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

HORTENSE F. FIEKOWSKY

Interviewed by: Daniel F. Whitman
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Q: You have an interesting insight into the Tiananmen Square incident in June 1989, but at this point in our interview can you fill us in on your own background. You worked at the Department of Labor for many years. You served as President of the Society of Government Economists in 1981.

FIEKOWSKY: Tiananmen Square was 1989, a day that will live in infamy, as they say. A day you can't forget because every year they talk about it. And it was very important but I won't go into why it's disappointing unless you want to know. You could call it incompetence or something.

As to my background, I worked at Department of Labor for about 20 years I think. I ended up representing Department of Labor on its trade negotiations. I was in the international trade, International Bureau something in the Department of Labor from 1969.

Q: Twenty years at Department of Labor. How did this happen and what was it all about?

FIEKOWSKY: I was in D.C. My children were then all in elementary school. My youngest, Peter was all of sixth grade or something. It was OK for me to leave then. I got a maid, a full-time maid. I tried to live in but we didn't like there. I got a maid that would come and stay with them.

Q: Why the Department of Labor?

FIEKOWSKY: I knew somebody that worked for Commerce Department or census. So I worked for Commerce and it was so boring that I had to quit. I had to get another job. I ended up at Commerce and I ended up doing numbers. International Trade Analysis (ITAT). I remember my boss Frances. The only good thing was there was a room with three or four of us in it. We didn't have much work to do, but we were paid. I don't know if you have even been to the Commerce Department. You go down to the cafeteria and everybody is having coffee all the time! So then I was at the Commerce Department and I got so bored and I had a friend, Joanne Dargley (?), who has been the wife of one of my husband's colleagues. She worked for Labor. She worked at Commerce too and then she got the job at Labor. That sounded much more fun. I decided I would get a job at Labor.

Since I was in international Commerce, I was doing Trade numbers. I ended up in International Labor; ILAB we called it.

Labor was one of the international negotiations that U.S. trade representative office to USTR. They had a representative of every agency that felt they were involved depending on the issue, that included State, Commerce. There are a lot of issues that involved Labor. Also, at that time Labor was very important, even now it's important. That's why I would go to Commerce because Labor didn't really do anything in my department, except to go to meetings which is terrific for me because I love to go to meetings. Then we would go to meetings like my boss, she would go to movies sometimes. When you get out of the office, you say I am going to a meeting in Department of Commerce.

Q: Let me be the bad guy here and ask you about work.

FIEKOWSKY: That was just a means to an end. Except one time when I decided I didn't like what ILAB was doing in copper industry, copper mining in Peru or Bolivia, South America basically. I decided I was going to leak to Jack Anderson because I knew of him from the National Economist Club, I was a joiner. I liked to go to meetings. I liked to dress up and I liked to meet all of these people.

Q: So you knew Jack Anderson?[Ed: Jack Northman Anderson (October 19, 1922 – December 17, 2005) was an American newspaper columnist, syndicated by United Features Syndicate, considered one of the fathers of modern investigative journalism. Anderson won the 1972 Pulitzer Prize for National Reporting for his investigation on secret American policy decision-making between the United States and Pakistan during the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971.]

FIEKOWSKY: No, I did not know him. I knew this reporter for Jack Anderson.

Q: What was it about our policy that you did not like? Was it abusive to local labor?

FIEKOWSKY: Well, I did not like the investments that we were making, I can't quite remember which, I would have to think about it.

Q: At this late date we can talk about a leak in the 1950s?

FIEKOWSKY: Yes, I was terrible.

Q: When you say investments, we, would that be private investments?

FIEKOWSKY: Private U.S. investments.

Q: So you were acting as a whistleblower?

FIEKOWSKY: Yes, I was a whistleblower. I had a reporter that worked for Jack Anderson that I met at the press club. So we would meet at the Hyatt Hotel which is right

off of New Jersey Avenue [Ed: there is a Hyatt Regency at 400 New Jersey Avenue NW], and we would meet there at lunch, at the bar, and try to be very discreet. Now, I realize and it just came out recently that Nixon was very suspicious about Jack Anderson because he would leak about the president. So he would have people checking on people meeting with Jack Anderson reporters.

Q: So somebody was maybe watching you?

FIEKOWSKY: Yes. But I never got caught.

Q: What was the issue that you did the whistle blowing about?

FIEKOWSKY: All I remember is copper, and it must have been Peru or Bolivia, but I did not think what the U.S. did was right, the U.S. policy.

Q: Do you mean morally or in a labor sense?

FIEKOWSKY: No, just in an economic sense. I didn't think the government should have been doing that and it depends on my attitude at that time. I am not easily tamed and I am a very free spirit; that is the way my mother brought me up.

At the time that I leaked it, and it appeared in Jack Anderson's column, my boss came to me, and his name was Kurt Blackman and he came to me and asked "Did you leak this?" And I said no, and that was the end of that investigation. You couldn't record our phone conversations because we would talk on the phone guardedly. He would call me at home and we would talk in a way that wasn't…I didn't know about being listened to.

I just leaked, and they were suspicious and the leak didn't work out the way that I wanted it to work out, so that was a very unsatisfactory leak. It was fun, but it did not change the policy. The leak did not succeed.

Q: Did you have colleagues at Labor that felt the same way you did?

FIEKOWSKY: I had never discussed it because my colleagues were actually more liberal, more pro-labor than I was. I thought of myself more as an economist, I thought of myself as being objective, though I wasn't really. I did not think that everything labor did was just wonderful, because it was labor. I knew labor; I worked with the labor unions when I was in high school. When I was in Detroit, the teamsters organized my husband's father's business because he had a fancy grocery store that with trucks that would deliver to the wealthier neighborhoods. The teamsters required him to pay dues even though he was hiring his relatives- they weren't union people- but they had to join the union and pay dues. It was like a mafia. So in essence, he and I had feelings about the union, that wasn't necessarily like, unions were wonderful. Everything works out as business in the end. The teamsters hired gangsters to this dues stuff. Like, if you didn't pay dues, like if you had a little business that was profitable, so it is like protection money.

Q: Did the Labor Department know your feelings about this?

FIEKOWSKY: No, most of the people I worked with were very democratic, very pro-labor. In fact, most of the people are more liberal than I am now.

Q: Did you feel as though you were a mole in the Labor Department?

FIEKOWSKY: In a sense I was. But I said, well, I have got to make a living and this is where I ended up. So this is what I have to do, I did my job, I like my job and I would do negotiations and I was very contentious about what I was doing.

Q: Negotiations with whom?

FIEKOWSKY: All different countries. U.S. trade representatives, we would negotiate. I would go to Geneva and Asia and all different countries around the time of the 1960s. So I was a representing the Department of Labor, and I did what was labor and what was U.S. government. There were certain subsets, there was labor, and you are working with the trade negotiations so you were doing what they were doing.

Q: So these were delegations, as you said earlier, a collection of different agencies, and probably you ended up seeing similar people in the various trade delegations.

FIEKOWSKY: Yes, it was very interesting. For example, when we negotiated with China and I would ask them, "Where did you go to college?" and these were all of the diplomats, but most of them went to college in the U.S. because that way they could learn how to deal with the U.S. They spoke English, they had to. When you work with USTR, most of the countries had to speak English.

Q: Nixon recognized China- was it- early 1972? So this was before? You were there before we actually recognized the country?

FIEKOWSKY: Yes. China was trying to get into the World Trade Organization (WTO), they wanted to be one of the big boys, but at that time the WTO was not recognized in certain economist countries because they were very hard to deal with. I found them-they had a certain line, and were very inflexible. But everyone was really inflexible for their own country, you know, you think that we're the good guys and you're not.

Q: Negotiations about what? Tariffs? [Ed: Wikipedia comments that China gained observer status with GATT and from 1986, began working towards joining that organization. China aimed to be included as a WTO founding member (which would validate it as a world economic power) but this attempt was thwarted because United States, European countries, and Japan requested that China first reform various tariff policies, including tariff reductions, open markets and industrial policies. China joined WTO in 2001.]

FIEKOWSKY: They were negotiations about trade, tariffs. But not only tariffs, but non-tariff barriers, which are very important, more important than tariffs sometimes. You know what I am talking about, like NAFTA sort of arrangements or inspection. For instance, the Chinese would say, "Well you can import your things, but we have to inspect them." So when they would inspect them, they can just say that they are no good for some reason. So China was a big problem at that time.

Q: So did you go several times a year to China for that purpose?

FIEKOWSKY: Well I didn't go a lot to China. I went a lot to Geneva because we would practically meet weekly at some time with the World Trade Organization, because that was the negotiating table for the trade.

Q: Was that multi-lateral?

FIEKOWSKY: They all were. Then there would be bilaterals on the side. Like you might have particular issues with a country that other people do not have, the U.S. especially.

Q: When you say multilateral, this was the club of wealthy nations?

FIEKOWSKY: Well there were the developing countries, those were the poorer countries, and of the developed countries, the U.S. was the chief honcho because at that time we were the richest and most powerful.

Q: Was the Soviet Union there at the table ever?

FIEKOWSKY: No. The communist countries were sort of peripheral, and there were certain negotiations they could get in, but they would have liked to be there. They always wanted to be part of the big boys, the WTO, but they had a non-market economy. So that separated the non-market from the market.

Q: So were you actually based overseas at some point? Did that come later?

FIEKOWSKY: Some of us were, but I was never based overseas. I would just go over to Geneva, I loved going to Geneva. I would also go to Israel and I loved Israel. There were certain countries where it was fun to be.

Q: Did you have a similar agenda each time you were sent out from the Labor Department?

FIEKOWSKY: Well it depended on the issue, they would change. That's the idea of a negotiation, it's always, you want this, and if they give you a little bit, what do you want more? So you give a little to give a lot.

Q: Is that a viable mode to do negotiations, to give a little to get a lot?

FIEKOWSKY: Well, they had what is called a "Salami" technique which means you give up as little as possible in order to get something. I took courses at State in negotiations, the State Department.

Q: Really? Because there is a bunch of criticism right now that State does not give enough training of that sort.

FIEKOWSKY: Well, it is very important training. The other important thing is to know the kind of country you are negotiating and how the people think and what their government is.

Q: Was the training in Rosslyn at the Foreign Service Institute?

FIEKOWSKY: Yes, that is where I broke my ankle. My husband was dropping me off to go to work; we were both going to Rosslyn. I was annoyed because he was going too slowly, so I jumped out of the car and I had high heels on, but I broke my ankle. I wanted to go to these training sessions at the Foreign Service Institute, so with my broken ankle I sat through the meetings. I was then going to see a doctor but by that time it was already closed. Then I had classes at George Washington University.

Q: I am going to ask you about the nature of the training, what was it that was willing to make you sit through physical pain?

FIEKOWSKY: Well it was training and negotiation technique and they had very good people; outstanding State Department people.

Q: Can you remember any principle or principles that they tried to teach you, for instance, the "Salami" technique?

FIEKOWSKY: Yes it was very important.

Q: Did they say to understand the culture of the country you are going to? Did they make a point of that?

FIEKOWSKY: I think they did. I think it is common sense that they would know. Like if I went to negotiate in Hong Kong, I would always go shopping to get clothes and jewelry no matter where I went, but I used to go in these little shops in Hong Kong and I would say, "Well, I want to pay this much" but they would say, "Well, you must negotiate." That is part of their game; you are culturally required to negotiate. So that is one thing I learned, how to negotiate, through the markets in Hong Kong. That is part of how you do business with these people. It is not like the U.S. where you go to a department store, and it is a set price, so you pay the set price. Not even in all of these big cities in China. They had some stores that posted prices, like a big department store, but a lot of the places did not.

Q: So your training was in the Foreign Service Institute and the Hong Kong market. Can you think of any negotiation successes that stick out in those years?

FIEKOWSKY: Well, Israel was one of our first free-trade area negotiations. That was the most fun because the Israelis were very informal. They would come with short sleeves and they would talk like I talk to you, they were good. We were not negotiating with the Chinese during this time. Then when you got to the Middle Eastern people, they were usually the wealthy people and they had a lot of money, but they really were not well educated. They didn't have a background that we did. One of the things I did was make a point of finding out what education people had. You would have cocktail parties, formals, and that way you could find out that.

Q: How did this serve your purpose, to find out their education? Did this become an instrument of bargaining?

FIEKOWSKY: Well it helped me to figure out how they think and what kind of background they had. If they went to the U.S., they would have more of like my background. If they were Middle Eastern and when to a bad college, some of them would go to the U.S. but did not go to a good college and instead went to not-so-good colleges.

Q: You say you had the most fun in Israel; you actually negotiated a free-trade zone? So everybody gains I guess.

FIEKOWSKY: A free-trade agreement.

Q: What is there to negotiate if everyone wants a free-trade zone?

FIEKOWSKY: Well there are specifics; for instance, McDonald's wanted to sell in Israel, however, Israel is a kosher country so you had an issue of culture. Then McDonald's says -- you know they are famous for their french fries, which has lard in them so that is an issue. They could make it without lard though. McDonald's is very smart and they can adapt to the country. McDonald's is not the same in every country.

Q: So thanks to your work, McDonald's was tipped off about how to do business properly?

FIEKOWSKY: They were not tipped off. They just knew not to put lard in their products. McDonald's is a pretty smart company and they knew what they were getting into. But we had to work it so that Israel would accept McDonald's standards. Like you have to have a certain potato to make french fries, it just can't be any potato, and so they had to have certain controls over agriculture. Which all of these countries did not want McDonalds running their show but they wanted to get McDonald's in their country. So that is what the negotiations were because you got into what the country grew and how they grew it; not everything, but they had to have certain potatoes, like Idaho-type potatoes.

Q: Did it have to do more with the taste of the consumer than where the potato was from?

FIEKOWSKY: The consumer did not care but the government did. The consumer would just go and buy whatever. McDonald's is also all over the world which is comforting; when you go you typically get a standard product. But some of these products you do not know what you're getting.

Q: Somebody once said that every Foreign Service Officer is actually a commercial officer promoting American goods overseas. Does that sound right to you

FIEKOWSKY: Yeah. Well you're unconsciously that because you know that you have better things here (the U.S.) than they do there usually.

Q: Did you feel like this was the specific purpose of USTR?

FIEKOWSKY: Well the U.S. Trade Representatives represents the interest of the U.S., and it depends on the issue.

Q: Do you see USTR being involved in a successful way of promoting American products?

FIEKOWSKY: Well, I would say almost everything. If you represented commerce and labor, you wanted them to buy U.S. products, and not let them use their own stuff. You wanted international trade and exchange.

Q: Do you feel that the consumer benefitted?

FIEKOWSKY: Yes, I feel that. I had to have a split personality because sometimes it was good for the consumer, but it wouldn't be good for labor. Like when we went to China and we were negotiating standards for automobiles, China at that time said to us, "We are learning about production of autos because we are going to make our own and sell them to you." Which they now do; I knew that was happening, but what else could you do? We could only control what happened at that particular time, but we could not stop things from happening.

Q: Within those 20 years, are there any individuals that you worked with that stand out?

FIEKOWSKY: I thought the people at USTR were very smart and I was impressed with them in general. We would go from country to country, and we would have to learn the issues for that country.

Q: A person I met recently was Robert Zoellick [Ed: U.S. Trade Representative, from February 7, 2001 until February 22, 2005] and you worked with his predecessors. Do any of them stand out to you?

FIEKOWSKY: They were outstanding. There was a guy that was USTR and State, and then he became assistant secretary.

Q: In terms of the things that happened, the people you knew, your own work, does anything stick out?

FIEKOWSKY: Tiananmen Square was the most exciting thing because we did not know what was going to happen.

Q: Why were you there?

FIEKOWSKY: We were there because we were going to negotiate a free-trade agreement with China, finally, because China was dying to get into it, in 1989.

Q: So it was a coincidence that you were there in June of 1989, and suddenly this huge event happened?

FIEKOWSKY: Usually I was in Japan, but it was very exciting that we finally got China to negotiate.

Q: Now you said that this is the most interesting thing that you observed?

FIEKOWSKY: So we finally got to negotiate with China, which was exciting because it is a big market to let in U.S. goods instead of just shipping things to us. Trade imbalance was a big problem. So we would start negotiating, and go across the street from our embassy, and we would come back and the ambassador said "We may have to leave. The soldiers are gathering outside of the city."

Q: So the foreign ministry was at Tiananmen Square? Were you physically by the square?

FIEKOWSKY: Yes, right by the square. At this time, Beijing was a small city. People mostly only had bicycles, they did not have cars. So that meant that the railroad station was very important; if you didn't have cars, the railroad station was the hub of the city. So I was in a hotel across from the railroad station, and we would go over to their Ministry of Foreign Affairs and we would have a list of issues. Meanwhile, the students were coming into the city on the train. It was a quiet little city, and then all of a sudden, these students were coming in. They would march to the square.

Q: So this was before Facebook, how would they know to come at that time?

FIEKOWSKY: It was just a network. You knew somebody that knew what you wanted to know. So somebody had a phone and would relay the information. If you were interested in politics, and you knew this was an issue, like if you knew you were a devout communist or whatever, they would tell you what to do. So because my hotel was right across from the railroad station, I could see all of these students coming in.

Q: We remember Tiananmen Square as a massacre, but what was it that the students came to do?

FIEKOWSKY: They came to get more rights for freedom for students.

Q: Why at that time?

FIEKOWSKY: I guess they felt that now China was talking to the U.S. So it had to do with our presence. Maybe they felt that now there was a chance they could get more intellectual freedom, instead of being taught the party line in their schools. It was very restricted. But the colleges weren't good, which is why they would send their diplomats abroad to learn the U.S. way.

Q: So your delegation being there, was a very high- profile thing?

FIEKOWSKY: It was a very high-profile thing. In fact, most countries had left because they knew there was some trouble coming. They did not want to be in the trouble. So we were the only negotiations. The ambassador told us that mostly all the other countries had left. We are the negotiators.

Q: What is the time frame here? A few days? A few hours?

FIEKOWSKY: A few days.

Q: So the event, was it triggered by your arrival?

FIEKOWSKY: It had a lot to do with it because then they felt that there was a chance that they would get something. The students did hand-lettered posters in Chinese and put them on the wall, which they were not allowed to do. You are not allowed to put posters up in China because that might cause trouble with the government. But at the time of Tiananmen, there was a certain breakdown of civil order; the police were unable to control it.

Q: So this is a situation that the Chinese government was not prepared for?

FIEKOWSKY: No. They were worried when the students started being restless, then they got nervous. They were afraid that there would be a revolt of the students, and there was. They were nervous about it at that time. They wanted to negotiate with us and get this agreement.

Q: So the government had a lot to deal with that week. They wanted to deal with you, but they wanted to somehow control the students.

FIEKOWSKY: The students were polite and were not like U.S. students. They were polite and orderly; they were quiet, disciplined and civilized about their revolt. I mean,

they couldn't be too disorderly, they did not want to be conspicuous or if it didn't work, they could be taken to jail.

Q: So somehow, at one point, something tipped and the control was lost. By the way, what happened to your negotiations at that point? Were they halted or did you get to finish them?

FIEKOWSKY: We never finished them because at that time at Tiananmen, we thought we had an outline for a trade agreement, and we were very happy about it. After Tiananmen the ambassador said "It's all off, we can't agree to this under these conditions." He told the Chinese that we cannot negotiate until this was solved. We also had spies there, and they told us that the soldier's were gathering outside of Beijing, the Chinese soldiers were ready for war. The Chinese are very casual about life in general. I had a Chinese colleague in Commerce and I said "How can you stand it when they kill so many people?" and his reply was "There are so many of us."

Q: So this was in June of 1989 and everything happened within a few days and it didn't take long. The government must have been nervous.

FIEKOWSKY: Yes they were nervous, but they wanted to have the negotiation. So they had a team with them to negotiate, though they weren't the same team as the soldiers.

Q: Did you have a certain camaraderie with the team you were negotiating with?

FIEKOWSKY: Yeah. But they were all careful. They knew they would all be spied upon. I could get away things in the U.S. but if they did it they were "dead meat."

Q: So they were friendly but cautious?

FIEKOWSKY: Yes. We would talk about our families and where we went to college, but we were not going to discuss politics.

Q: So at one session or something you got a message that said, "Stop the talks." Is that right?

FIEKOWSKY: It was not at the session. We would speak at night to the U.S. and ambassador due to the time difference. I was very careful in talking with Labor because you never know who is listening. We could talk to our own team and local U.S. officials.

Q: So then this big crisis came. Did you actually see what was happening?

FIEKOWSKY: We could see it happening because we were there. The soldiers came. The ambassador said "The soldiers are outside the town, you should leave now." This friend of mine from State and I said, "Well we aren't leaving." So then we were on our own.

Q: Did others in the delegation leave?

FIEKOWSKY: Most of them left. So it was just the two of us.

Q: So you stayed because of curiosity?

FIEKOWSKY: Yes. I wanted to see what was happening.

Q: What did you see?

FIEKOWSKY: Well, I saw the gathering in the square. They would put up posters that they could not put up before, even in the department stores, and all of a sudden there were posters. I could not read them, but you could still tell that they were not official. They were student posters defying the regime. They weren't really posters; they were like hand-written signs. We then went to the square at night to see what was happening, and we saw the students gathering. It was just a few blocks to walk down to Tiananmen Square, and we saw that they had a camp and a little statue of liberty. It was very impressive. There were a lot of students there, and they were very orderly. They weren't like American students that would be rowdy and drunk and drugs or whatever. They were serious; I think they realized they had a lot on the line: life or death.

Q: So they knew there was a risk of being hurt of killed?

FIEKOWSKY: Not only that but they knew their whole family could suffer. If they knew the name of the student, they could go to the family and say "Your son is a spy" or whatever they want to call him.

Q: So things got very bad very quickly?

FIEKOWSKY: Yes, very quickly until they gathered in the square. They would then sing the Internationale which was interesting. I knew that because I was a former socialist/communist. I like that song; it's a good song. So the students were basically just asking for freedom in general. The Internationale is a song of communists, and they knew that song. It was probably a Chinese international song.

Q: So they did not think of the more repressive aspects of communism, I guess, when they sang that song.

FIEKOWSKY: No. In fact we did not even know about it ourselves; it was all coming out more about the repression. More and more was coming out. But to them, Internationale was a song of freedom. I used to feel that way when I was a young socialist. I loved that song. It is a very emotional song. I mean, I believe in freedom and I believe if you are repressed that you should rise.

Q: The emotions in songs, is emotion .It's not ideology it is a conveyer of feelings. So you went in the evening and the students were there, and they were orderly, and they were singing the Internationale.

FIEKOWSKY: Yeah. They also had the statue of liberty and everyone was so happy because everyone thought that China was going to be free. It was so exciting to be there when this was happening. If you didn't know what was happening, I could go to my hotel room and there would be reporters and I could watch T.V and the reporters would send the stuff back. So I found out a lot on T.V from CNN. It is ironic because I was there but I could not find out a lot of things directly. CNN is very good internationally and it still is.

Q: So you saw some of the events eye-witness and some of it you saw on T.V?

FIEKOWSKY: Yes and we saw reporters in the hotel.

Q: So the reporters must have been in reporter-heaven because there was this big event and a lot of action. So when did things go wrong?

FIEKOWSKY: So this was going on. The ambassador said we should leave, and he left, so just this woman and I were there. There was finally a point at which we could not do anything. We could just see the students there.

Q: So there were two of you. You were there by yourselves.

FIEKOWSKY: Yeah and we had a good time. We could go around the Chinese palace and there were these little houses, these little huts, where people were living and there was no plumbing or electricity. Nothing has changed for the Chinese at this time. It was just like it always had been. So we could get the feeling of what it was like to live there in these cute little houses, but with no plumbing and electricity.

Q: So you were in the hotel throughout I guess.

FIEKOWSKY: I stayed in the hotel, but we were out observing.

Q: So you were never hassled by one side or the other?

FIEKOWSKY: No. But then this woman left, but I was still there. Because she was a State Department person.

Q: So you were the last person?

FIEKOWSKY: I don't know, one of the last. I did not really check on who was still there. But at that time our negotiation had fallen apart, the Embassy was not open for business. There must have been somebody there; they wouldn't leave it alone with all the materials. So I just got to see how people were, and how happy they were. I then had to

leave at some point. I felt that I should go. At this time some of the big important Chinese people were leaving too. They had a lot of their possessions that they were taking with them because they did not know what would happen.

Q: Were people thinking Tehran 1979? A total change? Was there some echo of students taking over the embassy in Tehran, 1979?

FIEKOWSKY: It wasn't the students. It was just the feeling that everybody, if they had the whiff of freedom; the Chinese are orderly people. They were brought up to be orderly. If they could get free, they would try to use their freedom. They weren't against the Americans. They liked Americans because we were friendly to everybody and the ones that wanted to get away, wanted to learn English. For instance, I would go to a park, and a student would say "I am studying English, will you speak English with me?" They had ideals of liberty. They associated those ideals with America, because we were the main country that was negotiating. A lot of countries would not negotiate, but we did up to a point.

Q: When your negotiations broke down, did you have mixed feelings?

FIEKOWSKY: Yeah, because we thought we had the agreement. You thought you had it in your hand. This was a good agreement, and we thought we would bring it back and get it approved. Then the revolt and the ambassador from the U.S. said it was all off. This isn't the same circumstances that we negotiated for.

Q: Were you also swept up in the wish for freedom for the Chinese people?

FIEKOWSKY: I was hopeful that the Chinese would get their freedom.

Q: Did they get any freedom at all?

FIEKOWSKY: When they were in the square… the department stores were all still the same. But the students thought they would have freedom, but they were also worried.

Q: We know that bad things happened. Any idea of how many people were killed? There had been a lot of discussion.

FIEKOWSKY: No. When I was there nobody was killed. See when I was there, they were just in the square and everybody was excited that this was it; we finally got rid of that government, and we'll have something better. You felt this had to be better, but who knows.

Q: So they felt that they had done regime change, but it was not so?

FIEKOWSKY: No. But the actual government wanted to keep their jobs and their status in the government, naturally. They had the soldiers and an army, a chain of command. No

matter what the soldiers thought, they were being told what to do. They were outside the town just waiting and watching.

Q: What was it that helped you decide when to leave?

FIEKOWSKY: Well, a lot of people were leaving. So I had to get a reservation to go back and the station, you had to take a train to the airport because it was out in the country. So everybody in the station was with suitcases and talking and buzzing of activity, and at one point I put my brief case down to check my ticket, then all of a sudden I could not find my brief case that had all of my papers. I am looking at everybody because I did not see it. So I thought, "Maybe somebody took my bag" and they let me go back down the shoot to baggage center to look at the bags. But I didn't see my bag there. So I came back but I still didn't know where it was. So then I was just waiting in the station and I see a group of people with a bag like mine. So we just got our bags mixed up. They had my bag, so I got the bag. So that was a little minor crisis. Imagine going back with your bag stolen with all of the papers in it. But in fact, it wasn't taken. In all the chaos it was accidentally taken.

Q: So that was on your way in the train to the airport? You left just before the actual conflict?

FIEKOWSKY: Yeah, because then I got home and I saw it on T.V, the shooting.

Q: It sounds as though you decided to leave at just the right time, because bullets don't always go in the right direction.

FIEKOWSKY: I didn't really think about that. Trouble is I don't really worry about things that way. I mean I am not a cautious person.

Q: Remarkable. What can we say about China now? Looking back, was that turning point a fail to turn?

FIEKOWSKY: Well they have more freedom now because of the internet and all kinds of information that they couldn't get before. But they have T.V so China can't say the rest of the world is evil, and we are the only good people because they could see. It was no longer a totally controlled information environment.

Q: People had to die for that to happen, or they did.

FIEKOWSKY: Not many of them died, it was a peaceful revolution because most of the country was not involved, it was just Tiananmen. I mean considering it was an unusually—I don't know the statistics—but I would say it was some kind of Prague revolution in which one person was killed.

Q: So comparable to the Prague spring? So you remember it as a positive moment in China's history?

FIEKOWSKY: Yes. I mean it wasn't costly and it gave people hope that things could happen. Up until then, they had no hope. It was just the way it was that it would remain that way. It is not what it used to be though; there are more sources of information now, and the Chinese cannot control the information that comes through—the cell phone, for instance.

Q: Now the negotiations that you had conducted and which were halted, were they resumed at a later time?

FIEKOWSKY: Eventually. By that time I was probably out of the government. If I had been in the government, I would have been in it. But by that time-- I retired in 1996.

Q: How long did it take before trade negotiations were resumed? Do you have any idea?

FIEKOWSKY: I have no idea. It was more than a few months. It was a big bridge. Then the revolt spread from China to Hong Kong. I had to change planes in Hong Kong, and then saw the revolt there because they had gotten the word. At that time, Hong Kong was sort of half free-half Chinese. But everybody felt like me when it happened. I mean thank goodness it's over, I mean it's not over, but may be freer.

Q: Oppression is now partially gone for good, is that what you are saying? So you stopped in Hong Kong on your way home, was it more than a plane change? Did you stay for awhile?

FIEKOWSKY: Yeah. I was there a little bit. But I always stop in Hong Kong; I used to like to shop there. By the way that was against the ambassador's orders because we should not have been there officially.

Q: He suggested that you leave, but he did not say "Don't come."

FIEKOWSKY: We were there negotiating with China, we thought we had a deal, and we were euphoric. But then that night, the students were coming in at the main train station in Beijing right across from our hotel, and I would watch them get out of the station and march in a very orderly way to Tiananmen Square. There they set up camp. They didn't have tents because it was summer; it was warm. But they just figured out how they could sleep in sleeping bags or whatever they did. It was June. We were still euphoric. We thought the chains are broken; China is free, and we all thought that. I am sure some people were unhappy people about it too, the government or something. They could have lost their job or been killed, you don't know what is going to happen. So then we were told to leave because it wasn't safe and soldiers were out in the outskirts. The Chinese soldiers, because nowadays they admit that we had spies. Tiananmen is one of those days that people just do not forget.

Q: So when you say a day that will always be historic, you were saying that there was some ambiguity. It looked like there was euphoria, but then the euphoria came to an end; what was the meaning of it?

FIEKOWSKY: Well as far as the public and most people, they were concerned. They were very happy that they were free at last, so to speak.

Q: Did they really believe that this was going to happen? That there would not be a military…?

FIEKOWSKY: Well, there were a lot of people that went to the square, including the students and people that would walk up like I did. There was sort of like an encampment right on the square and around the sidewalk there would be people with posters.

Q: When you say, "The way I did" do you mean as an observer? As a curious person?

FIEKOWSKY: Well they weren't just curious people, they live there. They were going to be effected.

Q: So you think that anyone who was present was a part of this event?

FIEKOWSKY: Most of them were. They could have been people, like the embassy, a diplomatic enclave and somebody must have been there; you don't leave the whole place. Just the basic staff.

Q: So you left hours or a day or two before the intervention?

FIEKOWSKY: I left about a day before the shooting. It was close.

Q: So you were with the USTR delegation?

FIEKOWSKY: I was with the USTR delegation.

Q: So you said last week that it was kind of deflating, a little disappointing, to do all of that work and have nothing come of it?

FIEKOWSKY: Well you didn't know at that point. The negotiations stopped, but negotiations can stop and start and stall. Negotiating is like they call "a slice of salami," you give a little work and you don't give up. It's not the end, it's never the end.

Q: So are you saying that even though there was no signed agreement, there was forward motion?

FIEKOWSKY: It would never be signed. We would bring back each side's authors and we would review it. I think I said an example of what happens is-- once my mother wrote a letter to the president about something-- she's in California. I said "Mother, don't write

because I may have to answer it." It is given to the president and then it filters down to some little group, and they have a little form letter that might say "We share your concern." Most of them are answered that way unless they are really important or something new.

Q: So your delegation did prepare a draft or something that would have…? Did the paper reflect consensus with the Chinese? Or was it mainly the U.S.. position?

FIEKOWSKY: It was semi-consensus. It was more of like, you can do this, and I can do that. The delegation does not have the real authority to make any final decisions; you just carry the water back.

Q: Did the draft paper, was it conceived before the meetings?

FIEKOWSKY: The draft that we came with was very carefully constructed. Interagency, and so on and so forth. That was important because the China thing was a very important negotiation.

Q: Did it change at all in the course of negotiating?

FIEKOWSKY: No you had little coins that you, you know. They would offer something, then you would offer something, then you would say "OK, we will consider it." We don't officially change anything. We come up with the options.

Q: When the talks were terminated, did you come back with the draft? Or was everything on hold?

FIEKOWSKY: We came back with the rough draft and we thought, "Good. We have gotten to the point where we can come to an agreement." That is where it ended, a rough draft.

Q: What happened to the draft then?

FIEKOWSKY: It didn't stay with us. It went back with those who returned. I had a copy of it though.

Q: This briefcase you said was misplaced at one point?

FIEKOWSKY: Yes, when we finally decided we'd seen all of these little nice huts where the Chinese actually lived; huts with no water or electricity. Here they were in the capital of Beijing-- right by the government headquarters-- the palace and the square, and on the outskirts were these little tiny huts of people living their little tiny lives.

Q: This was in 1989, twenty years ago. We are now hearing about incredible economic growth.

FIEKOWSKY: Since then they have raised a lot of that; they destroyed it. Now they are going into high rises and all kinds of big buildings.

Q: So you saw the Beijing that was coming to an end.

FIEKOWSKY: Yes and when I was there again on a cruise and all of these countries like Beijing, Hong Kong, Thailand were entirely different. That's exaggerating, but where you could go and buy little things and people in stores with handmade things. All of a sudden there are big stores, department stores, high rises. The high rises weren't mostly for the people except those in Hong Kong with prestige. They were government buildings. The main supporting material they use is bamboo when they build. It turns out bamboo is extremely strong and it is very cheap. It just grows like grass and spreads like weeds. So that was interesting to see.

Q: But you were saying this was on a cruise some years later? So you could see the changes?

FIEKOWSKY: Yeah I could see them. They had done some building, but when I came back they had a lot of these bamboo scaffolds and some things.

Q: The meaning of Tiananmen, historic day, you got out a day or so before the military came in?

FIEKOWSKY: The grievance had collected because of the domestic problems that the Chinese had. We were ready, but they could not handle anything. Although, as I said before, we were the only negotiation going on at that point because they were so involved with the uprising of the students. I mean, they could have gotten killed if things didn't go right. The Chinese insisted they don't value life in the sense that we do, because they said "Well there are so many of us. It is like ants. If you kill a few ants, there will be another stream of ants."

Q: I guess we don't know what goes through a person's mind exactly when they say that.

FIEKOWSKY: It depends on what situation. Part of it, then they might really be afraid, but if they are an observer in some sense, or if they are like my Chinese friends somewhere in this country, they would just say "There are so many guys, it's like ants. As long as it isn't their family it doesn't immediately affect them.

Q: Now there was a luggage issue at the airport.

FIEKOWSKY: Yeah when I finally decided that I better go because things were getting more loosey goosey. You don't know how this is all going to end and whether it be real revolution or who knows?

Q: Were a lot of people leaving that day?

FIEKOWSKY: Yeah a lot of people. I don't remember when the ambassador left, but some Chinese people that are famous that live in Washington, and they were going because they are not communist. If you were not a communist, you don't know what they are going to do to you because now they had done nasty things.

Q: So you were able to get a reservation anyway?

FIEKOWSKY: Somehow. So then in the lobby of the airport, it was before you go out to the actual airport, was quite crowded. It wasn't mobbed, but most of the people had left already probably that wanted to leave and thought that they should. So there were some people. It wasn't empty, but moderate. So I go up to the desk to check in, and while I am at the desk I have to put my suitcase down because you are taking out your papers and stuff. Then I look down and it isn't there. It was a terrible feeling. I had all of my official papers in it; things that you don't want to leave around. So I told them, "My suitcase is gone. I need to find my suitcase; I can't leave without it." Then they said well, "Maybe somebody checked it in, you can go look down the chute." So they took me behind the desk and showed me the chute. I slid down the chute. In this time that was a time of such confusion and chaos and they also didn't have the same kind of security that they have now. They were nice about it.

Q: So you went down the chute…

FIEKOWSKY: So I slid down the chute because I was desperate to get that bag; I didn't want to leave it. I didn't see it; I looked at what was down there. So it wasn't there. So somehow I got out of the chute, I don't think I climbed out but I don't remember. Then I thought that I needed to give up, I just have to go back because I could not stay. So I then went through departure procedures and was waiting in line. I then saw a group of people chatting in another part of the airport, and they had bags like mine. So I look at some of it, and low and behold, there was my bag! What happened was, the group was leaving and they all took their bags together and were talking, and they pick up and take my bag because they think it is a part of their bags. So I got my bag back.

Q: With great relief, you got on the plane. Was it a direct flight to the U.S..? Did you go through Hong Kong?

FIEKOWSKY: Yes, you have to go through Hong Kong. That was very eventful. I have had to travel a lot, and have done a lot of negotiating.

Q: When you came back, the people in your office must have been extremely curious?

FIEKOWSKY: Everybody had their own little thing.

Q: This enormous world event, you were there, and nobody wanted to know about it.

FIEKOWSKY: No, they did not care. Nobody asked me a word about it, and that was intentional.

Q: So people assigned to work on international issues, there was no interest in Tiananmen Square?

FIEKOWSKY: Well that was not their issue. They did not need to work on it.

Q: So you came back and…?

FIEKOWSKY: We had meetings about it and we did not know what was going to happen. We couldn't negotiate it at that time. Things were sort of suspended.

Q: So you spent some days or weeks, did this suddenly stop being an issue?

FIEKOWSKY: Well it was still an issue because we still wanted to get an agreement because that is our job, to get a working agreement. We realize we couldn't. Just like it was in Beijing, if I didn't know what was happening, I would watch CNN in my room because the CNN reporters were there and they got better information than I did at that point. The embassy was not really operating at that point. We weren't having meetings with officials.

Q: So was there kind of a post-mortem or an evaluation of what happened?

FIEKOWSKY: No, it just sort of drifted away that we went to other issues. I guess what allowed it to simmer down was because we didn't know what to do. China was so involved with the shooting and the world, and then it spread to Hong Kong, so I went there and they were having a revolt. It spread like wild fire. Once other countries that were under Chinese rule saw this, they thought this was their chance.

Q: Just like Eastern Europe which was at the same time and same year. There was something in the air in 1989. So you said Hong Kong…

FIEKOWSKY: Also, when we went to Hong Kong, there was a demonstration in their square. It was not under PRC dominion during this time, though. The PRC had certain presence in there. It was about to be. I don't remember the exact state of that.

Q: In 1989, it seems that reverting is very hard to imagine.

FIEKOWSKY: No, because the British were running it for a very long time and the Chinese wanted to get it. It was sort of like an octopus with tentacles. It was a prize; a lot of people wanted to do business in Hong Kong. We went there later on some tours and you can take this hydro foil, and in an hour you were in China.

Q: So years later you came back on a cruise as a tourist. Did you ever go back as USTR or Department of Labor?

FIEKOWSKY: I was retired on vacation during the cruise. It was just my husband and I, and we were just taking a cruise. He was retired and at some point he retired because he said it wasn't fun working at Treasury. I retired in 1996. He retired earlier. I wasn't that impressed with him, but when I saw all of the tributes and rewards he got… So he retired and he cooks and shops. So I would go to work, and I never worked that hard. I did what I had to do. I was a self-motivated person.

Q: So you stayed another seven years beyond Tiananmen. What types of projects came your way? Other Asia-related things?

FIEKOWSKY: Yes, I did Asia. A lot of Asia because that was my area. We divided into areas. Then there were issues across areas, for instance, intellectual property. I didn't work on that. But it will go on forever.

Q: Why does the U.S. work so hard to protect IPR?

FIEKOWSKY: Well the U.S. protects the industries that are important or influential. If we were in labor, we would try to protect labor issues and employment. There are always people interested in what the government is doing because it is for them. The government is doing what the public wants. The more money you can give, the more protection you can get.

IPR wasn't really my issue. I mainly worked on Asia issues. By the way, our offices were right across from the building where they would have hearings. Like the mafia would be tried there. They brought the mafia over from Italy. There were always interesting things going on. But then they would have the mafia, they would have bullet-proof glass around the place where they were sitting because a lot of people wanted to get them. So we would go-- our office was very loosey-goosey. In fact, one guy would get drunk everyday and sleep under the desk because we had a bar right across the street.

Q: Now that depicts a positive image of our federal employees. At least he wasn't getting into fights.

FIEKOWSKY: One fellow made a mistake that cost the U.S. millions of dollars. He retired honorably; he didn't suffer a bit. It makes you very cynical about the government.

Q: So this was the Department of Labor in particular?

FIEKOWSKY: The same thing goes on everywhere. It is very hard to fire a government employee. One time I was on one of these committees where there is somebody going through appeal and they get somebody to represent you, and I represented this person. Nothing ever came of it. Even if he was right, there was protocol within the government of what they wanted to admit. Except I noticed, they got some blacks in finally and they said "We have to have minorities such as women and blacks."

Q: Meaning that the department modernized?

FIEKOWSKY: Well they had to. The Labor Department had to be a model of good labor practices.

Q: You mentioned government workers goofing off…

FIEKOWSKY: Well we had the museum right across the street. So if there was something we wanted to see or a tour we wanted, we would just go over. Our work was not really a pressure on us, except when we had a deadline or when you needed to concentrate. For instance, if you were to go overseas, you needed to get your papers in order.

Q: What do you think about- do you have any comments or conclusions about the federal government as you saw it? There were some defects, there was some waste?

FIEKOWSKY: Well our lab was known as a place where Foreign Service Officers that couldn't make it at State to get a job at.

That is one of the places; I don't know what else they did. So then you had a lot of people, like there were people they should have never hired.

Q: Is this sloppiness? Or fear of accountability?

FIEKOWSKY: There were a lot of reasons. For instance, if you were black, you might hire another black. You might feel sympathetic. Like one of our bosses was Hispanic, then we would get a lot of new people who were Hispanic.

Q: So the use of government positions to promote a personal agenda. What about the man who made mistakes that caused millions of dollars?

FIEKOWSKY: Marvin. By the way, his last name was Fuchs he is still alive because he is younger than I am. He was in the trade adjustment assistance department. ILAB included trade adjustment assistance for workers who had lost their job, and they would get payments if it was justified that they lost their job due to trade, which was very hard to prove.

Q: Because jobs were lost to other countries that outcompeted us in the labor market.

FIEKOWSKY: You couldn't prove it; some companies would just be inefficient. You could always make an excuse to get what you want.

Q: You see this now, with the benefit of hindsight and looking back, at the time, did you have the same impressions?

FIEKOWSKY: Yes. I happen to be what is called a cynical and realistic person.

Q: Cynics are disappointed romantics. So you were disappointed in the performance..?

FIEKOWSKY: No I just felt, this is the way it operates. I am an observer; let's just put it that way.

Q: There is not a whole lot- you didn't have the leverage to do a whole lot about it.

FIEKOWSKY: No, I knew I didn't have the leverage. If I had the leverage, I probably couldn't do it anyhow. The government is like a leviathan just goes its way and won't be stopped. It takes a lot, even an election. The same staff is going to be there after the election below a certain level, and they will still be doing the same thing. If they are democratic, they will still be democratic, and most of them are.

Q: You talked earlier about Portland, Oregon being something of a heaven or a paradise… any regrets at leaving the academic world and coming to bureaucracy?

FIEKOWSKY: No. When I left Portland, my husband's side didn't get tenured. That was very hard. He is not a gregarious person, he is very good, and so he was a very good teacher. So a lot of his students years and years later will come to see him. Even at Treasury he was considered a teacher of the lawyers. So he would do his thing. He was a good worker and a good lecturer, and I was having children and could not get a job because we had just gotten there and there were not any jobs that I would take. So then, all of my contemporaries were having children; I hadn't really thought about having children, but I thought, this is what I can do here: get a nice house and have children just like everybody else.

Q: So these are two very different times in your life and you found yourself in the federal government. You said you do not regret being in the federal government though…

FIEKOWSKY: I didn't want to retire because I really loved my life. Wherever I was, whatever I did, I made it so I liked it. There were times when you don't like it. I liked Portland, Oregon, for example. It was a little bit of a hick town but there were nice people, it was beautiful; we could pick raspberries. Then I had these friends the Neubergers and Maurine, originally I knew her as the woman senator. Maybe she was the first one in the Senate. But she was a very able to person and also a presentable person. I just knew of her because, even before we came here, she would get coverage wherever we were because she was a woman senator and they were so unusual. Of course, Oregon is a small state and there is a small-town atmosphere. [Ed: Maurine Neuberger succeeded her husband upon his death and served in the U.S. Senate from November 1960 to January 1967. She was the fourth woman elected to the United States Senate and the tenth woman to serve in the body.]

Q: So did you come into contact with her at this point?

FIEKOWSKY: When we went to Portland, she had already apparently established herself and then I got to know her there. And Reed College is a part of the intellectual

community because what is there in Portland, Oregon? So people would sort of pick us up if they wanted dinner or something. They would like to have faculty members over. I said it is the kind of place where I wouldn't want to stay forever because you feel like you have the same people over and over. It was a small world. Leaving was horrible in the sense that I left against my will because I didn't get tenure and even though I couldn't do anything about it, I was upset over it.

We had our nice little life there, and our little kids and our German Sheppard dog and a nice house. I didn't feel like I wanted to leave; it wasn't my decision to leave. But I didn't get tenure so I wasn't going to take a job somewhere else there, because he could go back to Harvard to finish his PhD which went on for ten years. So then we decided that we didn't want to stay, so we left. We sold our little dream house and sadly decided that we would buy a trailer with the money, and live in a house trailer and drive across to Harvard and live in the Harvard yard in a trailer. A lot of people from Reed would work from Harvard and go back and live in one of the nice little hotels on the square.

By the way, most of the people at Reed… Well I wouldn't say most of them, but a lot of them had money in the background. You are going to a little nice academic college, so it made it more interesting. We had a good social life there and I had my babysitter, so I liked it while I was there. I didn't like being told to leave and I was very stressed about leaving. So we got the trailer with our kids and this friend of ours (Myers Lensky? 12:05) was a lawyer and it turns out he was shyster on the side. But if he likes you; he made good money, he was smart. In other words, if he likes you, he could be friendly. So we would meet a lot of people that way. But he got to be a witness and go to the Supreme Court to lead a case which all lawyers would like to do.

Q: So you were the Reed Annex in Washington?

FIEKOWSKY: Yes, because Reed was like a family. We would live together, slept together in some cases. We ate together. We had wonderful parties and I still have some of my best friends that were from there, or maybe their children sometimes now.

Q: How would you sum up your life experience? What is the secret?

FIEKOWSKY: Well you have to be adaptable. You have to figure out what you can do under these circumstances. I mean you don't want to be one of those people that say "Well, I could have had a job doing this but the guy died that was going to give me the job." You could have stories about your life that explain your failures— so the what-if theory of history is not mine. If you have an earthquake, you are going to be in an earthquake. People will always call me a realist. There is no point, unless you are writing a novel, or just want to spin it a little bit, but there is no point in worrying about spilt milk. You go on, and worry about doing the next thing. I think part of that is being a Hungarian Jew. We went to sessions about Hungary and all about Jews. Hungarians were overrun many times by other countries. They were in the middle of Europe and whenever So I am saying that Hungarians and Jews as a combination, it turns out that a lot of

Hungarian Jews end up being outstanding in their way. Of course maybe I notice that because I am a Hungarian Jew but even my husband said, "Gee, they always do well."

Q: So survival is in your genes….

FIEKOWSKY: It is in your genes because not all Jews, not everybody is like that. In general, it is a group that had to survive from being adaptable and coming out OK. To be adaptable, you have to be flexible and you have to know how much flexibility. If you do anything wrong, you want to be sure you are not caught.

Q: That is a great concluding statement for today. Thank you very much.

End of interview