was viewed as an absolute no-brainer by everybody, including me.

Q: And did you hit any walls because of the magnitude of that?

BRADTKE: Well, the obstacle was where's the money going to come from? And we're dealing with [US]AID or ESF, where all the money basically was programmed, was budgeted, was claimed. It wasn't like there was money floating around with no claimants on it.

Q: Does it matter when this was in the fiscal year or not?

BRADTKE: Yes, we were looking for money that could be promised, that could be committed almost right away, at least some sum of money, and I think that played a bit of a role in this. We weren't saying, Okay let's try to put this in the budget for next year. It was, Can we get something [now]?

Q: I mean sometimes there's end of year money—so this was not a factor.

BRADTKE: Yes, my memory's terrible here. I think it was in summer, so we were looking for something that we could tap into, at least make a firm commitment with money behind it.

Q: For the following year.

BRADTKE: As fast as we could.

Q: The second question. Nowadays ESF does not come in huge chunks. Did it back then?

BRADTKE: My recollection was—and boy I'm sure I could be [wrong]—there was a very large chunk set aside for the [dam project], hundreds of millions of dollars that were out there. I can't remember who the other claimants were, but we were looking for twenty, fifteen [million dollars], anything, so we were not the biggest claimant. I'm sure there were other big claimants in the pipeline or trying to get their hands on the money.

Q: Twenty million [dollars]? Did you say twenty million?

BRADTKE: Yes, I said twenty million.

Q: Yeah, nowadays that would be maybe a couple billion right, with inflation and all?

BRADTKE: Are we that old?

Q: Well no, I'm just saying twenty million.

BRADTKE: I don't know what the present-day value of twenty million dollars back then would be, I don't think it would have been that much.

Q: No, okay, but a good chunk of money.

BRADTKE: That was the thing—this was not a huge chunk of money. As I say, the dam project had several hundred million dollars set aside for it. We just wanted this little piece! But even that was just—

Q: As they [ask] in the Foreign Service oral exam, what was the outcome?

BRADTKE: The outcome was that we got ten to fifteen or twenty, I can no longer remember, but we got enough that Eagleburger was happy, that he could promise the Yugoslavs we were going to help, that we could do something, and that we could be out in front of the Russians, the Soviets, the other internationals who may have been thinking of doing the same thing; we got out in front.

Q: An astonishing accomplishment. Do you remember anything that would be valuable to know now about how this was done? Finding money from nowhere?

BRADTKE: I remember making a lot of phone calls as a desk officer, because we didn't have emails in those days, and talking to people saying, "Oh my god, there's got to be some money somewhere!" And then gradually, I don't remember which bureau, whether it was the Political-Military [Affairs] Bureau—we didn't have the kind of policy resource structure we do today where you've got F [Office of Foreign Assistance] and all these other places that deal with this. It tended to be controlled by the seventh floor [of the

State Department] and you had to kind of work with P staff, with Under Secretary for Political Affairs David Newsom's staff, and others to discover that there is this pot of money and you ought to talk to so and so and see if EUR can get on the list, get in the queue for getting some of this money. So it was doing a little digging, making some phone calls, trying to find out who was putting the memo together that was going to go to the seventh floor, that was going to say, "Reallocating the ESF from Jordan Dam." It may have gone to T [Arms Control and International Security Affairs]. At that point T was Under Secretary Lucy Benson, and she had security assistance in her portfolio.

Q: Interviewer's editorial comment. This was an inspiration of Lawrence Eagleburger. It could not have been done without Bob Bradtke at the desk. That's an editorial point.

BRADTKE: Well, that's kind [of you]. It took people pulling from both ends, or pushing from one end and pulling from the other end, that you could invoke Eagleburger's name, that George Vest, Bob Barry who was the deputy assistant secretary, were all fully supportive, and it was just kind of coming together with a way of doing this that they could then put their shoulders behind and push.

Q: Sounds like we had an enlightened group who were there at that time who all had the same objectives.

BRADTKE: Yes, it was, I think the EUR Bureau and the embassy were completely of one mind.

Q: Again, just speculating, if there had been an F [Bureau] there might have been more hills to climb, but that's beyond—

BRADTKE: Yes, I think that's probably right. I think the bureaucratic chain here was a little shorter, and the ability to focus some sixth and seventh floor firepower was probably a little greater than it might be today where the "green eyeshades guys" [financial people] have more control.

Q: Again more interpretation and then we'll go on to the narrative. Do you feel, ambassador, that the shorter bureaucratic chain is lost and that that's a terrible loss? Do you feel that we simply have a new situation and must adapt?

BRADTKE: Yes, I feel mixed emotions. It was a shorter chain of command. As a desk officer you felt closer to the sixth and seventh floors. There were fewer people! And I know the world's gotten more complicated and we can't operate quite that way, but I still have a certain nostalgic feeling for that era where in the Office of Eastern Europe we were just a handful, and the access [was easier], there was a shorter chain of command. You felt more connected to the senior levels, and to the ambassador in the field perhaps than is the case today.

Q: Again, interpretation. You've stated very articulately why smaller is nicer in order to achieve the task. Is there any gain in having an increased number of people? I mean, I'm looking for the glass half-full here. Or are we really just going to stick with the narrative?

BRADTKE: It's harder for me to judge, because I haven't been a desk officer for forty years, but I think something has been lost. Whether the gains offset that because the problems are more complex, because the issues we're dealing with require more individual attention—what we expect in terms of analysis—but I think a lot of it is just going to friction. By that I mean the clearance process, having to check with endless lists of people before you can do anything, and I think a lot of this has gone up in heat rather than light, if that's the right analogy. And then, jumping through hoops—and some of this is an outcome of e-mail—you had to walk pieces of paper around for clearance back in the dark ages. And that was a disincentive to clearing, you didn't clear. I see in my WAE involvement the lists on the clearance page of the number of people who need to clear even a non-controversial memo. It wouldn't have worked in the old days. You couldn't have possibly taken the time to do the [number of clearances] and multiple clearances within bureaus; we didn't have time for that. And physically you couldn't do that because you could not email the document; you had to print it out and carry it around and drop it off and have somebody look at it and phone you up and get back to you; you couldn't work it that way [with so many clearers].

Q: I try to avoid the sin of analysis, but do you think the increased Senate questions and oversight and digging requires more clearances? I mean, is this a defensive posture because of increasing congressional oversight?

BRADTKE: Some of it is, but I think most of it is self-inflicted. Let's go on.

Q: Good. Let's go on! We can delete that, but it's interesting to me!

BRADTKE: No, go on. And again it's the perspective of someone who thinks back to the good old days when we could operate and wheel and deal more freely.

Q: I think I remember that! Let's go on. So you were desk [officer] for it sounds like three years, and it sounds like a most wonderful experience.

BRADTKE: I was there for three years, '78 to '81, right.

Q: And it ended in 1981. Anything else about that three-year period?

BRADTKE: Well, Tito finally did die and we did run around like chickens with our heads cut off, as Eagleburger predicted, to find things to do, but I don't know if we came up with any magic formulas. The initial period after Tito's death was relatively stable so I left the desk before things started to fall apart.

Q: That was in the 1990s. So actually Eagleburger's insight and your very good functioning at the desk level may have foreseen, and may have prevented—

BRADTKE: Well, I would say it was really from 1948 through to the [1990s], the product of a lot of effort to build the relationship, to treat them specially. In this period, for example, [and this was not my part of the desk [role], this was the political side of the desk], when Jimmy Carter was elected president, we started a process of Carter writing letters to Tito, which was enormously flattering for the Yugoslavs. The letters [were] not necessarily dealing with some big bilateral problem but were asking for and listening to Tito's views on a range of world issues. It was that kind of thing—small things in some cases—that was a way of reinforcing a relationship, of keeping the connection, showing them we cared. I think all that, and in terms of our posture over the years, the loans from the EXIM Bank [Export-Import Bank of the United States] helped. There was economic assistance after 1948, military assistance—a lot of things that were done cumulatively over time—and my piece of this was in that same stream of building the relationship. I wouldn't lay too much [emphasis] on what I did in the last couple of years before Tito died, but it was a gradual steady process over the years of doing those kinds of things.

Q: Do we have any way of knowing how Tito reacted to the Carter letters?

BRADTKE: Oh, my sense is that—now back in the mists of history—he was flattered, that he did like being taken seriously. He thought of himself as one of the founders of the non-aligned movement, a leader of international stature, and being taken seriously by the American president, I think that was significant.

Q: Just a minute. On the non-aligned movement, it sort of broke apart after the cold war, sort of.

BRADTKE: Yes.

Q: But it was Yugoslavia, India, [and] I think Egypt, maybe, I think so.

BRADTKE: I think so too.

Q: Any comments about the non-aligned movement [NAM] since it's really history now?

BRADTKE: Not sure I have much to say.

Q: Okay let me help. Does it seem like a provocation that countries were resisting going with one side or the other, the Soviet Union or the United States?

BRADTKE: I'm sure it's post facto thinking—but my sense is that it depended on which countries you were working on. For us—for Yugoslavia—flattering them about their non-aligned leadership was a way to try and encourage other countries to move away from the Soviet Union. I'm sure for some of our friends where we thought they should be

closer to us, say in Latin America, their joining the non-aligned movement was probably a negative thing. So I think it was dependent on where we saw them, on which side of the divide, and whether they were closer to us or maybe a little closer to the other side, but certainly from the perspective of [our] Yugoslav policy, being in the non-aligned movement was not something that I would say we encouraged—but it's not something that was a problem for us.

Q: I know nothing about India but with history and with declassified things, we know that India was very close politically with the Soviet Union. They were in the NAM and maybe [were] a little bit in favor of—from the U.S. point of view—not having the overtly close relationship—

BRADTKE: No, it's too far back.

Q: There we go. So, the desk. From there?

BRADTKE: From there I wanted to have a chance to do something different and the top of my bid list was to apply for a congressional fellowship. There were two programs, there still may be two programs. One fell under the umbrella of the American Political Science Association [APSA], and the other was run out of our own Personnel [Office], I can't remember the name.

Q: Pearson?

BRADTKE: [Yes,] the Pearson program. I was more interested in the APSA program, partly because there was a bit of an academic link to it. There was a part of the program that was taught in a series of seminars by a professor at Johns Hopkins who had a very good reputation. You were with people from other agencies in that program, and then the idea was to split your time between the House and Senate, and I thought that would be a good experience. So I applied for that, and got it!

Q: Great.

Q: Okay, so we're now on the Hill. Physically where were you? In the House? Senate? Did you move around?

BRADTKE: I started on the Senate side, and once you realize how short your time is, you develop a certain strategy on how you want to use your time. On the Senate side, I felt that with the larger staff of Senators, the best thing was to try to sell myself as a foreign policy person, and that's what you did, you went from office to office, you sold yourself. So I went, among other places, to the office of Charles Mathias who was a senator from Maryland. I'm still living in the District [of Columbia] at this time so it's not a case of going to my senator. I went to his office. He was on the [Senate] Committee on Foreign Relations. He was politically compatible [with me], more or less, an internationalist Republican senator, and they were looking for someone. He had a guy on his staff by the

name of Casimir Yost who was his committee staff person but someone who was familiar with the State Department [and the] Foreign Service. And [he had another staff member,] a woman named Peggy Naul, who was the chief of staff for Mathias. They knew what to do with me, knew how to use me. The danger in internships is where you make Xerox copies and that's all you get to do. But they had a place for me, they had roles for me, and I felt comfortable there. So that was the Senate side.

[On] the House [of Representatives] side, I wanted to do something different. After I finished my Senate internship, and I was moving to the House side, I wanted to work on domestic policy issues, and I wanted to work for a representative from another part of the country that I didn't know. I ended up working for a Republican congressman from the state of Wyoming whose name was Dick Cheney!

Q: Pregnant silence!

BRADTKE: Yes, I worked for Dick Cheney. He was looking for a staffer to work with him on a special working group of House members dealing with budget reform. It wasn't a formal congressional committee, but a group of representatives who studied the budget process and how to reform the budget process, which everyone believed was broken. He was looking for staffing for that venture, and I had a good interview with him.

Wyoming—I'd never been to Wyoming. He had a small office, which I was attracted to, and he himself had been a congressional fellow.

Q: Really?

BRADTKE: Yes, way back.

Q: Wasn't that a page or something like that?

BRADTKE: No. He [had been] a congressional fellow and he came back eventually to Washington and was in the Ford White House and all the rest. But way back when he was an academic in university, he had been a fellow himself; so I knew—and this is so critical—when you had only four or five months in the office, you didn't want to spend the first two months having them figure out who you were and what you could do for them. And that was the advantage, you have a starting point there, so I worked for Cheney for half of my fellowship on the House side.

Q: How much inkling was there at that time that he would someday become so important?

BRADTKE: I thought he was incredibly bright; [I] still [think he is] incredibly bright. I knew that he had been in the executive branch and I think that was also important to me, because he was someone who understood, unlike some people on the Hill who have no idea what it's like to be in the executive branch. I thought he was very smart. He was in

the Republican [Party] leadership already at that point. I can't remember if he was three or four in the leadership [hierarchy]. I would have thought this was a guy who's got a future. Would he become vice president? Nah. Secretary of defense was much less of a surprise.

I remember he was very good about going back to Wyoming during weekends and recesses; not easy, given the distances. And one of the benefits of the congressional fellowship program, was you got to go with the member when he went back [home]. On the trip I went back with him, I'm reading some trashy novel on the plane, and he's got this tome, maybe 450 pages on defense policy, some very serious book that he's reading. And I'm thinking to myself, if this is the kind of guy that on the plane back to Wyoming pulls out this scholarly treatise on defense policy, then this is someone who is a pretty serious person.

Q: And what a beautiful state.

BRADTKE: I'd never been [there]. We were in Caspar, which is where he was from, for his office hours, and then in Cheyenne, and one other city for his office hours. So I had a chance to see his constituency.

Q: These were congressional breaks?

BRADTKE: Right. He would go back, and he would have office hours but anyone could come in and talk about their problems.

Q: This is democracy.

BRADTKE: It is democracy. And indeed [during] my entire time on the Hill, [I observed] it's a hell of a place to work. It was very difficult to be a member, and it's even more difficult now—the demands, the pressures on you. [It was] less so in the Senate because of the six-year term. But as a House member, your constituents thought you worked for them, which you do, but they thought they had every right to raise every little problem they could possibly imagine with you, and even in the safest seat that he had—Wyoming is solidly Republican — you had to deal with them. The demands on Cheney's time, the access he had to provide to his constituents, getting out there, in the field, talking to them, open door office hours, letter writing, constituent services, all very, very important and very demanding, [were] very tiring.

Q: Politics aside, the only time I ever saw him was at a memorial service for another staffer. This would have been in the early twenty-first century and he was very funny and very charming.

BRADTKE: I will be the first to confess that by the time he got to be vice president, my politics and his politics didn't square. But while I was in his office, I found him engaging, smart, very good with his staff, [he had] lots of time for you, and [he was] very

personable. I had intermittent contact with him over the years, but certainly, while I worked in his office, it was a good environment. I enjoyed it.

To his credit, he was somebody who had a remarkable memory for faces and names. I worked with him for maybe four or five months, but when my mother passed away—and this was years later—he sent a letter when he was vice president. This jumps the story, but we're talking about Dick Cheney. A few years before that, I was working as the executive secretary in the National Security Council, and I remember the first time he came into our suite in the West Wing. He didn't know I was there, and he walked in the door, and he said, "Bob Bradtke!" I was stunned, because I hadn't talked to him in probably fifteen years!

Q: Wow!

BRADTKE: I was absolutely stunned, and then the first time I was in the Oval Office with him with President Bush, he said to President Bush, "Oh, he's one of us!" Well I may not have been one of them at that point, but it was just the remarkable ability to remember who you were; it was just something that was a very positive thing about him. Loyalty to his staff, loyalty to people who worked for him. He has a remarkable memory for you and your time there, your service, and again our politics kind of diverged later, but in personal terms—

Q: One snarky question and then one serious one. Snarky one: every ambassador I've ever met remembers faces and names. How do they do this? How do you learn this?

BRADTKE: I didn't, I'm terrible [at it]!

Q: I don't believe that!

BRADTKE: I'm better with faces than with names, but the frightening thing now, at my stage of life, is to go through the State Department cafeteria—

Q: The scariest thing in the world!

BRADTKE: And think, Oh my god, who is that? And other people are very good. Sometimes it's a question of where you are in the pecking order. People are more likely to remember the ambassador looking up than the second secretary or vice consul looking down, but it is very scary.

Q: Even for the rest of us.

BRADTKE: I do not do well. My wife does much better, [but] of course she was also an ambassador. But I'm not good at that, and that's why I'm even more impressed with someone like Dick Cheney who can still pull your name out of thin air when you hadn't had any contact for years. And, I'll add that one of my good friends is someone who

worked in Cheney's office at that time, and I've stayed in touch with him, I still stay in touch with him. So there were times even now when Cheney would ask him, "Well, what's Bradtke up to?" And he would let him know. So there was still a point of contact.

Q: Possibly he remembered you because you were good, maybe.

BRADTKE: Well, I'd like to think so.

Q: Now the slightly more substantive question. You talked about being a productive member of the staff of a representative whose politics were not identical with yours. Nowadays I don't know if that's as common. Any comments about what was the dynamic of being a staff member—and I think a productive one—subordinate to a congressman you might not have voted for? Might you not today find this tremendously uncommon?

BRADTKE: At the time our views were not that different. This was during a Republican presidency [and] he was internationalist in his way of thinking. For example, I was not his international affairs staff person, I was his budget reform staff person, which is what I wanted, but I remember one time Cheney was adamantly against the nuclear freeze, which you may or may not remember. There was a period of time when this was a big issue, and I remember he said to me, "Can you write me a floor statement about why we should be against the nuclear freeze?"

Q: Carter [administration]?

BRADTKE: No, this was [the] Reagan [administration], so this is 1981–82. I didn't have any problem with that. I didn't like the nuclear freeze, either. So, there was nothing that I felt was so contrary to my own views. On the budget process, he thought the budget process was a mess; I did too. He was sympathetic with more executive control over the budget process. He thought there were too many hoops to jump through to get budgets approved on time; he wanted to streamline the budget process. I was all in favor of that too, so it wasn't a case while I worked for him that I felt [there was] anything that was so out of line with my own positions that I would think, I can't do this.

Maybe the last thing I wanted to introduce is a big concept here. Good grief, we haven't gotten very far, but I've always felt that as a civil servant, and I use that word to encompass the Foreign Service and everybody else who works for the government, you work for people who have been politically chosen. You have your own views, but they are entitled to your support to do things, because they got elected, and they've got the right which comes from being elected, and as long as I was not being asked to do something that was immoral or illegal, that I should help them; that I should do what I was being asked to do. If it was so completely contrary to my policy positions, then I should leave. If I couldn't stomach it for whatever reason, if it was just too stupid or I thought it was disastrous, then I should leave. But if it was not, if I wasn't prepared to leave, and it wasn't immoral or illegal, [then] I should do it.

Q: Good summation of a subject that comes up very often.

BRADTKE: How can you get through forty years in the government if you don't have this approach somewhat? The system can't work if every policy disagreement you have, you decided you couldn't do it. I understand there are times when it gets to that point where you see something that's so contrary—and in some ways Iraq [was]—I wish I had been smart enough to realize how bad a position that it was to go to war in Iraq. And I don't know what I would have done if I had realized. But again, for me, it was, these people got elected, they're entitled to the best advice that we who are civil servants can give them, and then if they don't choose to follow it, and it's not immoral or illegal, then everybody can't just quit!

Q: This is a great clip that should stand as guidance for people who are troubled by this. Normal people would rather fit into a system that is productive even if they don't agree with every policy.

BRADTKE: It's impossible where you are going to agree with everything. Whether there are times when you get to something that is so big an issue, the collapse of Yugoslavia, for example, and we have to [decide to] intervene or not intervene. Syria today, that's a tough one. That's a real tough one. The Iraq War also. So there were things that came down the road, but it was also not that point in my career. I came in right as [the] Vietnam [War] was ending, so I didn't have the Vietnam era considerations to think about. And did I agree with everything that was Ronald Reagan's foreign policy in the 1980s? No, but there was nothing that was so bad that I couldn't feel that he was entitled to my support, to me doing my job.

Q: NPR [National Public Radio] mentioned a comment by a Soviet official in the early '90s—consider it now prophetic—saying, "We have now weakened the United States by removing your main enemy." There was a certain consistency, and I think we have a certain nostalgia for things that appear clearer in retrospect, but we're getting away from your career.

BRADTKE: Let me just say, I've [seen] a lot of things with which I disagreed, but I used the channels that were available to say, "Look, [I don't agree with this.]" It depends on where I was, later in my career a little higher up, but if you were in a meeting maybe you spoke up, "I don't agree with this." But once the decision was made by the people who had the political authority, if it wasn't illegal or immoral, then it was time to move on and try to implement it as best as possible.

Q: I think that's an excellent guideline, "if not illegal or immoral," when people are groping for where they fit. A lot of people I think are troubled by this but I think your guidance—

BRADTKE: It may also be a generational issue. Politics are more complicated today than they were before.

Q: Clearly this was a fascinating experience.

BRADTKE: I think the thing I took away, that helped me enormously, was the perspective of how things look from Capitol Hill, which is very different from how things look from the executive branch. I remember, for example, when I worked for Senator Mathias calling up somebody in the State Department and just saying, "I'm from Senator Matthias' office. I have a question." The way I was treated, which was not particularly good, was, "Why is this staff member bothering me?" That's not the response you want when a staff member of a senator [who is] on the Foreign Relations Committee calls the State Department. You need to be a little more responsive. You want the tone to be more responsive. So that was one of the things—how to be more responsive. The second thing [was] learning how different were the jobs of the members, the demands on the time, [and] the pressures on them from the constituents. And third, I actually did learn a little bit about the budget process, the authorization and appropriations process, and the importance of appropriators, because those were the guys and the staff in particular, that control the money. Those are [the key] lessons, [although] there were probably others, too, that really helped me as I hit the senior ranks, and I was called on to testify, or called on to go meet with a member to argue for his or her support for something—

Q: You knew the language.

BRADTKE: —or knew what you needed in this particular case. The member had a hundred other things to worry about, but that staff member was the key person and you could convince him or her, and if you could pay a little attention to them, even if you might be saying to yourself, "I'm not going to deal with staff; I'm the deputy assistant secretary," or "I'm an ambassador; I don't have to deal with staff! Oh no, oh no!" Depending on the situation, the importance of cultivating [relationships] with staff, dealing with staff, [was key] to get done what you wanted. These were the lessons that were very important.

Q: I guess this is what they call "the messy democratic process," which of course this antagonism sometimes seems just unnecessary. Where people have similar objectives, why should they be arguing, but is there a positive side to that?

BRADTKE: Sure. There are different perspectives and that's inevitable, and there are times when members and staff are outrageous, frankly, and one of the times that appears perhaps more frequently is the infamous congressional delegation. There are a lot of FSOs whose main experience with the Hill is having to deal with some codel [congressional delegation], which never comes at a convenient time for the embassy. It's going to come during a recess, which is convenient for Congress. They're going to want all sorts of things that frankly sometimes are over the top.

Q: [Have] their ceramics shipped back?

BRADTKE: A lot of times that's what FSOs see. They see members on the codel and that gives them this negative attitude, when in fact it's much more complicated. Some of the members themselves take the codel seriously, some of them don't. But it's also a time when they are relaxed. As a FSO you'll find yourself riding in the motorcade with a member of Congress or a senior staffer. You have access which in Washington you never would get. Sometimes the codel experience produces a negative reaction, they're outrageous, they want all this stuff, they come at the wrong time, and they don't know what they're talking about. They go into a meeting with some foreign government official and they don't even know what country they're in! There are all those things, I get it, but it's more complicated than that. It is an opportunity actually to get to know members or staff in a way you can't back in Washington.

Q: Not to get into names but did some individuals stand out as really knowing foreign policy or budget issues more than others? The ones who were there year after year, the equivalent maybe of our—

BRADTKE: David Obey, who was a congressman from Wisconsin, who had a staff that was just [amazing]. They knew the ins and outs of the appropriations process.

Q: Those who know better, did they get a fair hearing?

BRADTKE: Not always. When I was in H [Bureau of Legislative Affairs] [and] you would get a call from a staffer that you knew could either put the money in the bill or take it out, and he'd say, "Goddammit, I can't get this question answered [by the State Department.]" You'd want to make sure it got taken care of, because he really could get things done, and if he was sending a letter and [our reply] was just bureaucratic jargon that was not going to work. There was Senator Leahy's staff as well, on the Senate side. There was a time when [Senator] Mitch McConnell—this again is jumping ahead to when I was an H—was the subcommittee chair of the Foreign Operations Appropriations subcommittee. These were the people who wrote the foreign aid bill, for God's sake. You wanted to make sure the staff's questions were answered. They knew the ins and outs, they knew about these programs, so you couldn't kind of blow them off with pat answers. You needed people to talk to them and stay in touch with them.

Q: Senators and congressmen must have had personal priorities [because] they were on this committee and not on the other one. Is it possible to generalize about what sorts of issues they took the most personally, or was it different in every case?

BRADTKE: It was different in every case. There were members who were very concerned about human rights issues, and that was the issue! It was, What are we doing about these prisoners? What are we doing about this human rights issue? They were so single-focused on that issue that it wasn't always easy to deal with them. You had senators and congressmen who were more into security issues with NATO, which again I dealt with later in my career, but those issues were very important to them. You had members who had foreign policy interests but also came from states perhaps that had

agricultural constituents, and so they wanted to make sure that PL 480 [Public Law 480], which is our food assistance, included their products in these PL 480 programs. [They wanted to know,] Was wheat going to go as part of our assistance program? Where were those dairy products going to go? Is that dried milk going to go somewhere?

Q: It also seems that a certain Mr. [Tom] Vilsack is on a short list right now. Maybe we'll see what happens.

BRADTKE: Sometimes they came at us from more than one side, sometimes they had a particular burning interest that they really cared about. Yugoslavia—again this was later—where there were a couple of members who deeply cared about the collapse of Yugoslavia and what was going on there. They pushed for us to be more interventionist. So yes, people were coming at us from all different sorts of ways.

Q: There's much cynicism today about senators and congressmen of all parties doing more politics than policy. Do you feel that there was a genuine devotion to policy among the majority of people?

BRADTKE: The world has changed, the Hill has changed, and I'm going to be accused of being back in the good old days. I was on the Hill from '81 to '82. I was an H in the mid-'90s. Even in the mid-'90s, the role of leadership was a little more important. You could cut deals, you could deal with the leadership, and you had people with years of experience, who were serious people, who were well-staffed by people who were experts in their area, who were willing to talk across the bipartisan divide. You could get things done.

Q: *And was there not more party discipline, [party] whips who were able to get their people—*

BRADTKE: Yes, if the chairman or ranking member wanted it, or the leadership really wanted it, they could push it through. And now I have a sense that things are totally broken down. I don't know when was the last time that we got a State Department authorization bill done. There was a period—

Q: Not in my career!

BRADTKE: I'm talking [about] back in the '80s and the early '90s. You had Dante Fascell, Bill Broomfield, who were the chairman, the ranking member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Their staff talked [together] all the time. They worked together, they compromised, they did things. [It was] a little harder in the Senate because Senator [Jesse] Helms was not an easy person, and his staff was not easy. The divide was greater there. They may not have agreed, but the [House] appropriations committee staff members really worked together to put bills together.

Q: Fascell paid close attention and had things named after him!

BRADTKE: Yes, the Fascell Democracy Fellowship. The Foreign Affairs Committee members didn't get a lot of benefits necessarily in their districts from being involved in foreign policy, but they were strong enough with their constituency they didn't worry about somebody challenging in a primary election saying, "You support foreign aid, so you're giving our money away?"

Q: Richard Lugar.

BRADTKE: Yes, on the Senate side [you had Charles] "Mac" Mathias. One of the reasons I was attracted to working for him on the Senate side [was] these were people who had a big picture, had a foreign policy view. [They] cared about the bigger issues, and not what was on the headlines that day, and not about pandering to their constituents all the time, and not about taking cheap shots at the administration. I cannot imagine—and maybe this is the place to stop—something like the Benghazi committee [occurring] back in the '80s or '90s. It's unthinkable to me that in that era you would have the exploitation of that tragic incident for some crassly political purposes as you do today, that you would have the leadership on either side being willing to go down that road. They would have been interested, they would have been briefed, all the rest, but would they have taken it to this? No way, no way!

Q: Ambassador, it's refreshing to me to hear someone with your historic perspective make that judgment. I think it needs to be said. That will take care of it today.

BRADTKE: We're not making much progress here!

Q: Well, Ambassador Bradtke, we can agree on one thing—today is August 5! This is Dan Whitman interviewing Ambassador Robert Bradtke and we're in Washington, DC.

BRADTKE: Dragging this story out to the ultimate length. It's like I'm getting paid by the word but I'm not getting paid anything!

Q: Oh, but this is self-enriching! This is the gift that keeps on giving! Ambassador, in our last conversation you were on the Hill.

BRADTKE: Yes, I was on the Hill as a congressional fellow.

Q: With an obscure little person Cheney—

BRADTKE: —with this congressman from far out west, from Wyoming, Dick Cheney.

Q: A little deviation. What is it about telegrams that can be more readable and can be more illuminating? Let's just have a short discussion on writing style in telegrams.

BRADTKE: Yes, it's different. We talked a little bit about this earlier, where so much of what might have been on the record in the past, so to speak, now is in the less formal channel of email. The dissemination issue: where emails are targeted generally to just a select audience, but with the telegram, the distribution can be quite broad, in fact, often ends up being way too broad. But as you say, it's also an issue of writing. When I started in the Dark Ages, telegrams were written in telegraph-ese. You dropped out words, certainly the articles, you wrote it in a style that was very concise, because some poor person was going back into the communications room and punching this out on a telex tape! So the fewer words, the shorter the tape, the easier it was to encrypt and transmit. So you were forced to write in quite a concise style, and I think that was actually a good thing.

Q: I did not know that; I thought conciseness existed because there was some sort of commercial charge for the words.

BRADTKE: Yes, that may have also entered into it, but I felt it was just to have fewer words. This is really Dark Ages material. I think this was the case when I was in Moscow as well. Telegrams were typed onto green cable forms and then approved by whoever the approving officer was, and then you took them in to the communicator, who then put it on a strip of this yellow tape like Western Union, and it was transmitted. The emphasis was really on brevity, both perhaps for the commercial cost but also the number of keystrokes.

Q: Not to be too sidetracked, but none of this went through the mind of George F. Kennan when he wrote the "long telegram." Do you think he understood that it was intended to become a classic at some point?

BRADTKE: Perhaps not to the extent that it was, and not in the way it was interpreted. But he knew he was writing [to a broad audience]. This is the thing about cables, you're conscious of a broad audience, for a high level audience, you're conscious of whatever the audience is. Okay, there's the simple reporting cable, but I think sometimes the so-called think piece cable is a bit of a lost art of cable writing. The best ambassadors, the best reporting officers, can rise to that level. It's not just, "I went into the Foreign Ministry, I made the demarche, here's what they said." That's the bread and butter of our business to a certain extent, but it's the ability of an ambassador or a senior officer, or sometimes it's the mid-grade officer, who can step back and write something for the ambassador, or the DCM, in a thoughtful way that is both short enough to be readable by a senior official in Washington, but long enough to have a degree of complexity. That's probably a lost art.

Q: I want to dwell on this for a long time, but let's proceed. You went from the Hill— No, you did a research project which was cut short.

BRADTKE: No, what was cut short was my time in Zagreb to come back to be in the pilot program of the mid-level officer training program, but then my time on the Hill was part of the American Political Science Association congressional fellowship, which had a

bit of an academic bent in that you started out with a kind of intensive seminar on Congress. Then I spent half my time with Mac Mathias on the Senate side and the other half on the House side with Dick Cheney.

Q: So let's proceed.

BRADTKE: And then when I finished with that I was interested in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union at the time. I wanted to go back out in that direction. And [I] was preparing to get married to Marsha Barnes, who also was interested in that part of the world. We both, not yet married, put in for assignments to Moscow, [and] got assignments to Moscow. Marsha, who was in the consular cone, got an assignment to the consular section as the deputy chief of the section, and I got a job in the economic section. Although I was a political officer by cone, that was the job that I got. I was the economic internal analyst in Moscow.

Q: Does this often happen with political and economic officers?

BRADTKE: I don't know now, [but] I think that back then that there was a little greater degree of flexibility. And Moscow was always looking [to fill positions]. I'd say it was not a place where people wanted to go. This was a 25 percent hardship post so there was a little more flexibility if an officer wanted to go and was otherwise qualified. I would not have been qualified to go to London, Paris or Bonn as an economic officer because I wasn't an economist, but the econ internal portfolio in Moscow was as much political as it was economic. You had to have the right vocabulary, but did you need to know the esoteric aspects of monetary policy? No, because that's not the way that system worked.

Q: A managed economy.

BRADTKE: Right. So we spent a year in language training in 1982–83 at FSI.

Q: You say there were not too many bidders; [however,] ten years later everyone wanted to go to Moscow. It was the sexiest place. It's funny how these things come and go!

BRADTKE: At least that's my recollection. And why did I get the econ job? Maybe [it was] the fact that I'd served in a communist country, although with a very different kind of economic system, the system of Yugoslavia; the fact that I knew one Slavic language, that I'd worked in EUR that may have given me a leg up that may have made it possible to do this.

Q: So a year of Russian [language study], one of the greatest gifts that the Foreign Service can give.

BRADTKE: I totally agree with the idea, and I have to be careful here. I don't want to be too critical of the [State] Department, but you don't necessarily, in my view, get a lot of marketable skills from the Foreign Service, particularly as a political officer. If you're an

administrative officer or a management officer, maybe you'll learn how to run things or manage people. But yes, the idea that the USG will pay you for forty-four weeks to learn a language and then once you've got it, it's yours! You don't have to give it back, you don't have to turn it in at the end of your time in Moscow! It's yours! Yes, it is one of the gifts the Foreign Service—the State Department—gives that keeps on giving over time.

Q: At this time you had Serbo-Croatian and Russian [languages]. So, off to Moscow in 1983.

BRADTKE: Off to Moscow in 1983. We got there just after Brezhnev died. I should also add in May of 1983 my wife and I got married, which shocked the people in our language class because we never really advertised that we were going to get married. It made the administrative people in [Embassy] Moscow very happy because it meant one apartment instead of two, and they were always a little tight on housing, so they were delighted!

Q: Aren't they sentimental people!

BRADTKE: Yes, but very practical at the same time. So we got out there right after Brezhnev passed away, thinking that we'd missed this great historic event, and Andropov was the general secretary. It was a time when there was a glimmer of an opening, and one of the first things I worked on after I got out there was a lifting of the restrictions on agricultural credits that had been implemented after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. I remember being off to the Foreign Ministry late one night to exchange the documents to finalize this deal. So, there were just the tiniest cracks opening up, and then the Korean airliner was shot down a couple weeks after that, and boom—we were back in the depths of the cold war!

Q: I'm not a Sovietologist at all, but I think I remember that when Andropov came in, the mere fact of not being Brezhnev won him some points in the Western media, maybe naively?

BRADTKE: There was the hope that because he had been security chief, the head of the KGB, that he knew more about the outside world. Brezhnev, and this was clearly known at the time, in his last months/years, was very ill. So there was no idea that there could be big decisions or changes. The system essentially was frozen; so for the West, Andropov was a guy who was fairly sophisticated, who was not Brezhnev—that was already a plus—who knew something about the West, who, the assumption was, had to understand that there had to be changes in the Soviet Union if it was going to economically survive. So there was this glimmer of hope that things were going to change. And balanced against that was almost immediately after I got there, he disappeared, because he was ill. The official line was he had a cold, he had the flu, but you simply didn't see him anymore. He was gone, he'd vanished from public sight.

Q: I forget the circumstances, but what I do remember is that the western press, or the American press was kind of in a bit of euphoria thinking that he was some sort of liberal when actually he was not. Was that a naive reaction?

BRADTKE: It probably was, but he didn't last long enough for that proposition to be tested. I mean he had some people around him who were more open-minded than any of the old guard that was there when Brezhnev was in power. By the time we got there in August, nobody ever saw him in public any more, and then he passed away.

Q: And then [the downing of] KAL [Korean Airlines] was an extreme interruption. All cultural ties were suspended. There was a scientific exchange that you might have been involved with run by Delphi researchers. The only exchange, a very robust exchange.

BRADTKE: No, I was not involved. There was a science officer who ran the science [exchanges]. And then of course there was the press and cultural section, but there wasn't a lot to run; there were very few ties, there were very few links. And the few that were just opening up on the economic and commercial side, were shut down completely.

Q: So did that make it a boring job?

BRADTKE: Yes and no. Once Andropov was out of the picture, there was great interest in what was going to happen. When he died, Chernenko was left as the secretary general and he almost immediately was ill. He was old, he didn't make a lot of public appearances, and then he disappeared from public view as well! So basically we had a shutdown in relations, the system, with Chernenko, kind of frozen in place. It was very frustrating, it was very hard to talk to any Russians. You had no access, really, to the Soviet bureaucracy. You would put in an appointment request; you'd ask to see people, [but] rarely did you ever get a chance to see anybody. Sometimes when we had outside visitors, codels, that helped open up a door or two, but basically it was very difficult to do what you were sent out to do, which was talk about the economy, and we did a lot of reporting from the press, but the Soviet press was not exactly putting out a balanced picture of things or even an accurate picture of things.

One of my favorite stories came from a UNDP-organized [United Nations Development Program] trip on statistics that was organized in Russia. There were people from different countries and the Soviets, who were normally very secretive about statistics, put together a program for the participants, including myself and an expert from the U.S. It was one of those rare times when you actually had access to real Soviet officials, and particularly for statistical information, because they would never talk to you as an American diplomat. But on this trip we were off together, we were off to Minsk, there was a lot of drinking as was usually the case in Soviet times. But one of the Soviet statistical office officials told a great story about his own agency. It's a little bit long but I'm going to tell it anyway.

He said that there was a small group of people sitting around a table in Moscow, and there were some lemons in a basket on the table, and they decided to have a contest, who

could squeeze the most juice out of a lemon! And so the first guy got up, grabbed a lemon, and he squeezed and squeezed and just a trickle of juice came out of the lemon into a glass. But he ripped open his shirt and underneath was a tee shirt that said, "Government of the Soviet Union."

The next guy said, "I can do better than that," and grabbed a lemon and squeezed and squeezed into the glass, and it was impressive—it was half full! He ripped open his shirt and it said, "Communist Party of the Soviet Union."

The third guy said, "I can do even better," and he got a lemon and he squeezed the lemon and filled the whole glass, got another glass, kept squeezing the lemon, and filled another whole glass! He ripped open his shirt and it said, "Statistical Bureau of the Soviet Union." Here was someone from the statistical agency who was telling the story. There were occasional blinding insights like that as to how the system really worked, and that they knew it worked that way.

Q: That's a great story. I was going to ask, but did even the statistical bureau have any accurate information? Apparently not. They were indeed squeezing the lemon harder.

BRADTKE: Yes, people lied. They were getting the same things and just making them look better.

Q: If your source as an econ reporting officer was the local press, which knew nothing other than what it was told by the party and the apparatus, and if the apparatus didn't even know anything, then I guess there—

BRADTKE: We used to do monthly cables. There was an economic paper that put out the monthly production statistics. We desperately looked at this, inside and out, to see what we could come up with, what analysis we could make. It was very frustrating, it was very hard, and we were making an assumption or making an analysis off of numbers that probably were totally meaningless.

Q: You're the person to ask. You were within five years of the Berlin Wall coming down! Any insights at all?

BRADTKE: This is what's so astounding. A little more than halfway through my tour, Chernenko died, and Gorbachev came to power.

Q: Two-year tour?

BRADTKE: A three-year tour, if I've got my Gorbachev years right. And he was obviously a much younger man, the atmosphere did change, there were voices in the press that were much more critical of the economic situation, who pointed out the need to do something. *Perestroika* [restructuring] was the great word of the time. So here was a communist leader who was doing at least one thing very differently—asking questions,

and allowing a certain criticism to start. Now, for those of us in the embassy, we had a lot of extensive debates. What did this mean? Was he really going to relax things? Was he really going to open or was this just a way of dressing things up and continuing the system as it was without making any real change? The great debate was, was he a real reformer or just a pretend reformer? I kind of went back and forth. Would I have ever predicted what happened over the next five years? No way! Would I have predicted things were going to change? I think the answer was yes. I think back to my reporting [during] that period, and it was simply the fact that once you kicked the stone down the hill of openly criticizing the existing system, once you started that process, snowballing down the hill, could you know how it was going to end up? So, I understood that much, and that is the only way that I will defend myself from failing to predict the demise of the Soviet Union!

Q: This is your chance to say that you did predict it!

BRADTKE: I think if you went back and read every single cable, you could probably excerpt a couple of lines that would have had me leaning a little in the direction of saying "big changes are coming," but—

Q: But surely perestroika must have been very jazzy for an economic reporter?

BRADTKE: It was. And we did have a little better access to the academics that we could talk to, who were loosely connected with the government, [but it was] still very hard to talk to anybody.

Q: Did perestroika reveal any more of the hidden facts that maybe nobody had? Like did real statistics ever come up?

BRADTKE: I don't remember that being the case.

Q: But it was a policy. The policy of looking once again at considering changes.

BRADTKE: And the admission that things aren't working the way they were supposed to be working.

Q: It sounds to me more like an economic reporting matter than a political one.

BRADTKE: It was both. We used to go back and forth. In the political section, Laura Kennedy, who went on to be an ambassador, was the political internal chief and she and I would sit down every day and go back and forth. So it was an interesting time.

Q: So we now say pol-econ, and in those circumstances it really was pol-econ,

BRADTKE: Yes, not by structure but by the fact that we just knew we had to work very closely.

Q: And in the smaller embassies that's now an institution.

BRADTKE: Yes, that's now institutionalized. The other thing that happened during the Gorbachev period was the improvement of relations with the United States, which of course opened up a few doors. And also in my case it got me into something that then played out subsequently, when the summit was announced between Reagan and Gorbachev that was going to take place in Switzerland. This was going to be a big deal, and the White House was very concerned about this. I was back in Washington on a promotion panel. I guess this was 1985. I got a call from Mark Parris, the political counselor, who was still in Moscow. I was asked to go into the [State] Department to talk to Mark Palmer who was the deputy assistant secretary for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Q: The same Mark Palmer that marched in the streets in Budapest?

BRADTKE: Yes. So I went to see Mark with another officer, a guy by the name of Lynn Dent, who became a lifelong friend of mine and who had been in Sofia. The pitch to the two of us was that the White House was deeply concerned about the preparations that were going on for the summit in Geneva and wanted our mission in Geneva to be reinforced by people who, in my case, knew something about Russia, who could liaise with the Russian mission in Geneva, and in Lynn's case, someone who knew how to do business. Lyn was a management officer, very practically minded, because the White House had lost faith in the people on the ground. That's a pun I suppose because Faith Whittlesey was our ambassador to Switzerland. In fact, the White House lost faith in the two missions, the U.S. mission in Geneva and our embassy in Bern. Whittlesey was in Bern and Gerry Carmen was in Geneva. So, we were sent out and wanted us to be the points of contact for the White House Advance Teams. The summit was going to be in October, and they asked us to go out in August. So instead of going back from Washington after the promotion panel, I went straight to Geneva and spent three months working on the summit.

Q: And I want to hear much more about that process, and Geneva, either now or later, or never, as you wish. In one of his books Strobe Talbot implied that the warming of relations with Gorbachev commenced more obviously under Reagan but was actually more fulfilled or came to fruition under George H.W. Bush. If you have any reflections on that—

BRADTKE: I don't know. At that point I was a mid-level officer and I was sent out not to do substance, so to speak; I was sent out to make sure the arrangements worked, that when the White House wanted something done, it got done. I can tell a few stories of that nature, but I was not one of the experts on arms control issues or any of these other things. This was to reinforce the mission in Geneva.

Q: No and not to worry about the details and again, now or later or never, and maybe you would be willing to say now with the perspective of history, were both Reagan and Bush Sr. equally historic in what they did with Gorbachev?

BRADTKE: Yes, again I was not at a level where I was there to hear conversations or even to read memcons of conversations, and I haven't gone over all the literature, but they each did something different, and I would have to throw Clinton in as well as a continuum managing the relationship with the Russians. Bush, who I think handled the collapse of the Soviet Union superbly, and then Clinton and Yeltsin, which was one hell of a complicated relationship with a guy, Yeltsin, who was so mercurial, but Clinton somehow [managed] it through the force of his personality. So, they all had a role to play, complementary, developing over time, and different, one from the other.

Q: Very satisfying answer, because some people have a strong opinion that it was one or the other, let's say frankly giving credit. It was actually no single individual.

BRADTKE: And it's the same thing with the secretaries of state in this period as well, to a lesser degree, but [Secretary George] Schultz' relationship with [Foreign Minister Eduard] Shevardnadze. And [James] Baker's efforts, [and Warren] Christopher's, to a lesser extent, even though I worked for him, partly because his Russian interlocutors didn't have the power. Andrey Kozyrev was a nice guy—is a nice guy—but he didn't have the oomph as foreign minister. But that's kind of jumping ahead.

Q: Actually it's what I asked. Thanks for that. Let's go back to Geneva.

BRADTKE: The White House was [planning] this trip. [I'm going to give you more detail than you ever wanted to know here, but for me this was kind of a formative experience as well.] We sat down with Mark Palmer and he said I want you to go over to the White House and meet one of the president's advisers, Bill Henkel. We went over and met with him and he made it very clear that they were very concerned about getting this [summit meeting] right. This meeting was coming up in the aftermath [of] when Reagan went to Germany and he laid a wreath at a cemetery where SS [*Shutzstaffel* (Protection Squadron)] officers were buried [May 5, 1985].

Q: Bitburg.

BRADTKE: Yes, Bitburg! Where it turned out there were [graves of Nazi] SS officers, so they were absolutely paranoid that something would happen on this trip that would be wrong; would give the wrong impression; would be a mistake. They did not want that. So they wanted Lynn Dent and me to go out and just be their eyes and ears, to make sure everything went right, to be the direct channel back to the pre-advance and advance teams that would be going out.

So Lynn and I went out, and we started to work with the Russian Mission in Geneva, and more importantly with the Swiss, who were really very competent, very capable. The first

kind of job Lynn and I had was to worry about two sites. The first site was the place where President Reagan would stay, and that was called the Maison de Saussure, which was the place where Dwight Eisenhower in 1954 had gone and lived when he met Khrushchev. And of course for the Reagan White House, the idea that Ronald Reagan would stay in the same place as Dwight Eisenhower, they just loved that idea. So task number one was get the people who lived in the Maison de Saussure, a Swiss family, to move out, and set this place up for the Reagans! The second task was the meeting site itself. The White House team had initially gone out and settled on a villa on the shores of Lake Geneva called Fleur d'Eau, "Water Flower." And our job was to take that villa, which was vacant at the time, and transform it into a place where the two presidents could meet and have the right atmosphere for productive discussion.

So those were the two tasks, and it was to work with the Swiss as well, to get their help, and there were some interesting moments in this process. One was at Fleur d'Eau, to take this empty villa and transform it into a place that could look good, because for the White House, the pictures were going to be everything. The White House wanted the photos to be perfect, they didn't want any glitches, they wanted the atmosphere to be right, and so Lynn and I were discussing all this with the White House advance guys who came out and would tell us exactly what they wanted. It was harder than it seemed. There was a dining room, which was to be a meeting room in the Fleur d'Eau, and it needed to be painted. How hard could this be? So, Lynn and I go off and we find it's not just painting it, this is an historic structure, that there are real gold flecks in the walls, and there's a wax coating over the top and the bill to do this—I don't remember what it was—was astronomical! They would not let us just take out our white paint and paint over it! These were the little complications that we ran into.

The people at the residence where President and Mrs. Reagan were going to stay, the Maison de Saussure, [were] a wonderful Swiss couple, very much aware of the historic nature of this, ready to do anything to help us. They agreed to move out of the villa and into what had been a stable in the old days but now was a separate guest wing. And so we were able to work with them [to] start to make this the kind of place that Mrs. Reagan and the President would be comfortable in.

And then there were the Swiss! As we got close to the time for the Reagans to arrive, the Swiss were very concerned about security. I think this is back in the days of the PLO [Palestinian Liberation Organization] carrying out terrorist operations in Europe and what not, and the Swiss were just adamant that they were in charge of security. This actually united the Russians and ourselves, because for the Russians it was the KGB that was going to be in charge of Gorbachev's security, and for President Reagan, it was going to be the Secret Service!

One morning about a week out from the visit, Lynn and I drove out to the Maison de Saussure, and the Swiss Army had kind of taken over. You entered through a gate; it was a wonderful lane leading up to the house. The Swiss had strung barbed wire across the land, and had actually installed machine guns. We said, No you can't do it this way. I

distinctly remember going with the Russians to talk to the Swiss to say, No, not on the grounds of the Maison de Saussure, or Fleur d'Eau. We would handle security for our sites! I remember the Russians having their problems with the Swiss as well, and walking out after meeting with the Swiss police, when one of the Russians came over to me and said, "You know what the problem is with these Swiss? They've never been occupied by a great power!" So that was another moment that kind of stuck in my memory!

These are trivial stories but I'll tell a couple more. One of the other things about making the Maison de Saussure comfortable for the president was the bed in the bedroom. I thought this would be a relatively simple thing, and as part of the White House pre-advance team, one of the White House stewards came out and said, "This bed is too soft; it won't work." I said, "Okay, no problem." When the full Advance Team came out, and I was working with one of the stewards, I said to him, "This is Switzerland, let's go to the hotels, let's find a hotel with a bed that you like." [We were using a lot of hotel rooms in a lot of Swiss hotels because this was going to be a big, big delegation.] He and I went around to three or four of the best hotels in Geneva, and it was like the fable of the princess and the pea! This steward would lay out on the bed—we were in five-star hotels—and he'd say, "This one's too soft, this one's too hard!"

And after the fourth [hotel], I understood what the game was. A bed had been built for President Reagan when he went to Madrid. It was a huge big bed, custom built. That was what the steward really wanted. He wanted us to get that bed and bring it [to Geneva].

Q: Who was this individual?

BRADTKE: This was one of the stewards on the White House mess staff. The White House advance people kind of deferred to him about the bedroom; they didn't want to get involved in that. I tried as hard as I could to keep us from bringing the bed from Madrid, where it was left after [the visit] to Madrid, but after the fourth bed I knew this was a losing battle. This was already like seventy-two hours before the president was to arrive and we hadn't got the bed business straightened out. Finally, I gave up because we're running out of time. We agreed that we would fly the bed from Madrid to Geneva to put in the bedroom of the Maison de Saussure.

I thought the problem was fixed, except that most days of the week the cargo hold of the plane which flew from Madrid to Geneva was not big enough for the bed. There was only one flight a week where they used a bigger plane that they could get the bed into the cargo hold. So we got the bed delivered, but now we were down to the day before the president's arrival. We got the bed into the house, but the Secret Service had locked down the whole property, so we couldn't bring in workmen [to install the bed]. [It was up to] me and some of the White House staff to get it into the bedroom.

So now I think I'm done, but a new problem arose. Someone from the White House staff said we had to make this bed look like the bed that was in a picture that was shown to Mrs. Reagan when the first White House team looked at the house, because Mrs. Reagan

saw what the bedroom looked like and said it looked fine. So now my job was to make the Madrid bed look like the bed Mrs. Reagan had seen in the photos she had been shown. I had to get the headboard off the original bed in the house and somehow get it on [this bed from Madrid]. This was eight o'clock the night before the president was supposed to arrive. So I got a drill and got the headboard off, and I spent an hour and a half trying to figure out how to mount this headboard on the bed that had been flown from Madrid, which in the end I succeeded in doing! So these were the kind of "elevated" tasks that I was given! This is why you're joining the Foreign Service, to be lying flat on your back on a hot night in Geneva trying to attach a headboard to a bed that had been flown from Madrid!

Q: A couple of comments. Not to speak ill of the dead, there are a thousand anecdotes of Nancy Reagan extremely complicating—

BRADTKE: And there are some I won't even tell, but this was the staff. This was not her specifically.

Q: And there is the story that Reagan used to travel with his own bath water. We know he did that in Finland. Do you have any knowledge of that?

BRADTKE: No I don't, but she was very particular. I'll leave it at that, because there are some stories I will not tell. Two other stories I will tell show again the ludicrousness of what you're asked to do sometimes, but how it can advance your career in ways that you hadn't imagined! One of the things that Reagan was going to do during the summit was host a dinner at the Maison de Saussure for Gorbachev, and the White House wanted this to be perfect. And they decided that one of the ways to make it really nice would be to have harp music. So Lynn Dent and I were tasked with finding a harpist to come to play at this dinner, which sounds straightforward enough. We found a harpist, but then one of the things I learned about harps was they're very sensitive instruments.

Q: They have to be tuned constantly.

BRADTKE: And they have to be transported in a heated truck. Well, the Secret Service had shut down the main gate. All the deliveries had to come in the back. This is again twenty-four hours before the president arrived. The road that led to the back of the chateau was dirt, and the truck would have gotten stuck. So we had to have the access road behind the Maison de Saussure paved with asphalt.

Q: And the harp has to be in the environment for a period of time to stabilize it.

BRADTKE: We got it in and we got it out! And we got it set up and I'm sure it was wonderful, but I may be the only one who remembers that there was harp music at this dinner because we had to not only get the harp [and] the truck, but pave the road to get it in!

Q: The harp that accelerated the end of the cold war.

BRADTKE: One last ludicrous anecdote, but otherwise these stories will be lost. So during the visit when Gorbachev and Reagan were actually meeting, Reagan would go to Fleur d'Eau and come back and spend the night at the Maison de Saussure. So I was a site officer at the Maison de Saussure, working with a member of the White House advance team—these are typically people who worked on the presidential campaign.

Q: And they can be abrasive.

BRADTKE: Yes, they can. So the other State officer, whose name is Bruce Turner, and I were basically at the Maison de Saussure in this annex full time, just in case anything needed to get done. And the day after Reagan had been there, or maybe two days, this young, very intense White House advance guy came up to me and said, "I have something to tell you that you cannot tell anybody. I need some help with something, this has to be completely secret, you cannot tell." And I was thinking to myself, Finally, my chance, this is going to be my moment of glory. Some tremendous secret is going to be entrusted to me! I was waiting, and finally he said to me, "The goldfish died."

The background to this is that Reagan came a day or two early to Geneva. The White House was looking for human interest stories before the summit began, and in this wonderful Swiss family who lived in the Maison de Saussure and who moved out [for the Reagans], there was a young boy who had a goldfish, and he left a note for the president saying, "Mr. President, while you're here, would you please take care of my goldfish?" So, the White House liked this and put out the story that the president was feeding the kid's goldfish. So, when the goldfish died, there was panic. The White House did not want the story to be: "President kills goldfish," and they didn't want anybody to know that this had happened.

Q: The taxidermist fixed it, right?

BRADTKE: No. The White House advance guy said to me: "You have to get a goldfish that looks just like this goldfish so the kid won't be able to tell the difference." And I thought, Holy Smoke, how am I going to do this? So, I pulled Bruce Turner aside.

Q: Delegate.

BRADTKE: I said, Bruce, I have something to tell you that you can't tell anyone! His French was much better than mine, and I said I need you to go out and get a goldfish just like this goldfish.

Q: To me goldfish tend to all look alike!

BRADTKE: So Bruce, bless his heart, and eager as he was to help, he went out and he came up with a goldfish. We replaced the goldfish. To their credit, the White House knew

the story would never hold, so they put out the fact that unfortunately the poor goldfish had died, but the president had gotten a goldfish to replace the goldfish that had died! So the bed, the goldfish, these were the kinds of things—

Q: So we now know the background for the new code word for the launching of the nuclear [warheads]: "The goldfish has died!" Now finally we understand the origin.

BRADTKE: In the end the White House was extremely happy with the way things went. They told this to Embassy Moscow and when my evaluation report [EER] got written up, there was this inflated discussion of my help to the summit, and I got promoted!

Q: And I hope Bruce Turner was recognized.

BRADTKE: Bruce had a good career. I don't know, I've lost track of Bruce a little bit. He certainly did well, but I don't know whether the goldfish ever got into his evaluation.

Q: The headboard may have been a more massive achievement than the goldfish, but if seems from the—

BRADTKE: These are the things that sometimes you just shake your head and say, "Is this why I joined the Foreign Service?" One of the lessons to me was—and this is what I'm trying to say—there are times when you just have to do it. You have to recognize that you may not be making big policy decisions, you may not be there at the secretary's right hand saying here's what you ought to do, but the small things that you do, things that can seem trivial at the time, if they contribute to the success of the mission, are important. Never overlook the importance of doing these kinds of things, or say, "This is beneath me. This is too trivial. I'm a political officer, I'm a mid-level officer; you can't ask me to do this!" If it's a legitimate request, if it's a request that's going to contribute to the success of something like this, you should do it, and you should do it as well as you can!

Q: This links very directly to something that you said in the last session when you were on the Hill, when you are asked to do things that you've had some internal disagreement with. You said, "If it's not immoral or illegal I will do the best I can." This is as good a phrase of advice as I've ever heard in situations where your own view may not be exactly the same—

BRADTKE: I've seen good officers and bad officers, but it's this idea that "this is beneath me, or I'll do it but I'll do it grudgingly." It's the wrong attitude. There are times when you may feel: "I'm way more qualified, I'm over-qualified for this job or this task, or why am I being asked to do this task?" If it's going to help, if it's going to support the mission, even if you don't get credit for it necessarily; it's an attitude that I think is very important; it's the right attitude to have.

Q: This is the best advice a person can have.

BRADTKE: The footnote on this was that after Geneva, the White House remembered me. They brought me back to work on the Reykjavik Summit, Reagan and Gorbachev again. They brought me back to work on the G8 [Group of 8] summit in Venice—G7 [Group of 7] at that time. And the Bush White House brought me back to do the stop that President Bush made in Budapest.

The exposure, the people you met, and what you were able to see was valuable. There's this mistaken dichotomy that a lot of officers have between substance and management or administration. I have never accepted that premise; that I'm only interested in doing substance. People look askance at a lot of jobs because they don't involve substance, whether it's supporting, being a control officer, being a site officer, doing these things. If you're keeping your eyes and ears open and paying attention, first of all you can be on the margins of history—the things you can see and the people you can see!

You know before Geneva, I'd never met the president of the United States. There I was, when he finished at Fleur d'Eau, they were thanking people, and we were brought in to meet President Ronald Reagan, president of the United States. I have a picture of myself with him. It's hard to recognize me because of my age! But it's the exposure, there's always something you can learn. I don't believe in this dichotomy between management and administration and substance, it's all one mission, it's all part of one job that we do in the Foreign Service. And to those who say I want to do substantive work, if you would have said that to me as ambassador or as deputy assistant secretary, you would have had a black mark because I don't believe there is a distinction.

Q: Extremely wise advice, and for what it's worth, I completely agree. I am a listener and let's imagine the reader of this transcript, I hope these words do not fall on deaf ears.

BRADTKE: Well if anybody's still listening at this point I hope that's true.

Q: Well, I am.

BRADTKE: The obscure but otherwise perhaps lost in the mists of history or time, stories of—

Q: Why is it that the obscure stories are the most amusing?

BRADTKE: I've told these stories to younger officers when I've been called on to talk about an officer's career or how I got to where I got, and I'll do one more pitch. How did I get picked in the first place to get sent by Embassy Moscow to Geneva? Back in Moscow as things were starting to open up, Tip O'Neill came out with a big codel to Moscow. Being control officer is a job people usually don't like. But I'd worked on the Hill. I think members of Congress are big figures, written larger than life, so I got named as the control officer for this big codel with Tip O'Neill. The Soviets would put people up in guest houses, which were a little nicer than the hotels. So I'm going through the guest house with the Soviet official in charge of arrangements for the visit, and he shows me

the room for Tip O'Neill. The bed is about the size of your couch, Dan. It's like six feet, and if you remember Tip O'Neill, he was a big person. And so this was the prequel if you will to the Reagan bed! So I looked at this bed and I said this isn't going to work! So the Soviet official said, "Okay, we'll get a bed that we use for basketball players. So then they come with a bed that's very narrow but about seven feet long! It was a bit of a humorous story, but I managed to get a bed that Tip O'Neill could sleep in! So Mark Paris, who was the head of the political section then, remembered my success in managing the O'Neill codel and working with the Russians, so when they were looking for somebody to send from Embassy Moscow to work on the summit, Mark remembered me, and he recommended me. That got me to Geneva, which got me to other places. So you never know, and what does this have to do with economic internal reporting in the Soviet Union? Not a heck of a lot.

Q: There's a difference between sycophancy and doing these things because it's the right thing to do, and the sycophants can fake it, but often it does not work. I'm guessing you did this because you actually cared about Tip O'Neill's visit.

BRADTKE: The speaker of the House is an important person. I happened to like him personally. I'd never met him but I had respect not only for his office, but him as a person, and if I could make him more comfortable, on what was going to be a very difficult and demanding trip, I was going to do it. He deserved that much! And what else was I doing that was so important! So there you are! Thank you for your patience in listening to these "war stories."

Q: Thank you ambassador. I enjoyed them, and so will the reader!

Q: Today is August 19, 2016. This is becoming like a radio-free tome. We left the fish dead in Geneva. Ambassador, how could you do this to us—leave us hanging in this manner?

BRADTKE: Well, I don't remember exactly where we left off, but I sent poor Bruce Turner, who had come from Embassy Paris to help out at Fleur d'Eau, off to find another suitable goldfish. He came back with a couple of fish. We went back to the White House advance guy who replaced the fish.

Q: And there was a vetting process, right?

BRADTKE: Yes, we had to have multiple fish to interview! But in the end—to their credit—the White House press spokesman— acknowledged that the fish had died.

Q: In public?

BRADTKE: Yes.

Q: We can only pause and express our admiration for being so open.

BRADTKE: Well, it's a reminder that the cover up is always worse than whatever it was that you did wrong in the first place, so you never want to go down that road.

Q: Today's example would be the UN [United Nations] bringing cholera to Haiti. It was finally revealed, but not acknowledged exactly. Cover-ups seldom work.

BRADTKE: It's worse that you covered it up than whatever it was that you did in the first place.

Q: Very important point. Let's proceed. I think you were TDY [temporary duty] from—

BRADTKE: Moscow.

Q: In Geneva.

BRADTKE: And then [I] went back to Moscow to finish out my tour.

Q: Back to Moscow, and you were toward the end of that tour.

BRADTKE: It was the first year of [Mikhail] Gorbachev, which was a time—I think I alluded to this before—where you had a sense that change was in the wind but never recognized how fast the change was coming.

Q: Nineteen eighty-seven?

BRADTKE: This was 1986. We were there [from] 1983–1986. So [it was] 1985–1986.

Q: Which in retrospect we all know was a crucial time, but very few of us knew it at that time.

BRADTKE: The sense of us in the embassy with varying degrees was, Gorbachev's a real reformer. That this guy was talking the talk, that there was a new style of leadership and a willingness to be critical in public of the system and to explore ways to fix the system.

Q: Now my memory is blurred but you mentioned [Yuri] Andropov at our last conversation as inspiring these same sentiments. What was the difference?

BRADTKE: Well, Andropov died, first of all, which was a big obstacle in pursuing reform! So one never really had a chance to see how far he was going to go. Then he was replaced by [Konstantin] Chernenko who was clearly a holding pattern, not the guy who was ever going to pursue big changes, and he was ill, out of the public life almost from the beginning as well, so you really didn't have any movement there until Gorbachev came on as a young guy. He was a product of the system but had the ability to be more

critical, to bring into positions [people who were] at least willing to speak out—people who were critical of the system—and to kind of start that ball rolling down the hill.

Q: So Lucy and the baseball?

BRADTKE: Or the football, whatever, yes.

Q: When Gorbachev appeared during your tour, can you remember what you thought and felt about him? You were in Moscow and you were political analyst.

BRADTKE: Economic analyst, actually.

Q: So, after a false start with Andropov, a non-start with Chernenko, at what point did it seem that Gorbachev was really something new?

BRADTKE: [In] his speeches [he spoke of] *perestroika*, *glasnost* [openness]—those references to changes—he was clearly a new style of a leader. What you couldn't judge was how profound an effect this was going to have, whether there were real changes in the economy coming, or whether this was just on the surface and everything below the surface was going to stay unchanged. At the time, I would have said, "Yes, the style, more openness, but a fundamental restructuring of the political-economic system, I'm not so sure."

And the other thing at the time was this notion that the Russian people were long suffering, were a people who could go through hardships that any Western population would have risen up in revolt; the toleration for a system that really was dysfunctional and wasn't producing consumer goods, that wasn't producing health care. This was a time when a scholar named Murray Feshbach, who was a demographer, was producing incredibly important and insightful pieces about the demographic decline of Russia. In any other place, one would have thought that the alcoholism and disease would have produced enormous pressures for change. There was a tendency on the part of a lot of analysts—and I think I was one of them—to say, Okay, the system's really screwed up, it's really broken, but there's not going to be a revolution here, there's not going to be profound change. There's going to be tinkering, there's going to be some efforts to smooth out inefficiencies, but we're not looking at revolution here, we're not looking at fundamental reforms.

Q: [This is an] unfair question but I'll ask it anyway. You've just said that change was very much needed but the Russian people, because of many disappointments, didn't really have expectations. Can you put this on a graph between fear or standing out, and fatalism or just bad expectations? Are both involved?

BRADTKE: I don't know how to put it on a graph.

Q: I did say this was an unfair question.

BRADTKE: Yes, a lot of it was fatalism. A lot of it is also this notion, which I think exists to this day, that you want security and you're on a graph between welfare perhaps and security, the curve bends toward security rather than risk-taking, rather than reforms where there's uncertainty but there's the prospect of a much better outcome. On a graph, the plot is more toward the security line of the curve.

Q: Maybe culturally and traditionally but that too is a stretch to make a statement like that. We really don't know.

BRADTKE: It's an oversimplification.

Q: During this period I'm sure you read the [George] Kennan materials—the long telegram. Was any of this relevant in the 1980s?

BRADTKE: Somewhat. I think some of it was, in a very simplified sort of way. The idea was—and this is what Kennan felt in his later years, or not even his later years—that containment was interpreted the wrong way.

Q: He was a hawk to doves, and he was a dove to hawks.

BRADTKE: Right. But the notion was, whether it was his or not, that we're playing a waiting game. This notion [was] that over the long run this system wasn't going to endure forever, but I think we stopped perhaps believing that in an operational sense. We certainly didn't believe that the horizon for the internal contradictions of the Soviet system was six years away. [In our way of thinking], it was still way off in the mists of time. This comes back to what I said about the perception of the Russian people, which was they could put up with just about anything. So [we didn't have] the idea that the system was going to change that quickly, pressure wasn't going to come from below and the guys at the top had too much at stake to let things get out of control.

So the time scale was much longer. There were a few people who were perceptive enough to say, It's going to happen sooner rather than later, but I think the consensus, the conventional wisdom was the system's not working, the system's broken, the system's dysfunctional, and they're having a hard time keeping up with developments in the West, but the Russian people can put up with just about anything and the leadership— My god—they're not going to force the change, because they don't want to get swept away. So we were on a time scale that's—

Q: Decades?

BRADTKE: That's very uncertain. Certainly not less than a decade. Certainly not that fast!

Q: Now two words entered into the English language. The English language is very averse to the Russian language, but perestroika and glasnost soon became common and generally understood terms. How did that happen? Was it embassy reporting [or] was it journalism?

BRADTKE: A lot of it was journalism. A lot of it was the Western press that picked up on these things, and we echoed it as well in our own reports. It was this notion that you had a Russian leader who was much more open—not only criticizing himself [and] the system—but allowing others to criticize. There were academic economists who were criticizing the system's national planning, the overly rigid structures in the economy. Again it was hard to imagine how far this was going to go. But that really was a change and a rather dramatic change for a system that had been paralyzed for so long under the last years of [Leonid] Brezhnev, which were totally stultifying, and then Andropov and then Chernenko, and here finally was a leader that had a very different style, whose wife caught the attention of the public. She used an American Express card, this was a very different style, which was of interest to the Western press but obviously to us as well.

Q: Did it seem at the time as if he had a target on his back and that somebody so open, so radically different from his predecessors might have difficulty in remaining?

BRADTKE: Not in my time, because he hadn't taken it that far. I left in 1986. And it was not at all [clear] how far he was going there. I think most of us felt that this was more style than substance, and so I can't judge the 1989–90 period when obviously pressure against him was building and the possibility for a coup was coming around. At the point where I left the Soviet Union, I would not have predicted—there was no way of imagining frankly—that we were that close to such a radical development, or that he would push it to the point where the conservative forces would go after him.

Q: Violating the chronological order for just a moment, you were later a DAS [deputy assistant secretary] or PDAS [principal deputy assistant secretary].

BRADTKE: Yes, both.

Q: And you were known as a Russian expert—that was fifteen years later.

BRADTKE: Yes, but I'm not sure I was ever known as a Russian expert.

Q: That may have been behind your back, but was this not a key assignment—your Moscow assignment—in your professional development?

BRADTKE: It was certainly important. It was important to have served in a country that you could start out describing in different ways. It was the major adversary of the United States. Even after the Soviet Union collapsed, it was a member of the [UN] Security Council, an important player, a country with nuclear weapons. I think having that background did help, having some understanding of Russia and the Soviet Union before

the changes that came and how the system worked. The [Russian] language also came back in a couple of instances as being important. So yes, I think this was an important assignment, and helped to open a few doors. We'll come back to that again a little more specifically, but it was a benefit in a number of my future assignments that I had this background. It also shaped an attitude that never completely went away, in the sense that while there have been tremendous changes in Russia, I was always somewhat shaped by my experiences in the Soviet Union where the system was so rigid, so totalitarian, and where things happened to you personally that made you suspicious and made it hard to get past those prejudices, or beliefs, attitudes that made you more skeptical, more cautious, made you feel—

Q: Your skepticism has been validated by history, I think.

BRADTKE: Yes, it didn't mean not cooperating with Russia, it didn't mean not finding areas of cooperation. I will quickly interject here, in one of my last assignments where I was along with a Russian and a French diplomat working on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, I had an extraordinarily productive relationship with my Russian counterparts that would have been unimaginable when I served in the Soviet Union, but those three years in Moscow left me with a certain skepticism, a certain withholding of judgment on being too forthcoming on how deep some of the changes were and on how Russia was going to be a great friend and ally of the United States, and all the rest. I never quite got to that point where I felt that all the threats had gone away, and we were truly in a "new world order." There was a huge amount of change, but there was still, kind of inbred, a suspicion of the system, even under the post-Soviet period, that the system was truly moving that fast or that far.

Q: You mentioned the "new world order," which I think was [the idea of George H.W.] Bush, and we can talk about that in a moment. I'd like to return to the chronology, however, [because] the reader will want to know any anecdotes you might have from talking flowers in the apartment in Moscow or any personal experiences you might have had.

BRADTKE: Sure, I'll give you two. The assumption was that you were listened to all the time, and strange things happened in the apartment, phone calls in the middle of the night. Again the Russian phone system was so screwed up that this could have been perfectly unintentional, but there are two other things that I will mention.

One was that my wife was in the consular section, and one of her jobs in that period was to have contacts particularly with the Soviet Jews, the Russian Jews who wanted to emigrate, and to help them with their efforts to emigrate. I remember distinctly one evening when we had a small dinner with a small group of Russian Jews in our apartment, and—

Q: Sorry, the senator from Washington State, Senator Henry Jackson.

BRADTKE: Yes, Senator Jackson of Jackson-Vanik fame, linking Most Favored Nation status for the Soviet Union to emigration. The next morning after this dinner, we went out to get into our car and, of course, the tires had been slashed!

Q: All four?

BRADTKE: At least a couple. You're parked in a compound that is lived in by only foreign diplomats and businessmen, which has a big fence around it and has a militiaman who guards the building—and you find your tires cut. Is it an accident? I don't think so. And that is the kind of thing that was personal. In other words, you did something they didn't like and you got the message back, "You're not supposed to do that!"

Another case—

Q: Sorry, and the reaction of the embassy was?

BRADTKE: It happened all the time. It happened to others in the embassy.

Q: Did the embassy alter its procedures in any way because of this intimidation?

BRADTKE: No, I don't think it affected the pattern of efforts to have contacts and build relationships. It was just the way life was there!

The other case involved the opportunities to get out of Moscow and travel with one of our agricultural attachés. It was always interesting because you could see sides of the Soviet Union that were very hard [to see] in Moscow. You could occasionally have conversations with people that were less monitored or were more happenstance, and you saw in many cases [in] some of the rural areas just how backward this country was—how poor it was, how underdeveloped it was. I don't remember which year it was, but I was driving with one of the agricultural attachés down through Ukraine, and looking at the crop coming up in the spring, and getting a sense of how well the crop was doing. I didn't know anything about agriculture; I was a city boy through and through and you could show me a field and I wouldn't know anything about it. But you had to travel in pairs, and so this was the agricultural attaché's way of having somebody come with [him]. So we were driving in Ukraine, and we would periodically stop and have a break on the side of the road, and so, one afternoon, we stopped to have a sandwich on the side of the road. You always assume you're being followed, and indeed sometimes it was very obvious you're being followed. And some people in the embassy were maybe a little more willing to do things that pushed the limits, but for me, this was a trip with the ag [agriculture] attaché to do his business, and I wasn't going to do anything that was going to cause him to have trouble.

In any case, we get back in the car and we get pulled off to the side of the road by the police. Essentially we're told to follow the militiamen to the station that's back the other direction, so we do that. We get to the station, and you never know what's going on here.

Basically the militiamen at the station pull out these statements for us to sign saying that we had illegally taken soil samples from Ukraine and that we should sign these statements and we would be allowed to move on.

We said, This is crazy! We stopped for a sandwich, we haven't taken any samples of anything. You're holding us improperly. We're diplomats! You can't do this! And so there we are at the station and they said, Okay, you won't sign, you can't leave. So we had to call the embassy, and all the rest, but we're still waiting there, and we're trying to think what in the world were they thinking? The only explanation that I could come up with was one of the things we had as we were traveling and having our lunch was a can of Pringles potato chips, which came in these little canisters, which of course, hardly anyone in Ukraine had ever seen. So I kind of came to the conclusion that basically what they thought was that this potato chip canister was somehow a canister for putting a soil sample in, taking a soil sample!

Eventually by the end of the afternoon we were allowed to proceed. We didn't sign anything. But it was this instance, again, where you take it personally. It's easy to look back on it and feel it was not particularly threatening, but when you're out there, and you're in the middle of the countryside, and you are being held against your will, you're being asked to sign something, you do take it personally. Now, it looks perfectly simple, it's actually humorous, but it's a time you're just a little concerned. Where is this going?

Q: Soil sample, as if there had been uranium traces or something?

BRADTKE: No, because we were trying to assess the crop, the spring wheat crop and were taking a sample of the soil.

Q: —and an accredited agricultural attaché!

BRADTKE: But again you have to remember how bad the relationship was at this period. It was a time when we had cut our trade relations, we were about ready to start again, agricultural credits, and then we pulled back, so it was important to get a sense of what the crop was like.

Q: The last thing on this, did the militia seem to be freelancing?

BRADTKE: No.

Q: —or implementing orders from above?

BRADTKE: I think the orders were to follow us, and if there was anything suspicious, you detain and then get further guidance.

And maybe one last quick story in this regard. I used to run in the mornings in Moscow in this park that was in front of our building. I'd be out there pretty early—like six in the

morning or 6:30—and the next thing I know there's this young woman in shorts running alongside of me who strikes up a conversation!

Q: No coincidence!

BRADTKE: Total coincidence? And for the next couple of days, there she is! I'd never seen her before. I think eventually she gave up because a) I wasn't very receptive to the pitch, and b) I ran pretty fast and she wasn't keeping up. It was the kind of thing that made you suspicious, unfortunately. In another country you might have thought, Okay this is just a person who wants to be friendly. I would say the chances [of this happening] were less than 2 percent but it's the kind of thing that made Moscow a difficult environment. You were always on your guard, you were always worried when somebody came up to you, [and] you were always concerned about provocations. It was the stress of that, day in and day out.

Q: Certainly. Now, I take it you had some expectations before going that this would happen. It was rattling but not really illogical. You knew these things happened.

BRADTKE: No, not unexpected. Not something that you were surprised by, but again it was the idea that you couldn't go home at night and talk to your wife about anything personal. Those kinds of things put a certain pressure on you in day-to-day life there.

Q: Apparently a completely wasted effort and use of human ingenuity for no purpose at all.

BRADTKE: Yes, if there was ever anything that was developed on me, I never saw it in the next decades of my career where they might have said, You did something when you were in Moscow and if you don't cooperate with us— There was never any follow up. I never had any sense that anything that had happened in my time there ever came back.

Q: I think we could say the time and energy was wasted?

BRADTKE: What they could have learned from monitoring the tapes, I think it would have been almost of no value, frankly, no real value.

Q: So creating jobs for many people.

BRADTKE: They just did it; it's just the way the system worked.

Q: Shall we proceed to the next posting?

BRADTKE: We better or this will be a lifetime project.

Q: This is great stuff! So, okay Moscow.

BRADTKE: We were getting ready to leave Moscow in 1986. And we didn't want to go back to Washington. To recall, my wife and I got married right before we went out to Moscow, so we wanted to stay out for another tour. We didn't want to go straight back to Washington. And that was not easy; it was hard to find a tandem assignment somewhere.

Q: It has to be a large embassy, I think.

BRADTKE: It needed to be a large embassy, and there are some places you just prefer not to go, [especially] after Moscow, [which] we felt [were] three tough years. So after a lot of to-ing and fro-ing, as is often the case with the personnel system, what we decided was to go to Bonn, West Germany. My wife had studied in Germany, had served in West Berlin, and still is a fluent German speaker. I didn't know any German at all. So there was a job for her right away in the consular section in Bonn, but there was nothing for me. But Harry Gilmore who'd been my boss and deputy director in EUR—

Q: Later also the IG [inspector general], right?

BRADTKE: Perhaps in IG's office, but ambassador to Armenia, a really wonderful man. Harry was the director of Central European Affairs and so I reached out to Harry. He said there's nothing for you in Bonn right now, but in a year—if you take a chance—I will see what happens, and there's a job as chief of the external unit in the political section. Bonn had a very big political section, and he said he couldn't promise anything, but he would try to support me for that job. So it was a bit of a risk, and also that meant me going on leave without pay. So we went out to Bonn. I went out on leave without pay [LWOP], while my wife worked, and I—on my expense—started studying German. I went off to one of these great Goethe Institutes for language.

Q: We have a great one in Washington, DC, too.

BRADTKE: I decided if I stayed in Bonn with the diplomatic community, and my wife was a great German speaker, I was not going to learn anything. So I paid my own way to go to a Goethe Institute in the little town of Schwabish Halle, and I went back to being a student! I did two two-month courses to take me to the end of the year, and it was a great experience. It forced me to use the language outside the classroom. Then, I would travel back to spend weekends with my wife in Bonn. By the end of the year I was paneled into the job, which was important. The system maybe was not as accommodating then as it is now. When I managed to get myself paneled into the job, and I took a language test over the phone, they said, Ok you're doing really well, but you should have more training, which I certainly wanted to do. But, they said you have to come back to Washington now. That's the only place we'll pay for you to study German and put you back on the payroll. So here I am in Bonn, in Germany, at a stage where I'd had the basics of the language already, and the State Department is telling me the only way they'll put me on the payroll and teach me German is if I'll come back to Washington to study at FSI.

Q: This is cuckoo!

BRADTKE: This was cuckoo, so I refused to do it. I said, "Okay I will stay on LWOP. I will stay in Germany, hire myself a tutor, and I will study German here." And that's what I did. I was on LWOP that entire year basically. I could have gone back to Washington, studied at the FSI and gotten back on the payroll, but it just struck me as being nuts. So I stayed in Bonn, and I think that was a far better place to study German.

Q: But you had been paneled and they did not undo that?

BRADTKE: No, they didn't undo that. So in the summer of 1987, I moved on to the political section.

Q: Now the embassy moved in 1992 or 1993 or something like that, but at that time Bonn was it?

BRADTKE: Bonn was it. Things were changing.

Q: Was Vernon Walters the ambassador?

BRADTKE: Yes, but Rick Burt was the first ambassador I had when I got out there, for only about a year or so. But then along came Vernon Walters, and when there really was an accelerated pace of change. Things were starting to happen in Eastern Europe, and the Germans were right in the thick of things. And Vernon Walters was—

Q: Correct the memory I have if it is wrong, I think I remember that Vernon Walters got way out ahead of U.S. policy and said that the two Germanys should and could be united soon. I believe Washington was very upset about it, but that in fact became policy. Is that correct?

BRADTKE: That's correct, and again I was a little far down the pecking order, so I'm not sure who did what to whom and who said what to whom and when, but Walters did go out publicly and talked about German reunification. And again, this is like containment and the collapse of the Soviet Union. It was a standard litany of U.S. policy. Of course we supported German unification. Did we ever think it was going to happen? Was it an operational part of our policy? Even at that stage it wasn't! For Walters to go out and say this publicly was getting well ahead of where Washington was. It was probably thought to be totally unrealistic, that he was raising German expectations in a way that was unrealizable.

Q: And he did it very purposely.

BRADTKE: I was a mid-level officer, and I wasn't seeing him every day, but I saw him enough and did enough with him to recognize that this was a man who had a sense of history. When you look back at the things he had done during the war, after the war, in the OSS [Office of Strategic Services], all of this, this was a man who really did have a

sense of history, [which] we in the State Department didn't always have. We're more short term, we're more bureaucratic, but this was a man who did have a sense of the sweep of history. That led him to talk about things that were really just barely over the horizon at a time when people were not willing to talk about it; not only not willing to talk about it, but didn't think these things were going to actually happen!

Q: Now tell me, I remember Walters—he came to Copenhagen that year when I was there and said in his convivial way, "I was talking to my Soviet colleague the other day and I told him that the difference between our countries is, we have a fixed past and a movable future. With you it's the opposite." Now that's a real good one. I don't know if Walters made that up. Do you have any idea?

BRADTKE: I don't know where he got that; I can't recall him as having said exactly that, but it does sound quite in character with him.

Q: I mean going with your comment about his sense of history, I mean that's a good one.

BRADTKE: The pace of change accelerated and I haven't gone back and looked at dates, but there were events occurring with such rapidity, moving so fast, that no one was quite sure exactly where they were going. From my perch in political external, I was watching Germany's relationship with Hungary, where the Hungarians were opening their border to Austria so the East Germans, who used to vacation there and come there for summer could now do this circular loop into West Germany. The Hungarians refused to close their border.

The sense throughout Eastern Europe was one of changes that were occurring there—in Czechoslovakia, in Poland—things moving really rapidly, the unwillingness of the Eastern European regimes to crack down on people who wanted to leave, things were just falling apart. And to their credit—and I'm a great admirer of President Bush forty-one, [Secretary of State] James Baker, [Counselor of the State Department] Bob Zoellick—they got it. They figured it out.

Whatever reticence they had had about Walters, I think our policy moved rapidly to catch up, and we had this process, the so called 2+4, which was to try to get the two Germanys, the Soviet Union, France, Britain, the United States into a process of managing the change and moving the process forward toward reunification in a way that moved very, very quickly.

I'm just finishing on this one point. One of the things that developed over the decades after the end of World War II was a very much inbred kind of German policy group within the State Department, the German hands, if you will. On the one hand, this was very important because Germany was a crucial, pivotal country in Europe—we needed expertise, we needed language skills, we needed people who had relationships—but it tended to be a little inbred. It tended to be a group that thought things were always going to be this way; where people's assignment pattern was, West Berlin, Bonn, maybe off to

one of the consulates in Munich or Hamburg, East Berlin, back to Washington, then back out.

There were people in that group who, I think, were not comfortable with the pace of change. They liked things the way they were, were used to things the way they were, and didn't really want to see reunification, which they thought would be destabilizing. And they argued, particularly as you saw changes in East Germany, where some new communist leaders came along who were reformists but were still communists, that the best thing that could happen was a reformist East Germany that opened up a little bit, but there would still be two separate countries. These people had a real difficult time accepting that this process was going to speed forward to the point where there was one country.

Q: There was a phobia, I don't know if it was official or in the U.S. public, a phobia of a reunified Germany, thinking back to previous wars.

BRADTKE: And there was European reluctance. Margaret Thatcher—and again this is not from personal experience but from reading speeches at the time—the Brits and the French were very uncomfortable with how fast it was moving and what the future was going to look like. But I think to their credit, Baker, Bush, [and] Zoellick recognized that if, after years of saying we supported German reunification, we put the brakes on this, if we looked like we had hesitations and tried to stop it, the price we would pay would be enormous. Instead of Germany being anchored in NATO, in the EU [European Union], Germany would go its own way and that would be far worse, instead of having a larger, more powerful Germany that was grateful for our support, where our support had helped them accomplish this historical achievement. Again I give credit to our leadership for recognizing that that was the right way to go.

Q: I think you're also talking about credibility. If we had a stated policy that we were uncomfortable with— Be careful what you wish for, right? If it had actually happened, we would lose enormous credibility if we didn't follow through on what we said was our policy. Zoellick was later USTR [U.S. Trade Representative]. What was he at that time?

BRADTKE: He was the Department of State counselor.

Q: Counselor at State?

BRADTKE: Yes, and later the deputy secretary.

Q: —and later the deputy.

BRADTKE: [Robert M.] Kimmitt was the under secretary for political affairs, and Zoellick was the counselor. But he played a very important role in this negotiating process. I worked with him subsequently, and he was a brilliant thinker. He and Baker recognized that this was the right—

Q: You were seeing this from Bonn. It was also happening big time in Moscow where you no longer worked.

BRADTKE: It's harder for me to kind of project myself into what was going on back there, but the culmination, if you will, happened while I was still in Germany. It wasn't full reunification, but the fall of the wall. But this process started in Hungary with the Hungarian refusal to send people back to East Germany. Again, I'm not the insider; there have been descriptions of how the wall really fell by the decisions of some people, border guards, who just decided that they didn't get clear directions, and they were going to let people cross over.

Q: There was apparently an official who inadvertently said something in public, he didn't really mean it, but everybody took it as right.

BRADTKE: I remember my wife and I were on a short vacation in Strasbourg, and we turned on the television, and here was this event that sent chills, even now it sends chills down my spine. I had been in Berlin in 1969, I had gone through Checkpoint Charlie. I had been back to Berlin when my wife was in West Berlin as a diplomat there. I had traveled to East Germany with my wife and some West German friends of hers who had a family estate in East Germany that they had lost after the war, and we had gone out to see what had happened to it. I had been there in these earlier times, and now I here am sitting in this hotel room in Strasbourg watching Germans go back and forth over the wall [November 9, 1989], through the Brandenburg Gate, and before leaving there in 1990, I had that experience, being able to walk under the Brandenburg Gate.

The quintessential cold war experience was to go through Checkpoint Charlie and to cross into the Eastern sector and to feel the tension at that little border point where back in 1960s a war almost started. Whenever you crossed, you felt it. People played seriously here. And now to walk under the Brandenburg Gate and to cross over to the East, it was just this incredible moment.

Q: The word euphoria comes to mind. Was that purely your sentiment? Were there any other thoughts than relief and delight? I know I felt relief and delight.

BRADTKE: Yes, if there was some part of me that said, "Uh-oh, there's trouble ahead," I didn't feel it at that time. It was just this sense of, "Wow, I never thought I'd live to see this and it's amazing." I remember the last trip to Berlin when we traveled over to the east. We were wandering around, and some East German in a Trabant stopped to give us a ride somewhere, and this person was just so euphoric that here, now, Germany was going to be reunited and they were going to be able to live freely and speak out and to have a standard of living. It was just extraordinary.

Q: I forget the year I was in East and West Berlin very briefly, but just before the weekend when they had local elections. It was June, and I've seldom seen such euphoria. It was

everywhere. It's hard to recapture the feelings of optimism. It was the month of June where things are so beautiful—so a wonderful moment.

BRADTKE: Yes, it was overwhelmingly my recollection, my feeling at the time.

Q: So any comments on—this was after you left, I guess—[the] West German ability to absorb East Germany, this created an economic hardship, right?

BRADTKE: This was just kind of starting to be a discussion. How were they going to afford this? But Chancellor Kohl embraced the reunification and tried to be very confident about it. "We'll pay whatever it takes." Some of the negative things were a little later.

Q: This is hard to imagine this happening in any other country actually, both culturally and politically, but also a country having the economic ability to do this. There may be other examples, but I can't think of one off hand.

BRADTKE: And not to jump ahead, I went back to Berlin as the chargé d'affaires for a very brief period in 2009, almost twenty years later, which for a lifetime of a person is a fairly long time, but in the history of a country, a short time, and to see what had been accomplished, it was breathtaking, just breathtaking!

Q: You were chargé—this was after Zagreb—

BRADTKE: After Zagreb I went to—

Q: No, but this was after Berlin became the capital again?

BRADTKE: Oh yes, this was 2009— Well after—

Q: Well, we'll get to that. I'm curious why there wasn't an ambassador. Why wasn't that you, actually?

BRADTKE: There was a period where we had no ambassador. We had a lengthy period of a chargé in Berlin.

Q: Was this a Senate confirmation issue?

BRADTKE: Yes, a Senate confirmation issue. Then we had a DCM who was leaving and rather than have a period when we didn't even have a DCM, the State Department in its wisdom decided to send me out for a short time.

Q: Most fascinating, but let's take it in chronological order. So Berlin 1990, I think.

BRADTKE: And then getting back to the United States. My wife and I realized it was time to come back to Washington. I had a couple of interests. One of them was in congressional affairs from my experience on Capitol Hill. I had been an American Political Science Association fellow, and one of the jobs that was open was as the congressional legislative management officer dealing with European affairs, dealing with the EUR Bureau, their person in H. So I came back to take that job.

Q: H, the Congressional Affairs Bureau, in State but liaison office on the Hill, which meant that you were based in State but often on the Hill.

BRADTKE: This was one of the attractions. I always felt that the best jobs in Washington were the ones that got you out of the State Department as much as you could, to do real things other than clear papers and write papers. So you spent a lot of time up on Capitol Hill but our office was in the Congressional Affairs Bureau in the State Department.

Q: That sounds marvelous! It sounds like a great assignment.

BRADTKE: It was in many ways, but I'll say a couple of things. A lot has changed in congressional affairs, so what I'm talking about, it was very much specific to that period of 1990 to 1994. First of all, the assistant secretary was up on the seventh floor, in that mahogany corridor. The H assistant secretary was a woman named Janet Mullens, and she was very close to James Baker, a pretty powerful person in her own right. There were a couple of challenges working in H—and I use the shorthand H for Congressional Affairs. One of the challenges was the leadership of the bureau. There was one career deputy assistant secretary, but everyone else in the bureau front office was political [appointees], and there was a bit of a gap between the political people and the career people who were doing jobs like mine. There was a certain feeling that while we might have some area expertise, we didn't know anything about politics, we didn't know anything about the Hill, and we were not entirely—I'll use the word—trustworthy. So we were not always brought into things. Indeed we were often left out. And while the front office, that is, the assistant secretary and her deputies, went off and did things, the rest of us were left out. I was very frustrated, particularly in the beginning, because I just felt I knew something about the Hill, and I seriously contemplated curtailing out of that job because I felt this was not what I signed up for.

The second thing about the job that was difficult was that you were caught between the Hill and the department. I recall having talked about this a little bit earlier, that when I was a congressional fellow, I called the State Department and how you were treated; that the State Department's relationships with the Hill, particularly at the desk officer, office director, and sometimes the front office level, were not very good. The typical State Department attitude was, Get these people out of our business! It's your job to get them to leave us alone. We don't want the Congress to tell us what to do. We don't want the Congress meddling in our affairs. So you're supposed to tell them not to do this. Whereas the Hill, of course, wanted to have more oversight, wanted to know what was going on, wanted to be more involved, and wanted to get more access to information. So there was

a certain being-caught-in-the-middle aspect to this job that at times was very frustrating. Because you were taking heat from your clients in the European Bureau who didn't understand, for example, why you couldn't get the Congress to stop trying to meddle in our relationship with Turkey, and the Hill, which didn't understand why the State Department wasn't more sensitive to the politics of things.

Q: In both sectors, the Hill and the executive branch, [there was] a lot of turnover. Did you have personal relationships from your earlier assignment that became useful at this later time, or had most people left?

BRADTKE: They were useful but not important. In H, I quickly was dealing with committee staff that I didn't really know until I got into H. I had my friends on the staff of Senator Mathias and Congressman Cheney, but these were not people that I dealt with regularly.

Q: You spent four years in H, and then what?

BRADTKE: Let me tell you after this, the story of H, which again was a critical moment in my career, and then we can give our listeners [and] you a break!

As I said, I talked about curtailing from H because I was so frustrated. But by coincidence, by happenstance, one of the first key issues that came up during the time when I was the European Bureau legislative management officer was the 2+4 Agreement!

Q: There you were!

BRADTKE: I had just come from Germany, I had worked in Moscow, actually knew something about this, and it enabled me to break through a little bit with the front office, and it was an interesting period on the seventh floor. The question for senior officials was what to do with this agreement that had been reached, about German reunification. There was a certain sentiment, including in the Legislative Affairs Bureau—Janet Mullins, [assistant secretary of state for legislative affairs]—I don't think I'm unfairly characterizing her view—was of the view it should be handled as executive agreement. Don't send this new agreement to Congress. Don't do it as a treaty. The chances of it getting screwed up, the political capital required to get this done can cause all kinds of problems; just do it as an executive agreement. But there was the Baker-Zoellick view—and I'm attributing to them to a certain extent, views that I think were theirs, but I don't know personally—their view was that this was too important, this was an historic agreement that ended World War II and the cold war.

Q: The cold war.

BRADTKE: Not only the cold war, but also World War II, because there'd never been a treaty to end World War II. So this was the peace treaty that would end World War II. So they wanted a treaty, Janet did not want a treaty. In the end—and again this was the White

House to some extent—the view that this needed to be a treaty prevailed. And so wham! The hottest issue going when I started in H was actually something that I knew something about, and I got to work on that agreement. And I gained the trust of Assistant Secretary Mullens, the front office. I got exposure to people like Bob Zoellick who were testifying. I worked very closely with Ray Seitz, who was a brilliant career diplomat and assistant secretary of the European Bureau. I managed to bridge the gap, if you will, between EUR and H, and the treaty was a success.

It was a huge vote, and I don't remember whether it was unanimous or not, but the treaty cleared the Senate remarkably quickly with little or no dissent. It was a great success! The White House was happy, Secretary Baker was happy, Janet was happy, and when Janet was happy, I was happy! So that was a leg-up, and when the time came for the career DAS to leave, which was the next summer—I think we're summer of 1991 [or] it could have been 1992. It must have been 1991, and the career DAS was leaving, and Janet was looking for a replacement. I was an FS-01 at the time, which was a middle level officer. I was not a senior officer. And the notion that you would take an 01 and make him a deputy assistant secretary was something the personnel system, of course, hated. But Janet had Baker's ear, and the deputy secretary of state in those days was none other than Lawrence Eagleburger, whom I had known from a previous incarnation. Janet went to Eagleburger and said, "I want this guy." Eagleburger said to the personnel system, "Make it happen." So I found myself moving across the hall to be a deputy assistant secretary of state as an FS-01. That was a big step up.

I continued to work well with that team. In 1992, I was still in H and Baker left to help Bush run his campaign, and Janet Mullens left as well to help. And a guy named Steve Barry, who had been the principal deputy assistant secretary and who was responsible for the House became the acting assistant secretary. To kind of fast forward a little bit, we chugged along until a minor—I even hate to use the word—scandal over Bill Clinton's passport.

Q: Yes, I recall something about that.

BRADTKE: The question was whether someone had inappropriately gotten a hold of the passport application records for Bill Clinton and had leaked information about Clinton's time in the UK, avoiding the draft, and all the rest.

Q: The fingers were on CA, I think.

BRADTKE: The fingers were on both CA and H, and there was a certain amount of heat to clean this up. So Eagleburger calls me down to his office and says to me, "I have to get rid of Steve Barry and I'm making you the assistant secretary for legislative affairs. I have to have a career person there because I want this problem to be pushed over to the IG, and Steve can't stay where he is, and I want a career person in charge." I don't remember exactly the date here, but in the fall of 1992, I ended up being the acting assistant secretary of state for legislative affairs.

Q: Remarkable.

BRADTKE: It was a bit of a surprise. [Maybe we should finish the H stuff at the risk of going on a bit longer.]

Even if it was during the transition from Bush to Clinton, it was a period where things were still happening, when we got a bill through Congress that would authorize assistance for Russia and the former Soviet republics. I guess we called it the FSA [Freedom Support Act of 1992].

Q: The former Soviet—

BRADTKE: Yes, and we did that. We went into Somalia with the humanitarian mission to Somalia. There was a lot going on. It was a busy time, and there I was as the acting assistant secretary in a very political environment.

Q: This is remarkable. Did HR just roll over and allow this to happen? Did they have any objections?

BRADTKE: At that point I was the DAS. Eagleburger said, "He's going to be the acting assistant secretary." I'd been promoted in the summer of 1992 after the first year as a DAS, so I was actually a senior officer at that point.

Q: This was a big game changer in your career.

BRADTKE: It was a huge game changer in my career. And maybe to just kind of cap this. [George H.W.] Bush of course loses the election [and] Clinton wins the election. A woman named Wendy Sherman is named as the nominee for assistant secretary of state for legislative affairs.

Q: Later P [under secretary for political affairs].

BRADTKE: Yes, P. I well remember the time during the transition when Wendy came up to my office, and I'm [still] the acting assistant secretary of state for legislative affairs. Even though the administration has changed, and even though the seventh floor has turned over and [Warren] Christopher is there, she's not confirmed yet, so I have the authority still, because she can't exercise the authority as a nominee. She comes into my office to introduce herself, and I've got on my credenza a few pictures, like everybody does. And I have three, I have Eagleburger's picture, but I had Ronald Reagan, the picture was taken after Geneva when I helped with the summit, and I have a picture with Dick Cheney, whom I'd worked for on the Hill. She looks over at the pictures and says with a certain tone of voice, "Some of my favorite people."

So I think, Okay, Bradtke, you are history! You are out of here! And that's the way life is! You serve an administration in your career and you figure, okay whatever happens, happens. So that was fully my expectation, that as soon as she could get confirmed she would bring in her own person, I would be history, and I would go back into the personnel system somewhere never to be seen again. And the remarkable thing was—and it's a testament to Wendy's objectivity and judgment, and willingness to take a risk—that as we went through this transition phase, while I was still acting assistant secretary and while I had to do things for the new administration, she came to the view that I was actually doing a pretty good job, and that I was the right person to stay. So she not only kept me, but she kind of nudged up my title slightly, so I was the PDAS. I was the principal deputy assistant secretary.

Q: Again, this is remarkable, the magnanimity on her part—

BRADTKE: I had no expectation that having served in a really tumultuous—if that's the right term—time as the acting assistant secretary in the transition between administrations, where there'd been a minor scandal in the bureau that I had been placed in charge of, that I would not be replaced.

Q: I don't understand why H would be involved in that particular scandal. That was a CA thing wasn't it? Maybe it was Congress that was making it up?

BRADTKE: Steve [Barry] in the end was cleared but he was left under a cloud. He had to hire a lawyer—very expensive.

Q: No, no, it's logical.

BRADTKE: In any case, Steve got caught up in the middle of this—and I think through no fault of his own—where the appearances were much worse than whatever had actually happened. But it was one of these strange turns of your career.

Q: So Wendy Sherman came [in] as a Clinton appointee?

BRADTKE: Correct.

Q: And later of course [she] became a very loved and respected person in State, but was not a career diplomat?

BRADTKE: No. She'd come from the Hill and the political world; she had worked for Barbara Mikulski. The time I spent working for her was a tremendous education in politics, managing the Hill. I had a really good relationship with her. She had a very open, inclusive style, and she did try to bring the career people who had been always kept at a bit of an arms' length into her deliberations. It was a tremendous education in how to manage the politics of foreign policy.

Q: Editorial opinion: this was great magnanimity on her part and open-mindedness. It also is proof of your value to her, and it's a wonderful story because, as you said earlier, this was not the expected thing that would happen.

BRADTKE: There's another example down the road, but it does show I think that it can happen.

Q: This is the way it should be.

BRADTKE: I would like to say "yes"—on both sides—that as a career person you can go through that kind of transition and come out the other end if you're doing your job fairly. I think I've said this before, the people who get elected deserve the best judgment, the best advice that we in the career service can give them. But they got elected, they get to make the big decisions, and we're there to help them. And for me, it's a vindication that that attitude can be recognized, that you're there to help the people who got elected to make tough decisions, and to support their decisions, to make sure that whether you agree with them or not, again, if it's not illegal or immoral, that they're getting your best advice. If they take it, great!

If they come in and say, No, we're changing the policy on China, which was a minor catastrophe in the early Clinton years, or, this is going to be our Bosnia policy, this is the way we're going to do it. Whether they take your advice or not is another thing, but that you work fairly and honestly and openly and give them your best advice and you support them, that's your side. And on the other side, it's important to have people who will recognize that they need that kind of advice, that there is importance in having professional help, and that they respect professionals. You've got to have both to make it work, but it does, at least it used to work, that way.

Q: And here's an instance of a political appointee having a perspective that's larger than narrow party politics, and again, the way it should be.

BRADTKE: And again it's the way a democracy works, that as soon as she got confirmed, she could have said, "Thanks, Bob, but see you later. I've got somebody else."

Q: Marvelous stories, both historical, professional, and personal.

BRADTKE: Again, I'm sorry to go on so long!

Q: No apologies accepted! Thank you!

Today is October 25, 2017. Ambassador Robert Bradtke is back again.

BRADTKE: Back again, back again.

Q: Back again and always welcome!

BRADTKE: Testing people's patience here.

Q: Never, never. Actually, that's the last thing I would think you ever did to anybody.

BRADTKE: Oh, I don't know. My wife at least, if no one else!

Q: We'll ask her [for] her opinion on that. Well, we got you, Ambassador Bradtke, suddenly catapulted in from H, Bureau of Legislative Affairs, because of circumstances and a bit of virtue, from being a foot soldier to suddenly—because of an opening, an opportunity but also a coincidence of your expertise from a past assignment—become a DAS and then, most unlikely, you became an acting assistant secretary. When Wendy Sherman came in as the political appointee you stayed on. Let's take it from there.

BRADTKE: It was an interesting time because we had a new Democratic administration in Bill Clinton, and we had a Democratic [controlled] Congress. It was 1993, but it was not an easy time. It was interesting for me that you could have the president and the Senate be of the same party and nevertheless struggle. And two big issues were Bosnia and China. Clinton had leaned pretty far forward to leverage continuing MFN for China.

Q: Most favored nation.

BRADTKE: Most favored nation status, and threatening to remove that for China if they didn't clean up their human rights performance. And Bosnia. The war in Bosnia was really beginning to heat up and there were lots of voices in the Senate, both on the Democratic and the Republican sides, that wanted the United States to do something. And then a third issue was Somalia, right at the beginning of this period.

Q: The inheritance of George H.W. Bush—

BRADTKE: And that was something that I was involved in—going up to the Hill when things really went bad.

Q: When Bob Oakley?

BRADTKE: This was before Bob Oakley, when we had Black Hawk Down. So these were some of the issues, and that one was particularly interesting because it ultimately resulted in Les Aspin being removed as secretary of defense. The one strong memory I have is that, after the helicopter was shot down and we had some soldiers who were being held, I went with Les Aspin and someone who was from the State Department—whose name I don't remember now—up to brief the Hill. It was one of these large briefings where all members of the House were invited, and it was catastrophically bad for Aspin. He did something which you never really want to do when you're going up there. He didn't know what he wanted to say. He either had not thought through or just didn't know what the approach was going to be, and he kind of threw it back at the members of

Congress: “What should I do? What should we do?” And that doesn’t work. As much as members of Congress always say, Do what we want, what they want to hear in a crisis is that you know what you’re doing; that you know how to handle this problem. It was a catastrophically bad briefing and it kind of resulted in Aspin losing his job.

Then, after Bob Oakley was brought in to deal with Somalia, it was very different. I would go up with Oakley, who was one of the savviest professionals, and he went out to Somalia and managed to get our guys back from the Somalis and put a Band-Aid over the Somalia problem. But I mention that because it affected Clinton’s attitude toward Bosnia very strongly. The bad experience in Somalia, the loss of the helicopter, the loss of our guys—things just not going well.

Q: Didn’t we also have Madeleine Albright with a very strong point of view of what to do in Bosnia?

BRADTKE: Yes, Warren Christopher was secretary of state, Albright was over at the UN?

Q: I guess she was Secretary during Clinton II.

BRADTKE: She was Secretary of State during Clinton II.

Q: Of course later this becomes a big factor because of her very strong feelings about the Balkans.

BRADTKE: As I say, [it was an] interesting time working for Wendy. She was remarkable, she was very savvy, and had very keen political instincts. Watching how she operated was really an education.

Q: Did the State Department have any responsibility at all—H in particular—to make the secretary of defense well prepared for a briefing?

BRADTKE: In H you’re talking to your counterparts in DOD and the Pentagon all the time. We’re talking to them about strategy on the Hill, about Bosnia where there was support on the Hill for so-called Lift and Strike. The idea was we would lift the arms embargo on the Bosnians, which we had imposed on all sides when the fighting broke out in the former Yugoslavia, and then use air power to strike at the Serbian side. The administration was dead set against this; our allies hated this idea, but the Hill loved this idea. Senator [Robert] Dole in particular was a strong advocate of Lift and Strike. At any rate, we always worked very closely with our Pentagon colleagues to coordinate strategy. But on Somalia, because it had been a military action, the Pentagon, the Defense Department, had the lead. I’m struggling to remember who the lead State briefer was at that time, because it was also a bit of a transition period. I can’t remember who it was, but the main actor in that briefing and the one who stirred up all the controversy was Les Aspin.

Q: In addition to being blindsided, how else did he fail?

BRADTKE: Well, I have a theory about members of Congress who go to serve in the cabinet. It's not without exception, and I'm not talking about current incumbents, but I think for members of Congress, particularly senators, but also maybe House members, they may be experts in their field, they may have learned a lot by being committee chairmen over time, but that doesn't always work well coming in the executive branch. There, the issues are different, the perspective is different, you're not only dealing on an intellectual level with some policy issues, [but] you have to run a department. It's a much bigger management job, and I just have the sense that experience on the Hill doesn't always translate well into coming into the administration, coming into the executive branch.

Q: I want to ask you about John Kerry. We might do that later, because there's a big example of someone with extensive legislative experience. We can talk about that later.

BRADTKE: But in the Aspin case—to translate this to more practical terms—it's also this notion that when you're a member of Congress you can say whatever you want, more or less. You can think out loud and not face the same consequences. Vice President [Biden] is a perfect example of a guy who when he was a Senator liked to think out loud. But when you're running an executive department, when you are the responsible person for that policy, you can't do that. You can't just kind of say things and then fix them later. You really are on the hook. It's not only domestically as it plays back inside the United States, it's how it plays overseas. It's not a simple matter.

Q: Plus, of course, the consequences are much more direct.

BRADTKE: Right.

Q: If you err in Congress, your collective opinion, and its accountability—

BRADTKE: If you're the committee chairman, at the next hearing you may say something else; it's not the biggest deal in the world. If you are secretary of defense or you are secretary of state and you make a statement off the top of your head, which people on the Hill do all the time, it can come back to haunt you in a real way. I think that was one of the problems that Aspin had in his briefing, "I'm a former member of Congress! Of course I can handle this briefing. Of course I can do this!" I think he overestimated his ability to manage the situation.

One of the things we used to say in the State Department H Bureau, when we worked with the [other] bureaus who didn't always like our advice, we used to say that you never want to be your own congressional person or your own lawyer. You need somebody who's going to tell you some things that you didn't want to hear: "You're not prepared; that answer is not going to work"; and "It's not legal to do that." If you thought you were

smarter and you didn't need congressional people, and you didn't need your own lawyer, you were making a mistake. You could get away with it sometimes, but other times it was a mistake. You only get yourself in trouble.

Q: Well there's probably someone to blame in Aspin's office but we don't know who that is! We're not underscoring that point! He didn't have the good fortune of having you.

BRADTKE: I learned a lot. Better advice could have saved him, but people don't always listen. It was a slightly obscure episode, perhaps, but at the time it just rocked the policy, and clearly he [Aspin] undermined confidence in him within the administration because it started to play back pretty quickly and the result was he lost his job.

Q: He had a very bad day. State was somewhat spared the stigma, I guess.

BRADTKE: Yes, the blame—the heat if you will—fell on the Pentagon because this was a Pentagon operation. It was badly planned, it was badly executed, and then the policy alternatives weren't there, and we [State] actually became the good guys. We had I think one or two pilots or helicopter crewmen who were being held, and Bob Oakley went in there at a lot of personal risk and got them out.

Q: Oakley was an envoy, not an ambassador.

BRADTKE: He was the special envoy to fix this problem. I can't remember whether he was brought back out of retirement to do this, but he had some connections to that part of the world. At any rate he did a fabulous job and he was very good with the Hill. He was one of these straight talkers that was not a striped pants, cookie pushing diplomat; he was the guy who could roll up his sleeves.

Q: There's another marital pair.

BRADTKE: Yes, Phyllis [Elliott] Oakley, two really outstanding officers.

Q: So you mentioned three things, Bosnia, China, and Somalia. The next thing that kept you up at night after night— I mean Somalia then became the problem of DOD and Bob Oakley, I guess.

BRADTKE: Once we got our guys out, of course, that was it. We didn't want to touch Somalia, and the spillover was on Bosnia where President Clinton, having been burned in Somalia, did not want any involvement in Bosnia, which was then going from bad to worse. We were playing a defensive game with the Hill. We were trying to keep Congress from mandating Lift and Strike—lifting the arms embargo on the Bosnias and then using air power against the Serbs.

Q: Against them. I'm thinking this would put oil on the fire, would not solve a problem, and would displease the Europeans.

BRADTKE: Well the Europeans were avidly against this because as time went on they had forces on the ground that were trying to be peacekeepers, which was not working very well.

Q: They were humiliated left and right.

BRADTKE: That's a little later in the process, a year and a half or so down the road—I want to say 1995. I was working for Christopher when this happened, but they did not like Lift and Strike because they thought this would expose them to greater danger. What they wanted us to do was to come in on the ground, not to be up in the air dropping bombs down and providing arms to the Bosnians, which might be used against their forces.

Q: Yes, to them this was a theater operation.

BRADTKE: But it was this fear of American casualties, it was the specter of the guys being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu—would this happen again—and a relatively exaggerated view of how powerful the Serb forces were.

Q: So is it time to describe how we did a 180 [degree] on this? Because we did.

BRADTKE: It happened in my next incarnation, interestingly enough.

Q: Is there more in the present incarnation?

BRADTKE: I don't think there's too much more to say other than that it was an interesting time. We were heavily engaged on the Hill. The Democratic-controlled Senate proved to be very hard to deal with because the expectations were the president was going to do what the Senate wanted. And that was on Bosnia. On China, the president eventually gave in and signed a bill on China, which ended up being a complete failure, where we were going to hold hostage MFN, and it just didn't work.

Q: Because China was already economically too powerful to be held hostage.

BRADTKE: And politically This was not a country that was going to react to pressure from the United States.

Q: Now we think of China as a superpower economically. Maybe in the 1990s it was already beginning to be, too, but we didn't realize it.

BRADTKE: Yes, I think that's correct. I think we completely exaggerated the leverage we had.

Q: Okay.

BRADTKE: So I was working on these issues, having a very good relationship with Wendy Sherman, whom I found to be a fabulous boss. Clinton's [first term] was 1992–1996 and his second term was 1996–2000, so Wendy came into the department in early 1993. I don't think she got confirmed until the spring of 1993, so I worked for her for a little over a year until the summer of 1994 when one day she came into my office and said that Secretary Christopher wanted to see me.

Q: Wendy Sherman says—

BRADTKE: So, I say, "What?" And she says, "Yes, he's going to offer you a job. He's going to ask you to be his executive assistant." I said, "What?!" So I think it was on a Saturday—I can't remember exactly the month—but this was the summer of 1994. So I went down to see him Saturday morning, and before I said anything, he said, "Thank you very much for taking the job." Well, "uh, ah," and I was totally floored!

Q: This was fixed with Wendy Sherman, no doubt.

BRADTKE: It was actually also fixed with Tom Donilon, who went on to other things as well.

Q: Oh I see!

BRADTKE: So I was totally floored. It was a relatively brief meeting. He said something that I didn't quite understand at the time. He said, "I hope this isn't going to be bad for your career," which I was completely nonplussed by. But what are you going to say? "Of course, Mr. Secretary, I'm happy to do this. I'll do as good a job as I can." And that was that! At the time Beth Jones had been doing this job, and she was moving on—I think—to be the ambassador to Kazakhstan, so that's where the vacancy came from.

Q: You know, so little is said about Warren Christopher. Time to get somebody's eyewitness view of him. He's sort of an obscure, forgotten figure.

BRADTKE: I feel he is not well understood and greatly underestimated. There's a lot of things that one could say, and I may ramble around a little bit here if I may. He did not like Washington. He did not like the politics of this town, the way people were often subjected to personal attacks. [And] his wife did not like this town. He had been deputy secretary of state, of course, during President Carter's time, and then passed over for secretary of state when Carter named Muskie.

Now this goes back to the Iran hostage crisis, where Christopher negotiated the package that eventually got our hostages out. I say this not from personal knowledge, but from reading I've done. He thought he would be offered the job of secretary when [Cyrus] Vance resigned after the [rescue] fiasco in the desert. But he was not. Edmund Muskie was brought on to be secretary of state.

So he came back to Washington with Clinton. Clinton admired him for his kind of gravitas, if you will. He was very much a gentleman. He was a man who had a tremendous amount of self-control. In a town where people having volatile tempers is now becoming kind of an okay thing to have, he was the kind of person who controlled his emotions. You had to read him to know when he was not happy—when he was angry. This was a man who, by raising his eyebrows, could show he was really unhappy, but he didn't yell and scream. He was very much the gentleman. He was respectful of people, and he had a lawyer's negotiating skills. He was a very private man. He was from North Dakota, very reserved, not a self-promoter. I think that's the other thing. When you look back at others who've come along, people are always trying to figure out how this is going to play out, how this is going to look in the press, how do I cultivate the right people to get ahead? That was not his style. He was a negotiator, he was perhaps not a big policy thinker, but he was, I think, very steady, very calm, very reserved, and again an extremely skilled negotiator, but not terribly comfortable with management.

His reserve led him perhaps not to engage with "the building," that is the rank and file in the State Department, in a way that people like Colin Powell, who came after him, were more successful at. I would also say that—this is my own personal assessment—there was a change about the time I started. Christopher perhaps did not have the right team around him at the beginning. A very nice man named Clifford Wharton was the deputy secretary but not a strong policy person. So the team, as I moved there, changed. Strobe Talbot came in to be the deputy secretary and Jim Steinberg came in to run policy planning, and Tom Donilon, was his chief of staff, a very political person, a very smart, very policy savvy guy. So Talbott, Steinberg, and Donilon really emerged as the kind of close-in policy team.

Q: Were there two Ds [deputies]?

BRADTKE: There was only one D in those days.

Q: It was just Talbott.

BRADTKE: It was just Strobe [Talbot]. Steinberg was SP [Policy Planning] but very much trusted, and had a very strong relationship with Donilon.

Q: The [same] job that Wendy Sherman later had?

BRADTKE: No, Wendy was P, under secretary for political affairs. She was the H assistant secretary. The under secretary was Peter Tarnoff, and Peter was part of the inner team but more on the implementation than on the policy development side.

Q: And Donilon was later—

BRADTKE: Donilon was later the national security advisor.

Q: At that time?

BRADTKE: No, at that time he was Christopher's chief of staff. He'd worked for Clinton. He'd come from the political world. I always saw him as the White House backdoor connection to Christopher and to the State Department.

Q: So your direct boss was Donilon then?

BRADTKE: No, [but] that's a very good question. In theory, my direct boss was Warren Christopher. I sat just outside of Christopher's office. I was his executive assistant, but Donilon was very powerful, very close to Christopher, and I made sure that I checked with Tom just about any time I did anything. I will say I went into that job having no clue of what I was supposed to do as executive assistant, no clue. I'm sure I must have had a conversation with Beth Jones whom I eventually went to work for in EUR [Bureau] years later, but I don't remember anything from that conversation. And the executive assistant job I'm sure changes with every secretary of state, [depending on] how he or she wants to organize the office. But it's not to be confused with the executive secretary of the department who runs the Secretariat, the person who oversees the Operations Center and oversees the role of the executive director.

The executive assistant is really kind of the personal assistant of the secretary. I ran his personal staff. I had two staff assistants who worked with me, and then we had a woman named Liz Lineberry who was the secretary's secretary. The secretary [of state] had a woman he brought with him who worked with him on a lot of his protocol issues. We also had a woman who was civil service who worked on scheduling and event planning. And then there were two people, we used to call office management specialists, and that was Christopher's staff at that time.

Essentially what I kind of figured out relatively quickly was the job had a couple of different dimensions. One was—and I'll come back to these—to be what I used to say: "I was his inbox." I did the paper that went in to him. The second thing was to do his trips. I went on all his trips and was deeply involved in all the planning for all the trips. So those were the two key kinds of things that I did. And in conjunction with both of those I was to be in almost all his meetings: with the internal meetings, to make sure that when people said they would do things, that they got followed up on, and frequently although not always, in meetings with foreign leaders, particularly when we traveled, again as part of the job.

Q: Well you said earlier that he said this might not help your career, but did it have to do with follow up and riding herd on people?

BRADTKE: I think two things. One is that you were going to have to get people to do things that they didn't want to do. You'd have to ride herd on people and sometimes that meant—

Q: Breaking some crockery?

BRADTKE: Breaking a little bit of crockery, although in the end you learn how to do those things without damaging relationships.

Q: And people always blame the executive assistant but they never blame the boss.

BRADTKE: Yes, but they know that while they may not be happy with you this time, they're going to need your help on something else, so there's no point in making an enemy out of you. The other thing—and I'll just put this as an aside, as a parenthesis, because this is something I did not know at the time—was that Christopher had basically made up his mind he wanted to leave after the first couple of years.

Q: Oh, did you—

BRADTKE: At the time I did not know that because he did not share this with me. So I wondered in retrospect, and I didn't know this until after his time as secretary, that he was thinking of leaving before the end of Clinton's first term. I think part of him—just knowing him the way I did—was his concern that I was going to come and work for him and then he was going to leave, and then what was going to happen to me. Because that is the way I think he would have thought of it.

Q: A very decent person.

BRADTKE: A very decent man. Another little anecdote about him. As I say, he was very reserved, and it was sometimes hard to read him because he wouldn't directly tell you things. He kept a lot to himself, could sometimes be very indirect in asking for things. He used to go off to California periodically—just to get away from Washington, where his home was. And when he went to California he went by himself. He didn't take any staff with him. There was just a DS [diplomatic security] agent who went with him. But he used to call in every day from California. One day Christopher called in and I went over the issues that were coming up that we were talking about. And then he said, "Well, what's in the newspapers today?" It was a very odd kind of request, and I told him what was in the papers. I found out later that the press clips that the Press Office used to put together and fax to California, hadn't gotten out to him. So instead of saying to me, "Where the hell are those goddamn press clips," it was, "What's in the papers today?" But that was the way he operated, and that made it sometimes difficult to read him and know what he really wanted. But that was part of his reserve, that he sometimes didn't express himself in the most direct terms.

Q: Press clips in the early days of email.

BRADTKE: There weren't emails, there was fax. [We] Xeroxed what was in the newspapers, clipped, Xeroxed, and sent it out by fax.

Q: But if he didn't have a staff, who was receiving the faxes?

BRADTKE: It was going to the DS agent. I don't remember exactly, but they were sent out to him and in this case somebody in Ops [the Operations Center] hadn't gotten them out to him. But he didn't say, "Where are they?" He said, "What's in the papers?"

Q: That's a good one!

BRADTKE: But to come back to the kind of things that I did. I was his inbox, and this was the most intimidating job I ever had in the Foreign Service. So the paperwork came up from the bureaus to the executive secretary. Then where did it go? It went to my two assistants, who looked it over, [and] did a kind of final scrub. Then it came to me, and then every morning at the beginning of the day—and Christopher was an early riser which made life not easy—I sat with him to review it! I can't remember exactly what time my morning meeting with him [was], but it was probably around seven o'clock. I would take in all the action memos and the paperwork for the day. He would look at the action memos. He would ask me questions. He would tell me if he thought something was wrong, but it was like a morning exam on any foreign policy issue in the entire world. And if he was happy with the answers, he'd check the boxes and sign them.

Q: Was this the two of you or were there others?

BRADTKE: This was just the two of us.

Q: That's terrifying!

BRADTKE: It really was! So as I say, the night before I'd have all the memos, including—

Q: You couldn't say, "My colleague from NEA can explain that one."

BRADTKE: Sometimes I'd have to, if there was a question I couldn't answer, I could. But basically everyone wanted the paperwork done, so you were under pressure from the building to get that memo signed, get that memo out! And so you'd go in, and as I say, he would look at it, and he would say, "Well, what do you think?" or "I don't understand this point." And it was just the two of us. Pretty scary.

Q: What was the average volume of stuff that required his action in the morning, like ten-fifteen memos?

BRADTKE: Yes, you might have ten-twelve memos.

Q: These were action memos, meaning he must say, "Yes" or "No?"

BRADTKE: These were action memos. You've got to check the box or you've got to sign a letter or a piece of paper, which is covered by an action memo. But we generally did paperwork once a day because once he got started in the day it was very hard to take time out. And then, if I had to, I would try to catch him before he went home at night, which was not always the happiest time to grab somebody after they'd had a hard day. But you'd get calls [from] an assistant secretary or desk officer: "You've got to get the letter signed, you've got to get that memo approved."

Q: What was the degree of resistance on his part to just saying "Agreed" on an action?

BRADTKE: He was a very meticulous person, and I think it was clear in his personality. He was a very careful dresser, and when I left his office, they had a little farewell reception for me which he was gracious enough to host. I joked that the biggest compliment I ever got from him was when I came into his office, and he looked up at me and said, "That's a nice tie," because he was so meticulous. He used to get his shirts and ties from London, from Turnbull and Asser on Jermyn Street.

Q: Historical.

Well, Warren Christopher, the opaque Warren Christopher that so few of us got to know! And, very loyal to the mission, I guess, and strong points of view but—

BRADTKE: I think he saw himself in many ways as the behind the scenes advisor to the president. People have forgotten Bill Clinton's reputation, and it has gone through several iterations, but the first two years of the Clinton administration were a mess. Totally undisciplined. And I knew this when I worked in H [Bureau]. I would go to the meetings on Somalia and Bosnia. We would spend hours talking without ever coming to any conclusions, without making any decisions. It was like a freewheeling seminar where, here I am, "Well what are we supposed to say to the Hill?" We were off on tangents of all sorts. So I think Christopher was not comfortable in that environment. I think it was a very hard environment for him to deal with. You had a lot of young inexperienced people who've gone on and learned, but at the time were not particularly disciplined, were not experienced, and here's an older man coming on with decades of diplomatic and legal experience thrown into this freewheeling kind of atmosphere with a president who had no discipline whatsoever, as we later found out. So that was really hard for him.

Q: Just an asterisk that I was at USIA [United States Information Agency] at the time, and it's true what they say about many officers in USIA being Democrats. And we referred to the political appointees there at the time as the "invading army" because they were so alien to a very welcoming environment. I would say they had everything going for them personally and ideologically, but they alienated themselves immediately. They were apparently the dregs of the political handouts after the election. If they couldn't do better by someone they sent them to USIA. But anyway, [that's] just to corroborate what you're saying.

BRADTKE: To come back, being his inbox was an intimidating experience. He did read things carefully. If he was not happy, he would have you go back and fix something, always done in a very civil way, though. It wasn't, "What is this piece of crap!" I've had bosses that threw stuff, but he was not that style. It was the slight intonation of his voice that [said], "I really don't like this," where you could sense how unhappy he was. He was a meticulous drafter. He didn't like grammatical mistakes. He didn't like what he called the vertical pronoun "I," again because of his reserve. You better not start the first sentence of a paragraph with "I" or he wasn't going to sign it.

Q: Hmm. Most secretaries love the vertical pronoun.

BRADTKE: Yes, but that was not his style. I learned from that job—and this is a theme throughout my career—it's surprising how bad we are at things we should be good at, like drafting. Like talking points for meetings. Somehow we think when we're writing for the secretary of state that he or she doesn't talk like a normal human being. There are these stilted turns of phrase, these complicated convoluted passive voice sentences. Christopher hated that. He hated that. So I would spend some time rewriting these points, as well as writing other things for him, where he would send notes I drafted for him, we called them "Night Notes," to the president, where he would tell you what he wanted to say and then you would draft it up.

Q: I think the department system has tried to cure itself of passive voice, I believe. But interesting.

BRADTKE: To fast forward slightly. Even in my last iteration, when I went out to Norway as the chargé last summer, people in the embassy—who were really good people—when they would send me talking points, I'd say, "You try to say that. Try to say what you've written here, and do it with a straight face." And they couldn't.

Q: Good lesson.

BRADTKE: So managing his inbox [job] was a challenge. And then the travel was a huge challenge, also.

Q: Now you mention travel. Do three or four trips come to mind?

BRADTKE: I would say lots of trips come to mind, but a major, major focus in this time period was the Middle East peace process [for] Clinton and Christopher and the administration, and Tony Lake, who was at the NSC [National Security Council] at that point. Christopher's particular responsibility was to try to work the Middle East peace process. I remember checking how many times I went to Damascus, and there were thirteen trips in my two years, just to Damascus. And [there were] probably more trips to Israel and other parts of the region. He was very engaged, very active. The team was really led by Dennis Ross, who was a remarkable diplomat, very skillful. Just a brief comment on Dennis. He reminded me of one of these climbers on a rock face. You look

up and it's sheer rock face—there's no handholds there—but somehow he'd get to a certain point and he'd say, "We're stuck," and then he'd figure out a way to move it, maybe to the side, then up. He was an experienced person. This is in the aftermath of the Oslo Accords.

Q: Nineteen ninety-two right?

BRADTKE: Nineteen ninety-three. So we were trying to build on the peace process, trying to engage with Israel, Jordan, Syria, and the Palestinians, trying to move the process forward in Israel; opening up with Arafat; going to Gaza to see Arafat, which was remarkable, going to Jericho to see Arafat. The peace deal with the Jordanians and [King] Hussein, this was all in this period. I think Christopher was extremely effective. Dennis was essential, and Donilon had a very important role here, but people just trusted Christopher. He was straightforward, an honest broker, so to speak.

But those trips were grueling, they were exhausting. We used to stop in Shannon [Ireland] on the way in, and I'll share this anecdote. We'd been on the plane all night, people sleeping or working most of the flight. We'd get to Shannon and it was a chance to have a bit of a break. People would go into the duty free because we had this aging [Boeing] 707 that couldn't fly any further without being refueled. You'd go into the bar, and Christopher would sometimes come in with us. His favorite was an Irish coffee, but it became known as a "Christopher"—no whiskey and decaffeinated coffee!

Q: That's a good one!

BRADTKE: But those trips were really extraordinary.

Q: Well, you mentioned the Middle East, [and] certainly there were many others.

BRADTKE: Yes, and maybe one other one slight Middle East anecdote that just has always stuck in my mind, was going to Gaza where we would meet [Yasser] Arafat. Of course everybody wanted to be in the meeting with Arafat. You had to have Dennis, you had to have Bob Pelletreau, he was the assistant secretary. You had to have somebody from the consulate general in Jerusalem, and I usually was in those meetings because somebody had to be sure that whatever got discussed got reported correctly. So we go to Arafat's office in Gaza, which was relatively small quarters. I can't remember exactly, but we had one extra person. Any rate, to make room, I ended up sitting on a little low table in the back, and it was kind of slightly to the right of Christopher and behind him. The meeting gets started and Arafat is looking across the table at Christopher, and then he's looking at me! And I'm thinking, Uh-oh, then he says something and he's motioning and he's looking at me. He had them bring a chair in so I could sit on a chair instead of a table!

Q: Well what a nice man, I guess. Got to ask you about Arafat.

BRADTKE: He had the coldest hand shake! His hands were so cold!

Q: The man who scorned the deal Clinton had designed.

BRADTKE: We'll come back to that because I worked for Clinton at the NSC during Camp David, and I have a few thoughts on that.

Q: We'll spend some time on that.

BRADTKE: One of the big issues was also Syria. As I said, I'd been to Damascus many times with Christopher, and this was a time when the meetings with [Hafez al-]Assad were basically just Christopher, Dennis Ross, and Chris Ross, who was our ambassador in Damascus, and a fluent Arabic speaker. The three of them would go up to Assad's palace and the rest of us—we had one of these rare times—had the morning off—to go around and see Damascus, to catch up on paperwork, but for me it [was] having just a chance to walk the streets of Damascus. I would go around with two people who were part of the traveling party, Bob Pelletreau, who was not in the meetings, which was a little awkward for the assistant secretary for the Near East not to be in the meetings when Dennis was. But Bob, who was a consummate professional, understood that this is just the way it was going to be, that Dennis Ross was managing the peace process. But I remember going with Bob to a museum and having him walk me through. He knew so much about the Middle East. And a woman named Marisa Lino, who eventually became our ambassador to Albania, who was the deputy executive secretary, who traveled with us. She'd served in Damascus. I remember going with her, just walking the streets and going to visit her Syrian friends who ran a candy store. But for me now, when I see what's happened there, it's just, it's horrible! Assad was 100 percent a thug. But there was a certain level of civility in the streets of Damascus.

Q: I've seen it myself.

BRADTKE: I remember that you couldn't walk in Cairo without people coming up to you and trying to beg for money or sell you something. [But] in Damascus you didn't feel that way. You could walk around. There was a certain standard of living. I [went] into the *souk* (market), and it's all gone now, it's just completely gone now. And the forces that were unleashed there destroyed what was, and, okay, Assad was 100 percent a thug, but there was a secular society there that found a way to function during the time that I was going to Damascus. This was 1994–1996.

Q: I had a brief visit ten years earlier. Very militarized, but never ever but people were so cordial, so hospitable. And probably the same tone that you saw ten years after.

BRADTKE: The other anecdote on travel to the Middle East, which I'll bore you with—this is after the assassination of [Yitzhak] Rabin, and I remember going to Rabin's funeral with Christopher, which was an extraordinary event. But in that period—afterwards—the fighting flared up along the Israeli-Lebanon border, and again,

something Christopher got very little credit for, is he went out to basically negotiate the ceasefire, working with the Syrians to get Hezbollah to stop shooting rockets over the border from Lebanon. So basically the deal got negotiated, Christopher shuttled back and forth. But Dennis Ross, for, I think, understandable reasons, said, "You have to go to Lebanon because we just can't undermine what we want to be perceived as the sovereignty of the Lebanese." This is the period of time when things were not going particularly well in Lebanon. So the idea was we would get into Lebanon the way people of our embassy would get in. We would helicopter in from Cyprus to Beirut. Christopher would meet the Lebanese, have them endorse the deal, and then we would leave. So on the very eve of doing this, our friends in the U.S. military say, It's too dangerous, we can't take you in. So then the question is, What the hell are we going to do?

Q: You're in Cyprus.

BRADTKE: We're in Israel, trying to figure out how we're going to get to meet the Lebanese in Lebanon. So there is a lot of back and forth working with the embassy in Beirut. The decision is we're going to drive across the border from Syria into the Beqaa Valley, to just a little crossroads town!

Q: That's the worst place of all!

BRADTKE: Of course it is! Our military couldn't handle this, but we were insistent we had to do this.

Q: Who's we?

BRADTKE: Dennis Ross was adamant we had to do this, and Christopher agreed. So we were going to do this.

Q: Wait a minute, wait a minute! The U.S. military said, Don't do this?

BRADTKE: "Too dangerous to fly in." So we had to go in overland. Now, we didn't go all the way to Beirut. The meeting took place in this crossroads town, Zahle. What we did was to go to the Syrians, and we said, Okay, we're going in and you Syrians, are going to provide an escort. So we flew to Damascus and then we drove from Damascus across the border into the Beqaa Valley and into Lebanon, to Zahle, which was an hour and a half or so from the border. It was a very uncomfortable feeling, needless to say.

So the meeting was set to take place in this hotel, and we were working with the embassy in Beirut. This was going to be the location of the meeting.

Q: But you're not in Beirut; you're east of Beirut.

BRADTKE: So we're east of Beirut. Zahle was a place where Syrians could go and shop and have a good time and go back to Damascus. So we're in this hotel and we've got, I

think, both the president and the prime minister in this meeting with Christopher and Dennis, and others, and I'm in the room. All of a sudden the lights go out. And I think, Okay, we're dead! But, it turned out just to be a power failure! But I was never so happy to see one of our DS guys come in and say, "It's just a power failure." The head of the [DS] detail was just outside the door. But my heart stopped.

Q: So DS was with you but the U.S. military was not?

BRADTKE: Correct.

Q: Incredible!

BRADTKE: They determined that it was too dangerous to fly in. Yes, too dangerous for them, but we had to drive in.

Q: Oh my gosh!

BRADTKE: Yes. I had a very good relationship with the secretary's lead Diplomatic Security agent, they did a hell of a job.

Q: Dennis Ross was saying Lebanese sovereignty is so important that we must show that.

BRADTKE: How can you do a deal involving Lebanon and encourage a strong Lebanon without having the Lebanese participate and agree?

Q: And Christopher saw the wisdom and was willing to risk his life.

BRADTKE: He agreed, saying this is dangerous, this is a little unusual, but we can do this. Without the help of the Syrians, who wanted this deal, we couldn't have just got into cars and driven in. We had a Syrian military escort going in.

Q: You said the Syrians wanted this deal. When they said they wanted this deal—aside from wanting Israel removed as a country—what else did they want?

BRADTKE: I think it's very hard to understand the Syrians and their policies, but this case was something that once they'd reached an agreement with Israel about stopping this—

Q: They wanted American cover to make it really stick?

BRADTKE: Right.

Q: So the Syrians actually worked a deal with the Israelis prior to your going in?

BRADTKE: No, Christopher mediated a deal between them, which then was to be ratified by the Lebanese. So that's the thing.

Q: Well that's a major accomplishment. And as you say, not much credit.

BRADTKE: Not much credit accruing to Christopher.

Q: Was that because of his self-effacing nature or—?

BRADTKE: I think that's part of it. I think it was because we'd been going to the Middle East for one problem or another. So this little piece where the U.S. was key—Secretary Christopher fixed something—has been lost in the horrible things that subsequently happened. The fact that the peace process is nowhere now makes it hard, but at the time what he did was relatively important. We got the peace process back on track for a brief moment. And for Shimon Peres, who was then the prime minister after Rabin's death, for Peres, this was just politically essential for him.

Q: I remember a name, the one now at the Wilson Center, David, who I think of as from the same period as Dennis Ross. Nevermind.

BRADTKE: A State Department person?

Q: Yes, a negotiator. I think at that same time. David—well nevermind.

BRADTKE: I think I know who you're thinking of. He was Dennis' sidekick, Aaron David Miller.

Q: Was he there?

BRADTKE: Yes, Aaron traveled with us, and he did a lot of all this as well. Aaron was really the right-hand man of Dennis, very much trusted by all of us, and very sharp.

Q: So he was working with Dennis Ross?

BRADTKE: Absolutely. They were a two-man team, Dennis and Aaron.

Q: Okay, that's what I thought. Oh, all of this work and all of this cleverness yielding so little in the long run.

BRADTKE: Yes, and what happened of course is Rabin lost the election. Just my own amateur analysis—he did not handle the aftermath of Rabin's assassination very well. He might have done better in terms of when he called the election, managing the election, but he ended up losing the election to Netanyahu. And that is another story. But this was a time, initially after the assassination, and [we] fixed the Lebanon crisis. It was a case of: Okay, let's see what we can do, let's see if we can move forward.

Q: So we're in favor of democracy, right? Never mind, strike that!

BRADTKE: Yes, because not everybody gets elected. There we are!

There was just one other big piece that I want to talk about and that was Bosnia.

Q: Yes, please!

BRADTKE: There's some other smaller things, but I think the other thing where I feel Christopher's contribution is just lost is negotiating the Dayton Accords and stopping the fighting in Bosnia. Bosnia was a nightmare. It was just an absolute nightmare. It was the kind of thing where I would go into the morning meeting with Christopher, that kind of intimidating meeting, and every day it was bad news on Bosnia. Something, always—the marketplace bombing—you name it. In the initial time I worked for Christopher, Bob Frasure, who was a career diplomat, was our negotiator. A wonderful, wonderful person who was killed in this tragic accident when his armored car went over the side of the cliff in Bosnia.

Q: With Ron Brown?

BRADTKE: Ron Brown was killed, this was another kind of nightmare, later, after the Dayton agreement. He went out with a delegation of business people and State Department people, and they tried to land in Dubrovnik in bad weather and hit the side of a mountain. But that was after Dayton.

So Frasure was killed in this accident. It was just constant bad news, and I don't want to go over the whole history of Bosnia. Holbrooke, who was EUR assistant secretary, took over direct management of the policy. I could spend a lot of time talking about Dick Holbrooke, and I don't know whether this is the right time to do that.

Q: I hope you do. When you say managing, we all think of Holbrooke as having an enormous ego. We sometimes forget that there was a secretary of state but we only remember Holbrooke. This is crazy!

BRADTKE: That's why Christopher's role in this [is lost], because Holbrooke would suck all the oxygen out of any discussion of Bosnia. But Christopher was very important to this process in providing guidance, in working with the White House, with Tony Lake.

Maybe fast forward to Dayton. The parties were brought to Dayton. Christopher went out to open up the negotiations and then the idea was to leave Holbrooke behind. Holbrooke would work with these guys. Christopher went out once, if my memory is correct, briefly just to see how things were going. But, then things were not going well; there was no deal yet. Christopher—and I went with him—then went to Osaka for an APEC [Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation] meeting that Clinton was supposed to go to, and then couldn't;

and then Gore was supposed to go, and couldn't. So Christopher had to go out. We flew all night to Osaka, and he did a round of bilaterals.

But we did go to Osaka. I'm confident, because I remember sitting in a meeting. There was nothing worse than being completely jet lagged and being in a meeting with the Japanese where you didn't understand Japanese, where there was consecutive interpretation, and trying to stay awake during the interpretation! Sitting at the table and saying, "Oh God, please God, please don't let me fall asleep!" (laughs)

Q: Why wasn't it simultaneous? They didn't have that guy available at that time?

BRADTKE: Whatever it was, it was consecutive and it was just agony! So we spent maybe one night in Osaka and then turned around and flew back to Dayton. So we get to Dayton after having been to Osaka, and it's the end game in the negotiations. Everybody's going back and forth, and it's a very heated atmosphere. Holbrooke is, you know, volatile, emotional, exhausted, and things were really not going particularly well. We were there for a couple of days. We get to a point in the negotiation where basically Holbrooke, who had this kind of constant overly dramatic way of operating, brought everybody into a room and said, "It's over, we're finished, we're done."

Q: I think I remember. And he threatened to walk out or something.

BRADTKE: He threatened this all the time, but this time he said to us, to Christopher and his own staff, "We can't do this." But, at the meeting, Christopher takes a deep breath and says, "No, we're going to continue." Christopher then goes back to the parties, and where he particularly managed to make it work was going to Izetbegovic, the Bosnian president. [It was a] very tough meeting. I was not in the meeting but I got debriefed afterwards, and basically Izetbegovic agreed to something he didn't want to agree to and said, "This is not fair, this is not honorable, but you give me no choice." But Christopher—because Christopher was the way he was—he could sell it where Holbrooke could not sell it.

That wasn't the end, though. Because what happened after that was a somewhat muted celebration, which Holbrooke writes about in his book where he talks about me getting a bottle of Christopher's—he used to like a California white wine—favorite white wine, then I went to bed just completely exhausted, totally exhausted.

The phone rings at five am and it turns out that the Croats had balked. [Franjo] Tudjman, the Croatian president, who had been very ill, had gone back to Zagreb and was not in Dayton. But when the Croats found out what the deal was, when they saw that some of the territory they were occupying was being given back to the Bosnian Serbs, where they had fought over it, they objected to that.

So I went in to see Christopher in his room, and right away it was clear from the bed in his room that he had not slept all night. But there he was putting on a clean shirt, looking

as dapper as he possibly could, and he went back to it, and eventually got the deal done, got the deal put back together.

Q: How is it that we think only of Holbrooke throughout this whole thing?

BRADTKE: Because we can spend half an hour—

Q: Please, let's.

BRADTKE: I had a very complicated relationship with Dick Holbrooke extending over multiple incarnations. I won't blame Holbrooke, no that's not the right word. I give Holbrooke a lot of credit for Bosnia because he at least filled the void of "nobody's doing anything about this." He jumped into it, particularly after Frasure's death and engaged in a serious way, with one exception, which was in the aftermath of Srebrenica, where he simply was missing in action, and we can come back to that and the Holbrooke story.

Q: It was not a turning point?

BRADTKE: Yes, in a sense it was, because it was when we decided we had to really step up our activity.

Q: And then we sort of walked right past the EU and went in there.

BRADTKE: We made this a NATO operation, and we can come back to that. But Holbrooke, I give him a lot of credit for filling the void, for creating action but he was not alone here. This was not a one man band. This was part of an administration strategy where Christopher played a very important role in selling this to the parties and negotiating this at Dayton, and Tony Lake, who worked with our allies on an approach that they would accept.

From my money—okay I'm not completely objective—in critical moments of Dayton Christopher was the key one, because he was under control, he was steady. He didn't go up and down—moments of way up at the top, things were great, and then down, "Oh no, it's impossible! We'll never get this done." He was always steady, he was always, "Okay, what do we have to do? How do we get these people to agree? Whom do I have to talk to?"

In the end, Christopher—I was in the room—somebody had to call Bill Clinton and say, "Here's the deal, if we're going to get this done we have to be prepared to send troops to Bosnia as peacekeepers, because we must do this. Mr. President, if you want this done I've got the deal." Christopher was the one who called Clinton to say we had a deal but we're going to need to send peacekeepers to Bosnia and the president agreed. But Christopher was the one who sold that!

Q: Well this is a very dramatic conclusion to part of the story. Intuitively I think anyone would say that's diplomacy! Diplomacy isn't highs and lows and emotional things. This is really a rare chance to give [him] some of the attention he deserved.

BRADTKE: It is, but Holbrooke was the one who wrote the book.

Q: And a book was written about Holbrooke posthumously.

BRADTKE: No, the one about Bosnia was written by him with his wife, Kati. They were writing the book as we went along because he knew he wanted the story told from his perspective!

Q: I was thinking about the book that was organized by Strobe Talbott and Kati Marton about Holbrooke that included some of his own material— Anyway, Ambassador Bob Bradtke. This is still October 25.

BRADTKE: We're not getting very far.

Q: I hope not, because as they say in the Pentagon, it's the granularity! Oh the Pentagon has ruined our language but it has not ruined our work.

BRADTKE: Thank you, thank you.

Q: You're welcome!

Here we are. It's a cold, blustery day in March 2017! Ambassador Bob Bradtke is here at 3630 39th Street, and I'm Dan Whitman. And we're going to take up this fascinating—thank God there's a good memory because there's—

BRADTKE: I've had another three to four months to have my bad memory fade even further! But I think we were ending up at Dayton.

Q: We were bringing peace to the Balkans.

BRADTKE: And I was giving Christopher credit, which, I think, he did not receive as being the steady hand in Dayton. Not that Dick Holbrooke didn't work very hard, but Christopher at Dayton really kept people from kind of just closing up shop and leaving when things weren't going well. I don't know how many of the anecdotes I've told in the last session, but let me return to the question you raised which was the challenge of persuading President Clinton to get this done at Dayton. The president had to commit to putting U.S. troops on the ground. It's perhaps a little difficult to remember now after so many battles in places like Iraq and Afghanistan and Syria, where we have deployed troops, but there was a lot of controversy at the time. It was particularly burdensome for President Clinton. He inherited an operation in Somalia which was humanitarian, and then it was the classic case of "mission creep," where the mission was to go after the

Somali warlords. Then he had the horrible incident where the Black Hawk crashed, our soldiers were killed, and the bodies dragged— That left a very big scar on President Clinton, and he and the people around him on the political side wanted no part of sending U.S. troops to Bosnia. Because the president was focused on the economy, on the domestic situation, he did not, and his political advisors did not want us to send troops.

Q: If I got the chronology right, one was in 1994 and he was very reluctant, and in fact, later apologized for doing nothing. I believe that was also because he'd been burned with the inherited Somali deaths.

BRADTKE: Yes, I think this was very much a deep rooted feeling—no U.S. troops, no ground troops. We had this strange policy of "Lift and Strike" where we were going to lift the arms embargo on the Bosnians and then we're going to drop bombs on the Serbs, which the Europeans hated because they did have troops on the ground.

But two things I think brought the president around. One, was that we really had perhaps the last, best chance to get this agreement done and have a political settlement, and without U.S. troops it wasn't going to happen.

But the second thing was what the Europeans were telling us, the British and the French in particular. They were saying to us that if a deal was not done, they were not going to stay on the ground any more in the former Yugoslavia. They were going to withdraw and they needed us on the ground to help cover the withdrawal. So basically what Secretary Christopher and Holbrooke were telling the president was, You got troops on the ground either way. Either we go in to support a peace agreement or you're going to have to send troops in to help cover a European withdrawal.

That seems to have been the culmination, to my way of thinking. God knows there are probably others who know more about all this than I do, but from where I sat and having listened to conversations and having read reports, the combination of these two factors was what brought the president around. We had a deal; we needed U.S. troops to close the deal. If we walked away from the deal, if we didn't do the deal, the Europeans were going to say, Okay, NATO obligations, you need to come and help us get out, because we need you to come and cover our withdrawal.

Yes, it was quite explicit, and the argument made very forcefully by Holbrooke to the president was, "You're in! One way or the other, you're in!"

Q: History does not repeat in rhymes. Is there anything to say about the "red line" that Obama established for Syria? I mean, when Clinton committed to sending troops, this was a red line, right? This was the threat of what would happen if they did not agree to a deal.

BRADTKE: But the deal was done and the sequence was different. Well maybe, maybe not. Analogies are always bad. The bombing of the Serbs started before there was a deal,

but the key to getting troops on the ground was that there was a peace to reinforce. I don't think we would have ever sent in troops to separate the parties. They had already agreed at Dayton to a political settlement, military ceasefire agreement/arrangements, the cantonizing of weapons. All these steps were agreed so that the United States was not going to send in troops with guns blazing; we were going to send in troops to keep the peace that the parties had agreed to.

Q: And they say in the FS exam, "What was your role?" I'm just being snarky, but—

BRADTKE: Yes, my role in this whole period that I worked for Christopher was to support him, make sure he had the papers he needed, make sure that when he had something that he'd asked to be followed up on, that those things were conveyed to the bureaus, to the staff. My role, frankly, was just to support him personally. He was a very modest man. And I viewed part of my job as trying to look after him. I was the executive assistant, so it was to support him personally, to see that he got what he needed. And that he was okay!

Q: I would suggest that he maybe needed a bit more confidence or more boldness, and if so, how did you manage to do that?

BRADTKE: The push, the political push, the "be more forceful" wasn't going to come from me. It came from Tom Donilon and that was one of the crucial changes that took place in the administration in the first year and a half. Tom Donilon went on to become the national security advisor.

The Clinton administration was not particularly adroit in the first year and a half or so, and there were some important changes that came along that gave it its footing in the second half of the first term. One of them was Tom Donilon who came on board to be—I'd describe him as chief of staff, as political advisor. Tom was the link to the White House. Tom knew Christopher, and could nudge, could push him to do something that I don't think any Foreign Service officer could get away with. Maybe some could, but most of us are still pretty deferential when it comes to dealing with the secretary of state. Tom Donilon was different, and if he thought Christopher needed to do something he didn't want to do, he could give him a push.

The second change—and this I watched up close again—was the deputy secretary. Maybe we talked about this in the last go, but the original deputy secretary was a person who was a very decent man, who was a smart man, but he was ill-cast, and that was Clifton Wharton. He was African-American, the son of an African-American diplomat at a time when there were very few. But Wharton just didn't have a relationship with Christopher. It didn't work.

So, he was replaced by Strobe Talbott. Strobe had several things going for him. He was very creative, very smart, and very knowledgeable about Russia. He brought all of that, and he could deal with the Russia portfolio. He was also a friend of President Clinton's.

Q: Clinton's roommate?

BRADTKE: That's right, in Oxford. He had a White House connection, so there was now—I don't want to say forceful—a better, more active deputy secretary of state, particularly on the Russia front.

Q: Just bureaucratically, at that time there was one deputy, now there are two, one is management and the other—

BRADTKE: There was only one. There only ever needed to be one.

Q: There was much less management responsibility, I think it was more of a policy function?

BRADTKE: Yes, the job has always changed, but in my view what the best deputies have always done is they've done policy resources, and they've stood in for the secretary.

Q: Do you have Talbott's arrival and the date? I don't know—

BRADTKE: I'd have to go back and look. It certainly was in the first—

Q: I mean, did he come to sort of rescue that first term that was rickety?

BRADTKE: He came about halfway through, after about a year and a half, I want to say, when things were not going particularly well. So the reinforcement team had really four people: Talbott replacing Wharton, Tom Donilon coming in to be the chief of staff, Jim Steinberg taking over from Sam Lewis as SP. Sam Lewis was a veteran diplomat, smart guy, who was ambassador to Israel, but Jim was much more aggressive. Jim was a policy wonk. He and Donilon had a strong relationship, and they just generated ideas and initiatives. They were sources of ideas and problem solving that were very important.

Q: Whose idea was it to have these reinforcements? Was it Clinton himself?

BRADTKE: I don't know where it came from.

Q: It does show either good luck or good skill.

BRADTKE: Well, it wasn't luck. This had to be a package. The fourth change was in EUR. There was a lawyer who worked for Christopher's law firm who had been on Christopher's staff, when Christopher had been deputy secretary. He was a nice guy, Steve Oxman, who was the initial assistant secretary for Europe.

Again, it just didn't work. I saw this up close, one of these heart-rending moments when you're sitting there in a congressional hearing room. I was still in H when Oxman went

up to testify on Bosnia. Oxman didn't really like our cautious policy. He was sympathetic with doing something far more aggressive, and he had a disastrous hearing in front of the Foreign Relations Committee. He literally was unable to speak a couple of points. He choked up, literally choked up, where he was trying to defend the policy that he didn't believe in, and he just lost his voice. It was awful! It was just mortifying. So Oxman was gone and Dick Holbrooke took over EUR.

So you had these four powerhouse individuals come along in this period, roughly a year and a half, two years in, just about the time I moved into the S world to be his executive assistant. From the perspective that I had working in H, with Wendy Sherman, and then moving to work for Christopher, I saw that a huge change. There was far more energy; far more drive; far more political savvy. And in the generation of momentum, it just changed, and moved things forward at a much more aggressive pace.

Q: So you were in the S camp—

BRADTKE: [From] 1994 to 1996.

Q: —and that was exactly when Dayton was right at that time.

BRADTKE: Dayton was 1995, November 1995.

Q: Well, then I need to squeeze more out of it, but I don't know the right questions. Then this was a very crucial moment in the Clinton administration.

BRADTKE: Yes, it was.

Q: And Albright was not there yet.

BRADTKE: No, Albright was secretary during Clinton's second term. Christopher also had thought about leaving. Things were so bad—and this is not news or anything else; it's in somebody's memoirs—but about two years into the administration, he did not like Washington. He saw Washington was a mean-spirited place. Not the job, but the atmosphere had changed from when he was deputy secretary. I don't know this from personal knowledge; I think it's from reading memoirs, but when he had been deputy secretary and Vance resigned after the fiasco in the hostage rescue mission in Iran, Christopher, I think, had expected to be made secretary of state. Instead [Edmund] Muskie got the job. I think it always stuck in Christopher's mind that he [Muskie] was there, and he didn't get the job, and the outsider was brought in. Then, Christopher really did the hard work of getting the hostages out, the hard work of negotiating with the Iranians. Getting the deal done. But he didn't get to be secretary of state.

Q: The hostages were taken in '79, so maybe '80.

BRADTKE: Okay, so between then and 1994, the job had become much more high-pressure. The twenty-four-hour news cycle wasn't as bad as it is today, but it was growing. It was more difficult to be a private person than he remembered. So when he finally did get the job, when Clinton was elected, being secretary of state was very different.

So between those eight years of Reagan and four years of Bush, in those twelve years the public persona of the secretary was that much more out there. Christopher was not comfortable with that. He was not comfortable with dealing with Congress. He didn't like dealing with the press. He didn't like the backbiting that would go on sometimes when the White House wasn't happy. So he was not happy; his wife hated Washington, she detested Washington. She thought the criticism of him that was creeping into the press was grossly unfair.

Q: So he was in the wilderness for what years?

BRADTKE: Well, the Reagan years and then the Bush years.

Q: Twelve years.

BRADTKE: Yes.

Q: So not exactly of the temperament that S needs to be, but also dormant, hibernating—

BRADTKE: No, I mean he was still politically active, but he was a behind-the-scenes person, and that's what he did for Clinton; work behind-the-scenes. He helped with the transition. He was well connected to the Democratic establishment, but he was not an out-in-front person. The job of secretary had become more and more of the out-in-front person, traveling, making speeches. He was inheriting this from Jim Baker, and George Shultz—and Al Haig for that matter—but the job had just kept evolving to the point where it had changed. So he hated Washington, or I should say, he didn't like Washington; his wife hated Washington. After two years, he didn't think it was going very well and he wasn't happy with the job, so he asked the president to let him leave. And the president asked him to stay.

Q: And that's when Talbott and Holbrooke came?

BRADTKE: This was right after this change over. He was not happy.

Q: So it was the year—

BRADTKE: So this is late 1994–95. And this is not a new fact. It's in various memoirs that have been written that he wanted out.

Q: And even after the change, he just wasn't comfortable.

BRADTKE: Yes. He wasn't happy with the job.

Q: Now, memoirs. People say—I hate using that expression these days—I don't remember, but it is said that Madeleine Albright encouraged Clinton to be more aggressive in the Balkans. When did that happen? Was that when she became secretary of state?

BRADTKE: No, even before. When she was at the UN, she was an advocate of a much more forceful approach. She did this as permanent representative, and I wouldn't say behind the scenes, but inside senior-level meetings. So, on Bosnia, she was an advocate for and a supporter of a much more muscular policy.

I hope we didn't cover this, [but] at the risk of repeating myself, I'm happy to do this.

Q: No please. We're going to talk about what you've touched on—

BRADTKE: I want to say I've done a little bit of this already, but go ahead.

Q: No. The question is, could you give us a sense of the daily life in the front office. There you were, having to coach the man who had some reluctance. You were squaring the circle, I think every day.

BRADTKE: You're giving me too much credit. I was trying to support and help the secretary of state.

Q: Well, then, how did you do that?

BRADTKE: The way I described the job was it had a couple of dimensions. I have a recollection that we already talked about this, but I'll do it again anyway. If you recall my repeating anecdotes, then stop me.

The first thing, and this kind of pertained to the daily flow, was to be his inbox. Paperwork would come up through the system. It would come up to the S staff. I had two special assistants who worked for me. They would look at it, then they would send the papers and memos to me, and we had a good feel for what the secretary could tolerate and what he didn't like.

Q: In terms of volume, or—

BRADTKE: In terms of quality. I will say this, much of what we saw, you'd be surprised how poorly drafted it was. It just needed work, so we would either kick it back or we would redo it because we knew Christopher was going to hate it. The inability of the building to draft things that sounded Secretarial was always a discouraging and astounding feature. Sending up talking points that sounded like they were written for

some professor, and not the secretary of state, passive voice, wordy, long sentences. Christopher hated what he called the vertical pronoun "I". You'd never start a letter with the word, Dear Minister so-and-so, and "I" is the first word. Never, ever. He would never sign a letter like that. You'd try to communicate this, but it would continue. So we would do a certain amount of editing of the paper flow after it had been through the Executive Secretariat, because we had a good feel for what his tolerance was for some of these things. There was too much bureaucratic mush!

Q: It goes on still.

BRADTKE: Of course. I saw this at the White House, too, when I was NSC executive secretary. So, apologies for repeating myself, but, the way the day would begin, Christopher would come in very early. He would be in at seven o'clock at the latest. We had to be in early too. I would have the two special assistants come in ahead of me. I would probably arrive between seven to 7:30. Then, before the day started, before his morning meetings and all those phone calls and things, I had private time with him to go over the paperwork. I would bring in to him all the action memos and things for his signature, folders, etc., and sit there in the inner office while he went through them and signed them, or didn't sign them.

Q: Did he tend to make decisions quickly? And easily? Yes/no?

BRADTKE: He knew his mind. If he didn't like it, you knew right away. If it was going to be okay, you knew right away. There were a few where he'd say, "Go back, fix this, or I'm not signing this."

Q: What was the average number of action letters/memos in a given day? Every bureau must have had—

BRADTKE: It could have been six to ten to twelve.

Q: Okay. That's not overwhelming.

BRADTKE: We tried to prioritize. Not every memo needed his personal attention. He'd look it over and if it was a routine memo, a routine letter, he'd look at me and say, "Is this okay?" Then he'd sign or he'd check the box—Agree/Disagree. But that was to me the most harrowing fifteen to twenty minutes of my career. You're sitting in there with the secretary of state. It's an examination! He would say, "Why do they say this? Does this make any sense? Wait a minute. I don't— Why are they sending me this? What is this?"

So if you hadn't read it and you didn't understand it and you couldn't answer the question, it was just painful! You really didn't want to go in there for those fifteen minutes. You had fifteen minutes to get through all these memos. You know, you needed to help him do this.

Q: Did you say you had a sense of what was coming based on the previous afternoon?

BRADTKE: Yes, at the end of the day you had an idea what was coming up, what had to be signed by the next day. You had a sense of what your morning was going to look like. And it kind of jumps to the back end of the day. Christopher liked to have dinner with his wife when he was in Washington. So he would try to be out of the office by seven pm. This is really jumping to the back end of the day, but basically every bureau would send something and tell you, "Oh my God, he's got to sign this today!" So I would try to catch him on his way out the door, which I hated to do. You know, he's put in a long day, he's tired. So you would get some paperwork at the end of the day, but the normal routine was, get the paperwork done at the beginning of the day and kick it back to the bureaus, fix it. Move it out.

Q: If you have any friendships that survived that period, this is much to your credit, sir.

BRADTKE: Yes, you didn't always make the bureaus happy. On the other hand, I think people knew you would try; that you were going to try to get this done for them and that they could trust you. The other thing I prided myself on—that's too strong a word—I didn't feel that I had an agenda. I was not there to push any particular policy. I was there to make the trains run on time. I was there to keep the paper flow moving; to get things done in an appropriate way. I was not there to take a memo and say, "I don't like this policy, I'll kick it back to the bureau," or "I'll say that Christopher didn't like this." I've always believed that a good staff person does not pretend they're the principal.

Q: Your predecessors and your successors, did they generally have that same approach, do you think?

BRADTKE: Beth Jones was my predecessor and I know that she had a little bit of a tough time with Tom Donilon. Beth was a little more senior than I was, and I think she probably did have more of her own views. Maura Hardy replaced me. I think Maura was more in my kind of vein of thinking, which was, "I'm going to help make things work, and I'm going to help this man deal with a job that's impossible."

Q: Back to your routine.

BRADTKE: I would go out of the secretary's inner office door sometime before eight o'clock feeling, "My God, I've gotten the worst of this day behind me. This fifteen minutes of sheer terror, of fearing that the secretary's going to ask you something that you don't know the answers to. You'd come out with your stack of paper, I'd give it back to the special assistants. They would kick it back to the Executive Secretariat—I guess we still call it SS—and then it would get distributed back to the bureaus.

Q: An unfortunate acronym.

BRADTKE: Yes. Sometimes you'd make sure that you called the desk or you'd call the front office and say, "He signed," or "He didn't sign." Then the rest of the day revolved around supporting him in his meetings.

Q: You've described this today as sort of psychological support, and—

BRADTKE: Well, just to make sure that he was not over-scheduled; to make sure he had time to think; that he had what he needed. If you saw paperwork that really wasn't good, you didn't take it into him and have him waste his time looking at something that wasn't any good.

Q: Did you have some degree of control over the schedule?

BRADTKE: Yes. I would work with Tom Donilon on this. This was another part of my job, to work with Tom to try to schedule the secretary. So, when the action memo would go on saying, "Meet with Foreign Minister Mucketymuck," Tom and I had already talked and we'd already agreed whether this was a good idea. So we would try to do that.

Q: Again, this is not big policy stuff but did he sort of look at a draft of his schedule and then say, "Yes" or "No," or did you just deliver it to him, and say, "Sir, you've agreed to all of this?" How did—

BRADTKE: We didn't put items on without him agreeing. And we'd try to bring things—

Q: And then when he saw the following day, was it done the day before in some cases?

BRADTKE: The schedule was, to a certain extent, between Donilon and myself. We were the gatekeepers. You always started out the day with kind of a schedule, whether it was going to be phone calls, whether it was going to be meetings with ministers, whether it was going to be going over to the White House for an NSC meeting. But, there was always the unexpected, when Holbrooke would say, "I've got to see the secretary." Or Peter Tarnoff would say, "I need ten minutes with the secretary." Or Strobe [Talbott] would say, "I need time with the secretary." So you were always juggling the urgent, short-term requests with the regularly scheduled, booked-in-advance, staffed-up meetings that he had.

Q: I can see it from his perspective. I agreed to do these five things but I can't do it in two hours. I mean, did that ever happen?

BRADTKE: I am a great admirer of his. If it had to be done he would do it; even if the day was jammed. You never want to start the day jammed, but life happened. If I went in to him and said, "Look, Mr. Secretary, Holbrooke's just got to see you." He'd look at me and say, "What's it about?" I'd tell him and then he'd say, "Okay." Then he'd pull out his little schedule card, and he'd say, "Okay, looks like I've got fifteen minutes here. Tell

Holbrooke he can come up." But he had an enormous sense of duty, and he was never going to say, "No" if it had to be done. He was just not going to do that. You just tried to give him a little time. You tried to screen out a little bit when the request was urgent or not urgent, or when somebody else could decide. You know, "Why does he have to do this? Why can't Strobe do this? Why can't Peter Tarnoff do this?"

Q: Talbott was P.

BRADTKE: No, Talbott was D. Tarnoff was P. So you'd try to push stuff down a little bit, to not have just everything come to him. All too often, everything was urgent, everything was crucial, everything needed the secretary's attention. That was just the going in position, and you couldn't possibly manage his time or his life that way.

Q: It seems to be the exact opposite of these days, you know, March 2017.

BRADTKE: I just want to touch on travel. The other job that I had, the other part of the daily life, was to go on all the secretary's trips and do much the same job for him when we were traveling as during the course of a day in Washington. In Washington, when the secretary would have meetings, I or one of the special assistants would sit in. I think the secretary wanted us to be there to be sure that things were followed up on, appropriately reported. So one of us would sit in the meetings to do that. I learned from [James] Baker's executive assistant—whose name I can't remember—who took copious notes, that you couldn't take copious notes on what happened in a meeting or they'd be subpoenaed or would end up being made public. So you'd try to remember what happened. I had to rely on my memory; I couldn't write a lot of notes, because I didn't want a record that could end up being released of the secretary's private meetings or internal policy discussions.

Q: I would think that notes would be taken if on a trip—

BRADTKE: Oh yes, for official meetings, there was a notetaker, but if you were talking about something like—Holbrooke comes up and sits down with the secretary, and then Strobe comes in, and Donilon and Steinberg are there, and they're talking about what to do in Bosnia, there weren't notes for those meetings. If the foreign minister of a county comes, yes, the desk officer, or the office director is taking notes, of course. I'm talking about internal meetings. There's no blow-by-blow record of a lot of these meetings, because it was to the point where you couldn't protect those kinds of records.

At any rate, my job was to come out of those meetings and then to make sure that if Holbrooke said he was going to do something, if somebody else promised, NEA promised, that there was feedback, that they knew they had to do something, that you could tell them when it was due, or you could then follow up on commitments that the secretary made. If the secretary said he was going to call somebody, then you could work with the Ops Center to set that up. All these things that needed to be followed up. Most days, once I finished the paperwork with the secretary, I'd sit down with Donilon, and

we'd go over the schedule and he'd tell me what he was worried about. Then I was sitting in his secretary's meetings making sure we kept track of what was going on and then at the end of the day, we would get ready for the next day.

The travel piece, as I say, was to work with S/S-EX to work with the embassies, work with the Executive Secretariat, because they did the advance work. Donilon was very good about knowing how to structure these things; he had a good sense for messaging, and then we would try to set up the trips.

Q: Action memos, schedule, travel—

BRADTKE: When you were on the road it was extremely difficult. I remember what Dick Shinnick, who was the executive director of S/S-EX, who traveled on almost all the trips as well, used to say. He said, "The military had tested sleep deprivation, and if you got four hours of sleep a night you could function. So the going-in goal was to try and get four hours of sleep!" I'd say half the time you didn't.

Q: I always wondered. I mean I'm sure that it's a USG owned plane, do secretaries get more rest than the other people on that plane?

BRADTKE: Yes.

Q: Isn't everybody exhausted?

BRADTKE: Yes, everybody was exhausted. It was very stressful. In my time we still had the old [Boeing] 707s. The famous 707s that had been used as Air Force One, including the one that brought Kennedy's body back from Texas. The secretary was in the cabin up front with a couch, where he could sleep, where he could have a little bit of privacy. The senior staff, and that included me, sat in the cabin behind where we sat around a table and we had reclining chairs, but we didn't have beds. The temptation was to talk and work on papers the whole way over to wherever the hell we were going! Rarely was all the work done when we got on the plane. Donilon and Steinberg in particular almost always traveled while working over papers.

Q: Were trip books handed to you on the way, on the plane?

BRADTKE: No, the trip books were always done beforehand, but they needed more work. Because they were done by the bureaus, sometimes the bureaus didn't have all the issues, didn't have the sense of being able to fine tune the talking points, give them more edge. So a lot of the word work was re-done on the way. The secretary's remarks had to be worked over with the speechwriter. We had Nick Burns, who was the press spokesman, with us. So on the trip over, except for maybe the last hour and a half when everybody tried to get a little bit of sleep, we were working over the trip papers.

So you would get to wherever it was, and in my time we made thirteen trips to the Middle East. We were doing Bosnia, we were doing China. Although we did not go to China on my watch, we did trips to Asia. When you'd arrive, basically you'd go to the hotel, you'd dump the bags, you'd check in with the Advance Team, and then you'd go off to meetings! I usually went with the secretary just to be around to support him, to make sure he had his papers, to make sure that things were being followed up on. Most of the time I had at least the choice of being in a meeting. The one big exception being Syria—and I do feel we covered this somewhere along the line—where the secretary would go with Dennis Ross up to see [Hafez-al-]Assad, the father, and it would just be Dennis, Chris Ross, who was the ambassador, and Christopher. I'd be back working on the papers for the next stop.

So, was it exciting? At a certain level, yes. Did you feel you were right there watching history unfold? Absolutely! Were you just completely exhausted and wasted? Yes! Fortunately I think I was still young enough in those days where I had the energy to do this, but it was very, very stressful and literally exhausting. On trips, the secretary might finally go to bed at eleven o'clock, but guess what? Washington's still working! People wanted to hear what happened, people had things they wanted the secretary to do. They wanted to know what he'd signed, and they wanted to ask him to sign memos and approve papers. The secretary was very good about sending night notes to the president, to report on his trip. These were very personal, private notes. He would kind of dictate them up, and he'd say, "Proofread this and then just sign and send it for me." Or sometimes he would say, "Do a short night note." So you're there at small o'clock in the morning, or it's midnight, and you haven't had any sleep, and you're working with Liz Lineberry [who was the secretary's secretary] trying to proofread, and you read it ten times and you still can't focus on the page because you're exhausted! But this is why you joined the Foreign Service, to have this kind of experience!

Q: You wanted less or more time in that two-year job?

BRADTKE: I was exhausted after two years. I would not have wanted more than two years. I felt kind of burned out after two years. I could not have made it to the end of the administration, and I was delighted that Maura [Harty] was coming on to replace me.

Q: I have three questions either for now or for the next time, but I'll give you a heads up. You mentioned Assad, there were many trips. Are there maybe two or three that you want to highlight? Secondly, you have commented about Holbrooke and everybody has an opinion about Holbrooke. You have given a description: he was demanding, he was very supportive, he was sometimes antagonistic. Do you want to add anything?

BRADTKE: Yeah, Holbrooke is a subject of at least ten or fifteen minutes, because he's a figure in himself. And there were a couple of the other trips, one Middle East trip and one Bosnia-related trip.

Q: Do you have time to do that now, or do you want to do it next time?

BRADTKE: I've got to leave between five and 5:15.

Q: Yup, that would be now. Well, it's five pm.

BRADTKE: Well, maybe we can do the two trips instead of Holbrooke.

Q: Let's do that. So, there are two trips that are vivid in your memory.

BRADTKE: Yes, one of them—didn't I do this before? This was a Middle East trip where we ended up going to Lebanon. The military at the last minute said, "No helicopter," and we had to go in overland?

Q: Yes, we did that.

BRADTKE: Then I'll save the other one, because this is a Holbrooke trip. It's a trip when the foreign ministers of the so-called Contact Group were going to meet in London to talk about Srebrenica. Holbrooke just didn't show. He claimed he had an earache, and he couldn't go on the trip, and he left Christopher to deal with this on his own.

Q: So that's the story.

BRADTKE: Yes, that's the story, but it's part of the whole Holbrooke—

Q: Like Kissinger getting sick in Islamabad—

BRADTKE: It's a part of my experience with Holbrooke, which kind of goes across a range of feelings.

Q: Hungering and thirsting for more. And next time we will get more! Thanks.

BRADTKE: Next time let's not wait so long so we don't lose the thread.

Q: I totally agree. Thanks.

St. Patrick's Day 2017. The sun is shining, the snow is melting—

BRADTKE: Thank God!

Q: —and we have a song in our hearts!

BRADTKE: I don't know about that! But at least the sun is shining, and the snow is melting!

You'd asked me about exceptional trips and I think I've touched on one. Another one that is strong in my memory—I don't know if this is the one we had in mind when we stopped or not—but it was in 1995 in the aftermath of the massacre at Srebrenica. We had been struggling with our policy mightily, and the fact that we were unable to stop, or the Dutch were unable to stop the massacre just showed how incapable and incompetent that the peacekeeping efforts were in Bosnia. We were unable to protect these people.

Q: Was it the Dutch who were—?

BRADTKE: Yes. Well, I think it was the Dutch who kind of declared it a safe zone and then didn't do anything to protect the Bosnians. This is a little vague, but Srebrenica was just a horrible wake-up call that we were not doing enough. But nobody really knew what we should be doing, and this is where it kind of gets into a bit of Dick Holbrooke. I may have to go back, and then come back.

Holbrooke had been very energetic in this period. He'd been traveling to the region. He'd been engaging and he'd been working with Bob Frasure, who was nominally the special envoy for Bosnia. Holbrooke was the assistant secretary for European affairs. I think I've talked a little bit about Stephen Oxman, his predecessor, who was just overmatched and had this horrific hearing in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Q: I'm sorry, Frasure was envoy to the Balkans?

BRADTKE: He was the special envoy for this issue. So it was clear that the international community had to respond in some fashion, and we agreed to go to London for a conference, the British, the French, the Germans, [and] others, to try to decide what we were going to do, and also to put down a marker about further activities like this by the Bosnian Serbs. There was another enclave at Gorazde that we were keen to protect. The French were being very aggressive about helicopters going in and being quite muscular.

So the conference was called on very short notice; it was going to be a quick response. As I say, Dick Holbrooke was not an easy person. I think even his admirers recognize that he was not an easy person—and I'll come back to why this is relevant to this trip—but I'd not had the happiest of histories with him. Going all the way back to when I was in Legislative Affairs, and I was the principal deputy to Wendy Sherman, I had worked on Holbrooke's confirmation hearing as ambassador to Germany. We got to know each other a little bit. He asked me to go out to Bonn as his deputy, and I think to his shock, I said "No." I wasn't terribly comfortable with him, I was perfectly happy working for Wendy Sherman, who I thought was a superb boss.

Q: Holbrooke was assistant for Europe?

BRADTKE: This was when he was being confirmed as ambassador to Germany.

Q: And you were on as the DCM, is that it?

BRADTKE: He asked me to be his DCM. So I said, "No," and he took it personally. This was a man of such an enormous ego that it never occurred to him that somebody might say no to him. He literally accused me of having some kind of—I don't know what to say—kind of relationship with Wendy Sherman; that she had wrapped me around her little finger kind of thing. It was really on that level of personal accusation. But I was happy where I was, and he went off to Germany. I then moved on to work for [Warren] Christopher. Eventually he [Holbrooke] came back to be the assistant secretary [and] of course we ran into each other again.

To be honest, he was brought on because he was a "bull in a china shop," and the policy needed to be shaken up, and we needed somebody who could be forceful with thugs in that part of the world—I get all that. But I thought he carried it to a level that, particularly inside the building, didn't need to be. He tried to run over people, and I thought he was flat out disrespectful to the secretary of state. He and Christopher knew each other. Christopher tolerated this because—as I think I've said earlier in this conversation—Christopher was very decent, but a somewhat reserved man. And here's this guy who comes storming in and insists he's got to see him [Christopher], it's got to be right away, and he needs Christopher to do this, do that. He was very aggressive, very aggressive.

Q: I just want to say for the record, many people say so.

BRADTKE: Right. So my job was—and we talked about this—partly to be a gatekeeper for Christopher, [to] try to protect Christopher from demands on his time, to make sure that he had time to think, that he had time to deal with all the issues he had to deal with, and that he didn't become the Bosnian desk officer, which of course ran me into Holbrooke on a fairly regular basis.

It was Peter Tarnoff, the under secretary for political affairs, who I think captured this when he said [to me], "You know, Holbrooke is not very sensitive, and he doesn't recognize that there are people who don't like him, but he *knows* you don't like him!" It was literally a case where there were times when I had to body block Holbrooke to keep him from intruding on Christopher's private space.

Q: As we say to veterans, "Thank you for your service."

BRADTKE: Yes. Christopher usually worked in the back office in the secretary of state's office—the private office, not the ceremonial outer office where he met visitors, but the back office. There were only a couple of chairs in there, the most sensitive meetings were [held] in there; it's where I would go in the mornings and do paperwork with him. Off of that back office, was a private bathroom. And this is such classic Holbrookian behavior—and maybe my memory's a little vague—I'd say at least one of every three or four times he came up to see Christopher in the back office he'd say, "Chris, I need to use your bathroom." It was like—and this is terrible, the man is dead and he deserves

respect—but it was like a dog peeing on another dog's spot! It was a power trip for Holbrooke! No one else did that! No one else would have thought of walking right into the secretary of state's private office and saying, "I've got to use your bathroom!"

Q: Now, it's also no secret that he wanted that job, and continued wanting it up until Clinton got it, is that correct?

BRADTKE: Yes, I think that's correct. I don't know that personally.

Q: Or he thought it was his to take. He felt entitled, I think.

BRADTKE: I think that he felt—given his career—it was his destiny; he was entitled to it. In any case, we had a very rocky relationship. As Christopher's executive assistant, his gatekeeper, this guy comes into the office and says he wants to use his bathroom! Use the bathroom out in the hall, for God's sake, I mean there are plenty of bathrooms in the State Department! It's not like this is the only one!

So again, we had a strained relationship, and there were plenty of ways to get around me. There was Tom Donilon, and Strobe Talbott and Toria Nuland, Strobe's executive assistant. They all tried to help him, if that's the right word, but I was kind of the resistance. I was willing to push back on some of the things he asked Christopher to do—got to make this phone call; got to talk to this person; got to see you right away; got to drop everything. So we had a strained relationship.

One of the things that kind of always stuck in my mind, that lessened my opinion of him, was the aftermath of Srebrenica. As I said, [it was a] terrible massacre, nobody knew what to do, but we had to do something. We had to stabilize the situation, map out a new strategy, move forward somehow. There was going to be this meeting in London—very short notice—and Holbrooke announces he can't go to the meeting with Christopher; that he's got an ear infection. The net result was we got on the plane to go to London with no papers, with nothing from Holbrooke, no strategy, no objectives for this meeting. He's dead now, it's not fair he can't rebut this, but it was as if he didn't know what to do, and the result was he decided he was too sick to go on the trip, and he couldn't produce any papers, or have his people produce any paper. One of the very rare times—I can't think of another time in my two years with Christopher—when we got on a plane without the usual—

Q: There's no such thing as people not producing a paper! It could only be the person in charge saying, "Don't do this."

BRADTKE: We got on the plane with nothing. It was Tom Donilon and Jim Steinberg who, on the overnight flight to London, crafted a strategy that got us through that meeting. It didn't solve the Bosnian problem. But I just felt that Holbrooke had consciously or unconsciously opted out; that he didn't know what to do, or he knew what

to do but didn't think he could sell it. He just decided to opt out of any responsibility for what was going to happen.

Q: Could you explain that a little more. What possible motive? He did it for a reason; you've just suggested two. He was panicked, or when you say he couldn't sell it, you mean to the British, the French and the Germans, or—

BRADTKE: Within the administration, but I don't think that was the case. He was not shy. We could have heard from him, "Here's what you've got to go there and do, I'm too sick to go." He was not the kind of guy who was not going to argue for his position.

Q: Even if they had a meltdown his people were working on papers—

BRADTKE: A very odd situation. In retrospect and at the time I held it against him that at a moment of crisis he did not produce for the secretary of state. He let the secretary of state, who had a hell of a lot of other issues to work, get on an airplane to go to a high-level meeting at a moment of crisis with basically nothing.

So that was something I'll never forget. We talked already about Dayton where Holbrooke and his team—he had some really loyal people—who did a superb job. People like Chris Hill, Jack Zetkulic, and others. And I get it, they did a lot of hard work at Dayton; they put the package together. But I do feel that Holbrooke, because if anything he was a self-promoter, managed to ensure that he got the lion's share of the credit. But I thought he was needlessly abrasive. I talked about the moment at Dayton when he basically said, "We're leaving! It's hopeless; we're going home." And Christopher said, "No, we're going to give this another shot."

The way he treated the allies at Dayton was shameless. Okay the British, the French, they were desperate; they would do anything we wanted, but he was gratuitously insulting toward them. He would tell things to the press before he would tell it to the allies. He kept them in the dark right up to the end as to what was happening. The British envoy was a woman named Pauline Neville-Jones, Carl Bildt was the EU's guy. He just treated them in a way that I thought was not the way Christopher would have wanted them treated. And he could get away with it! I get it! But to me it wasn't the kind of behavior that I thought was necessary or productive in the long term. And it just left me with even harder feelings toward him than I'd started out with. Again, some of this goes all the way back to the initial time I knew him when I was working in congressional affairs.

Q: What's the first name?

BRADTKE: Kati. Kati Marton.

Q: Even Kati Marton, t-o-n, right; even she admits that he had extreme personality quirks; however, she's very devoted to his—

BRADTKE: Yes, and he got her to sit on the margins of some of the meetings in Dayton that he wouldn't let the Europeans sit on!

Q: I've heard her speak about that. She's grateful to him for that. Now aside from being possibly crazy, is there any other hypothetical motive he would have, for it sounds like sabotage?

BRADTKE: I don't think it was conscious. I think I've seen more of an abdication of a responsibility by somebody who didn't know what to do in that situation, and didn't want to take responsibility at that moment. So intentional sabotage? No. There was too much at stake, and a huge failure would have swallowed him as well, but I think it reached the point where policy was breaking down.

Q: How much of this was spite? Not being in charge.

BRADTKE: No, I don't think so. It's a man who had a huge ego, who was a relentless self-promoter who reaches a point—and I know he's dead and I don't mean to be disrespectful—but he reached a point where he didn't know what to do, couldn't face up to it, and as I say, just opted out. That doesn't mean that at other times he didn't step up. I think after Bob Frasure was killed when the armored car he was driving rolled over a mountainside, I give Dick [Holbrooke] full credit. He stepped right up. He saw that as an opportunity to kind of really push hard forward and he did it; I don't begrudge him that. At Dayton he built a team and [developed] enough of a relationship with the parties that Christopher could come in and kind of maneuver it to the final stages. So again, I'm not totally negative!

I don't want to impose my personal feelings here, but I do feel that Srebrenica and the aftermath of the London trip was a moment where he just did not step up.

Q: That's very dramatic.

BRADTKE: Go ahead. I've got an aftermath to the story of my relationship with Holbrooke.

Q: In your aftermath can you just give us a chronology of what happened after the London conference in the world, in the Balkans. But your aftermath's first.

BRADTKE: Yes, I mean the aftermath of London was that there really was no peace agreement, but we edged closer to using NATO air power. And then the Croatians had built up their strength and that the combination, and this is my own theory about how we finally got to Dayton by the end of 1995—in November, it was NATO air power and Croatian armed forces on the ground who pushed the Serbs out of parts of Croatia they were holding, and were rolling them up in Bosnia. So after years of no capable force, we finally had a capable military force on the ground, and we had air power backing us up. That combination put pressure on Milosevic to show up at Dayton and do the deal.

Q: So you think the Croatian military was a key element?

BRADTKE: Absolutely, and I think Holbrooke would have acknowledged the same. To close this chapter so to speak, after I finished working for Christopher I ended up in London as the deputy chief of mission. We can go back to that, but who should show up in London working on his book? Dick Holbrooke! He also knew my wife. I can't exactly recall where she served with him or knew him, but the DCM's residence in London is superb. It's a magnificent place. It's called Wychwood House. I don't quite remember how this request came and how we offered our house—it may have been my wife—but Holbrooke showed up in London, and he needed a place where he could hole up and write. It may have been my long suffering wife who offered him the beautiful guest suite on the second floor of Wychwood House, which had a small kitchen and was very elegant, very comfortable. So he ended up staying with us! He barely emerged from the room. When he needed something my wife would get it for him, coffee, tea, lunch, he had it brought up. So we took pretty good care of him in that period.

Q: Which must have seemed like an endless period. How long was he there?

BRADTKE: I'd have to verify this; either it was a week or seemed like a week. Probably it was a couple of days! But that also helped our relationship. I think he decided I wasn't so bad after all that I'd put up with him. So we then kind of moved to a better place.

Q: Maybe to Marsha Barnes' credit?

BRADTKE: It's the classic story of the spouse being likeable and the other spouse being kind of a miserable person! And people go, "How can he be married to such a nice person like her?!"

Q: We're both laughing. The transcriber will—

BRADTKE: There's an epilogue to the story. When I was ambassador in Croatia, Holbrooke came out to Croatia, and this was his first visit since the aftermath of the war. I took him around to see people, the president of Croatia, others that he knew. Holbrooke and I had a really good long conversation. He stayed at this wonderful old hotel in Zagreb called the Esplanade, which is this great hotel that was part of the Orient Express network. I distinctly remember this conversation when we talked about Dayton, the shortcomings of Dayton, and why we hadn't gotten a better deal at Dayton. He admitted some of his mistakes, which was not the kind of Holbrooke that I knew in an earlier stage, who would say that in retrospect he should have gotten a better deal. But it was just a different kind of conversation.

Q: Was he a Jekyll and Hyde?

BRADTKE: A little bit. I mean, if he liked you he would flatter you, and if he thought you could help, he would do that. But if you were his enemy or he thought you were his enemy, he could turn on you like that!

Q: There was nothing for him to gain for himself in making you his first visit when you were ambassador.

BRADTKE: It was just a question of timing; he'd consciously decided to stay away from that part of the world.

Q: But he came to Zagreb?

BRADTKE: Yes, but, this was now maybe 2007. So it's more than a decade after the war.

Q: So it's part of his normal duties, possibly he wanted to have peace or some understanding with you because you had figured —

BRADTKE: I think London kind of took some of the heat out of the personal relationship, and the timing of this visit was coincidental, the fact that I was there. He didn't come because I was there; he [came] because he was traveling in that part of the world, and it would be perfectly reasonable that he would come to Zagreb and see the Croatians.

Q: Let me open a parenthesis here, just because I'm curious. Students of foreign affairs that study schools of thought, realism, idealism, and they seem to be fascinated with so-called realism, [e.g.] Kissinger— My question is, do you have comments about the importance of personal relationships in matters that really are not personal but are geopolitical, can you comment on the importance? And is it not a paradox that it is so important when we're talking about genocide and—

BRADTKE: Yes, does it outweigh everything else? No, but are there moments in negotiations when you're trying to resolve an issue where things like trust, being able to look the person in the eye, and say, "You can count on me. Please do this. It will work for you. This is in your long term interest." Credibility, trust. integrity, I think those things can make a difference.

Q: I think you're making this comment referring both to adversaries and colleagues, because even with the same objectives there can be huge differences in tactics, right? [Although] the strategy may be similar.

BRADTKE: Right. Dick Holbrooke is dead, he can't speak any more for himself. But I always thought that in the time I worked for Christopher there were two strikingly contrasting styles of negotiating tough issues. There was Holbrooke, the bull in the china shop. And there was Dennis Ross, whom I hugely admire, whom I thought was a brilliant negotiator, creative, effective. [He] didn't always agree with Christopher, didn't always

get what he wanted from Christopher but was respectful. [He] never lost his temper, never shouted at people, never flew off the handle, [and] always had himself under control. In some very frustrating moments in the Middle East peace process, and this whole period, Dennis had such a different style.

I guess my only point was, well, people saw Holbrooke as somebody who could knock heads when we needed that kind of approach. I don't agree with that. I don't think you have to be that way to be successful as a negotiator, even if the parties are difficult. I saw that with Dennis. I mean he was dealing with Arafat. He was dealing with Bibi Netanyahu. He was dealing with Israelis and he was dealing with [Hafez al-]Assad—the father—for God's sake!

Q: Who himself was a murderer!

BRADTKE: And a thug. But Dennis, it was just such a difference, and we made—I think I told you—like thirteen trips to the Middle East with Dennis. [It was] exhausting, tiring, everybody kind of working flat out. He didn't lose his temper. He didn't shout at people.

Q: Was he NEA assistant secretary, or what was he?

BRADTKE: No, he was the special envoy for the Middle East.

Q: He himself after all these years I think I've heard him saying, "I tried and I tried for forty years,"—and he was kind of disappointed.

BRADTKE: It was the work of his career. He started out, and I'm not the expert on Dennis' background, but he was working for Bob Zoellick and then kind of more and more focused on this issue. And then continued. He was so brilliant at this that he was brought back by Clinton, and I think he helped Obama at the beginning as well. So he's been relied on by multiple presidents and secretaries of state. And again, to me it's just such a contrast in styles; that you don't have to be, with all due respect to Holbrooke, a bully to be an effective negotiator. That there are other ways to do this. And all of acceptance of Holbrooke's rougher edges and his ego and his self-promotion, because people would say but he has to be that way. You don't have to be that way!

Q: So of course I have to ask, because I've seen you negotiate with DOD and post 9/11, do you have a role model, or several, in negotiations? Is that a fair question?

BRADTKE: Yeah, I'm probably not as calm personally as Dennis or as Christopher, but my style is much more in that vein. It is [important] to try to keep your ego under control; not to identify your own value, if you will, with the outcome of the negotiation. It doesn't prove you're a good or bad person. It doesn't prove you're any smarter. It's just can you try to help get this done? I think that's much more the Dennis Ross, Warren Christopher style than the Dick Holbrooke style.

Q: Thinking back earlier, you had a friendship with [Lawrence] Eagleburger. Would you say when you think back before you were in the front office, any other individuals who stand out? Eagleburger you've mentioned.

BRADTKE: Yes, and this jumps ahead a couple of notches. I've always felt that any boss you had was an opportunity to learn something, [whether] good or bad. Eagleburger, Wendy Sherman, who had an extremely good way of trying to make everyone feel part of the team. We'll come to Bill Crowe, who was my ambassador in London.

Q: Admiral!

BRADTKE: Admiral Crowe!

Q: Now, not digging for dirt or gossip, but you've mentioned people I have to ask about. [Strobe] Talbott, Toria [Victoria] Nuland, [Tom] Donilon, Jim Steinberg, Chris Hill, are you going to have observations of how each one was effective?

BRADTKE: These people—

Q: We can skip it, we can skip it. Do you want to wait until they're dead? (laughs)

BRADTKE: I don't know how to say what I have to say.

Q: Well, let me put it this way. Could you give an example of strength with any of these? Talbott, Nuland, Donilon?

BRADTKE: Strobe had a really superb sense of the Russians. [With] Yeltsin, he smoothed over a lot of rough edges, working with President Clinton, because he was close to the president, the president trusted him. Christopher gave him a lot of leeway to work with the Russians. Strobe was respectful of the secretary. I mean he was a policy person in his own right, who was catapulted into this job, and he learned that being deputy was not necessarily the job he thought it was going to be. I remember the first time the secretary went on vacation, when Strobe was deputy. Strobe said that since Christopher wasn't going to be there, this would be a good time for *him* to go on vacation! Because he figured the secretary was gone, nothing was going to happen. But he had to understand that the job of deputy is to be there when the boss is gone. He didn't get that at the beginning. But to his credit, he learned over time that he had to do this. He was loyal to the secretary. He didn't do things behind his back. He was respectful, smart, and in some ways more of a policy person even than the secretary. The secretary was a lawyer. Strobe was an historian and a policy person. I never saw Strobe trying to use that to demean or denigrate what Christopher could do. He was always respectful, always. Strobe had his own channels to the White House, but I never had the sense that he used those to undermine Christopher. He was always fair and direct.

Donilon was crucial to Christopher's ability to do things because of his political stance, his ability to be the person who could go in—I think I talked about this—and tell Christopher that he needed to do something he didn't want to do. We'll get to some other stories along that line. One of the hardest things in the bureaucracy is to tell the boss that they've done a bad job or they have to do something they don't want to do. Donilon was kind of the last one who would talk to Christopher before he went out to do a press availability. In the Middle East trips in particular everybody's exhausted, and Donilon knew that if Christopher went out and looked tired, sounded tired that it would convey a message, that he couldn't do that. It didn't mean that he had to go out and smile and be Pollyanna, that wasn't his style, but he had to sound energized, engaged. He couldn't sound tired. Defeated is not the right word, but Donolin could say, "Chris, are you ready for this?" And one of the lessons I learned from Donilon was he would never let Christopher go out and do something when he wasn't really ready. It didn't matter how late we were. Christopher was someone who loved to be on time. Not being on time was kind of [if] not a mortal, at least a venial sin! But Donolin would stand there and say, "No, let's go over that again. Let's make sure we know how to answer this question. Let's not go into that meeting." And he was right. Take five more minutes; be sure you know what you're going to do and be five minutes late.

Q: Did it ever get to the point where he'd say, "Don't face the press! You seem too tired." Did that ever happen?

BRADTKE: I can't recall this. I saw the opposite, which was, "I know you're tired Chris, but you've got to sound more upbeat, you've got to sound more positive."

Q: Did you call him Chris?

BRADTKE: I would never call him Chris.

Q: No, but did I mean does—

BRADTKE: Donolin called him Chris. Holbrooke called him Chris, Strobe called him Chris. I could never call him Chris. He was always Mr. Secretary.

Q: I didn't know he had a nickname. And just can you—

BRADTKE: And Donilon, for a guy who came on the political side also, had a really good political sense, and he did Christopher's politics with the White House, to a certain extent with [Congress] working with Wendy. He had a feel for and a way of keeping some of the heat [away] from Christopher. Not easy, and I give Tom huge credit for that. He made Christopher a lot more effective. He could do things with Christopher nobody else could.

I talked about Steinberg already—just a policy-a-minute person! He'd get on the plane and he'd just have one idea after another. He would rewrite papers, he would sharpen

them, he'd give them an edge, he would toughen up the talking points. He had an encyclopedic knowledge in the sense that he could get a paper from NEA or EAP [Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs] or EUR or WHA [Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs] and he could make it better whatever the bureau. He really [was] a brilliant policy thinker, but not just the thinker, he could articulate strategies and sharpen papers and talking points—very critical to success. Donilon and Steinberg, they were a very strong team with Holbrooke but also with Dennis Ross.

Q: I'm not trying to lengthen this but I have to ask, because there's been so much talk about Toria Nuland and Chris Hill, especially after Hill published his autobiography. Some people thought it was self-serving. I thought it was fascinating. Can you think of useful positive points that would be—?

BRADTKE: I've known Chris from the time he served at the beginning of his career in Belgrade, in the late 1970s, a long time ago. I like Chris, I admire him. I think he was the engine room so to speak for a lot of Holbrooke's ideas. He had personal courage. When he was ambassador to Macedonia, the embassy came under attack. The work he did on Kosovo; I'm a big admirer of Chris. Again, [he was] steady, solid, unflappable, and he could put up with Holbrooke.

Q: Yeah, and there's a scene towards the end of the Hill book where I think it is Holbrooke who says I want you in Iraq. Does that make sense? And he described himself as being completely blindsided by that, and rising to the occasion.

BRADTKE: On Toria, it was sometimes not the easiest relationship because I was Christopher's executive assistant and she was Strobe's executive assistant, and sometimes it was my duty to say "no" to things. There was a time when Christopher asked for Strobe to come to a meeting. There was a push that she could come instead, and I put my foot down. I mean he had asked for Strobe to come, Strobe wouldn't come—that's fine—but she couldn't be his substitute. Toria, again a very smart woman, very ambitious, very ambitious. She was Strobe's foreign policy person.

Q: She was Nick Burns' DCM in NATO, and I think that she—

BRADTKE: Then she came back to be the ambassador to NATO.

Q: I think it was when she was DCM that she developed—I actually saw him putting her out front, developing, I actually saw that a few times.

BRADTKE: And to her credit. I was the deputy assistant secretary dealing with NATO at the time; we'd moved into different incarnations. I'm a huge fan of Nick as well, but there were times when Nick was operating at the high end of the policy chain, and we were back in Washington trying to get our NATO mission's instructions out, trying to manage a very difficult relationship with the Pentagon, this was in early post 9/11, and get the Pentagon's clearance on something for the mission. As I say, Nick was in the

stratosphere and helped, but Toria and I worked very well and closely together to get stuff fixed that needed to be fixed and to come up with strategies to get around problems, and to get the interagency together.

Q: And a famous quote is, "Fuck the EU"; that was a telephone conversation.

BRADTKE: Yeah, Toria's pretty outspoken, too.

Q: I mean, the joke there is I think it was a phone conversation which was picked up by the Kremlin and distributed in order to embarrass U.S. foreign policy. And the pity of it is, she really said that at the very end of that conversation.

BRADTKE: Well, we've now moved beyond that to things far more shocking than that!

Q: Now we don't say it on the phone; we say it on the microphone! In fact, just today, St. Patrick's Day, Angela Merkel had to do a joint press briefing with POTUS and there were big differences. She of course was the more smooth-spoken one, but the president said, with these trade deals, the German negotiators were much better than ours! That's what he said today.

Well, thanks for giving us a little more face to some of these people.

BRADTKE: Well, I've worked well with all of these people and I don't mean to disparage anybody.

Q: You haven't, you have not disparaged anybody.

BRADTKE: And like all of us, including myself, we make mistakes; we have flaws. I certainly learned a lot in the two years I worked for Christopher. I don't think I came into that job prepared for what was coming. Maybe we could stop there.

Q: We're now in 1997?

BRADTKE: We're in the summer of 1996.

Q: And it's time for you to get out of the kitchen.

BRADTKE: I'd been doing this for two years, and I really did not want to continue. I just felt two years—the travel, the hours—that it was time for me to move [on]. I confess I also have this certain Foreign Service bias that you accumulate—again this is going to sound self-serving or even worse—you do a good job; you accumulate some chits. But if you wait too long, you can't cash those chits!

Q: That's not self-serving, that's smart!

BRADTKE: I also thought this was my best chance to cash in those chits. Donolin [and I], we got along well. Tom was not necessarily easy; he was very demanding. But he was loyal to his troops, and I think he saw me as one of his troops because I was managing the front door to Christopher's office, and he was literally sitting in that little suite with a direct backdoor into the secretary's office. So between the two of us, we tried to manage the front door and the back door! He said, "Where do you want to go?" I said, "I want to go to London; I want to be the DCM in London. I decided I was going to swing for the fences and this was always a dream job for me. Admiral Bill Crowe was the ambassador [and] I didn't know Crowe. Crowe actually had somebody else in mind he was going to move up, somebody from within the embassy. I know Tom leaned on the admiral to take me. And to prejudge the story, I think it worked out okay, but Crowe certainly was not keen on taking me at the beginning, and here too was a job that in retrospect, being honest, I wasn't quite ready for either.

Q: I don't think any of us have ever been ready for any of our jobs, and everyone can be described as one that seemed daunting at the beginning and which you found your stride.

BRADTKE: It was a big management job, more than twenty-eight agencies or offices of agencies, three hundred some people. [The UK had] a very complicated relationship with the United States, covering just about every imaginable issue. You were a public person in the UK and London. Lots of dealings with Washington. I think I did bring some things to the table because I knew the secretary, I knew the secretary's staff, I knew the assistant secretaries, I knew some of the people at the NSC who'd traveled with Christopher. So that piece I brought with me. But, the management piece was different. In Christopher's office I managed two special assistants, the protocol woman, Liz Lineberry, and the woman who supported me, maybe five people.

Q: And now you have three hundred.

BRADTKE: And at H where I was PDAS [principal deputy assistant secretary] maybe thirty. Now I've got a big interagency operation, I've got senior people. So it was, as I say, a big step and I wasn't perhaps completely ready for it at the start. I would say it took me at least four months, maybe longer, to start to relax! I confess, probably because I felt I wasn't ready, that I was too prone to intervene, if that's the right word, or to try to show that I could do things, to be too directive, to some of the section chiefs. And that was something, as I got more confident, and as I felt I'd built my relationship with Crowe, I could step back a little bit and not pretend I was the super political section chief, or the super econ section chief, but just let these people do their job.

Q: I don't know if these interviews will ever be used for lessons learned. We now have a secretary of state who everybody says we don't hear from. This might be very smart, we don't know, because we don't understand. Do you have things that come to mind that you would advise future people in this position—DCM London? I mean you described two styles just now, maybe not consciously, not intervening, maybe having to prove that you're really there, but you said as you felt more secure you also loosened up. Now, any

advice for people in large managerial positions like that in terms of what to do during the first two months?

BRADTKE: Yes. I'd like to think I learned, and that was a lesson I certainly tried to apply in Zagreb, when I became ambassador, and I feel that I did with some success. A little bit less at the NSC. I think I tried to do this when I was in the EUR as a deputy assistant secretary and ultimately as the PDAS, [just] be yourself. If you've gotten that far, have a little more trust in yourself. You don't have to do it the way everybody else did it. You don't have to do it the way your predecessor did it, you do it your own way; particularly in the job of DCM at a big embassy like London. You've got a lot of people who didn't get there because they screwed up! They got there because they were good at what they did. They earned the trust of their bosses, and they beat out competition from lots of people to get their jobs. You didn't need to micromanage them! You needed to be there to be helpful, because there would be points where they all inevitably needed some help. You needed to make sure that they were hooked up with the ambassador's agenda. This also comes to the lessons [I learned from] Bill Crowe, I learned more about management for perhaps better leadership from him than anyone else. And this is, again, getting more comfortable with myself. I learned from others, Wendy Sherman and later from Beth Jones. But [with] Crowe, first of all, he had his ego under control. It was never about him. This is someone who had been chairman of the Joint Chiefs [of Staff], for God's sake! He was a friend of the president's. But, he was very down to earth.

To mention one of the examples, I had walk-in privileges in this office. A couple of times I'd walk in and he'd be playing Solitaire. He didn't care if he wasn't busy every minute! I'd walk in and see him playing Solitaire! I can't imagine Dick Holbrooke or Warren Christopher but you know— There were times when it was slow, and he wasn't worried that I would think something less of him, or that it would affect his self-image or my image of him. But he was in there playing Solitaire! It was a measure of fact that he trusted me that if everything was going okay, then he was okay! But keeping your ego under control. Big lessons.

Second lesson from Crowe, that in a mission like London you have to be positive. This is a Colin Powell lesson as well—positivity. In London in January or February when the days are short and dark—and we'll come back to this—I would have half a dozen people, well that's a bit of an exaggeration, outside my office, complaining about their neighbors, about their bosses, whatever. So the embassy staff meetings could have been a real downer. And Crowe wasn't Pollyanna; he wasn't ignoring difficult things or pretending everything was fine. But he would come in positive. The result was after the staff meeting, everybody went out feeling better! I would watch how this rippled right through the embassy, where people would feel positive. They would feel the boss is in a good mood, I'm in a good mood, they'd come back to their office, they'd do their little readout of the country team meeting, everybody in their section would be in a good mood, and whoosh! The embassy would be in a better mood. The power of positivity.

Yes, there are difficult times, nobody's talking about being Pollyanna, nobody's talking about ignoring things, but just trying to create a positive mood, to be positive about getting problems solved, addressing issues. The impact it could have. I watched people go out of the country team meeting, and then I'd maybe wander down to one of the sections. It was like the sun came out! [Crowe was a] very powerful person about being positive. People were watching all the time, they were reading you in the front office. If they were in a bad mood, they were in a bad mood, and the people who worked for them were in a bad mood! It's not that simple, but there's a lot to be said for that.

Then the last lesson—and I'll stop on Crowe after this—the military understand because they're trained and [know] instinctively the importance of the guys and gals at the bottom of the chain of command. I remember one day it was late, and we were struggling with the Northern Ireland problem, which was difficult in that period. Crowe was an older person, I don't know what the politically correct term is. His knees were kind of shot. He was a little older, I don't know how much older he was than I am right now, but he would tire, and that was just a fact. We'd had a long day; I could see he was tired. He's walking slowly towards the elevator because his knees were bad. And there's one of the char ladies, who cleaned the embassy in the evening after everyone was supposed to be gone. The easiest thing in the world would have been for Crowe to blow right past her, get in the elevator, get in the car, and go home where he probably had a reception that night or a dinner. Does he do that? No. He stands there and talks to the char lady, "How are you feeling? What's going on? How are you doing?" Something about the weather, whatever. I thought to myself, "She's going to remember the ambassador cared enough about her and what she does, even though she's the char lady, which is not the section chief; she's not the head of this or that agency. That to me was another powerful lesson. If you're at the top, keep in mind that you're not only leading the section chiefs and that next level down, but that you have the power to really motivate and be a leader for the people all the way down the chain.

Q: And they communicate. Since we're on lessons learned. You've mentioned trust a number of times. Just if this ever becomes a lessons learned thing— The first two months on the job before you are really able to test people's adequacy or competence, what's the default of a DCM in a large post? It doesn't have to be London, it could be Brasilia, or Berlin, when you're not yet in possession of the knowledge you need, what is the default mode of trusting your subordinates?

BRADTKE: I think you have to go in thinking that they know what they're doing. With the political section chief in particular, I don't want to say I felt threatened, but that was the area I knew the best. I thought perhaps this is where I could make my mark. He had very good relations with a lot of senior Brits, and I was maybe a little jealous of that. I thought some of these people should be my contacts. So, was I probably second guessing him? And was that a mistake? Yes. This again comes back to Powell and what he said about his field commanders and what he said about ambassadors, that you're right until you prove to me that you were wrong. I think to a certain extent that it doesn't mean that as DCM you sit back and don't do anything. You need to stay engaged; you do need to

ask people questions. But you don't need to do their jobs, and you have to show some trust that they know what they're doing.

Yes, there are always times—and we'll come to some of these—because there were a couple of really difficult cases where your default position isn't the answer for everything. There are cases where somebody's not doing the job; there's a problem and you've got to intervene, but you need to be selective in how you do that.

Q: Ambassador Bradtke, thank you for a great St. Patrick's Day!

BRADTKE: Thank you!

[Robert A. Bradtke – Tape 20 – April 19, 2018]

Q: We're going to hypnotically go back to the late 1990s, the end of the twentieth century, in London, England.

BRADTKE: —which was a wonderful place to be.

Q: Remembering Admiral Ambassador Crowe. In our last talk we had pretty much gone through your London experience but I wanted to come back to that if there are other recollections, other conclusions. You had some very wonderful things to say about Ambassador Crowe.

BRADTKE: Yes, and this is the danger of doing this a couple weeks apart. There are a couple more things, but I may be repeating myself, but just to deal with, I'll do it quickly. One of the other challenges of being in a large embassy with a lot of Americans is that even if only 2-3 percent have problems, you as the DCM can have serious problems on your hands. And I don't want to mention names, because in some cases there's privacy—

Q: We're talking about personal differences.

BRADTKE: We're talking about child abuse, where the DCM has a statutory obligation to take action. We're talking about spousal abuse. There was a case of an officer who engaged in fraudulent behavior that we had to send home. This is a person who—I don't want to get into names here because of privacy—but it was a case where her supervisor was simply not prepared to recognize this. I felt somewhat vindicated a couple years later when this person was convicted of a violent crime back in Washington. I'm getting out of the elevator and Rich Armitage, who was deputy secretary, was there, and it was right after this happened and it was in the newspapers. He looked at me and he said, "I read this person's file and I saw what you did. You must feel vindicated." I did, because it was a case, and we'd talked about this before, where as a supervisor in the Foreign Service, it's very easy to say, "Let's wait it out. This person's going to leave, I'm going to leave. I'm not going to get into problems, it's too awkward, it's too complicated, and it's too difficult. I'm not going to deal with this." There are times though when you've got to be

prepared to risk being threatened with grievances or other actions, if you have seen evidence of improper behavior, you can't just close your eyes.

Q: When you say statutory requirements, it sounds like the captain of a ship.

BRADTKE: Well, in the case of child abuse, the law requires you to take action. You cannot just say, "I'll deal with this [myself]." You have to report it. As a matter of—

Q: Who's "you?" The DCM? The ambassador?

BRADTKE: The DCM and the ambassador have statutory responsibilities to do things.

Q: I did not know that.

BRADTKE: Yes. Again it's something that you are taught in the DCM/ambassadorial "charm school" but that's where you can't just say I'll deal with this the best I can. You must report these things through channels to DS [Diplomatic Security] so that they can be properly looked at.

Q: Big problems. Criminal actions. What about other DCM duties that would come under a CEO type of heading that would be the normal annoyances and frustrations of a CEO?

BRADTKE: Maybe I'm repeating myself here, but when it was dark in January and February, I had a line of people outside my office that complained about their neighbors, their apartment, their boss, about their not being— Every day there were people who just wanted you to solve their little problems. And when the sun was back out in April, and you had the glorious English summer, nobody was waiting there for you anymore. Another problem, in a big embassy such as London, and I presume this is now the case in so many places, because of the security requirements, everyone was behind closed doors. You really had to work hard to walk around the building because there were all these cipher locks. It also inhibited people from the consular section walking into the political section, or the econ section, and it just was very challenging to create a sense of common purpose and to get people to circulate and to get people to know what other sections were doing, particularly at the middle and junior levels. The senior people got together. They went to the country team meeting, but for the more junior people [it was important] to break down some of these barriers so that they have a chance to see what other people were doing in the embassy, so that they had a chance to see what they might do in another assignment!

Q: Let me betray my own bias here. Do you believe in obligatory contrived social gatherings? I should restate that, but you know what I mean.

BRADTKE: Not necessarily. But at first, for example,—and this is a credit to my wife who's much better at social things than I am—I discovered there were people who had never been to the DCM's residence. So I made a point of systematically being sure that

every American officer and staff member, whatever the rank, had at least one opportunity to be at the DCM's residence for some function, and particularly the more junior people. The political section chief was going to be there when you're having lunch with some member of parliament. But the junior person in the consular section, or somebody in the public affairs office that's well down the totem pole, or an office management specialist; everybody should have had an opportunity at least once in the course of their two or three years to be at the DCM's residence for something.

Q: Not all DCMs in large embassies have that sense, so, as they say, "Thank you for your service."

BRADTKE: Just to reiterate, in a large embassy, even if you have a tiny percentage of people with problems, you can have some real serious problems that require you to spend a lot of your time. I'm telling people things that they really don't care to know. Sometimes the problems were because some agencies felt or the department felt that there was medical or other help in London for people with problems. That their conditions, their problems, could be dealt with, and that's a fair point. And in London as a post, we did have a lot of resources. There was good medical care, there were supportive institutions.

Q: You mean in the embassy of London?

BRADTKE: That's right. You had medical care, you had counseling, psychological care in some cases, and you had care for young children who had disabilities. That was all there, but it sometimes put a lot of burden on the post management, to see that people got the care they needed. Then, sometimes when there were cases when it simply couldn't be dealt with at post, you had to take a deep breath and have somebody from Washington come out or draw this to Washington's attention. And in a few cases people had to return to the United States.

I had a file drawer of problems, problems that couldn't be dealt with by anybody else in the embassy. You needed the ambassador's support but, particularly with my second ambassador, it would be more a case of, "[You] deal with this, I don't want to deal with this!"

Q: Not what you thought you were getting into.

BRADTKE: Right. You think when you're going out to be DCM or the ambassador you're going to deal with big policy issues but it ain't necessarily so! There's a lot of personnel management, and in my case, I was still a rookie. I still had a lot to learn about management and about leadership. I'd like to think I came out of those three years having learned an enormous amount, an enormous amount from Crowe whom I mentioned earlier in this interview, but also in just facing these problems and having to try and figure out how to deal with them. It was a big chunk of my life in London.

Q: Apropos of something you just said, who does the training? I think you used that phrase, in terms of psychological counseling, which none of us are qualified to do, and in caring for elderly family members, what should the department be doing that it is not doing?

BRADTKE: That's a hard one. I'll admit I mean I was lucky in London, the regional psychiatrist was based there, a wonderful, wonderful woman named Esther Roberts. She became one of my right hand advisers. She was a "tough love" person, an African-American woman—skilled, trained, just perfect. I don't know what I'd have done if she hadn't been there. So I had somebody on the scene that when these problems came up I could go and call her in and ask her, "What are we going to do here?"

Q: Were staff reluctant to see her because of concern that it would be on the record?

BRADTKE: No, but sometimes the problems didn't come to her first, they came to me first. Partly [it was] perhaps because of a reluctance to say, "Why do I need to see a regional psychiatrist?" Well, this is maybe your point. It was just hard for people sometimes to admit the kind of problems they have.

Q: That's true I think in society in general. Don't know if it's particular in embassies—they certainly try—but we're not intended to be a therapy group, are we?

BRADTKE: No, and there's also the tension between worldwide availability, which theoretically we're all supposed to be, or were, and being able to make accommodations. And that is the tension.

Q: Do you know the percentages of those who have Class I clearance? Below 50 percent?

BRADTKE: That's interesting. You can't put the burden on some people to go to all the bad places, or to go to all the places where there's no help and to do the hardship tours all the time! There's got to be some balance there and that's tricky. I'm glad I don't have to deal with assignments. But it means there are some times and places like London where there's a slightly disproportionate number of people with problems. I've never really had discussions with my colleagues in those kinds of jobs in say Berlin or Paris.

Q: You know the regional psychiatrist, was that for west Europe?

BRADTKE: Yeah, I think Esther did most of a good chunk of the EUR posts.

Q: Wow, that's huge!

BRADTKE: Yeah, she was spread pretty thin. She traveled a lot, but was based in London. At any rate, I don't know if I've even mentioned the kind of substance of London, and I'm not sure somehow that when I think back that is what I remember. I

remember a lot of the management issues, I remember dealing with a lot of the internal things of the embassy, although there were a lot of fun things you got to do outside the embassy. You were treated by the Brits as a serious person, and you got to do a lot of representational things that were really enjoyable. When I got there John Major was the prime minister, and then he was defeated by Tony Blair. So there was this close Bill Clinton-Tony Blair relationship, working together on Northern Ireland, and a lot of hard work there.

Q: Now the numbers of VIPs and codels [congressional delegations] that go through London, off the charts?

BRADTKE: Astounding! Yes, something like ten thousand visitor nights in the UK from people from all sorts of parts of the U.S. government. It was just an astounding number.

Q: So how do you manage that? You've only got 365 of your own!

BRADTKE: Everybody had to share the burden of taking care of visitors, and I was truly a believer in the importance of taking care of official visitors. Having worked for Warren Christopher and having seen the reputation a post gets when you don't take care of visitors, it was one of my priorities that we were going to take care of people.

Q: Did you dig deep into the mid level and junior officers to give them, did you rotate people being site officers?

BRADTKE: We did try to spread the burden. A lot of it fell on the political and economic sections because we had a lot of policy people coming through.

Q: Was it ever possible to use this as a training opportunity for younger officers?

BRADTKE: Yes, to have the exposure to senior people, and to be the control, or even the site officer, or to be a note taker for the deputy secretary, the assistant secretary. A learning experience [that] really helped people.

Q: Of the ten thousand, how many were frivolous? You don't have to answer that!

BRADTKE: (laughs) Not a lot. I wanted people to go back and say they were well taken care of. Not to toot my own horn, but the residence was on the way from Heathrow [Airport] into town, and I can't say I'd do this for everybody, but I did it for the relatively senior people. You know the department in its cheapness basically expected people to get off a plane after having flown overnight and go right to work! I believed that the wonderful DCM residence called Wychwood House was not just for me to use. So, we would have people—the Jim Steinberg's of the world when he was in policy planning, or the assistant secretaries, or deputy assistant secretaries, people from other agencies in some cases—come to the residence, use the guest suite, which was a very nice suite, which I think I talked about Dick Holbrooke using. You know, a shower, change of

clothes, we'd roll out a nice breakfast and then they'd be ready to go! To me, again, it reflected having been a visitor, having seen how important it was to be taken care of.

Now you're going to have to stop me here, because not every visitor was easy to deal with. Did I tell the Madeleine Albright stories?

Q: No! Everybody's got a Madeleine Albright story! Let's have it! I have to say, she destroyed my agency!

BRADTKE: I don't care whether this could be held against me— She was a frequent visitor to London; this was a time when we were working on Kosovo, and there were a lot of issues and London was a good place to visit and consult. But it was also a time when her daughter lived in London and had a grandchild, and there were even more frequent visits after that happened! These were not always easy to deal with. She and her staff were very demanding. They had a sense of importance. I had worked for a secretary of state myself; I wanted to make any secretary happy and comfortable, but there were times when it was hard to satisfy that sense of importance. So, there was the time when she arrived on a Sunday evening, and she was not going to an official meeting. But, she wanted to visit her daughter and her grandchild, and was put out that stopping at the lights slowed her en route to her daughter's. So, when we arrived at the hotel where she and her staff were staying, first her staff berated me for not being able to take care of this and then she upbraided me personally for her motorcade having to stop at the lights. And I was ordered to raise this with the Brits. It's the only time I've ever been yelled at by any secretary of state. But I dutifully did what I was asked to do. The Brits, used to the occasional strange request for us, politely explained that even the Queen herself had to stop at stop lights when she was coming in on a Sunday night from Heathrow to Buckingham Palace!

Q: But it wasn't you, it was the people above you!

BRADTKE: What compounded this story to me also—besides being yelled at in front of other people by the secretary of state for not dealing with this, or not successfully—was that her press spokesman, Jamie Rubin, came to me afterwards, indeed after I'd already gone from London, and some reporter had wind of this, and Jamie asked me to lie about this. He said, "He thinks he's got this story about how she had wanted to have a motorcade that didn't stop. You talk to this guy and tell him that's not true." It's the only time in my career that someone asked me to lie. And I did not do so.

Q: That's outrageous!

BRADTKE: But that was her staff. I'm sure she had many positive qualities, but dealing with her and her staff's sense of her importance was just not easy. I use names here because I feel this is part of the record, and it was such a contrast for me working with Warren Christopher who was so low maintenance, and then to see the other extreme, just extremely high maintenance on the other end.

Q: I can just say that in the trenches some of us who were in less important countries had similar experiences. We all have stories similar to this, but this is the most notable that I've heard.

BRADTKE: I'm kind of rambling here, but there was one more follow up. Well after my retirement, Marsha and I hosted a retirement dinner for a very senior career officer, who was also a good friend. During the dinner it turned out that when we were inviting other guests, someone I didn't know said to my wife, who did the invitations, that he knew me. When he arrived for dinner, I said, "I'm not sure we've met." He said, "No, we haven't, but I know you because when Madeleine Albright used to come to Tokyo, the DCM and I had to deal with her insistence on motorcade protocols, and what they would say to us is, 'You can't be like Bradtke in London and not do this.' For us it was great because we knew that we were not alone in dealing with this!" (laughs)

Q: Vindication!

BRADTKE: It's funny that that's how he knew me; that their staff had badgered them the same way and used me as an example of how not to do it! They felt that as long as I was holding out, they were going to, too.

[Robert A. Bradtke – Tape 21 – April 19, 2018]

BRADTKE: We should leave London and move on!

Q: Well maybe. That story speaks for itself; it's on the record. I'm delighted. We were in 1999. You were three years, 1999–2002?

BRADTKE: I was there from 1996–1999.

Q: Nine eleven. So shall we get to your time as EUR PDAS?

BRADTKE: Well, there's two years in the NSC. I was there [in London from] 1996–1999.

Q: Right, two years before 9/11. Okay, let's go from 1999 to—

BRADTKE: Two thousand one. So my wife Marsha took leave without pay while we were in London. She just concluded that it was too hard to have an assignment in the embassy when I was the DCM.

Q: She could not be under your supervision.

BRADTKE: Right, nor could she be supervised by someone I supervised, and to work outside the embassy would be awkward. So at any rate she very generously did not work.

But when we came up to the, "What were we going to do next?" we pretty much concluded we had to go back to Washington, and I wasn't sure what I wanted to do. So Glen Davies, who was someone I knew who was the executive secretary at the NSC, was interested in replacing me in London. We were kind of communicating back and forth, and then he said to me, "Hey, how about you come back here and replace me?"

I thought, "Okay, that's a great job, a fascinating job." I knew Sandy Berger very slightly. I knew Jim Steinberg, his deputy, more because Jim had been, as I mentioned when we talked about Christopher, head of policy planning. I guess it was sometime during January or February 1999 when I was looking for an assignment. So, the idea was I'd come back to Washington and talk to Sandy. So I flew back. I spent like twenty-four hours in Washington, interviewed with him, and he offered me the job—much to my surprise! So Glen and I switched jobs and I came back in the summer of 1999 to be the NSC executive secretary.

Q: Okay, it sounds in function a little bit like being on the seventh floor running things. Is there any parallel?

BRADTKE: It's a strange job and every administration does it differently. Every NSC advisor does it differently. I've talked to Glen; I've talked to people who replaced me, and people who did this and before me. There's no one kind of model. It had some fixed elements. It's curious that nowhere in the National Security Act and nowhere in legislation is the job of the national security advisor mentioned. The statutory head in the 1947 legislation is executive secretary!

Q: No!

BRADTKE: Yes! So you, as the executive secretary, are the statutory head, not the national security advisor.

Q: That's kind of like chief of state and chief of government.

BRADTKE: Yes, I don't know about that, but occasionally you had to be the one who signed because you also had the authority to sign. But basically you're right. The job was to help the national security advisor manage the staff and manage the paper flow and deal with other elements of the White House, the domestic side of the White House. One of my partners in this was a wonderful woman named Mara Rudman, who was effectively a second deputy national security advisor. She was the chief of staff, and we sat in adjacent offices in the West Wing, and worked together very closely. I had responsibilities for the paper flow. Most of the paper that would go to the president that would be produced by the NSC staff would come to the Executive Secretariat where I had a couple of deputies. We would review the paper, make sure that people knew how to spell and people had not put in typos, and that it more or less addressed the question. Then it would go up to Sandy or Jim to be signed off by them, and would come back down to us, and it would go from us to what was called the White House staff secretary's office.

Q: Who created the tasks? Was it the NSA, the advisor? There must have been various—

BRADTKE: We generated the taskings based on what we knew. We knew the president was going to have a meeting so we generated the taskings.

Q: I have to ask, between NSC and State I know that it gets all involved. At the time you were there, who called the shots and were many of these documents cleared by State or not?

BRADTKE: Rarely did a document go back to State. When there was a meeting coming up or a visit coming up, the senior director and the director-level people at the NSC would be in touch with the country directors and the DASs at State. The formal tasking of paper would come from the NSC executive secretary to the department's executive secretary. So the president is going to meet the president of France, there would be a tasking that would come from me as executive secretary. The specific things that the NSC senior directors wanted would be put in the tasking and the tasking would go to State executive secretary.

Q: So State would draft and then this.

BRADTKE: State would draft and it would come back to us. It would be cannibalized and put into the format that the president wanted, that Sandy wanted, and then it would go forward. Some relationships between senior directors and assistant secretaries or DASs were good enough that a lot more was done informally, but there was a formal system that was supposed to keep the taskings manageable so that some poor desk officer wasn't getting tasked in five different ways, that there was a formal way to deal with the tasking.

Q: You mentioned the president of France. How many clearances are needed in a tasker of that sort? Ten, twenty, thirty?

BRADTKE: From the NSC side, relatively few because it's such a horizontal operation. I think it got more complicated actually as time went on and after 9/11 and during the Obama years where my own sense of the NSC operation was that it was much bigger. But we had a fairly streamlined operation. It was Berger, it was Steinberg, sometimes it was Mara, it was the senior director and a couple of lateral clearances within the NSC, but it was quite a streamlined operation. You could move quickly; there was not a complicated clearance process. So the paper would come back from the department [where] there were obviously many, many more clearances.

Q: I want to ask you some of the issues that come up in your memory, but let me ask you even before that. David Rothcuff at the Carnegie Institution published a book called American Insecurity where he talks about the huge growth of the staff of the NSC, which

he says I think in a nonpartisan way, both parties have allowed it to grow beyond what it was intended to be in 1947. Any reaction to that?

BRADTKE: Well, this may give you the longer answer than you want, but the world today isn't the 1947 world; it is a much more complicated world. There has been a lot of growth in the size of the NSC. When I was there, Berger was very conscious in trying to manage the growth, and the departments and agencies were conscious of that, not giving up officers and losing slots. So we tried to manage very carefully the size of the staff. The White House itself did not like to pay salaries; we were part of the White House Executive Office of the President's [EOP] budget. So there were limits on the number of people that the White House Executive Office of the President would pay for. I'm probably going to get this wrong, but if an agency kept somebody, borrowed from the State Department, and retained after then the State Department wasn't going to pay any more. They expected the White House to pick up the tab. So you had to have managed that piece of it. So we used to have a system in the Berger days where we had what we called counters and non-counters, because you could also get people from the outside, from think tanks, from non-governmental organizations, [who] would come and those were considered to be non-counters.

Q: Because they weren't seconded. You ever think of the White House as having budgetary constraints but of course it does!

BRADTKE: It was also [that] people didn't want the White House budget being out of control. There was a lot of sensitivity on the part of the chiefs of staff to manage the resources and not look like there was this bloated Bill Clinton White House. So our numbers—I have to do off the top of my head—I think total staff was somewhere around 170, something like that, and that counts everybody. It counts people like the Situation Room, which reported to me. It counts people from the White House Communications Agency [WHCA]. So it was not that huge a number frankly. And again [it was] a relatively streamlined operation.

What I think was more important is—and this is one thing I saw when I was brought back to State during the Obama administration—what do they do? The gold standard for NSC models is the Scowcroft years, which was when the NSC staff was small, lean, and collegial with the cabinet secretaries, all the rest; everybody talks about that. Berger's idea was more ambitious than that. But, he still felt, for example, NSC staff members should not travel abroad on their own. They would travel when the secretary of state traveled; they would travel with the president, but they shouldn't just be off traveling on their own, except in very rare circumstances. That certainly changed! He tried to keep NSC staff from giving media interviews. He would deal with the media, but even he tried to keep his role relatively lower profile. NSC staff shouldn't spend a lot of time seeing foreign diplomats. They shouldn't be traveling around the United States going to conferences.

So I was the guy who had to approve travel, as executive secretary, and I can tell you, Berger didn't approve a lot of travel because he didn't think that was their job. He thought there were two jobs. You were the president's staff. You were supposed to advise the president, to be the ones to deal directly with the information flow to the president. And secondly manage the interagency process. That was his concept of what they should do. And again, the world changed.

I'll jump ahead slightly and then come back to the Clinton times. But where I saw this was when Dr. [Condoleezza] Rice came, and I was extraordinarily fortunate to be the executive secretary in two different administrations, and we can get back to that later I hope. Dr. Rice came along, she had been in Scowcroft NSC, and her idea was to turn the clock back! She saw Berger's time as having too large a staff, and I think she saw very quickly how difficult that would be. She felt, for example, why do we have speechwriters at the NSC? Why do we have these press people? Why do we have a separate legal adviser's office when we have the White House counsel? Can't we rely on the White House to do the speeches, to be the legal authority, to deal with press issues? She discovered very, very quickly that you needed your own in-house people to do this. I left before 9/11 when the staff exploded beyond that because of all the terrorism issues. But even before 9/11, when I was helping with the transition to the Bush administration at the NSC—I stayed until roughly August of 2001—already it was clear to her that you couldn't turn the clock back.

For example, why did you need a kind of congressional H [liaison] inside the NSC? Over the years, members of Congress expected to be able to talk to the national security advisor. You needed somebody on your own staff who understood Capitol Hill and could read Congress because Congress was so much more important than it was previously in the day-to-day foreign policy world. You needed speech writers because the president was going to make a lot of foreign policy speeches and you needed someone who understood, who could talk to the senior directors, get their ideas, and then draft a foreign policy speech. To Berger's credit—and this I think was one of his ideas—he had Tom Malinowski and others, just a really brilliant speech writing staff.

Q: Human Rights Watch.

BRADTKE: Yes, he came back to be DRL [Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Bureau]. But he had three—but I'm sure I'm missing someone—really brilliant speechwriters who were also the policy shop. They were the ones who could in the process of writing a speech develop policy initiatives that had a little bit of reach to them, that didn't come out of the bureaucracy. So they weren't just speechwriters, they were idea people. I thought it functioned very well, but you couldn't go back to the Scowcroft era. And as I said, I think Dr. Rice realized the same thing, that you needed to work with the other parts of the White House but you had to have your in-house experts on legal issues, on speechwriting, on the press, on Congress, because the world had just become so much more complicated and that was the way it was!

[Robert A. Bradtke – Tape 22 – April 19, 2018]

Q: From your time in the White House, do you have any recollections of POTUS, personally?

BRADTKE: A couple of things. One was I came to the NSC after a very turbulent period, when you had Monica Lewinsky; you had everything else. And you had people who were generally pretty tired having lived the pace of the NSC; it's a twenty-four-hour a day job, seven days a week.

I'll jump ahead quickly. When Steve Hadley came in as deputy national security advisor for President Bush, he had his first staff meeting with the new senior directors. He also remembered an earlier NSC era and he said, "I want people not to come in on weekends." But, he was there the first weekend and everyone knew that they had to be available. That was, again, even before 9/11, so it was that kind of place. The pressures were enormous! I loved the TV series West Wing, and the guy who was the president's chief of staff said to someone about serving in the White House, "Don't tell me your family's more important. What you're doing is the most important thing you're going to do. Your family is going to come second while you are working in the White House." And he was absolutely right! He was absolutely right. If you're going to sign on to those jobs, you've got to decide this is going to be my first priority. This is what I'm going to do.

Q: You knew that, of course, when you took the job.

BRADTKE: Yes, although you still never fully realize it, until you walk into the West Wing at seven o'clock in the morning, and your heart starts beating fast! You may be tired, and you may not have had your first cup of coffee, but the adrenalin rush, because you know the pace, the pace is going to be frantic! You're flat out all the time, and yes, when I worked for Christopher it had been more or less that way, but there is a special feeling there, at the White House.

So at any rate, one strong memory is just how exhausted and how short tempered people were, and how the Clinton West Wing was a place where people wore their feelings on their sleeves, where people lost their temper all the time, where people argued, where they'd been through so much that there were a lot of personal combat.

Q: Interesting that—

BRADTKE: And I say this in preparation for when we get to the Bush White House. But, the Clinton White House was a very creative place, where people argued, yelled at each other. You'd be in the hall, and sometimes people would be screaming at one another. To their credit, there were a couple of people who were kind of peacemakers, and one of them was John Podesta, the chief of staff. I don't know how that place could have

survived without him, and another was Karen Tramontano, whom I got to know pretty well, because she helped me in my dealings with the domestic side of the White House staff.

The domestic side of the White House wanted all the president's time for domestic policy. Sandy Berger wanted as much time as he could get for foreign policy, and one of my jobs as the executive secretary was to try and get time on the president's schedule, to try to get the White House domestic side to agree to meetings with foreign leaders, time for phone calls, time for foreign travel. And by the time I got there, Sandy's relations with the scheduling office were so bad that he didn't want to have to do any of this. He would tell me, "Just get me time for phone calls! Get me time for meetings!"

Q: You'd done this at least two times before.

B: So I worked very hard to develop a relationship with the Scheduling Office. But I tried to not be torn apart between Sandy, who would say, "Goddammit! Why can't we get this meeting on the schedule?" And the scheduler would say, "Godammit! How come Berger can't understand we're doing other things; we don't need to be wasting our time with these foreign leaders!"

Q: This seems to be a pattern in your career—

BRADTKE: I think both sides kind of grudgingly felt I was trying to take account of their problems and the time pressures on the president. But that was the kind of White House it was. I'm amazed at the people who were there for all eight years. Berger in particular. How he could have survived eight years, first as deputy and then as the NSA? I don't know how he could have done it. And Sandy has of course passed away, but I think of his poor wife. They would plan a trip, they would plan a vacation. There was always some crisis. He never got any time off. And I also learned this early on, I was simply never going to plan anything. It was better not to plan anything, not to promise your wife you're going to make a trip, book something, and then you don't go, because there was always something. So there was just no point in planning anything for your personal life, because it made you feel twice as bad when it had to be canceled than just realizing you were never going to do it anyway, so why bother telling your wife yes, we're going to spend two weeks at the beach! Because it wasn't ever going to happen, so why ever agree to it!

Q: So, two years like that.

BRADTKE: So two years of pretty flat out work, and a White House where feelings were already strained, where relationships were strained, where it was just the style, the president was very much that way. I mean he was pretty blunt when he didn't like what he was being told! I don't want to say there wasn't civility, but on the other hand, it was creative. I will give them credit for that—that ideas were argued in the most direct, blunt terms, if papers were no good, people were told flat out, "This thing's bad, go back and fix it!" But it was a stressful challenging work environment that you had to just deal with.

Q: You mentioned crises. Can you think of two or three examples? During that period, 1999–2001. I'm sure you had five per day. Do any stick out?

BRADTKE: One of the huge challenges was the Middle East peace process where—

Q: We know how that ended up!

BRADTKE: Yes, and this also is a bit of commentary on the president himself. One of the fringe benefits of this job was to work the phone for the president's calls with foreign leaders. And I don't know whether it's still this way or not, but either I or one of my deputies, we'd get a call on the schedule, or the Situation Room would get a call from Ehud Barack or Arafat or somebody who wanted to speak with the president. We'd get the call on the schedule. When the call actually would take place, I or one of my deputies would go into the Oval Office with Berger or Dennis Ross or whoever the policy expert was, and I'd pick up the phone, I'd tell the Sit Room, "Okay, you've got Arafat on the line?" and they'd say yes, and I'd look across to the president sitting or standing behind his desk, he was usually sitting there, and I'd say, "We've got Arafat on the line, Mr. President." And he might say, "Hold on a second! I've got to go to the bathroom. I'm not ready!" and there you are with Arafat on the phone! I remember being on the phone with Tony Blair once when the president just stepped out all of a sudden! At any rate—

But what I did see close up was Bill Clinton at the height of his powers. He knew the issues. He knew the leaders, and his ability to talk at levels of detail about the Middle East peace process was extraordinary, it was just extraordinary. And the effort that he put into that process goes way beyond anything I think any other president since then has done. The effort at Camp David, which has been told, but just watching the effort that went into preparing for that. One of the things which I did was go out to Camp David to determine how we were going to bring Arafat and Ehud Barak together to make this drive for a settlement. Similarly, when we did the peace talks with the Syrians at Shepherdstown, one of my jobs was to find a venue for that.

Q: Pretty remote, isn't it, Shepherdstown?

BRADTKE: But that was the idea! It was to be close enough to Washington so the president could go there but not too close, to give some privacy to the negotiating parties.

Q: It's often said that at Camp David Arafat walked away from the deal he himself had outlined. Any comment on that?

BRADTKE: I wasn't in the meetings. I saw a lot of the results of the meetings. I certainly saw the follow-up that took place. There was a deal on the table there. Arafat probably didn't have the courage to make the deal, and again I'm very reluctant to fault Dennis Ross or Martin Indyk or any of those people because they were there, and they were closer to this. We were trying to protect the ability of Ehud Barak and Arafat to make a

deal, without premature leaks of positions and ideas. But we basically made it very difficult for them to communicate with anybody outside, and, particularly in Araftat's case, get support from Arab leaders, and this again is my nickel's worth, and I'm not the one who should make this kind of judgment. If we had to do it over again, the question I ask myself is whether we should have gotten the buy-in from the Arab leaders in the region in a way that Arafat would have felt he could make the deal.

Q: Because you just said "he didn't have the courage" meaning not only among Palestinians, but you think other Arab leaders?

BRADTKE: I think it was all falling on him to make some historic decisions, and if he'd heard from the Saudis, or the Jordanians, or the Egyptians, or the Gulf States that they were on board, if they knew more about what was on the table, but the concern that this would leak out that it would sabotage the deal, that it would put Barak, who was willing to really kind of roll the dice. And that's how we got to Camp David in the first place. We had been doing kind of the step-by-step diplomacy. And there are a lot of negotiations where that's the way you do it. You get this piece done, you move to the more difficult piece, then a more difficult piece. What Barak said was, "I've got to know everything, I'm dying because every little compromise I make, I pay a huge price for. Let's do it all! And then I can sell it, and you can help me, Mr. President!" And Clinton would have helped. He absolutely would have helped. But, from Barak's perspective, let's do it all so that I don't get nicked by a thousand cuts, not a thousand, but you know. But all these small concessions, that the whole package is on the table, and so there was a desire to protect him from being caught out by leaks and being exposed and not having this deal presented the way we wanted to present it, and the result and this is again, just me, was that maybe we didn't draw in the other Arab leaders in a way that could have bucked up Arafat. But when Camp David failed, you had a new intifada in the Middle East. You have the president trying very hard to kind of keep the peace process intact. He made one his last trip out to the region, he was working the phones nonstop to try to calm this down, and again, I remember being in the Oval Office where things were getting out of control, and he gets on the phone with Barak and says, "I can be there tomorrow!" And I'm looking at Berger, going, "No, he can't." It would have been logistically impossible. And we were able to get a little more time to execute the trip, but this was one of those moments where presidents of the United States don't understand how complicated moving them around the world can be!

Q: I'm laughing because we're both thinking of VIP visits, the incredible complexity of them.

BRADTKE: Well, what we did on that trip was the Advance Team went right away, and the president was on the plane the next day before the Advance Team was even on the ground, basically, even had a chance to do anything. It was the most extraordinary short term kind of thing, and it was to try to calm the situation down. This was done in the Sinai somewhere. And this was called the Summit of the Peacemakers or something, and

to bring in the Jordanians, the Egyptians, and just to get things back under control. But the president was extraordinary in managing this process.

Q: You said about Barak, that he saw the whole package as having a better chance rather than incrementally with small concessions.

BRADTKE: Right.

Q: Arafat likewise? Or was it the other way around?

BRADTKE: It's harder for me to say. I think the process was being driven by us and by the Israelis more so. I think, my recollection and boy this is a long time ago and again I wasn't on the inside of all these discussions, but my sense was Arafat was in a reactive mode and the proactive part of this was coming from the president and from—

Q: And then going way out on a limb—do you think Arafat came knowing that no deal would happen?

BRADTKE: No. That I don't believe. I think he came without knowing what he was going to do.

Q: Which is the way it should be in a negotiation.

BRADTKE: Yes, with, but there needs to be more of an "I'm here to hear what they're going to propose, and then I'm going to make these proposals myself." Again one of the glories of being the executive secretary was not just being able to be in the Oval Office where some of these phone conversations [took place], but we also, in the Executive Secretariat, we edited and cleared the president's memcons. And let me tell you, there are some real challenges there! To your sense of what the historical record should look like and what the use of four letter words should be, or whether the historical record should have the president saying some of the things he said about some other people! And you really had to be very careful there. But it gave you remarkable insights; it was the ultimate fly on the wall; so that again you were not in all these meetings but you at least were seeing the transcripts of meetings and conversations that were being carried out at the highest level!

Q: We hear tapes of Lyndon Johnson on C-SPAN [Cable-Satellite Public Affairs Network] using the most vulgar language imaginable. I guess there were no tapes of Clinton and—

BRADTKE: No. We did this in a nineteenth century kind of way in that when the president was on the phone there were notetakers, I'm sure, on both sides but they wrote notes. We didn't have a tape recording. They took notes from the conversations, and then the conversations were transcribed and sent to me or one of my deputies to edit and go into the historical record.

BRADTKE: I assume that after the Nixon tapes that no other White House wanted to have such things. I think that's right. Although there were times where you said to yourself, God, this is just incredibly old fashioned! We're writing these notes, we've got Foreign Service officers who were in some cases senior directors, who were scribbling down as fast as they could notes on a two-hour Clinton phone conversation or meeting on the Middle East. It was as I say remarkably old fashioned, but on the other hand, given what had happened in the Nixon years, that was the way it was done by at least the two presidents that I worked for in this job.

Q: You mention Dennis Ross as being associated with this process for decades. Poor man has so little to show for it. Tell us about Dennis Ross.

BRADTKE: Yes, Dennis Ross, and I may have touched on this when we were talking about Dick Holbrooke, you couldn't have two more different styles of negotiation, mediation. Dennis was not a screamer or a yeller or any of those things. He didn't abuse people, he wasn't pushy, he was low key but he knew his stuff; he was very effective. He knew how to read people. He was calm. He had command of the details. Tireless. Absolutely tireless, I mean the Middle East peace process was twenty-four hours seven days a week. During a crisis he was steady; and again I'm talking about Holbrooke and Dayton where Holbrooke was flying all over the place. You never ever saw that kind of behavior from Dennis. And my image of Dennis and if I've told this I apologize to anybody who's transcribing this, he reminds me of, he reminded me of one of these rock climbers where it's a sheer vertical cliff. And you watch this guy go up the cliff and get to a certain point where you say to yourself, there's no way forward here, there's no handholds, no footholds anymore; that's the end. And then somehow he'd find this tiny little place to stick his fingernails in and get his foot and then suddenly you're on the next level! He had that kind of ability, that when you could see no way forward or it did not seem that there was a way to keep moving, to even move sideways, he would come up with ideas. He would have ideas, he would figure out how to move sideways. And he was trusted by everybody because he was discreet. And he was trusted by the Israelis. He was trusted by the Arabs, by the Palestinians. It is, you're right, in some way regrettable that he put so much into this and in some ways we really haven't moved since Camp David, and this was kind of everybody's feeling afterwards—we're going to spend years trying to get back to this spot, if we can ever get back to this spot!

Q: Could anybody have done better?

BRADTKE: As I say the only, and again I'm loathe to find fault, the only question is, could we have somehow strengthened Arafat's spine so to speak by getting more Arab leaders, getting them to buy into what what was happening so that they could say to Arafat, do it, we'll be with you, we're all going to be with you, the president of the United States is going to be with you, this is your moment, just do it. Could we overcome Arafat's instinctive doubts that he could sell the deal? This was as good a deal as he was

ever going to get! And it's as I say, in historical terms, a great shame because we're, will we ever get back to the point? I don't know that we will.

Q: Did Arafat have a personality?

BRADTKE: Yes! He had a sense of humor.

Q: Really?

BRADTKE: Yes! And I saw this again goes back to my time with Christopher rather than my time at the NSC. I was never in any of the president's meetings with him. I heard phone conversations but never face-to-face after—

Q: Was he a worthy representative of his people?

BRADTKE: I think he was, and again there are going to be people who are better to judge him, but when you think the distance that he traveled from this terrorist, basically, to a guy who was willing to accept Israel's right to exist and to engage in a peace process with Rabin, to be standing there on the White House lawn with him and then again this was when I was still working for Christopher, and to negotiate the way he was, yes. I mean it's a great shame that that last step proved to be so elusive, and that we've now gone backwards.

Q: One more glance back. Could he have agreed, would it have, do you think, you said he didn't have the courage? What would have been the consequences? What would have happened to him if he'd agreed? What was he afraid of?

BRADTKE: I think he was afraid to look, again, look at the distance he traveled. From someone who started out with the idea that you'd wipe Israel off the face of the earth so to speak and push the Israelis out of Israel, all the way to accepting their right to exist, to a co-existence with them, and I think the idea that then he could take that on more step further and legitimize Israel's presence in the region, that he could give up parts of Jerusalem, that he could make a deal which was, at least, vague on the right of the return of all the people who left, those were huge steps! And for a guy who started out miles away from that to come all that way, that was just not going to ever be easy. And to expect him to do that was asking a lot, given where he'd come from.

Q: Last question. I promise. Did he make all of his decisions, did he have a staff? Did he have an NSC equivalent?

BRADTKE: Yes, he had advisors. I don't, I can't really tell you how they fit in here. This is something more for Dennis or Martin to judge. I'm a little too far out of the immediate flow to say that.

Q: So, Ambassador Bradtke, we—

BRADTKE: Yes, there's some anecdotal things from the Clinton time, but I've kind of run out of steam, and then there's the contrast with the Bush White House where everyone was determined to be nice to each other.

Q: Except for removing one letter from all the typewriters! Which I don't think ever really happened!

BRADTKE: No, but the internal dynamics of the Bush White House versus the Clinton White House were quite different.

Q: I'm sure it was very different, and then oh my God, 9/11, but you were gone. This was very dramatic. Let's end the session on this. You moved in August, one month before 9/11.

BRADTKE: I left one month before 9/11!

Q: Hold that thought. Thank you!

We're picking up from where we were in the last conversation. We are, I think, in the year 2000 talking about Camp David. We are pre-9/11 and in the last year of President Clinton, and you were on the NSC staff at that time. You've mentioned some of the things you had to do and did but let's see what may yet to be said.

BRADTKE: Maybe a couple more things, and if I'm repeating myself, stop me! I wanted to come back a little bit prior to Camp David where, if I'm getting my sequence of events confused, I apologize for this. Back to Syria, this was another one of the tactical decisions that didn't turn out quite right and where you saw how people who really wanted to make something happen could not see that it wasn't realistic. There was a big push get a Syrian-Israeli deal—when the Palestinian tracks was slowing down—and this was before Camp David, in early 2000.

It was at a point on the Syria track where there was a lot of hope around meetings that we organized at Shepherdstown between the Israelis and the Syrians that it might still be possible to get a deal with Syria. A lot of effort went into that. I'm a fly on the wall for some of this; I am reading and editing memcons; I'm sitting in the Oval Office when discussions take place over the phone. I'm not directly involved in the substance of it, but I could see there was a strong desire to try to get this done. There is this temptation—I could see this among the people who were doing the policy part of this—to believe that a deal was out there. [Whereas] for me sitting back being less invested, I thought the deal wasn't there. It revolved—and this has been written in people's memoirs—on whether a deal for withdrawal from the Golan [Heights] and essentially a peace deal with Syria was in the offing. What was on the table from the Israelis was a withdrawal, except for a little strip of land along the Sea of Galilee. Berger and the president convinced themselves that this was do-able; that Assad, the father, would buy this. I never thought this was going to be the case, the idea that it would be made into a park or would be kind of a neutral area

would work, [and] that somehow Assad would be willing to make a deal where he didn't regain sovereignty over every inch of land he'd lost. In the end it turned out he did not accept this. There was a climactic meeting with Clinton in Geneva where Assad said, "No." This to me was a case where policymakers who get deeply invested in decisions, who want something to happen so badly that they sometimes sell themselves on something that somebody on the outside would say, "That was never going to happen." And this was the case.

Q: [A] fly on the wall. Was Assad stringing us out or do you think he was actually invested in—?

BRADTKE: I think he wanted to see what he could get. I think he knew we really wanted a deal and somehow he thought perhaps we could deliver the Israelis to a complete withdrawal, and the Israelis won't—

Q: That tiny sliver of land was the downfall?

BRADTKE: It was, and that's exactly the way people are looking at it, "It's just a small bit of land along the—"

Q: Was it a strategic hilltop or something?

BRADTKE: Nope. It was strategic in the sense that it was access to the Sea of Galilee. But it was beyond strategic; it was symbolic. It was political, it was, "I'm giving up something that I lost and I'm never giving up sovereignty over something that I lost." You can kind of step back and people in a rational world are saying, Well, look at all you could get if there was peace here, and it's just this tiny strip! You can kind of paper over it; you can even call it a neutral zone, not a national park, whatever, but it's the principle. I've seen this later in my career in other negotiations, that countries are very particular about giving up territory, as we would be as well! We can convince ourselves sometimes that the benefits of a peace deal are such that what's a little piece of territory? Pieces of territory are a big deal, even if they're small pieces.

Q: It's disingenuous to go into a negotiation without any willingness to give anything, isn't it?

BRADTKE: Those are your words, not mine. Perhaps the way I'd put it is to say that if you go into a negotiation thinking you're going to get the other side to agree to give up pieces of its territory, good luck! That is always a big ask, whether they're strategic or not. Countries are attached to their territorial integrity, their sovereignty. And this comes back most prominently in my career when I was doing Nagorno-Karabakh where it was the same issue. It didn't matter if it was strategic or not strategic. Every inch had some political and symbolic significance that if you were being asked to cede part of your sovereign territory, no matter how insignificant it might look on the map, it was a big deal.

Q: Conservative think tanks say that sovereignty with its imperfections is the only and best model for nations to behave. Is that a usable insight, or will it ever change in our lifetimes? Would we want it to?

BRADTKE: It has to. It's a principle that gets ignored when it's inconvenient. Kosovo is a classic case as well. And the breakup of Yugoslavia—we were talking about it way back months ago—we were so attached to this principle of unity and territorial integrity of Yugoslavia that we were blind to the fact that the situation had changed after Tito died and after the Soviet Union collapsed. We didn't recognize that it was a principle that just didn't work there anymore and we needed to have a more flexible approach. If we were wedded to the principle of territorial integrity, we were led into a civil war that was going to be pretty ugly and pretty brutal, and then we ended up having to accept the fact that things change.

Q: In that context I'm not following. The territorial integrity of Yugoslavia, or of the states within Yugoslavia?

BRADTKE: I'm sure I'm repeating myself here, but it was so far back that I'll do it again anyway. When I was in Yugoslavia in the 1970s and through that period of Tito's death and afterwards, the United States had this unshakeable commitment to the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia. [Then] when the time came in the 1990s when Tito was dead, the Soviet Union had collapsed, when all the things that held the country together no longer existed, we still kept saying that! And someone that I admired immensely, Warren Zimmerman, who was the ambassador to Yugoslavia at the time, who'd been my boss as deputy chief of mission in Moscow, wrote a great book about that period, but when you read it now, it seems almost dated because of his unshakeable commitment to the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia. When Milosevic was going to use that principle to have dictatorial control over the entire country, the Slovenes, the Croatians, other parts of the country were understandably not going to accept that. Yet we were so committed to the concept of territorial integrity; we'd been saying it for decades because we were always afraid that the Soviets were going to break up the country. That threat was gone and the breakup was coming within the country itself, [but] we were still repeating a principle and a policy that no longer made any sense.

Q: Is it possible to move from territoriality of a country like Yugoslavia and maintain the same principles for the sub-states within [it] after the dissolution, or does that really [cause] a rupture in the whole logic? In other words, you have Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, Kosovo, in your opinion is it proper to transfer the same idea of sovereignty and—

BRADTKE: What happened after the collapse of the Soviet Union was we decided that the sovereignty, the territorial integrity of the old Soviet republics applied to the new states. It was the same thing in Yugoslavia, we recognized them as countries within their boundaries as republics. Now that hasn't always been a terribly neat solution because in

some cases the republics didn't have well-defined borders, Croatia and Slovenia in particular. So that came back to kind of haunt us.

What we did was to say now we have a new territorial integrity principle. It's not what used to be the whole country, we're going to apply it to the pieces!

Q: So, if the old model was outmoded, is the new model also outmoded?

BRADTKE: All I'm saying is there's no such thing as an absolute principle here of territorial integrity.

Q: That goes in the coffee mug, "No such thing—"

BRADTKE: No, there are times when it's inconvenient and it suddenly becomes less than an inviolable rule, so to speak, of foreign policy or even international relations or international law. It gets sacrificed sometimes when it just doesn't work, or when other things are going on as in the case of Kosovo, when what was happening to the Kosovars was an atrocity and a problem of such magnitude, that you just threw up your hands and said, "Okay, Serbia, this used to be part of your territory, but it isn't any more because you forfeited this right and now we're recognizing Kosovo as an independent country."

Q: Willing to comment at all on the Baltics, because we never recognized that they were part of the Soviet Union?

BRADTKE: That was different. We never accepted their incorporation, so when the Soviet Union collapsed, effectively for us this was easy. We just continued our relationship in the Baltics.

Q: The three capitals, right?

BRADTKE: Right. Whereas in the case of Armenian and Azerbaijan for example, and we'll get to this later, we said, "Okay, we recognize Armenian and Azerbaijan; we established diplomatic relations with them, which we did not have before, within their boundaries that existed when they were republics of the Soviet Union, which caused problems after the war broke out over Nagorno-Karabakh.

Q: Just parting shots. Is there any alternative to thinking that way? I mean does the policy—

BRADTKE: Yes, I'm sure I'm repeating myself or wandering around aimlessly. In the case of Yugoslavia, we were so committed to keeping the country together that we waited too long to change our approach and the result was there was always a civil war. Had we said, Okay, territorial integrity is a great principle, and ninety-nine out of a hundred [times] we think it's the right principle. But sometimes it doesn't work, and when it doesn't work, let's try and negotiate a peaceful breakup. Let's tell the parties, Look, we're

not going to be committed to the territorial integrity of this place because this is just not working anymore. So that's the model to try to move toward. In the case of Yugoslavia, I recognize this may never have been possible. [Whereas] Czechoslovakia, where it worked, where you had two pieces of a country that wanted to go their own way, or at least Slovakia wanted to go its own way, and the Czech side was willing to accommodate this. For me the question is—we talked about this in a previous session—was there ever a moment where the international community could have gone to the players in Yugoslavia and said, You need to negotiate the peaceful breakup of this country? We will support this, we will contribute to it. If it's not possible, we're prepared to send in international peacekeepers and observers because we don't believe any more that this country can be held together by anything other than force, and we're not prepared to see that happen. So either you work this out, or we will start recognizing pieces, but we will also do it in such a way that we will try to prevent a civil war from happening.

Q: Without getting to world government, which is a utopian thing, the alternative to sovereignty seems to be ethnic identity. In Slovakia you had fraternal, ethic, and linguistic groups easily separated, Czechs in the west and Slovakians in the east. Not so in the Balkans.

BRADTKE: Right.

Q: I mean this gets very abstract, but—

BRADTKE: Yes, it's very hard; every little ethnic community cannot have its own country. Nor in the way the colonial boundaries—I know very little about Africa—were drawn up in Africa, did every ethnic group end up on the right side or all by itself on one side of the—?

Q: Almost none!

BRADTKE: Almost none! Well, this was the case in Yugoslavia. The Slovenes were pretty much by themselves. The Croats were not by themselves but there were a lot of Serbs in places in Croatia. Bosnia was an ethnic mix, so the borders were not drawn neatly. People got left on one side or the other in a lot of cases. So that's part of the problem.

Q: I'd like to dwell on your profound statement, "There is no such thing as an absolute principle." I mean, just a comment, in Africa the policy of the African Union is, "We hate the borders but we're not going to mess with them. But they made two exceptions, one was Eritrea and one was South Sudan. The United States was on board with that. So I guess a bit of adaptation is always helpful in arriving at a peaceful solution.

BRADTKE: It happens. It's hard to know what's the right moment when you say the principle that we apply no longer works, because you don't want to provoke the breakup of the state; you don't want to touch off ethnic conflicts that the breakup of the state

would potentially lead to. On the other hand, blind adherence to the principle of territorial integrity sometimes is going to make things worse rather than better.

Q: Just—

BRADTKE: Just one or two more things. I was a huge admirer of President Clinton's ability to master detail, to deal with more than one thing at a time, and I will give two anecdotes that stuck in my head. One is in New York at the UN General Assembly. This is the fall of 2000, where the president—I don't know whether President Obama did this or not—hosted a reception during the high-level meeting of the General Assembly. So all these leaders are invited, and the president does a receiving line. Berger didn't want to be in the receiving line; he had other work to do. So he said [to me], "Right, stand there with the president so that when these guys come through you tell the president who it is."

Q: You?

BRADTKE: Yes, I would do this. So there's the protocol person, there's me, [and] there's the president. And, Bergers says to me, "If there's something the president needs to know about these guys and their countries, tell him." So, this is a great job!

Q: They didn't have baseball cards at that time!

BRADTKE: Oh yes we did! I had the baseball cards! But the idea that I was going to tell Bill Clinton something that he didn't know about any of these guys—! The first four or five people come through the line, the president of this country, the prime minister of that country. He knows them all, he remembers when he met them last time. One of the Baltic leaders came and Clinton remembered this guy's kids. It was just this phenomenal total recall of conversations, of faces. I was totally useless except as an observer who could just kind of be dazzled by his ability to recall details of conversations and memories of meetings with people. It was just a *tour de force*. And again, I was seeing him at the height of his power so to speak. He'd been in office for such a long time. He had this mastery of details, it was just an amazing performance of someone who could command that kind of knowledge of people and situations. And of course all these leaders just ate it up. They just completely ate it up. It had such an impact on them that here's the president of the United States who remembers all these things about meeting them, talking with them about their families for God's sake!

The other multitasking of Clinton that sticks out in my mind was a trip that I'd made with him to Kentucky. I think I said that when the president traveled domestically or overseas for that matter, somebody from the NSC always traveled on Air Force One and on Marine One, the helicopter. A lot of times for domestic trips Berger didn't want to go. Jim Steinberg didn't want to go either because there was always work back in Washington, and a lot of the time when you travel with the president domestically you sit around the holding room waiting for Berger to call you to say he needed to talk to the

president. So it was not exactly an exciting thing to do except you're with the president of the United States!

The president loved to play cards. On Air Force One, on Marine One, even in the limousine I played cards with the president. But on this particular trip to Kentucky, we're playing Hearts, which was the game of which he was master. And—

Q: Which has some elements of bridge, I think but simpler.

BRADTKE: Yes, simpler. And so we're playing Hearts. He's reading the speech that he's going to give in Kentucky, and making edits. He's on the phone with somebody back in Washington. So he's chewing on a cigar, on the phone, playing Hearts, and whipping the rest of us because he's got such a great recall that he knows— The thing about hearts is that if you can count the cards, you'll have an advantage. And this is where he says to me, "Just play that card!" And I'm going, "How does he know?" An amazing ability to do multiple things at one time! Just incredible multitasking.

Q: This is the talent most visible with very skillful politicians, right? And I can never remember his name, the Swedish later foreign minister who was involved in the Balkans in Birch Cove, ah—

BRADTKE: Oh, Carl Bildt.

Q: Carl Bildt, who I think had the same ability.

BRADTKE: Yes, I'm an admirer of Carl Bildt. I got to know him in several different incarnations and I thought he was immensely sensible and—

Q: Did he not have some of these same qualities? At least that ability to—

BRADTKE: He was very good with people, that I did see. But Clinton's ability to be thinking about one thing, to be playing with cards, to be talking to somebody— As I say, it was just one of these things where you say, "How the hell can he keep all this straight?!"

Q: Did you have any role at one of Clinton's last things before he went out of office, [which] was to sign the Rome Agreement on the ICC [International Criminal Court], which nobody thinks was serious. Do you have any idea whether that's—?

BRADTKE: I think that's right.

Q: It was just sort of—

BRADTKE: Yes, as much as I knew there was never any thought that this was going to be approved by Congress, but he was going to do it anyway.

Q: Any guess as to [whether] that was a stunt or just a way to satisfy himself?

BRADTKE: The motivations I can't judge. But he also thought at the time that Al Gore might be president of the United States. So I don't think it was just thinking, "Okay, George Bush will be stuck with this." I think it was just, I can't get this done on my watch, it's the right thing to do. Maybe the next guy can get it done.

Q: Any other things come to mind at the very end? There was Kyoto at that time.

BRADTKE: Yes, Kyoto was the same time. But he knew that he couldn't get it done.

Q: I think that's the only time in history we've had an un-signing. Must have been very hurtful to Clinton to see these things go up in smoke.

BRADTKE: Yeah, that's my guess. Sure, a lot of things that were important to him that kind of didn't quite get finished.

Q: So, NSC, the year 2000. What more should we know?

BRADTKE: Then there's the bizarre transition, because here comes the election, and the Clinton people are leaving. Berger wants everybody, all his directors, all his people to write memos so that they can sum up what got accomplished and would get in the files. Because in our system, those are all White House presidential documents, cabinets are getting cleaned out, nothing really gets left behind. So we get to the election and the day after we don't know who's going to be president of the United States. It's this very odd time where I'm the executive secretary, and more or less what I would call the senior career person. I'm thinking about the transition. I'm thinking about how we prepare the next people to come along, how we work with the transition team for the new president, for his people who are going to take over the NSC but we've got this little problem which is, we're not sure who's going to be president of the United States!

It was an awkward, kind of strange period. Eventually, and I can't remember exactly how quickly, but Steve Hadley did appear on the scene. There were a lot of conversations with Steve about what he wanted, particularly about the personnel side. I was fortunate that I had as my chief administrative guy, one of my deputies, a guy named Dean Haas, a State Department officer. Between Dean and I, we started telling people, [It's] time to go! So we fired, I think, like two-thirds of the staff. There were some people who recognized that they should leave and didn't need to be told to leave. There were people who went back to the State Department. There were people who were going to hang on as long as they could and had to be kind of urged to go out the door!

Q: People who mattered in the NSC are political, I guess, there is I guess a—

BRADTKE: A lot of the senior directors were career people. There was a lot of turnover.

Q: So, when you say two-thirds, that would be two-thirds of the civil servants?

BRADTKE: Both the political people and the civil servants. I'm not talking here about the people working in the Situation Room or my staff who were the wonderful, wonderful people who worked in the Executive Secretariat and who were White House employees basically. And I'm also not talking about the support staff. I'm talking about senior directors who had geographic or functional policy responsibilities, directors who worked for them.

Q: And your own exit? What were the circumstances? When was that?

BRADTKE: It didn't happen right away. I assumed that I would be leaving too and was told by Steve that they wanted me to stay. It wasn't quite clear how long I was going to stay, but he was quite clear that I was going to stay for a while. And indeed one of the fringe benefits of being asked to stay was moving my office. Real estate in the West Wing is extraordinarily precious. And when I went to work at the NSC as executive secretary, the exec secretary's office was relatively small. Maybe it might have been a closet in the old days. It was very small and narrow, but it was in the West Wing, and it had a window! When the Bush people came along—this is after this big court decision [and] it was clear that Bush was going to be president—I actually got to move into a wonderful office in the basement of the West Wing, which was where Mara Rudman who had been kind of the chief of staff for Berger, had had her office. So I got a really wonderful West Wing office!

Q: And for a while. How long were you able to stay?

BRADTKE: I stayed until August of 2001.

Q: That's seven months!

BRADTKE: So I worked to help with the transition. We were also still supporting President Clinton in that period. A lot of it is blurred in the mists of time, but the one thing I do remember is January 21, 2001 where we're trying to get President Clinton to sign papers— It's not quite the John Adams "midnight judges," but a lot of it's just routine reports to Congress that if you didn't get them signed, they're going to have to start all over again. And then the president wants to make phone calls, including some he probably shouldn't have been making! He was trying to get all of this done. And you're trying to also deal with the new people who were not yet in charge but are coming. We did as much as we could and shortly before noon, I walked out the door. A good friend of mine came from Pittsburgh—we had a habit of kind of going to presidential inaugurations—so he showed up and we walked down to the Mall, stood way in the back, watched the inauguration, and then I walked back up to my office and went back to work!

It really was this wonderful moment where you saw the transition from the ground floor. The West Wing was being painted, the painters were there, they had fans blowing on the

walls so that the walls would dry. We were getting ready to swear in Dr. [Condoleezza] Rice, who wanted to swear in her new senior directors. It was this incredible moment where I walked out working for President Clinton, and I walked in, working for George Bush!

Q: Democracy.

BRADTKE: And you really did have this feeling of peaceful exchange of power. I've talked a little bit about Rice and Bush at the beginning who had this model for the NSC that was based on the Scowcroft model, but very quickly they learned that it wasn't going to work.

Q: Meaning trying to—

BRADTKE: That they had to have more staff. [You] needed your own lawyers; you needed your own press people; you needed your own speech writers, and that you couldn't cut back as much as you wanted to cut back.

So they did make some changes in the geographical structure of the NSC directorates, combining certain things, moving certain things around, but ultimately, you couldn't just radically cut back the staff.

I stayed as executive secretary. Much to their credit, they trusted me. This also again comes back to what we talked about before, my belief that as a civil servant, you owe to new people the same loyalties as the old people, that you were there to help them, you were there to give them the best advice you could. To Dr. Rice's credit, to Steve's credit, they trusted me. I mean they had no reason to. I knew Dr. Rice in the very smallest of all ways. There's an anecdote that maybe we can come back to, from when she was in Russia at the George Bush forty-one's NSC. But they could have easily said on January 21, Thank you. Good-bye, go back to the State Department! But they didn't. They thought it would be useful for me to stay on. They accepted some of my personnel recommendations, which they had no reason to, two of them I'm immensely proud of. Dr. Rice wanted—in the old days they would have called secretaries—I called them personal assistants, the British PA. Dr. Rice said, "Do you know anybody that I could hire?" I knew a woman, I'd worked with her when she worked for [Warren] Christopher, whose name was Liz Lineberry. She'd worked for Jim Baker, she'd worked for Christopher, and she'd worked for [Colin] Powell. Rice hired her and Rice and Liz had a great relationship. Liz stayed on and worked for Rice the whole time.

We needed someone to come in and be the point of contact to work with the White House Advance [Team] on the president's travel, to work with the schedulers on the president's domestic events. I had had someone who worked for me in the State Department Legislative Affairs Bureau as the executive director, a woman named Mary Haynes, and I said, "I think Mary Haynes could do this." They hired Mary, and then they made Mary permanent. She worked for them the entire Bush administration.

On the White House domestic side, there were all these new people who came out of the campaign who worked in the scheduling office, who worked in the advance office, who worked in the communications office. It was partly surprising, partly encouraging to me, because I'd find myself in meetings representing the NSC with all these other people who were on the domestic staff of the White House. The role of the executive secretary, at least in my time and in some of my predecessors' time, was to be a kind of a point of contact between the domestic staff and the NSC. If there were issues they needed to have input on, but also for us, so when we had events that involved the president, to be sure that we were hooked up with the domestic staff at the White House. It was encouraging to me that you'd have people who'd come out of the campaign who would say to me, Well, how [do] you do this?

Q: What's the way it should be?

BRADTKE: And they had a lot of experience. They also brought in experienced people who'd worked for Bush forty-one, but they also had people who worked in the campaign. And a lot of this came together when we did President Bush's first trip to Europe. He'd made a trip to Mexico, but the first trip to Europe was kind of a rollout trip. I went on the pre-advance, helped put this trip together. We worked seamlessly with the White House advance people, with communications staff to put this trip together. To me it was a case where I wondered whether they would trust this guy who worked for President Clinton. And they did. Again it was an encouraging thing for me to see that the principles that I believed in, which was you serve whoever is the elected president, if it's not illegal or immoral, give them the best advice and it's up to them to decide whether to accept it. But you tried to help them, and that was your duty. I really felt in the seven months or so that I worked in the Bush NSC that that was the case. There was never any question of my loyalties.

They did things their own way. They had their own style. I think they learned a little bit that they needed to be—how shall I put it—a little more inclusive in the way some decisions were made so that you didn't have the right hand and the left hand not knowing what was going on. But they had a learning curve as well.

I think I may have mentioned this, where early on there was a decision to take out some of Saddam [Hussein]'s missile sites as part of our "no fly" policy over parts of Iraq. They didn't really coordinate this. It came during the trip by President Bush to Mexico. It was the first use of force during the Bush forty-three presidency, and it was going to be a big story and they stepped all over what was also supposed to be a big story, the president's trip to Mexico, and the right hand and the left hand didn't know, but they learned that lesson. They realized that use of force decisions were very closehold and you had to watch carefully who knew, nothing leaked out, but you also didn't want to keep it so closehold that you didn't put the pieces together with what else the president was doing. So they weren't perfect at the start, but they did learn.

I'll just go on and say this, the atmosphere was also different in the sense that they were committed, I think, to running a smoother operation. The Clinton White House was notorious for being behind schedule, the president had his own kind of— I think I have related at least one or two anecdotes where he was so far behind schedule, and decisions not always being made in a timely way. They [Bush forty-three White House] were determined it would be a smoother running operation, and they put a lot of emphasis and priority on that. And indeed that was a tricky thing. When I traveled with President Clinton—I think I may have related this—I was on the last trip he made to Europe where he went to Ireland. We were on Air Force One, we got off Air Force One early in the morning because we'd flown overnight. Bertie Ahern, the Taoiseach prime minister, was down there at the bottom of the ramp, at the airport to greet the president. All the traveling staff, including me, got off the back of the plane, [but] President Clinton doesn't get off the plane! He's still sleeping! We must have kept poor Bertie Ahern waiting for half an hour at the bottom of the plane!

Well, they didn't want that, but it meant occasionally President Bush would come out of a meeting with a foreign leader on the first trip to Europe, and he was ready to go, and the schedule may have said, "President departs at ten am," and he was ready to go at 9:55. If you weren't in the motorcade, you were risking getting left behind, because he was ready to go before the motorcade! So they wanted things to run on time; they wanted things to run more smoothly; they wanted the paper flow to be more manageable. They wanted papers to get to the president in a more timely fashion, so they were determined to do that.

They were determined to have an atmosphere of civility. There were a lot of burned out people at the end of the Clinton administration. It was not unusual to walk down the corridors of the West Wing of the White House and hear voices raised, people shouting at one another. They didn't want that. They wanted calm; they wanted everything to be subdued. Occasionally it meant that they wanted people to say nice things about everybody. They wanted people to be nice; sometimes when they didn't really deserve to have nice things said about them.

I'm not going into names, but I well remember there was someone whom we worked with closely in the West Wing, on the domestic staff whom I thought was just marginally competent. I remember Steve Hadley coming to me, or saying in a staff meeting what a great job she was doing, and I'm going, "What?!" But it was this new tone. Everybody's going to be nice; everyone's going to be respectful toward one another. The result to me was that people didn't challenge things that weren't going well because you were not supposed to say bad things about people. And it was not as creative a place [as] where disputes got aired and people fought it out and they slugged it out, and then a decision would eventually get made. It was just, I thought, a less creative place. I can't say that this then later led to not challenging decisions like Iraq and some other mistakes, but sometimes I think that the premium put on everybody getting along led to things happening that shouldn't have happened.

Q: The image of the old Republican Party as the party of cordiality and politeness, which is being questioned right now, but Bush senior was very much the collegial person, I think.

BRADTKE: This is completely after the fact, although you could see it. The NSC was supposed to play this coordinating role and it was clear even in the six to seven months I was there that [Defense Secretary] Don Rumsfeld was shooting stuff directly to the president. He would take advantage of getting some time alone with the president to try to get things signed, or to get guidance from the president, that we were then playing catch up with. In retrospect, should Dr. Rice have been reigning in Don Rumsfeld, which under the best of circumstances wouldn't have been easy?

Q: Okay.

BRADTKE: Maybe one more thing about style. In my time at the White House and at the State Department as well, many times I saw people tell the president [or] tell the secretary, "A great job, boss! Well done, boss!" When you as the fly on the wall thought, Oh boy, that was a lousy meeting! Berger was one of the few people I saw in my time who was just fearless about telling President Clinton, "You messed up, boss." Much to his own detriment, at least having a lot of hostile fire from Bill Clinton directed at him. The president was not shy about chewing out Berger if Berger had said to him, "That didn't go very well," that phone conversation, that meeting, it didn't go very well.

Perhaps this is not fair for Dr. Rice, but I well remember the flip side of that, which was early on, President Bush talking to the prime minister of Israel. This is after Ehud Barak, and I may get my prime ministers screwed up, but I think it was [Yitzhak] Shamir. It was not [Yitzhak] Rabin, because Rabin was already dead at that point. I think it was Shamir, who was still healthy. Basically the president made a few points and got nowhere, just got pushback, pushback, pushback. He ends the conversation and asks Dr. Rice, "How did I do?" "Great job," is her answer. I had listened to many conversations of President Clinton with Israeli leaders, Arab leaders, where he knew the stuff cold, and boy, if he heard something he didn't agree with, he'd spend the next half hour arguing it! Whereas President Bush did the talking points and that was it. Of course it's not fair to expect that Bush could ever in his first two months argue a point with an Israeli prime minister the way Clinton could do after seven and one-half years! But it was this notion of saying "great job" when—

Q: Overstating it, many articles depicted Dr. Rice as sycophantic, as basically the lapdog. Now I'm sure that's overstating it.

BRADTKE: I think that is grossly unfair. But as I said, she was certainly not alone in my career, seeing people who tilted the scales when it came to not telling a boss from an assistant secretary all the way to a president of the United States, that something didn't go so well. The people who could speak truth to power were the exceptions, very much the exceptions.

Q: Berger being one of them.

BRADTKE: Berger being one of them, and the higher up you went, the more rare it was for somebody to tell the president or secretary of state, "That didn't work out so well! It didn't go so well." Tom Donolon being another one with Christopher. But it was pretty rare when you had people who could do that. This is something that I certainly try to tell younger officers, tell them to speak truth to power. And don't be confrontational; find the right way to do it. If it didn't go well, and you know it didn't go well, or you know a mistake was made, find a way respectfully to say that, because you're not doing anybody a service by pretending everything went well when in fact it didn't.

Q: So historically and ironically, you left the NSC one month before 9/11 during a—

BRADTKE: Thank God! I would have died! Two years as executive secretary for me was exhausting. Had I been there on September 11, when I think of what they had to do, and the changes that they had to make in terms of going to twenty-four/seven, [for me] it was twenty-four/seven [also] but we at least got to go home at night and the staff that worked for me got to go home at night. In the Executive Secretariat one of us, I or one of my deputies, stayed until the last piece of paper moved to the staff secretary's office, which was then responsible for getting it onto the desk of the president. So many times that was ten, eleven o'clock at night! The poor people who worked for me, the women—they were all women—our staff who processed the paper and then got you to look at it, at least one of them stayed so that any changes to the paperwork got done!

After September 11, they went to something more like the Operations Center. You just had people who came in so it could be staffed twenty-four hours a day, rather than someone coming in at seven in the morning and staying until eleven o'clock at night, which was what we were doing basically, which was insane.

Yes, I stayed until, I want to say early August, the exact date I can't recall, but I was gone by September. I got to do some great things. I got to see two different White Houses, two different styles. I got to advance and go with President Bush on his first trip to Europe, which was the famous trip where he met Putin and "looked into his soul!" From my perspective also, it was a wonderful trip to Poland where President Bush launched a policy on enlargement of NATO in a speech he gave in Warsaw. It was something that I came back to when I moved over to EUR [Bureau] to work on NATO enlargement. We went to Spain on that trip; he had a great relationship with the Spanish prime minister. We went to Sweden where he had his first meeting with the EU leaders, first NATO meeting, and again just a tremendous experience to be involved in those kinds of things, basically for two different administrations.

Q: You say Beth Jones was assistant secretary for EUR at that time?

BRADTKE: Correct.

Q: And you were the PDAS, is that right?

BRADTKE: When I left the NSC I had no idea what I was going to do. I had not spent more than two minutes thinking about what I was going to do, because I didn't have more than two minutes to think about it! I had thought about retiring because I felt I had done things that I'd never expected to do in my career, I'd been DCM in London, which was a job that I would have always thought was one of the greatest jobs as a career officer you could ever have. I got to be executive secretary of the NSC, and park my car on Executive Drive outside the West Wing, and go into the Oval Office of the West Wing of the White House, and basically almost every day have some kind of contact with the president of the United States! And [I got to] travel with the president, both domestically and overseas, and in the case of President Bush, when he travelled domestically, I joined in briefing Bush on the PDB, the Presidential Daily Brief! Then eventually the CIA briefer traveled with us, Michael Morell, who became director, and I remember going to Texas to go to the Bush ranch to brief the president on the PDB! I got to do all these incredible things!

So I wasn't sure what I wanted to do.

Q: Before we get to the next step, much has been said about that month, August 2001.

BRADTKE: July, August.

Q: Which wasn't at the ranch in Texas, and whether he was getting the daily brief or not, there's been a lot of things said about how much interest, I mean you weren't there, so I guess you weren't witness to, you're aware of the controversy—

BRADTKE: I'd really have to go back and look at the dates. I made one trip to Texas with the president, and I have very strong memories of going out with Morell to the ranch to brief the president on the PDB. What was in the PDB I probably couldn't talk about in this [conversation], even if I could remember! But we did sit down with the president every morning during that trip. He did ask questions. He was still learning very much about a lot of issues, and there were questions that Clinton would have known off the top of his head. In fact, Clinton didn't even bother at that point with a lot of his briefings.

Q: The point that the press made may have been completely incorrect, but the point is made that somebody attempted to brief the president about al Qaeda and he didn't notice or something.

BRADTKE: It certainly did not take place during my time. I want to say there were four or five days at the ranch, that period of time. We stayed in a motel in Waco and we would drive out every morning, brief the president, and he would listen to what we had to say. He would ask questions, and I would provide feedback to Dr. Rice but I don't remember anything unusual. That was probably earlier in the summer, before a briefing where there

was something in the PDB on terrorism that was of relevance to what happened later. I can't remember anything like that.

Q: I know you have a schedule. Let's get to, you had two minutes and something happened and you ended up in the EUR.

BRADTKE: Well I had no idea what I was going to do. I was seriously contemplating retiring. I was already over fifty. I'd done jobs that I would have never imagined I'd be lucky enough to do, executive assistant to the secretary of state. Beth Jones called, and I did not know Beth well, but she asked me if I wanted to be, at that point not the PDAS, but the deputy assistant secretary who dealt with NATO, European security, and most of the Western European countries, and to work on NATO enlargement in particular, which was an issue that I really felt strongly about. This was a great opportunity. I'd heard good things about Beth. It was a great front office, good people that I knew something about, so I said, "Yes." And that was a very fortunate thing because I had no idea what I was going to do [next].

Q: I'm sure it wasn't two minutes, but the call, did it seem right to you the minute that this was proposed?

BRADTKE: Yes! A) Because I had no other offers; b) because I really hadn't thought too much about what I wanted to do; and c) because it was a chance to go back to work on issues that I knew something about, to work in EUR. I think I may have told Beth, "I'm not really a NATO person." She said, "Don't worry, I'm not a NATO person either, but that may be a good thing because we're going to try to do things a little differently."

Q: We'll hear more about Nick Burns who was at NATO at that time, I think.

BRADTKE: Yes.

Q: And I'm sure there must have been a lot going on with that

BRADTKE: A lot going on. We worked very closely with Nick.

Q: Do you want to get into that today, or do you want to leave it?

BRADTKE: No, I think I want to stop here. The more I talk about the NSC years, the more anecdotes that I'd forgotten about, my going out to Waco kind of comes back to me, but for the moment I think that's kind of it.

Q: Just for the sake of the recording, let's say thank you Ambassador Bradtke. Today is still May 11, 2017, and we'll go on next time.

Q: We're going to go back just a bit to our last conversation about the President's Daily Brief at the ranch in Texas, the two and three months preceding 9/11.

BRADTKE: [During] the initial phase of when President Bush was president, the pattern of who accompanied the president on his domestic trips had stayed more or less the same as it did in the Clinton administration. One person from the NSC traveled with the president wherever he went domestically, and when I did that, much of the time the NSC person just waited in holding rooms during the president's domestic events, and it was not a good use of Dr. Rice's or Steven Hadley's time. So, I would go for example to Minnesota; we went to Minnesota for some trip or another, went to Montana with him, Chicago with him.

If it was an overnight trip, the PDB would be sent out, and I would take it to the president in the morning and give it to him.

Q: Physically.

BRADTKE: Yes, physically hand it to him. He'd look through it and if he had questions I would answer the questions. Just before I left, I have one strong memory of when the president went to the ranch—and this was in the summer because it was hotter than Hades. It must have been July maybe. I went out, but by that point one of the briefers, the CIA officers who would brief the president in Washington, would accompany on domestic trips as well. And in this case, it was Mike Morell [CIA] who was doing this, who went on to bigger and better things. In the morning Mike and I would get up and Mike would have the PDB. We would have a car and a driver and we would be taken out to the ranch—we were staying at a hotel in Waco. [After 9/11 they put a trailer on the property at the ranch, but in this earlier stage we stayed at a hotel in Waco, and then we would be driven out to the ranch.] We would go into the president's house, his ranch, and sit down with him, and he would look at the PDB and he would ask us questions.

Q: There's so much talk nowadays about the length of the PDB. Was it a page? Or was it ten pages?

BRADTKE: No. I would have said off the top of my head ten to twelve pages, and sometimes there'd be a longer article and then more updated kinds of things. But it was certainly not a page.

Q: So the president would read this.

BRADTKE: He would kind of flip through it, and for reasons I can't explain there was a piece on Angola, which I knew nothing about, maybe that's why I remember it. He asked Mike and me a question about Angola, to which neither one of us had the faintest idea what the answer was! But that was the kind of thing he—

Another case—and this is another one I remember where I did know the answer—we were in Minnesota or Montana, and it [the question] was about the OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe]. He asked about the OSCE and how the OSCE worked. So he did ask questions and he did look through this.

Q: George W. Bush did have curiosity, he did read, and did take in the information?

BRADTKE: Look, nobody read this thing cover to cover. I think President Clinton stopped looking at this by the time I traveled with him. He didn't spend a lot of time on any kind of reading material.

Q: Did the brief change a lot from day to day? Was it sometimes a repeat of situations from—?

BRADTKE: No, I mean I think there was an effort made to put new items in all the time, or updated items.

Q: So, this would be done overnight, and then—

BRADTKE: Oh yes, absolutely. When I worked for [Secretary of State] Christopher, INR [Bureau of Intelligence and Research] did an overnight brief, which I think they stopped doing at some point but not during my watch. Then the secretary would also get a slightly watered-down version of the PDB. Every morning I would go through [it] and highlight stuff that I thought was interesting for Christopher, and then he would leaf through it, ask questions or not, as the case may be.

Q: So INR, CIA, same brief?

BRADTKE: There was a lot of overlap. INR tended to have fewer but longer pieces and more analysis, [but] there was a certain amount of duplication by the INR and CIA. It didn't make sense to have two morning briefs.

Q: Same sources, I think, pretty much.

BRADTKE: Yes, it was drawn from the same material. It was also trying to cover what was really in the front page of the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* and put a little more depth into it.

Q: I heard the story about that. I think I may have told you. Well, very interesting— So, by August you were already in EUR?

BRADTKE: I left, I think, the NSC by the beginning of August. The last week or so at the NSC, I moved out of my West Wing office over to the Old Executive Office Building, cleaned up some things, and then took about a month off. I started—I want to say—after Labor Day in September.

Q: Wow! One week before 9/11!

BRADTKE: Yes, a week to ten days before 9/11. It was really amazing, just amazing!

Q: I'm speechless. That's pretty dramatic.

BRADTKE: Yes, who would have expected this to suddenly be on your plate, and like you, and almost everybody who was in Washington or anywhere in the Foreign Service, I remember where I was.

We were in the Department [of State]. I say we because it was my wife and I. She was the director of Caribbean affairs, which I'll get back to in a minute. The EUR staff meeting was in the mornings, I want to say nine o'clock but it could have been 9:30, I don't remember the exact timing. The first plane hit one of the towers before the staff meeting, and so we went off to the usual EUR morning staff meeting with Beth Jones, and in the middle of the meeting the announcement was that the second plane [had hit]. There were still people like me kind of naively thinking, "This is a horrible accident, this is really terrible."

Q: Yeah, well we all thought that.

BRADTKE: But once the second plane hit everybody knew this was bad, and that was the end of the meeting. We went back to our offices and I sat down at my computer and was trying to get on with the day, and just not registering exactly what was going on! My office was on the courtyard side of the sixth floor facing the inside, and my wife, [who] as I said, was director of Caribbean affairs, and had an office down on the 23rd Street corner, called. She said, "We're leaving." I said, "There's stuff to do!" She said, "I can see the smoke from the Pentagon." I said, "Well I'm going to stay." And she said, "Well, okay." By the time we hung up— Were you in the department at that point?

Q: I was in EUR as a matter of fact.

BRADTKE: Well then, the alarm went off and—

Q: I was at FSI [Foreign Service Institute] that day, but I remember.

BRADTKE: We were kind of ordered—well the recording came on. It was one of these things again in retrospect that you never would have thought of. They didn't have the kind of recording to evacuate the building that described what was going on. So, we're watching TV and CNN is reporting that a bomb was going off at the State Department. The alarm recording says, "There's a fire in the building, please leave immediately!"

Q: That's all they had.

BRADTKE: That's all they had! So, we closed up, packed up, went down the stairwell, and I called my wife and said, "I'll meet you in front of the [John F.] Kennedy Center [for the Performing Arts], all the way down Virginia Avenue. We didn't have rally points, the kinds of things that we now have.

Q: —that Beth Jones later established, I remember that.

BRADTKE: Right. So, I walked down there to meet up with my wife by the Kennedy Center there on Virginia Avenue, and she said, "I'm going home." Now we each had come in separately, and we each had cars in the basement of the State Department, but she said, "I'm just going to walk home," because we live in Bethesda but you can walk on the C&O Canal and the Capital Crescent Trail, and make it that way. And I said, "Well I'm going to wait and see what happens here."

Q: A true Foreign Service officer! (laughs)

BRADTKE: So, I hung around for a while, and I've forgotten the name, [but] I ran into somebody else who works in the building and I don't even know if it was an EUR person, come to think of it. But we walked back up to the State Department and we were standing there back at the entrance.

Q: No one knew what to do.

BRADTKE: Right. So, we went back into the building! We went up to the seventh floor to the Ops Center and [Richard] Armitage was there. All hell [was] breaking loose, but in his best way—someone whom I deeply admired—he was very calm. We said, "We're here. We'll do anything. We'll go get sandwiches and coffee for people; we'll do anything that you need to get done!" And he said, "No, we've got enough people. The best thing you can do is get out of here." So, I went back down to my office and sent a few emails to some of our European posts, to Toria Nuland, the DCM in NATO. I said "Toria, you probably are watching the news and have a better idea of what the hell's going on than I do, but essentially here's the state of play. I'm back in the building, Armitage is up on the seventh floor, we've been told to go home, and that's everything I know. Good-bye!"

Q: Well let me ask, why if you felt like someone arrested getting one phone call, why NATO?

BRADTKE: I did NATO. I did a couple other posts. I may have done London and Paris; I did the DCMs of a couple of our—

Q: I mean NATO in a conflict situation is way up—

BRADTKE: That was my particular area of responsibility, and when I was brought on, it was to do NATO and Western Europe. At any rate, I went back down to the garage and

the parking attendants who were all saints down there—at least they used to be—got my car out for me and I drove home!

Q: Yeah, they're amazing.

BRADTKE: By the time I got home, Beth, who was always very good, was on the phone saying, and we each had certain posts—I had the Western European posts. She wanted us all to be in touch with our posts to see what they were up to and just establish a line of contact. That was not easy. Phone lines were always working, and we didn't have all the phone numbers. We didn't all have emails for everybody. You didn't want to bother the Ops Center. But we made an effort to try to reach out to our posts to see if they were okay, tell them what we knew, which was basically nothing, and kind of get through the day. That was September 11.

But again, it's this strong recollection of sitting there kind of in that inner courtyard somehow knowing that the twin towers had been hit and thinking I was still going to have a normal day in the office until my wife called and said, "You're crazy! This is—"

Q: I guess we know in this household which one has the common sense!

BRADTKE: Oh God, yes! Who is much better thinking on her feet as well.

Q: As I mentioned, I was not in the building but I was in EUR and I do remember Beth Jones immediately saying to all of EUR, "The department has no way of dealing with this, so EUR will do its own arrangements," which I thought was very praiseworthy of the— And by the way, ten days later, I was the guest of Toria Nuland and Nick Burns at NATO because there was a PD gathering, and there was sort of a vote, did we want to do this, and we all said, "Yes."

BRADTKE: So that changed very much the complexion of my time in EUR. I started out with a couple of issues that were going to be important. One was NATO enlargement. We had launched the process in the Bush administration of a second round of enlargement. The first round had been [under] Clinton [and] had been Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. There were a whole number of other candidate countries that the president—and I think I mentioned when we talked about my time at the NSC—he had taken a very forward leaning position. When he was in Warsaw he said essentially, "Let's not see how little we can get away with, but rather with how much we can do in terms of enlargement." So we were well along, we hadn't picked the candidates, but we knew there was going to be an enlargement. There were seven leading candidate countries.

Q: Did 9/11 accelerate that process?

BRADTKE: Yes. There were seven leading countries, the three Baltic countries, Bulgaria Romania, the Slovak Republic, and I'm missing one.

Q: Former Yugoslavia maybe?

BRADTKE: Slovenia. Yes, thanks, right. So those were the seven that were in the kind of active consideration phase. And one of the issues was how are we going to handle this enlargement process? And this may be more than anybody's interested in knowing, but the Clinton administration—and I'd been in H at the time—had decided it needed to set up a special office to deal with enlargement, and they brought in Jeremy Rossner who essentially ran this process—he wrote a book about it afterwards. So, they had created a kind of special envoy for enlargement. Well I got there and when Beth said, "We're going to do that," I said, "Well why am I here?"

Q: Meaning, this seemed like a duplication?

BRADTKE: It seemed like the most important part of my portfolio was being taken away and given to somebody else! And it just struck me that I knew a lot about Capitol Hill, I'd worked on Capitol Hill. I think I had a pretty good sense of politics, having worked in the White House, and could handle the process of congressional approval of enlargement. So I said, "Beth, no, you've got to give us a chance. We can do this within the bureau." And she said, "Okay."

Q: The special office was not yet set up?

BRADTKE: Was not yet set up, but the plan had been that's what they were going to do. They were going to set up a special office to deal with the enlargement and the ratification of enlargement. And so along with my colleague who was the DAS for the Baltic countries and Scandinavia, Heather Conley the political DAS in EUR, we thought we could do this, working together.

She and I went back to Beth and we said "We can do this." And Beth convinced the seventh floor that we could do this, and, as you'll see at the end of the story, we did it!

So that was the one issue. It was enlargement. And what went along with it, managing the NATO-Russian relationship, dealing with the Balkans, southeastern Europe. There was a NATO mission in Bosnia, we had a NATO mission in Macedonia. Kosovo was also in, we had big equities in southeastern Europe. So a lot [was] going on there.

Another related issue—and this is one where at the time was very important but now in retrospect maybe a little less—was the NATO relationship with the European Union. The idea had been that NATO and the EU would work together as seamlessly as possible, that some of the NATO missions, in particular Bosnia and Macedonia, could be handed off to the EU to do as part of their own common defense and security policy. The trick with that was that the Turks were not willing to agree to the formalization of a NATO-EU relationship until the EU defined the terms for non-EU NATO countries to participate in EU missions. And it revolved around a concept called "Berlin Plus," which had been discussed at a Berlin NATO foreign ministers' meeting, and the framework had been

discussed there, but after a whole lot of hard work by Jim Dobbins, who went on to fame in other areas, it never got done. We never managed to bridge the gap between NATO and the EU.

Q: And the sticking point was Turkey.

BRADTKE: Turkey was blocking this because NATO needed consensus to approve the NATO-EU relationship so that NATO could hand off Macedonia and Bosnia to the EU, and Turkey said, No, not until we get defined terms for NATO members who are not EU members to participate in EU missions, because they basically wanted to be inside the EU and inside these missions.

Q: Sounds stubborn, but there is a logic to it.

BRADTKE: There was a logic to it, but as is often the case with Turkey, logic was taken to rather inflexible positions. So those were the two big issues that I thought I would be spending my time on—NATO, NATO enlargement, and Berlin plus; with lots of other things, too.

Q: So, Berlin plus was—

BRADTKE: This framework for the understandings between NATO and the EU.

Q: —which would have been the deal if Turkey had agreed.

BRADTKE: Right.

Q: But they didn't. Okay.

BRADTKE: So, along comes 9/11 and now we're in a different ballgame. Now we're getting our European partners to help us in Afghanistan and trying to walk our way through "what was NATO going to do." This put a whole new item on the agenda, which was capabilities. Because we learned very fast that while the will was there—and President Trump may have forgotten even though he stood there in front of the pieces of the Twin Towers—that immediately after 9/11 Article V was invoked for the only time in its history. It was to support us!

Q: To send AWACS [Airborne Warning And Control System].

BRADTKE: That's right, but the question then was, "What else can they do?" There were two things going [on]. One was, Donald Rumsfeld, despite having been an ambassador to NATO, did not think much of multilateral defense organizations. [To him] it was, "The U.S. was going to do this; we were going to do it our way. These wimps couldn't help us very much." And he really didn't want their help, frankly.

But secondly, they didn't have the capabilities. Other than the British and the French, no country had the capability to deploy troops as far as Afghanistan and sustain them in the field. No country—maybe again British, French, [and] Germans to a degree—had the special operations forces we were using in Afghanistan in the initial phases where we wanted guys on the ground right away who were trying to do things right away. At the beginning, when the president first decided we would go into Afghanistan, we were making it up as we went along, and it was hard to bring in partners who did not have capabilities. They all said, "What can we do?" And the answer was, "Well we'll check with the Pentagon." And Donald Rumsfeld's answer was, "Stay out of my way!" I think as time went on—and the timelines here are going to get all messed up, the military in particular started to understand the advantages of having lots of flags behind the operation even if sometimes the capabilities were limited.

But what it did in my world was it meant that as we looked ahead to the next NATO summit, which was going to be in Prague in November of 2002, we had [NATO] enlargement, and capabilities as the three huge agenda items; getting our allies and the Pentagon to figure out what they could do to help us in Afghanistan.

Q: Two things about Russia. I forget the name of it, there was some kind of cooperative, the SIF—whatever it was, which was just a kind of a holding pattern, I think.

BRADTKE: There was a NATO Russia—

Q: A partnership for friendship to peace?

BRADTKE: Right, there was a cooperation agreement between NATO and Russia, very limited. As we moved down the line on enlargement, there were three of us working a lot of these issues on a daily basis. Me at the State Department, Kurt Volker at the NSC where he was the director who did NATO, and Ian Brzezinski was a deputy assistant secretary in DOD. It wasn't always easy! But it was the three of us who were trying and using the people who worked for us; it certainly wasn't me doing this by myself! Basically we were the point people on how to move this agenda forward. Kurt, who is very creative, came up with the idea that we should revamp this NATO-Russia agreement.

Q: PFP? Partnership for Peace? Anyway.

BRADTKE: Partnership for Peace was the broad, overarching— There was a joint something called the Permanent Joint Council.

Q: Later.

BRADTKE: What he came up with was [the] idea of elevating it to what we called the NATO Russian Council, having a formal document, having regular meetings, of really

showing to the Russians that NATO by enlarging was not trying to squeeze them out, and that—in this naive time after 2001—Russia might even aspire to be a member of NATO!

So that was also moving at the same time. We were going to elevate the Ukraine agreement to a council; we were going to gussy up the partner agreements with the countries of the Caucasus, like Georgia and some of the other partners, to take them through what was called the "membership action program," so they could get a whiff of what it would be like to work on membership.

So that whole agenda was the everyday work for much of the next four years.

Q: The second thing about Russia that you just alluded to, you said "naive." Now, even Western analysts say that the NATO enlargement actually provoked Russia. You're aware [of the] Foreign Affairs article out there.

BRADTKE: Oh yes.

Q: Your comments?

BRADTKE: I could not disagree more.

Q: Great. Great to hear that.

BRADTKE: I adamantly believe that we did the right thing when we enlarged NATO, starting before my time, but really accelerated it in the 2002–2004 period. It was the right thing to do because we could not leave these countries in a vacuum. The Baltics in particular were very exposed. As countries that had been forcibly incorporated into the Soviet Union, but even Bulgaria, Romania, and the Slovak Republic, would have been left in this gray zone for their insecurity. As the EU did, we used NATO enlargement to drive domestic reforms. When we talked to these countries in this period we said, You've got to show us that you're democracies and that you're going to stay democracies. This was kind of our standard talking point.

I got an award from the Bulgarian government. The wonderful woman who was then in the foreign ministry and then came back to be the ambassador here just a year or two ago gave me an award for encouraging and helping Bulgaria. She said, "You pushed us as hard as any, but you should have pushed us even harder to reform our political system!"

It gave us the lever to get these countries to clean up their act; to get rid of corruption. Okay, we didn't succeed 100 percent, but we made a lot of progress. We did move them down the democratic path as well as the security path.

The other thing they did for us though, was they helped us in Afghanistan. And some of them helped us in Iraq at the expense of lives and treasure, doing this because they believed that we were their friends, we were their allies, and friends and allies help

others. You had the Lithuanians who had a very checkered history with Afghanistan, because the Soviets had made Lithuanian soldiers go to Afghanistan in the Soviet War. It was not an easy decision, but the Lithuanians now sent their army back to Afghanistan; they had very good special forces. But they did it because they felt we were all now in this together, because of NATO!

I've seen this argument; I've been on the receiving end of this debate. This fast forwards to a time when I was in the UK. Brent Scrowcroft was there and he did not like the first round of enlargement. He felt that we had pushed the Russians, but I truly do not believe that's the case. I believe Putin would have gone in the direction he went in, that he was being driven by many other factors. Has he used it as a club to hit us? Yes, but I think if we look back and we say to ourselves—given what we know now about what Putin's been doing—would we be better off with these countries in this kind of gray zone of security left on their own or would we better off with them as members of NATO and the EU? We're much better off; much better off!

Q: The mission of NATO was to be cognizant of Soviet advancements and possible incursions. How does that reconcile with the idea that Russia could have been a partner or even as you said an eventual member? Is that not a contradiction?

BRADTKE: No, this is what people forget, and it really shows how much times have changed. We did the first NATO-Russia Council meeting at the summit level, and guess who attended for Russia? Vladimir Putin!

I remember I was in Slovenia when President Bush met President Putin. The famous "I looked the man in his eye," his soul, or his heart, wherever part of his anatomy it was! There was a lot of optimism that we were on the verge of a new relationship. Even after September 11 there was this view that the threat was no longer in Europe, the threat is all around the world, and we all can do this together. It changed tremendously. Now when you think about the kind of interview that Putin just gave to Megyn Kelly, it was a very different atmosphere. There really was hope back in the second half of 2001 through 2002, that we were going to have a different kind of relationship with Russia, that we were going to open up NATO discussions to Russia. Not that it was a member; not that it would have the right of veto, but that they would have the right of consultation, and to be very close, to have people sitting in Brussels, an ambassador who would participate in regular meetings in the NATO-Russia Council! We hadn't had Georgia yet. We hadn't had Ukraine yet.

Q: The NATO-Russia Council was a concept, not a secretariat, right? Did it move?

BRADTKE: No, it was non-institutional. It was a regular series of meetings at the summit, the ministerial, and the permanent representatives [level] in Brussels.

Q: So, we've talked about NATO enlargement and capacity building of NATO-member countries. You deserve much credit for actually working on transparency and democratic

values in NATO countries. You've talked about what we got out of this in terms of having flags in Afghanistan. Should we go directly to the very different formula that Iraq was, or are there other questions?

BRADTKE: The question is whether we should finish the story of enlargement—

Q: Let's do that.

BRADTKE: —and the relationship with Turkey. Then we come back to the capabilities piece when we get to Iraq.

So, you asked, "Did September 11 accelerate the process?" It did because these countries stood up for us and they showed us that they could actually contribute. Not hugely, but all seven of the candidate countries were in Afghanistan with us; they all had guys on the ground in Afghanistan. They were demonstrating that they could do this. Our concern was often not so much the military capabilities—we wanted to see them improve—but they were enthusiastic about working with us. The U.S. military is still the "gold standard," at least as far as Europe is concerned, and I think other parts of the world. When I eventually got to Croatia, the one country they wanted to work with, the one country they wanted the closest possible relationship with was the U.S.

Military reforms were going along pretty well; it was the democratic reforms, and it was the issue of corruption. These were huge issues in these countries, which had inherited from the Soviet era terrible problems of corruption; where corruption was a way of life. It was the only way people got things done! Some of the leaders of these countries who emerged when the Soviet Union collapsed and when the Berlin Wall came down were not exactly your leading lights. So we would go on the road to talk to them. We would meet them at various international gatherings. There was a man named Bruce Jackson who ran an NGO [non-governmental organization] that would bring them together and then have us come and "read them the riot act" about the need to clean up their act. We did two road shows to the candidate countries with Nick Burns and Heather and I and Ian and I think Kurt—although I can't quite remember whether Kurt and Ian were on both trips—and somebody from the joint staff.

Q: Kurt had been ambassador to NATO before?

BRADTKE: No, it was later. So we'd meet up with Nick in Brussels and we'd get on a plane and we'd do the tour of the capitals. We would meet the presidents, the prime ministers, the justice ministers, and we would tell them, You've got to do better! You got to go after corruption. You've got to go after the judiciary. You've got to stop going after the press. You've got to clean up your act. So, we worked very hard at this.

Some countries were better than others. The Baltics were further ahead; the Slovaks were a little further behind; [and] the Bulgarians and Romanians were a long way back.

Q: In light of more recent events, did Ukraine stand out as one of the most corrupt?

BRADTKE: No, Ukraine was not one of the seven; it was not one that we were actively considering. The Slovenians had a good track record on their internal system but didn't spend a lot of money on their military. And there wasn't much popular enthusiasm for NATO. So those were the kinds of issues—

Q: You were talking about the seven candidates.

BRADTKE: Right, [we were] focusing on those seven. We also went to Macedonia and Albania to kind of do the same drill with them, but we really didn't think they were going to be ready. At that point Croatia was not ready because they still had war crimes issues they hadn't dealt with.

So, we were really focused on the seven, but we had tremendous access to any officials we wanted; we had open doors. We had intensive conversations with their security people, and there's some great stories that came out of this.

One of my favorites was going to Bulgaria. Where, as I just said, the Bulgarian ambassador told me later, "You should have pushed even harder!" They had a new justice minister, and I was in Sofia for whatever reasons, and I remember meeting the justice minister. He said to me very seriously at one point—when I was pressing him to clean up the judiciary —he said, "You know how a cemetery and judicial reform are similar?" And I thought what the hell is he talking about? "No, I don't know." He said, "In making changes in either one you can't expect any help from those inside!" (laughs) I got to know a lot of these people—the ministers, the presidents, the prime ministers—because we were their interlocutors. Secretary Powell trusted us to do this. Mark Grossman, then under secretary for political affairs trusted us; and Beth Jones had her hands full, EUR at that point still included Central Asia, which changed after—

Q: Grossman was P, is that right?

BRADTKE: Grossman was P. So, I had a really good relationship with Nick Burns and with Toria, so we were out there all the time.

Q: So how regular were these road shows; monthly, quarterly?

BRADTKE: No, no, we did [them] twice, but there were so many other gatherings in between. As I mentioned, Bruce Jackson, he brought the enlargement candidates together in Riga, [and] he brought them together somewhere else in Europe. We would meet these people on the margins of NATO meetings where they would be invited as partners. We were seeing them literally all the time. And then the crunch came right before the decision, which was going to be at the Prague summit in November 2002. There was serious remedial work with a couple, and I went out—I think with Ian—to Bulgaria, in particular, [where] the corruption problem was terrible. We managed to extract a few

commitments from the prime minister and the president, but to me inviting them to join NATO was certainly the right thing to do. It was not an easy thing to do for these countries, their willingness to listen to us, to help us in Afghanistan, to take this whole process seriously. As we used to joke, they were taking it more seriously than some long standing members did!

So, we got to November and while there was some hesitation, the NSC staff and State were pretty much in the same place. We invited all seven [and] they've all made it. One of the arguments was—I don't know what the adjective is—but we're better with them in than [with] them out; that if we had left them out it would have been worse. They're not perfect, but we got a better chance of working with them when they're in. And Nick Burns used to say this to them—and I used this phrase many times—he said, "If you think you're working hard now, wait until you're in NATO! That's when the work really begins." It was a great line; it was a wonderful line. [And] it was true.

Q: So if I were Megyn Kelly I would have to ask, "So would we go to war for Estonia?"

BRADTKE: I would go to war for Estonia. I would say this country *has* to go to war for Estonia; we have this ironclad commitment, Article V. And the Russians have to believe it, or Estonia's gone. We'd go to war for Berlin even though—you look at it on the map, and during the cold war you would see how difficult it would be to defend. How fast would it have been before Berlin would be overrun? And then you'd be, "Are we ready to escalate to nuclear weapons?" Thank God we never faced this situation, but I think I wouldn't be able to sleep at night if we let Estonia go without—

Q: But you just said— It's very important to me and I think to people reading this, there have been so many comments, [Charles] Krauthammer, and all these people saying, "Well, it would never have been fact." And yet having this principle and having it a reliable principle, seems the basis for some stability.

BRADTKE: Right.

Q: You must know the line from Strangelove, "But Dmitri, if you had a doomsday weapon, why didn't you tell us you had it?" It's all about communicating what you have and that's what—

BRADTKE: Right, and not opening up any gray areas. But the last thing I guess I would say about enlargement was we got this through the interagency process, the president signed off. My friend Ian was never quite sure about the Slovenes. And he was never sure about Romania and Bulgaria, but actually the Pentagon liked Romania and Bulgaria because they actually had troops! They actually had relatively good-sized armies, which they had not downsized completely from the Warsaw Pact times. At any rate, DOD was the most reluctant to come along, which maybe is understandable, but we got the interagency process decided. We then let our allies know. There was basically universal agreement among the allies. President Bush went to Prague in November 2002 and the

summit endorsed enlargement. I had a chance to be there in Prague and it was just one hell of a great moment. Havel was still alive; he spoke to the leaders.

You've asked me if it was the right thing or not, and I tried to give the rational answer. But there's also the answer from the heart, which is "these people deserve to have a better future." They deserve to live in a secure environment that helps them maintain their freedom and their independence, and they've been through some historically hideous things. And here's the chance for this to change. And are we going to not give them this opportunity?

So, this is partly the heart, but I think at any rate it was great to be there in Prague. But it wasn't the last requirement because the process of inviting—so we won't do Iraq—so the process of ratifying their accession to the NATO Treaty remained. So, the Senate had given its "advice and consent to ratification." The way new members join NATO is that each country must ratify the accession of the new members, because it is a commitment to go to war.

Q: And member countries also have to ratify.

BRADTKE: And the countries joining have to ratify. And we expect the countries to ratify before *we* ratify.

Q: Yeah, they declare that they're willing to be in, and the member countries admit them, right?

BRADTKE: Right. There was a lot of nervousness in the administration about the process. Again, this comes back to the way that the Clinton administration handled it. Here we were just going with the existing structures. We didn't have some special task force; we didn't have some special envoy for NATO enlargement. We worked the Hill—Kurt, myself, Heather, Ian. The big issue at the time was— It was Senator [Richard] Lugar who coined the expression about NATO, "Out of area or out of business." This comes back to the atmosphere. The working assumption was, "There's just not a threat in Europe; the threat's coming from elsewhere." So, NATO countries needed to have capabilities and a willingness to engage "out of area" so to speak, or NATO wasn't relevant. So, we had to do a lot of work on the Hill to lay the groundwork for the enlargement vote.

Q: What ideology would be opposed to this? Would it be libertarianism? Who on the Hill would be opposed to enlargement?

BRADTKE: Taking on more commitments to defend these countries. Were they doing enough to defend themselves? Was NATO itself doing enough? Some existing member countries—countries like Greece were not doing very much. This is now already in the Iraq period. So, you had a lot of unhappiness with some of the European countries that were not—

Q: Were there any figures on the Hill who stand out as skeptics? Do we want to—

BRADTKE: Yes, the biggest—and I'll tell one story in this regard because it makes me look good! (laughs) It's the eve of the vote. We've gone through the hearing process. We think we're in pretty good shape. What we don't want is conditions put on the ratification that would then somehow keep it from being a clean ratification, or cause problems that would then force us to go back and renegotiate with either the existing NATO members or new members. So, we were fighting to keep this as clean as possible. Senator [Carl] Levin was kind of the—

Q: Really?

BRADTKE: Yes. He felt that some of the existing NATO members were not doing enough, so he was pushing the notion that one of the conditions to ratification should be that NATO looks at the existing members and decides whether members should get kicked out! Right!

So it's the night before the vote and we've invited all the foreign ministers of the new members to come to witness this historic vote in the Senate. I'm at home and I get a call from a Levin staffer who says, "I'm not sure how the Senator's going to vote. I think we've got a problem. And if he votes against, then some others are going to join him."

Q: Is this committee or floor?

BRADTKE: Floor. It won't be unanimous. If he votes "no" there'll probably be a couple others who join him, but I'm still trying—and this was a sympathetic staff person. He said, "I'm still trying to convince him to do this. And if you can make a commitment on behalf of the administration that you will instruct Nick Burns to raise the issue of kicking members out, in the North Atlantic Council, to raise this in Brussels, I think he'll vote in favor. You don't have to promise any outcome, but just get him to raise this. I said, "Jeez!"

Q: That's brilliant, isn't it, on the part of the staffer?

BRADTKE: Right.

Q: Because it's so—

BRADTKE: We went back and forth and finally I just said, "Yes, okay. I agree."

Q: Well done!

BRADTKE: Well, next morning Kurt Volker says, "What the hell did you do? How could you ever agree to this? This was nuts! You can't agree to this! This is terrible! You should have never accepted this!"

Q: Raising a question?

BRADTKE: Kurt said, "Why didn't you get us all on the phone?" I said, "Kurt, I had five minutes there to make a decision about whether this was the right thing or the wrong thing and the stakes being what they were, and I made the call. If you don't like it, I'm sorry, but I made the call."

Q: Wow.

BRADTKE: So, we all trek off to witness the vote. We're up in the gallery with the foreign ministers of the seven countries and afterwards we're going to the State Department. Secretary Powell has a lunch for them, and [the vote is] ninety-nine to zero!

Q: No!

BRADTKE: I think it was Ted Kennedy who was not well, who was not there. So, everybody's over the moon here, and as we were walking out, Kurt said, "You did the right thing."

Q: Aw, that's a great story!

BRADTKE: It's one of these things where there are times where you've got to take the decision, you've got to—[Richard] Armitage, whom I dearly love, once said, more than once, multiple times said, "You never know what you can get away with until you try!" (laughs)

And this was one I just knew that we could spend all night on the phone and not come to a decision and have it kicked all the way up to Powell and Rice [and] God knows who, or I could just say, "Yes," and he would get Levin and the next day everybody would be happy. And we went off to the State Department for the lunch with Powell. And Powell said, "Ninety-nine to nothing!" And he gave all the credit to H.

Q: What?

BRADTKE: That's okay. I don't care who gets the credit, but it was just one of these things, it was the right thing to do. It was one of those times where you just say, "I'm just going to decide this," and it turned out the right way. Afterwards Nick—Nick was very good—he found a quiet way to raise this. Nobody ever even knew, I think, he had done it!

Q: Next question, I take it he had a twinkle in his eye.

BRADTKE: He snuck this into some discussion, and it never generated any controversy.

Q: Brilliant, brilliant.

BRADTKE: It was done without causing any fuss.

Q: So, you and Nick Burns were absolutely on the same wavelength.

BRADTKE: Very much so. We wanted the seven in; we wanted this to be as clear cut as possible, and to be as dramatic a vote as possible. For me being up there in the Senate gallery where I think to myself, Christ, I've agreed to this and now—

But, it worked. It was done by a roll call vote and it was ninety-nine to zero.

Q: I don't think we can talk after that!

BRADTKE: No, let's stop right there.

Q: That's a great story.

BRADTKE: That's one of my best moments in the Foreign Service.

Q: Let's just say professional satisfaction. Wow!

BRADTKE: Absolutely!

Q: That's marvelous.

BRADTKE: We'll get on the dark side of Iraq later.

Q: The dark side comes later; let's let the light shine for now. Clicking off for June 6, 2017.

Thank you, ambassador.

We left our last episode, an extremely intriguing one. We were talking not only about the couple months leading up to 9/11 and following, but also NATO enlargement and the climactic moment when there was a vote in the Senate ninety-nine to zero in favor of admitting I think six countries.

BRADTKE: Of making the changes to the NATO treaty which were required to bring in seven countries.

Q: Seven countries. Now that's just too good for us to leave it at that. Give me more on NATO enlargement, NATO-EU.

BRADTKE: Well the two pieces, and I don't think we covered one of them, but let me do the NATO-EU relationship, which now—I don't say it's a loss or it's not important—but so much has happened that I think it's hard to think back to the time when this was a big deal. The European Union's relations with Turkey, and Brexit impacted this enormously. The idea for many years was the EU strengthening foreign policy coordination, but then developing its own security and defense policy.

The idea was—the French and the Germans were particularly pushing this—the EU should have its own capability to react to crises around the world.

Q: This is a military—

BRADTKE: Military. This is an outgrowth of the EU's incapability to deal with the Balkans and feeling that they were moving toward a political union, so they needed to develop this capability.

There were concerns in Washington and in London that what was happening was potentially setting up a rival organization to NATO, not in a political sense, but a capability that would not be well coordinated, that would drain resources from these countries' commitment to NATO; that would lead to confusion about who was going to do what. So, we and our British friends very much wanted to get a clear understanding of how NATO and the EU would coordinate on defense policies.

Q: Let me just say as an uninformed bystander, I remember this and I always found it puzzling, because it seemed like a duplication.

BRADTKE: Right, and that's what we were trying to avoid, not to have a duplication.

Q: I forget what they called it, but it seemed like they had the same mission as NATO.

BRADTKE: Right. So, where the EU would have said it didn't have the same mission as NATO was, they were not going to do what we could call Article V, mutual defense. They were going to do crisis intervention. They were going to do humanitarian missions. They were going to do disaster-relief missions where they called upon military assets.

Q: Which the EU traditionally does responsibly and relatively well, I think.

BRADTKE: This is back in the late 1990s, early 2000s. The EU did not have the capabilities it needed to do this. The British and the French—and this is way down in the weeds, but it's my chance to get this off my chest! One of the big issues was planning capabilities. We did not want to see the EU have its own planning capability, to plan a whole operation. We wanted them to rely on—NATO has more planners sitting in

Belgium than anybody needs, so we wanted to keep the link by saying to the EU, You use NATO planning. We wanted NATO to have the first right of refusal so that you didn't have this competition to do a mission. We wanted terms and conditions—and this was our Turkish friends in particular, but the Norwegians as well—for participation by non-EU member NATO countries in EU missions. So, this was a large piece of it. Those are some of the core issues that we had to try to get negotiated.

Q: Can you just define, when you say "mission" you're talking about military, humanitarian, everything?

BRADTKE: Yes. Now, it came to a particular focus because NATO was doing two missions that the United States, in particular, wanted out of. You have to think back again. This is post-9/11. We're up to our eyeballs in Afghanistan, and we're getting ready to do Iraq, although we're kind of pretending we're not necessarily going to do Iraq. I remember going out to this huge NATO depot in Luxembourg or maybe Belgium, but under U.S. command, and they were putting desert camouflage on otherwise vehicles that were going to stop the Russians from coming across the Fulda gap. It was the moment when I thought we really are going to attack Iraq. At any rate, that's an aside.

But we wanted out of Bosnia, and out of Macedonia where NATO had gone in on a small scale to prevent a civil war. And Don Rumsfeld's attitude was, you know, "We're not doing these kinds of missions. We don't want this."

So, the EU was willing to take these missions on, but for NATO to hand these two missions off required an understanding between NATO and the European Union. That was kind of a long-winded explanation, but this is where the Turks come in, because the Turks were very concerned. Again, it's also very hard to kind of think back to where we were with Erdogan, but you flash back to 2001, NATO was critically important for Turkey. They did not want NATO to be weakened. They did not want to be left out of the EU's institutions because—

Q: —because they thought they might be in the EU someday.

BRADTKE: They had aspirations to be in the EU.

Q: Before the scales fell from their eyes.

BRADTKE: That's right. So, the Turks said, Whoa! Before we have this NATO-EU agreement, there has to be a clear understanding of the terms and conditions for NATO countries that are not EU members to have the chance to participate in, not just to send troops in, but to be part of the political and military decision-making process for EU military missions. They didn't want to just say, Okay, we'll send a couple of companies of our guys and the Europeans can tell them what to do. They wanted—

Q: So that's pretty reasonable, isn't it?

BRADTKE: It was very reasonable. But for the EU it was, Wait a minute, these guys aren't members! They didn't want this to be some kind of backdoor to EU membership where the Turks would get a seat at the table without having to become members. This was going on for a number of years and the package of NATO-EU understandings was called Berlin Plus, but there was no agreement on particularly the sticky point of non-EU/NATO member participation in EU missions.

Our point person on this was my predecessor as DAS for NATO affairs, Jim Dobbins. I had tremendous respect for Jim, and I would not have thought I could do something as well as he was doing, but I inherited this problem. How were we going to get the NATO-EU relationship fixed? We kind of played around with this and I think it was around the end of 2002 or beginning of 2003. The British came up with an idea. Their Foreign Office political director was Peter Ricketts. His idea that was passed to me was that he and I should go out and try to talk to the Turks and have quiet behind-the-scenes meetings to see whether we could come up with a formula for Turkey to participate in EU missions. He would then take [it] to the rest of the EU and sell it to them, which was an interesting mediation-negotiation idea. It would be the three of us, Ricketts, myself, and the Turkish under secretary of state in the Foreign Ministry. His name was [Sitki Ugur] Ziyal.

So, the Turks agreed to the idea we were trying to do. For me, it's lost in the mists of the past because life has moved on. It's one of the most interesting negotiations I've ever been involved in because what it came down to was Ricketts, who had no mandate from the EU, was doing this on his own, and on her Majesty's government's own hook; trying to feel his way to something he thought he could sell, and the Turks, who had their own views, and me, who just wanted to see a deal. I was not negotiating on anybody's behalf, but I was trying to watch and react to the conversations between Ricketts and Ziyal and where I could, intervene and say, "You need to change this. Maybe if it's done that way it will work."

Q: I see all kinds of hazards here. It must have been a very delicate zig-zag.

BRADTKE: It was a fascinating exercise. For the reasons you touch on and this idea; essentially, I was mediating between someone who was negotiating on behalf of the EU who didn't have a mandate to do that, and the Turkish government!

Q: Which was not in the EU!

BRADTKE: Which was not in the EU! And what was my standing? I'm not the Turkish government, and I'm not in the EU!

Q: I could see this getting all out of joint with the USG.

BRADTKE: No, this was blessed by Washington, which wanted to see a deal.

Q: Oh, okay.

BRADTKE: This was not a secret mission. Indeed, everyone was hopeful; had put a lot of eggs in this basket, so to speak, because we wanted to move ahead on Bosnia; we wanted to move on Macedonia. But, we couldn't get past this problem, and it was, "Bradtke, go out there and see what you can do." So, we had a couple of rounds with Ziyal, and we had further conversations over the phone. In the end—it took a while—much to my amazement, we got an understanding between Ricketts and Ziyal, which Ricketts was then able to take back to Brussels. Again, one of these little high points of my career was [Javier] Solana, the secretary general—

Q: Is this what eventually morphed into Berlin Plus?

BRADTKE: This was the finalization; this permitted Berlin Plus to be finally agreed. They put out this piece which was part of Berlin Plus, with conditions for non-EU/NATO members to participate. We couldn't get the whole agreement in place, [but] this was kind of the key piece to get that done.

Q: So, Norway, Turkey, who else?

BRADTKE: Well, Iceland, which does have a military, the Canadians, [and] us.

Q: The big one was Turkey.

BRADTKE: The big one was Turkey. They cared the most; they had the most conditions. So it was really a satisfying exercise. Solana was head of the EU and one of the real treats was, I'm in a hotel room somewhere on the road in Europe, and the Ops Center [calls] saying, Got Javier Solana on the phone, he wants to talk to you. He wanted to thank me. It was a nice feeling because it happened right before Powell was supposed to go to Turkey. So, we had taken this issue [and fixed it.] Every secretary of state loves it when there's a big issue out there and you fix it before they have to go out and deal with it.

Q: Oh yeah, absolutely. It's a deliverable.

BRADTKE: And then having the Turkish FM whose name was Cem, call Mark Grossman, who had been, of course, ambassador to Turkey and told him, "Bradtke did a great job!" It comes back later in the sense that it made me think, Okay, I did a good job. I understand how to deal with the Turks. Then I discovered years later when I was doing the Nagorno-Karabakh exercise that everything I thought I'd learned in 2002–2003, was totally irrelevant. Turkey changed so much under Erdogan.

Q: Better to know it, however, than not—

BRADTKE: Well, it took me a while. So, this is a small thing, but then what did happen as the follow up was NATO unloaded its Macedonia mission to the EU and I went out to Macedonia and I traveled around with a French general. This was during the worst part of Iraq, when the Defense Department and the French simply couldn't talk. But this French general and I traveled around. We talked to the parties in Macedonia and went up in the hills to meet the head of the Albanian Macedonians who was a key figure in this. So we had this practical cooperation. They were able to hand off the mission to the EU. And we did the same thing in Bosnia. We managed to get NATO out and have the EU take over. And again, it's lost in the mists of time because so much has changed. And now I don't know the current state of NATO-EU relations. There was a formal declaration. It was approved at a ministerial in March 2003.

Q: It was a month when another big event took place.

BRADTKE: Lots was going on then. But this was a chance when we were not doing well with the EU because of Iraq. It was a chance for us to deal constructively with the European Union at a time when, with the French in particular, things were not going well.

Q: And the French became heroes in the eyes of some for actively opposing the Iraq [War].

BRADTKE: I wanted to come back, but maybe I'll do that in the end to NATO-Russia relations.

Q: Before we leave this, though, this really was an achievement, not to be minimized. First of all, Turkey's an immense country.

BRADTKE: But now, the idea that Turkey would participate in an EU mission, I think that we—

Q: Let's go back a bit.

BRADTKE: That's the only way to judge.

Q: How many visits and how long?

BRADTKE: I want to say there were two visits to Turkey and a meeting in Brussels.

Q: That's nothing. You did that in no time at all!

BRADTKE: These were like day-long meetings, and drafts, going back and forth.

Q: Well, that's an amazing accomplishment. I thought this would be a six-month process with twelve meetings, but that's—

BRADTKE: No, this was a six-month process with a handful of meetings, but for me it was a really satisfying accomplishment, which as I say now, in the mists of time looks a little anachronistic almost because the British are out; the Germans and the French, I don't quite know the status of their independent planning capabilities are. [The] EU is in a variety of crises; I doubt the EU's planning too many far-flung missions.

Q: I wouldn't minimize this and I would argue that it's actually a significant accomplishment. You talk about the mists of time, but in the context with the buildup to the war in Iraq and a radical restructuring of who was going to be doing what during that major conflict.

BRADTKE: This was a particular sticking point for the French, because they were members of NATO, but not in all the planning bodies, although now I think they are. But the French did not want to somehow have the EU be subordinated to NATO. For them it was important, however it was perceived that this was not perceived as a hierarchy, NATO, EU, et cetera. I had to do some massaging there as well. This was again a time when I went to Paris to talk about NATO-EU cooperation. Nobody [came] from the Defense Department; I was the highest ranking official as a deputy assistant secretary to visit the French Ministry of Defense. This is now 2003. Rumsfeld was so anti-French that nobody dared [go] from the Pentagon.

Q: I think the French were as anti-Rumsfeld as he was anti-French.

BRADTKE: With good reason.

Q: And the famous speech in the Security Council; it was [Dominique de] Villepin, wasn't it who was cheered on that day? Not universally, but it was a significant departure.

BRADTKE: It was Villepin. The other satisfying piece of this was I developed really productive good relationships with a guy who then became ambassador here years later, Gerard Araud. He was head of the Foreign Ministry Political-Military Affairs Department, the PM of the French Foreign Ministry.

Q: Is he not the one here now?

BRADTKE: I think you may be right. And another person, who became afterwards—he was the NATO person in their Defense Ministry, whose name was [Marc Perrin] de Brichambaut. He became the secretary general of the OSCE. It was another small coup for those of us who wanted to improve relations with the French. We had a feeler from our ambassador in Vienna saying that the French might have a candidate for the OSCE job. Beth Jones and I went to see Colin Powell and he said, "This would be great. It would show that we could work with the French." The misperception of Rumsfeld, and a lot of the Pentagon people at the time, was that France somehow was not a good NATO partner. France had military capabilities and had the willpower to deploy troops and to use them! There were people in the French government who understood NATO, and this

was a way to signal to them that we in the State Department were not at war with them. So, we came out for de Brichambaut as the secretary general, which I think shocked a lot of people. Powell just said, "We're going to do this." He liked the idea and so we got behind the French candidate and with the United States and France supporting the same candidate, he was chosen.

Q: Again, this is very significant. A parenthesis, please. On the importance of diplomacy in a moment like this where two nations are really scratching each other's eyes out—France and the United States—in the lead-up to the Iraq War, March 2003. And I didn't know anything good happened during that period! Evidently it happened very quietly, below the radar. Please, a comment on the value of quiet diplomacy. Unless it's so obvious that there's nothing more to say!

BRADTKE: I would just say it's the value of talking to people, the personal relationships. If you're sitting back in Washington and all you're reacting to are the statements in the press, or speeches, or pronouncements, that's one thing. And that can take you the wrong direction. Or if you're only reacting to the position of the government on one issue, an important issue, Iraq, but the one issue, if that's all you're doing, you're not pursuing a rational sensible policy. You need people to go out, sit down, talk to the governments, to build those relationships at senior levels. You're not going to do that if you won't send anybody out there to talk to them! If you say, "I won't talk to the French," it damages your own ability to get things done that you want to get done. We and the French had very similar ideas of how the OSCE should work. And once we supported de Brichambaut, he listened to us. He knew we had helped him get that job! It didn't mean he'd always do what we wanted!

But it was the same with Gerard Araud. Gerard Araud could be irascible, could be difficult, but when we were trying to get the Bosnia piece worked out, you could talk to him; you could try to figure out ways to shape it so that the NATO-EU piece worked for the French. And then we got what we wanted, which was NATO out of Bosnia! Maybe this will answer your question. But diplomacy is important, personal relationships are important. Being able to see the whole picture and not have one issue so blind you that you can't figure out how to work with a country on other things where you share interests. And this is an ally; I'm not talking about Russia! I'm talking about allies. That if you expect your allies to agree with you 100 percent of the time, and if they don't then you don't work with them, you're not going to get anything done; it's not going to help you.

It's not the right approach, and I worry a little bit frankly about this administration coming in, with a bit of that attitude.

Q: Well this is a very valuable point.

BRADTKE: And I have one more piece. This is one of the favorite quotes of my entire forty odd years. The British had also been very—

Q: Wow, it's in plastic!

BRADTKE: Yeah, this is in my scrapbook!

The British also were really grateful that I'd gone to Ankara with them, that I'd tried to work with the Turks to give them a sense of confidence. So that it wasn't just them against the EU. That they saw us as being on their side, which now looks strange.

But the British were also dealing with criticism in London that the EU and NATO relationship was not developing the right way; that here's NATO [that] is so important to the British being weakened by all this. There was some criticism in the British Parliament. This was during Labour's time and the Tories in particular were using the NATO-EU relationship to beat the government. So there's a debate in the Parliament—and this is from the Hansard, their Congressional Record—and the minister of state from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is a woman, Baroness Symons, who is defending the policy on NATO-EU relationship. This is in the House of Lords, and there's a Tory Lord who basically is challenging her to say that this is weakening NATO, what the government agreed to. And she says, "The fact is that in my written answer, I put forward a very strong position from the United States government. Bob Bradtke used to be the deputy head of the United States mission in London towards the end of the 1990s. I negotiated with him often. He is a real toughie. He's not given to over-egging his pudding (laughs), and I believe that he means what he says!"

Q: (clapping) Aye, aye!

BRADTKE: Me being described as not "over-egging my pudding" was really one of the best things that anybody ever said about me!

Q: And it's on the record, and it's for eternity. That's great!

BRADTKE: I always felt a lot of times in this one little episode and again, life is—

Q: I think people would rather be friendly with a toughie than friendly with a no-toughie, I think. I can add a quote. I think it is a quote from Araud, who later when he came to the United States as ambassador, shortly after our elections in '06 and before the inauguration. I'm almost sure I remember this word for word. He was asked, "Do you have any comment about our elections?" And Araud sat back. I remember pretty clearly, and after some hesitation he said, "You know, we know that Americans find our politics very funny. This time it's our time to laugh!" He said this to a large audience.

BRADTKE: He could be very sharp-edged in some of his comments. But as I say, it was a question where nobody else was talking to the French government except the State Department. And this is a time when Powell would say, "We're like a long-married couple; we've been in therapy for years, but we stay together." We kept the channels open

so that when we wanted things, like when we wanted NATO out of the Balkans, get the NATO-EU relationship nailed down we could work with them. You have to talk to them! You couldn't do this unless you talked to them!

Q: Very important, very good lesson.

BRADTKE: I think we're going to stop here.

Q: I object!

We've just had a fascinating story about keeping relations going with allies during moments of extreme diplomatic tension, leading up to March '03. What else can we add to that story?

BRADTKE: The one thing I want to add to my NATO time was a little bit on NATO-Russian relations, which obviously have not gone the way we had hoped they would at the time. There was much more optimism, and we talked about that earlier. But there was one snippet, an anecdote or an incident, at the end of my time in the European Bureau. So now we're talking about 2004, when Beth Jones decided to retire, when Dr. [Condoleezza] Rice came to the State Department. I was the principal deputy at the time; Dan Fried had not yet been confirmed, so I was running the bureau. I had a chance to go with Rice—and it's again one of these great things on her first NATO ministerial meeting—and when she went to see Putin in the Kremlin.

Q: [You were] acting assistant secretary.

BRADTKE: Acting assistant secretary in the European Bureau. But the lesson of this to me, and again maybe history has changed a little bit, was to never think some things are impossible. This was what was driven home to me when we had a NATO foreign ministers meeting that Dr. Rice attended. We're talking 2005—after the second term election—so this would have been 2005. We had the NATO ministerial meetings in Vilnius, this was Lithuania. So, I'm there with Dr. Rice and we're sitting in Vilnius at a NATO meeting where Lithuanians are of course at the table as full members.

Then, after the NATO ministers meet, we have a meeting of the NATO-Russia Council in Vilnius and attended by the Russian foreign minister. For someone like me, who had been in Moscow during the old Soviet Union, who had gone out when the Soviet Union was starting to fall apart, gone out—I guess this was 1991—when there was unrest in the Baltics. I remember being with Senator [Al] D'Amato and a codel, and we stood there by the famous television towers in Vilnius, which were surrounded by Russian tanks and everything looked like it was on the road to complete catastrophe, when in Riga, the Latvian Parliament had barricaded themselves in the parliament building, when people had been killed in the Baltics.

And sitting there then, in Vilnius in Lithuania, which is a member of NATO, at a meeting of NATO ministers and the Russian foreign minister, I just said to myself, "Bradtke, you never would have predicted this!" But this just goes to show you that history sometimes delivers up things that nobody predicts; that you can't imagine happening! Okay, you can argue that maybe this was a false start, a false dawn, but at the moment it did signal to me that there [were] times [when] you think something is impossible that you could never imagine. In my wildest dreams, when I was there in that January of 1991 looking at Soviet tanks around the television towers, if you would have said to me, "Eh, don't worry, in less than fifteen years you'll be sitting in there in a meeting with the NATO foreign ministers, including the Lithuanians, and the [Russian] FM and you'll be discussing NATO-Russian cooperation—"

Q: To focus on this a little bit. Was there suspense that the Russians would show up? This was just after a NATO ministerial? Or part of?

BRADTKE: Part of, yes.

Q: Part of, but the rump session.

BRADTKE: Yes, because out of it—and this goes back to something we talked about—we decided that as part of the enlargement track, we would take the existing NATO-Russian joint foreign consultative commission or whatever it was called, and formally call it the NATO-Russia Council [NRC]. That we would enhance its powers, its capabilities; we would try to signal to the Russians that they were not on a road to membership by any means but that they would have special access, we would have a special relationship with Russia. So at that point, this was kind of the beginning of what we hoped would be a much more positive relationship.

Q: And Rice had done her research on Russia. Does this give her personal motivation in this instance?

BRADTKE: The new council was all done during the time when Powell was secretary and when Rice was at the NSC, so this was not new.

Q: So, in Washington was everybody on board with this? DOD? Rice? NSC?

BRADTKE: Yes, NSC. And when we talked about this, this was really an idea Kurt Volker had driven. He and I had worked extensively to bring the Pentagon around. There had been a lot of skepticism at the Pentagon [who were] concerned that we were giving Russia a veto on NATO's actions. And it was clear that was not the case, but there was some skepticism there. This was a way of trying to signal to the Russians, "Yes, NATO is expanding, but the world is changing, and you're going to have a new relationship with NATO and this is not going to be a threat to you." At the beginning we were making this work, in modest ways.

Q: So, you're not an enemy, you're part of the dialogue.

BRADTKE: And an enhanced dialog on a regular basis. You—Russia—are going to have an ambassador in Brussels. We are going to have regular meetings at the ambassadorial level, ministerial level, and then summits. And we did!

Q: And so, the outcome in Vilnius—I remember this vaguely.

BRADTKE: I don't even remember what the specific outcome was in terms of policy. It was a time when we were trying to get NATO more involved in Afghanistan. That was one of the big issues at that stage.

Q: Because that was Russia's "Vietnam."

BRADTKE: Yes, but also in the early stages, they saw a threat from Afghanistan, too, I think. They did not want to see the Taliban and Osama bin Laden in their neighborhood— They were worried about Central Asia and the contagion.

Q: Never at the center of things, I think I remember this as a very optimistic period.

BRADTKE: Yes, it was. It was quite an optimistic period in relations with Russia. Well, it's the whole period where Bush said he "looked into Putin's eyes and saw his soul," or something like that. Where we thought we could more— And the world changed, Europe was no longer an issue, Russia was no longer a threat. Together with Europe we were going to fight fires around the world. It was going to be about terrorism; it was going to be about failing countries, things like that. We could all work together on these issues.

Q: Do any anecdotes come to mind on that rump meeting with the Russians?

BRADTKE: Just the idea that it was happening. I couldn't tell you what was on the agenda. I'd have to go back and try and figure it out. There were no huge decisions being made.

Q: Did they have an individual, a team?

BRADTKE: Their [foreign] minister was there. I want to say [Igor Sergeyevich] Ivanov was the foreign minister at the time. But they participated in the discussion; they had equal speaking rights with the NATO foreign ministers around the table. It was one of these things where you said to yourself, "Wow!"

Q: Were all the NATO members comfortable with this?

BRADTKE: I would say the Baltics were probably not very comfortable, but our Western European partners liked this idea. We all thought, that is the older allies, that this was a good idea to signal to the Russians that NATO enlargement was not aimed at them. That

the world was different, that the threats were no longer from Europe. The threats were from anywhere in the world, and these were threats that we needed to address together.

Q: I don't want to oversimplify this, maybe it's an idea from Kurt Volker that caught on and stayed; that went to our mission to NATO, and that the U.S. was sort of in the lead?

BRADTKE: Yes, in a classic sort of way. While NATO [members] are all equals in the North Atlantic Council in all its various levels, we, at least up until recently, are the ones who drive things. We're the ones who come up with the ideas, the initiatives, and we're the big motor of NATO.

Q: Can it be said that we're first, the UK is second, and [then] the others. I mean is that a pattern?

BRADTKE: Certainly in this period of time we were the lead. We liked to have the British with us. This is maybe a sideline on the British-U.S. relationship, which we have touched on, but it is a unique relationship in that the British participate in what I would call "upstream" in the U.S. decision-making process. At least up until my time, before decisions got made, when they were being discussed by the interagency process, the deputies, the principals, the British were brought into those discussions. They knew what was going on in those discussions.

Q: Check with them first before going further?

BRADTKE: It might not have been a formal check but there rarely was a decision in NATO coming down the line, where we didn't try to make sure they were on board. Because we really started with them.

Q: Again, this has to me been very fascinating because I remember the NRC thinking. "How nice, how nice." And I always wonder how that happened. You've just answered that question.

BRADTKE: Now in retrospect, it's still there, but it has fallen short. I want to say we met in Istanbul, which must have been 2004? That Putin actually came, and somebody can fact check this, but I want to say we had a NATO-Russia Council meeting at the Summit-level.

Q: What would you say was the lifespan of the actual active, you said dormant now, was it—

BRADTKE: Now, my sense is that the Russians use it to complain about NATO. I don't know the answer to that because when I left dealing with NATO affairs we were still hopeful. And then when I was in Zagreb, it wasn't really relevant and I kind of lost the thread of when, the Russians—

Q: It was such a nice idea! I mean it is the way things should be. We do have a common objective of confronting terrorism and non-state actors. I think the interests are very similar and it makes sense to be working together instead of at odds.

BRADTKE: Yes, but post-Ukraine, post-Georgia—

Q: Syria looks pretty nasty right now.

BRADTKE: Yes, but when the Russians went into Georgia, I think that also really—

Q: Who invaded whom in Georgia? Both sides say it was the other side!

BRADTKE: That's a long story that I wasn't directly involved in. My impression is the Georgians did stupid things; the Russians then compounded the problem by doing stupid things, and we never really understood what was going on enough to send the right signals. (laughs)

Q: I think that's all the listener needs to know!

BRADTKE: But now we have squandered the time for Iraq!

Q: Squandered? No, we've avoided it! No, we're going to do it next! We will do anything that needs to be revisited. We should do Iraq because everybody's— We have to put these memories down; I have mine and you have yours.

Thank you, ambassador!

BRADTKE: No, thank you for your patience!

Q: Patience? Patience! I have infinite patience!

Ambassador Bradtke, you said we learned a lot from these experiences. Sadly, those who learned are mostly gone at this time. Is that true?

BRADTKE: Well, I think I'd agree with you. I can't say that I have a complete understanding of exactly where we are right now, but I do worry that we have lost a lot. There's Jim Dobbins who's just written this book about his life in the Foreign Service. He's got a line in there—I wrote it down in a little notebook where I keep good quotes—he said, and I won't get this right, but he talked about one of the prices of democracy. The price of democracy is a certain degree of amateurism in government, and it unfortunately particularly affects national security. I think he's absolutely right. It's that people come and go; professionals who develop, who learn, who have experience, leave government at a certain point. And different generations crossover and the people coming from the outside don't always understand what the lessons were that were learned.

If I look around now—and this is no judgment on any of the people working in this administration, and there are a lot of really good people in the [State] Department right now—but when you look at the fact that we were talking before we started, that there's not a single assistant secretary of state who's anything other than acting assistant secretary. Where are the people that have been through some of these things? Who understands the difference between Bosnia and Kosovo, and Syria and Libya? Where are these people? And then the other question is, is anybody listening to them? But it's not all about experience though. I mean, look at Don Rumsfeld, look at Dick Cheney, look at Colin Powell. We had people get us into one hell of a huge mess that should have known better, that had the experience to know better, but who didn't in the end know better.

So, I'm a firm believer in the importance of experience, of judgment, of a willingness to speak truth to power, which is also very, very difficult, and it's harder for people who are relatively new to positions than it is for people who've been around a long time. For me one of the great lessons of Iraq was if I felt something was wrong, I should have said something, even on some of the smaller Iraq-related issues that I was involved in.

Q: The other alternative is to have an elite corps of people who will unquestioningly always be in charge. That would be France—

BRADTKE: All the graduates of the Ecole Nationale d'Administration—

Q: They are not amateurs but they make huge mistakes also.

BRADTKE: Yes. No system is perfect. No individual is so smart that they're not going to make mistakes. But I do feel that some other countries do a better job than we do. I think the British do a very good job. Tony Blair—and we talked about this—certainly led them down a wrong path on Iraq, but I think he did it by pushing the mandarins, the FCO [Foreign Commonwealth Office], the British Foreign Office, all the way. I think there was never enthusiasm among those people for Iraq. I think—and we were joking about Villepin—I think some of the French colleagues I had were brilliant diplomats. [They] were very good. But in Africa—I can't tell you about French policy—but in European policy and in Iraq and to a degree in the Middle East, I think they were very good. They had the ability to see things clearly. You still had to make policy judgements, but you needed to approach the policy judgments with an understanding of the consequences of what you were doing and I think they were very good at that.

Q: Now, anything more from this period or should we move on to President Bush's second term.

BRADTKE: There was a lot happening in the European Bureau in the four years that I was in the EUR, from 2001 to the middle of 2005. A lot happening there; things that I'm sure if I had more time I'd remember or have better memories of.

Q: Well, we do have more time.

BRADTKE: Right, but I've had to dredge things out of the depths of my memory. As I think I have quoted Bill Crowe, who used to say that the older he got, the stronger and stronger memories he had of things that never actually happened! But when [George W.] Bush was elected to his second term, I was the PDAS at that time. [Beth Jones had asked me to move up when Charlie Ries went to Greece as ambassador]. After the election she decided she was going to retire; that she did not want to stay on. I think she was feeling—and she could speak for herself certainly—some of the same kind of remorse over Iraq that I was feeling. And being the assistant secretary for that period was just an incredible burnout job.

Q: So she retired shortly after the second election?

BRADTKE: Once the results were in in November 2004, she called us in and said, "Okay, I'm leaving. When Powell leaves, I'm leaving." So, I became the acting assistant secretary—it must have been January, maybe a little later—and for the second time in my career was an acting assistant secretary.

Q: January 2005, right?

BRADTKE: January 2005. Dan Fried was going to be the assistant secretary, and it's always an awkward situation being acting assistant secretary. I think I've talked about when I was in H, when Wendy Sherman was nominated and I had to make decisions, and the fortunate thing in that case was that Wendy and I got along well and I certainly recognized what my role was. A little more awkward in the case of Dan's coming over from the NSC. I'd been in EUR since September 2001. I had my own views on issues, and they weren't always Dan's views. I felt—and I need to be a little careful here—that I had an understanding of the people in the bureau. Maybe I'm complimenting myself; maybe I'm misreading things, but I want to make clear I'm not patting myself on the back. Beth Jones was one of the best bosses I ever had in the Foreign Service [and] she believed it was our duty to take care of our people. It was the Powell and Armitage philosophy and she believed in it. Under their leadership, we created a bureau where everybody in the bureau felt a sense of belonging, that the front office cared about them. And I like to think that in the case of the embassies, they felt the same way. We cared about the people in the bureau.

Q: I was in EUR at that time. I remember very clearly 9/11 what Beth Jones did to take care of her people. I don't think you're grabbing credit unduly if you say that after three years in the bureau you knew the bureau and that someone coming from the NSC—this is not to denigrate him—did not know—

BRADTKE: Dan had a very different management style. And the other thing is—and maybe a bit like the change [from] Reagan to Bush, sometimes the roughest transitions are the ones where the party in government doesn't change. You think it's going to be easy, you think, You know, I've worked with Dan; we've had some run-ins, but by and

large we had broad views that were the same. At any rate, it was not an easy transition. It was a transition between two very different leadership styles.

Basically, what Dan decided was he was going to completely clean house in the EUR front office. That all of us were going to be gone. He was bringing with him, basically his team from the NSC, including some very smart people like Kurt Volker, but who were not senior officers who had not had a lot of management experience. In Kurt's case I think he was still an FS-3 or FS-2. This was very difficult for the bureau, a very difficult time because I had office directors who were more senior. They came to me and said, I'm not staying to work for an FS-2! I had to try to keep people together in this period. There really was a sense of a hostile takeover. And to a degree it was reinforced in that those of us who were moved out were kind of left up to our own devices.

Q: So, you said "clean house." Did that mean—?

BRADTKE: All the DASs left. We were all replaced.

Q: Incredible! Same president?

BRADTKE: Yes, we were all replaced.

Q: At this point you were acting assistant secretary.

BRADTKE: And Dan was confirmed by May and—

Q: But you were also PDAS. That's long gone?

BRADTKE: Well, I was doing both jobs.

Q: So, you were removed both as acting assistant secretary and as PDAS?

BRADTKE: Yes. I was told, "I'm bringing on a new team and you're all gone." There was almost a little revolt among the office directors, and I tried to help them understand that Dan could do what he wanted to do; that he was bringing in some good people. That, yes, they were people who hadn't had some of the experience that Beth Jones had. [Hers] was [an] incredibly experienced team, you know, people like Lynn Pascoe, who had been an ambassador. I'd been the executive secretary of the National Security Council; Charlie Ries was a DAS. We had a really experienced team! And now they were being replaced by people who hadn't been in the front offices in other places; hadn't been DCMs overseas; hadn't been office directors in the department, as I say—

Q: Were they FSOs?

BRADTKE: Yes. I think they had one political appointee, I can't even remember now. But it ended up being kind of a hostile takeover, which was not a happy time. Which was

reinforced by the fact that there was no, "I'm going to ask you to leave, but I'm going to take care of you. I want to see that you get a good onward assignment."

Q: Why would a person do that other than ego? What's the rationale?

BRADTKE: I know Dan well and I don't want to make it sound so harsh. But I think every assistant secretary, everybody in a leadership position, whether it's an embassy or elsewhere, strikes a balance between management/leadership and policy making. Beth, I think, tried to strike that balance in such a way—and she pounded this into us and I learned an awful lot—that leadership is not to be neglected for policy; that they were intertwined; that you could be effective at both. I think for some people in the department it's all about policy. It's about achieving policy goals. It's about policy initiatives. And the leadership piece of this, their awareness of the importance of the leadership piece of this, is secondary. And everybody draws that line, strikes that balance differently.

Q: It seems that we now have a secretary of state who gets an A-/B+ on policy and a D- on management.

BRADTKE: I think you're being generous on the policy side. On the management-leadership side, I think we're in failure mode right now.

So again it was a different environment, and I was out. Once Dan was confirmed, there was no place for both of us to be in EUR, because he brought over his team, and—

Q: Had you not worked with Kurt in the past?

BRADTKE: Yes, Kurt and I had been great partners in dealing with NATO and NATO issues, but Kurt was replacing me. It's this funny feeling that you've been DCM in London; you've been a DAS in H and the acting assistant secretary in H; you've been three plus years in the EUR; you've been the PDAS in EUR and you're being replaced by someone very smart, but with much less experience. So, it was a bit of a blow to my ego. But what was more complicated in personal terms was I had no assignment. I literally packed up my stuff and I was gone!

Q: The normal person who's never been through this [might] want to know, how did you receive the message? How did you learn you were to clear out? Did it come as a conversation or an email?

BRADTKE: You know, I don't remember exactly. I certainly expected to leave; I didn't think I was going to stay. It must have been a face-to-face conversation, because then I could tell everybody else what was going to happen.

Q: Yeah, because you were the outgoing leader.

BRADTKE: Right. So, I had to go into the bureau staff meeting and say, "Here's what's going to happen guys." But it was an odd situation for me because I literally had no assignment. I had some aspirations. I'd been told some things, but the people who told me those things, who made those commitments, were gone. Nobody in the new team owed me anything in their way of looking at it.

Q: And then?

BRADTKE: So, I loaded up my car. I took my pictures, my photos, and stuff and I drove home.

Q: Sorry, are we talking about retirement, or leave of absence, or home leave?

BRADTKE: I thought about retiring. There was no discussion about what I might do next. I was basically put on EUR over complement. I went down to EUR/EX.

Q: Note to the reader: A "hall walker."

BRADTKE: Right! Literally a hall walker! I went down to EUR/EX and I got a cubicle down there. The office director, Gretchen Welch, was shocked, because her EX office had reported to me as the PDAS. I had this windowless cubicle in EX. I had no responsibilities. None. Zero. Zip.

Q: Some people would love that but I don't think you did.

BRADTKE: I decided I'd do a little reading. I took books out of the library.

Q: Out of the Ralph Bunche Library?

BRADTKE: I took a long lunch break. I had no job, I had no responsibilities, and I had no one telling me, "You're going to do something."

Q: Incredible!

BRADTKE: Yes, it was. It really was. Eventually—wait let's finish this sorry chapter in my life. Eventually the decision was, "Okay, we've got to do something with this guy," and they packed me off to a training program at the War College. Let me try to think. I think that was first. That was still the end of 2004, the winter of 2004, but basically that summer I had no job.

Q: The War College?

BRADTKE: Yes, the War College. It was not exactly the right course. It was the Capstone course for newly promoted 1-star generals, and I was more senior.

Q: Not the senior seminar?

BRADTKE: No, it was not the senior seminar. But there were a couple of other State Department [officers], [and] a couple of people from other agencies.

Q: This being in Pennsylvania?

BRADTKE: No, this was the National Defense University. This was at NDU, and it was a five- or six-week course. That's when I got to go to Afghanistan with these 1-star generals, and so I did that. Now I still had no assignment when I finished that.

Q: Can we dwell on that? Okay, you came to Afghanistan as a European policy person.

BRADTKE: Well, as far as this trip—

Q: That actually is interesting to me. Here you're out of context; you're doing something that you're not prepared [for]. How did you see the Afghanistan situation? You traveled there?

BRADTKE: This was a trip back in this period for this training program. Part of the course was a trip to visit a particular region of the world, and the trip that I signed up for was to go to Qatar—these countries don't necessarily fit—[and] to Tunisia, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. I think Tunisia got added when Pakistan got dropped, [because] there was a terrible earthquake in Pakistan at this point. So it was a chance for me to go to some places I'd never been to. And Afghanistan and Pakistan, when it was on, were certainly high on my list. We went to India as well, which I'd never been to.

So, you're talking like two days basically, and we meet people in the embassy, people in the Afghan military, and the government. We flew to Bagram to see the base there.

Q: Did NDU have an agenda that they— Did they just want people to learn about things, or did they want you to think a certain way?

BRADTKE: No. It was wide open and then you had to make a presentation on one of the countries when you came back.

Q: Fascinating.

BRADTKE: Yes, a great program. Not everything that we were taught in that program was useful to me as a civilian but it was a chance to see that part of the world, and on that trip, we flew on a C-17. We had a C-17 for the whole trip.

Q: That's the very big one?

BRADTKE: Yes! I don't know if they still do this, but they did it for us. And let me tell you, when you're going to those kinds of places, that was a great way to travel.

Q: I know you certainly had met and worked with the military before—

BRADTKE: It made me think that of the value of these programs where you put rising military officers and people from the department together in training programs, whether it's NDU and the War College, or this kind of program, there's a lot of value in that, there really is. You develop some relationships, and even when it's not the relationship, you get an understanding of the mentality and the culture.

Q: And the vocabulary.

BRADTKE: And the vocabulary. I wished I had done this earlier.

Q: We sometimes used the same words as DOD but with very different meanings, like public diplomacy, for example. It has a totally different meaning. Well, this sounds like a painful period but I'm hearing it as a real career builder.

BRADTKE: Maybe a character builder. I don't know if it was a career builder. At any rate, we came back from this program. I still didn't have an assignment. I [was] still kind of doing my time. I went up to see Nick Burns to say, "I'm looking for a job," and we talked about Croatia.

Q: Sorry, at that time he—

BRADTKE: He was the under secretary for political affairs at that period. He'd been at NATO and then was P. I had, to begin with, higher aspirations than Croatia, but when the regime change in EUR came, those aspirations were gone. I was perfectly happy, obviously; you don't always get a chance to be an ambassador. But Nick said, "Okay, that's a reasonable thing to aspire to and we'll try to make it happen." So, I at least had the glimmer that maybe I was going to get an assignment, but I still didn't have one.

So, I was back [to] twiddling my thumbs, and then HR called. They needed someone to serve on the accountability review board for two DS [diplomatic security] officers who'd been killed in Iraq. One had been killed in Basra and one had been killed outside of Mosul, when the convoys they'd been in had been attacked. A retired ambassador was the head of the team. We had somebody from DS, we had an outside person, and I was kind of the executive secretary of the [board].

Q: Why an accountability review?

BRADTKE: Because whenever somebody was killed, a Foreign Service officer, or there was an attack on facilities, you had to have an accountability review.

Q: Because many were killed, but—

BRADTKE: No, this was two State Department people.

Q: Got it.

BRADTKE: This was a State Department accountability review board, the kind of thing that after Benghazi Tom Pickering led. Not because you're looking to find somebody guilty of negligence, but just to review the circumstances. Maybe somebody *was* guilty of negligence. Maybe here's something that could be done to improve the—

Q: Lessons learned.

BRADTKE: Lessons learned. So, I did that. I think now we're talking 2006. That involved talking to people back here who knew something about both incidents and then going out to Iraq. We split up, half the team went to Mosul and half the team went to Basra, and we were based in Baghdad. We talked to people in the embassy in Baghdad; we talked to the diplomatic security people in Baghdad. We spent two nights in Mosul, viewed the area where the incident took place, and then kind of rendezvoused back in Baghdad, and then came back to the United States. We did not find—and I guess these are now public record more or less—that there had been any negligence. It was just the risk of these convoys. It was a damn dangerous place!

Q: Convoys were targets.

BRADTKE: They were targets. The bad guys knew what we were doing. They could monitor; they could track. We had not quite developed the degree of sophistication in detecting some of the IEDs that we now [can]. We still lose people now, but that was just the beginning. We really were learning and feeling our way.

Q: Were the DS agents killed by IEDs?

BRADTKE: Yes, their convoys were blown up. And then the one in Mosul came under small-arms fire as well. The convoys were run by contractors.

Q: Not the Blackwater people?

BRADTKE: Yes, the Blackwater people.

Q: Yeah, they've changed names so many times!

BRADTKE: We didn't find anybody negligent. We made some recommendations about how to run the convoys; things that we'd heard when we were there. Trying to do more to mask the movements. Trying to be more careful about how the movements were carried out, but there was not a lot you could do.

Q: I mean it was a flat topography with very little vegetation. You cannot mask a convoy going through—

BRADTKE: But you know, our convoys were always the same; our vehicles were always the same. Could you have a beat-up old jalopy rather than the white SUV or the black SUV? Did you always have to have the same vehicle pattern? Could you just do things a little differently? In some cases, I think that was being done by others who had presence in these places. But the State Department, we felt we should just give the DS people the flexibility to say, Let's try something a little different this time. Today let's not have the two black ones front and back and the Humvee and the white SUV with the principle in it. Let's send out a smaller package or let's send out a vehicle that's different from these.

Q: In your interaction with the local DS, they must have been traumatized by the loss of their colleagues. How did they interact with the accountability review board?

BRADTKE: They were very open. They had ideas that they thought maybe weren't being heard back in Washington. The embassy front office was the most defensive, which was, You're going to come here and tell us how to do things. You're going to come here and try to find a scapegoat. We tried to make it very clear from the beginning, that's not what we're about. We were not trying to find somebody whose fault this was. We're trying to just make sure that, if at all possible, this didn't happen again!

Q: Funny thing about front offices. They tend to really—

BRADTKE: And I'm sure I've been guilty of that, but that was not the purpose. We had a rather stormy meeting with Jim Jeffrey who was very defensive. Again, we had no silver bullet of how you keep from running into this problem again. My sense is that over time we were more sophisticated with how we dealt with IEDs. That this was a period where it was amazing to me how anybody could ever get out of those compounds. Having driven the route from our base in Mosul to where the meeting was, I can say it was one of the more unsettling and unnerving things I've done in my Foreign Service career. Because you're in a Humvee, you're about as protected as you're going to be, but every vehicle parked in the street, every trash can along the road, who knew what was in these things? It was a very unsettling thing. I felt huge sympathy for our people who were in these places. I don't know how they could do their work. I had some conversations. When you're a visitor, everyone kind of unburdens on you. Very difficult. Just getting to the airport to get out of there. They had the chance to have periodic R&Rs [rest and relaxation trips] to Jordan. Just getting from the compound to the airport in Baghdad, they had what was called the "Rhino Run." There was a vehicle, an Israeli vehicle that we had bought, kind of an armored bus basically [in which] they took people from the Green Zone to the airport. When our team had first arrived in Baghdad, we came in by helicopter, but when we went out, we went out on the Rhino Run. It was like 4:30–5:30 in the morning. You're loaded into this vehicle [and] the stress level was extraordinarily high. I just had enormous sympathy for the people who were staffing our post and how

they could do anything; how they could do their work was just amazing to me. I have a lot of sympathy for people who work under those conditions.

Q: Weren't we a superpower? (laughs)

BRADTKE: Well things were really badly out of control in that period. The end of 2004, beginning of 2005.

Q: Yes. I can remember. Can you let us know where our next conversation will—?

BRADTKE: Well, let's kind of wrap up my sour-grapes conversation. By the time I got back, it was clear I was going to be the nominee for Croatia. I had not yet been nominated. I lobbied very, very hard to get out of EUR/EX, with nothing to do, and to go over to FSI. I had spoken very good Croatian when I'd been in Zagreb in the 1970s. I knew I could pick it back up. I begged to be let go to be able to go to FSI to study Croatian, and eventually, after a huge amount of lobbying, I managed to get there, just before I was nominated, to go into language training. But it frustrated the hell out of me that I'm sitting in EX doing nothing when I could be studying Croatian at FSI.

Q: How long was the stay in the holding cell?

BRADTKE: I want to say it was until early spring 2006, so basically EUR/EX was my home from the summer of 2005 to the spring of 2006 with interludes at the National Defense University and doing this Accountability Review Board.

Q: Three seasons in a windowless room.

BRADTKE: Yes. A cubicle. "Room" would be too charitable.

Q: As we conclude, was it Nick Burns who made the—

BRADTKE: Well, I think Nick recognized that I should get taken care of. I think hands down I had better qualifications than anybody I could possibly imagine for the job in Croatia. I'd served in Zagreb before the 1970s in Yugoslavia. I'd been the PDAS in EUR. The big issue for Croatia was going to be NATO enlargement, getting them an invitation to join NATO. I had helped shepherd seven countries through the NATO enlargement process. I was available, and I think if anybody had better qualifications than me, I'd like to know who it was!

Q: DCM London!

BRADTKE: DCM London. And NSC executive secretary. So I think I had good qualifications. I think I was certainly very well qualified, so whatever considerations were given to others, I'd like to think it wasn't just, "Oh we've got to pay this guy off." I think that there was a recognition that I was really—

Q: Is there any story in the Senate confirmation? Should we talk about that next time or did it just fly through?

BRADTKE: I was asked one question by the Foreign Relations Committee. It was part of a panel of nominees. It was very straightforward. There were no issues.

Q: Did the panel have any understanding of Croatia?

BRADTKE: It's the Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Europe. None of us were controversial. I can't remember whether I was asked about NATO, whether I was asked about economic relations, but I had one kind of "cream puff," pro forma question and that was all it took.

Q: So confirmed in spring of 2006?

BRADTKE: Confirmed in the summer of 2006. And that's maybe where we should stop.

Q: Confirmed in the summer of 2006 and you're about to move to Zagreb!

BRADTKE: Right.

Q: What an enlightening moment that must have been!

BRADTKE: It was a good feeling to think I'd be back to work again, a full-time job. And I get a chance to be an ambassador, and a chance to go back to a place that I had a very strong positive feeling about.

Q: Fantastic! This is great. Many of your stories end on a high note, ambassador.

BRADTKE: No, no, no. I feel that way about my whole career, about everything that actually takes place from that point forward. With maybe one slight exception.

Q: Well we'll contemplate on that one! Thank you.

Ambassador Bob Bradtke, this is Dan Whitman. It's November 29, 2017. We're going to pick up from when you were confirmed by the Senate to be COM [chief of mission] to Croatia. Can we take it from there?

BRADTKE: We can. At the risk of throwing in something that is of less interest to anybody but me, this is one of the lessons that I kind of learned— It was a lesson of sorts, and it happened before I even got out there. I got confirmed. My wife was still in Suriname as the ambassador. I wanted to wait until the end of the summer before going out, since not much happens in Europe in August. So, I am talking on the phone with the deputy chief of mission [DCM] Greg Delawie [who has gone on to be the ambassador to

Kosovo]. I didn't know him personally, but he had been out there for a while. I started to talk to him about what I wanted to do, and he basically told me, in a very good way, that I had it all wrong. What I needed to do was come out early, because there were things that would be important to do, and then I could leave and go to Suriname to join my wife for her farewells, and then I could come back out.

So, Greg had a completely different idea of what I should do. I should go and come back. Then, he also told me, "Guess what, we're going to be working on the residence, so you won't be able to live in the residence for a while." So, he had this boatload of bad news, telling me things that I really didn't want to do. Here you are, you're a newly minted ambassador, and you're in charge. Here's a guy you don't know who's telling you things that you didn't really want to hear.

He was my predecessor's DCM, and I was inheriting him. So, here I have a guy who's telling me things I don't want to hear, that I'm not going to like, and I don't really know him. It was one of these lessons where he was absolutely right. His advice saved me from doing the wrong things, and the result was that I got off to an extremely good start. I did what I needed to do, was still able to go to Suriname and join my wife. I lived in an apartment, which was okay, rather than the ambassador's residence, but going out early enabled me to present my credentials, and make a trip with the president and the prime minister to a ceremony honoring Nikola Tesla, who is a famous Croatian and whose parents were partly Orthodox. He's revered by both Serbia and Croatia. There was a new museum at his birthplace.

Q: Again, the spelling?

BRADTKE: Nikola Tesla, like the car. The car is named after him. It was a great start. I was able to fly with the prime minister onward to Dubrovnik for a conference. It was a tremendous start, and then August came, and I could leave. Getting the residence worked on in this whole period was the right thing to do. The residence badly needed work; it was better that I wasn't there and that they started at the beginning of my tour rather than the middle of the tour. The result was a much more livable house than it would have been. So, everything he told me was right, but it was one of these cases where I learned early on—and I really valued this in both of my DCMs—that I really wanted someone who would tell me something that they knew I wasn't going to like, and they wouldn't be afraid to tell me that.

The lesson to me was, don't be so stupid as to not listen to what they have to say. It doesn't mean you have to agree, but you're better off with somebody who's going to tell you, "Boss, that's not the way to do it," or "that's not the right thing," than somebody who will say, "Yes, Mr. Ambassador; of course, Mr. Ambassador," and then you go off and do something stupid. So, again, it's a tiny lesson but important. You need at least one person, other than your spouse, who can tell you, "No, you really don't want to do that."

Q: I was going to say, I think you learned this earlier.

BRADTKE: I think so too, but this was a reminder of that. So, I got off to a good start. I came to Croatia at a really good time. I was fortunate. Croatia had, of course, come out of the war badly damaged. They had come out of the war with a political system in turmoil. The president during the war, Franjo Tudjman, was really a right-wing nationalist. He was not a very savory type. There were war criminal issues that were still hanging over the country. There were issues regarding the resettlement of Serbs who lived in parts of Croatia that had been populated for centuries by Serbs. There was a lot of baggage that came out of the war. To the credit of my predecessors, they basically cleaned up 90 percent of that before I got there, including sending off to the Hague a controversial Croatian general by the name of Gotovina. Gotovina is still a controversial person. He was under indictment by the Hague, he had been on the lam. Everyone assumed the Croatian government had some idea where he was, but he was at large. As long as he was at large, we had a big problem. Just before I got out there, the Croatian government and the Hague tribunal got their hands on him, and he was sent off to the Hague. That really opened the door to trying to move more quickly on U.S.-Croatian relations.

Q: So, the actual hostilities were in the '90s. You were there in 2006?

BRADTKE: Yes, I arrived in 2006, so it was about a decade after the hostilities ended. Dayton was 1995, so it was eleven years after.

Q: So, it was still a very raw nerve?

BRADTKE: It was still a country that was coming out of that war. It had come along. They had done better than they gave themselves credit for. But the baggage of the war was still there—the political baggage, the idea that the war had been run by a strongman president, that the political system was still taking root, that you had war criminal issues, that you had the mistreatment of Serbs from Croatia— All this baggage. They were still dealing with that.

Q: I think you spoke Serbo-Croatian because of a previous posting in Belgrade?

BRADTKE: For me, there was this opportunity; the door was open, now, to moving quickly. Here I was, and I had a couple of real big advantages that, with all modesty, made me a good person to be there at the time. You got it slightly wrong—I had served in Zagreb. I'd actually served in Zagreb from 1976 to 1978. So, I knew the country. I'd been there in the old Yugoslavia. I started with a knowledge of the place. I started with a certain credibility as someone who had been there and who knew the old Zagreb, who knew Croatia.

I also had managed to get my language back to reasonably good shape, and there were very few ambassadors in Croatia who spoke the language. Some of the Eastern Europeans spoke a smattering of some kind of Slavic variant that passed for Croatian, but I actually knew a fair amount. I was at least at what we call in the Foreign Service a 3/3

level. I was probably a 3+, when I got off the plane. It was, if I may, "Croatian." It was no longer the so-called "Serbo-Croatian" that doesn't really exist. So, I had the Croatian words, I had the Croatian variant, if you will. So, it really helped me to do public diplomacy. It helped me to talk to ministers where I could be one on one with them when we dealt with sensitive subjects. It was a tremendous asset. So, as I said, I arrived at a good time because of what my predecessors had done, and I had a set of qualifications and background that really were the right things for that particular moment.

Q: So, the obvious question is, this seems like a thirty-year gap between when you arrived and when you first came as COM. How did things appear to be different?

BRADTKE: One of the first things I did was— I came out with a couple of objectives. One of them was to help Croatia get into NATO. As someone who had worked on NATO for the Baltics, the Romanians, Bulgarians, Slovenes, and Slovaks, I really believed in NATO enlargement. So, that was one of my key objectives. But to convince Washington that that was the right idea, I needed to show how Croatia had changed. Again, looking back to what my predecessors had accomplished, Croatia had made real progress. The first message I sent into the department was a first-person message trying to describe the Croatia that I had now seen, as opposed to the Croatia that I had known in the 1970s. I tried to say how much it had changed. It was a country that could have gone in a really right-wing nationalist, negative way, but instead it embraced the idea of NATO membership and it embraced the idea of European Union membership. It embraced the reforms, political and economic, that they needed to get there. Croatia was more oriented towards the Adriatic and Mediterranean and no longer "Balkan."

In my cable, I said that Croatia has gone from a Turkish coffee country to an espresso country. A road network had been built. The old trip I used to take as a junior officer from Zagreb to Rijeka, over the mountains, hideously bad traffic— You would put your life in your own hands for four hours. You could now do it on a superhighway, except for one little piece that was finished after I got there. It was like an hour and a half, an hour and fifteen minutes. Zagreb had literally moved much closer to the Adriatic. It really had opened up the country in a very positive sort of way. That is very much what I was thinking. Obviously, it was much more of a consumer society when I was there. Among Eastern European countries in the '70s, it was perhaps the most consumer. You could find goods from Europe, and people traveled to Western Europe. But the gap to a Western European country like Italy was still great.

Q: So what about Croatia and World War II? I'm sure this is wrong: Croatia was receptive to Nazis?

BRADTKE: This also was part of the historical baggage. In the '30s, when it was the Kingdom of Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia, it was not a good time. The economic mess, with the Serbs in Belgrade concentrating power, the assassinations of political leaders— It was really a horrible time. Then, along comes World War II, and Hitler annexes, basically, part of Slovenia. There's a puppet government—Ustasha, as they were called,

government—that was set up in Zagreb. Not a good time. Definitely not a good time. That image tars Croatia even today, but I think what I saw was that, particularly coming after independence, they could have gone backwards in that direction. Tudjman, a strongman, cracked down on the press. There was linguistic purity and all sorts of strange things going on, but they turned away from that.

To me, this was something that I had seen with the Baltics, with the Romanians, the Hungarians, the Slovaks. The magnetic attraction of wanting to be a part of Europe and the European institutions, NATO and the EU, was such that this was a driving force for reform. If we hadn't had these great institutions, it would not have happened or it would not have happened as quickly, but they wanted to be in the EU. They wanted that NATO umbrella so that they would never be attacked again and never be alone again. The memories of being attacked by Serbia and Milosevic are still strong. This was a country which, during the war, had their presidential palace bombed. When you talk to the Croatian military or you talk to the Croatian minister of defense, they say, We never want that to happen again, and we know that if we're in NATO, we will never be alone if something like that happens.

Q: Is that partly because of your good work prior to going to Zagreb?

BRADTKE: I don't think I had too much to do with Croatia before I went out there as ambassador.

Q: Even though you were Mr. NATO Enlargement?

BRADTKE: Right. There were two tiers, if you will. There were the three Baltic countries, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovenia and Slovakia. [The Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary had been in the first enlargement wave.] Then there were the— I hated the word Balkan, and I told the foreign minister when I first met her, "You're never going to hear me use the word Balkan. There's too much baggage there. This is Southeastern Europe. This is not the Balkans."

Q: It goes back to the eighteenth, maybe the seventeenth century. It's an—

BRADTKE: I could see from her reaction. From the beginning she thought I got it, that I understood.

Q: Let's dwell on that for a moment. You had a sense of history and culture that broke through a barrier. Any further comment on that? I guess the stupid question would be, what's the importance of knowing the history and culture in order to be an effective emissary to a country?

BRADTKE: It's huge. First of all, it depends on the country. Let me be honest, I think there are some countries where you can go on autopilot. You get a good DCM, and it doesn't matter. You have good political, economic, consular staff— But I think, for

countries in transition, for countries that are in crisis, or where there are big political decisions this country is going to face about their future, you can always learn. You can read books. You can get briefed in Washington. But to have lived there, to speak the language. It is sometimes small things. You need to understand that when you say you're going to the train station, you use the Croatian word for train station and not the Serbian one. It was important to do this in a place where they were facing big decisions, because NATO was not necessarily the most popular. The elite got it, but the man and woman in the street said, Wait a minute, why do we need this?

It was during Iraq, during Afghanistan. For them, it was, If we hitch our wagons to the Americans, they'll drag us into another war. We just fought a war for independence. Why are we letting the Americans come in and tell us what to do? So, there were a lot of sensitivities there, and understanding those sensitivities was crucial. So, yes, they had to find a way to resettle or to offer to resettle the Serbs who lived there and who had been driven out. You had to speak to that, but if you could speak to it with an understanding of the history—

Let me give you another example. When I was there, war crimes trials were going on for Serbs who carried out massacres in a town called Vukovar at the beginning of the war. They were horrific massacres. It was really the beginning of— It showed how awful this all was going to be.

I made it a point early on, and this was again my good DCM— He said, "You've got to go to Vukovar. It's the first place you go." So, I went, and kept going back. I made a point to get to know the mayor. Even though he didn't speak any English, I could speak enough Croatian that I could get through to him. Then, there was a moment when, at the Hague Tribunal, the Serb generals and military leaders who had carried out these atrocities in Vukovar got extremely light sentences, which was then subject to appeal, and I'll come back to that at the end. It was on the eve of when I was supposed to go to Vukovar and give a speech.

So, I went there, I gave the speech in Croatian, and I knew I had to walk a fine line between seeming like I was attacking the Hague Tribunal, but also saying to Croatians, "Look, I understand why you're not happy with this verdict, and part of me is disappointed, too." It helped that I also knew the war crimes ambassador, whose name was Clint Williamson. I knew that Clint had been in Croatia, in the aftermath of the war, investigating some of these things. So, I knew Clint also had some pretty strong feelings about what had happened at Vukovar. So, again, it was being able to bring some of these threads together as you tried to communicate to people. You weren't always telling them what they wanted to hear, necessarily, but you could do it with an understanding of their own feelings. You could do it in a way that showed you understood what they were thinking, how they were feeling, even if you couldn't agree completely. You could convey that message, and that, I think, was very helpful. Again, a good chunk of that was the fact that I had been there before.

The other thing is, and I'm beating this one to death, when I left Croatia in the '70s, I was actually rather down on the Croatians. I thought they were narrow-minded. There were some virulent anti-Serb feelings that I encountered. Again, I was a young junior diplomat. I spoke really good Croatian. I would go out by myself and meet people and talk to people and run into people. I was a great hiker. I'd go off and encounter people in these little huts and have a beer with them. Some of the stuff I heard Croatians say about Serbs was just horrific. So, when I left— I was relatively negative in 1978. So, part of it was, I really did perceive that there had been a fundamental shift. The economic impact and the political impact of wanting to be part of western Europe was moving people in a different direction.

Q: So, a softball question: can these sensitivities be learned out of context? There may be an obvious answer to that. The language, the cultural references, the local word for train station— I mean, it's almost a silly question, because of course you learn much more when you're in the middle of it.

BRADTKE: It really— Part of me, and off the top of my head, I would say it really does depend on the country, how much they know about the United States, what the history of the relationship is, where they are in their own development— I'm just going to jump around and make this a whole mishmash, but my last assignment in the Foreign Service was to Oslo as a WAE [When Actually Employed] chargé d'affaires to run the embassy in a period where, for more than two years, we had had no ambassador. The relationship was extremely strong, there were great allies, but there were sensitivities: "Why do we have no ambassador? What's wrong with us?"

Now, I don't speak a word of Norwegian. I'd never lived there, never served there. I knew some of the Norwegian officials because I had worked on NATO issues with them, but other than the Vikings, did I know the history of Norway? The domination of the Danes and their struggle for independence and all the rest? What I knew about Norway was how we worked together in NATO. So, my whole Norwegian expertise was kind of a little thimbleful of, "This is the way we worked in NATO together." But it didn't necessarily matter, because I could learn. I could read, I could get briefed, I could talk to Norwegian friends. I had to get a sense of what was on their minds. I didn't have quite the public profile—

Q: But you were there for a limited time, right?

BRADTKE: Yes, for a summer.

Q: A summer. So, that's—

BRADTKE: But it enabled me, when I finally met the prime minister and was talking to her, to understand where she was coming from. So, again, there were things that I certainly did not know before I got there. There were certainly things that I only had a very limited amount of information on before I got there. But it wasn't as critical, I think,

as going to a place like Croatia where it's newly independent. We're celebrating this year the twenty-fifth anniversary of diplomatic relations between the United States and Croatia. So, it's a young relationship with the United States. They were a country which was still trying to figure out what their place in Europe was. Where did it fit? Was it a Balkan country, to use that word? Was it a European country? Was it a central European country? Was it an Eastern European country? Where did it fit? There were a lot of really crucial decisions that they were facing as a country and as the leaders of the country. I think there, the more background you had, the more information you had, the more cultural awareness you had, the better, because there was just so much kind of swirling around and outside voices carried a lot of weight.

Q: Another possibly softball question: I had the impression from our last conversation, or you may even have said, Croatia might have appeared a bit junior to you given your previous accomplishments. On the other hand, given your profound knowledge of the language and culture, looking back now, again, do you think it was a good match? Might you have been used in a more strategic and important post?

BRADTKE: Yes. I mean, I think as Foreign Service officers we always think that. There was a tremendous amount of personal satisfaction in going back to a place that I knew, a country where I spoke the language. It's the small things. The residence that I lived in as the ambassador was the consul general's residence when I had been there as a second tour officer in 1976. Part of this was a sense of your career kind of coming full circle. But I continue to believe, and the two examples I'll drag out—

Again, maybe no one will ever hear this, which is probably just as well, but I had two tours as chargé after retiring. One was in Berlin, and one was in Oslo. I think I did a perfectly good job in both of those places, and you can't tell me that I couldn't have been ambassador in those places and not done a good job and not done well. So, yes, if I was only going to have one embassy, under the circumstances, I can't complain. And part of it is, and we'll get into this, the things we did while I was there and the people that I worked with. But I also feel that in terms of capabilities, as I showed in my short-term assignments to Berlin and Oslo, I could run a much bigger or more important embassy in terms of U.S. interests.

Q: So, looking back, maybe one last thing: did you feel at all slighted when you were named to Croatia? Did the post— Apparently it grew on you, because you were able to accomplish things.

BRADTKE: It's not what I originally aspired to. Had there not been this cleaning of house in the European Bureau and a new secretary of state, I think I could have aspired to something more.

Q: Would you even say you were a little bit disappointed?

BRADTKE: Yes, but not after being in Croatia, not after having had the experiences that I had there. It was deeply rewarding professionally and personally.

Q: What would be the post? Berlin, perhaps—

BRADTKE: No. This is where I'm going to censor myself. There were indications that I could get something quite major in Europe, and then that just went away and somebody else got the job. It was a person who was perfectly qualified, but I think I had at least as good credentials. It was just an opportunity I didn't get.

Q: Do you believe at all in destiny? Do you feel you were sent to Croatia for a reason?

BRADTKE: No, I don't believe in destiny in that sense. But do I believe that it was rewarding, that it was personally satisfying? Absolutely. But—this is going to sound potentially strange—but the fact, to me, that I was able to do Berlin and Oslo as a chargé gave me the sense of personal satisfaction that of feeling that while I never got to be the ambassador to those places, and as a career officer probably never could have been, I could have done it, and I showed I could have done it. And indeed, in both of those places there were people who would have been happy if it had been me as ambassador. So, some of that feeling got washed out in the course of those two WAE charge-ships where I felt like, okay, I didn't get the chance to do this as an ambassador. But guess what? I got the chance to show that I had the ability to do it and that I could do a good job. And when I left, people were sorry that I left.

Q: I think every Foreign Service career has a moment of sting and hurt. This is the first I've heard in our conversations. This almost makes you a normal person, ambassador.

BRADTKE: This may be the only one I regret, because I don't have any real—

Q: So, I guess the months of waiting were also hurtful. Everybody has these horrible moments.

BRADTKE: Yes. It's kind of humiliating. You were the acting assistant secretary of arguably the most important geographic bureau in the State Department, at least in my humble way of thinking. You've been an acting assistant secretary in another bureau. So, you were twice an acting assistant secretary. You had been a DCM at one of our largest embassies in Europe. You'd had a fairly successful run. And now you're sitting in a windowless cubicle, where you come in in the morning and you've got nothing to do.

Q: I'm laughing because all of us in the business have had these moments. Did it— in my case, and, anecdotally, in others, there was a personal identification of the hurt and the sting. Sometimes the system does things without intending to. Any comment on whether this was personal or impersonal, the moment of needless waiting when you could have been better employed?

BRADTKE: I think—

Q: I can withdraw the question.

BRADTKE: No, it's one that's worth answering, because in this business, you build up relationships with people. I don't want to describe it exactly as patronage, but there are people who know you and know what you're capable of doing and whom you have worked hard for. They feel— I felt this way about people who worked for me: you feel some obligation to try to help them get ahead, because you think they're good. Not just because they helped you or they worked for you, but you look at them and say, "Gee, this is a really good person. I'd like to see this person get a good job as his or her next assignment." So, you have those relationships.

Then, there are those people you don't have those relationships with, and they have those relationships with other people. They're interested in helping those people. When you have a change of administrations, or you have a change within an administration, you can find that the people that you were most closely associated with are gone, and then the people who come in are people you know but who don't feel any particular obligation towards you. They don't know your work as well as the people who you had worked directly for. So, you're at a competitive disadvantage. That's just the way it is. It happens. You can't say it's the system not taking care of you; the system is people who you know, and particularly in our business, I think.

Q: So, in the higher echelons, you're dealing with professionals and political appointees, more so than in the mid and lower levels. So, as the political appointees come and go, you have a lot to lose.

BRADTKE: Exactly. You do. Or a lot to gain. I don't know how many weeks or months ago we went back over the history of my work in H. If I hadn't worked for Wendy Sherman, I wouldn't have worked for Warren Christopher. If I hadn't worked for Warren Christopher, I wouldn't have been DCM in London. If I hadn't been DCM in London, I wouldn't have been the executive secretary of the National Security Council. So, there is a complete change of political administration that opened the door to some of the best things I did in my career.

Q: It works both ways, I guess.

BRADTKE: It doesn't always work one way, but it does mean that, at certain levels, you can wake up one morning and think your future was going to go in a certain direction and then discover that, no, somebody else has got that job now. While they like you, they don't owe you anything, and they're busy.

Q: You're making me cry.

BRADTKE: And the new assistant secretary has got other things on his mind than, "Oh, yeah, Bradtke, he's down there, and we need to find a good embassy for him." It doesn't work that way. It just doesn't work that way.

Q: We will talk later about what's happening to this whole system now. It's really not good, but let's save that for later. Why don't we get the rest of the Croatia story? Should we do that today?

BRADTKE: Let's give it a shot.

Q: Croatia.

BRADTKE: Croatia, right. As I said, I came at a good time, and one of the things I was able to do right at the beginning, which was critical in moving Croatia ahead, was I lobbied to get the prime minister in to see President Bush. Here, again— I'd been at the NSC. I knew who to pick up the phone and call. I knew how to work the system pretty well, and within a couple of months of my arrival in Zagreb, I got an invitation for Prime Minister Sanader to visit Washington. It was—

Q: Apart from the prestige of it, was there a certain objective?

BRADTKE: The objective was to show Croatia what it needed to do to move towards NATO membership. So, that was going to be the idea. I got all of the personal credit, deserved or not, from the prime minister and the foreign minister: Wow, we've been wanting this, and now Bradtke comes out and he makes it happen. It wasn't exactly right, but I managed to reap the credit for what my predecessors had done. The point of this story is, I had been the executive secretary at the NSC at the beginning of the Bush administration, and I knew the NSC staff.

So, the prime minister is getting ready to go to Washington. He calls me in to have a one-on-one talk about the visit. I take that back. I asked to see him. I said, "Look, I've seen President Bush in meetings with other foreign leaders. He's not going to follow the script. I think he's really going to like you"—and I really believed that. The prime minister was a good English speaker, he was a big guy, he was a great talker. I knew that he would get along with the president. So, I was pretty pumped. But I said, "Be prepared. He may ask you about a variety of things of interest to him. He doesn't follow his talking points. He'll follow whatever he's interested in. So, be prepared."

So, I went back to Washington to be in the meetings. We had a fabulous schedule for the prime minister; we've got the president and a meeting in the Oval Office; Vice President Cheney, who—

Q: You had worked with him.

BRADTKE: I had worked for him. When I had asked the vice president's staff for a meeting between the president and the prime minister, the vice president decided instead to host a small private lunch, which I was included in, at his residence out on Mass. Avenue, at Observatory Circle. It was a very generous gesture. We had Secretary Rice, we had— the secretary of defense was Gates. We just had this blockbuster schedule. So, we start out with the president. There is the usual small pre-brief for the president in the Oval Office. The president, to his credit, remembered me and asked me, "What should I ask this guy?"

I said, "I think you're going to like this guy. Talk about NATO. So, we get in the meeting and it's the president, it's the prime minister, it's the foreign minister, it's Nick Burns, it's me, it's the Croatian ambassador. There's some other senior staff. And bingo, the president starts talking with Sanader. They hit it off. The president is in a good mood.

After some back and forth, the president tells the prime minister, "I'm going to support you for membership in NATO." The president jumped the entire process that was supposed to go on with an inter-agency evaluation of Croatia's readiness for membership. The Croatians— I got into the car to drive over to the Pentagon with the foreign minister, and they were just— They couldn't believe it. I think they partly expected to get the usual lecture: "You've got to do this; you've got to do that." Instead the president says, "I like you guys. I want you in NATO. I'm going to support your membership in NATO."

Q: Because he trusted you.

BRADTKE: I don't know whom he trusted. He personally— and this— I can be critical of him, but he believed in NATO enlargement. He truly, in his bones, believed that we had to help the people of Central and Eastern Europe.

Q: And he knew that you were the guy for NATO enlargement.

BRADTKE: Well, yes and no. But I think it was— He started with that belief before he ever knew who I was. It went all the way back to the speech he made in Warsaw on his first trip to Europe, where it was, "Let's not ask ourselves how little we can get away with in terms of enlargement, but how much we can do to advance the cause of freedom." Great line. It always motivated me in my work on this. But the Croatians were just—it knocked off their socks. So, as I get back to the State Department, and we're getting ready for this gala dinner, the bureaucracy is going crazy: The President can't do this! He can't say this! We haven't done— We didn't send any recommendations forward! I said, "Excuse me. He said it."

I had a rather sharp conversation with a senior person who accused me of having talked the president into telling the Croatians he supported them. And this official suggested he was going to try to walk back what the president said. So, we went off to this dinner where the prime minister was going to address members of the Croatian-Americans community and some policy people from around town. It was at the Ritz-Carlton, I think.

And then Nick Burns was going to speak, and then I was going to speak. When Nick got up he said, "I'm really happy to be able to report today the president said he was going to support Croatia for NATO membership." So, Nick shut off the debate by going public with what the president said. It was just one of those moments where I was going, "Right on, Nick. We're not walking the president back on this one."

Q: What would have been the possible misgivings of the NSC? I don't even get it.

BRADTKE: We didn't do the process. We had— When we did the other countries, we had an extraordinary, an excruciating process. We would go out, we would talk to all of their ministries, and we would extract promises from them. We would review the promises. We would write memos. We would have inter-agency meetings, endlessly. We had done some of that for the next round of enlargement, but we hadn't gotten to the final phase of that, and the president just short-circuited the whole process. So, that was kind of my start as the ambassador, getting the prime minister in to see the president and then the president decides he likes this guy.

Q: This was at the beginning of your tour?

BRADTKE: This was like two and a half months into my tour. So, it got off to a fabulous start. I had a huge amount of credibility. I had capital in my bank account that I could do all sorts of things with. All of the doors were open. Then, we had to kind of keep working at this, because the rest of NATO had to approve, and there were some controversies. Some NATO members weren't as enthusiastic about enlargement as we were, and we had to get it through the United States Senate. Membership in NATO for new countries requires amending the NATO Treaty. So, it wasn't like we could stop. But they had the promise from the president of the United States, directly to support them.

BRADTKE: Sometimes, presidents get to make decisions without being told what to do.

Q: Well, duh.

BRADTKE: I remember the Dutch ambassador, who was kind of a hardliner on the Croatians. He was like, "Oh, they're not ready yet—"

I said, "Look. My position is clear. The position of my president is clear. We're going to work hard. We want them to continue to do the right thing, but the outcome, basically, is that we're going to support them. That's the way life is." A lot of this was spent, though, trying to push them on their economic reforms, trying to push them on their political reforms, trying to deal with the residual issues from the war. I spent a lot of time working on the return of Serbs to the parts of Croatia from which they had fled during the war. At least they would have the right of return, whether they chose to do so or not.

That was, sometimes, the argument I would have with my European colleagues: "Oh, they've all got to come back."

I said, “They’ve been gone, in some cases, for more than thirteen or fourteen years. Some of them left when they were young. They’ve never lived in those little villages up in the hills. You’re going to make them come back? Then you want the Croatians to pay them if they don’t come back.” I said, “That’s never going to happen. They’re not going to pay compensation. If the refugees own property, okay. But to pay them simply not to come back?” At any rate, the right of return had to be unquestioned. If somebody wanted to come back, if somebody owned property and it was seized, then that had to be corrected. So, that was not easy for the Croatians to deal with, and I was not willing to let them off the hook there. I pushed them pretty hard on that.

In their defense sector, they produced for Afghanistan, and they sent soldiers and troops to Afghanistan. They were very uneasy about Iraq, and fortunately, again, things kind of shifted in that second term for President Bush. We had this miserable thing called Article 98, which aimed at forcing countries to accept that our soldiers would never be subject to the International Criminal Court. It had little or no practical meaning, but it became kind of a test of our relations with other countries for people like John Bolton. I said, “Look, I’m never going to raise this, because it’s stupid.” And then it just went away. Washington stopped pushing this. So, I never had to make that sales pitch. Meanwhile, my wife, down in Suriname, had to get the Surinamese to sign up for this. She was not happy that I got off the hook and she didn’t.

Q: So, she had to—

BRADTKE: She got the Surinamese to sign an Article 98 agreement.

Q: Wow. Article 98, if I remember, was the U.S. effort to get people not to join the Criminal Court, the ICC.

BRADTKE: I think it was to promise that they would never hand over a U.S. soldier to the ICC or was it not to join?

Q: I think it was to lobby them not to sign it.

BRADTKE: But it’s so funny, because as you and I know, this was on everybody’s front burner for quite a while, and now we can’t even remember what it was anymore.

Q: Yeah, I think I remember, actually, because George W. Bush considered it a challenge to American sovereignty. We had a legal system— Even though the Rome Statute had said, if you have a legal system, you don’t have to surrender to—

BRADTKE: Right, but I think it was that they would never turn over anybody to the court who might happen to be in their country.

Q: An American, yeah.

BRADTKE: Not so much that they wouldn't sign— They could sign or not, but they had to promise that—

Q: Yeah. At least in Africa, I believe, the effort was to actually get them not to join the ICC, even though, currently, we support the actions of the ICC, though we are not members.

BRADTKE: Convenient.

Q: It's a little crazy.

BRADTKE: Let me come back. The other, of course, incredible high point was having Croatia get a formal invitation to join NATO. Then there was approval by the Senate.

Q: Was this while you were there?

BRADTKE: While I was there, yes. The amendment to the treaty was approved by the Senate and then the Croatians were welcomed in. I'm going to miss the dates here. I want to say it was 2008 when it happened. But I'll have to double check the dates. So, they got in, and then there was the formal welcoming of the new NATO members—it was just Albanian and Croatia that made it. Macedonia didn't make it because the Greeks blocked them. A rather unfortunate thing for the history of Macedonia. But the formal admission took place at a NATO summit in Bucharest.

Again, part of the advantage of having come out of Washington in the European Bureau and the NSC was that I knew how to work the system. The president had to come to Bucharest for the summit. I got on the phone, worked the back channel, got agreement that he was going to come to Croatia. On the way back from Bucharest to the United States, the president would stop in Zagreb. Only Richard Nixon had been in Croatia, and Bill Clinton, during the wartime period. He had stopped at the airport to lecture Tudjman about his bad behavior.

Once the decision was made for him to come, then I worked on the phone and email with the woman whom I had proposed that Condi Rice hire at the NSC to do the foreign travel. She is a wonderful woman named Mary Haines, and is still a great friend of mine. Mary was superbly competent. When they got her, they trusted her. She stayed on after Rice left and Hadley took over because she was so good at organizing foreign travel and putting the pieces together. So, I called her up, and I said, "Mary, he really needs to spend the night here." And I got the overnight. So, all of this, again— It was not just an airport visit, but an overnight stop by the president, and the visit went very well. There was a period where—and I will tell a story here that is not widely known, because I kept it a secret— I think I can now tell.

So, we're about a week out from the visit, and you know, there are advance teams and all of this. I get a call from the Croatian president's office. The president and the prime minister didn't really get along, and there were issues about how the two men would share responsibility for hosting President Bush. President Mesic was the last president of communist Yugoslavia, with the rotating presidency. He was a perfectly good person whom I thought I had a good relationship with. I knew his advisor, Budimir Loncar. He had been a foreign minister of the old Yugoslavia and had been the Yugoslav ambassador here in Washington when I was part of the desk. So, I knew him from the 1970s. So, we already had— Again, we come back to the relationships. So, I got a call from him, and he says, "Come see me."

I go up to the president's palace and go into Loncar's office. He gives me a letter from President Mesic to President Bush saying he can't see him when he comes. I go, "What?" Part of the problem was the rivalry between Mesic and Prime Minister Sanader, and the feeling that Sanader was getting too much billing, so to speak, during the Bush visit. There was going to be an outdoor speech in the most important, historic square in Zagreb, up in the old town. It was going to be President Bush, the prime minister, and the prime ministers of Albanian and Macedonia. Mesic was not going to speak. And now, a week before the visit, I have been given a letter from the president to our president saying, "I can't see you."

And I'm going, "You've got to be kidding me." I said, "He can't— He cannot do this." Loncar understood what this meant, effectively that the visit would have to be cancelled, but he said, "Look, I don't think I can do anything."

I said, "You can't do nothing. You've got to do something. You've got to help here." So, it's unresolved. I go back across the river to our godforsaken embassy, which is in the middle of nowhere. That may be a separate story we can do next time. So, I call in my DCM, and I say to her, "You're the only person I'm going to show this to, and then let's talk about what we're going to do."

And she said, "Oh my God!" This is Vivian Walker, my second DCM and an excellent officer with a cool head. She says, "I can't believe this. This can't be—" She was the action officer, the control officer, for the visit. So, she was up to her eyeballs in arrangements. And we looked at each other and I said to her, "We're not going to do anything. I am not going to send this letter to Washington. I don't care that it's a letter for the president of the United States. I am not sending this to Washington."

So, we agreed that we would not tell anybody. I would not tell anybody in Washington. I would not tell the White House. I would tell no one. Vivian and I were the only ones until this very moment, I think, who ever knew about this. So, we sat on the letter. Later Loncar called me back and he said, "Okay, he's changed his mind. Don't send the letter." I said, "I haven't."

Q: So, it was the advisor to the president who convinced the president to backtrack at your urging?

BRADTKE: Yes.

Q: That gets three asterisks, maybe four.

BRADTKE: Well, again, that's one of those moments where you know something, and everything you're supposed to do is— You're supposed to send it back. It's a letter to the president of the United States from the president of this country. You're the ambassador. What's your job? How can you not tell the White House? But I decided that I was not going to do this.

Q: Good call, ambassador. Good call.

BRADTKE: As long as you're right, it's a good call.

Q: You never know.

BRADTKE: Right. But it's just one of those times where you have to decide, "Okay. I'm going to take responsibility here, and I'm not going to do this. If there's hell to pay later, that's the price for me making the wrong call, but I've got to believe that we can get this turned around, and I'm not sending this letter." If I had sent the letter back and said, "I'm working on getting this fixed," the answer would have been, "We're cancelling the visit. We don't care. What do you mean you're working on fixing this?" There would have been a firestorm, and I knew that. I knew that then people would talk about cancelling the visit or changing the schedule. I didn't want any of that. It was better to just keep Washington in the dark rather than tell them that I had this letter to the president of the United States.

Q: In the manual for future COMs, we'll put this as maybe not a practice to follow in all cases.

BRADTKE: Be careful.

Q: It takes good judgement, but also some luck.

BRADTKE: Let's finish Croatia. I could do a hundred stories, but I will do the postscript to this story. So, the president comes out [April 4-5, 2008], and one of the things I was able to do because of the overnight was work with the Croatians on a dinner. Mesic wanted to host a dinner, after he agreed that he was actually going to see the president. He wanted to make it a small dinner where they would just have government officials. I knew the president wasn't going to want to do this—talk politics with a socialist and the last president of Yugoslavia. So, it also wouldn't give him a chance to get a broader picture of Croatia. So, I proposed that President Mesic would host what for us would be a

state dinner. It would not be business. You'd have the leading people from all walks of life at this dinner. You'd have basketball players, a soccer coach. You'd have businessmen and women. And, important for me, you'd have the leader of the opposition, whom I couldn't get on the schedule. He was a young leader that I had tried to get to know from the very beginning.

So, this dinner, first of all, revealed, as it turns out, that Mesic and the president really got along. They were laughing. They were backslapping, laughing, joking. Everything was going swimmingly. You would have never thought that this is the guy he tried to disinvite. So, Mesic, in the end, liked him. Everything went fine. The visit, particularly that Mesic piece, went fine. All of the other meetings were fine. And, we did one more thing. My protocol assistant, an incredible Croatian woman, Duska Duric, worked with President Mesic's staff. I set it up so that the last person who came through the receiving line at the dinner was going to be the leader of the opposition. They've just lost an election, but I see him as someone who will be prime minister at some point. I wanted him to understand we took him seriously, even if the president didn't have time for a separate meeting.

So, at the end of the receiving line, the president took him aside, told him how he also had lost an election. It was George Bush at his best. He did so much to help in those five minutes at the end of the receiving line, by spending some time with this person, looking him in the eye, talking to him on a personal level. It was a great gesture, and again, just helped me enormously, with my own relationship.

Q: I'm not asking you to be self-aggrandizing, but you give everybody credit except yourself.

BRADTKE: Well, there are a couple of other things that are worth talking about. Let's plow through.

Q: Next time?

BRADTKE: No, let's do it this time. Let's clean the slate. So, again, there were these moments like this. One of these other things that I really felt proud about—and I'll give myself credit here—is my relationship with the head of the Croatian intelligence agency— This is not a secret. Our intelligence people, of course, knew him, but I felt that I should also have a relationship with someone at that level. I had met him to introduce myself, but—forgive me if this is a little roundabout—then I was going to some ceremony at the Croatian parliament, and there was a wonderful little café in the Zagreb Old Town near the parliament, which they call the Sabor. And since I have a few minutes before the ceremony, I'm sitting in there, outside of the café, and there's the head of Croatian intelligence, sitting there by himself.

So, I go over and sit with him. He understood English, but, at least at that point, was more comfortable in Croatian. My Croatian was good enough. So, we start having a little

chit chat about things, and we get to know each other a little bit. Then, what we decided, mutually, to do is to do alternating lunches. He would come to the residence, and I would go to their headquarters. I'd have my guy with me, and he'd have a member of this staff with him. We had great discussions. We had really good conversations about working together on things, which I won't get into. But then he moved on. He became minister of the interior, where I continued to have a good relationship with him.

Then there were things. Right before I left, Prime Minister Sanader decided unexpectedly to resign. Some people assumed I had something to do with his resignation. Croatia was a conspiratorial country. They knew I was leaving, and suddenly he was leaving. There was a lot of speculation that I had told him he had to quit, that because of corruption issues he had to quit. Of course, it was not true, but that was the perception. But his successor in the last couple of months was his deputy prime minister, a woman named Jadranka Kosor who didn't speak much English, but understood.

She and I had built up a relationship where I would go to see her when she was deputy prime minister. I would speak in English, which she understood, and she would speak in Croatian. I wouldn't need an interpreter. And that was the way we communicated. So, when she became prime minister, my diplomatic corps colleagues, who had relatively little contact with her, were asking, "What do you know? She's not going to be any good! She's going to be a puppet of Sanader! He's going to step back but tell her what to do!"

I said, "No. I know this woman. She's going to be her own woman." And indeed, after I left at the end of my assignment, she oversaw the arrest of Prime Minister Sanader for corruption charges. So, she was strong enough to do that.

And the minister of the interior, the former intel chief, also went on to be prime minister, and leader of what had been Sanader's party. So, again, the relationships, the doors that were opened, the chance to get to know people— I spent a lot of time traveling around the country the same way. I talked about going to Vukovar, and every year for the memorial of the massacre, I went there. I walked from the place where the victims of the massacre were kept in this hospital to where they were executed and buried. Did any other ambassadors go? Ironically, only the Serbian ambassador, who was a good guy.

Q: Really?

BRADTKE: Yes. But where was the German, where was the Brit, where were the French? They didn't go.

Q: I was just going to ask, there's Serbia. The bad guy.

BRADTKE: But this ambassador, he was really good. This was a time when there was some effort being made towards rapprochement.

Q: You mean between the Croatians and Serbians?

BRADTKE: Between the two countries.

Q: We tried to be friendly to both, I guess, and certainly you had a counterpart in Belgrade. We can maybe put that on another discussion. You must have had frequent discussions with the COM in Belgrade?

BRADTKE: Yes. Cameron Munter was the ambassador for part of the time, and then Chuck English was the ambassador in Bosnia. That's where— Again, this is maybe a long story. That's where the most difficult issues were, because the Croatians had a period—and this was the Tudjman era—where, basically, they wanted to carve up Bosnia with the Serbs. We wouldn't let them do that, but then they were very worried about the fate of the Croats in Bosnia. I spent a lot of time talking to the prime minister about the Croats in Bosnia and trying to find ways that they could be assured of having their voice heard. I went with our Ambassador Munter to Sarajevo at Ambassador English's invitation to meet religious leaders, to meet the Bosnian leadership, and to talk about this.

Q: So, this was a regional settlement in a way?

BRADTKE: A little bit, yes. You had to stay in touch with your counterparts in Belgrade and Sarajevo to make sure that we were at least not sending mixed signals. But back to the point I was trying to make, which is that I used to go to small towns and villages, and of course, I went to Dubrovnik and the coast. But the places you've never heard of, where we had assistance programs after the war. I had a wonderful AID [United States Agency for International Development] director. We were phasing out the AID program, but he said, "I'll take you around to all these places where we did these programs. When I leave and we close this down, nobody's going to remember what we did and whom we worked with. But if you go with me now, I can hand off the relationships we've built to you."

So, I would go, and I would see these mayors. I would speak Croatian, I would see a little bit of the press, walk the streets. Again, I was fortunate. It was a good time, and again, the language skill was really important. In Zagreb, yeah, you could do most of your government business in English with the exceptions I mentioned. The foreign minister had studied at GW [The George Washington University] for God's sake, and she'd been an exchange student—I think I mentioned this—in New Mexico. Her English is as good as, if not better, than mine. But other ministers? In the countryside? Yes, you could take an interpreter, and of course I would. It was helpful to have somebody there when you were stuck for something, but you could do a lot of it in the language, and you didn't have to have every word translated. It was a huge plus.

Q: So, shall we say that the assignment may not have been best for you, but you were best for the assignment?

BRADTKE: Well, I wouldn't say that. Somebody else has to make that call. But I think it was a great time to be there. The other thing—and maybe this is where I'll stop, because

I've kind of thrown out most of the other stories—is that I had the most unbelievable staff. Croatians and Americans, and at the residence— They were just incredible. I was incredibly lucky. I had two great DCMs. I had two great political section chiefs. I had good admin, good consular, good PD [public diplomacy] staff, Croatians and Americans. The Croatian staff was just extraordinary. I've never had a relationship with a staff like that. There was a practice that, again, to the credit of my predecessor—Ralph Frank was my immediate predecessor. He would go down to a press briefing in the morning where the PD staff would brief him on what had happened in the papers.

But I could read Croatian, and I had already read the papers before I got into the office, because we built this ridiculous embassy out by the airport when everything else was on the other side of the Sava River. The luxury of being ambassador was that I had a driver who would drive me so I could read the newspapers in the car. So, what this press briefing evolved into over time was a discussion, not a briefing. Beyond that, it was like an extended staff meeting. Anybody could come. People from all parts of the embassy—Croatians, employees—would come. You've got the political sections FSNs [Foreign Service nationals] and you've got the PD FSNs, but sometimes you'd get the consular section FSNs. You'd get my protocol assistant. You'd get somebody from the admin section. Every day, I met with these members of my staff. I shared what I knew with them, and they helped me to understand Croatia and Croatians.

Q: Because you enabled and permitted them to.

BRADTKE: And, you know, they earned my trust. I would say things in there that, if you thought about it, had the potential for kind of blowing back in a bad way. When I knew the president was going to come, and there was all this speculation, but it wasn't public, I told them first. I said, "I'm going to tell you this, and you can't tell anybody: the president's coming." There were things like that where I would speak my mind around them. It never came back against me. There was never a moment where I got called out or something leaked to the press. I don't know that you could do that everywhere. But when the inspectors came out, the chief inspector was a PD officer who had been my PD person in London and went on to Moldova to be the ambassador— Pamela—

Q: Pamela Smith?

BRADTKE: Pamela Smith. She came down to watch this. She said, "This is unbelievable. This is great. This is a great model." I said, "Look, it may not work everywhere, but it works here, because this is such a good group of people. I trust them, and we have this incredible relationship." One of the Croatian staff was the PD woman who had incredible relationships with the Croatian press. She kept me from getting into trouble and knew how to put me forward. She was drafted frequently by the White House to help with presidential travel. In fact, I first met her in Slovenia, when Bush had gone to Slovenia to meet Putin. She had been sent to help manage the White House press because she had that kind of reputation. Anja was her name. I only got in trouble once, with the press, and it was because I was too self-confident. It wasn't this huge problem. But she

was so good; she had fabulous instincts about— "You don't want to do this interview. You want to do this interview. That answer is just not quite right."

The other person was my protocol assistant, Duska, who worked for the embassy going all the way back to before Croatia's independence. She knew everybody. She had thoughts about everybody—there were people she liked and people she didn't like. But she was an encyclopedia. She was just incredibly valuable, because I would say, "I'm trying to see this person," and she would say, "No, not yet. You need to see this person before you see that person." We would have these incredible discussions—again, incredibly open.

So, again, my time in Zagreb, personally, was rewarding. I was there by myself most of the time. Marsha stayed back in the United States for part of the time. She was up in New York at our mission to the UN helping out there. Then she went out to Montenegro, when the Montenegrins broke away, finally, from Serbia. She opened the embassy as the chargé in Podgorica. So, that enabled us to see each other a little bit and at a much closer range than me flying to Suriname and her flying from Suriname back to Washington. Then, eventually, she retired and stayed with me, the last year that I was in Zagreb. But it was a wonderful tour. I don't think there could be anything as personally rewarding as it was. It was a great time to be there. We accomplished a lot: we got them into NATO, we got the president out there, we did, I think, an awful lot.

And again, it was a great embassy. When I left London as the DCM—and maybe I will stop here; my God, we've gone on a long time—I had a file drawer in my safe of problem cases, personnel problems of some sort or another. I got out to Zagreb, and I thought, Okay, in my safe, I'll put this drawer aside for all of my personnel problems. I left there three years later, and I didn't have a single piece of paper in there. I didn't have anything in there, because it was such a good team. It was such a strong team. People were happy to be there; people were glad they were there. They had a sense of teamwork, they were respectful of the other sections, they had good family situations. Again, it's one of these things where— It's one of the reasons that, when I left there—and now we can conclude this chapter or whatever it is—I didn't want another embassy, a small embassy where the experience couldn't be repeated.

Q: It would have been déjà vu, right.

BRADTKE: It would not have been a repeatable experience and that wouldn't have been as rewarding. It wouldn't have had all the pieces that came together to make my three years in Zagreb so special.

Q: Also, probably, or at least among the staff, a significant moment in history. Sometimes diplomacy is most exciting in post to post concert.

BRADTKE: Exactly, particularly when we're on an upward trend. There was a sense of what we were trying to accomplish that was shared. Everybody knew why we were there,

Croatians and Americans. But it was really a special kind of time. As I said, for me, when I was done there, I thought, I don't want to go to Albania or somewhere like that. Not because those countries aren't important or there isn't something to do there, but I know that if I go and I think I'm going to repeat what has just been this great experience—

Q: You can't repeat it, yeah.

BRADTKE: Yes. I just didn't want to do that. So, I decided when I left there that I would retire. The system kind of edged me along as well—I didn't want to come back to Washington. I'd been an acting assistant secretary twice. I'd worked at the NSC. I knew how brutal those jobs are, and I just didn't feel that I wanted to go back. I didn't think I had the stomach for that anymore, quite frankly.

Q: I think we're getting to our next section.

BRADTKE: Yes. So, we draw the line here, and then I've got all of these WAE assignments that I can kind of—

Q: Well, we draw the line, but I want to give some chance to revisit— There may be some moments in Croatia yet to capture.

BRADTKE: Okay. If we come back to that, sure, but I think that was the gist of it. It was three great years.

Q: A remarkable story. We don't even have to say, because it's so obvious, that what you did at that time— What's happening to us now is going to make it more difficult to have those satisfying experiences, but that's my comment.

BRADTKE: Oh, God, yes.

Q: We can maybe mull that over at the end of our discussion.

BRADTKE: Okay.

Q: Thank you, ambassador.

BRADTKE: Thank you.

Q: We are talking to Ambassador Bradtke. This is Dan Whitman. It is December 8, I think, of 2017. You never know. One year can slip to the next. When we talked on November 29, we talked about— well, the official end of your career, ambassador. But we know that in many cases, and certainly yours, that is not the end of your activity, so let's go on from there.

BRADTKE: Well, I had made the decision—and we talked about this a little bit last time—after Zagreb that I would retire. I wasn't interested in going back to Washington for the jobs that I could have had, and I wasn't interested in another embassy that would have not been much bigger than Zagreb and wouldn't have had all of the personal rewards of Zagreb. So, I decided to retire. Also, it was because my wife, Marsha, had been ambassador to Suriname, and she had then opened the embassy in Montenegro, and then had finally retired and then joined me in Zagreb. That was another reason that we weren't interested in going off separately anyway.

Q: Not in tandem, yeah.

BRADTKE: So, as I reached this decision, the department already had at least a first assignment in mind for me, and they asked me to go to Berlin to run the embassy in Berlin for a brief period as chargé. There was a nominee to be ambassador, who was in the pipeline, but there was some question about how quickly he would get out to post. The DCM was leaving, so the department wanted to have a senior officer who could go and run the embassy until the new ambassador arrived.

Q: So, you were officially retired but taken back on as ?

BRADTKE: That's right. I was brought back on in this wonderful, When Actually Employed [WAE] category, and went straight—

Q: That's an exceptionally large assignment for someone in the—

BRADTKE: Yes. It was a great opportunity. We had hoped that it was going to last a little longer, but I flew directly from Zagreb to Berlin. My wife loaded up the car with as much as she could squeeze in it and the dog, and she drove to Berlin.

Q: Sorry, we're in '06?

BRADTKE: We're in '09.

Q: Okay.

BRADTKE: Zagreb was 2006 to 2009. So, we're in '09. The summer of '09. It was a wonderful time. My wife had served in West Berlin during the cold war, and we, of course, had been in Bonn at the end of the cold war. To come to Berlin to see the fantastic embassy, to sit in the ambassador's office, which looked out over the Tiergarten and the Brandenburg Gate and had this wonderful little terrace where you could have your sandwich at lunchtime— It was summertime. Things were relatively slow, but there was enough going on to keep me busy. The hot issue of the day, strangely enough, was General Motors' [GM] decision that it was going to close out its investment in Opal, which would have had considerable effect on employment in Germany. So, I was kind of thrown into that mess, working with the chancellor's office, working with the minister of

economics, just to try to manage that. But otherwise, it was a pretty quiet time, which was also nice. I had a chance to enjoy Berlin.

Q: GM was invested in Opal, but Opal was a German company, right?

BRADTKE: Yes, but a big money-loser, with the European auto market being very competitive. Opal had not updated its models. It had fallen behind. GM wanted to close factories and get out of the business, but the German government didn't want GM to move too precipitously because they were afraid of the loss of jobs. And this, of course, again, if you think back to 2009— We were in the aftermath of the financial crisis. The issue was not completely resolved in my time there. It was resolved later. GM is now, in fact, I think in the final stages of getting rid of Opal. But what we wanted to do was make sure that the channels were open, that GM was listening to the Germans and their concerns and would not just shutter the factories and throw a lot of people out of work.

Q: Germany now is one of the very few countries to have a positive trade balance. Maybe it did also in '09. It is one of the few countries that is reliably an export nation.

BRADTKE: Oh, yes. In economic terms, it was doing pretty well, by and large. But employment is such a sensitive issue, and workers' rights, in Germany that this was a high-profile case. It was in the newspapers. It was on the desks of ministers. We just wanted to make sure that, without trying to tell GM how to do its business, because nobody wanted to do that, they would take account of the German government's concerns.

Q: It sounds like something of a crisis. You're not dramatizing this, but it sounds like something very important to the German government. Did you feel you were prepared? Did this take you off-guard in any way?

BRADTKE: I was fortunate. The embassy had some really good officers. The econ minister had been following this issue. He had a good understanding of it and guided me through, because obviously I had no particular background in this issue. But I think what I could do was be their frontman, so to speak; I was a senior officer, I had a fair amount of experience, and the Germans knew me a little bit from NATO days. So, I wasn't a total stranger. We got through this, but I should jump to the end of the story of my time in Berlin, which is that my hopes of spending a comfortable few months there were relatively short-lived. The new ambassador was actually confirmed relatively quickly. So, this was a period of time that was no more than, I think, five or six weeks at most. So, it was a relatively brief time. But it was great fun. The Germans took me seriously. Berlin is a wonderful city. It was really a brief but good time. Not much else to say about that time.

Q: You said earlier that this, in a way, vindicated your belief that you were capable of running a very large operation. I know you were.

BRADTKE: Yes. I'd been DCM in London, and I'd been the principal deputy in EUR, I'd been the executive secretary of the NSC. I'd been an ambassador. I knew how to do this. I'd served in Germany for three years and lived there for four. So, yes, this, to me, was— There was a certain degree of satisfaction that I could do this if I had ever been given the opportunity. That's a big statement to make, because this is one of the most important and largest embassies in the world. We had multiple consulates scattered around. So, it was a big management job as well. But it made me feel— Had the opportunity ever presented itself, I could have done an embassy of this size.

Q: Any disappointment in spending that short of a time?

BRADTKE: Absolutely, both in personal terms and professional terms. In personal terms, as I said, Berlin is a wonderful city. My wife speaks fluent German and had been a student in Germany and had served in West Berlin. So, she had friends and there were people still in the consular section who had worked for her. So, she was greatly enjoying herself. And for me, as well— Again, with the Germans, lots of doors were open. There were still things going on that were interesting to do. We had a chance to travel a little bit in what had been East Germany, which had been, if not off limits, at least a hard place to visit during the old days.

Q: Right. Fifteen years after consolidation or something like that?

BRADTKE: Yes.

Q: What was the opinion of the dog? The dog came from Zagreb.

BRADTKE: Oh, the dog was in high heaven. The Germans love dogs. We stayed in the DCM's residence, which was a great house in a wonderful old neighborhood of Berlin.

Q: What was it like being in a reunified Berlin, because prior to that time you had lived in West Berlin, not East, right?

BRADTKE: We'd lived in Bonn. My wife had been in West Berlin. We were in Bonn from '86 to '90, just as the wall was, in '90, coming down. It was a really extraordinary experience to be able to come back now. I remember going to Potsdam with my wife when she was posted to West Berlin in the '70s, and it was this very complicated trip around. You had checkpoints. But now, we went to Potsdam for a Sunday or Saturday afternoon. You just got in the car and in fifteen minutes you were there. You could go across a bridge that you couldn't have crossed in the old days. Then we went to Dresden, as well. I'd never been to Dresden before, obviously. It was recovering from tremendous damage during the war. It was rebuilt but still looking a little bit like a city that was rebuilt. So, as I said, in both personal and professional terms it was good.

Maybe the only other thing I would mention is the time when we were there, in Washington they were greatly worried about our troop presence in Germany, and what

kind of posture we wanted in Europe as a whole. This was an issue I cared about a lot when I was a deputy assistant secretary. Some decisions were coming down the line, and I believed, personally, and I still believe, we were making a mistake. We were in the process of getting ready to withdraw our last armored division from Germany. I felt this was a big mistake. We needed, if we were going to be a European power as I think we should be, serious land forces. The prevailing mood in Washington was that putting tanks in Fort Hood, Texas was just as good as having them in Germany. I've never subscribed to that theory. Even if you can put them on transports or whatever, their actual presence and the ability to respond quickly to a crisis is important. And now I feel, again, somewhat slightly vindicated, because we are starting to pre-position equipment in various places.

Q: The original idea was to occupy a hostile, defeated power, which later became a close ally. At about what time did that happen? The troop presence in Germany is clearly not meant as that of an occupying power, but as a—

BRADTKE: Well, I think it started with Germany joining NATO in the 1950s. That was when the posture shifted from occupation to mutual allies and defense.

Q: Did you think that the German government went very smoothly along with this quite major shift?

BRADTKE: At that time, the German government would have been happy to see us keep our presence there, partly for economic reasons and partly for political reasons. I'm sure it ended up costing us a lot of money to bring forces back to the U.S., because we had established facilities in Germany, and we were able to use them, as we did during the Iraq War, as a kind of forward deployment. So, I never— Well, I did not agree with the idea that we should be moving everybody back to what we call "CONUS"—the continental United States. I thought, for strategic reasons, it made a lot more sense to keep them where they were.

Q: It's expensive one way or the other. Expensive to keep them, and expensive to bring them back, yeah.

BRADTKE: Right, but, Germany was bearing some of the costs. I think Japan probably pays a lot more for our forces there. But, there was always a degree of burden-sharing, and as I say, for me, it was the case that if you're a European power and you're serious, then you'd better have forces in Europe.

Q: Reflections now or maybe later about our current apparent withdrawal as a world leader? I may be overstating it, but I'm just reflecting on things that I've seen and read myself about the perceptions of many diplomats and military people willing to speak. They think our presence in Europe is kind of iffy at this time.

BRADTKE: Well, I don't think there is any question that in the first year of this administration we've done enormous damage to our relationship with Europe. The confidence, first of all, in our NATO commitments has been undermined, and while Secretary Tillerson and even the president have now made positive statements about NATO, I think for a lot of Europeans, what he said previously during the campaign and right at the beginning of the administration—which was, "Hey, these guys aren't paying their way and we're not going to defend them"—is what people think he really thinks. So, to come back now and say, "We're fully committed to NATO," is not taken seriously. You have had Chancellor Merkel saying that this is a time when Europe has to look elsewhere, to ensure its own security. So, again, I think we've done a lot of damage. I think, for the Europeans, American stability and predictability were always two incredibly important things. "America First," that concept, is not consistent with America working with its allies. There's a contradiction there, and you can talk all you want about—

Q: Continuing with "America First" in the world— Tillerson and Sarah Sanders have all tried to walk back this notion of countries not paying their fair share, but the damage was done, I think, in the original— It was not one statement, but many.

BRADTKE: Yes. This is not the first administration to say that the Europeans need to do more. This is the first administration to say that the failure of the Europeans to do more, or the shortcomings of the Europeans, undermines our commitment to defend them. That's never been brought into question. We've always hectored the Europeans about spending more on defense, but it's never been the case where we've said, "We're not so sure about whether we'd defend you anymore," or that we would only defend the countries that are paying a certain percentage of their gross national product for defense. Whether we can really turn this back, I'm not sure. Once you start creating that doubt in the minds of your allies and your adversaries, reestablishing that is not a simple matter. Once you've raised the level of doubt to a point that it has never been at since the beginning of the cold war or the end of World War II, then rolling that back and reestablishing that 100 percent certainty is not easy.

Q: You said in an earlier conversation that there's a lot of public discussion about defense of the Baltics, for example. Many people very lightly say, Well, we cannot, and we would not, and you have said very clearly that that's a terrible mistake.

BRADTKE: Look, Berlin was, for a lot of people, indefensible during the cold war. Yes, we had troops in Berlin. Could a concerted Soviet ground effort have been held off without escalation to nuclear weapons? I don't know. It never came to that. But NATO has committed itself to defend places that were not easy to defend. The key was always to make sure there was not the slightest doubt in the adversary's mind that we would defend them.

The other thing that now has happened in the last month or so is the renewed emphasis on the EU's own defense and security capabilities, particularly with Brexit looming. And

this is something I worked on. We talked a bit about this infamous Berlin Plus and how we wanted to see NATO and the European Union's defense capabilities not be duplicative. We wanted NATO still to be the primary responder in the case of security threats, and we worked very hard for many years to make sure that that was the case. The British were our most important partners in trying to keep the French and the Germans from adding capabilities that would have been duplicative. Well, now in these last couple of weeks, Europe has announced this new approach, with a kind of very convoluted title. I can't remember what the title is.

Q: The new defense set-up?

BRADTKE: Yes. But they have announced a new structure, and this is precisely what we were trying to avoid having happen, because it does stand, potentially, to undermine NATO and to see the Europeans, perhaps, spending more money but not spending it on things that NATO needs as opposed to things that the Europeans want to spend it on for domestic economic reasons.

Q: Right. Within the last week, we've had very open discussions in British Parliament about the, from their point of view, extremely abusive communications from our president, which they have characterized as—

BRADTKE: The inexplicable personal attacks on the prime minister, on the mayor of London. This is our most reliable ally, our partner, and the one we have the closest security, defense, and intelligence relationship with. I think for all of the other Europeans, as they look at this, they have to say to themselves, "If this is the way they're going to treat the British—"

Q: They're best friends.

BRADTKE: Yes. They are our best friends, they're the ones we've always thought were closest to the United States and that we had this so-called "special relationship."

Q: Not to see a silver lining on this, but we are doing history, and this is an oral history. I just suggest that the value of remembering the way it was and getting it on the record is an important thing to do. What happens now is in the hands of others. This history will be available for them to consult.

BRADTKE: Yes.

Q: So you were there for five or six weeks?

BRADTKE: Yes. It was a short time, and then we packed up and headed back to Washington. I still wasn't sure what I was going to do with my life. I really had not thought a lot about what I wanted to do. There were things I knew I didn't want to do, but I didn't have any immediate plans. We got back to Washington, and the day we got back

or the day after we got back, there was a phone call. We were staying at a hotel while we were trying to get ready to move back into our house. My wife took the call, and she said it was the Operations Center, and they were looking for me. I had been out somewhere. I said, "Did you tell them I don't work for the State Department anymore?"

She said to me, "Stu Jones was looking for you." Stu Jones had worked for me in EUR on NATO affairs, before going off to Iraq, and then he had come back to be in the EUR front office. So, I knew Stu.

So, I called him up and he said, "Look, we'd like you to come back as a WAE. We have a job, and I'd like you to come in and talk to me. We're looking for a U.S. co-chair for the Minsk Group, working on Nagorno-Karabakh." So, I went in to talk to him the next day, and why I decided to do this is a little bit of a mystery. It probably wasn't a job I had ever thought of doing. I knew people who had done the job prior, and I'd had some involvement on the issue when I had been a deputy assistant secretary, because I covered OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe] matters. The Minsk Group works under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. So, I knew roughly what it was, but I'd never been to Armenia or Azerbaijan. My Russian was now largely gone because I had spent three years speaking Croatian. But I decided it sounded like something interesting. I didn't have anything else in mind, so I decided, why not?

Q: Okay. We are talking about the Minsk Group?

BRADTKE: The Minsk Group was set up to try to bring about a settlement between Armenia and Azerbaijan over their dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh. It's called the Minsk Group because the expectation was—and this is from I want to say the late 1990s—that there would be a meeting in Minsk, where peace would be ironed out. That never happened, but there was a group of OSCE countries, including Turkey and some of the Western European countries, that were members of the Minsk Group, and then there were the three co-chair countries.

Q: So, it was France, Russia, and the U.S.?

BRADTKE: Right. It evolved a little bit over time. The U.S. was not immediately one of the chairs of this group, but again, my memory is a little fuzzy here. I think it was the late 1990s where we decided that we wanted a more active role.

Q: And Ian Kelly did this later?

BRADTKE: Ian Kelly replaced me, so we will get to that, perhaps. So, I took this on. There was a lot of optimism at that point. Matt Bryza, who had been doing this as a deputy assistant secretary, along with his other responsibilities. He had been double-hatted. He had managed to move the process, with the Russians and the French, along to the point where there was a draft of a framework agreement being put together.

This was being worked by the three co-chairs with the two governments. It was loosely called the Basic Principles or the Madrid Principles. It was rooted in the Helsinki Final Act.

Q: From 1975.

BRADTKE: Right. The framework was based upon three principles: the non-use of force or the threat of force, the right of peoples to self-determination, and territorial integrity and sovereignty. Three principles that are not necessarily easily reconciled, but these were the principles that were the basis for the draft that was being produced.

Q: That second one, the right of self-determination. Was this consciously derivative of Wilson—

BRADTKE: It's a leading question, and you're right. It was being stretched, I think, to cover something that had not really been anticipated. When the Helsinki Final Act was written, where this language appears, my understanding of what people or diplomats were thinking of at the time was the peoples of Eastern Europe. For the countries that were behind the Iron Curtain, the idea was that they should have the right to determine their futures without the Soviets—

Q: This was not the 14 Principles. It was not really an ethnic thing. It was more political than that.

BRADTKE: Right, and dating from a different period, so it had a different meaning. It was not Wilsonian, where we needed to have all of the Slavic peoples of Europe that were part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire— No. It was— In fact, I think that we have these countries of Eastern Europe that are, as we used to say at the time, captive nations. They should have the right to determine their futures.

Q: Going back—and this is before your time, I think—that was the so-called thaw. It was a thaw in the cold war, I believe, in 1975. I was always curious: it's clear what the Western point of view came out of with that, which was a declaration of principle that we could hold. What did the Soviets get out of it?

BRADTKE: What the Soviets thought they got was kind of recognition of the borders. There had been no peace treaty after World War II. Lots of lines had been moved around Europe. This really, essentially, was saying, "Okay, we're not moving these lines." So, the chunk of Poland that they got, and the chunk of Germany that the Poles got, and some other little tinkering around the edges—this was settled. They also interpreted the language on human rights as non-interference with internal affairs, which was a mistake, because that was not what we intended. But I think, for them, it was the security dimension and the territorial integrity dimension, the settling of the borders.

Q: So, this really was a win-win at that time?

BRADTKE: Yes. I mean, again, I was in South America at the time. So, a long way from all that. There was certainly a lot of criticism of it at the time, when President Ford signed this document. I don't think anybody anticipated quite how fast events would move, and that the peoples of Eastern Europe and Central Europe would get the chance to decide their futures. Human rights groups in Europe—and I think this is something that no one really understood at the time—would seize on the Helsinki Final Act. You had groups like in Czechoslovakia, at the time, with the Charter of '77 Movement that were based upon these principles. They then were able to say, Soviet Union, Warsaw Pact countries, you signed up to these things. You signed up to the guarantees for human rights that were in the so-called Basket Three. There was a security basket, an economic basket, and a human rights basket. They were able to use that. The Soviets, of course, rejected that, but it still gave these groups something to cling to. So, it was a powerful message of hope for these dissident movements in Central and Eastern Europe.

Q: And less than fifteen years later, the whole thing changed. Not because of it, but as you say, neither side would have foreseen it.

BRADTKE: Right. But it provided a basis for saying that these changes were legitimate.

Q: So, you are the Minsk person.

BRADTKE: I was the U.S. co-chair. As I said, I came in at a time when a draft document was being discussed. The three presidents had just issued a statement. At that time, it was—

Q: This is Armenia, Azerbaijan, and what?

BRADTKE: No, this was the U.S., Russian, and French presidents. They had provided more details about what this agreement was supposed to do, and they released this publicly. This was a big step forward. My first French counterpart used to say that the peace process was like a three-stage rocket. We had the Helsinki Principles, the three principles I mentioned. Then you had a middle stage, which was these other guidelines in the Madrid Principles, and then the last stage would be the peace treaty itself. So, we were working on the middle stage, a framework document—the idea was to negotiate a framework.

The framework was going to include a set of detailed principles that would be the basis for negotiating a final settlement, an actual peace treaty, for the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh [NK]. The two countries had fought a brutal war in the early 1990s, and while there was a shaky ceasefire, the issue was not resolved, despite years of trying and the threat of a renewal of major fighting remained. I'm not going to go into details of the long history of the dispute. Just let me say that we, the French, and the Russians agreed to make this new push for a settlement.

Q: I'm guessing that Azerbaijan was the tough nut to crack in that.

BRADTKE: Just let me take you through a little bit. The sides were making progress, but there were still lots of vague things. There were questions about the right of the people to return, and how the final status would be determined.

Q: Not a referendum, not a plebiscite. Something in between.

BRADTKE: Yes, that was an issue at a meeting I was at with the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan in Moldova, in the fall of 2009, where we brought them together to keep working on this draft. While there had been progress, the Moldova meeting showed that there were many unresolved questions. The two presidents could not even agree on what to call the vote that would determine Nagorno Karabakh's final status. And there was also the return to Azerbaijan of the territories around Nagorno-Karabakh. These had been occupied during the war by Armenia. Armenia and the Armenian Karabakhis had not only taken Karabakh in the war in the 1990s, but they had pushed the Azerbaijanis out of seven territories that surrounded Nagorno-Karabakh that were lived in almost entirely by Azerbaijanis or by Kurds, with very few Armenians.

So, despite all this, we felt we were making progress, and we were hopeful. The atmosphere was good. Then things started to come apart in the fall, in November or December of 2009, when the reconciliation process between Turkey and Armenia started to break down.

Q: Turks, not friendly to Armenians, and not friendly to Azerbaijanis? To us, it seems like a complicated overlay, but to them, it's existential.

BRADTKE: As you say, complex. When Armenia conquered the areas around Nagorno-Karabakh, Turkey froze its relations with Armenia and closed the border. As the negotiation moved forward on Nagorno-Karabakh, there was a parallel negotiation going on over reconciliation between Turkey and Armenia, where a lot of progress was being made on very difficult issues, particularly relating to the massacre of Armenians by Turkey during World War I. These two tracks, if you will— We said, We're moving parallel, but we're not linked. We, the three Minsk co-chair countries, felt very strongly that they should each move along separately. They each had their own merits, and linking them would only make matters that much more complicated, politically and particularly for the Armenians.

The idea of Turkish-Armenian reconciliation was not only controversial in Turkey; it was controversial in Armenia, one of the key issues being the massacres, which are viewed by the Armenians and many others as genocide. The fact that Turkey and Armenia were moving forward was a positive thing, and it had a strong influence on this other negotiation, but we came to a point where it got difficult to maintain this separation. First of all, it was because the Azerbaijanis did not want Turkey to move ahead with reconciliation with Armenia. They did not want the border open; they did not want

relationships re-established between Turkey and Armenia. They wanted Turkey to stay squarely on their side of the table and to keep Turkish pressure on Armenia. So, they got very nervous. And indeed, they did a lot of lobbying in Ankara, working with the Turkish Parliament to try to slow the reconciliation process and make it dependent on progress in getting what they wanted on Nagorno-Karabakh.

By the end of 2009, we had come to a point where Armenia and Turkey, with Mrs. Clinton's good work and efforts by France and Russia, initiated what we called the Protocols, which were going to normalize relations between Armenia and Turkey. That caused the Azerbaijanis to be deeply unhappy. The Turks, then, who had been publicly careful about linking the process, decided that they could not ratify the agreement with Armenia unless there was progress on NK. It was never clearly defined, but the issue was some kind withdrawal from territory that had been occupied by Armenia. At any rate, this, then, really caused us great difficulties, because President Sargsyan, who was, I think, trying to move quite courageously on both of these tracks, suddenly found himself in a position that was not tolerable.

I saw this at Moldova when he came out to meet President Aliyev, the president of Azerbaijan. We met him. He had just been on a tour of the Armenian diaspora around the world—Russia, France, the United States—to try to explain the Turkey-Armenia reconciliation package. The diaspora, by and large, hated this, because it did not provide the kind of recognition of the genocide that they expected. It did not do anything about some of the pieces that were historically Armenian that ended up, I guess in 1918, on the other side of the border in Turkey. So, they hated the reconciliation package.

So, Sargsyan was already carrying that burden that they didn't like. Then the accusation was coming at him from his adversaries that he was swallowing the Turkish-Armenian Protocols to get a Nagorno-Karabakh Settlement, which they didn't like either. So, he was now under attack on two fronts, and for him, this was just unsustainable. So, we saw over the last part of 2009 and into the beginning of 2010— The process just completely broke down. The Armenians produced a counter-draft of the basic principles that we were presenting to them, where we thought we were making progress. But it was just impossible. It was just—

Q: When you say "you," you mean the Minsk Group, or the Armenians and Turkey?

BRADTKE: The Minsk Group co-chairs. The protocols were stuck in the Turkish Parliament.

Q: I'm willing to be shown to be very ignorant about this—

BRADTKE: No, some of this is— I lived these details for three and a half years, and there's a lot that I'm assuming knowledge of, some of these issues, which is not always the case.

Q: This tale of discord and conflict exists in so many places. It has to do with national and ethnic identity. As I understand it, Nagorno-Karabakh is an Armenian enclave in Azerbaijan. My question is, Armenia considered it Armenia, but Azerbaijan considered it Azerbaijan. Were you able to tell how the people of that area thought of themselves? Did they think of themselves as Armenians?

BRADTKE: It may be worth it to take just a brief step back here. In the aftermath of World War I, the Soviet Union reconquered the Caucasus, which had been, for a brief and fleeting moment, independent states. The Soviet Union came back and reconquered them, and then when Stalin set up the Republics of the old Soviet Union, he decided to put Nagorno-Karabakh into Azerbaijan. By far the majority of the population of Nagorno-Karabakh were Armenians. Who knows why Stalin did any of that? A lot of the historical analysis is that he did this to keep the Armenians and the Azerbaijanis at each other's throats so that he could play them off against one another, and he could be a kind of arbiter between them. There's another school of thought that is that Stalin wanted better relations with Turkey. By putting Karabakh into Azerbaijan, where the population is essentially ethnic Turkish, he was doing a favor to the Turks and placating them in some fashion.

Q: Did Stalin see himself— This is before our time, of course, but did he see himself as a kind of Tito doing ethnic identities?

BRADTKE: No, I wouldn't put Stalin and Tito in the same breath. But the outcome was, then, that Karabakh found itself inside Azerbaijan.

Q: A very uneasy place to be.

BRADTKE: But while there had been difficulties over the years, the Caucasus had always had a certain kind of cosmopolitan quality. You had people scattered all over the place, and there were times when one group would, for reasons sometimes economic, cultural, religious, or whatever, take it out on another group. But by and large, people were living side by side. There hadn't been any kind of out and out civil war. But over time, as then the Soviet Union started to unravel, the assembly of Karabakh—their kind of soviet or parliament—wanted to break away from Azerbaijan. As the Soviet Union was breaking apart and Moscow couldn't control events, they spun out of control. You had massacres in villages in the area of Karabakh and around Karabakh. You had a terrible pogrom in Baku—

Q: This is '88, '89, '90?

BRADTKE: Yes, roughly in this period. I'd have to check the dates. You saw a real flare-up of tensions and violence and people being killed and people being displaced. Then as the Soviet Union completely fell apart, it got really ugly. You had an out and out war going on with the Soviets at one point being on the Armenian side, but Soviet army's

weapons were being seized by the two sides. You had guerrilla operations. You had a brutal, nasty war in that area.

Q: So, this might have happened much earlier if the Soviet Union had been a weak central power, unable to restrain the conflict?

BRADTKE: It's probably a little too hypothetical. If you had had more enlightened leadership in both Armenia and Azerbaijan, and in Moscow, which would have said, Okay, let's find some ways around this. Let's find some ways of giving them more self-government. I mean, they were an autonomous region, but that, in the old Soviet Union, didn't make a heck of a lot of difference. So, I'm a little hesitant to kind of do the parallel with Yugoslavia, but, as I say, the war took an extremely bad turn. There were tens of thousands of people killed and missing. There were hundreds of thousands displaced. The tide was first against the Armenians but then swung back, and at the end the Armenians managed to push the Azerbaijanis out of Karabakh and seize the seven territories around Karabakh. Karabakh did not border Armenia. There were two or three districts on the other side that were between Armenia and Karabakh. So, Armenia seized those, but then kept going and seized another four. So, they took about 15 percent of the land that was Azerbaijan's as a result of this war, driving out the inhabitants.

Q: What was the basis of the military power of the Armenians at that time? It was not purely local, was it?

BRADTKE: No. It was, first of all, money from the diaspora. It was weaponry from Russia. It was, I think, also— It's always hard to judge the issues of morale and spirit, but the Karabakhis were fighting for their homes. The Armenians who suffered—and here I do use an analogy—they were in some ways like the Jews and the Israelis. They'd gone through a genocide. They were not going to let this happen again. They were not going to get pushed out of their land. If it took sticks and stones, they'd be fighting with sticks and stones, whereas in Azerbaijan you had corrupt leaders, you had weak leaders, you had a military that was not very efficient or well-organized. The Karabakhis and the Armenians just outfought them. They had higher morale, higher motivation. For some Azerbaijani from Baku, what did he care about Karabakh? Was he going to get killed for Karabakh?

Q: What support did the Azerbaijanis have? You say that Russia was sending weapons to the Armenian side—

BRADTKE: Weapons were flowing throughout this whole period, and indeed afterwards. The Soviet Union was selling weapons to both sides. Ukrainians, the Soviet Union— There was no trouble— At a certain point, it was not difficult to get weapons.

Q: Here's where I think we are. Oops. So, you went from a high in Berlin, overseeing a very large and important mission, to a pretty discouraging situation in '09 and '10 watching Minsk fall apart.

BRADTKE: Right. But it was not— Well, it was discouraging in many ways. This is now kind of an irrelevant comment, perhaps, but it was one of the more satisfying things I've done during my career because, first of all, I was in this kind of unique position. I had come back out of retirement. I was not expected to be in the office eight hours a day. What the job entailed was a huge amount of travel. I was probably on the road to Europe or the Caucasus on average twice a month. I loved the travel. I was not reporting on a close basis to anybody, and I didn't supervise anybody. I had a very clear mandate from Phil Gordon, who was the assistant secretary, who saw things the same ways as I did throughout this time, and from Mrs. Clinton, who was very supportive. She followed this issue and knew about this issue. When I met with her, she said, "Whenever you need my help, let me know." And she delivered on that promise throughout the three and a half years.

But it wasn't the kind of thing where every day you had to report to somebody. I would report after each negotiating round, and before I went out, I would usually tell Phil Gordon, "Here's what I hope to get done during this round." So, a lot of independence, and this notion that, unlike any other job I had in my career, every morning when you woke up you were trying to prevent a war. You were trying to keep people from being killed. It was that simple. When the war ended in 1995, there was no peace agreement. The ceasefire agreement was a single piece of paper that the three sides didn't really sign together; it had to be faxed separately to each side. [I count the Karabakhis as a side in this regard.] Every year, people were still being killed on this ceasefire line. So, that to me was just a tremendous motivator, even in the dark times when you were struggling on the political side.

I used to say this to Phil Gordon: "Phil, I understand this job to have two purposes. I'm supposed to do two things. I have two objectives. One is to try to get a peace agreement, and two is to make damn sure there's no new war." As I said in my career, I've never been in a job where it could be reduced to something quite so simple. It was, in my way of thinking, pure diplomacy. You had your powers of persuasion and argument and reason, and you had your work with your two counterparts, the French and the Russian co-chairs and that's what you had to deal with. You had to think of every strategy, every argument, every diplomatic device that you could think of to try to move toward a peace agreement and try to make sure that no new war started. When there were flare-ups along the line of contact, you wanted to make sure you intervened as quickly and as effectively as you could, and you stopped people from escalating.

Q: With hindsight, we see that you succeeded, mainly. In '09, it may not have seemed so.

BRADTKE: Well, when I left, and this is what I said to Ian Kelly who came after me, I said, "Ian, you've got two jobs. And I didn't succeed at the first." We came close. This may take another session, but we came close in 2011 to getting an agreement on this framework. Even though we didn't do that, there was no new war, and I feel that there were moments when a new war could have started, when ceasefire violations could have

escalated, and I know very concretely of one case where, working with Mrs. Clinton, we undoubtedly kept some young soldiers on both sides of the line from being killed.

Again, for me, when else in my career was I able to say that I kept somebody from getting killed? So, as I say, for all of the frustrations—and 2010 was a period of frustrations, when the Armenians just pulled back completely into a shell, and we could not move them. We spent almost all of 2010— We were going out there, we were talking to them. President Medvedev, whom I feel played a very positive role in all of this— He was extremely engaged in trying to manage the up and down of ceasefire violations and find small ways to move forward. But by the fall of 2010, you might as well have been pounding your head against a wall.

Q: From what you've seen and done, ambassador, do you think that outsiders can do conflict resolution?

BRADTKE: I think there are times when outsiders—when the role of the outsiders is important, but it's not sufficient. And this was an argument I used to have with the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan. You'd go to Baku, and you'd meet with President Aliyev—I think I had more than thirty meetings with Aliyev in three years, and I had a similar number with Sargsyan. Aliyev or Sargsyan would say to you, United States, Russia, France you are powerful countries—just make Armenians give back our land. You can make them do it. Just go there and tell them they've got to— And you'd say to both Sargsyan and Aliyev, "Mr. President, what if we came and told you you've got to do it?"

Both presidents would say, No, of course not. I'm not going to do that. I'm not going to do something against the interests of my country. I would say, "Exactly. The other guy's not going to do it either just because we tell him to."

So, the lack of political will was the primary— the first reason there was no solution, but you also have to remember the issues were not easy or simple. The two principles, territorial integrity versus self-determination— It's hard to square that circle. One side had one principle on its side, and the other side had the other principle. So, hard issues, yes, but also lack of political will. I can't think of anything outside powers could have reasonably done that could have overcome the lack of political will.

Q: I'm sort of smiling because I had— This is very tangential. I heard these same things being said in Central America during the wars of the '80s there. Even though the United States was with one side and not with the other— And I never served in that area, but I've heard leaders of those countries say, Why don't you come and fix this? It's sort of a— It's funny, because they believe we're omnipotent, we know we're not, and it's one of the obstacles of doing diplomacy as an American.

BRADTKE: Yes. It also becomes an excuse for them, which is, they can blame you for their own failures, their own unwillingness to make a compromise or to trust the other

guy. They can say, Well, you're not doing your job. Your job is to fix this problem. Now, I will say, and I want to be clear on this, that I do believe that had we not been engaged, the sides would not have been doing this by themselves. They would not have settled this by themselves. We were a vehicle for them to be able to talk to one another, which would have been very difficult as two countries with no diplomatic relations, where there was personal animosity at all sorts of levels. So, we could bring them together. We could put ideas in front of them, and we could intervene, which we did as vigorously as we could, to shine a spotlight on these ceasefire violations so that we could dampen things down before it spun out of control.

Q: Did you get to know Sergey Lavrov?

BRADTKE: I did. Well, no. He's a foreign minister of the country and I'm at a different level. But he was very much engaged in this problem. He knows probably more about this conflict than anybody else.

Q: So, please, tell us who this man is? He's so important to what's happening to us right now.

BRADTKE: I think he's smart. I think he's a very clever diplomat. I'll only recount— Well, this is getting out of the chronology, but I'll recount it since you've brought it up here. Eventually, we will get to a point where, in 2011, there's the possibility of a breakthrough. Again, President Medvedev met with the two presidents at Sochi. We, the co-chairs, were there on the margins of the meeting to kind of encourage the sides. After we were done, Lavrov said to the co-chairs, "You want a ride back to Moscow? I'll give you a ride on my plane." For a guy like me, who had served in the cold war in Moscow, to have the Russian foreign minister invite you to fly back from Sochi to Moscow with him was just unthinkable. He came back from his cabin, sat down with us, and we talked about what we were going to do next. We would periodically consult in Moscow, as we did in Washington and Paris. Lavrov was always engaged with us.

Q: I don't know how to ask the question. What motivates him? Clearly loyalty to his country, and I think loyalty to his boss. I don't know. What makes him tick? Does he care about solving conflicts or extending the influence of his country? What is he all about?

BRADTKE: This is a tricky question because— I kind of have to jump back slightly again, because people back here would always say to me, What are the Russians doing? What's going on? We don't trust the Russians. This is going to be a long way around to get to your question. But my answer was, just like in Washington sometimes, there's not a single Russian policy toward Karabakh, just like how in Washington sometimes we have agencies and departments and parts of departments of slightly different policies. My view was that you had the military industrial complex that was not interested in a solution to this conflict, that could sell weapons to both sides, that saw this as a way of making both sides dependent upon Russia to some degree. I think you had the intelligence, the FSB

[Federalnaya Sluzhba Bezopasnosti (Federal Security Service)] guys, who were always stirring up trouble against the United States, particularly in Azerbaijan.

In Armenia, the Russians already had a very tight relationship with Russia for historical and economic reasons. Azerbaijan, with its oil, had a chance for a more independent kind of policy. So, the FSB was, I think, constantly trying to undermine us and the Europeans and keep the Azerbaijanis from moving in our direction. So, you had their policy, but I think then you also had—and this is what I argued, and I'm still convinced was the case—the Medvedev-Lavrov policy. That policy was driven by the recognition that if you didn't solve this problem, at some point, it wasn't just going to remain stable forever. This, I think, was also the aftermath of Georgia, and feeling that you already had one war down there in the Caucasus, and all the blowback and problems that that created. You didn't need another one. If a war started, Russia was going to be dragged into it. Russia has a defense treaty with Armenia, which does not cover Karabakh, because everyone recognizes Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan.

But the Russians—or certainly Lavrov and Medvedev—were smart enough to know that if a war started, it wouldn't stop at the borders of Karabakh and the occupied territories. The Azerbaijanis would strike into Armenia proper, and then they would be in the soup, because the Armenians would say to the Russians, Treaty. You've got to help us. Come on. Then, what are the Turks going to do? They're buddies, which is a little bit of an exaggeration— The loyalty they felt toward Azerbaijan, and not wanting the Russians to have any more presence in the Caucasus, would drag them in.

Q: No treaty between Azerbaijan and Russia?

BRADTKE: No. Not defense. They've stayed out of the defense arrangements of the former Soviet Union.

Q: So, maybe not in its heart, but in its policy, Russia has been more attached to Armenia than Azerbaijan?

BRADTKE: Oh, clearly. But Russia saw, by pursuing a peace agreement, an opportunity to get better relations with Azerbaijan. If they could be the principal broker of a peace agreement that would bring peace to that part of the world, the credit they would get would enhance their relationship with Azerbaijan.

Q: Being friendly towards Armenia means being unfriendly to Turkey.

BRADTKE: It's not that simple. That's why they wanted reconciliation between Turkey and Armenia.

Q: Because Turkey and Russia seemed to be getting very close at this time, and whatever impediments there were, they seemed to have been overcoming them.

BRADTKE: This is still a part of the world where geo-strategy plays a role, and you've got—we're getting really into the digressions here. I always view it this way, and I'll try to link this back because I still want to get your Lavrov question. You have three former imperial powers that kind of come right together in the Caucasus: Russia, Turkey, and Iran—the Persian Empire. The Caucasus have been pushed back and forth between these three empires for hundreds of years. So, I don't think Turkey wants to see Russia expand its influence in that part of the world.

Q: Now, you've just mentioned Iran for the first time. How did they play into this? I know they're bordering there but—

BRADTKE: They're bordering Azerbaijan. They are Shia, as Azerbaijan's population is. They, however, are not the same kind of Shia. Azerbaijan, for all its faults, is essentially a secular country. In the countryside you see the veil; you don't see the veil very much in Baku. That was the influence of the Soviet Union and the cosmopolitan aspects of Baku where you had the oil industry and other factors. So, you also have, between Azerbaijan and Iran, the fact that many ethnic Azeris live on the Iranian side of the border. So, here you've got this quite prosperous country, Azerbaijan, where life is open, relatively speaking. Politically, no, but culturally, yes. It's right on your border, where Iranians, particularly Azeri Iranians, like to go for vacation. They see what life can be like. This is not great for Iran, to have this country right there. Then you have the Caspian Sea, where the boundary lines for oil and gas are still up in the air. So, you have parts of the Caspian that are claimed by both Iran and Azerbaijan.

Q: So, they're mutually suspicious?

BRADTKE: More than mutually suspicious.

Q: Does this make Iran, by default, a friend of Armenia?

BRADTKE: Now we're getting to it, right. One of the ways that Armenia survived this blockade by Turkey was an economic lifeline, an energy lifeline, through Iran. When I would drive to Nagorno-Karabakh, which is an event in itself, at a certain point you would come onto the road that was bringing truck traffic from Iran to Yerevan and into Armenia. There was just Iranian truck after Iranian truck. You would see the gas pipeline that had been built. So, perversely, the oversimplified view is that you've got Muslims and you've got Christians. All the Muslims are on one side and all of the Christians are on the other. But no. You've got Shias on both sides, and Muslims and Christians on the same side. So, religion is not what drives this.

Q: Meanwhile, here come the Chinese with their new Silk Road. The Belt. Is that going to affect this?

BRADTKE: I don't know the answer.

Q: China and Iran are rather close.

BRADTKE: I think a Chinese role is a long way off, at this stage. So, at any rate, it is a complicated part of the world. I think Medvedev and Lavrov recognized that this was a powder keg of sorts, and if they took a long-term view, if they could fix this and be seen as fixing this, this would enhance their influence over Azerbaijan, their access to Azerbaijani gas and oil. They could try to keep some of that flow from going straight to the West and instead come into their pipeline system. I think, after Georgia, they thought it would be good for Russia to be in a peace-keeping or peace-making role. The last thing is that this is also a time when things were going south pretty much with the U.S. This was one project where the relationship was cooperative, where we worked very closely together. We were on the same wavelength, we were doing the same things, we were sharing strategies, we were discussing what to do next.

So, the outcome of this is that you're on the plane with Lavrov and you're talking about how you're going to move to the next stage of this negotiation, what do we need to do, and who should call whom, when we should go back to the region. I had excellent relations with my two Russian counterparts throughout this period. So, I think Medvedev was motivated by the strategic concerns and the fact that he became personally invested in the issue.

Q: So it goes.

BRADTKE: The more Medvedev worked on this issue—and he worked very hard on this issue—the more important it became to him, the more he wanted to get it done. Maybe, he had started out thinking this wasn't that big a deal, but his personal stake really was obvious, and I think Lavrov, working for Medvedev, also got invested in this. Both spent so much time on the issue— This was the thing I used to say to people back in Washington— They used to say, Oh, this is all just a game. They're just pretending. I would say, "No. If this is all an act, they don't need to spend hours dealing with the Armenians and the Azerbaijanis." And believe me, because I used to spend hours dealing with people who were very difficult to deal with on both sides. And the Karabakhis, oh my God, very difficult to deal with— If you were pretending that you wanted to get a peace settlement, you didn't have to do hours of sitting down with the sides, but Medvedev and Lavrov did. It would have been a lot easier just to occasionally have a meeting and say, "Get to work, you guys," but they spent hours and hours—the kind of time no American president, no French president, no Western European leader would spend— As I said, Mrs. Clinton was extremely supportive, but she couldn't have spent half of the time that Lavrov spent on this issue.

Q: I was going to ask, and I will: does a western diplomat have reason to envy the amount of time that Lavrov has been able to be in his job? He's been there for quite a long time. Doesn't that give him some clout and some perspective that other diplomats lack?

BRADTKE: It's knowledge of issues. He has been through so much that—

Q: One can envy a person in that position.

BRADTKE: Envy is a tricky word. I do this with less of a subjective kind of qualifier; it's the fact that he brings to the table, whether it's with Syria, Ukraine, the Caucasus and other issues, an institutional knowledge that is very hard for a western foreign minister who has been in the job for a couple of years or even less—six months or nine months. You can't learn that fast. You just can't.

Q: A peripheral, maybe question: it appeared that he was very friendly with John Kerry. Does that seem to be the case?

BRADTKE: I don't know enough. I left before Kerry took over, and my agreement more or less with Mrs. Clinton was that I would stay in the job as long as she was the secretary of state. So, I can't really say for sure.

Q: Question withdrawn. It just seemed so. Maybe— I believe we have another discussion coming.

BRADTKE: Yes, because there is one thing I want to cover. As I said, 2010 was the year of marking time, but then by the end of 2010, we started to get our heads above water and we made a push to get an agreement, and maybe it's worth talking about that. Because we came as close as anybody has come in maybe a decade to getting the sides to agree to a significant step forward.

Q: It seems that now we have no resolution, but it's on a low simmer, it seems, which is an achievement.

BRADTKE: It's debatable, whether it's just forgotten or on a low simmer.

Q: We'll leave that bit of suspense. Ambassador, thank you very much.

BRADTKE: Thank you.

Q: So, it is March 28, or within a day or two of that, with Ambassador Robert Bradtke here in Northwest DC. Where we last spoke, we were getting into the Nagorno-Karabakh issues that you have dealt with.

BRADTKE: My recollection is that we talked in general about some of the factors behind the conflict and the resolution of the conflict. Maybe it's time to move through more chronologically, without getting too bogged down. As I said, right after I came back from Zagreb, I was offered this position. Even though I did not know much about the Caucasus, I agreed to take it.

Q: And the year?

BRADTKE: This was 2009. I think I started in September of 2009. At the start, and again, I hope I'm not repeating myself here because it's been so long since we talked last, but at the start it was a relatively promising time. Considering this was a conflict that had gone on since the early 1990s and really hadn't gotten very much down the road towards a peace settlement, there was a real opportunity here.

As I took this job on full-time, there were the basics of a document that was being worked intensively with the parties. The document was called the Madrid Principles or the Basic Principles, and this I think we may have talked about. It was built upon some elements of the OSCE Helsinki Final Act and a statement that Presidents Obama, Medvedev, and the French president—

Q: Nicolas Sarkozy?

BRADTKE: Sarkozy, yes. They made it on the margins of the G7 or G8 summit in Italy,

BRADTKE: At any rate, the presidents made a statement, which outlined six elements of a settlement. If I can do these off the top of my head, they were that there would be an interim status for Nagorno-Karabakh that would give them the right, within a secure environment, to manage their own affairs. There would be a final status that—and the tortured phrase was—"would reflect the will of the people." So, it was not terribly well defined. There would be a corridor linking Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia. The refugees and IDPs [internally displaced persons] would have the right to return. There would be international security guarantees of some sort, and the so-called occupied territories—the additional land conquered by Armenia and Karabakh during the war, all seven of those territories—would be returned to Azerbaijan. So, those were the core of the basic principles. There was a draft document that elaborated these that was not a peace treaty or a settlement. It was to be a framework document, which would then be a text that would be the basis for negotiations. So, I started in September.

Q: Sorry, so that was the Madrid document?

BRADTKE: That was the Madrid document. When I started in September, draft language was being exchanged with the parties. They had not seen a full text, but it was being discussed quite intensively with the two presidents and the foreign ministers, who were the only players in this game. It was President Aliyev, President Sargsyan, Foreign Minister Nalbandyan of Armenia, and Foreign Minister Mammadyarov of Azerbaijan. My baptism by fire was up in New York. Mammadyarov was at the UN General Assembly [UNGA]. He was the foreign minister of Azerbaijan, and he met with Mrs. Clinton. I went up to be in that meeting with her, and she and I were talking relatively positively, and Mammadyarov was being quite cautious. I read that as, well, that's just the way people are.

Q: New York—was this—?

BRADTKE: Yes, New York, on the margins of the UNGA. In fact, I should have been, perhaps, a little more perceptive, and realized that what Mammadyarov's caution was saying was much more likely to be the case than our optimism. But, as I said earlier, I think, there was this other track that was also moving. The two tracks, which we insisted were separate, but mutually reinforcing. There was the Nagorno-Karabakh track, negotiated between Armenia and Azerbaijan with the Minsk Group co-chairs, Russia, France, and the United States. There was the other track, which was very important: Turkey and Armenia, where the Turks and the Armenians were negotiating so-called protocols that would normalize relations between Turkey and Armenia.

These two tracks were moving nicely, and they were separate, but they were giving us some momentum. The Turks, by engaging in the protocols with the Armenians, essentially were ready to open the border between Turkey and Armenia as part of the normalization process. But, that would have really weakened the Azerbaijani position on NK. It would have reduced the economic pressure on Armenia to negotiate on NK. Needless to say, the Azerbaijanis reacted negatively to the Turkish effort. My own impression is that they did everything they could to undermine the protocols. But the protocols were moving, even though they were also very controversial among the Armenian diaspora.

Q: I'm sorry, so the diaspora were skeptical or supportive?

BRADTKE: The diaspora were very negative about the protocols, because they felt that what was being negotiated was not going far enough to recognizing what they believed to be genocide and Armenia's loss of some of its historic territories to Turkey.

Q: They wanted an apology.

BRADTKE: They wanted the word "genocide." And basically, what the protocols would have done is set up an historical investigation by the two sides, by Armenia and Turkey.

Q: We're talking about diaspora in California or all over the world?

BRADTKE: All over the world.

Q: Where are they?

BRADTKE: They were in Syria, Lebanon, parts of the Middle East. They were in Russia, particularly in the south and in Moscow. They were in France, particularly in Paris and the south, and they were in the United States. So, we felt that things were going in the right direction, and I can't, unfortunately, remember the exact date, but it got to the point where Mrs. Clinton and Lavrov managed to get the two sides, Turkey and Armenia, to actually initial the document. Meanwhile, we were starting to work through the draft text

of the framework document on NK in more detail with the parties. We had a couple of meetings with the two presidents. We met with them in Moldova, of all places, and we met with them in Munich, on the margins of the Wehrkunde Conference. Painful as it was, we were getting them to focus on the specific language of the Basic Principles document, which was a big step forward. It was not easy, but we were making progress.

Q: Now or later can you comment: since Lavrov has survived so much longer than any of our foreign ministers, the relationship between Clinton and Lavrov, if you have any insight—

BRADTKE: It was never very good. I know from general knowledge that it was not good. On this issue, I think Mrs. Clinton understood that Lavrov was helping move this process in the right direction. I don't think it made her like Lavrov particularly, or feel they had a good relationship, but they had a practical working relationship, which enabled this process to function.

Q: I don't know if it's a relevant question, but between policy and personality, were they both equally at play in this instance?

BRADTKE: I'm not sure I can judge. I saw one sliver of the relationship where it was not warm and fuzzy, but it was supportive of collaboration and cooperation. So, we were feeling pretty good about the progress we were making. Then the Turkish-Armenian protocols went off the rails. The Turks, after having initialed the protocols without conditions and without having ever said there was a linkage between the protocols and progress on Nagorno-Karabakh, started publicly saying, We will not ratify the protocols unless, basically, territory is returned to Azerbaijan. That was extremely difficult for President Sargsyan.

Q: So, they initialed but said they would not ratify?

BRADTKE: They would not ratify.

Q: That's kind of a double message, isn't it?

BRADTKE: Well, it caused great trouble for President Sargsyan. He was trying to sell the protocols to the diaspora, on the basis that this was going to improve Armenia's position. It was going to open the border. It was going to get them out of their isolation. Now he's got this double whammy, so to speak, where he's being looked at as, first, selling out to the Turks, because he's not getting a good enough deal on the so-called genocide. If he makes any concessions on Nagorno-Karabakh, it looks like he's doing it under Turkish pressure. No way. So, he came under enormous pressure because of what the Turks did.

Q: So, Armenia's out, right?

BRADTKE: So, what happened was, first I tried to talk to the Turks and tell them, "You should want to see all of this to go forward." I found the Turkish side extremely difficult. This was one of the things for me that, again— If I look back at my own performance, it was a miscalculation. I had dealt with the Turks when I was the EUR PDAS, and we talked about it earlier in our discussions, where I worked with the Turks and the British to create this package on Berlin Plus, this NATO-EU cooperation. So, I thought I knew how to talk to the Turks. I thought I knew the kind of appeals to make to them, and I went to Ankara and realized that, unlike 2004, by 2009 they were speaking a completely different language.

Q: Aside from being obtuse and stubborn, from their point of view were they seeing this as trying to balance opening the border but compensating Azerbaijan? Was there any element of that? Was there any logic to what they did?

BRADTKE: The logic of their position was, they first closed the border in response to the conquering of the seven territories around Nagorno-Karabakh. For them to open the border without getting some of that territory back was going to make it impossible for them politically.

Q: What was their stake in Azerbaijan? Only to be friendly with a country hostile to Armenia?

BRADTKE: They are kindred Turkic peoples. These areas are full of Turkic people. Now, the Turks are Sunni, and the Azeris are Shia, but there is a Turkic root to both Azeris and Turks. So, it's a complicated relationship, and at some point, maybe I'll come back to that. It's not always been a happy relationship. It wasn't happy in this period because Azerbaijan felt betrayed, essentially, by the Turks when they were negotiating with Armenia. At any rate, the fact that the Turks publicly stated that there was this linkage just slammed the brakes on the process. I recall we were out in Athens for the annual ministerial meeting of the OSCE. While we had been making progress, it had been really tough.

Q: You may have explained this, but for the transcript: how did linking the two tracks ditch the deal?

BRADTKE: Right. It ditched the deal in the sense that it took the pressure off the Azerbaijanis. Knowing that the Turks had basically said, publicly, that they would not normalize their relationship or open their border with Armenia unless they got something on Nagorno-Karabakh, it put all of the cards in the Azerbaijanis' hands. Then the Azerbaijanis could say, That's not enough. We're not getting enough. That's not a good enough deal. And the Turks would have to back them. So, the border would stay closed. So, from that perspective, it strengthened the Azerbaijanis' hand. And again, from the standpoint of the Armenians, politically, for Sargsyan, he was riding two horses here. It just became politically impossible, as I said. The protocols were not popular to begin

with, the linkage now to progress on NK, would make him appear to be giving into the Turks.

Q: Allowing them not to mention genocide.

BRADTKE: Right. So, he was already accused of making too many concessions to the Turks. So, his ability, then, on Nagorno-Karabakh to make any concessions, when it would look like not only was he making concessions to get the protocols done but he was making more concessions to the Turks to get Nagorno-Karabakh done— He was essentially negotiating Karabakh under Turkish pressure. That, for the Armenians both inside and outside the country was impossible—

Q: If this were a fictional situation, it would seem as if nobody had full control. Everybody was reacting to something.

BRADTKE: Yes. That's why this problem hasn't been solved in twenty-something years.

Q: So, it's not only lack of will, maybe, but it's that nobody had enough cards in their hands to have a winning hand. Is that accurate?

BRADTKE: Yes. I want to come back to that question of why none of this has worked, because amazingly enough, although the Armenians in December of 2009 and January of 2010 slammed on the brakes, the process did move forward later. It was President Medvedev who tried to get things going early in 2010 by bringing the two presidents together. So, we were all out in Sochi, and what we saw there was a counter draft of the Principles by Armenia to the draft we had shared with them of the Madrid Principles. It was the most one-sided— It was just an impossible document. Totally impossible. So, we—

Q: Is that something that the negotiators should have foreseen, or could have? I can withdraw the question.

BRADTKE: No, it's a fair point. Maybe we were naive. Maybe all three governments—France, Russia, and the United States—were a bit naive in thinking we could keep these two tracks separate, that somehow, we could keep the Turkish-Armenia Protocols separate from the Azerbaijani-Armenia negotiation. While we knew there was a relationship between the two, it had been positive, and we may have overestimated our ability to manage moving these two pieces down the track at the same speed. That's something that is hard to know. But yes, in retrospect, maybe it was not realistic to think that we could keep these separate, with no linkage. That was always our line: "There's no linkage between these two." In reality, whether we said it or not, the perception by the parties was there was a linkage. At some point, ignoring that issue or not facing it more squarely may have been a mistake.

Q: I can see why the Turkish Azeri side would have said no linkage because they didn't want to get into the genocide—

BRADTKE: No, they wanted the linkage between the protocols and Nagorno-Karabakh. It was the Armenians who didn't want the linkage.

Q: Right, okay. Because no linkage means no acknowledgement of genocide?

BRADTKE: No. No linkage meant normalization of relations with Turkey, open border, and this commission that would study the genocide and the events of 1915. But it was the open border that was the key. That's where the linkage came in. That was giving a big—concession might be the right word—to the Armenians without getting progress on Nagorno-Karabakh in exchange for it.

Q: Okay, got it.

BRADTKE: This— I've lived and breathed it for the better part of three years, and even though it's been some time since then—it's so deeply in my bones that sometimes you forget how, for an outsider to follow. They go, What? What is he talking about? So, you need to stop me if I get down into places where it doesn't make any sense. Because the fact that it doesn't make sense may not mean it's not what happened; it just means it doesn't make any sense.

Q: Well understood. Now, we're emphasizing chronology.

BRADTKE: So, we're in the beginning of 2010. Medvedev calls them together, it's a terrible meeting, and Sargsyan is in a foul mood. We get nowhere in Sochi. We spend, and I will fast forward a little bit here, most of 2010 marking time. There's another meeting with the presidents in St. Petersburg, but, in the classic way these guys play each other, there are nasty ceasefire violations right on the eve of Medvedev's meeting. So, it just inflames the atmosphere. The meeting takes place where the two presidents are arguing about who shot first. It's very hard to engage on the substance because of the ceasefire violations. So, that doesn't go very well either.

Q: Two thousand ten?

BRADTKE: Right.

Q: Later, I think: general comments about Medvedev as a leader or as a negotiator.

BRADTKE: Yes, please try to— I may have touched on that last time, but I do want to come back to that because it's very important. So, we're not getting anywhere. Now we've got another problem, which is that as a result of the ceasefire violations, there and there are prisoners and dead bodies on both sides. It's really ugly, because usually those

things were quietly resolved, but now the sides are making a big issue of it. You've got to give us our dead bodies back, and No, we're not giving your prisoners back.

Q: What was the scale of the ceasefire violations? How many were there?

BRADTKE: At that point, it was the most serious in a number of years. You know, small arms. But the serious thing was people crossing the line of contact. Sniper fire is an everyday occurrence there, and there were probably on average thirty casualties and deaths a year. But more rarely did they send people across the line. That's what they were starting to do. So, it was really going south, and the Petersburg meeting, once again, was just a total lack of success getting anywhere. But finally—and again, I'll just drop this small foreshadowing—Medvedev, who just wouldn't give up, brought them back together again in Astrakhan in what I want to say was October of 2010.

Q: Can you—

BRADTKE: Astrakhan, on the Volga.

Q: Oh, okay.

BRADTKE: I had never been there before, but it's a big center of the Russian gas industry.

Q: Okay, so, we're still in 2010?

BRADTKE: We're still in 2010. So, he brings them back together, and he finally starts generating some progress. He gets the prisoners of war and the dead bodies issue resolved. He gets the sides to focus on the substance again. The Armenian irritation over Turkey has kind of worn down a bit. The process starts to move again.

Q: Did Russia see itself as an honest broker on the outside? Or did they have a predilection for one side or the other?

BRADTKE: You know, that's— From what I saw, and I'll try to say it this way— Point number one is that they obviously had a closer relationship with Armenia. They dominate the Armenian economy, Russia does, and they have a military base in Armenia, and they have a defense relationship with Armenia. I would say that does not apply to Karabakh, because that's not part of Armenia, nor are the seven occupied territories. It applies to Armenia proper. But that's still one big heck of an important thing.

So, obviously they have this important relationship. Their relationship with Azerbaijan is not as good; historically, it's not as good. When Azerbaijan got its independence and when the war was going on, some Soviet troops did some pretty nasty things in Baku. The Azerbaijanis, for the Russians, were an independent supplier of oil and gas, and they

were not putting it through the pipelines to Russia. So, Russia couldn't control it. So, that relationship has always been more strained.

Q: Forgive the asterisks: now that Russia and Turkey are much friendlier than they were at that time, would you say that this alignment that you described is pretty much still the case?

BRADTKE: With—

Q: Well, Putin and Erdogan have been, apparently, very friendly.

BRADTKE: Yes, I'm not sure that's led to any—

Q: No formal change of anything?

BRADTKE: I'm not sure the relationship has enabled the co-chairs, the negotiating process, to move in any particular direction.

Q: If you're Russia, you can be friendlier with Turkey without being less friendly to Armenia. Is that too many—?

BRADTKE: You can try. It's not going to help you with Armenia, but you have enough cards with Armenia anyway, because of your economic and security relationship. So, at any rate, in October 2010 Medvedev gets the process going again. All through this period, the co-chairs are meeting with the foreign ministers. We're traveling to the region; we're trying to handle ceasefire violations. We reinitiated crossing the line of contact on foot, which had been stopped when there was an incident where a soldier—and I can't remember which side it was—was badly injured by a landmine. We decided it was important, as a show of our ability to run the process, to go wherever we wanted to go, that we physically walk across the line of contact. So, we started to do that again.

Q: Excuse me, you walked across land mines?

BRADTKE: An area that was heavily mined, yes. We had people in front of us with mine detectors, but we walked across. There were both snipers and land mines. But we felt that, as a confidence building measure— And we used to say this: We are trying to show the parties that someday, this line of contact was going to go away, and people would be able to walk across just the way that we did.

Q: Interviewer's comment: the subject has demonstrated a true personal commitment to this task.

BRADTKE: Yes. I mean, I was always happy when we got to the other side, and I'm not sure anybody in Diplomatic Security would have approved of any of this, but again, we felt that it was important to do this.

Q: Okay.

BRADTKE: So, we're back to October again and the diplomatic process. We're trying to generate momentum: we're meeting with the parties, we're visiting the region, we're crossing the line of contact. We carried out a survey, which had not been done in many years, of the conditions in the areas outside of Nagorno-Karabakh, which were rarely visited. These were the occupied territories— What was going on there, were the Armenians settling or resettling these places? So, we did that. We really tried to move the process forward.

By 2011, once again Medvedev brings the sides together in Sochi. It's a very positive meeting. Both presidents come out of the meeting. We meet with them afterwards, and they say, We've made real progress. I'm going to be careful a little bit here, because it's all the same players, speaking today, 2018. It's the same two presidents, it's the same two foreign ministers, it's the same negotiating process. And I don't want to say anything that might affect the current negotiating process, but I would say that both presidents were positive. We felt that we had a chance to get agreement on this framework document.

Q: What made the difference?

BRADTKE: That's a good question. I will allow myself to speculate a little bit here. One was the persistence of the diplomatic effort from the U.S., France, and Russia, all united, all pushing the same line. It was Medvedev, President Obama, and I guess still President Sarkozy. They were all working together in the same direction. I think the sides became more comfortable with what we were trying to propose. There was something in it for everybody. This wasn't the only bite of the apple, to use that metaphor. This was the framework document, and there were going to be battles to be fought later, but it was a way of demonstrating progress.

Q: Each saw something for themselves?

BRADTKE: Each saw something for themselves. Each could find something in the document, whether it was the return of the territories, the return of refugees and IDPs, or on the other hand a path for Nagorno-Karabakh toward final status. So, again, I also feel that here—and again, this is my own speculation—I think that the Russians worked very hard to bring the Armenians around.

Q: Under Medvedev's leadership.

BRADTKE: Right. One of the key issues always was the sequencing of all of this. For the Armenians,—I think President Sargsyan understood that at the end of the day, territory had to go back. These seven territories around Nagorno-Karabakh, which were not lived in by Armenians before the war, were lived in by Azeris, and in one of them—Kelbajar—believe it or not there were some Kurds.

Q: Minorities within minorities within minorities.

BRADTKE: Right. So, this is the Caucuses, after all. But I think President Sargsyan understood at the end of the day that the price for Karabakh and other parts of the deal was going to be for the territories to go back. But I think he also felt that if he gave these territories back too soon, and I don't get the self-determination for Karabakh up front, what's to keep Aliyev from saying, "Thank you very much. I got my seven territories back. Now I want Nagorno-Karabakh, too?"

Q: I'm smiling because this is the formula in so many of these things.

BRADTKE: Right, and without getting into the details, Medvedev had come up with a formula that allowed both sides to say, Yes, that could work for us.

Q: So, know that you'll concede, but resist doing so.

BRADTKE: Right. But essentially—and again, I'm not going to do the details because this is still a negotiating point—a formula was found to kind of get past the obstacle of the sequencing—when do you get your territories back, and when does the process of self-determination for Nagorno-Karabakh move forward. And again, we were working with a framework document; this was not a peace treaty. So, we then continued our efforts in the early part of 2011. We had another statement by the three presidents, the U.S., France, and Russia. It was where the presidents said, We now think that the time has come to finalize the framework document.

President Medvedev had summoned the two presidents, Aliyev and Sargsyan, to meet with him in Kazan. So, the three presidents—U.S., France, and Russia—said, We want to see a deal at Kazan. We were feeling that good about it. The signals were all positive. Maybe a small parenthetical comment on how the co-chairs worked together: we had, every year that I was there—so, 2010, '11, and '12—the three presidents of France, Russia, and the United States issue joint statements at the G8 summits.

The process was that the three of us co-chairs sat down and drafted it up, and then we ran it past our governments. In my case, I shared it with Phil Gordon and then sent it over to the White House for the NSC senior director for Europe. They, or whoever looked at the document in Paris or Moscow,—a change. We basically had the ability, the three of us co-chairs, to put a statement together that was cleared without almost any changes by the Kremlin, the Élysée, and the White House. We did it three times.

Q: That might show some skill on the part of the drafters.

BRADTKE: We knew where the limits were, but we also could sit down together in one room, and in a couple of hours, draft up a statement that all of our highest-level officials were signing off on. We did it without going through the bureaucracy.

Q: This is the way it should be.

BRADTKE: It is the way it should be. At any rate, we had the statement at the G7/G8, in the buildup for Kazan. We orchestrated all the pressure we could build. Mrs. Clinton had the two foreign ministers come, and she said, "Time to do the deal." The Russians were pushing the same line. And again, Mrs. Clinton who said to me, "If you need my help, let me know." The White House was not willing to allow President Obama to call Aliyev and Sargsyan to tell them, "You need to do the deal." They said he was too busy, and couldn't do this. So, Phil Gordon and I went to Mrs. Clinton and said, "I'm afraid you've got to raise this." And she did, and the president made the calls.

Q: Wow. Who was reluctant, the president himself?

BRADTKE: It may have been Tom Donilon, his national security advisor, but Mrs. Clinton got it fixed for us.

Q: The Obama White House is thought, by some, to have been too much in the background in some of these situations, like with Syria—

BRADTKE: Well, if we ever get far enough along and I talk about my time doing counterterrorism, they certainly weren't in the background on that. They were kind of micromanaging every twist and turn.

Q: So, is it fair to say that Secretary Clinton persuaded the White House that the president must be involved?

BRADTKE: Yes. We needed him to make these calls, and she got him to make the calls. The feedback he got from both presidents was positive.

Q: So, that call was key?

BRADTKE: It was essential to give us any chance, and to keep ourselves in the game. Also, if the meeting was going to fail, we needed to be able to say afterwards that we did everything we could. But all of the signals were coming back pretty positive, and the three of us felt quite good about this. Now, we got out to Kazan, and the scenario was going to be that President Medvedev would meet the two presidents, and they would give him their final assent to the framework document, which they each had received already. It had been tinkered with a little bit in the run-up to Kazan, but it was basically done.

Then, when they said to President Medvedev, We accept, we, the co-chairs—my Russian counterpart and my French counterpart and I—would be waiting right outside, and we would be called in to witness the initialing of the document. We were there with Foreign Minister Lavrov, and his idea, which we were all ready to do, was that as soon as it was a done deal, we would all get on a plane and fly to the region to try to sell this. We wanted

to sell it particularly to the Karabakhis, who had never seen the document. They had basically been told by the Armenians, We'll do this, and we'll tell you what it's going to be. So, that was the scenario.

So, we're in Kazan. We're there with Lavrov, and we're going over the details of how we're going to do this. The meeting starts, and we're expecting a kind of short meeting. They're behind closed doors, and it's like an hour and a half. It's getting to be two hours. We all knew something was going wrong. One of Medvedev's advisors—and I'm not very good on the names anymore—came out of the room and just kind of shook his head at us and said, "Not going well." After a while—I want to say it was like three hours plus—they broke for lunch. Medvedev tried over lunch to get them to come to closure and could not. The meeting broke up with an agreement by the two presidents that Medvedev would make further suggestions and come back to them. So, we felt that we had gotten very close. We felt that all the signals before Kazan had been very positive, including the conversations with President Obama. Then, it didn't happen.

Q: Do we know why? It was closed doors, you just said, but—

BRADTKE: We met with the two presidents afterwards, and again, because of the confidentiality of the negotiation, it's hard for me to say.

Q: Could we say that the document that everybody felt comfortable with, the two presidents had final thoughts about it? Final questions or tweaks?

BRADTKE: I think as far as I would go is to say that there were changes that were put on the table that caused the negotiation to break down.

Q: Changes after the document was submitted?

BRADTKE: Right. After the document, which we thought was going to be final, was given to the two presidents. There were changes that were requested that caused the deal to fall apart.

Q: Bad will on the part of whom?

BRADTKE: That's probably where I don't want to go. When one of them is out of office, maybe then I can do the sequel here. But again, given that I want this to be available to scholars, I don't want to go that far now. The issues are still the same. People are still fighting over the same issues.

Q: Seven years later.

BRADTKE: Yes. At any rate, to kind of fast forward, the process breaks down. Lavrov continues to try to work the issues. We made no progress in the rest of 2011. I want to say we met with the two presidents in Warsaw on the margins of some kind of OSCE

meeting, separately. We were just getting nowhere. We traveled to the region, we tried to once again manage the ceasefire violations, but we drift into 2012 and we're marking time. We're being asked, "You're not making any progress; you're not getting anything done. Why do you keep having these meetings?"

My own view was, and I think we talked about this before, that even when the process is not producing results, if the alternative is that there's no process, that the parties are not engaged in a dialogue— If the parties think no one's paying enough attention to them, they're far more likely to do even worse things. So, we traveled extensively. We took every idea that we could come up with to try to get the process back on track. Frankly, we were just marking time.

Q: How frustrating.

BRADTKE: Yes. Maybe the last— Let me just do two things and then we can come back to why this didn't all work. Mrs. Clinton was determined not to give up, and neither was Lavrov, for that matter. So, Secretary Clinton decided she was going to travel to the region. She was going to visit Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. I worked very hard with Phil Gordon to come up with a package of things that she could talk about. We had a good back and forth about how ambitious to be. In the end, we had some ideas to try to get this process going again. So, I went out to the region with the other co-chairs to try to get the process going a couple of days before she was due to arrive.

I started in Armenia, and I get to Armenia, and I find out that there's been a nasty ceasefire violation. Some Armenians have been killed. Sargsyan is furious, and this is going to be a real problem.

Q: Well, you were there but she was in Georgia.

BRADTKE: Right. But then I went out to Georgia to meet with her, return with her to Yerevan, where we met with Sargsyan. He, of course, was furious. He didn't want to talk about anything but the ceasefire violations. All of the ideas we had worked on—he wasn't even willing to talk about any of them. He only wants to talk about the ceasefire violations. The threat is very much of Armenian retaliation and escalation. So, we go from there to Azerbaijan. Mrs. Clinton is meeting with Aliyev, and I'm on the phone with the OSCE special envoy, who had been doing NK for many years. He was a Polish diplomat, and his name is Andrzej Kasprzyk. He's— I think I've talked about him. We had a tremendous relationship.

So, he's now saying to me, "Things are really bad." He's heard from the Armenians, however, that if Mrs. Clinton can get a promise from President Aliyev to stop violating the ceasefire, they will stop.

So, we're at lunch at the presidential palace in Baku, and I take Mrs. Clinton aside and say, "If you can get Aliyev to tell you that he's prepared to give the order to stop, then I'll pass that back to Kasprzyk, who will tell the Armenians Aliyev is prepared to stop."

So, she gets Aliyev's agreement, I pass that back to Kasprzyk, and the Armenians say, Okay, we will stop.

So, I'm thinking we've got the ceasefire back in place. No progress on the overall agreement, but at least we've got people stopping shooting one another. Then, in the middle of the night, I get a call from the Armenian foreign minister who says, "They haven't stopped." So, I'm back on the phone with Kasprzyk, I'm on the phone with Minister Mammadyarov. It's not clear what's going on, but everybody says, Okay, we will adhere to the agreement. We will stop. And, we got things back into place.

Again, the trip had no substantive results, but where I give Mrs. Clinton credit—and I said this to Jake Sullivan afterwards—is that maybe a month or so later we were traveling to NK, the co-chairs and I. We went to Karabakh. We met with the de facto minister of defense of Karabakh. He said to us, "You know, it's a good thing Mrs. Clinton was able to get the Azerbaijanis to agree to stop violating the ceasefire, because we already had commandos on the other side of the line of contact who were ready to take action. We pulled them back."

I said to Jake, "There are probably a couple of seventeen or eighteen-year-old kids, soldiers on the line of contact, who are still alive today because of what she did." So, again, the trip did not produce what we wanted it to, and it showed the worst behavior by the parties. Whenever things start to move forward, for whatever reasons, one side or the other—or maybe somebody not under the control of the two presidents—decides to stir the pot. But to her credit, Secretary Clinton got Aliyev to give the order to stop the violations, which enabled us to get the Armenians on board, which, as I say, probably prevented worse fighting on the line of contact.

Q: Very dramatic. My gosh. This is great. How much more can we realistically look at?

BRADTKE: We'll fast forward to why this is difficult, and then we're done with Karabakh.

Q: Okay.

BRADTKE: Are you willing to spare the other jobs?

Q: No, I'm not willing to.

BRADTKE: Oh, I meant for one more session on Karabakh.

Q: Absolutely, yeah.

Q: Okay.

BRADTKE: So, this is the summer of 2012.

Q: Okay.

BRADTKE: We made no progress for the rest of 2012. I had already decided I would finish doing this job at the end of 2012. I felt that— I had started in 2009, and I felt I had a commitment to Mrs. Clinton to work on this, but I was not going to stay longer than that. So, I left at the beginning of 2013, before Secretary Kerry took over.

Why is this problem so intractable? There are a lot of reasons. First and foremost is lack of political will. The parties don't have the will to make the deal that everybody can see is out there somewhere. It's some kind of future status for Karabakh versus the return of the territories and the people from those territories. That's it. It's going to have to be on that basis, somewhere, sometime, somehow. You either have the will to do it or you don't.

Secondly, and this is where I have some sympathy for both presidents: It is easy to say, "Why didn't you guys have the political will to do this?" But this was a horrible conflict. You had thousands of people who were killed. You had three-quarters of a million people who were displaced or made refugees. You had atrocities that were committed by both sides. You had a really nasty conflict here that— You know, an outsider would say, "Oh, compromise." But it's not so easy.

Third, each side has got a powerful principle behind its position. For Azerbaijan, it's territorial integrity. Who doesn't love territorial integrity? Every country in the world that recognized Azerbaijan after it gained its independence from Russia and the Soviet Union, recognized it within the borders that it had, including Armenia. So, the Azerbaijanis say, with some justification, Wait a minute. This is our land. This is our territory. Everybody recognized, when we got our independence, that this was our land. So, how can they come and seize it by force? This is an egregious violation of international law.

Then you have the Armenians, who say, Wait a minute, what was going on in Karabakh, what was happening to Armenians, was like in Kosovo. These people deserved, by the way they were treated, to have the right to self-determination. Who doesn't love the right to self-determination? They should have the choice, given what they went through, to decide where they want to live and what country they want to be in, or whether they want to be independent. So, they each have these powerful principles of international law and practice behind their positions, which are not easily squared.

Q: Was there any sense of Woodrow Wilson looking over this from heaven, favoring that second option?

BRADTKE: I'm not sure he's in heaven.

Q: Right. Great answer. I mean, he would have sided with side B, I guess, with the ethic of self-determination.

BRADTKE: Possibly. Yes. But would he have sided with the use of force to create the conditions for self-determination? One of the issues is, whose self-determination? Who gets to decide? There was always an issue of, when we got into the nitty gritty negotiations, this language from the basic principles about the expression of the "will of the people."

Q: Too vague.

BRADTKE: What people? The people of all of Azerbaijan? Because the constitution of Azerbaijan says you can't give up any territory unless everybody agrees. The people of Karabakh? The people who only live in Karabakh now? So, again, self-determination is a little bit tricky. But again, they each had strong principles behind their position.

Another thing was the personalities of the two presidents, and again, I don't want to get too deeply into this, but they're very different people. They've had a different political and personal background, and they don't trust each other. Without trust, it's hard to generate the will to tackle the tough issues, but they do not trust each other.

Q: Well, if people are being killed on both sides, it's logical that they would not trust each other.

BRADTKE: Right. I don't want to go back over too much ground; let me get to the end. I'm going to leave some of the details out. There's just too much detail; I lived and breathed every moment.

Q: But this is the value of it.

BRADTKE: Right. But as an example of their lack of trust, and I will make this one digression in my list of why it didn't work: There had been a NATO exercise, Partnership for Peace, with both Armenia and Azerbaijan as members of the Partnership for Peace. This took place in Hungary, and I can't remember the exact date, but it predated my time as the co-chair. An Azerbaijani soldier, who was participating in the exercise, took an axe and murdered the Armenian participant in the exercise. He was tried and convicted in Hungary and locked up. During my time as co-chair—and this was during a bad period—It might have been after Kazan. I think it was probably after Kazan. And, the Hungarians release him and he goes back to Azerbaijan. There's all sorts of speculation as to whether there was a dirty deal done by the Azerbaijanis, they got him sprung from Hungary in exchange for something. When he came back to Azerbaijan, he was feted as a hero.

Q: Oh my. Azerbaijan got him sprung, and he was a hero.

BRADTKE: When he got back to Azerbaijan, he was feted as a hero. You can only imagine the Armenian reaction. But this was the kind of thing that caused— And there were problems on both sides, but it was the kind of thing that just made it very difficult. When we saw Sargsyan, he said, "See, I told you. Aliyev can't be trusted. Look at what he's doing: an Azerbaijani soldier murders an innocent person, and he's made a hero."

I won't even go into our conversation with Aliyev, who basically said, "That's the way it is." So, at any rate, there was a lack of trust. What else can I rack up? The other thing was—and I am convinced, and this is something I'm guessing other people may disagree with—that when the Turkish-Armenian protocols stalled, that was a very important blow to the process. Had the Turks gone ahead—and my Turkish friends would view this as outrageous, but in my view, frankly, and I wouldn't hesitate to tell this to the Turkish ambassador if he was sitting here—with the protocols, the atmosphere would have been very different. We wouldn't have had that terrible period from December 2009 all the way to the fall of 2010 when there was no progress.

Q: Is it possible, or even desirable, not to have a bias as an outside, honest broker?

BRADTKE: I think it is possible. You can't have a bias. You have to understand the position of both sides. You have to get behind what they're saying to what's driving their position, and in this case, they both have powerful arguments as to why they are right. But that's not making life better for anybody in the region; that's not solving the problem. Saying, "I'm right, he's wrong, and here's why I'm right," is just—

Q: So, how is it possible to progress if you yourself don't see one argument as more valid than another?

BRADTKE: You can try to take elements from both sides and put them together and create a balance. I never used the word "compromise" when I talked to the presidents, because for them, compromise was— How do you compromise your principles? "How do I compromise the history of my country? I'm not compromising." But how do you put pieces together in a balanced way? Also, how do you get the sides to understand objective reality?

It wasn't President Aliyev who lost the war, so to speak, in 1994 or during that period. There were mistakes made by Azerbaijani leaders, but he wasn't there. He came later. But the reality on the ground now is that you've got Karabakh, which has an entirely Armenian population. That is just a reality that he has to understand, and there has to be some path forward on Karabakh, because the risk for Azerbaijan is that the seven territories around Karabakh are going to get lost, too. The longer these territories are not settled or resettled by Azerbaijan, the more there's a tendency—particularly by the Karabakhis, who have very great ambitions for Karabakh—to absorb these territories into Nagorno-Karabakh and create what they call "Artsakh."

Q: What is the current status of these seven territories?

BRADTKE: They are administered by Nagorno-Karabakh.

Q: Okay, so Azerbaijan doesn't like that, right?

BRADTKE: Nor should they. When we traveled through there, what we discovered was that the graveyards, the historic monuments of these areas, were in terrible condition. Road signs, evidence of Azeri language and that these were inhabited by Azeri populations, have been systematically eliminated. After the war, the Armenians—and I'll say this openly—basically contracted the Iranians to come in and strip out anything of any value in terms of construction material. The sewage pipes had been dug up and carted back to Iran. There were almost no buildings in the seven territories remaining that had four walls and a roof that had been lived in by Azerbaijanis.

There are now a small number of Armenians who live in these places, but anything that's connected with Azerbaijan has been destroyed. It's a wasteland. I mean, Tom de Waal, who is the scholar who knows more about this area than any other academic, describes the city of Agdam—and we visited Agdam many times. It was a city of probably forty thousand that essentially looks like Syria at its worst. There's no one living there, except a few squatters. Every building has been destroyed except for the mosque, which some of my predecessors insisted not be desecrated any further. So, it's now been stabilized. So, you try to tell President Aliyev and the Azerbaijani side, "Try to take the long view. You didn't lose Karabakh. Karabakh may have been lost long before you ever got there. But you risk losing the seven territories, and you're being held back. The development of your country, the role you can play in the region is being held back."

Q: What did Iran want this to turn into?

BRADTKE: I think that's just economics. I don't think this was a political calculation. I think this was just a chance to kind of assert itself and get material that had secondary uses in Iran. But you'd tell the president of Armenia, "Armenia is really lagging behind. It is isolated. It is losing population. While you don't want to give up Karabakh—and I can understand that—you need to think about where you want your country to be in ten years. Do you want to be in the same place?"

I had this conversation with President Sargsyan, now six years ago, and nothing has changed. It's not any better. At some point, you have to try to find a way forward. That comes to my last point on why it's so hard to solve the conflict: Both sides—and I'll add the Karabakhis, so all three sides—see the status quo as in their favor. From the Azerbaijani perspective: We're a much bigger country, much more populous. We have oil and gas. We're spending more money on our military than the entire budget of Armenia. It's only a matter of time before the preponderance of forces will either enable us to get the land back without firing a shot, because it will be so obvious, or we'll be able to knock them out with military force. So, why should we be in any hurry to negotiate a

deal? Why do we have to give up Karabakh, which you tell me is lost? Why do we have to give up Karabakh? Wecan get it back.

If you're the Armenian side: We have the territory. We're sitting on the land. It's also the belief on the Armenian side that the Azerbaijani forces, while they may have better equipment, are not as motivated. Their morale is not as good, and we could beat them. We did it before, we'll do it again. It may also be, on the Armenian side, the theory that somewhere along the line, if another war starts and spreads to the territory of Armenia, then they get to play the Russia card. They could invoke their defense agreement with Russia. So, why should they be in a hurry? Why should they give anything up unless they know for sure that Karabakh is going to have self-determination on terms that they like?

Then you've got the Karabakhis. I visited Karabakh thirteen times, which is not easy to do. The Karabakhis are living in—I'll say this openly, as well—a dream world, which is that, We're going to be independent someday. Every day that goes by when we are de facto independent is a day where we strengthen our capability to run our own affairs, when we make the case that we should be independent. So, the Karabakhis used to say to the co-chairs, We love you. Just keep everything quiet, and every day that goes by—Don't cut any deals that might require us to do anything. Just keep things quiet, because every day that goes by is a day when we're more de facto independent. So, when we finally do achieve our independence, it'll come in a way where everybody says, Yes, they've been running their own affairs for twenty, twenty-five, thirty years.

Q: All of them are, to some extent, deluded.

BRADTKE: Yes. They all make mistakes. They all don't see far enough into the future. They all underestimate the other side. This is a notorious problem. They see weaknesses but not strengths, and they believe that time is on their side when it's not.

Q: When they see an outsider free of bias, do they suspect that that outsider does not have sympathy for their cause?

BRADTKE: Yes. We were always accused of being— The beauty was that both sides accused us all the time of being unsympathetic, of not seeing their side or being too pro the other side. It was a regular occurrence.

Q: Your reaction to this? Did this make you want to give up the whole thing, work harder, be more realistic, have higher or lower objectives?

BRADTKE: You just had to let it run off your back. You couldn't take it personally. You also had to retain the ability to tell both sides when they were wrong. Both sides would—the polite phrase is "stretch the truth." But when they did, you had to call them out. You had to say, "Mr. President, that's not right. That's not accurate." That rarely ever produced a positive reaction, but you couldn't just let them think you were buying some of these things when you knew it was not true or not right or was exaggerated.

Q: Do you think there's any better way to deal with these things? What about an elephant in the room, right or wrong, just coming in and making a settlement that might be imperfect?

BRADTKE: Back here, with Phil Gordon, with others, with our two ambassadors, and with the co-chairs, we used to periodically get together and brainstorm. One of the brainstorming ideas was the ultimatum, which is, "If you don't agree, we will decide what we think is fair, and then we will come tell you –"

Q: We the three.

BRADTKE: We the three co-chair countries. We will come tell you that this is what you have to do. There were times when I actually thought that that was what they would want us to do, because then they would say, I couldn't make that compromise, but the three Presidents of the most powerful countries in the world have decided this and what can I do except accept. The problem is, for me, two things: one is, I'm not sure you would not have had one side or both sides saying, No. We don't care what you do to us. We will not accept these terms.

Q: You can always reject an ultimatum.

BRADTKE: Right. And then what do you do? Then the process is completely dead, and you've got no alternative except to go to war. I've always been very leery of the deadline or ultimatum approach, because once you get to the end, if it didn't work, where do you go from there?

Q: People get hurt, yeah.

BRADTKE: The other thing is, the amount of pressure that could be brought to bear behind the ultimatum. The "do it or else"— what is the "or else?" In the case of the United States, the "or else" is not particularly impressive. "Or else" what? We won't send you a national day message? We'll not buy your oil and gas? Our leverage was very limited. All that leverage was pretty limited. The Russians certainly had more leverage, but, you know, it was not easily applicable. This was another—and I'm going to stop here, because this is my life story in Nagorno-Karabakh— We used to say, and I want to say I've said this before, so I'll repeat myself— We used to have this conversation all the time with the two Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents, which is, You, Russia, France, the United States, you're powerful and rich. Russia and the United States, you're the two most powerful countries in the world. France has the EU. Why can't you fix this? Why can't you just tell the other guy he's got to agree?

Q: Sounds like the Middle East.

BRADTKE: The answer was, Mr. President, if we came and talked to you and told you that you had to agree, would you accept? No, of course not. I'm not going to take any dictates from you. Well, why then, Mr. President, do you think the other guy is going to do this?"

Q: Powerful point.

BRADTKE: I'll stop it there.

Q: Ambassador Bradtke, most dramatic. The richness of detail has great value. Thanks.

So. Here we are. It's 2018. Ambassador Robert Bradtke is in Washington, Northwest, with Dan Whitman, and you have finished working on Nagorno-Karabakh and this brings us to 2013?

BRADTKE: Right. I stayed on through the end of 2012. I think I've mentioned this. I felt a personal commitment to Mrs. Clinton, who was so supportive of me that I wasn't going to stop, even though I thought we weren't making any progress, and leave her with a situation where she had to pick somebody for five or six months to do this job. So, I stuck it out to the end of 2012, and then I left in the beginning of 2013.

Q: Well actually, while we're on the subject, any comments about envoys and their role now?

BRADTKE: I think we have to be very selective in how we do this. I think having "special envoys" takes away the responsibility from the people who are responsible for the policies. It has become a—

Q: Are we profligate in having too many?

BRADTKE: I think we are. It becomes the fallback position when you can't think of what else to do to solve the problem. Name a special envoy, and then when people say you're not doing anything, you can say, "No, we have a special envoy." That's not the answer. People won't admit that they do this, but they do this all the time, and that's how we get so many of them. Either that, or you have an outside interest group that has a special interest and that succeeds in badgering the administration—whatever administration—into appointing someone to deal with it. I'll be candid: whether it's religion or women or whatever, there are times when it's justified, but there are also times when it enables the people who deal with the policy on a day-to-day basis to put these concerns aside. It keeps the policy from being integrated. So, these issues get dealt with kind of off to the side, and they don't get dealt with in the mainstream of our relationships. That, I think, is a mistake.

Q: What is the history of envoys getting along harmoniously with chiefs of mission?

BRADTKE: I think it very much depends.

Q: Personality, right?

BRADTKE: Yes. It's partly personality derived, it's partly how the envoy operates. I had a good relationship with all the chiefs of mission in Armenia and Azerbaijan, and that included a long-term chargé, except for one who had a habit of trying to negotiate this issue.

Q: Two voices.

BRADTKE: It enabled the country involved to say, We like what he's saying, and we don't like what you're saying. That's not good. That was unfortunate. So, it can be a little tricky. But in general, I think we overdo it. In general, as I said, I think it becomes like sanctions, which is also an over used tool when we can't think of what else to do. The argument for having a special envoy for Nagorno-Karabakh was the extensive travel. Right before I took the job, it was done by the deputy assistant secretary. But—

Q: You need a full-time person for that.

BRADTKE: I was traveling once every six weeks to Europe, and I could be gone for as much as ten days. I think it would be very hard for someone who had Washington responsibilities or broader responsibilities to spend that much time doing this job.

Q: I take it that with the Karabakh authorities there was no U.S. representation?

BRADTKE: No. Indeed, the only person who is theoretically allowed to visit NK is the U.S. co-chair. People from our embassy in Yerevan are not allowed to visit NK.

Q: Okay. Not allowed by us?

BRADTKE: Not allowed by us, and the Azerbaijanis would react because they would say it's a violation of their sovereignty. They, indeed, resist and will blacklist people who do go in—members of Congress, members of the European Parliament, whatever. If they go in from Armenia, which is really the only practical way to go into Karabakh, they get blacklisted by the Azerbaijanis.

Q: Okay. Understood. So, we're at the end of 2012.

BRADTKE: Right. I was happy to retire again. It was adjusting from full-time Foreign Service life to something else. I wasn't quite sure what the something else was. I was also contemplating just plain old retiring. When I asked to do the retirement course, I was told I couldn't because I hadn't done it when I retired. The fact that I got asked the day I got back to Washington by the State Department to continue to work as a WAE was not an argument for allowing me to take the retirement course. So, I didn't do that.

Q: I wasn't able, also, for different reasons. Oh, how we suffered, not taking the course.

BRADTKE: Right. Well, you know, maybe I would have had a better strategy if I had gone through the class. It's neither here nor there.

At any rate, in the classic kind of fashion, which occurred multiple times, it was actually in February—so only about two months after I'd left—when Beth Jones, who was the acting assistant secretary in the Near East Bureau, called me up and said that they were working with the government of President of Egypt Morsi. Morsi was very inexperienced. He had asked for assistance in trying to set up what Beth said was basically a kind of national security council. Morsi did not have the experience of trying to organize a government, and there were elements of his own bureaucracy, frankly, that probably were not very supportive of him. So, she said that she thought of me because I'd been executive secretary of the NSC. I'd been her deputy in the European Bureau. I said, "Beth, they really want our help to do this?" I had a certain image of Morsi, which was that he was trying to distance himself from the United States. This was the time after Mubarak and all the rest.

But she said, "They really want our help." So, I agreed to do this, again as a When Actually Employed [WAE] employee. I came back, and the first step was to meet with Morsi's deputy national security advisor. He came to Washington. We spent the better part of a day together. I took him over to the NSC, and I did a lengthy presentation on what our National Security Council is. He seemed to appreciate that. He invited me to come to Cairo. So later—I guess it was in spring—I worked on a more detailed presentation on the National Security Council. It was a little bit of the historical background of the NSC and how it had evolved, and what the functions of the national security advisor were.

Q: Nineteen forty-seven, right?

BRADTKE: Yes, the National Defense Act, I guess it was. But beyond that, there were all of the Presidential Determinations that were issued, and what role of the national security adviser—which is not in statute, by the way—evolved into. So, I pull this together and head off to Cairo.

Q: Who was your audience there? The deputy?

BRADTKE: The deputy, and then I went around to some of the ministries to talk to them. I think they were less receptive than the deputy national security adviser. They saw an Egyptian NSC as taking away some of their powers. Anne Patterson was our ambassador in Cairo at the time, and she was supportive of this, and very helpful to me to make sure that I was taken seriously. I got in where I needed to get in. I had support from the embassy.

In putting my presentation together, the other thing I discovered, to my— Well, not to my surprise. I discovered how many helpful, declassified documents there are out there, like the basic documents on the NSC, which are available in the National Archives or in the presidential libraries.

So, I could take him— I could say, "You have a meeting of the Deputies Committee, and then you have a summary of conclusions. Here is a summary of conclusions of a meeting on Kosovo, back when Clinton was president. This was a way of making sure that decisions were recorded and then communicated back to the agencies. I showed him a declassified briefing memo done for the president's phone call with Jacques Chirac. There were declassified copies of the president's schedule. One of the important things the national security adviser does is make sure that the president's responsibilities are reflected in the schedule. How did we do visits? That again is run out of the NSC with the White House advance people. So, there was a wealth of material, and it was— I felt I had a very good relationship with my Egyptian interlocutors. I felt they were serious. I felt they were in an extremely difficult position, and maybe that's why they listened so carefully.

I did a slide presentation, and the last slide was a quote from Machiavelli. I'd had quotes from Colin Powell and Dr. Rice, and Brzezinski about how they saw their role, and when I was ready to show the last slide, the deputy national security advisor said, "Machiavelli?" And then he read the slide, and basically the quote— I can't do it by heart, but roughly it is: "If you're trying to accomplish reform, don't expect any help from the people on the inside or the outside. The people on the inside are going to be slow to change, and the people on the outside will never think you are doing enough, and won't be happy either." That was the gist of the quote. At the end, as a moment of our meetings, I gave him a pair of NSC cufflinks that I had acquired when I was at the NSC. Less than a month later, Morsi was out, and this guy was off in prison for quite a length of time. He had been living in Canada before Morsi became president. We made representations on his behalf, but it took quite a while for him to be let loose by the court and the new government. Once Morsi was gone, that was the end of my job.

Q: Wow. As I am trying to remember— It's not my area, but there were elections, and it was sort of like careful what you wish for? Is that what it was? We went to elections, the elections genuinely put Morsi— It was probably a fair election, but we were never comfortable with Morsi.

BRADTKE: We were taking flak from all sides with Morsi.

Q: We don't like coups, but we also— We had bad options.

BRADTKE: I've had this conversation with Anne Patterson and people back here. There was this perception that we were trying to get Morsi out of office, that we were supporting the military or whatever, and yet on the other hand, critics were saying, How can you support Morsi with Islamic tendencies and some of his policies in the region? So,

it was a very difficult line to walk. But one thing I feel pretty safe in saying is, we were trying to help him. We were trying to help him in ways that would make him understand the realities of what he inherited, and that would make his government more responsible. That's what I was doing. If we were trying to get rid of him, why recruit me to spend a good chunk of my time trying to help them set up a decision-making apparatus? It's because they were so inexperienced.

I mean, the people that I was meeting with on Morsi's staff—not the ministries, but Morsi's staff—had no government experience. They'd been— This was a conversation I had, again, with the deputy national security adviser: What he would tell me is, these were people now in in Morsi's government, who came from a political movement where you had cells that didn't have links—that was the structure to make sure that you kept these clandestine, that they didn't have direct connections— These were basically people who had been underground most of their political careers and had no experience in government. They were suddenly catapulted into these roles, and they had no idea how to make the government work in a country that— Again, my last visit to Cairo was back in 2013, but it's just mind-boggling when you look at the population, the poverty, the urban chaos of Cairo. I challenge anybody—the most gifted administrator, manager, politician—to make it work. It's an extraordinarily complicated task, and here are these people thrust into this job who have never run anything.

Q: Cairo's impossible, yeah. Right. Are you pretty confident that U.S. policy was consistent? I have no doubt that you were sent by Beth Jones to help Morsi, but between DOD, the IC [United States Intelligence Community], the State Department— Are you confident that everybody was working with the same goals?

BRADTKE: Yes, that— I can only say that the National Security Council, under Obama— Again, they helped me because they wanted their counterparts in Egypt to be strengthened, so I think they were certainly supportive. Beth and the people in the Near East Bureau and Anne Patterson definitely— I just can't speak for the rest of the U.S. government. I never saw the opposite, but I wouldn't necessarily have seen the opposite.

Q: Remembering only what I would remember as a reader of newspapers and nothing else, I think I had the impression that the Morsi administration was a bit clueless.

BRADTKE: As I say, it does not surprise me that what happened, happened. Again, the inexperience of these guys who were trying, on the one hand, to get an entrenched bureaucracy to do what they wanted, and on the other hand, meet the popular expectations— It was something that, as I say, would have been incredibly challenging even for the most skillful politician, administrator, manager, whatever, and they were not. But they were caught in that middle area there.

BRADTKE: So, my job went poof with the coup, and then I went back to being comfortably retired. In this period, I had one more WAE assignment that I genuinely enjoyed. Because of my OSCE experience, I was asked by the European Bureau to go out

to Warsaw for what was basically an annual two-week meeting on what's called the Human Dimension, basically the OSCE's annual human rights review. I love Warsaw. It's a great place to be. I had two wonderful weeks there. It was interesting being the head of a delegation and, I confess, I enjoyed engaging and sparring with the Russians across the table on human rights issues

Q: These are regular, routine meetings?

BRADTKE: This is an annual meeting, right. Typically, the head of the delegation is someone from the outside. It's a retired Foreign Service officer, or it's a distinguished person of some sort who has a human rights background. The meetings have value in allowing for the airing of human rights issues, and letting NGO's address their concerns. But, I can't say what may have changed as a result.

Q: Well, as you've said before, keeping a process going is better than not having a process. Do these meetings have the expectation of having outcomes, or is it really a matter of—?

BRADTKE: Unlike a lot of OSCE meetings, these meetings were open to the outside. Non-governmental organizations and private individuals could sign up to appear before us and speak. I'm not even sure this was my turn of phrase, but it's one I stole, adopted, or invented. I said, basically, at the closing plenary, "This meeting is kind of the conscience of the OSCE." When governments sit down to talk to each other, there's always a shading, because you've got other issues to work with these governments. We're all diplomats, and we don't like to call people on the carpet. We don't like to be called on the carpet by others.

But here, we had people coming in who had all sorts of human rights problems, and not just in Russia or in the former Soviet Union. There was the treatment of the Roma in Europe, there was the treatment of immigrants, there was the death penalty in the United States, there was rendition and extradition. There were all sorts of things that were aired here, and it was because of this fact that non-governmental organizations and private individuals could appear that, as I said, forced us to sit down and listen to some uncomfortable truths about ourselves.

Q: Well, in '13, we weren't in heaven with Russia, but it was better than it is now.

BRADTKE: Correct.

Q: What was your sense of how— What was possible back then that might not be possible now in communicating with Russia? It was the same Putin, no?

BRADTKE: It was. It was such a different era, though. It's hard for me to roll the clock back— This is pre-Ukraine, pre-meddling in our elections. Both of those things have now forced us to do things that—

Q: Could such a dialogue happen now, the one that you saw at the meeting?

BRADTKE: I think it would be much sharper edged.

Q: Do these things continue now, in this bad period? Do they even have these?

BRADTKE: Yes. It's built into the OSCE structure, so I don't think the Russians could block the meeting from happening. It's usually in the fall.

Q: Okay. Is the Secretariat of the OSCE in Vienna?

BRADTKE: Right. But this meeting is always done in Warsaw, because that's where the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights has its headquarters.

Q: Right. There is also this other committee on democracy that began in Warsaw?

BRADTKE: The Committee of Democracy. Yes, Madeleine Albright's—

Q: It was the Madeleine Albright thing. That was Warsaw, and I think it still is.

BRADTKE: Yes. The Community of Democracies.

Q: The CD, the Community of Democracies.

BRADTKE: I confess to not knowing a lot about that.

Q: But that always had a Warsaw attachment. That's how I remember it.

Ambassador, let's resume with what happens after the OSCE Warsaw Meeting.

BRADTKE: Yes. So, that kind of got me through to the fall of 2013. I was not necessarily twiddling my thumbs. I was doing some speaking for the Army War College, helping them with some exercises and going out to Carlisle. But I was not particularly heavily engaged in anything. Then, in January of 2014—

Q: Fourteen?

BRADTKE: Yes. In February of 2014, Tina Kaidinow, whom I'd worked with closely on Nagorno-Karabakh, and who was director of the new Counter-Terrorism Bureau.

*Q: She was charg*é *in Moscow at one point?*

BRADTKE: She was someone I knew from a variety of different jobs. She was the deputy assistant secretary in EUR for some of the time when I was doing the

Nagorno-Karabakh job. So, she called me up out of the blue and said, "I've got a job for you." This is, again, the beginning of 2014. She said, "We are increasingly concerned about what's going on in Syria, and one aspect in particular, which is that Syria is attracting all of these foreigners from Europe, North America, the Far East, various places, to come and fight in Syria. We are very concerned about what happens to them, that they're not going to just stay in Syria. ISIS [Islamic State of Iraq and Syria] is planning to carry out attacks in Europe, North America, and all over the world. We are concerned that our allies and partners around the world don't understand how serious this is getting to be."

There had been an effort, an inter-agency effort, to raise the consciousness of our partners at the end of 2013. One of Tina's deputies went off, leading an inter-agency delegation—FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation], Homeland Security, CIA [Central Intelligence Agency], State—to Europe to talk to the Europeans and say, You've got to get control of these foreign fighters, as we called them. You need to do a better job of sharing intelligence among yourselves. You need to track these people. You need to take steps to change some of your laws. For example, it needs to be illegal to go off and do a terrorist training camp somewhere, which in many cases is not illegal. You need to have better control of your borders. This was difficult for our EU partners since one of their great achievements was liberalizing the borders.

By the beginning of 2014, the NSC felt that the U.S. government needed someone who would deal with our partners full-time. So, there was much to-ing and fro-ing about what my job title should be. It was never clear what authority I actually had, but my title was the senior advisor for partner engagement on Syria foreign fighters. Basically, and I said this to Tina, "I am not a terrorism or Middle East expert. It sounds like a full-time job to me, nor a job for a retiree." She said, "You can do it part time. You don't need to know a lot about the Middle East, because what you need to know about is Europe. What we're really concerned about is the Europeans. You know how to talk to the Europeans."

So, I was a little hesitant, and I basically said, "No." And Tina, who is a good friend and a very skillful bureaucrat, said, "I'll have Wendy Sherman call you."

I've worked for Wendy in H, and I said, "Oh no." Because this was in the middle of Iran and all of those other things going on. So, I said, "No, don't do that."

Q: She said she would do that.

BRADTKE: I knew I couldn't say no to Wendy, and I also did not want her to spend her time asking me.

Q: She knew your—

BRADTKE: Tina hit the right button there. So, I agreed to do it. I did that from basically February of 2014 to January of 2015. I think we made some progress. In the summer of

2014, it got much more serious, though, because we saw ISIS roll through Iraq, almost unopposed. They suddenly controlled a much wider territory and much more in the way of resources. The danger of the foreign fighters having access to those resources and attracting even more people was heightened.

So, what started out as a WAE job, which was—as you know, you can't work more than half-time. It was no longer even close. I was lucky if I was working only fifty hours a week, much less twenty hours a week. So, we got a waiver so I could do the job full time. Originally, I understood the job to be going on the road, because this was the way it was pitched to me, and trying to convince our allies and partners that they needed to tighten their borders. They needed to do better passport checking. They needed to keep an eye on who was coming and going back and forth to Syria. They needed to watch the financial flows that were going from their countries. They needed to engage in what we called "Countering Violent Extremism."

Q: CVE?

BRADTKE: Yes. In a propaganda way, but also in a community activity way. So, I had a list of these things. I would go out and I would take an inter-agency group with me. We traveled to Europe, we traveled to North Africa, we traveled to Turkey, we traveled to the Far East. We kind of tried to make the sales pitch that— We traveled to the Gulf, to Kuwait, to Qatar, to the Emirates. We tried to say, You've got to do more.

Q: How did you square the circle of the EU and how it had reduced the importance of borders? How did you do that?

BRADTKE: This was a huge challenge, because we saw tremendous vulnerabilities there.

Q: And, of course there are.

BRADTKE: One of our great frustrations was what we called PNR, "passenger, name, record." The Europeans were not accessing the data on passengers that we accessed. All of the data: how did a person buy the ticket, what information did they provide, what address did they provide, what phone number did they provide, what credit card did they use? Did they pay cash? What else do we know about their travel connections?

Q: This would be for air travel?

BRADTKE: Yes.

Q: So, people coming by surface—

BRADTKE: Right. This was when the surface flow of refugees was just also starting to really build up. We were also concerned about the way those people were entering

European countries. When I went to Rome, this was one of the things that I talked to the Italians about, which was that you've got to track these people. You've got to make sure you're getting names. The de facto Italian policy, at a certain point, was just to put them on a train and let them go off to Germany. But, for the EU, there were issues of privacy, the sharing of information back with us, the sharing of information among themselves—

I went to Europol [European Criminal Police Organization], which is the European branch, so to speak, of Interpol [International Criminal Police Organization], and pressed on their problems in sharing information, even within the EU. Did the British trust the Germans the way they trust us, or the French, the Germans, the Italians, the smaller countries? They were back to where we were pre-9/11. The intelligence agencies here, the police forces there, were not sharing information. And again, were they checking passports? Somebody would come in with a Schengen country passport, and they wouldn't look to see where the person had been. They would just waive them right through. There were a series of incidents that finally started to get the Europeans' attention, and it's been worse since I left this job. But there was a shooting at a Jewish museum in Brussels, and it was a litany of mistakes where the guy who came in and did this had a very suspicious travel itinerary. He had been in Turkey, but then he laundered his travel, so to speak, by going elsewhere. He was not carefully checked. When he came back into the EU, he came into Germany. He didn't come back to Brussels or France. The French were kind of alerted, but not with the level of concern necessary, and he was only picked up in the end because he was traveling, after having done this attack in Brussels, to Marseille on a bus. What the French do is, they do routine drug checks, and he was caught in a routine drug check with the weapons and the propaganda and things. But he wasn't caught because of any of the terrorist measures.

So, this was the kind of thing that started to drive home to the Europeans that they couldn't just do business as usual. They had to make some accommodations here. They had to do a better job of tracking people, checking documents, and working some of the Countering Violent Extremism programs. For others, this was a new experience, and they were still building up. They were looking to see what we did. We had a center in the State Department that was trying to combat ISIS online, not terribly successfully, frankly. They had terrible management problems over time.

Q: It's been renamed twice.

BRADTKE: Yes. But the idea of trying to push back was probably not the worst one. It was how you did it, who did it, all the rest. As I said, by the time I left, I think things were changing. The other thing, I think, that changed was that General John Allen was brought in. This was one of the ambiguities of what my job was. There were parts of the U.S. government that thought when I was brought in, We now have someone whose job it is to organize the U.S. government's effort to combat ISIS. That was never my job. That is not the way it was sold to me. I was never given the authority to do that, and it was not my job title. My job was to work with our foreign partners on dealing with the foreign partner issues, and to get on the road.

What happened was, in the course of that summer, and I guess it was late in the summer— I can't remember exactly when General Allen came, but the job changed. My view of the job was that I was to spend 80 percent of my time on the road or preparing to go on the road, and then 20 percent of the time you're in Washington to deal with the inter-agency process. By the time I left my job in January of 2015, I was spending 80 percent of my time on Washington issues, and 20 percent dealing with foreign partners. We were constantly being tasked with papers. The inter-agency process, the NSC—

Q: Did you have a staff?

BRADTKE: I had one person, and part of a secretary. There were other people who worked on these issues, but every morning, the NSC would be tasking us with something or wanting to know what we did. So, we were so busy on that internal piece that we had less time to do our real work. It was extremely frustrating. There were just way too many people whose job it was to check to see what you were doing, rather than they themselves doing something. We were constantly receiving taskers and rewriting endless papers. There were strategy papers— It was a strategy paper a week. For me, being retired and doing this, I thought, on a volunteer basis, so to speak— I did not sign up to write endless strategy papers, which were of no value whatsoever. I signed up to be out talking to people, trying to get them to change their positions on things.

Q: I'm sure NEA [Near Eastern Affairs] must have been sympathetic, but maybe they were sidelined by these other things?

BRADTKE: NEA, at first, was worried that I was going to try to suck some of their powers. Believe me, I was not interested in running Syria policy, and I tried to draw that line. I got along very well with NEA, and the relationship between the Counterterrorism Bureau and NEA was very good. But again, it was more difficult after General Allen came, because he was then the overall coordinator for our ISIS efforts that people had been looking for. There was going to be overlap, and I was less needed. He had his own staff, he was doing his own thing, and I came to the conclusion that the job, really, was not what I was brought on board to do. Not that there weren't things that needed to be done, but it was time to bring in a full-time, active duty Foreign Service person, with well-defined responsibilities rather than having somebody like me doing the job.

Q: Is there any parallel with Brett McGurk? Were you in touch with him?

BRADTKE: Brett was Allen's deputy. I have tremendous admiration for Brett; he's done very well, and he's done a great job.

Q: His job was Iraq, right?

BRADTKE: His job was Iraq, but he then gradually expanded it, and when Allen left, he became the lead person.

Q: Did your position remain?

BRADTKE: Yes. Eventually, Jake Wallis came back from being ambassador to Tunisia to do it.

Q: So, this was a Beth Jones creation?

BRADTKE: No, this was a Tina Kaidinow creation. But it was at the request of the NSC. This was specifically directed by the NSC. The NSC said, Get a person who will be the point person for dealing with foreign fighters and our partners.

Q: Sounds clear to me what the—

BRADTKE: Yes. One of the low points of this time was that I had to go up and testify in front of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, or rather two of the HFAC subcommittees. It was one of the worst experiences of my Foreign Service career. I expected a tough hearing, but the members were attacking me personally as well as the administration's Syria policy. Despite the subject of the hearing being foreign fighters— They wanted me to testify on our entire Syria policy, and when I declined to go down that path, a congressman from Pennsylvania shouted at me, saying, "You don't really know anything, do you?" Another congressman said, "I don't understand why you're doing this job. You don't speak Arabic."

Q: Oh, for God's sake.

BRADTKE: I'd written a note and put it in front of myself— I knew that in a hearing the worst thing you can do is lose your temper or take it personally. I'd written a note and put it in front of myself. It said: "*don't get mad."* Boy, I had to look at that note multiple times.

Q: Apparently that note is now being used in the White House, except that he never reads it.

BRADTKE: Well, anyway, I did the Foreign Fighters job for a year. I did my duty. It convinced me that I really was not interested in coming back to work full time in Washington. Being plunged back into the bureaucracy— I just didn't have the stomach for it anymore.

Q: You did have a more tranquil start to your next WAE assignment—

BRADTKE: Yes. Last but not least, we get to the summer of 2015, and I got a call from EUR, and they were looking for someone to go out to Norway to be the charge in Norway for a couple of months that summer. The woman who was the deputy chief of mission was going off to be our ambassador in Equatorial Guinea, and she had to leave.

Her replacement, as DCM, was working in INL [Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs], and he could not be sprung until the end of the summer. We had had a longstanding vacancy in the ambassadorial position, because the Obama administration nominee simply didn't perform particularly well in his hearing. He made "minor" mistakes, like thinking that Norway had a president, when it's in fact the king who is the head of state. Senator McCain was outraged and not going to let this guy go through.

Q: And I think there was a whole year between—

BRADTKE: It was two years.

Q: Oh my gosh.

BRADTKE: Yes. The better part of two years. So, there was a new nominee, but no one was quite sure when he was going to get out there, with this gap between the two DCMs, the idea was to send someone out. It was an interesting experience. The Norwegian ambassador was an acquaintance of mine from my NATO days, working on NATO, and I had lunch with him. I said, "Well, I think I should probably keep a low profile and not—"

He said, "No. You get out there, and I'll send a message telling people they need to see you. You should see everybody. We've had this long period with no one of senior rank, and you need to do whatever you can." That kind of changed my view of the job. So, I thought two things: One, was the fact that we had not had an ambassador there for two years, and second DCM had been trying to do two jobs for two years: both serve as the chargé and be DCM.

Q: The rank is not the same.

BRADTKE: But it's also the management. I mean, I was an ambassador. I was a DCM. You can do both jobs as chargé for a month, two months, but not for years. Not for twelve, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen months. One job or the other is going to suffer. So, I saw that dimension of it. I also— I was curious about when the last time a career officer had been the ambassador to Norway, so I looked it up. It was when Lyndon Johnson was president.

Again, we have good political ambassadors and not so good ones, but it does take a toll when you don't have a senior officer there. There were practices at the embassy that were just inexplicable, but they had built up over the years, and one of my favorites was this: I was having some people over for lunch, some Norwegians, to talk about trade policy. I was off at the Foreign Ministry, and I was being driven back to the ambassador's residence where I was staying. I was a few minutes late because I'd been at the ministry. We pull up, and I look, and all of the Norwegian guests are outside the gate of the residence.

Q: Oh no.

BRADTKE: So, I go in, and there's a Norwegian—very nice woman, very competent—protocol assistant. Also a couple of embassy officers. I'm saying, "Why is everybody outside?" "Well, the previous ambassador never wanted anybody to come in until he was here." I thought, holy smokes! This is ridiculous. They're standing outside and you're in here. You could have just welcomed them and said that I'll be a few minutes late! I said, "We're changing that policy right now." There were some other administrative things where there were really bad practices.

Q: So, how many months were you in this position?

BRADTKE: Unfortunately, it was only two and a half months. But again, I found that there was this vacuum. I called on the foreign minister right away; I called on the defense minister. I went up to see the chief of the intel operation. I don't think that had happened in a long time. I found out from my defense attaché that we had high level visitors from the air force, like two days before I got there, with no involvement by the embassy front office whatsoever. I said, "No. You don't do that. They at least come and say hello to me. I get it; they've got other things to do with the Norwegians. But nobody at that rank comes to the embassy without meeting me as the chargé."

But things like that that had just atrophied over time. I guess, while I'm on a roll here, another thing was some of the middle ranking and more junior officers, who just had no contact or little contact with a senior Foreign Service officer. For me, it was relatively heartening that I'd take them along to a meeting with the Norwegians and they'd say, "Now I see—"

Because of the terrorism issue, I had to go in and see the minister of justice to do some of the things that I was doing in my previous job, telling him, "Here's what you've got to do. You've got to be more careful. People are transiting Norway. You're not checking documents at the airport." It was a tough exchange. The officer who went with me said, "I didn't think it was possible to have that kind of conversation."

So, again, it's a product of just what happens in a place like that, without an ambassador and without a senior career officer. I went off to do a speech at Norway's major defense firm that makes parts for the Joint Strike Fighter. There was a reception that evening, a buffet where they put me next to the prime minister. The prime minister said, "What's wrong with us, that you can't get an ambassador here? Also, I can't be invited to Washington to see the president?" So here we have Norway, one of our closest partners, a woman prime minister, whose views on things like climate change and education were just like President Obama's and they couldn't get in the door. We had Mrs. Obama's chief of staff come out—a very nice and competent woman. She was out for—

Q: Not Cheryl Mills?

BRADTKE: No. Not Mrs. Clinton's. Mrs. Obama's. She said to me about the Norwegian PM, "Why hasn't this woman been in the White House?"

I said, "That's exactly right." So, it didn't happen before I left town, but I lobbied hard to try to get her in, because again, you didn't have a confirmed chief of mission who could pick up the phone, who could lobby for things like that. So, the Norwegians ended up feeling taken for granted, which was unfortunate.

Q: And it's an anomaly, because Norway's a small country, but it's one of the most energetic NATO allies. They're very committed, and they have a border with Russia.

BRADTKE: Right. The defense and intelligence cooperation were just— My eyes were opened. I knew about our cooperation with the British because I had been in London, but it's very much on par with the way we operate with the British. They really did, I think, feel taken for granted. I felt— I got some help during my time there from President Clinton. This will be one last anecdote to pat myself on my back.

About two weeks into my tenure, the Clinton Foundation contacted us to say—actually, it was the Secret Service which started contacting us, saying, "President Clinton's coming out. He's going to be on foundation business. He's going to see the prime minister. He's going to see some other people. We just want you to know, and we'll need some support from the embassy for the Secret Service."

So, I called somebody on Clinton's staff, and I said, "Look, I know this is for the foundation, but he is the former president of the United States. I know there's lines here that need to be kept separate, but I'd like to be in some way involved in his visit. I understand there are things we can't do."

They were a little nervous, and I said, "I also worked in the White House when he was president. My guess is he may not remember me. But I used to travel with him when he traveled domestically. I did some foreign trips with the president." So, eventually, they came back to me, and what we agreed was that he was going to give an open speech to the staff of the Norwegian Foreign Ministry. I would be invited to be there for that speech, which was fine. That was all I needed.

So, before the speech he arrives and is backstage. I am asked to come backstage. I'm there with the Norwegian foreign minister. I'm there with the president. He says, "Oh, Bob, it's so great to see you."

Q: Great.

BRADTKE: I know he has a phenomenal memory, but I also know that there was some good staff work to tell him, "Look, I don't know if you remember this guy or not, but we'll bring him back."

Q: I think he remembered.

BRADTKE: So, the foreign minister was immediately impressed that the former president of the United States knows my name. So, I went back out into the audience and sat there, and the president, to his credit, at the beginning of his remarks, said, "And I see Bob Bradtke out there in the audience. We couldn't have done what we did during my administration without Bob Bradtke."

It was way over the top, but it's the kind of morale and capital boost that I could trade on for the rest of my time there. They love Bill Clinton in Norway. I'm also an admirer of President Clinton's, and he gave one of these Clintonesque, no-note speeches that day where he'd go from talking about visiting Africa in one moment and then he'd be in the stratosphere of the grand principles of organizing the universe in another. Then he'd come back down to some micro-enterprise and how this is going to change the world. It was great, and the fact that he had given me a boost at the beginning of my time there—

Q: All of this in less than ninety days.

BRADTKE: Yes. So, I had a great time in Norway. I enjoyed it. I think I was able to be an interlocutor for them on things that they had not had, partly because I knew issues from my previous life, like the NATO issues. The speech I mentioned was on NATO as I saw it from my time as a deputy assistant secretary and what we had done right and what we had done wrong in retrospect. The terrorism issue, which was red hot— I had just spent a year working on terrorist issues, so I knew that issue. I could be an interlocutor for them on that.

So, again, it was a great experience, and I think I've touched on this before, but it just reminded me of— Why should a career officer not have this opportunity? I would like to say I was perfectly qualified. What the head of the political section said to me was, "You were their dream ambassador." And I'm not criticizing anybody in particular— Some of the political ambassadors were good, and some of them were not good, frankly. That I know. There were a few that really did not manage the embassy or the relationship particularly well. It's just that, why should there have not been any career ambassador since Lyndon Johnson with a chance to do this job? Maybe that's not the right place to end, but there it is.

Q: No such luck. We're not there yet.

BRADTKE: I'm not sure what's left.

Q: What's left, I'll propose, and it's really up to you, is teaching, passing the torch to the new generation, and your future plans. Now, you have been teaching at the McCain Institute, and you did, may I say, a brilliant job at Carnegie Mellon a few springs ago with the War College exercise. That's where we became reconnected. Lessons learned on how to transmit the type of knowledge that you have to younger people?

BRADTKE: Thank you. I'm still learning the lessons. There are far too many things that I take for granted that students who are, say twenty-one to thirty— It's just not part of their life. It's not part of their background. They grew up after the cold war. They grew up well after Vietnam. They may have grown up in parts of the country where— I've spent so much time in Washington where politics is every day. It's the local industry, and these students are from Arizona, or they're from the West Coast, where it's a different world.

Q: But you have taught them, and I'm guessing that at the McCain Institute you've done it successfully.

BRADTKE: I hope so.

Q: What do you remember doing that hit the mark?

BRADTKE: Trying to draw them out more. You've got to ask them questions. These are, in some cases, law students who are all too happy to have a law school class go by without the professor calling on them to explain some complicated law school case.

Q: Passive?

BRADTKE: Yes, by default. You go in as the ambassador, the deputy chief of mission, into a country team or an embassy meeting, and that's not usually a problem. Everybody usually wants to tell you what they're doing, because they want to get credit, or they want your help. Here, you go in and you're playing a country team, which is how the class was structured, and in some cases, getting them to talk is the challenge. Understanding that they have to bring information to you, and it's not just your job to impart information to them. Particularly in this format at the McCain Institute, where we role play the country team— Ambassadors don't give lectures. Deputy chiefs of missions don't give lectures. They want to be briefed by their staff on what's going on, and they want to contribute some things that they know that the staff doesn't know, or that they know from their conversations. So, again, the need to draw the students out, the need to not make big assumptions about what they know about policy or events.

Q: Are they fearful? Are they lacking in motivation? What's going on?

BRADTKE: No. I just think that they've come up in a different world. When you spend nearly forty years in the Foreign Service, off and on, including retirement— I have a lot of assumptions about what the people that I'm talking to know, and those assumptions don't necessarily translate into a group of students.

Q: Ah, so there's a knowledge gap. It's not to do with character.

BRADTKE: Yes, it's on both sides. These are smart kids. I don't know if you can call them that. These are smart students. But it takes a few class sessions—

Q: To see where they are.

BRADTKE: And it took me a while, when I first did this last year, to realize I can't do all the talking. Even if you know the answer, you've got to get them to tell you the answer, rather than just going right to the answer. And, you can't just put a second- or third-year law student in a hypothetical country team and expect them to understand how things work. So, that has been— But that's part of what we're supposed to do.

Q: Would it be different if they were the NSC, rather than a country team? It would be the same, I guess.

BRADTKE: I think it's better to be a country team.

Q: Better to be a country team. Okay, that's interesting.

BRADTKE: So, there's that. Most of these students write pretty well. I still sometimes feel that there's too much auto spell. I get papers that nobody's proofread, and words have been changed into things that make no sense. I remind them, periodically, "You wouldn't send a brief like this to your client without somebody proofreading it and spell checking it. Don't send it to me either this way." There's a little bit of sloppiness. But I'm heartened, on the other hand, by how smart and bright they are. They want to do things with their lives. Most of them are interested not in becoming a corporate lawyer and making a million dollars, but they want to work— It's a little harder, frankly, in the current environment to make the pitch that they should work for the government, but they want to work for non-governmental organizations or international organizations. They want to work on international law. They're interested in human rights. That was also pretty heartening, that they've got this—

Q: I hope you'll continue to do this. What is your plan?

BRADTKE: Yes. Well, it's on a year to year basis. I'm coming to the end of the semester—we have two more classes—and then they'll do their evaluations and I'll talk to the people running the McCain Institute, and they'll talk to people back at Arizona State and see whether we do this again. My expectation is that we will. I have some concern that—and this also goes to the work I've done with the Army and War Colleges—you need to have someone who's got fresh experience. It's your knowledge of how things work in the government that enables you to do this kind of teaching. Every year you're out of the government, things change.

Now, it's only been a couple of years since 2015, when I was out in Oslo. So, that's only a couple of years, but at some point, you get stale. I just don't want to stick around doing this when my anecdotes aren't so interesting anymore, or where there are people who could do this who have retired more recently and could bring a bit of freshness.

Q: I rarely get to do this, but I totally oppose what you're saying. I can go back to my notes, and there are remarkable moments of insight that you have provided in this interview that are permanent issues. Things like empathy, things like bias, how to manage subordinates, and manage up and down. This interview— I think we're towards the conclusion here, but it's remarkably rich and to be mined with "command F" or whatever for topics that you have covered marvelously. So, Ambassador Bradtke, I thank you.

BRADTKE: Well, that's very kind. I thank you for your patience. You are a wonderful interlocutor. There are things that occurred to me to say that, if you hadn't been sitting across from me, I would not have said or thought of saying. So, thank you very much.

End of interview