

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

AMBASSADOR H. KENNETH HILL

*Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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Q: Today is March 28, 2014, this is an interview with Ambassador Kenneth Hill, I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. Well, let's start off by when and where were you born?

HILL: I was born in Cushing, C-U-S-H-I-N-G, Texas on June 14, 1937.

Q: OK. What do you know about the Hill side of your family?

HILL: I've actually done genealogy on it. The earliest member I could find in America came in about 1660 to Baltimore County, Maryland. His name was John Hill. I have not been able to find out exactly where he came from. It was England I'm sure, but I don't know exactly where. He died in Baltimore County in 1691. I found his will in the Maryland archives in Annapolis and was able to hold the will with a wax seal on it in my hands.

Q: What do you know about how your ancestors supported themselves when they got to America?

HILL: We were farmers right up to my father. One of the descendents of John Hill in the 18th century left Baltimore County and went to South Carolina where he got a grant of land and began farming there. His son went to Alabama and farmed. And his son went to Texas and farmed. And my father was a farmer in Texas until World War II when he took our family to California and got a job at the Standard Oil of California refinery in Richmond, California.

Q: All right. So now, do you know anything about, firstly, what kind of farming your family's involved in? Small farm, large farm, what?

HILL: It was small subsistent farming. Basically my ancestors were growing food to feed themselves and their families.

Q: Well then, did your father get much of an education, or?

HILL: No. His elementary education reached into high school, but he didn't finish high school. And neither did my mother, but she later earned an equivalent high school diploma.

Q: What about on your mother's side? What do you know about where they came from?

HILL: She was from Dallas, Texas. Her ancestors settled in the Dallas area in about 1840, making them very early settlers there. But by the time she married my father they were certainly no longer a prominent family in the area.

Q: Did you grow up in Texas?

HILL: No, I grew up in California. I was five-years-old when my father moved the family to California. He was happy to leave subsistence farming, which was very difficult in Texas during the Depression, and have employment at the Standard Oil refinery in Richmond.

Q: Oh --

HILL: So I grew up in California in Richmond, which is on the east side of San Francisco Bay, and graduated from high school and went to the University of California, Berkeley.

Q: Well, let's move back a bit. When you grew up in Richmond. What was it like when you were a kid in the '40s?

HILL: Well, this was wartime. At the time, Richmond had three important businesses. One was it was the terminus of the Santa Fe Railroad. The second was the large and important Standard Oil of California refinery. And third was a shipyard built by Henry J. Kaiser that produced liberty ships. We lived in one of the housing projects that were put up very quickly during the war to accommodate the large influx of wartime workers. Richmond had a population of about 23,000 at the beginning of the war and very quickly the population grew to about 105,000. So I grew up living in the large apartment blocks built for the war workers, which meant that I had a lot of kids to play with and things to do. For example, it was easy for us to play softball with two small teams, or to ride to the hills or visit San Francisco Bay, or have a group hike on the high hill by the bay, Nickel Knob. .

Q: Well, I was going to say, the war was difficult for the warriors, but for small kids it could be a lot of fun.

HILL: Yes. During the war, we had a Coast Guard station across the road from our apartment house, with barracks and young men in uniforms. Their presence provided fantasies for the war games we played. As children we heard a bit about what was happening in the war but mainly about victories in Europe and the South Pacific, but not about the casualties of servicemen and the people in war torn countries. The war wasn't a problem for kids. The fighting in the Pacific was especially interesting because the ocean was nearby. There was even a small Japanese submarine at Point Richmond, the small harbor off of San Francisco Bay, that had been captured somewhere. We also experienced blackouts early in the war when an unidentified airplane flew overhead in the evening, and the searchlights near the oil refinery and the railroad tracks would light

up and sweep the sky while we lowered our window shades to black out the lights in our apartment.

Q: When you were a small kid, compared to other small kids were you much of a reader?

HILL: Yes. I discovered the library not far from our apartment house and spent time there reading books and checking them out. We did not have television in the 1940s until about 1947 when one or two of the neighbors got an early set, so I read a lot more than kids did in the fifties when television became common. I also enjoyed reading Popular Mechanics magazines that a neighbor boy's family subscribed to. But I wouldn't say that I was a budding intellectual.

Q: (laughs) Okay. What religion was your family?

HILL: We were Baptists.

Q: And was this an important factor, or?

HILL: It was. It was important in my life until I reached early twenties.

Q: And what about politics? Where did they --

HILL: My dad was a staunch Democrat.

Q: Was the union a big thing at that time?

HILL: It was for him because the oil industry was unionized. And he was a shop steward for a time, a leader of a small group of people. There was a very large strike against Standard Oil in about 1946 or '47.. Dad was out of work for a while because of the strike, and one day he took me with him to where the union had set up a picket line to prevent "scabs" (workers who crossed the picket line) from going to work in the refinery.

Q: Did you identify as I'm a union kid, or was that sort of thing going on at the time?

HILL: No, it was really my dad's thing. I knew as much as I've just told you about what was going on, but all of the kids that I grew up with were workers' kids. We were living in the housing projects, 16 families to a building and most parents worked at the oil refinery or the shipyard. So one didn't think my dad's a union man, so therefore I'm a union kid. That just wasn't part of my growing up.

Q: Well, what was -- school. How about elementary school? What was your elementary school like?

HILL: Well, first of all, because it was wartime and because the town had grown so large in population so quickly, we had split shifts. So in elementary school you could either go in the morning until lunchtime, or you could go in the afternoon after lunch. In the first

grade I had a teacher in the morning that I didn't like very well, and so I shifted to the afternoon and stayed as an afternoon pupil for the rest of my time in elementary school.

Q: What sort of subjects did you like and what ones didn't you like?

HILL: I liked math. And, and I was always interested in history and social studies. I had an easy time in elementary school. I got good grades without having to work very hard. So I enjoyed school simply because it was never much of a burden or a challenge and I got good grades and positive recognition.

Q: Were you old enough to follow the war at all?

HILL: A bit. Probably I followed it more based on what my parents and other adults said, instead of reading the newspapers myself. But certainly I was vaguely aware of things like the Normandy Invasion in Europe, the surrender of Germany and the surrender of Japan. I remember those events very clearly. I also remember the death of FDR (Franklin D. Roosevelt). He was an important leader for my parents who had lived through the Depression and the war. He had led them and the country through very difficult times. So they were saddened by his death in the spring of 1945.

Q: Well then, high school, where did you go to high school?

HILL: Just as I was finishing junior high school my parents bought a house on the south side of Richmond and that put me in the district not of Richmond High School, but of El Cerrito High School, in the next town to the south. So I went three years to high school at El Cerrito High School.

Q: Was the student body at the high school mixed? Was there a significant Hispanic or black population in the area?

HILL: We had black students. I don't remember any Hispanic students. There was an area on the south side of Richmond where blacks lived and kids from that area attended El Cerrito High School. I knew black kids all the way through elementary school, junior high school, and, and high school. And in high school, for example, I shared a locker with a black student.

Q: How did things work out there? Was there much of a racial feeling, or what was going on?

HILL: We got along OK. There were a few minor problems. I remember there was a confrontation between the whites and the blacks but it did not become a race riot or anything very serious. But by and large we got along with black kids. It was interesting to me because I had come out of the South where there was segregation, but I fit in very easily with the black kids and had friends among them. I don't remember any sort of serious continuing problem between white kids and black kids at the schools.

Q: Living in Richmond in that area, was San Francisco much of a draw for the kids?

HILL: It was. We were about 15 miles from San Francisco. I became a paperboy at some point in elementary school. We would have contests to find new subscribers to the newspaper and one of the rewards for finding a certain number of new subscribers was a trip to San Francisco on a weekend, usually a Sunday. Playland at the Beach had a roller coaster and other rides and the Cliff House was nearby with model ships and other attractions. So early in my life San Francisco was a draw, and it was a draw for the other kids as well.

Q: In high school, did you get involved in extracurricular things, or?

HILL: During high school I became very active in our church, the First Baptist Church in Richmond. I also had a few extracurricular activities at school. But it wasn't easy for me to stay after school for sports programs, for example, because I had to take a bus to school and back home in the afternoon. So if I stayed after school I either had to walk home, probably about five miles, or walk a mile or two down the hill to San Pablo Avenue, and take public transportation home. In my senior year I was in the school's a cappella choir and we put on a modern version of *The Merry Widow*, which required some after school rehearsals. The choir would also go off on weekends sometimes to perform or to take part in contests with other choirs. But, but otherwise I was mainly involved in the church.

Q: Did your church have a southern orientation, or was it a little bit looser (laughs) California-wise?

HILL: It was not a Southern Baptist church. It was a member of the American Baptist Convention. During the Civil War the Baptist and Methodist churches and other Protestant churches split, which led to southern and northern denominations. The Northern Baptist Convention renamed itself the American Baptist Convention. That meant that they were somewhat more liberal than Southern Baptists, but only to a degree.

Q: Were movies important for you at the time?

HILL: Yes. Our church didn't forbid movies so I went to them. As a kid in elementary school I went to movies almost every Saturday. There was a local movie theater that had special prices for kids and showed cowboy movies or serials on Saturdays. As a teenager, I became interested in contemporary Hollywood movies.

Q: What about in high school? How about dating? Was there -- what was the pattern?

HILL: I dated some during high school. But most of my dating was with girls from the church.

Q: What'd you do, was it going to the movies, or?

HILL: Yes. Particularly after you got your driver's license at age 16 it was easy to go to movies on a date. Before that, I tended to take girls to church events. We had volleyball games and dress-up banquets, and we went to summer camps and had moonlight hikes..

Q: Well now, in high school, what subjects did you concentrate on, or did you?

HILL: In elementary school I liked math. But after I took the first year of algebra I veered away from, from math toward courses for college preparation, which involved social sciences, foreign languages, civics, and history, in the direction of liberal arts rather than math.

Q: Well, given your later career, did foreign events -- we're still talking about high school and foreign -- did developments in the world outside of where you were interest you, or not?

HILL: They did. I took first Spanish, then French, and in college German. I liked foreign languages and became interested in what was going on in the world, in foreign affairs.

Q: You graduated from high school when?

HILL: 1955.

Q: Did the Korean War interest you or affect you at all?

HILL: No, I was too young. By 1955 there was already an armistice in Korea. I was interested in what was happening in Korea and the brother of my brother-in-law was over there and so I heard a little bit about what was going on. But I wasn't directly involved beyond that.

Q: Did you have -- I assume that the University of California would be your next step. Was that true, or not?

HILL: Yes, I started in the fall of '55 and I got a BA in June of '59. And there was additional education after that.

Q: Well, was it Berkeley or -- was that the nearest one, or?

HILL: Yes. I previously indicated, I got very involved in religion in my teens. And I had the idea that I should go to seminary and become a Baptist minister. And so I got a BA (bachelor of arts) from Berkeley in 1959 and entered a Baptist seminary in the fall of '59. I attended the seminary for a year and a half, but I woke up one morning and said, "I don't belong here, this is not what I want to do." So I dropped out of the seminary. Which meant that I was liable for the draft. Because the rule then was that if you were in theological schooling you didn't have to go to the draft. So after leaving seminary I volunteered for the draft and went into the army for two years from 1961 until 1963. I got married while I was in the army. When I was released from active duty I returned to UC

Berkeley and got an MA (master of arts) in January 1964.

Q: Well, I want to go back to the university. At Berkeley, what was the campus like? You know, particularly because obviously later on the campus was a focal point for all of the protest movements with Mario Savio doing his thing and all the --

HILL: No. That all came after I finished the MA in 1964. There was no demonstrations and no political problems at Berkeley when I was going through my first four years, and even not when I went back and got the MA in early 1964. But a presidential election was scheduled in the fall of that year between President Johnson and the conservative Republican challenger, Barry Goldwater. There was an area at Sather Gate, one of the entrances to the UC campus, which like Hyde Park was a place where anyone could give a speech on any subject, socialism, religion, domestic politics, and any other subject you could imagine. For reasons I can't remember, the university regents decided in September 1964 to move the free speech area away from Sather Gate into the middle of the university campus. The students were interested in the Vietnam war and in the two presidential candidates. They felt that their freedom of speech was being assaulted and Mario Savio became their spokesman and leader of the Free Speech Movement. Some violence developed and the movement became more fanatical and became known as the Filthy Speech Movement..

Q: Yeah.

HILL: And then it's chaotic and sometimes violent demonstrators disrupted classes until Ronald Reagan became the governor of the state and imposed order there.

Q: Well --

HILL: But I was long gone by then. By the time Reagan became governor I was already in the Foreign Service.

Q: Well, when you're looking back on these things (laughs) the issues don't hold up as well as they seemed at the time.

HILL: Yes. I went in the Foreign Service in September 1964, several months after receiving my MA. In Washington I would read in the newspapers about what was happening at UC Berkeley and couldn't believe what I was reading.. A friend of mine taught Polish at UC Berkeley and recounted how radical students would disrupt his class to give seminars on politics.

Q: Yeah. Well now, let's go back to this. You were at the university. When did this desire to be a Baptist minister hit you? Was this --

HILL: It began in my teenage years. I was a teenager in high school and went to a couple of summer camps and where there was a very intense religious influence. And I came to feel that that was what I should do. And so my goal was to go to Berkeley and get a good

liberal arts education as preparation for seminary. The general rule of the seminary was that one should have a BA from a recognized university before entering seminary.

Q: Did you find -- I'm not trying to get too far in, but I think it's interesting to -- for people later who will read this to understand where people who got involved in American diplomacy came from. When you were at the seminary, how did it strike you? Was it you might say too orthodox or was it just a change in you?

HILL: Well, to put it into a few words, my first reaction was that I was learning more things about the Bible and more things about religion than I had ever realized before, and I found it exciting and, and interesting. But as time went on, some of the studies of the New Testament raised a number of questions in my mind about what I had always believed. And as I said, I reached the point after a year and a half in the seminary that I just didn't feel that I belonged there and that I no longer wanted to go into that field.

Q: Yeah. Well, of course this is the way the system should work. I mean you've got to -- you study it, you take a hard look at what you're going to be involved in, and ask yourself the big question. Is this for me?

HILL: Yes. I don't want to burden you with too much detail, but the notion in the Baptist Church was that, that the Bible was verbally inspired God. Every word was true. What I found out in seminary was that a lot of serious theologians didn't believe that. And they had very good analysis for questioning that assumption that began to make sense to me. And so all of a sudden all of the things that were part of what I thought was my tidy religious beliefs began to unravel.

Q: Yeah. Well, this of course -- it's difficult. My wife is, was very religious and I've sort of experienced through her some of her, you know, some of the questioning. And you know, the sources of the Bible and the fact that it's not a, just a book that just appeared. I mean it's one that developed over the years. Makes it, you know, much more questionable.

HILL: Every religion seems to have an ancient book. And people accept those ancient books without questioning them very much. But I daresay that if you went to a modern American and told them something like some of the stories that appear in those ancient books, person would say, "You've got to be kidding." So anyway, I came to the point where I thought that I shouldn't be in the seminary anymore. And I dropped out. And then I had to pay a price for that by going into the army for two years, instead of what I might have done otherwise. I had been in ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps) at Berkeley for two years. If I had stayed in ROTC for four years I would have graduated from Berkeley and gone into the Air Force as a second lieutenant for probably three years as an officer, instead of what I ended up doing, going into the army for two years as an enlisted man.

Q: By the time you were -- before you got actually in the military, how did you feel about the Soviet Union? Did you think about this?

HILL: Oh, sure. By then and even when I was at Berkeley I certainly understood the Cold War that the Soviet Union was our major adversary. Let me just mention that in 1957 the Soviets put up Sputnik, which was a big shock to Americans that they were ahead of us. And they were even with us in nuclear weapons, and suddenly they were ahead of us in space. And in 1961 the Berlin Wall went up. And John F. Kennedy was confronted by a more experienced leader, Nikita Khrushchev, who challenged him in a whole series of things. Even before I went into the army I certainly regarded the Soviet Union as the major threat to the United States and our allies, and I tried to keep track of what was going on.

Q: At Berkeley had there been much in the way of sort of campus marches and all, or?

HILL: I don't remember campus marches either when I was working on the BA or when later when I worked on the MA. There was one event, a riot rather than a demonstration, the impetus for which was not ideological but hormonal. It was panty rain that occurred soon after I began studying at Berkeley in 1955. Hundreds of fraternity boys (they were certainly not acting like grown men) paraded by sorority houses and women's dorms demanding that the coeds throw out their undies, which some of the girls (also not yet acting like grown women) did. Then the males started entering sororities and helping themselves, causing damage to the houses and also some of the wardrobes. The next issue of the campus newspaper headline an article "The Masses are Asses."

One political thing I remember very clearly in 1963, when The New York Times came out with a full-page article on the split between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. Before that split we had always referred to the Sino-Soviet bloc. But suddenly the PRC had gone its separate way.

Q: Oh yes.

HILL: And all of a sudden you had a Soviet bloc, and you had a separate Chinese communist state to deal with. That divorce triggered a profound change in international affairs. That divorce led to Nixon's visit to Beijing a decade later began U.S.- PRC relations while the Soviet Union gradually declined and collapsed in 1991.

Q: Well, did foreign travel -- this is before you got into the military -- did foreign travel interest you, or was it sort of out of the question?

HILL: Oh, I wanted it desperately, but I didn't have the money to do it on my own. And even when I was in the army I tried to get myself assigned to Europe. But they wouldn't do it for a guy who was taking a two-year stint as an enlisted man. And at one point during my two years in the army two major things happened. One was the construction of the Berlin Wall, and the second thing was the Cuban Missile Crisis. So a couple of times I thought that my time in the army might involve a trip either to Germany, maybe under threatening circumstances, or to South Florida because of the Cuban Crisis. But I spent my entire time on the Southern California desert. And so I didn't travel abroad until I got

into the Foreign Service.

Q: What were you doing in the California desert?

HILL: I was a company clerk. I had a BA, and a year and a half of seminary, which I thought amounted graduate school study. But the only thing the army was interested in was that I could type.

Q: (laughs)

HILL: So I was a company clerk.

Q: What -- were you with a division, or?

HILL: This was a field vehicle repair unit, to repair army trucks. But I had nothing to do with the repair of trucks, I just worked in the orderly room, the company office, working for the first sergeant and the captain of the company.

Q: Did your clerical experience pay off later in the Foreign Service?

HILL: Oh sure. I had learned to type in high school and it was one of the best things I ever did. So it helped me in the army to get a better job since I didn't have to stand guard duty, and in college, because I could type my own papers. And of course when I went into the Foreign Service it was a very useful thing for drafting reports. And of course I still use it on the computer.

Q: I know, for all of us who -- we thought in a way you really had to -- learning to type to survive to write the papers.

HILL: Yes. I don't know where I got the idea, but at least I'm glad I learned to type in high school. I was never super fast, but I was a reasonably fast, perhaps 30 or 40 words a minute.

Q: Well then -- well, in the army did, did you -- were you -- did you see the army as maybe a, an -- a long term goal of yours?

HILL: No. *(laughs)* Quite the opposite. I wanted to do my time and get out. We all theoretically had to go into the service then. Not everybody did, but I wanted to get in and get out and get on with my life as soon as possible. I mentioned earlier that I got married while I was in the army, a woman that I had known for a long time. She was also from the Richmond area. We started dating long distance when I was in the army. I would drive by VW Beetle to Berkeley where she was finishing up her BA and we'd go to San Francisco for dinner. I also took the Foreign Service Exam. I had heard about the Foreign Service and became immediately interested in it from my experience learning foreign languages and studying European diplomatic history at Cal. I didn't pass the written test the first time but I took it a second time and passed. Those were two

important things that I did while I was in the army. And while I was still in the army I applied to go back to Berkeley to get a master's degree. I got out of the army a few days early so that I could begin studying for the MA in January of 1963. And by taking courses in the summer, I was able to earn the MA in one year.

Q: Well now, did the advent of John Kennedy to the presidency, for many this was -- became very attractive, made government service feel very attractive. Did this hit you too, or not?

HILL: Yeah, he was certainly inspiring and he was interested in foreign affairs. He created the Peace Corps and a new program focused on relations the Latin America. He encouraged me to pursue the goals that I already had established.

Q: Well, so when you went -- first place, did you take the oral exam in this period while you were in the military?

HILL: No. I took the oral exam very soon after I got out of the military. It was probably in February 1964. I got out of the army in January. I'd taken the written exam the fall before and passed it. An oral exam team that came to San Francisco.

Q: Do you recall any of the questions?

HILL: They quizzed me on history and economics, as I recall.

Q: Then -- but do you -- how did you feel about the exam, the oral exam?

HILL: I thought it tested my confidence and composure more than my knowledge of specific subjects. I was delighted that I was able to pass it. There were three people in the team, and two of them were good cops and one of them was a bad cop in the sense that he would ask challenging questions in an attempt to rattle me. The first question was, "Cushing, Texas: What part of the Bible Belt is that?" I had questions about my religious background. For example, I was asked if I would try to convert other people in the Foreign Service or foreigners. That confused me because I had the impression that some of those questions ignored the fact that I had left the seminary and become an agnostic. But I think the scenario that went well for me was when one of the men said, "OK, you're a consular officer in the Belgian Congo. And there is, you know, an uprising of people who are sweeping through areas where there are American Christian missionaries. And your job is to convince me that I need to get out of there." So we got into a discussion where he was saying things like, "It's God's will that I'm here and I don't want to leave." And I was saying things like, "But the people who are coming have been known to do some very bad things to missionaries and to their families. So my advice to you is that you really need to think about pulling out right now until the situation has become pacified and then you can return and continue your important work." And I think that convinced them that I was unflappable, and that I could express views articulately.

Q: You're echoing the experiences there of Terry McNamara when he was in Kinshasa,

trying to persuade missionaries to get the hell out.

HILL: Yes. Those sort of things were going on at that time. And I had the good fortune of having a friend who was born of a missionary family in Africa and who was even then a Baptist minister. And even though by that time I was differing with him on theological questions we were still friends. So I had a pretty good sense of what missionaries would think in the Belgian Congo and what one had to say to convince them that they had to do sensible things or they'd end up dead.

Q: Yes. When you were taking the exam for the Foreign Service, did you have any real idea of what it was all about?

HILL: Well, the first time I took it I was shocked that it was a test not only of certain subjects, but of pretty much everything that I had been exposed to in my whole life. An example was that there was a biblical verse that was quoted. And one was asked where it was in the Bible and what was it about. And of course that was a piece of cake for me. But I was just amazed by all of the subjects that were touched on or covered. The second time around when I passed the exam I think I passed it partly on the ability to write fairly well in the essay part of the test.

Q: Well, I mean it's always -- the test is always controversial because they claim it's too hard or it's not aimed at Middle America or something like that. But it does sort of break a lot of people who later will show their versatility, which you really need in the Foreign Service.

HILL: Yes, absolutely right. Anyway, I think both in the written test and in the oral test, my crazy mixed up background ended up serving me fairly well as able to deal with challenging questions, have a broad knowledge of a lot of different things that probably other Americans wouldn't have, and I was delighted that I passed. Now, the next thing was I passed, but the president came out with a very small budget. And the State Department got in touch with me and said, "We don't think you're going to be able to come into the Foreign Service during your candidacy, because of this low budget that's being passed by President Johnson." And so (*laughs*) by that time we had a child on the way and I began to look around for other jobs. But fortunately the crisis was fairly short lived and by the mid-summer of 1964 I was contacted and asked, "Can you show up on September 1st in Washington?" And I said yes.

Q: Well, what did your wife think about all this?

HILL: Oh, she was game. I don't ever remember a time when we sat down and talked through whether we should go into the Service. I mean it was just agreed between us that it was a great opportunity. Now, her parents never said anything, but they must have been sorry to know that their only child was going to go off with me to foreign parts of the world. But we tried to keep in touch with them and send letters and tapes about our life abroad.

Q: Well, I know I took an only child off to the wilds of Europe at the time.

Q: Well, when you, you took -- I take it you took the A100 course and all.

HILL: Yes.

Q: How long was that?

HILL: I'm going to say two months.

Q: Mm-hmm. And --

HILL: Something like that. I already spoke German fairly well but the people in the department thought that it needed a little more beefing up, so they put me in a German course after A100.

Q: You took the A100 course from when to when?

HILL: I started out on the 1st of September and it probably finished in October or November, 1964.

Q: Mm-hmm. Well, what was your class like? I mean where did the people come from, and --

HILL: They were from all over. Another man and I both had gone to Berkeley but there was a number of people from the Ivy League schools and, and other parts of the country as a result of the Wriston program in the 1950s. The Foreign Service was supposed to be representative of the whole United States. So there were people from a lot of different states and schools. Now what we didn't have were any minority members.

Q: And how about women?

HILL: There were at least three women in that beginning class.

Q: How did you find the serving training? Did it give you a feel for the Foreign Service?

HILL: Oh yeah, and I thought it was terrific. It gave a feel for the Foreign Service, but also an exposure to the whole U.S. government. And especially the part of the U.S. government that's involved in foreign affairs, such as the agency, Treasury, and the Pentagon, Commerce, that were involved in foreign affairs. I thought it was great.

Q: At that time, were they looking at what type of work you'd be doing, or were you coned?

HILL: It was before the cone system. We were supposed to go out to on-the-job training

assignments. We were supposed to get some experience with all four of the key elements of the Foreign Service, consular, administrative, political and economic. But the only thing they gave us in A100 was we had a long class on consular work, and particularly on visas. So we learned a lot about issuing visas but there was no preparation for the other three functions, political and economic reporting, and administration.

Q: (laughs)

HILL: We, we, we had a lot of instruction on the visa law.

Q: So what was --

HILL: The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1951.

Q: Yes, I remember that. With no great pleasure, but I remember it.

HILL: *(laughs)* I remember one of the wags in the class said, "Whatever happened to the huddled masses longing to breathe free?" quoting the inscription on the Statue of Liberty.

Q: (laughs) Yeah. Oh God. Where was your first assignment?

HILL: Jerusalem.

Q: Well now, this is -- now, that's, that had to be -- that's a good solid exotic assignment, wasn't it?

HILL: Yeah, it was interesting. Somebody noted that I had been in theological study came to me and said, "They want a junior officer out in Jerusalem, would you be interested?" And I said sure. So on the 1st of April, 1965, my wife and child and I went off to Jerusalem and the post did a very good job arranging on-the-job training for me. I did some consular work, although mostly passports since we did not issue visas, and a bit of economic and commercial work. And then I did administrative work including helping the post get ready for an inspection. And at the very end I was doing political reporting because the political officer had been pulled out and sent to another post. I relished the political reporting and imagined I had found my niche in the Foreign Service when a congressman told a Department official that he understood some FSOs had been sent to on-the-job training assignments we were not working and earning their salaries, and insisted that the on-the-job training program be terminated and officers in it had to be transferred immediately to real jobs. So after only 18 months in Jerusalem I was pulled out and sent to do immigrant visas in Frankfurt, Germany.

Q: Oh boy. Well, let's talk about Jerusalem for a bit.

HILL: OK.

Q: Can you explain the status of Jerusalem, which of course is an important thing -- still

is -- but what was it in your time?

HILL: It was an independent post, not under the purview of either the embassies in Tel Aviv or Amman. The city was divided then and we had two offices, one in the Israeli sector and one in the Jordanian sector. I worked in both of them over the period of 18 months. We lived in the Israeli sector but I could go to the Jordanian sector office as early as 8:00 in the morning across what was then called Mandelbaum Gate. And I had to be out of there back across the border on the armistice line into the Israeli sector not later than eight p.m., when the gate closed overnight and would not be reopened until the next morning. It was a fascinating time. As I said, I did all of those different OJT things but what I really enjoyed doing at the end was writing political reports.

Q: Well, what -- the political reports consisted of -- what was the focus?

HILL: The focus was the tension along the armistice line between the Israeli sector and the Jordanian sector. There was then, and I think it's still there, the UN (United Nations) Truce Supervisory Organization (UNTSO) that had been put there after the armistice in 1949 that was negotiated by Ralph Bunche at the United Nations, an American. And the Palestine Liberation Organization had appeared sometime before I arrived in Jerusalem. And there was a group called Fatah in the Jordanian sector, particularly on the West Bank. They would occasionally cross the armistice lines at night and carry out what was then called terrorism but was mostly mischief, such as blow up a chicken house or something like that. It wasn't serious terrorism the way it became later on but the Israelis were having none of it. The Israelis ever so often would launch a punitive raid across the armistice line and blow up a house or two claiming that those houses had harbored terrorists. And so most of the political reporting I was doing was basically reporting on those kinds of tensions across the armistice lines.

Q: Well, how were relations -- you know, as a junior officer how did you see relations with our embassy in Tel Aviv? I know these were quite constrained or they were difficult, but --

HILL: We certainly got along well with the embassy in Tel Aviv but in Jerusalem we often had a different viewpoint than the embassy in Tel Aviv. The embassy in Tel Aviv was dealing with the Israeli government. The Israeli government had its own view of what was happening in the area. We were between the two sides and by having regular contacts with UNTSO we often differed about who started a firefight or what had happened on a particular Israeli punitive raid into Jordan, or a PLO action in Israel. Tel Aviv would send its report of what it had learned about a particular incident, and the embassy in Amman might send its report, although it was less actively involved in what was happening in Jerusalem. And we would send ours. Sometimes they were the same and sometimes they were different. We didn't have serious disagreements with the embassies. They did not tell us what to do. As noted earlier, we were an independent post so we reported directly to Washington ourselves without clearing anything with Tel Aviv. I remember once writing a report differing with a report that was done by a defense attaché in Tel Aviv, in which he reported that Israel had no interest in taking over the

West Bank. We thought differently.

Q: Well, who was your consul general?

HILL: Edwin Wilson.

Q: And how did you find him?

HILL: He was a nice man. He was sort of old school Foreign Service, obviously from a somewhat well-to-do family from the Mainline in Philadelphia. For him and his wife I thought the Foreign Service was noblesse oblige. He was a decent person to work for and he had served in other posts in the Middle East. I think he had been in Lebanon and Egypt. So he and his wife were experienced Middle Eastern hands. When the political officer was transferred to another post I had just started my stint in political reporting as part of the OJT program. Mr. Wilson called me in and said, "Now Ken, you go and get the information and bring it to me and I'll write up the political reports." That lasted about 24 hours. I soon had good sources and began to get the information and write up draft reports. Obviously he edited and approved them before they were sent out, but I became, in effect as a junior FSO the post political officer for several months until a new political officer arrived at post. This was the summer and fall of 1966 as tensions were mounting between Syria and Egypt on one side and Israel on the other, that led up to the Six Day War in 1967.

Q: Well, then you were off to Frankfurt.

HILL: Yes.

Q: That must have been quite a, I won't say downer, but it was certainly different.

HILL: Yes, it was. But you know, I had learned German well. So we enjoyed being in Germany and I enjoyed doing visa interviews of applicants for immigrant visas, mainly the German wives of GIs. But there were also other applicants such as older Germans who wanted to immigrate to the U.S. I issued immigrant visas for nine months and then I was transferred to the Passport Citizen Section for nine more months. And I found both assignments quite interesting. I got deeply involved in both of them so much so that the department wanted to make me a career consular officer. But that's a later story.

Q: Well, you must have found this a tremendous introduction to the complexities of Europe. Because Frankfurt had all these people from all over who ended up in Frankfurt and the various elements of west, of Eastern Europe were there too.

HILL: You probably mean the Gastarbeiter, the Guest Workers that West Germany hired from Eastern Europe and Turkey.

Q: Yeah.

HILL: The Frankfurt consulate didn't have much contact with those people. I got to know some of them later when I went to Yugoslavia, but that was really a German domestic issue when I was in Frankfurt. We did have people occasionally coming through Frankfurt trying to get visas. For example, I remember a Filipino nurse wanting a visa to go to the States to work as a nurse. But that was a visitor visa, and I didn't do many visitor visas. I did almost all immigrant visas for the nine months that I worked at it. And I found that interesting because the law required you to delve into people's lives and make sure that the people who were going to the States would make good citizens in the future. And I found the work on passports and citizenship fascinating, because I had several cases of people who came to me who had a claim to American citizenship and I basically had to do the research to support their claims. It was satisfying to help somebody submit his claim to citizenship and get the department's approval, and then be able to issue the documented citizen an American passport.

Q: Did you have a problem, I mean sort of a personal problem with dealing with asking women of the -- many of course were GI wives --and had they ever been involved in prostitution. Which a significant number had been. I mean this was --

HILL: Well, there was a certain amount of background investigation that was done by the Army on the fiancées of GIs. And often you knew even before you sat down with a woman that there was something like that in her record. I can think of two cases in which prostitution was involved. One of them was a woman who had married an African American, and obviously the two people loved each other. And there was an indication in the investigation report that she had probably been involved in prostitution for a short while. When I confronted her in the interview, she admitted that the report was correct. She also said that her husband was aware of it. Under the law I had to refuse her visa application. She and he applied for a waiver of the ineligibility from the INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service) office in Frankfurt and it was granted. So I was able to issue an immigrant visa to her after a delay of several weeks. I regretted that I had put them through that ordeal because it was a burden for them financially and they were held up for a while. But she got the visa and the two of them left for the U.S. There was another case of a 19-year-old soldier who said he was in love with and wanted to marry a woman who was several years older than he and who, according to a background investigation done by the Army, was still a prostitute and was working as a pornographic actress. The Army sent me the case before she came in for a visa to see if she would be eligible for a visa before the army would give him permission to marry her. I reviewed the file and notified the army that there was no chance that she could get a visa. I noted that if she were refused she could apply for a waiver of the ineligibility to the INS. But I thought it unlikely that she would get a waiver, given what the investigation had revealed. And then I remember getting a letter from the boy's mother who criticized me for preventing her son from marrying the woman he loved. I thought oh my God (*laughs*) lady, you don't know what I have saved your son and you from. I felt good about that one.

Q: Yeah. But did -- going back to Jerusalem, how did you find life there? I mean this was -- was it stressful? I mean this is --

HILL: Yeah, somewhat. Shopping was a bit of a problem. Language, I mean I'd learned enough Hebrew just to say greetings, and a few other phrases. I did the same in Arabic. Sometimes we would shop in the Israeli sector. Often we would go on the weekend to the Jordanian sector to the old city souk and buy things. We had to find our own housing within the allowance provided. We had to get bottled gas for the stove. We had an old ringer washing machine to do the laundry. Yeah, it was, it was not always easy. And sometimes, you know, there was some tension with the Israelis. I remember a Saturday when I was duty officer and had to go to the consulate to read an immediate telegram that had come in, and a couple of Hasidic Israelis threw stones at the car because I was violating the Sabbath. But it was not too bad. I was 28 years old then and had the energy to deal with the complexities. And it was exciting to live in Jerusalem and tour in both Israel and Jordan.

Q: Well, did you sense the, oh, the changes that were taking place, I mean the Israelis jockeying for position for making sure that they were sort of moving into neighborhoods to make a claim? All that sort of stuff that was going on?

HILL: Are you talking about the Israelis moving into new areas?

Q: Yes. Or was that going on at the time?

HILL: Well, it sure was. The American officer who was assigned to the UN Truce Supervisory Organization, called it the War of Centimeters. There was a situation where a hotel was built right next to the armistice line. But guess what? The building spilled over the armistice line a bit. And so you had those kinds of problems. The Jordanians would protest, but it was too late. A concrete building extended into the armistice zone. We reported those things but nothing was done. And there was always an issue involved with diplomatic representation, because we were not accredited to the Israeli government. The only office that we had any dealings with in the Israeli sector was the mayor's office. We had no contact with the Foreign Ministry of Israel. And the same thing was true in the Jordanian sector. It was easier going in the Jordanian sector because they were more defensive and their foreign minister was miles away in Amman. The Israelis often were more active in improving their status.

Q: Well, was this the case of, you know, Foreign Service posts often develop localitis. And here was an issue of world importance about the status in the West Bank and the status of the Jews and all. Did many of you, you or your officers develop strong feelings about who should get what and who, oh, was legitimate and who wasn't?

HILL: Yes. We were dealing with those kinds of issues all of the time. And I often say that in our case, we arrived in Jerusalem shortly after we had seen the movie Exodus, which has a song with the text, "This land is mine. God gave this land to me." And after arriving you met Israelis, and also Palestinians. And you realized that the situation was not as simple as the movie implied.

Q: Yeah. Well, it's --

HILL: Most of us who came out to serve in Jerusalem probably changed our viewpoint in the sense that we were trying to be open minded, but open minded about both sides. Palestinians had lived in that location for over a thousand years. Many had lost their homes and land during the 1948-49 war.. And hundreds of thousands of them were in refugee camps. And we also met Israelis who had survived the Holocaust and still had numbers tattooed on their wrists. We hoped that there was some way to bring about a peace settlement. But it didn't come then and it hasn't come yet.

Q: Yeah. How about your fellow officers in Tel Aviv? Did they see things differently, or?

HILL: I don't remember that any officer in Tel Aviv criticized what we were doing in Jerusalem although, as I noted earlier, one of the defense attaches accepted an Israeli statement that Israel had no interest in taking over the West Bank, which was then administered by Jordan. In general I think the embassy accepted that Jerusalem had a unique and independent position and the Jerusalem consulate reported on the confrontation along the armistice lines, which helped the department formulate and carry out policy.

Q: Do you remember who was the ambassador in Tel Aviv at the time?

HILL: No, I can't remember now.

Q: Was Sam Lewis still there?

HILL: No, it wasn't Sam Lewis.

Q: Oh.

HILL: He came later. But I cannot remember who was the ambassador, I'm sorry. You're testing the limits of my failing memory.

Q: Oh, I'm testing mine too. It's very hard because particularly when you're fairly junior, you're not -- these names don't ring down the aisles of history as much as --

HILL: I did a book, a self-published book, on my career for my kids and grandkids. But I don't think there's anything in it about who was the ambassador in Tel Aviv. I was a junior officer then. Ambassadors were not on my radar screen.

Q: When you left Jerusalem -- what year did you leave Jerusalem?

HILL: October 1966, a few months before the '67 War.

Q: Yeah.

HILL: Which we knew was coming.

Q: I was going to ask about that. How did you feel -- how did you sort of know it was coming?

HILL: Oh, well there were tensions. In fact, the tensions were greater with Syria at the time than with Egypt, but there were still some tensions with Egypt. The Syrians ever so often would decide that they were going to divert the Jordan river. And they would bring out earth moving equipment and would start working on the diversion. The Israelis would go in with their air force and destroy the equipment. This was happening during the time that I was in Jerusalem. So it was perfectly clear that that kind of tit for tat could not continue without a war.

Q: Well, moving on in Frankfurt, did you feel that war with the Soviet Union was a real possibility?

HILL: No. I didn't there. I guess I felt that we had faced down the Soviets in Berlin when the Wall was built. And they had challenged us in Cuba and they backed down. At least at that time it didn't seem very real that a war was coming.

Q: Yeah. Well, did you get any -- did you have much connection with the Germans?

HILL: Yes. I tried to have as much contact as possible, because I wanted to speak German and get to know Germans. And so I looked for every opportunity to engage with them. Most of my interviews in the Visa Section I did in German. If the person that I was interviewing was German then I didn't interview in English, but I interviewed in German.

Q: Where were the Germans going? I mean was it a pretty mixed group, or were there any particular areas where you'd notice many were going?

HILL: You mean --

Q: In the States --

HILL: -- Where they were coming from? What sort of people they were?

Q: Where they were going in the States.

HILL: Oh, in the States. Well, of course the, the GI wives were usually going wherever the husband was going. If he planned to stay in the military they were going to a military base somewhere. Occasionally you had soldiers who were getting out and who had married a German woman and they would be taking to the States. I would guess that most of them were going to places east of the Mississippi. I mean that's the recollection I have. I didn't sense that there were many people going out to California, which I knew very well.

Q: Yeah. Well, you'd already had -- I mean this wasn't a bad look at the Foreign Service, particularly the time in Jerusalem. Did you and your wife feel that this was the thing for you, or?

HILL: Oh yeah. I mean we were hooked. We were enjoying it and, and at that point had no intention of doing anything different.

Q: Well, then where'd you go?

HILL: After Frankfurt I went to West Berlin to the consular section in the U.S. Mission in West Berlin. They needed an officer to replace one who had tragically died in an apartment fire. It was essentially a subsection dealing with passports and citizenship. We went to California on home leave and then came back to Berlin, and I was there for two years.

Q: All right, well this is a good place to stop. I'll pick this up in 1960 -- what, seven? I mean '68?

HILL: Yes, 1968 to Berlin.

Q: OK, well I'll pick it up then. Great, well this is going along very nicely. Let's take a look at the calendar. How do you stand this on the -- next Friday maybe?

HILL: OK, let me take a quick look. Next Friday is the --

Q: Fourth.

HILL: Fourth. Yeah, that would be OK.

Q: OK, so you prefer -- can we do the morning or the afternoon?

HILL: Let's do it in the afternoon, again because our son is going to come over on Thursday and we'll probably head back home sometime late morning --

Q: Sure.

HILL: -- on the Friday. So the afternoon around 2:00 would work well.

Q: OK. OK. Catch you then. Oh, by the way, I will -- our office manager will send you a release form. And if you could sign it and return it to us I would appreciate --

HILL: I'm going to get that by mail?

Q: Yeah.

HILL: OK.

Q: OK, thank you. Take care.

HILL: OK, Stu.

Q: All right. OK. I'll make my announcement here.

HILL: All right.

Q: Today is April 4th, 2014 with Ken Hill. And Ken is in Norton, Virginia. And --

HILL: Winchester.

Q: Winchester! OK. And, and who is -- I'm trying to think of -- somebody who's only 40 miles away or something like that in the poem? The Civil War -- Sheraton --

HILL: Oh.

Q: It's Sheraton, isn't it?

HILL: Yes, Winchester was right in the middle of the Civil War. Stonewall Jackson was here and it changed hands depending on which history you read anywhere from 50 to 70 times between the union and the confederacy.

Q: Oh yes. It was Sheraton who --

HILL: Oh Sheraton. He was here and was fetched for the Battle of Cedar Creek, which is right near the small town of Strasburg, about 20 miles south of Winchester.

Q: Yeah. OK, well anyway, we'll move to a little more recent history. Ken, you're off to Berlin when? Or not Berlin, but was it Bonn? Or Berlin?

HILL: Yes, Berlin.

Q: Which did you go to, Bonn or Berlin?

HILL: To Berlin. That was in June 1968.

Q: What was -- how stood relations with Germany at that time? We haven't gone through many sort of crises, but how stood things would you say at that --

HILL: Well, we had good relations at that time. Of course this was in the middle of the Cold War. And especially West Berlin was very important to the Germans, very important that the Americans and the British and the French were there because the Soviets had backed the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961. And so West Berlin was actually surrounded by the wall. The western powers, who were known as the protecting

powers by then, not the occupying powers, ensured that West Berlin was not going to be taken over by the East German regime.

Q: Well, you were there for what, two years was it?

HILL: Yes.

Q: Let's talk about your job first. What --

HILL: I was in the Consular Section and worked specifically on American citizen issues. That included issuing passports and other documents to GI families. If a child was born in West Berlin we issued an American birth certificate and a passport, or included the child in an American parent's passport. And I looked after American tourists who got into difficulty in one form or another, either because they ran out of money, got sick, died, or got arrested for breaking a law. West Berlin was also famous as a spy center, a place of intrigue. And people, particularly people who had mental problems sometimes would show up there thinking that they were involved in east-west intrigue in some fashion. And so I became heavily involved in dealing with people like that. I had several cases over the period of the two years that I was there. One man, a veteran of the Korean war, came two times to my office several months apart looking for his Korean wife, who had apparently left him because he had a mental disorder, perhaps the result of a plane crash he mentioned. He imagined that the FBI in Berlin was helping his wife to run away from him. Each time he appeared in Berlin he would stay a week or two and frequently visit the consulate and I would spend time trying to help him. I was fortunate that I got to know an Army psychiatrist to whom I could turn for advice in dealing with disturbed people.

Q: Who was the -- who was running on our -- it as a mission, wasn't it?

HILL: It was designated a U.S. mission and a minister was in charge. At that time he was Brewster Morris.

Q: And how was he? How did you find him?

HILL: Well, he was fine. He was the highest level diplomat in the American sector of West Berlin. I didn't see him very often but he was accessible if I had a need to visit him. And he was quite agreeable. His deputy was David Klein, who before coming to Berlin had been in Moscow. He was very much a Soviet hand, specializing in Eastern European and the Soviet Union, and Cold War issues. I saw him much more often. He was a quick study and decisive. He helped me get an onward assignment from Berlin.

I remember the reactions of Morris and Klein at a staff meeting to my report of a consular case right out of the movie Cabaret. A 16-year-old Puerto Rican girl had attempted suicide by jumping into one of the Berlin canals. The fire department rescued her and she was taken to a German mental hospital for observation. That same morning an American man about 30 years old came to the consulate to inquire about her. My German assistant

asked if she could help him and he replied, "Yes, make me into a woman!" He said he was a transvestite stripper at a gay nightclub called Chez Nous, French meaning "our place." He and the young woman lived together, he pretending to be her mother and she pretending to be his son. A German psychiatrist at the hospital told me that the two were probably as stable at that point as they would ever be in their lives. Apparently the two were trans-gender. I cabled the department and asked it to contact the girl's parents in New York City, assuming that since she was under age they might want to have her sent home. But the reply stated that they had disowned her and wanted nothing more to do with her. The department instructed that I could not become her "loco parentis," in essence that she was on her own. At the staff meeting Minister Morris said that my unusual telegram to the department had required him to look up some words in a dictionary.

Q: Well, how did you find the German staff at the --

HILL: Excellent. I had four ladies who worked for me and they were all very good at what they did. The most senior among them dealt mainly with citizenship and passport issues. Another looked after Special Consular Services for American citizens who needed help as I just mentioned. One of them also dealt with things like veterans' benefits and other retirement issues.

Q: Well, going back to my days as a consular officer in Frankfurt, did you run across baby birth problems? Sort of quite a bit of time of people who were, you know, they were registering children which they -- some of them they probably were not the fathers of. They were picking up the girls to inveigle women into getting married when they were pregnant by somebody else and all that. Did you run across that sort of thing?

HILL: A little bit, but it was a much bigger problem in Frankfurt than it was in Berlin. Perhaps because we had a smaller group of servicemen there and because there was a concentration of people who were involved in intelligence. Those servicemen were more mature and more often married and family men. They probably were more settled and more serious people, maybe older, than the young soldiers that you are talking about in Frankfurt. I certainly did register the births of children of American citizens, who acquired American citizenship under the law. And there may have been a few cases of babies born of doubtful American paternity. I remember one letter I received from a German woman who wrote that she had born a baby but it was not the child of her American husband Joseph who was serving in Vietnam. Of course I responded that the child had not acquired American citizenship from her husband. I think she wanted such a statement to convince the German registry office that the child should be registered as having German citizenship.

Q: Did you run across -- did you get involved in any agent activity, trying to bail people out who'd taken -- gotten involved in the East German authorities, or?

HILL: Yes. We had a few cases of Americans who got arrested in East Berlin and who at some point, sometimes after a year of incarceration, would be released and sent across the

Sandkrugbruecke (a bridge at the Berlin Wall between East and West Berlin). I'll mention one case in particular. A person showed up in the visa section down the hall from my office with a Cuban laissez-passer (a substitute passport) asking for a visa to the U.S. But the laissez-passer indicated the person was born in the United States. And so he was sent to me and I checked with Washington and found out that he was wanted by the FBI for hijacking an airplane from Atlanta to Havana. He was considered dangerous, and so I was advised to take measures to protect myself. In the following days the FBI and the State Department considered several ways to arrest the man so he could be returned to the U.S. and tried for the hijacking. The FBI was especially keen to have a conviction of a hijacker in the hope that it would discourage the crime which had gotten out of hand. But there were concerns that the various plans might jeopardize convicting him in court. I was anxious to get the man out of Berlin lest journalists learned of him. So I informed the department and the man had told me he wanted to return to the U.S. and "face the music." He was tired of running, he said. So I suggested that a former Texas sheriff working in the public safety office at the mission and I, unarmed, could escort him on a commercial flight to New York. My suggestion was approved and we were successful in escorting him to New York and turning him over to the FBI, who were waiting for the flight at JFK airport.

Q: Do you know what happened to him?

HILL: Yes, he went on trial in Atlanta, Georgia and was convicted and given a twice-life sentence in prison. I assume he is still serving his sentence.

Q: Good God.

HILL: . During the flight the former sheriff talked with the hijacker while I was taking a nap. The hijacker apparently discussed in detail why he had taken over the airplane and diverted it to Cuba, thus freely admitting the crime. And so my friend was called to testify at the man's trial in 1969 or 1970.

Q: Well, how did the man hijack a plane to Cuba and end up in East Germany?

HILL: The Cubans gave him a laissez-passer and wanted to get rid of him. He used the document to travel to Prague, where he went to the embassy and offered to return to the U.S. So under instructions from the department, the embassy gave him a non-refundable voucher to buy a one-way airline ticket to New York. But on the way to the airport, he jumped out of the car at a stop light and traded his voucher for a ticket to Guinea in Africa. The Guineans wouldn't let him enter their country even though he was an African American, and they put him on the plane returning to Prague. From there he traveled to East Berlin. When he showed the East Germans his laissez-passer and asked for assistance, they said, "Oh, you're an American. You need to go to West Berlin and talk to them." He was rejected by everybody, a hot commodity that nobody wanted, even to give him asylum. So he ended up in my office. Years later the man from prison filled papers to sue 13 American officials for a million dollars each, including an unnamed Foreign Service Office who with another man, both armed he claimed, abused him and violated

his rights, and forced him to return from West Berlin to the U.S. Of course his claims that we were armed, had abused him, and had forced him to return to the U.S. were entirely false. I was alarmed that I might become involved in a lengthy legal case but the Justice Department had the suit dismissed as frivolous.

Q: Wow. Was Berlin a center point for you might say American tourism, to go look at the Wall and all that when you were there?

HILL: There was a little bit of that. It was an interesting and cultured city, a former major European capital. Besides the Wall there were wonderful museums in both East and West Berlin, opera, good restaurants, shopping. So it was a place that attracted a certain number of tourists.

Q: Well, was there the feeling in your mission that here, unless there are going to be some drastic change, this is sort of a dying place?

HILL: The Germans were trying to keep it alive. In truth, the permanent old population in the city was getting old and dying off. And in fact, there were lots of shops with used goods. We bought a couple of antique German things, furniture, because people would die and, and often the family members would come from West Germany and have to get rid of the furniture that their parents had. The German government encouraged young families to move to Berlin and gave them financial incentives to do so. So there was a struggle going on of one part of the population getting old and dying, and another part of the population coming to Berlin from some other part of Germany. People had to be coaxed to move to West Berlin because it was surrounded by the Wall and an unfriendly East German state. We diplomats from the three western powers could visit East Berlin and travel to West Germany by car, rail or airplane. But West Germans usually elected to fly rather than deal with the East German Volkspolizei (peoples police).

Q: Did you have anything to do with the students at Freie University and other places there?

HILL: A bit. I guess the people in USIA (United States Information Agency) dealt more with them. But occasionally I would run into students. And because I had gone to Berkeley the students practically worshipped me because they were at the time going through demonstrations and regarded Berkeley as a model for university demonstrations. Otherwise I didn't have much contact with them. Occasionally a student would come to the consulate, but more often they would go to the Visa Section and not to me in order to travel to the U.S.

Q: How was social life there?

HILL: Excellent. We were able to get a good babysitter to look after our young family and go out to dinner downtown or go to the opera. Occasionally we would cross at Checkpoint Charley into East Germany and go to the opera there. They had an excellent opera as well. And there were actually a couple of Americans who sang in the Staatsoper

in East Berlin as a way of getting a foot in the door in an opera career.

Q: I was thinking '70 to '72, was there any sort of world -- obviously we were involved in Vietnam. Did that translate at all for any problems for you or interesting things for you?

HILL: No, or are you thinking about Berlin?

Q: I was thinking peripherally.

HILL: No, it wasn't an issue in Berlin when I was there from 1968-70. I'll tell you what was happening nearby. Right next door in Czechoslovakia the Soviets with a couple of their satellites, including East Germany and the German Democratic Republic, invaded Czechoslovakia and brought an end to the Prague Spring, an attempt by liberals in the Czech communist party to create the beginnings of a democratic system. And that happened right after I got to Berlin. I could tune my shortwave radio to Radio Prague the last two or three days before the Soviets discovered where the transmitter was and shut it down. It was thrilling to hear a person say in English, "This is Radio Prague, the voice of Free Czechoslovakia." But in a few days they found the station and shut it down. Now, we also had a radio station in West Berlin that broadcast to East Berlin called RIAS, Radio in the American Sector. And I remember once, for example, being invited to come and give an interview in German on how Americans voted absentee when they were outside the United States and there was an election going on back home.

Q: At the time of the Czech crisis -- this is the fall '68 -- did you feel, I mean were forces mobilized? Did you feel that something might have happened in your sector too, or not?

HILL: I don't remember feeling that we were under any kind of threat at the time. The U.S. forces in West Berlin and also in West Germany may have been placed on heightened alert but I wasn't aware of it if it occurred. The Soviets were threatening NATO but the action in Czechoslovakia was clearly a heavy-handed Soviet control of one of its satellites. And you know, as much as the U.S. denounced it and protested it, it's something they were going to do and we were not going to intervene. When we went to Berlin the first time I drove our car with my wife and our two young children crossing the Iron Curtain at Helmstadt and drove 110 kilometers to West Berlin. It was very clear we were in enemy territory and we felt very uneasy. And in West Berlin there was always a sense that you were right up against the Wall and, and, and surrounded by a country and a system that was hostile. If you crossed into East Berlin to go, as I mentioned earlier, to the opera or to do a little shopping, there wasn't very much there, but there were a few things you could buy. You knew you were crossing the line into hostile territory. We had a special pass called flag orders that enabled us to cross the border without leaving our car. But you were not supposed to roll the window down and hand the document to the East German guard but of course he wasn't going to open the gate until he was satisfied that you were in fact an allied official. And so you constantly felt that you were surrounded by an unfriendly regime.

Q: Well, did you -- were there many illegal crossings of people coming over from East

Germany into Berlin?

HILL: Illegal in the sense, you mean that they were --

Q: Ones that basically were escaping from East Germany into West Germany?

HILL: Well, I don't remember that happening much at the time we were there. There had been earlier cases, for example, of a young man who was shot between lines of barbed wire and was allowed to bleed to death. He was an East German who was trying to get to West Germany. By the time we were there, the Wall and areas in front of it bound by barbed wire were difficult to overcome. Escapes had become virtually impossible. The Wall was effective and so were the guards who patrolled it all the time.

Q: Were there any incidents at the Wall while you were there that, you know, sort of stood out in your mind?

HILL: As I mentioned earlier, occasionally an American who had been arrested and imprisoned in East Berlin would be released and would cross to West Berlin. A couple of lawyers, one on either side of the city, often worked on getting those people released. But there was none of the drama that occurred at Checkpoint Charley when the Wall went up in 1961 and Soviet and American tanks confronted each other.

Q: All right. Well then, you left there in 1970. Where did -- where did you want to go and where did you go?

HILL: When, when I went back to the States with a hijacker, I was able to go into the department and talk to personnel. Their idea was to put me into the consular cone because I had done consular work well. And I said, "No, I would like to be a political officer, I'd like to go in the political cone." And they said, "You can try to do that, but you won't get any assignments and you won't be promoted." But the deputy at the U.S. mission got in touch with the Office of German affairs in the department and recommended me for a position there, and the office director agreed to take me on board. So when I left Berlin I was assigned to the Office of German Affairs in the department.

Q: All right, you did this job from when to when?

HILL: From July 1970 until July 1972.

Q: What job did you have in German Affairs?

HILL: I had two jobs. I started out working on Berlin Affairs. At the time the Four-Power talks were taking place in Germany. Willy Brandt, who was the chancellor of the FRG (the Federal Republic of Germany) proposed a policy called Ostpolitik, eastern policy. He wanted to reach an accommodation with the Soviet Union and East Germany that would ease the severe division of Germany that prevented divided families from visiting each other. One of the steps he proposed was that the Soviet Union and East Germany

(known as the German Democratic Republic), the FRG and the U.S. would engage in Four Power Negotiations to overcome some aspects of the division of Germany. I worked on that for about a year and then I exchanged positions with another officer who worked internal German politics in West Germany. I then worked for a man by the name of Elwood Williams, maybe you're heard of him.

Q: Oh yes, he was in a wheelchair, wasn't he?

HILL: Yes.

Q: Yes, he was quite a, I mean he stood out in the cafeteria, but also, you know, had quite a reputation as an analyst. He --

HILL: He was a terrific person who had studied at a German university in the 1930s and had worked in German affairs in the department for a number of years. The department wisely kept him on board after he developed some kind of dystrophy that forced him into a wheelchair. He was my boss and my mentor. He had a man who served him as a caregiver. I did whatever work needed to be done, drafting letters, answering cables, all sorts of things like that. When Chancellor Willy Brandt visited Washington in 1972 I wrote position papers and set up appointments in the White House and in the department. My assignment ended in the summer of 1972 when I went to FSI to learn Serbo-Croatian.

Q: Well now, in the -- on the German Desk, you were working on the Four-Power Treaty. Who was doing the big negotiations in that?

HILL: The negotiations were handled in Germany by Jonathan (Jock) Dean, the political counselor of the embassy in Bonn, and the DCM, Russ Fessenden. The ambassador at the time was a political appointee from Union Carbide. I've forgotten his name.

Q: Well, we can always fill that in.

HILL: They would meet every day and send a reporting telegram at the end of their day, which would hit Washington just about at the end of our day. Usually their cable would say that they needed instructions by the opening of business the next day or they would take a certain position. I often had to work another two or three hours helping to write and clear a reply. Sometimes we simply could not get a telegram out in the evening and the negotiators in Bonn would follow their own advice. Embassy Bonn clearly wanted to control the talks rather than leave decisions to the department. But my having often to work late at the department cut into my time at home with my wife and young children.

Q: Well, I'm -- right now I've been interviewing Philip Kaplan who was in Bonn I think at the time. And talking about Jock Dean and his work on his Four-Power Treaty. How did you feel -- how did -- what was sort of the impression back in Washington about what this treaty was aimed at and where it was going?

HILL: The view in Washington, and more specifically, the view of Henry Kissinger who

was then the national security advisor, was that the talks amounted to softening of U.S. and western resolve. But Willy Brandt was pushing Ostpolitik and the Four Power Talks because the Cold War and the Iron Curtain were difficult for Germany and the German population. Kissinger was not in favor of the effort but was unwilling to confront our ally the FRG openly. So we were constantly trying to apply brakes to slow down and limit the process. But in the end, the talks resulted in quasi-recognition of the German Democratic Republic by the U.S., with diplomatic representation there. And West Germans, and to some degree West Berliners, were able to increase family visitations. West Germans seem to feel more confident in visiting their relatives in East Germany. But I think Kissinger felt that Ostpolitik was a mistake and that it allowed the Soviets to make even further gains from the Second World War. The Helsinki Final Act signed by 36 countries in 1975 came soon after the Four Power Talks. It provided even more contact between east and west and renewed recognition of international human rights. And the Helsinki treaty soon began to challenge police control in the communist countries, and was a contributing factor in the demise of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union 1989-91.

Q: Was there something, I think I've heard people dealt with it talking about the Berlin Book, or something? I mean a whole series of things, you don't want to exceed this or that and the Soviets were keeping the same book and they were trying to get us to lower the tailgates of trucks an inch farther.

HILL: Yes..

Q: You know, it was a very delicate game, wasn't it?

HILL: Oh yeah, there was a crisis in 1948 when they closed off road access routes to Berlin and, and we had to resort to the airlift to keep the place alive. Road access to Berlin was restored after we supplied the city by air for over a year. But there was a constant battle that went on between the West and the communist authorities who were constantly trying, as you said, to lower the tailgate, restrict the traffic, counteract anything that that we did. And there were things going on constantly in Berlin itself, for example, the prisoners Spandau Prison.

Q: This was --

HILL: The four World War II allies alternated in providing a guard at Spandau prison. And when it was the turn of the Soviets they would have an honor guard with all of the soldiers over six-foot-tall so that they came across as invincible heroes. But there were more serious things going on than that. There was a constant struggle going on with the Soviets, and with the East Germans. The East Germans were always trying to force recognition of their sovereignty and in creating a government, but it was a country that didn't function very well.

Q: Again, by this time in dealing with Germany from Washington, was there any concern about the Ostpolitik leaving to a German, East-West German sort of neutrality?

HILL: The more conservative people, and particularly those in intelligence units were concerned that Ostpolitik was a sell-out to the Soviets and the East Germans. I remember the CIA representative who came to the weekly German affairs staff meeting would refer to Brandt's adviser Egon Bahr as "Egon the Fox" suggesting that he was perhaps deceitful.

Q: In the work you were doing, did the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) play much of a role of telling you what was happening, and?

HILL: I don't remember that. As I just noted, I remember that a CIA guy came to the weekly staff meeting but he didn't divulge intelligence secrets to the 20 or more people in the room. The director of German affairs in the department was James Sutterlin, a bright and articulate man. He ran a good meeting and there was a lot of interest across the government in German affairs, so we had representatives from Defense, the CIA and other agencies. But I don't remember getting intelligence reports, perhaps I was too low ranking. I assume that intelligence analyses were being shown to people who were higher ranking than me.

Q: I tried to ask this of people who were dealing with European affairs across the board, but did -- was there at any time during the time you were dealing with German Affairs there that you felt that, you know, the balloon might go up and the Soviets might launch an attack or something might happen?

HILL: I don't remember feeling that way. We had American military forces in West Germany guarding the Fulda Gap, through which we expected that Soviet tanks would begin an attack on western Europe. But in the department I don't remember that we seriously felt that the Soviets were planning an imminent attack. But we knew that the Red Army had large tank forces in East Germany and the other satellite countries and there was always the possibility that they might some day invade the FRG.

Q: Well then, what caused you to turn towards Yugoslavia?

HILL: Personnel called me in at some point, I guess sometimes while I was on the German Desk and said, "Well, where do you want to go next? We could put you into hard language training. We have three possibilities right now: Polish, Hungarian, and Serbo-Croatian. A political officer job will open up in Belgrade in the summer of 1973." I decided on Serbo-Croatian. Hungarian is virtually impossible to learn (*laughs*). Polish would have been interesting, but at that point I thought maybe something a little further south that wouldn't be so cold in the winter. So I opted for Serbo-Croatian.

Q: Who were your teachers?

HILL: They were native Serb speakers. Janko Jankovic was the chief teacher. He was a man who was probably then 65. There was also a Serbian Orthodox priest who taught part-time. I don't remember anybody else.

Q: Yeah, I had -- Janko Jankovic, he had a brother-in-law named --

HILL: Yes, and he was dead by then.

Q: Yeah. Was --

HILL: Yeah, I've forgotten his name, but, but he was often mentioned by Jankovic. He had died a year or two before I started taking Serbian.

Q: How did you find the class?

HILL: Well, I thought it was very good. It was six hours a day, small classes, and we were expected to spend a couple of hours in the evenings. We didn't have computers then. We had tape recorders and you were expected to take the tapes home at night and spend another couple hours working on the language. I do remember at one point maybe six weeks into the course waking up in the morning and saying, "This is a hoax, nobody speaks this way." But I found out they do. Even the children!

Q: (laughs)

HILL: I mean, you know, this was the first fully inflected language that I had learned. German has cases, but nowhere near the extent that they determine what happens in Serbian when you speak it. I went through the 10 months course and came out of it at a three-three level, and after serving for almost three years in Belgrade I came back and tested at a four-four level. So I thought it was a well run course.

Q: Something I got from, I must say from Popovic, he was Jakovic's brother-in-law. I -- we practically had a revolt because he was a Serb in the old school and very much -- I mean he didn't deviate. And he would sometimes tell us that this is the way you should do it, and he made no adjustment to the fact that the language was changing and we would get elements of the language we'd hear from people who came back. But for him, the language stopped right at 1941, I think. And we practically had a revolt led by one Larry Eagleburger in my class. But did you get much from Jankovic and from the priest, sort of the feeling about Serbs and how they looked upon Croats and others?

HILL: Jankovic would make somewhat critical remarks, but he was fairly careful about criticizing the Croats. We had a couple of people in the class who were going to Zagreb. So he would tell us how to say it in Serbian and then if there was a variation in Croatian he would tell them how to say it. You know, they're basically dialects of each other. But don't tell the Croats today that I said that.

Q: (laughs) No.

HILL: Serbian ideas certainly came across. Jankovic and Father Milosevic were certainly Serbian nationalists.. They talked about World War II, and certainly the Croatian Ustashe would come up. And they mentioned some of the terrible things that happened in Bosnia

during the war, for example.

Q: Well, so you went out to -- you served in Yugoslavia for what, three years or two years?

HILL: Three.

Q: Three.

HILL: I left a little bit early. I had some bad luck with a political appointee ambassador. I left in March 1976.

Q: Was that Silberman ?

HILL: Silberman, yes.

Q: I've interviewed him.

HILL: Oh. Congratulations.

Q: (laughs) It's interesting, you might want to -- it's online, so you might want to go to the Library of Congress, or actually go to our website adst.org, and check Silberman's interview.

HILL: I shall..

Q: But --

HILL: When he arrived in Belgrade he said that George Shultz had warned him that Foreign Service Officers were clannish and he needed to have somebody at the post who in effect was on his side. I think that choice of words "on his side" was revealing. He ended up choosing a person who had been in a White House program.

Q: Fellows Program,?

HILL: Yes, a former White House Fellow, to come out and be on the embassy staff. I think that Silberman also arrived with a strong animosity toward the Foreign Service which may have resulted from Shultz's warning that FSOs were clannish and that he needed his own guy at post.

Q: I'd like to -- we'll come to this later, but let's start at the time. You got out there in '72 was it?

HILL: '73.

Q: '73. What was the situation in Yugoslavia in '73 when you arrived?

HILL: Tito was president, of course. In 1972 the Croatians tried to join the United Nations separately from being part of the Yugoslav state and the Croatian communists allowed students to express Croatian nationalism. Tito stopped both and there was a change in the leadership of the Croatian organization in the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY). Then he began looking for a way to ensure that his legacy, that Yugoslavia would stay together as a socialist federation, would be perpetuated after his death. And he was getting along in years although he seemed reasonably healthy. In 1974 he organized a LCY conference to create a new constitution to create a federal structure in which the executive function after Tito died would be a rotating group presidency. The leadership of the group would change form year to year and from one republic to another, so that all of the republics would have a chance to run the country and presumably have a stake in keeping the country intact. Besides Croatia, there were problems in other parts of the country, some student demonstrations in Kosovo, Macedonia's concerns that Bulgaria wanted to annex it while it claimed Pirin Macedonia inside Bulgaria, and some strife between Montenegrins and local Albanians.

Q: Well, was there a Bosnian movement?

HILL: Not then. The prime minister of the country at the time was Džemal Bijedić, who was a Bosnian, and that was an effort by Tito to give Bosnia a bit more status. The Bosnians were the butt of jokes that reflected a notion that they were not very smart. Both Serbs and Croats joked about Bosnians. We in the Political Section were encouraged to visit Bosnia as well as other parts of the country. I went to Bosnia several times and liked it instantly. I had served in the Middle East and had some exposure to Islam, and Bosnia was more secular than very religious. And culturally Bosnia was an interesting place with wonderful architecture and an interesting history.

Q: How about Montenegro?

HILL: Again, Montenegro was another republic that was considered to be backward. And I remember going to Montenegro with my wife and I could get around in Serbian there very easily. The pronunciation was a little different, but not significantly so. Again, I liked the place very much. And again, it was a butt of jokes.. Serbs would tell you Montenegro jokes that implied that the Montenegrins were provincial and slow. They were also proud mountaineers. I remember a Montenegrin tour guide in a museum telling me that the museum had the largest collection of Turkish flags--outside Turkey. Meaning, of course, that the Montenegrins had defeated the Ottoman Empire's several efforts to occupy Montenegro.

Q: Well, I, I can recall one where somebody was going through a pass up in Montenegro and it was snowing heavily. And there was a Montenegrin man sitting on the back of his horse and his wife is all huddled up in a shawl, but clearing the way for the horse. And somebody asked, "Oh Ivan, what are you doing? And he replied, "My wife is ill and I'm taking her to the hospital."

And the other one was the Soviet astronaut Gagarin who was circling the globe in his rocket spaceship. And was asked, "Did you see anything unusual?" And he said, "Well yes, we saw a Montenegrin working."

HILL: *(laughs)* One joke I heard once was that two Montenegrins were walking along and one of them saw a snail and stepped on it. And the other one said, "What are you doing stepping on that poor snail? It's not bothering anybody."

And the first one says, "I'm fed up with that snail, it's been following me all day."

Q: (laughs) God. Well, you know, we ran across the prejudice against Albanians. They were called Shqiptars --

HILL: Yes.

Q: -- at the time. And we had two Albanians working for the, our little club on the embassy grounds, the, the Twib Club? And we needed to get them drivers' licenses to pick up stuff and all that. And we were told they'll never get a drivers license here in Belgrade. They won't -- just the people who run the License Bureau and give the test won't approve it. So we had to ship them down to Pristina to take the driver's license test and get a license. I mean things were that bad.

HILL: Yeah, I remember Jankovic and Milosevic both making comments about Shqiptars, and always to the effect that they were dumb, inefficient and lazy.

Q: Yeah. Well, were we monitoring, you might say nationalist or separatists movements in the Yugoslavia at the time, or was that of any interest to the political section?

HILL: Yes, we were following nationalist and ethnic events carefully. One of my jobs was to scan all of the newspapers that were printed in Serbo-Croatian every day. A local employee scanned the Slovenian and Macedonian newspapers that I couldn't understand. And at one point when I was reading newspapers I learned that a couple of Soviet diplomats had a minor auto accident as they were driving toward Montenegro. The Yugoslav police found brochures in their car that indicated that they were supporting a Montenegrin separatist movement. It was anti-Muslim because there were ethnic Albanians in Montenegro who were Muslim. I remember writing a cable or two on that incident to the department. We were constantly interested in what the Croats were doing after the manifestations of nationalism in 1972. And I would often see articles in the Bosnian newspaper about fights in bars between Serbs and Muslims, and Croats and Muslims, and Croats and Serbs, and note the prison sentences meted out in an effort to control ethnic strife.

Q: Well, let's look at the internal doings of our embassy at the time. Did you realize that Silberman was he ambassador when you went out there?

HILL: No, the ambassador at that time was Malcolm Toon.

Q: Oh, he was a tough cookie. But he --

HILL: Yes, he had served as a political counselor in Moscow. Basically I got along with him although there was a DCM and a political counselor between him and me. He was tough and arrogant.

Q: Who was the DCM?

HILL: Richard Johnson.

Q: Yeah, Dick and I took Serbian together, along with Larry Eagleburger n the class.

HILL: A distinguished group.

Q: And who was political counselor?

HILL: Don Tice.

Q: Did you -- when Silberman came out, did it sort of immediately change the tone of things?

HILL: Yes. There was a constant in U.S. policy toward Yugoslavia dating from Tito's break with the Soviet-led Comintern in 1948. Although under Tito Yugoslavia continued to be led by the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) we helped the country from not being invaded by Stalin and made into a Soviet satellite and part of the Warsaw Pact again. And even though Yugoslavia got involved in the non-aligned movement and didn't always do things that we appreciated, by and large the U.S. tolerated Yugoslavia and supported Tito because he was anti-Soviet, or at least non-Soviet. Yugoslavia was a communist country but it was not hard line communism. By the 1970s Yugoslav communists had created a communism with a smiling face, or at least with less of a scowl. A million Yugoslav Gastarbeiter worked in Germany and other parts of western Europe and Yugoslavs had passports and could travel whenever they wished. There was wide freedom to write, paint, and speak so long as one did not criticize Tito and the LCY. But when Silberman came he changed the policy at once. He was ideologically opposed to the traditional U.S. policy toward Yugoslavia. He saw the country as a stalking horse for the Soviets and an adversary of the United States. Besides manifesting animosity toward the Foreign Service which I mentioned earlier, I think he also had an animus toward American diplomats who had carried out the traditional policy that he disliked. He also indicated that Yugoslavia inspired other countries or organizations, for example the UN International Labor Organization (ILO), to be more leftist and take positions contrary to our interests. The U.S. should be strongly and publicly critical of Yugoslavia. I accompanied him to one of his earliest calls on a Yugoslav official and he told the official that the U.S. would link Yugoslav policy to trade relations and other ties between the two countries. If Yugoslav took policy positions contrary to U.S. interests we would retaliate economically. Shortly after he arrived he got involved in a public dispute with the

Yugoslav government trying to win the release of a Hungarian American arrested for taking photographs of sugar refining equipment and charging him with espionage.

Q: Well, did he bring a different DCM out with him?

HILL: Yes, but not right away. Toon had changed Dick Johnson and replaced him with Dudley Miller, who had worked in the Secretariat.

Q: Yeah, Dudley had been in the embassy when I was there.

HILL: Yes. He and Pat had had an earlier assignment in Belgrade. So Dudley was DCM and he had been there a year when Silberman arrived.. As noted earlier, Silberman brought a young guy by the name of Brandon Schweitzer, who had been a White House Fellow. Soon after Schweitzer arrived Silberman began to look to him for advice and to get him involved in various activities of the embassy. For example, Silberman appointed Brandon as youth coordinator. And I remember him asking Brandon what his contacts thought about some issue, which was odd since he had not been in Belgrade very long and didn't speak Serbian. In October, three months after Silberman arrived he announced at a staff meeting that he was changing his DCM, that Dudley was leaving and Brandon would replace him as DCM.

Q: Ooh. So how did that go?

HILL: We were all shocked. Most people in the embassy, and I was one of them, regarded Dudley as a friend. I helped organize a farewell party for Pat and Dudley. Obviously Silberman would not host a farewell party for Dudley, whom he had fired publicly and harshly. I had already had my own encounter with Silberman who nearly transferred me in September after we had a major CODEL (congressional delegation) visit led by Carl Albert who was then speaker of the house, with a group of a dozen congressmen and their wives and staff, and a visit by President and Mrs. Ford. I was still the acting political counselor and doing my job after he told me I could stay in Belgrade if I behaved myself, whatever that meant, since I wasn't aware that I had misbehaved. I had that experience in preparation for Dudley's firing.

Q: Well, did you feel that you had to change -- did you understand what your approach was that's wrong as far as Silberman was concerned?

HILL: No, I didn't think that I had done anything wrong. I was surprised by Silberman's policy changes but I carried out his instructions because he was the ambassador and in charge, even if in private I did not entirely agree with him. I think Silberman targeted me because I was the acting political counselor when he arrived and I represented in his mind a practitioner of the old traditional policy that was reasonably friendly toward Yugoslavia, that he disliked. Plus, I was an FSO about whom Shultz had warned him. Mark Palmer, who had written speeches for Kissinger and whom I suspect Silberman approved to become the new political counselor, arrived in September but became ill with hepatitis right after landing, so he was out for three months or so recovering and I

remained the acting political counselor. I continued to take orders from Silberman and do my job but he was prejudiced against me.

Q: Well, were --

HILL: But, as noted I did what I was supposed to do. I wrote position papers ahead of the ambassador's introductory meetings with Yugoslav officials. I went with him to those meetings and wrote reports afterward and I never at any point criticized the policy he advocated. I think that because of a statement that had been made to him by George Shultz, he just had the notion that Foreign Service Officers were basically insubordinate and he shouldn't trust us. And because I was on the firing line in the Political Section he decided to target me.

Q: You know, when you have sort of a policy dispute like this, usually formally or informally by communications, by visits, telephone calls or what have you, you're getting a feel from the desk of how they were approaching this.

HILL: In this case the desk was silent. The desk did not assert itself.

Q: And were you getting anything there on who was right, who was wrong, and all that?

HILL: No. He didn't deal with the working level of the department at all. He dealt with Kissinger. And I don't think the desk had been informed of the policy change until they began to read the reporting cables of his introductory meetings. A deputy director of the eastern European office came to Belgrade with the Albert CODEL. On the airplane taking the CODEL to Dubrovnik he asked me about some minor issue and I replied. He must have referred to what I said in a conversation with Silberman and the ambassador considered it an example of insubordination, that is, that I was disloyal if I conversed cooperatively with the department.

Q: Well, how did this sugar secret stealing case with the American who was arrested play out?

HILL: The name of the man was Lazlo Toth. He was a Hungarian American who had worked in a sugar factory in northern Yugoslavia, near the border with Hungary before he immigrated to the U.S.. During a visit to Yugoslavia he visited the factory and took some pictures of modern West German equipment in the factory. He was arrested for espionage even though the equipment was commercial and in no way secret. The charge was absurd. Silberman conducted a loud, public campaign to free the man. I wasn't involved but I certainly wanted the man freed. But I thought Silberman's public attacks on the Yugoslav government forced its back up. Quiet diplomatic meetings with Yugoslav officials might have had more and quicker effect. But in any case, eventually the man was released, but it took several months. And the bilateral relationship certainly suffered in the process. At one point the Yugoslav government indicated that it wanted Washington to withdraw Silberman but that wasn't feasible, either. I doubt that that was an important concern for Silberman who was seen as a strident defender of the

American's rights. The man's release strengthened Silberman's hand. He felt that when he had won on that he was doing the right thing.

Q: Well, I mean were you and others in the embassy taking any sides on this case? I mean when an American gets arrested he's American and the idea is get him out.

HILL: No. No one defended the Yugoslavs for arresting and holding Toth on a ridiculous charge of espionage.

Q: And I mean that's it. But could you figure out why he had been arrested? I mean was there any plausible reason to be arrested?

HILL: I think it was an example of the Yugoslavs being overly sensitive about what they regarded as their security, especially near the border with Hungary, which was then a satellite of the Soviet Union. I think the Hungarian American had previously lived in Yugoslavia and the Yugoslavs may have wanted to highlight a case of someone using his ethnic connections, better to charge a Hungarian ethnic for a change, instead of a Serb or Croat. There was a ethnic Hungarian minority in the Province of Vojvodina, along the Hungarian border.

Q: Yes, I remember reading about this and having been in charge of Consular Affairs back in Yugoslavia sometime before, you know, I couldn't help but be interested. But did -- were there any other sort of anti-U.S. manifestations at the time?

HILL: No. There were no demonstrations. The conflict was between Silberman and Yugoslav government officials, with public statements and an occasional editorial in the Yugoslav press. And articles in the American press quoting Silberman's criticism of Yugoslavia. Americans came there on visits and I don't remember American tourists having problems. But the Yugoslavs were concerned about ethnic Serbs and ethnic Croats in America who were critical of Tito and Titoist Yugoslavia, and who sometimes had organizations that at least talked about undermining Yugoslavia. Officials raised those concerns with Silberman in meetings. And in one instance a Croat in Canada sent a letter to Silberman criticizing him for interfering in Yugoslavia's internal affairs. Silberman sent a reply to him with an explicit crude suggestion of what the writer could embrace.

Q: Well, what happened between you and Silverman?

HILL: I stayed on until March of 1976, most of the time acting as the political counselor until Mark Palmer was over his attack of hepatitis. Silberman had confidence in Mark, who had written speeches for Kissinger and who was a very capable officer. Mark became a buffer between me and Silberman, which was helpful. When I got ready to leave in March to take a job in the department Silberman invited me to come to the residence for farewell drinks with some other people. He pulled me aside and said in effect that he had changed his mind about me and that I had done a good job. He thought I would do well in my new job in the Human Rights Office in the department, and he

wished me well. I got my efficiency report after arriving in the department. Mark wrote me up well but Silberman wrote a career ending reviewing statement, accusing me of undermining him and being insubordinate. His farewell statement to me was deceitful.

Q: Well, you know, when you get into one of these situations you can have a career ending, but the department takes, usually takes note of, of the -- I mean Silberman was not an unknown quantity. I mean he was --

HILL: No. That did not happen.

Q: -- considered a -- I guess -- well, he's still around as a judge.

HILL: No, he's retired now.

Q: Yeah.

HILL: But he's still around and he still writes things occasionally.

Q: I can recall when I was interviewing him, we were interrupted because a call came from his great buddy Clarence Thomas, who's on the Supreme Court.

HILL: Right. Well, I can tell you this much. The State Department wasn't going to tangle with him; they were afraid of him. And I'm not talking now about the desk, because a friend of mine on the desk also was forced by him to transfer to another office.. Personnel quietly informed me that they were aware that there were problems at the embassy since Silberman's arrival. They wanted to avoid grievances over damaged careers and would deal with unfair efficiency reports administratively. So when I got the career ending reviewing statement I went to an officer in the DG's office to ask for help. But I was told that there was nothing the DG could do, that probably the best thing for me was to file a grievance, which I did. And the result of the grievance was that the reviewing statement was removed from my efficiency report as "falsely prejudicial," which I thought was exactly right. But of course my efficiency report then had no reviewing statement and it was noted that the absence of one was the result of a grievance. So I was still disadvantaged in the promotion panel in a major way. The result of the whole thing was that my next promotion was probably delayed three or four years.

Q: Yeah. Well, you never win on these things.

HILL: No, you can't. It was a bad experience.

Q: Well, I'm just thinking that probably this is a good place -- well, when you left how did you feel about -- I mean were you -- I guess a diplomatic way of describing everything is certainly you must have been pissed off about this whole thing.

HILL: Yes.

Q: (laughs)

HILL: Yes. It was a tough experience in several ways. It was hard on me and my career, and it was tough on our family. We had to pull the kids out of school in mid semester and put them in Bethesda schools in mid-semester. We had our house rented out in Bethesda and had to have the tenants move so we could take the house back and move in. But Dudley got it worse than me. He didn't get another job equivalent to being DCM in Belgrade and after a couple of years, he retired from the Service.

Q: Well, did you get a chance to go back and talk to people at the desk about, you know, policy matters? Or were they -- was Silberman sort of a loose cannon? Were they afraid to touch him, or what?

HILL: Absolutely they were afraid to touch him. So I didn't go to the desk. The desk knew what was going on. And as I said, the Yugoslav desk officer was a friend of mine. Silberman also attacked him for "undermining him" and the officer was moved to another desk job. The department's way of handling Silberman was to run for cover. He had contact with Kissinger and while he was in Belgrade he was asked to consult with several European countries about the ILO. I think the desire in the White House was to keep him well away from Washington, because he had been involved in the Saturday Night Massacre and he knew a lot about Watergate because he had worked in the Justice Department before going to Belgrade.

Q: Ah-ha.

HILL: So they wanted him as far away as possible. And nobody wanted to deal with him.

Q: So there's Ken Hill sitting out Kalemegdan with -- caught up in a Watergate thing.

HILL: *(laughs)* Yeah. I mean it was all related to what was going on in Washington and, and what was going on in Washington was pretty awful. But I think that Silberman had too much hot information. And he loved to talk to the press, and I think the desire was keep him away from Washington. But that's just my hunch.

Q: Well, Ken, I really feel for you. Because I, you know, I understand that whole area there so well. Did -- I think what we'll do is we'll pick this up the next time.

HILL: OK.

Q: You're back in Washington, you're dealing with Human Rights, is that right?

HILL: That's right.

Q: OK, well that would be '76?

HILL: 1976 to 1978.

Q: OK, let's look at another time. How stand you same time next week, on the 11th?

HILL: Look at my calendar. You know, it's amazingly full. I'm retired, but -- yeah, that looks fine. Two o'clock?

Q: Yeah.

HILL: OK.

Q: Great. OK, this is very interesting.

HILL: Thanks.

Q: I think you might want to find -- you might want to sample my interviews. I've done Silberman and I've also done Mark Palmer.

HILL: Oh.

Q: So you might want to look at those. Go to adst.org and then Oral History Transcripts.

HILL: Oh, and I can get it that way?

Q: Yeah, right on the Internet.

HILL: Oh, wow! OK. I'll do it.

Q: OK.

HILL: Thanks, Stu.

Q: OK, take care. Bye-bye.

HILL: Bye -- interview with him.

Q: Yes, I have.

HILL: I was assigned to the Office of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, which in the department was connected to the Deputy Secretary of State and given the code D/HA to emphasize that human rights were a high level concern of the State Department, although we had little contact with the deputy secretary on a day-to-day basis. My immediate supervisor was Ronald D. Palmer, who headed the human rights subunit of the office. The head of D/HA was James Wilson, and I remember that he attended the deputy secretary's staff meeting.

Q: OK, well we can add all this in.

HILL: Yeah.

Q: Sometime. But --

HILL: Anyway, I was there for two years from 1976 to 1978. I was the continuity between the Ford administration and the beginning of the Carter administration. The humanitarian affairs part of the office title referred to two subunits, one addressing the aftermath of Vietnam and the other concerning international refugees. The Vietnam subunit was involved with the search for missing in action American soldiers (the MIAs), those who reportedly might still have been held in North Vietnam prisons or were living in Vietnam or elsewhere in southeast Asia, and the location of the remains of soldiers who were killed and buried in Vietnam. Both the MIAs and the desire to locate American remains and bring them back to America had strong and active followings in our country. The other issue from Vietnam were the Vietnamese and Hmong refugees who had escaped from Vietnam on small boats or crossed the border into Cambodia and Thailand, and were living in refugee camps. The office had a couple of FSOs who were committed to helping the civilian victims of the Vietnam war and bringing stateless Vietnamese refugees to the U.S. I have forgotten the names of the FSOs who worked on MIAs and the civilian victims of the Vietnam war but I remember them as deeply committed to the causes they worked on. And there was a separate subunit under the leadership of Jim Carlin, which worked with international refugee organizations, mainly with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Geneva. It focused on refugees that resulted from wars, coups, and natural disasters.

Q: Yeah.

HILL: But back to the human rights subunit. Toward the end of 1976, which was the last year of the Ford administration, both Jim Wilson and Ron Palmer left the office, Ron to be ambassador in Togo. A senior FSO temporarily headed D/HA until President Carter was inaugurated. He then appointed Patricia ("Patt" with two Ts) Derian to be director of D/HA. She was from the civil rights struggle in the South. She had stood up to the likes of Bull Connor and Sheriff Clark in achieving civil rights for southern blacks. Since I was the only officer in the human rights unit that stayed through the transition, I ended up editing the first set of human rights reports that the department was required by the 1976 legislation to send to the House of Representatives Committee on International Relations. Reports on the human rights practices of 137 countries were sent and published on April 25, 1977. Congress mandated the reports in the 1976 Foreign Assistance Act. The department was required to submit a report on any country that received any form of foreign assistance from the United States. That might be something as minor as a maintenance manual for a C-130 airplane, or millions of dollars in foreign assistance for Israel and Egypt, or the transfer of American jets to Saudi Arabia or Jordan. The department had embassies submit human rights reports on their host governments in 1975 in anticipation of the requirement, and the human rights office worked with country desks during 1976 to produce the reports of submission to Congress. Since I stayed on through the transition, I finished up the preparation of the reports in early 1977.

Q: OK. What was sort of the attitude when you arrived there about this? Were you

feeling that this is not what you signed up for, or what?

HILL: I needed to get out of Belgrade and I was off the assignment cycle. I was offered the human rights office, and was accepted. When I was in Belgrade I had worked on the embassy cable describing the human rights situation in Yugoslavia, so I had a little taste of what was in store. There were certainly feelings in the department among Foreign Service Officers and including Kissinger, who was secretary of state under Ford, that what was regarded as a moral issue shouldn't be part of U.S. foreign policy. But the Congress included the requirement for the department to submit human rights reports in the first version of the 1976 Foreign Assistance Act. At Kissinger's recommendation, President Ford vetoed it. And the Congress in bipartisan votes of over two-thirds majorities, overrode the veto. The act required the submission of the human rights reports but also provided that the U.S. could not provide foreign assistance to a country that engaged in "a consistent pattern of gross human rights abuses." That was called the Harkin amendment, named for its author, Congressman Tom Harkin of Iowa. Jim Wilson and Ron Palmer, and I as the newly arrived human rights officer, had a mandate that we had to carry out. And so there was a strong sense that we should get these human rights reports done and they had to be credible. When you read them now -- and I have a copy of the 137 reports in my bookcase-- they seem insignificant compared to the human rights reports that are submitted today. But they were breaking entirely new ground to report, and in many cases criticize, the human rights records mainly of our allies.

Q: Did you end up with any particular areas?

HILL: No, I worked on all 137 countries. I was especially interested in Yugoslavia and Israel, where I had served. But I quickly became involved in all of the geographic regions. Ron Palmer and I did everything. The 1976 act required all of country desks of countries receiving U.S. foreign assistance to put together human rights reports. There was no template. We had to decide which issues would be covered in the reports and create consistently of issues and of the way they were expressed. The typical format we created was as follows: Descriptions of the political and legal situations in the country, how the country was organized, if there were elections and an elected president, if there were democratic institutions such as a parliament that represented the population, and if there was an independent court system that could ensure fairness and justice. Then there were comments about the country's record respecting several articles drawn from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948: Article 3, the right to life, liberty and the security of person; Article 5, the prohibition of torture, and cruel or degrading treatment or punishment; Article 8, effective maintenance of rights before courts; Article 9, prohibition of arbitrary arrest, detention or exile; Article 10, fair and public hearing before an independent tribunal; Article 11, the resumption of innocence until proven guilty according to law in a public trial. The next section was headed "Other Important Freedoms" and dealt with things like freedom of religion, association, organized labor, and the ownership of property. Finally there was a section on "Other Human Rights Reporting," in which references were generally made to reports issued by Amnesty International, and the determination if Freedom House considered the country free, partially free or not free. Amnesty International usually

addressed abuses such as torture, arbitrary arrest, political prisoners, and politically motivated murder. Freedom House was mainly interested in whether a country was a democracy or at the other end of the spectrum, a dictatorship, or at some place in the middle. The other human rights reporting allowed the department to publish the critical judgments of human rights groups without the department directly charging countries of human rights abuses.

Q: Well, did you get involved with the -- I would think the big one would always be human rights on Israel.

HILL: Yes, the Israeli report was covered on the front page of The Washington Post the day after the report was submitted to Congress because it alleged that there were credible reports that Palestinian prisoners had been abused in Israeli prisons. In reporting abuses, the phrase "credible reports" was often used, of course. But the fact was that a State Department report to Congress stated that Israel was said to be a human rights abuser.

Q: Well, I would assume that there would be -- particularly early on when we hadn't developed sort of the, the, the language that would get it by, there would be real battles --

HILL: Oh, there were.

Q: -- over this. Did you get involved in these?

HILL: Oh sure. And there were battles over other countries, besides Israel. For example, Iran. I remember the country director for Iran, whose name I've totally blanked out at this point, said, "Henry Kissinger is not going to be happy about criticizing his friend the Shah of Iran."

And I said, "Well, with all due respect, the secretary of state has to decide if he's going to carry out the law that's been passed by the U.S. Congress." The final version of the Iran report stated that there were credible reports that Savak, Iran's secret police, had tortured and abused political prisoners.

I remember a conversation with the Romanian desk officer over how strongly worded some of the comments in the Romanian report should be because the Romanian president, Ceausescu, on the one hand permitted Romanian Jews to emigrate to Israeli (after payment of bribes) while his secret police committed terrible abuses against political prisoners.

Q: Well, how --

HILL: And there were other countries where there were disputes. But I remember Israel and Iran as two of the obvious ones at the time.

Q: Well, I would think that, particularly early on, I mean OK, you can say it's the law of

the land and all that, but there's nothing more sort of in the spirit of Washington than taking its clear cut instructions and put a bunch of bright people to work their way around it.

HILL: If you look at the reports, you'll see that in no case was there a definitive statement that Israel was a human rights abuser or Iran was a human rights abuser. It was all put in terms of "there are reports that." And in some cases we added the word "credible reports" or "numerous reports," that sort of thing. And as noted above, including the findings of other human rights organizations enabled the report to show criticism of a country's human rights record without the department having to render its own judgment. And frankly, we never got around to withholding assistance to a foreign country on the basis of the section that prohibited providing foreign assistance to a country that engaged in a consistent pattern of gross violations of human rights. In fact, that provision in the 1976 act was not enforced by withholding assistance until several years later when the Congress voted to block providing assistance to Pinochet's Chile, a regime which certainly engaged in a consistent pattern of gross violations of human rights. In the department we could never get consensus as to what "consistent pattern" and "gross violations" meant. Or more accurately, the department could not reach a decision to enforce that provision of the law. So the Congress did it in the one case of Chile.

Q: Well, did you --

HILL: It was the Congress that was really taking the lead on concern about human rights abuses starting in 1972. There was a young congressman from Wisconsin, Donald Fraser, who started out saying basically, "Look, this country was founded on the basis of individual rights and freedoms. And we are now dealing with a lot of countries in the world that are violating those kinds of rights. We ought to be doing something about it." He started holding hearings. And over a period of time, by 1976, there was a consensus in both the Senate and the House, by both Republicans and Democrats, that this was a major foreign policy issue for the United States. Now, as I said, Henry Kissinger didn't agree with that and he was the chief foreign policy advisor of the president. But there was a law that the Congress had imposed and so we did the best we could in terms of writing reports that we thought had to be credible even if they weren't explicit in describing the human rights abuses of some of our allies. Now, I'll just add that it was interesting to me that human rights was not initially among the things that Jimmy Carter was advocating in his election campaign in the spring and summer of 1976. I don't remember hearing him mentioning human rights until about September 1976. But when he mentioned it in a speech it took off like wildfire. All of a sudden you had reports in the newspapers that Jimmy Carter was the advocate for human rights. And it did indeed then become a part of his platform. When he was inaugurated he mentioned human rights in his inaugural speech and he appointed people both at the White House and also at the department who were advocates of human rights, or in the United States at the time, civil rights. Patt Derian had a lot of experience in dealing with the likes of Bull Connor and Sheriff Clark in the south, but she had no experience in diplomacy. But she certainly equated civil rights with international human rights and believed fervently that human rights should be

part of U.S. foreign policy.

Q: Well, did you find that you were, oh, pushed to one side or ostracized or anything like that?

HILL: I came to be known as the human rights guy in the department and some people respected me for the work I did. Others were not convinced that human rights should be an important issue in our policy. I would guess that over time I paid a price for being a human rights advocate.

Q: Oh yes.

HILL: One result was that my next two assignments were not what I would call main line but more on the periphery of the department's work. My next assignment was in management, working for Joan Clark, Ambassador Joan Clark. And then the one after that was working in Political Military Affairs.

Q: How'd you feel about it? Did you feel that you were sort of breaking new, new ground?

HILL: Yes. It was breaking new ground and I became a believer in having a human rights plank in U.S. foreign policy. In a short space of time the U.S. became known as the champion of human rights and the leaders of many countries were confronted with the issue, and many were forced to change their ways of doing business or at least become defensive of their practices and records. Some people were no longer being abused. Or being abused as much as before, both in the non-communist countries but slowly also in the communist countries. It was nice to have the U.S. intervene with a foreign government that was abusing human rights. Patt Derian gave me a Meritorious Honor Award for the human rights work I did, which I cherish. When she took over the office I was a sort of a point man for a while. She had no experience in diplomacy and didn't know how to get things done. And so I did a lot of drafting and footwork for her. The Carter administration brought in Mark Snyder as Patt's human rights assistant and my supervisor. And Mark had worked in the office of Ted Kennedy on the Hill and had good skills and a lot of political contacts. And he had a experience somewhere in Latin America. There was a strong sense among human rights people outside the department that the main human rights abuse areas were in Central and South America. And indeed, there was Pinochet in Chile, Admiral Videla in Argentina, and also dictators in Uruguay, Nicaragua, and in various other places in Latin America. Because of my assignments in Berlin and Yugoslavia I would remind those who concentrated on Latin America that there were also human rights abuses in communist countries, in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and Cuba, not just in non-communist Latin America. There was an office in Washington called the Washington Office on Latin America, with people who had gone to countries in Latin America and who were religious, who had gone on kind of missionary assignments and had gotten involved with the common people who were not only searching for God but also searching for justice. They felt very strongly that the U.S. should attack the abuses that were occurring in places like Chile against the ordinary

people, whether they were Catholic or Protestant.

Over time there were also people who were concerned about Park Chung-hee in South Korea, Lee Kuan Yew in Singapore and Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines.

Q: Yeah.

HILL: There were people who for religious and political reasons, had ties with some of these countries. They would say, "Well, it's nice that the Carter administration is in favor of emphasizing human rights and trying to get other countries to improve their human rights records. But they're not doing enough in the country that I'm concerned about." People would come to me and say, "If this administration really believed in human rights in South Korea then they would do something dramatic about Park Chung-hee, because he's one of our allies and he's violating human rights of the people in his country." Often the desire was regime change but the human rights office didn't go that far. However, human rights concerns did bring about regime change, for example, in Iran. The Shah resigned under pressure from Iranians who were tired of abuses by Savak. But the regime under the control of ayatollahs that followed replaced the abuses of the shah and Savak with another set of abuses. And soon people operating under the new Iranian regime invaded our embassy in Tehran and took fellow Americans working there as hostages.

Q: Yeah. Well, did you find yourself getting called to the desk to, to fight battles on particular --

HILL: Yes. Issues would arise. There might be a proposal to provide military assistance to country that had human rights problems and a discussion in the State Department and with the Pentagon would follow about whether any assistance or certain kinds of assistance ought to be provided. When the Shah of Iran was driven out of Iran, that became a major issue. Some critics of human rights said that his demise showed that the human rights policy had gone too far.

I remember once when our relations with China were new that the Chinese government came out with a public statement that they had instructed the police forces not to abuse anybody who was arrested. And so I said to Patt Derian, "This is interesting. We've never had anything like this before. I think it would be nice if recommended to the press spokesman that during the press briefing he would just simply say that we welcome the statement by the Chinese government to control abuses." She said yes and so I drafted something up.

I obviously had to clear it with the East Asian Bureau. And within an hour Dick Holbrooke, the assistant secretary of the bureau, walked into my office and threw the paper onto my desk and said, "This is not cleared. The Chinese do not understand what we mean by human rights."

I thought, "Hm. I think the Chinese have been in the diplomacy business for a pretty long time." So anyway, it didn't go to the press briefing.

About two or three months later Holbrooke made a visit to China and met with Zhou En Lai. And in the memorandum of conversation that Holbrooke sent to the department after the meeting, he recorded that Zhou En Lai had said something like, "Oh yes, we understand about human rights violations because that's what the Soviets do," (*laughs*). So I had to laugh about it afterwards, that the Chinese were well ahead of Dick Holbrooke on the issue of human rights..

Q: Yeah. Well, how did you find Patt Derian as a method of --

HILL: Oh, a delightful person. She was a very nice person, kind, and with a good sense of humor. She could be exasperating simply because she didn't know anything about diplomacy. Her instincts were formed in her civil rights experience. So she had a tendency sometimes to confront a foreign leader when a milder form of disagreement would have been better. At some point Warren Christopher, the deputy secretary, formed a committee to screen and make final decision on human rights issues for several offices and officials in the department, the White House, and at the U.S. mission at the UN became involved in human rights. The human rights office, and particularly working for Patt simply didn't have things under control. It was appropriately called The Christopher Committee.

Whenever an important decision needed to be made it was taken up by that committee. I remember that D/HA had over committed its budget for refugee work and the committee had to obtain additional funds. The committee provided badly needed organization and control. There were people at the White House who also worked on human rights. At one time or another Andrew Young worked on it, and would issue statements after he was named ambassador to the UN. And there was a lady named -- last name Mathews who was the daughter of --

Q: Tuchman, wasn't it?

HILL: Yes.

Q: Yeah, she's Jessica Mathews.

HILL: Yeah, Jessica Mathews.

Q: She was the head of --

HILL: She worked on human rights at the White House.

Q: Yeah.

HILL: And I would say typically for the Carter administration was that there was often not very much coordination. So you know, Andrew Young might say something at the UN that was somewhat different than what was being done by the State Department or

what was being said by the White House. And I remember Patt Derian one day say, "Well, you know, people get excited by these things. But they're all correct. All those statements are correct."

I said, "Well, OK. I guess, you know, diplomacy is sort of fussy about having things stay in line."

But anyway, that was my two years in human rights. As you said, it was a new field. I felt that there were things that I could do. I certainly did pay a price for sometimes being in the middle of some of these fights. And the other part of the problem was that I had earned some recognition in the European Bureau. And that assignment and the next two assignments kept me away from the European Bureau. So when it came time for me later in 1982 to look for an assignment, I didn't have people to support an onward assignment in the European Bureau.

Q: OK, well when you left -- after what, two years you left Human Rights.

HILL: Right.

Q: And where did you go?

HILL: It was called the Office of Management Operations. The designation was M/MO. I don't know who came up with the idea. It was headed by Ambassador Joan Clark, then an assistant secretary. She was the director of the office, but she was equivalent to an assistant secretary in the department. And the idea behind the office was that it would use people who had been involved in substantive activities, for example political reporting and economic reporting, to look at management issues and make recommendations that were brought into the management decision process. So I did that for two years.

Q: All right, well let's talk about this.

HILL: And again, I was working in a peripheral, not a normal assignment, but I found it interesting.

Q: Well, you know, I mean when we talk about it, when you say that -- maybe it's coming from my perspective, a consular officer, when you talk about looking at the management of the State Department, it seems that there's an awful lot of avoidance by those that are, you know, so-called the high rollers, the, the, the people who look like they're on the way up to avoid things dealing with management.

HILL: Yes.. Dead right.

Q: Which is scary, when you think about it.

HILL: You're exactly right. I guess the idea for this office might have come from the undersecretary for management, Ben Reid at the time. And Ben had a young guy by the

name of Pat Kennedy working for him. You may have heard his name recently.

Q: Oh yes. For a long time he's been --

HILL: He's been around a long time.

Q: At the center of things.

HILL: I was in M/MO from April 1978 to July 1980.

Q: Yeah.

HILL: I had a series of things that I looked after. Let's see. I was looking at things like narcotics, counterterrorism, environmental issues, relations with USIA and at the time that was a big issue because the Carter administration was changing the way USIA worked. They were trying to make USIA and also the Voice of America into something closer to non-governmental news organizations. They wanted to remove some of the policy control over them. So that became a kind of interesting issue to work on.

Q: Well, of the things you dealt with, which ones did you find that you really had the most involvement and success in?

HILL: Of those things I just mentioned?

Q: Yeah.

HILL: USIA, because I was in touch with them over a long period of time, about what they were doing and what the State Department thought about what they were doing. And narcotics was interesting because I got involved in narcotics along with intelligence activities. There was a big push at the time to improve narcotics control, DEA going into countries and getting countries to control the production and trafficking of narcotics. Yugoslavia was one of them when I was there, but later it was places like Thailand and Southeast Asia that needed to control the flow of narcotics. And sometimes they were in touch with people in the CIA, but the agency was very leery about getting involved in anything which was regarded as police work. It's amazing to think of it now, but this is back in 1978. The CIA now reportedly has drones and deals with counter terrorism, but then it did not want to get involved in anything that was involved in police work and weapons. I remember sorting out something in Thailand between DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) and the CIA . DEA expected that everybody should be part of their efforts to shut down narcotics operations but CIA said, "Oh no, not so fast, you know, we're not packing guns and we're not doing police work."

Q: Well, did you, did you, you know, you'd already went through this Cuban rights exercise. Did you sense even when you left a change in you might say the group think about human rights? I mean was it becoming more accepted?

HILL: Yes. Over time I think people learned that we weren't going to wilt and die if we did something about human rights in a foreign country. It involved a lot of people gaining enlightenment. I remember that the first human rights report draft that I got for one of the Gulf states, one of the questions in the report was to describe if there was freedom of expression on things like law and new initiatives and so forth. And the desk officer wrote, "In a country that graduated its first high school class only two years ago, there's not much creativity to talk about."

Q: Yeah.

HILL: And I said, "Well, let's try to put a little bit more positive spin on that." It was useful for people in the State Department to realize that human rights ought to be one of our major influences in the rest of the world. We ought to be saying to the rest of the world, "We believe in the Bill of Rights and the U.S. Constitution. And we think other parts of the world should have those rights as well because they are also written into the UN Charter and other international documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights." A lot of things that the U.S. had been involved in during World War II and after World War II were indeed human rights. A lot of Foreign Service Officers that hadn't thought about them and hadn't thought that they were important before the human rights requirements came along began to see them as an important element in U.S. foreign policy.

Q: You know, you watch some of these things that at one point were an anathema, just not our business.

HILL: Yes..

Q: And then all of a sudden the world changes.

HILL: Yes. Yes. At one point DepSec Christopher asked the Office of Management Affairs, M/MO, to consider the question of hiring an openly homosexual American student as a summer intern in the State Department. And up to that point, security simply wouldn't hire anybody who was openly gay. Homosexuality was an automatic refusal for getting hired by State Department, whether the person went overseas or only worked in a temporary position in the summer. There was a division with M/MO by mid-level FSOs on whether he should be hired. I believe that ultimately the person was hired. It was the beginning of a change. There also had to be a change about issuing a security clearance to a gay serving overseas. But now, people go out as ambassador who are self declared homosexuals, in some cases taking their same sex partner along with them.

Q: Yeah, it's a -- well, the world is changing around us all the time.

HILL: Yeah, exactly. I changed, too.. I remember thinking when we went into the discussions about whether to hire the summer intern, I thought "Well, we can't impose some of our notions on other countries. There are countries that would be offended if we sent a homosexual out as an ambassador or even as a diplomat." And there are still

sensitivities like that, but in general declared gays and lesbians are now members of the Foreign Service.

Q: Well, did you see any sort of improvement in oh, management techniques or --

HILL: Oh, not a whole lot. I think we were able to bring some new perspectives to people in management positions, assistant secretaries in the bureaus, and even at the seventh floor level. By day I was working in M/MO in the department and by night I was working for AFSA (American Foreign Service Association) on trying to get a pay increase for Foreign Service Officers. I wrote an article for the Foreign Service Journal on the subject.

Q: Well, speaking of the AFSA thing, what were you -- were you sort of working with AFSA at the time?

HILL: Yes, I did. And my article influenced achieving an increase of Foreign Service pay in the...

Q: Well, what was the issue?

HILL: The 1980 Foreign Service Act.

Q: Well, what was -- I mean was there a problem between the Civil Service and the Foreign Service at the time?

HILL: It was tied up in OMB, the Office of Management and Budget, and the cost of running the State Department. But basically what we were trying to do, and what we succeeded in doing, was raising the, the Foreign Service pay levels up about half a step in relationship to the Civil Service pay scales. So we all ended up in 1980 with an increase in salary. The Foreign Service felt for years that the relationship between the Foreign Service pay grades and the Civil Service pay grades, were pegged too low when you looked at a combination of experience, education, and job content. The Civil Service did better than we did. And we deserved better. So that's what I tried to present in my article, and I was glad to see that the people who were heading AFSA at the time were certainly lobbying Congress and were trying to get this change in the Foreign Service Act.

Q: Well, did you feel that AFSA, you know, I -- at one point I had the feeling that AFSA was pretty much representing the -- I don't know, sort of the political officer in trying to -- and it was sort of its focus, as opposed to, you know, sort of the rest of us. Did you feel that at the time?

HILL: I thought that about AFSA for a while, and I dropped out because I felt they weren't doing much to help me. But by 1978 or '79, when all of this discussion was taking place about the reform of the Foreign Service and the people in AFSA were trying desperately to get the pay issue included in the act, that I rejoined and worked on it. But yeah, I know what you're talking about because I had been in consular work also. And although I wanted to be in political reporting, I certainly didn't feel that "substantive"

jobs, political and economic reporting, were any better or any more important to the Foreign Service than administration and consular work. And the pay of all of us was too low to live in the Washington area until you reached the upper grades of the service. By the late '70s, consular officers in the consular cone were competing against other consular officers, instead of against political officers or economic officers. That was an effort to try to create more equity among the four cones. My sense later was that some of the officers in the consular cone really did quite well.

Q: Yes, well I was one of those. I ended up as a minister counselor.

HILL: Good.

Q: But it was, it certainly wasn't the way things seemed to be moving when I came in.

HILL: Yes. The history was of course that the Consular Service was separate from the "diplomatic service" in going --

Q: Yeah.

HILL: -- going back to 1924. And it's interesting that you still have the organization in Washington that makes a distinction between diplomacy and consular.

Q: Yeah. Well so --

HILL: So anyway, I left this management job in July 1980, and I went to Political-Military Affairs. I was having trouble frankly getting a job because I'd gotten away from EUR and they didn't know who I was anymore. One's reputation doesn't last very long.

Q: No.

HILL: And so I started looking for a job with substance and hopefully management experience. Don Tice, who remained a very close friend, knew a guy in Political Military Affairs by the name of Jim Farber. Don was at that time working for Phil Habib on the seventh floor office. Jim Farber was director of the Office of Foreign Military Sales and Security Assistance. So I went to work as one of his deputy office directors of PM/FMS. It was a totally different kind of job, but I found it very interesting. Foreign military sales were running at about 20 billion dollars annually. I had several people working for me as the deputy for security assistance and sales. We were the policy control over foreign military sales. Every week or so I would write a memo to President Jimmy Carter. When he came into office he said he would personally approve or disapprove every foreign military sale that had to be submitted to the Congress for approval. The threshold then was 25 million dollars, if you can imagine that. Anything over 25 million dollars had to go to the Congress for confirmation. And so I would do the memo to the President of the United States every week listing the sales that we were going to make that had to be reported to Congress. And by golly, back would come my memo with "Approved JC" next to each of the proposed sales. I don't remember any disapprovals.

So anyway, I did that for two years, almost two years. And there were a lot of interesting things going on at the time. The human rights policy was still active and there was a lot of concern about selling certain weapons to countries that were regarded as human rights abusers. There was also a big fight over the development of what was called the FX jet fighter plane, which was going to replace the F-5. The F-5 had been our good, low cost fighter plane that we provided to countries in the Middle East, Latin America and Asia. The FX would replaced it for export to third world countries as a sort of human rights fighter plane. General Dynamics had come up with the F-16 for our own air force, which was a very capable plane. And they got into the competition to create the FX by offering an F-16 with a smaller engine and lower level avionics. With the hint, I think, that it could be easily upgraded to full F-16 capabilities. So that became a *big* issue that the Carter administration was dealing with. Eventually the whole competition ended when Reagan was elected president. Nobody was very concerned about selling lower cost and lower powered jet fighters. Just let General Dynamics sell stock F-16s.

I dealt with the Pentagon on a daily basis. I was on the phone every day with somebody at the Pentagon, usually on the colonel level, clearing off on their military sales list of items that were below the \$25 million threshold. I had the power, at least the initial power, to say, "This is cleared," or "This is not cleared. You have to take this item off the list." My refusal to clear, based on the department's interpretation of the Carter administration's policy, would usually hold, or on rare occasions it might be kicked up to a higher level and would eventually come over to the State Department to Dixie Lee Ray, who was the undersecretary for security assistance on the seventh floor. She would make the final decision if there was a disagreement between the State Department and the Pentagon. But usually if I disapproved something that was it.

Q: Well, what sort of things would you disapprove?

HILL: Oh, things like the chain gun, which is the very high-speed machine gun, which is used mostly for crowd control. That is, kill 'em all.

Q: Yeah (laughs).

HILL: And you know, certain kinds of tear gas, some kinds of chemical weapons were a no-no. But there were other weapons that could not be sold to some countries because of the human rights records they had. It was amazing that I was still dealing with human rights. And of course I knew quite a lot about human rights because of my previous assignment, so it worked out very well. Then of course at this time we were also dealing with the takeover of the American embassy in Tehran. I had a couple of personal friends who were hostages. And so we were dealing with the Iranians for a while. The Carter administration tried to apply Christian principles to them and (*laughs*) apologize and convince them to let our people go, which didn't work at all. I can't immediately tick off another half a dozen weapons that were not permitted to be sold abroad. There was a weapon that was used on ships, which was a highly effective -- I can't think of the name of it -- but it was a highly effective weapon in knocking down incoming missiles, because

it had depleted uranium in the bullets to make them effective at penetrating the incoming missiles.

Q: Oh yeah.

HILL: It would crash right through the nose of an incoming missile and, and destroy it. And you know, that was a sensitive weapon, which we didn't provide at the time to a lot of other countries. But it was those kinds of things that I was dealing with. And sometimes I had to deal with not only the Pentagon, but also for example with the Commerce Department, because some of the weapons were involved with commercial licenses. And you had American weapons manufacturers who would either work their contacts in Congress or at the Pentagon to try to circumvent the State Department if they felt that the State Department was not giving them proper consideration.

Q: Well, was there much of a, an appeals process in this business?

HILL: Yes. If at my level we disapproved something it could be kicked up to a higher level to the undersecretary for security assistance. Or even possibly up to the secretary of state. And you know, these military weapons producers had lots of friends on the Hill and other places so they could certainly get access to reconsideration of decisions if they didn't like the results. We didn't turn down that much. We were selling \$20 billion annually at a time when a billion dollars was a real figure.

Q: Well, did Political Military seem like a pretty promising area?

HILL: I didn't want to do it beyond that assignment. It was an assignment that I found interesting. But by the time it was ending I certainly didn't want to stay in that field. Reagan won the election in 1980, and administration that came in removed office directors, not only assistant secretaries and deputy assistant secretaries in the department. They went down to the office director level in Political Military Affairs, and transferred those FSOs who had been assigned during the Carter administration and replaced them either with other FSOs, or in some cases with political appointees. The idea was to have people the Reagan administration had appointed to the office director positions, whether they were FSOs or political appointees, who were beholden and presumably more loyal to the new administration. It didn't sit well with me. There was a different atmosphere in the department, more political than before. And there was a very strident, almost aggressive anti-Soviet policy. The FSO who was the new office director over me was very intelligent and capable but he knew less about PM/FMS/SAS than I did. And he replaced Jim Farber he had years of experience in PM. I just wasn't interested in staying. And I guess I also saw that it wasn't going to be the way to go higher in the Foreign Service because PM had been politicized with political appointees.

Q: So what did you -- where'd you go? What'd you do?

HILL: Let me just mention that finally in 1980 I was promoted to the 03 level (old system). And that was the promotion that finally broke the influence of Silberman in

Belgrade.

Q: Yeah.

HILL: So all of a sudden I'm an O3, and between that promotion and the salary increase that was brought in by the Foreign Assistance Act with the increase for all FSOs, I could almost afford to live in Washington. In 1982 I started looking for another job, because my assignment was coming to an end in PM. And I got help from a friend who was working on the Eastern European Desk by the name of Bill Farrand. The ambassador who had gone out to Bulgaria, to Sofia, by the name of Bob Barry, needed a DCM. I knew Bob slightly and had once given him a ride home. And Bill Farrand recommended me and Bob Barry approved me. So it was a very big break in my career that suddenly I was going out to an assignment overseas as a DCM.

Q: Well, so you went out to Bulgaria.

HILL: Yes.

Q: And how did you find --

HILL: It was interesting and good assignment. The job of consul general in Zagreb was opening up, and of course I had taken Serbo-Croatian language training. So I tried to get that. But the person who was chosen to go there as the consul general was chosen on sort of a personal basis. The interesting irony was that he had served in Bulgaria and had learned Bulgarian (*laughs*). And I ended up going to Bulgaria having learned Serbo-Croatian. I had to go and take some language training in Bulgaria. The people at FSI said they were going to put me through a conversion course from Serbian to Bulgarian, but I can tell you, they're different languages. There are a lot of cognates in the vocabulary, but grammatically they're quite different. So, but I got about six weeks in Bulgarian language training. And because of the Serbian I had learned, I was able to learn the rudiments in Bulgarian. And went out able to read the newspaper and speak quite a lot in broken Bulgarian. It was still pretty weak. But I worked on it when I was in Sofia and got up to a reasonably good level. I went back and passed at the three-three when I went back to Washington after Bulgaria.

Q: Well, you were there from when to when?

HILL: I was in Bulgaria from July '82 until June '84.

Q: OK, and Bill Farrand was the ambassador?

HILL: No, Bob Barry was ambassador.

Q: Oh, Bob Barry was ambassador.

HILL: And this was real Cold War, Eastern Europe. Bulgaria was the most committed

satellite of the Soviet Union. And it had a real Stalinist regime and presence, so I mean it was a real Cold War assignment.

Q: Well, when you went out, what was the situation in Bulgaria?

HILL: It -- well, in what regard?

Q: Political, sort of political or economic. Well, let's talk, you know, get a feel for what sort of the situation you were dealing with there.

HILL: Well, first of all, it was a small embassy, I think with the marine security guards we were around 30 Americans. And probably another 30 Bulgarians who worked as Foreign Service Nationals. Any employees that we hired, either at the embassy itself or if we wanted to have somebody working in our house, we had to go through the Bureau for Diplomatic Service, with the Bulgarian acronym BoDayKah. But it was actually part of the Secret Police. And they controlled the people who worked for you. And of course they had them in for debriefings every so often. The secret police monitored everything we did. To some degree we were followed, although I was never aware that I was being obviously followed. You had to assume that your house and your car were bugged. And of course there was a strong suspicion that the embassy building was bugged. The embassy shared common walls with Bulgarian buildings on both sides. It was an old building downtown. I called it the tenement embassy. We had a major project when I was there trying to find microphones. None were found. We created a new communications section, which hopefully was insulated to the point where it could not be bugged. During the time that I was there, we had two threats against the embassy. The first one was by a Palestinian group who allegedly planned to attack our embassy because of what the Israelis had done in Lebanon against Palestinians there. At one point or another the security officer was riding with the ambassador in the limousine with a weapon to protect him if needed. It never came to that, but in a sense we were under threat the whole time we were there. We were never sure that Palestinians, who had married a few Bulgarian women, intended to attack the embassy or the Bulgarian secret police used the threat to keep our embassy under wraps.

Q: Did you get a chance to talk to the Bulgarians? I mean did they sort of shrug their shoulders and say eh, this is what the Soviets want? Or did they seem to be committed to the cause?

HILL: We couldn't have personal contacts with Bulgarians. Other than just very superficial ones. The Secret Police told Bulgarians that they were not to have any contact with the American embassy, and they also tried to keep us from having contact with Bulgarians. You couldn't have contact with Bulgarians and try to explain the American position on things happening in the world. Bulgarians were so controlled and the Secret Police applied fear so effectively that Bulgarians simply couldn't and wouldn't contact us. At one point we had a piano in the house that was provided to us. And there was a Portuguese student who was studying music in Bulgaria. We made arrangements for him to do a concert in our house. And we invited a dentist at the diplomatic clinic who

worked on my wife's teeth and whom we knew loved music. She had to decline our invitation and implied that she had been ordered to do so. There was a secret police control at every office and years later she told us he had forbidden her to accept our invitation. She said he had asked her, "Why would you want to go there? How are the Americans trying to exploit you?" And so she had to back out. Something that was quite as innocent as simply a musical concert.

Q: Yeah.

HILL: At one point we had a group of jazz musicians sent out by USIA and we put the word out at the university that anybody could come, that it was free. And in the end we had only three Bulgarians who came. Two of them were from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and obviously had approval to come. And the third one was a girl friend of the Portuguese musician. And she came in past the militia guard who was at the gate where we were having this, and she trembled the whole time, because she knew she was taking a risk to be there.

Q: Well, this -- it's, it sounds like Bulgaria, if you had to have a list, was at the very bottom of contact --

HILL: Oh, it was a tough place.

Q: Much worse than it was in Moscow.

HILL: Yeah, I think by this time in Moscow you had dissidents who were having meetings with people in the embassy occasionally. We knew of no dissidents in Bulgaria at the time. We learned later that there were a few dissidents but they were so secretive that we were not aware that there were any dissidents in the country.

Q: Well, did you -- were we looking for dissidents at all, or?

HILL: Certainly, to the extent we could. The consular officer, who spoke very good Bulgarian, got to know a youngish Bulgarian tour guide who wanted to go to France with his whole family. He contacted the consular officer to get a copy of the Helsinki Final Act, which 36 countries had signed, including Bulgaria, and which said in effect that the citizens of those countries had the right to go to another country if you wanted to. The Bulgarian spoke fluent French and wanted to take his family to France. He thought if he could get a copy of the Helsinki Final Act, he could prove to the Bulgarian Foreign Ministry that he had a right to emigrate. But even though Bulgaria had signed the treaty, it was unavailable in the country. The Secret Police found out that he was in touch with our consular officer. They arrested him and roughed him up and warned him to stay away from the American embassy. Then the consular officer came to me one day since I was his supervisor. He said, "I've been invited to the Foreign Ministry tomorrow, and I think it's because of my contact with the tour guide."

And so I went with him. The official who interviewed us said to the consular officer,

“You have been violating your diplomatic status here, and if you continue doing this we’re going to declare you persona non grata.” The consular officer and I argued with this him and apparently convinced him that the consular officer had done nothing other than share a cup of coffee with the tour guide. And believe it or not, we were called back a week or two later. The official said to the consular officer, “You’ve broken your promise that you wouldn’t have contact with this guy. A friend of mine took a picture up on the mountain at a coffee shop and there you are in this picture with the tour guide.” It was clear that the Secret Police were following the consular officer and also the Bulgarian, and took the picture.

Fortunately the Foreign official was a retired not very smart secret policeman who did not carry out his threat to declare the consular officer PNG. But next time the Bulgarian was arrested he was sent to work in a chemical factory in eastern Bulgaria, where he apparently persisted in demanding the right to emigrate to France. He was then incarcerated in a prison and his cellmate beat him to death, after which the cellmate was pardoned and freed. I learned about the terrible fate of the naïve tour guide when I returned to Bulgaria in 1990 as ambassador and the man’s father visited me and ask me to find out who had killed his son. I tried but was unable to find out anything about the case.

Q: Well, what did you do there?

HILL: Well, essentially, you know, a DCM runs the embassy, obviously under the supervision of the ambassador, and Bob Barry was very much a hands on supervisor. Basically I dealt with personnel problems, the project to try to find out if there were any microphones hidden in the walls of the building where we had our communications room. By the time the work was completed, the construction had loosened plaster and a ceiling fell down on our conference room, which was one of those conference rooms which was also insulated so that it couldn’t be bugged. And plaster was in danger of falling in other rooms. So we had to bring in workers from Austria to take care of the damage and renovate the insides of the building. I was in charge of that work, because I could also speak German and by then my Bulgarian had improved a lot. Often I would deal with the Austrian workers, and if it was necessary tell Bulgarian workers what help or materials the Austrians needed.

A Bulgarian import-export firm tied to the Secret Police was smuggling guns from Central Europe to the Middle East to create trouble there, and smuggling various kinds of drugs from the Middle East to Central Europe. The ambassador got approval from Washington to raise these issues with the Bulgarian deputy foreign minister and I accompanied him to that meeting. And then the ambassador got a meeting with the Bulgarian president at his summer place in eastern Bulgaria. Of course, the Bulgarians denied everything. I also collected information on reports that Bulgarian commercial trucks were being used to collect intelligence in NATO countries in western Europe and wrote a long report on what I found.

Q: Well, was there any migration at all, or visitors’ visas?

HILL: No, Bulgarians were not allowed to leave. The Consular Section issued visas to people who were going on various business trips and so forth. But those were people who had the approval of the government to leave the country. And the spouse and children of the traveler stayed at home as hostages to ensure that the traveler returned. Bulgarians were totally different from Yugoslavia where over a million workers were outside the country in western Europe working. No Bulgarians were allowed to travel abroad as tourists except to the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact countries.

Q: Was there any thought of what the hell are we doing here, or?

HILL: During the Cold War we all had this hope that it would end some day but we didn't think it was going to happen in our lifetime. We were like missionaries who were engaged in an ideological struggle and defending American interests even in a place like Bulgaria. And there was the hope that some day there might be an improvement. The Helsinki Final Act, at least on paper, provided some improvement. Theoretically, for example, you could get the Herald Tribune in Sofia. But of course you almost never saw one. The hope was that some day things might change. And wonder of wonders, it happened in 1989. But, but at that time nobody saw it coming. I would just add that we thought that down-trodden Bulgarians gleaned some encouragement from the American flag flying over the embassy, and from looking at the exhibits we put in the large windows of the building. In fact, one exhibit was so enticing that the militia guards roped off the sidewalk in front of the embassy to keep passers-by from spending time looking at it.

Q: How about relations with the Turks at the time?

HILL: There were no problems at that time or more precisely we didn't know about any problems. There had been problems earlier, but quite a ways back in the '50s, I think. The problem with the Turks started soon after I left Bulgaria and occurred between '84 and '89. And it was again the old game of communist leaders who resorted to nationalism in order to distract from other problems and to strengthen the government's position. Zhivkov and the communists went after the Turks because it was something that would arouse racism among ordinary, ethnic Bulgarians. Memories of Turkish massacres in the 19th century were still fresh in Bulgaria.

Q: Well, did they stir up trouble with the Romanians, both in Bulgaria and across the border?

HILL: No. At that time there was no trouble with Romania. Ceausescu was playing his own game. He was at various times on the outs with Moscow. But Zhivkov was the loyal leader, very loyal to Moscow. The Bulgarian Communist Party played their relations with Moscow very cleverly and very effectively. They handed out awards to Soviet leaders and they praised Moscow, Brezhnev and the later leaders. Bulgaria got cheap oil and other assistance from the Soviets because they were the faithful satellite.

Q: Well, I realize I'm touching these bases, I'm getting the same answer. But I do want to touch them because things would change later. Students, did any contact with students --

HILL: USIS had a little contact with students. There was an American student who was at the university. I think she was on a Fulbright exchange. USIS could do a little bit through her such as invite students to the jazz concert I mentioned earlier but they had to be very careful not to cause her risk. Everything that we did culturally with the Bulgarians had to go through the Bulgarian Cultural Committee and had to be approved before you could do it. A concert or an exhibit had to be approved or Bulgarians were not free to take part. And for example, I mentioned that the chancery had big storefront windows and we had exhibits in there all the time. Bulgarians would walk past on the sidewalk and look at these exhibits. When we put in an exhibit on the U.S. space program, they were *really* interested and people would stop and look at this exhibit because besides pictures we had a space suit on display. This was the exhibit that the militiaman in front of the embassy, start pushing people off the sidewalk. And pretty soon they had a second militiaman there. And then finally they put up a barricade, so that Bulgarians could not get close to the windows. They were forced out onto the street instead of walking up the sidewalk. It turned out that the government was annoyed that USIS had a small sign in the window that the exhibit continued inside the library. I was in charge when the sidewalk was closed and I made a demarche to the Foreign Ministry. The reply was that the ministry regarded the library as restricted to embassy use. It was not an approved public library so they said we had no right to invite Bulgarians to anything inside the library, which we considered the USIS American library for Bulgarians to use.

A couple of things that you might be interested in. One was that a Turk shot John Paul II, the pope --

Q: Yeah.

HILL: -- in Rome in 1981. And that Turk, named Ali Ağca, had come through Bulgaria several months before and stayed in one of the fancy hotels in town, even though he was a poor shepherd from the Anatolian plain. Claire Sterling wrote a book that was published in The Reader's Digest, called The Bulgarian Connection, which charged that the Bulgarians were behind the attack on the pope. The book claimed that Ağca had met with a man named Antonov, the deputy of the Bulgarian national airline, Balkan, in Rome prior to shooting and seriously wounding the pope in St Peter's Square. Sterling also claimed that the CIA and KGB had agreed to keep the conspiracy quiet for fear that it might provoke a war. For that reason, she wrote, the American embassy in Sofia had no one looking into the case. Regarding that last charge, all of us in the embassy were very interested in trying to get any information in Bulgaria about the assassination attempt but no one would talk to us, of course. The number two of Balkan in Rome was arrested by the Italians and put on trial. But he was eventually acquitted even though Ağca had provided some corroborating evidence that he had been in touch with the airline agent. The charge was that Antonov controlled the Turkish shooter and was carrying out instructions from the Bulgarian Secret Police. The assumption was that the Bulgarians

were working for the Soviets to get of the Polish pope who was causing them trouble by exciting both Catholics and dissidents to oppose communism. But the Italians could never get evidence to prove that, and Antonov was acquitted and released, and returned to Bulgaria.

The second interesting issue was that the daughter of the dictator, Lyudmila Zhivkova, who was in her early 40s, had organized the 1300th anniversary celebration of the founding of the first Bulgarian kingdom, which took place in 681. Before the date of the celebration in 1981, she died of a brain hemorrhage, although some Bulgarians harbored a suspicion that the Soviets were involved in her death. The celebration nonetheless took place in a gleaming new cultural center that she had had built for the occasion. The celebration strongly emphasized Bulgaria's long history and many accomplishments, so there was more than a hint of nationalism in the project. Being a Soviet hand, Bob Barry was very interested. For a change it was not about Soviet accomplishments, such as putting a satellite in space, but Bulgaria's history of 1,300 years when they brought Christianity from Greece into the Slavic countries including Russia and when they had their own kingdom and came out of 500 years of occupation by the Ottoman empire.

Q: How were relations with Yugoslavia?

HILL: Not very good. The Yugoslavs were constantly accusing Bulgaria of trying to take over Macedonia, the southern republic of Yugoslavia that was a part of Bulgaria a thousand years before. The Macedonian and Bulgarian languages are dialects of each other. I can understand a significant amount of Macedonian when I hear it spoken, maybe three-fourths. There were certainly movements in Bulgaria over the years, including even during the communist period that wanted to make Macedonia join Bulgaria. And Bulgaria had occupied Macedonia during World War II. And of course the Bulgarians were the favorite satellite of the Soviet Union and the Yugoslavs were careful not to become one again.

Q: Well, how about Greece? I know the Greeks don't take kindly to anybody who starts talking about the Macedonian language.

HILL: Bulgarian relations with Greece also were not warm. Greece was a member of NATO and Bulgaria was a member of the Warsaw Pact. Bulgaria had barely correct relations with both Greece and Turkey, but not warm ones.

Q: Were there -- did you -- were there any sort of Greek-Bulgarian joint festivals, or anything of that nature?

HILL: No. Greeks would come to Sofia to attend the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, to hear the excellent choir and follow the orthodox mass. But they were only tourists.

Q: I was just wondering whether they would try to, you know, make a point of -- there was unity there or not, or was it just?

HILL: There were people in northern Greece who spoke Bulgarian, who were Slavic. The Greeks denied that there was such a group of people. But I had a personal experience when I went to Thessaloniki. I had studied a semester of classical Greek in college and I could read signs and say what I read in mispronounced Greek. I was trying to order food in a restaurant in Thessaloniki and without thinking I uttered a Bulgarian word. And the waiter leaned down to me and said in Bulgarian, “What would you like to order?” *(laughs)*.

Q: (laughs)

HILL: There had been an exchange of populations between the two countries at the end of World War I. Some of those people probably had Bulgarian mothers or Bulgarian grandmothers or something. And they still spoke the language. There was no appreciable Greek population in Bulgaria. Of course the two countries had a very old historic connection in that two Greek priests, brought Christianity to what was the First Bulgarian Kingdom in the ninth century. And the Bulgarian Orthodox Church is modeled on the Greek Orthodox Church. So there were some connections there. There are a lot of connections in the food. And Greek tourists used to come to Sofia, even during the communist period. Beside going to the cathedral, they liked Bulgarian feta cheese. And I heard a story of a bus going back to Greece after one of these tourist visits. When it got to the Greek border the customs agent came on board and asked, “Does anybody have anything to declare?” All the Greeks answered no but the bus reeked of feta cheese.

Q: (laughs)

HILL: And they all said “Okhi,” No *(laughs)*.

Q: OK. Well, were there any demonstrations against the embassy while you were there in this particular tour?

HILL: Yeah, just the one time when the Bulgarians put a barricade on the sidewalk in front of the embassy to keep people from looking at the space exhibit in the windows and from coming inside the library to see the rest of the exhibit.

I was Charge and insisted on protesting even though it was Saturday and the Foreign Ministry was closed. I met somebody who had the title of duty ambassador, but obviously he was an ex secret policeman. I had practiced in Bulgarian to say, “Mr. Ambassador, like thieves in the night who are ashamed of their deeds, your militia barricaded my embassy at four o’clock this morning. I protest this in the strongest terms.” Of course it made no difference at all.

Q: Oh yeah.

HILL: This kind of thing we did during the Cold War.

Q: Well, I mean you didn’t have the feeling at this point that you were really dealing with

the end of an era, I mean --

HILL: No. We didn't know that the end of an era was only a few years away. In 1984 nobody could see 1989 coming, even people in the CIA. But I think the only person who did was Zbigniew Brzezinski. He wrote something in Foreign Affairs in 1988 that things were going badly in the Soviet Union and a change was coming. Something like that. But nobody else predicted the dramatic changes that would take place in 1989 in Eastern Europe and 1991 in the Soviet Union.

Q: I think Vernon Walker, our ambassador in Germany, kind of saw it. Or was thinking that -- I mean he was --

HILL: I knew him. In fact, he came out to my next assignment when I was DCM in Lusaka, Zambia and he stayed in our house for a day or two. It was nice to get to know him. I can imagine that he could have foreseen that a change was coming.

Q: Did you sort of feel that you were marking time?

HILL: No, I saw it as a challenge, every day. I certainly didn't think I was going to make a big change in Bulgaria and something dramatic would happen. In retrospect one would like to believe that he influenced the course of events that resulted in the changes in 1989.

Q: Yeah.

HILL: But no, you just saw it as making a mark and defending the interests of the United States and hopefully impressing a few Bulgarians that that flag flying over the building meant something and that somewhere in the world there were people with a system and a better life for its citizens than Bulgarians were going through and those citizens wanted the captive peoples of Eastern Europe to have a better future.

Q: Well, also would you say that the fact that you were the DCM in a Soviet Bloc country had a certain, oh, I don't know, you'd call it prestige or something? Any -- I mean the people who deal with the Soviet Bloc were considered to be a bit special, weren't they?

HILL: Well, yes, but I wasn't a Soviet hand so I didn't have the real cache that somebody like Bob Barry had, who had served in Leningrad. I didn't speak Russia. But I certainly felt that it was an important job. And of course just to make it to DCM was a big thing for me because I had been wandering, as I told you, in the periphery. To be a DCM, even in a small country like Bulgaria was a step up.

Q: Yeah. Well, this is probably a good place to stop. When did you leave there?

HILL: I left in June 1984.

Q: All right, and then where did you go?

HILL: After home leave I went to Lusaka, Zambia. With Bob Barry's help I was able to get another DCM assignment there.

Q: OK, well we'll pick it up there the next time and we'll be talking about how you got the job and, and all that and then what you did, OK?

HILL: OK.

Q: All right. How about next week, same time, on the 18th?

HILL: That's fine.

Q: Can we do it a little bit earlier, say can we do it at 10?

HILL: OK, let's see. Ten in the morning. All right. I've got you down.

Q: OK, great. See you then. Take care.

HILL: OK, thanks.

Q: Bye. I'll make my announcement here. Today is the 18th of April, 2014 with Kenneth Hill.

HILL: Right.

Q: And Ken, we have you off to Zambia, is it?

HILL: Yes.

Q: And this is what, 19 what?

HILL: This was July 1984.

Q: '84. All right, how'd you get the job?

HILL: Well --

Q: You were DCM there.

HILL: -- I was finishing up in Sofia, I was DCM. And I stated looking around. Frankly, there wasn't very much on the market that I could aspire too. Fortunately, Bob Barry, the ambassador in Sofia knew Nicholas Platt who was the ambassador in Zambia and put in a good word for me, so I got the job. And I was delighted.

Q: All right, when you got there in '84 what was the situation?

HILL: Kenneth Kaunda, the first president of the country from 1964, was still in power. They got their independence from the British in '64. Kaunda ran a single party, a dictatorship, but a benign dictatorship. He was a professed Christian, leaned towards Socialism, and had a policy that he called Humanism, which was a mix of African socialism, Christianity, and Zambian village culture. He was critical of the Reagan administration, he felt it was supportive of South Africa. But he was willing to assist Chet Crocker, who was the assistant secretary of state for African Affairs, in carrying out a policy that was called "constructive engagement." What Crocker was trying to do was to open up apartheid in South Africa and also stop the various confrontations and wars that were going on around Southern Africa in Namibia, which was also called Southwest Africa, Angola, in the Congo, and in Mozambique. Kaunda was helpful and there were a lot of people who would come to Lusaka for negotiations. He was willing to be the host for those meetings and be supportive. So it turned out for me to be an interesting job, both as a manager and also fairly important politically.

Q: Well, let's see. Your ambassador was Nicholas Platt.

HILL: Right.

Q: What was he like? What was his management style?

HILL: His management style was easygoing. He was the boss, but he expected me to take over the day-to-day running of the embassy. Nick's background had been mostly Asia, but he was close to people in Washington, including that he certainly knew Chet Crocker and he knew Chet Crocker's principle DAS who was Frank Wisner. And Frank had been ambassador in Lusaka before Nicholas Platt. So Nick was well connected that way.

Q: Kaunda, he was obviously getting on in years by this time, wasn't he?

HILL: Kaunda was probably in his 50s in 1984. He was still a strapping healthy person and intellectually very fit and in charge. There was a tendency in Africa for presidents to become presidents for life. And probably his biggest weakness was economic. He was attracted to socialism and he had the notion that he could do anything as president of the country in the economics sphere and it wouldn't have repercussions. But the result when I arrived in 1984 was that Zambia was about eight billion dollars in debt. And their economic policies were becoming increasingly confused and unhelpful to the country. For example, soon after independence in 1964 he imposed a price on corn that was grown by the village farmers in the country and was the food staple of the population. The price was less than the farmers would work for. The result was that Zambia, which was a wonderful agricultural country, was importing corn from other countries. And the price of that corn was subsidized by the government at an artificially low price. The corn was ground into grain called mealie meal and cooked as a sort of polenta for people's day-to-day food. The consequence of Kaunda's bad economic decisions was that people didn't stay in the villages and grow corn. They moved to shantytowns, to townships, outside the main cities. And there were several of them around Lusaka. Poor people with limited employment were living off of the subsidized cornmeal.

Q: Well, were there any sort of political movements? Or was it at all, all Kenneth Kaunda?

HILL: A couple of times before I arrived, there had been little shows of opposition to Kaunda but he had arrested, for example, the head of the miners union in northern Zambia, lest he become a threat to Kaunda's power. In the north there was a big copper mine. And they had organized themselves into a union and at some point he put the head of that union, Frederick Chiluba, in jail. But otherwise there wasn't any real opposition to Kaunda. He had the country pretty well under political control. Soon after I arrived the Reagan administration came out with something called the economic policy initiative, EPI. The idea behind EPI was that the U.S. would give third-world countries some money if they would institute market economic reforms. I was soon involved in negotiations with the Zambians after I arrived to try and get them to introduce reforms. One of them was to reduce the subsidy on cornmeal and another one was to float the currency against hard currencies, against the dollar, because their exchange rate, which was then two to three to the dollar, was artificial. There was a black market exchange of around 10 or even more than that to the dollar. So the plan was to get them to introduce market reforms that would resolve some of their economic problems and each time they did we would give them some money. As I remember that for Zambia it was seven million dollars. The first thing they did was to reduce the subsidy on the staple food, mealie-meal. I think it was probably under advice from some of his socialist economic advisors that Kaunda reduced the entire subsidy all at once. People were shocked and riots broke out in the townships. The police had to be called out and one or two people were killed. A day or two later Kaunda restored the subsidy. The next reform was to float the exchange rate of the local currency, the Kwacha. The rate went from two or three to the dollar and quickly rose a little bit past 10 to the dollar. At that point he cancelled the float because people thought that it was somehow insulting to the country to exchange more than 10 kwacha for one dollar. EPI became a dead letter in Zambia.

I concluded I got the best education in economics in Zambia, that is what not to do.

Q: Well, what was he doing wrong?

HILL: Well, I mentioned that he had the notion that he could issue decrees and make economic decision without thinking about how those decisions would affect the economy of the country. Zambia wasn't like the Soviet Union or other communist countries where they had closed borders and they had their own common market system in those countries. Those countries could manipulate prices and currency values with less influence from the world economy. Zambia's economy was generally connected to the rest of the world. So when he made those economic decisions without knowing what the consequences would be. For example, he couldn't just issue a decree to trade the Kwacha at two per dollar, he could not wish away a black market rate of ten Kwachas to the dollar, and when he allowed that rate to be maintained after the float, eventually 50 Kwachas to the dollar.

Q: Ah.

HILL: The currency was weak and wasn't supported by a strong economy. Market forces took over. The one thing the Zambians had, besides a lot of fertile land for growing food, was copper. And they were still mining and bringing out a large amounts of copper. During the Vietnam War, Zambian copper had been sold to the United States to make brass shells for ammunition. But once the Vietnam War ended, the, the price of copper fell. Zambia still could sell copper, but at a lower price that it had gotten previously. And that was part of the reason why they got themselves into eight billion dollars of indebtedness. After the copper price slumped, Zambia borrowed from banks to continue investing in projects such as road construction and schools, at the same level as when the copper price was higher, believing that the old price would return. But it hadn't returned by 1984.

Q: How about food prices?

HILL: Food prices at the official kwacha rate were acceptable to us, but they were not cheap. Some people -- of course not in our embassy-- would buy kwachas on the black market and that would make food prices very cheap. We had to buy our kwacha at the official rate. Food that was produced in the country , as I indicated, sold at acceptable prices for us who bought kwachas at the official exchange rate. Now, obviously if we bought imported goods we had to pay a much higher price. We imported certain things directly from South Africa, which was a big supplier for all sorts of things, including wine for example, and we would pay in dollars. Or we could bring things from diplomatic suppliers and also pay in dollars. But those prices would be international prices. Zambians and ex-pat farmers produced a lot of vegetables and tropical fruits, bananas, avocados, things like that, and even at the official exchange rate, the price was acceptable to us.

Q: Well, how was the staff there at the embassy?

HILL: We had a good staff. The embassy staff was about 30 Americans. There was also an equal or even larger AID (Agency for International Development) staff. I had people working for me who had extensive experience in Africa, and they did their jobs very well.

Q: Did you do any real political reporting, or was there much going --

HILL: I did a bit but I had a very good political officer who had African experience. I became involved in a couple of tasks due to events that unfolded after I arrived in Lusaka. One was that Nicholas Platt was transferred from Zambia to work in the Secretariat, in November 1984, in other words only about three or four months after I arrived. And so I became chargé. And I was chargé for the next nine months before the next ambassador arrived, which was delayed by politics in Washington.

The other thing that happened, besides these political negotiations that were going on

with people coming in from Washington and meeting with people from some of the other entities around Zambia, was that I discovered in 1985 that Zambia had a very high rate of HIV infection and AIDS was a major problem in the country. This was discovered by a group that came in from the Department of Health in Washington and also was connected with a U.S. military medical group that was interested in the subject. They came and met with some local doctors and discovered that the HIV infection rate was probably approaching 20% of the sexually active population in urban areas. So I began to do substantive reporting on the HIV problem because of as chargé and also as DCM under the new ambassador, I was trying to run an embassy in the midst of a fatal epidemic. That soon became a very strong interest of mine and a problem that I had to deal with on a regular basis.

Q: Well, how did -- what were the factors in trying to run a embassy with, you know, key members might have been dying around you all the time.

HILL: What we began to discover was that a few Zambian workers came down with AIDS. For example, we had a carpenter who was working with power equipment and doing repairs on embassy houses, who installed a door knob next to the hinges on a door. And we had him visit the nurse and have his blood checked, and we found out he had AIDS, not just HIV infection. In another case a driver ran a car into a tree on a weekend when he shouldn't have had the car out. And his blood test revealed that he had AIDS. And in fact, our own cook came down with AIDS. We learned about it when one morning he could not get out of bed. My wife took him to Lusaka hospital and his blood test revealed that he had AIDS. His health declined very quickly and we honored his request to be taken to his home village in Malawi where he died and was buried.

I wanted desperately to ensure that our American staff was protected and prevent our Zambian staff from hurting themselves and others if they suddenly came down with AIDS. I wanted to test the blood of all of our Zambian employees but the department wouldn't let us because HIV and AIDS had become a political issue involving homosexuals' rights to privacy and employment. We didn't want to screen our employees in order to fire them, but simply to know who might become ill and if we needed to shift an employee from a job where he might endanger himself or an American employee, we could with knowledge do so. One of our nurses gave briefings to the marine security guards about the dangers of having unprotected sex with local women. I was also concerned that if somebody from the embassy had an accident on the highway and was brought into Lusaka to the hospital unconscious, he or she might get a blood transfusion and we had learned that 10% of the blood supply at Lusaka's hospital was contaminated with HIV. We asked people to commit that they could not engage in any activities in which they might become infected with HIV, and volunteer to provide blood if any Americans on the staff needed it. And we kept track of blood types and the names of potential donors. We never had to call on that back-up during my tour in Zambia but I felt that we had to be ready to deal with an emergency if it arrived. One other note on AIDS in Zambia. We found that Zambians who became infected with HIV very quickly developed full blown AIDS and developed AIDS Dementia Syndrome because their immune systems were already under stress from malaria and other endemic diseases. The

syndrome quickly damaged cognitive and coordination functions, which explained the carpenter's mistake in wrongly installing the door knob.

Q: Well, I would think that the Americans there would be very reluctant to serve there because of AIDS.

HILL: I don't remember that becoming a problem. I don't know (*laughs*), whether it was mentioned in the post report. Probably later on it was. But when I was there I don't remember people rejecting assignments because of HIV infection.

Another problem was the Lusaka International School. It charged the local British ex-pats and diplomats fees in kwacha. But the school tried to operate as a European or American-based international school, paying good salaries to teachers and buying books and other equipment from abroad. So it ran into financial trouble. We in our embassy reached a point when we decided in late 1986 to set up our own embassy school. The ambassador, by this time he was Paul Hare, appointed me chairman of the school committee. In the space of nine months we set up an American embassy school, hired a principal and teachers, brought books, and rented a building. We succeeded in creating a K through 8 school, which is still in existence and also offers high school grades. What drove our decision to set up an American embassy school was that people considering accepting an assignment in Lusaka heard that the international school was having difficulty financially and was not keeping up its standards. And so they were reluctant to come if they had school aged children. After we set up the school I occasionally would even get phone calls from for example, Stockholm, Sweden from a man who was going to be assigned by a business. And he said he would accept this assignment if I could assure him that his child would be accepted in the American school.

Q: Could you the Swedish child?

HILL: Oh yes, we could.

Q: Yeah.

HILL: We opened the school in September 1987 with 25 kids and by the next year we had 125 kids and the school just continued to grow over the years. This was a K through eight school in 1987. I don't know if it's still called the American Embassy School, but the school still exists in Lusaka, and they actually have included a high school now.

Q: Was there much activity going on between the various forces in South Africa in Lusaka? You know, meetings and that sort of thing?

HILL: The South Africans did not send any officials to meetings in Lusaka. Zambia did not have diplomatic relations with South Africa although they had airline connections and trade. Instead, American officials who were dealing with the South Africans went to either Cape Town or Pretoria for those meetings. But in Lusaka we had people coming in, for example, Sam Nujoma, who was the President of SWAPO, the South West African

People's Organization. They wanted to create an independent Namibia and the UN General Assembly had created a training school for Namibians in Lusaka. Kito Rodrigues, who was the minister for internal affairs in Angola, came and met with officials from Washington. Kaunda was the host for those meetings that were involved with the American policy of constructive engagement, trying to reduce South African exportation of violence to these other countries and trying to get these other countries to stop the civil wars that were going on, to create a more peaceful region in the southern Africa.

Q: Well, how about Zimbabwe?

HILL: Zimbabwe had become independent in 1980 and Robert Mugabe was president. Ian Smith had resigned. Zimbabwe was not involved in the negotiations in Lusaka that I've described. And during this time Zimbabwe was functioning more or less well. It was a place to which we could go by driving from Lusaka to Harare in maybe about six hours. And we could stay in a nice hotel and go to a good restaurant. If you needed various kinds of technical help, parts for a TV or a computer, you could pick up things like that in Zimbabwe. Later Mugabe stayed too long time and he began to confiscate the farms of British ex-pats commercial farmers and the country became the mess that it is today. But when we were there it was still functioning reasonably well.

Q: What was your attitude and maybe some of your officers around you towards Chester Crocker and his constructive engagement? He was quite controversial at the time.

HILL: We thought he was trying to do some good things. At least somebody was doing something about the problems that existed in Southern Africa. There was no opposition to the policy in the embassy. The Reagan administration ended before Crocker was able to complete what he was trying to do. But his successor, Hank Cohen, finished it in the early 1990s. The government changed in South Africa. Namibia was established as an independent country. Eventually the civil war ended in Angola. The big problem that existed was in Mozambique, where there was an organization which Jesse Helms thought was anti-communist and opposed to Machel's socialist government, but was in fact a bunch of thugs who robbed, raped and killed the poor people of Mozambique and pretended to be in opposition to the socialist government there. They were just committed criminals. Helms held up approval of 25 ambassadors that had been nominated by the Reagan administration for about a year. And the ambassador who was supposed to come to Zambia, Paul Hare, was finally not confirmed until the summer of 1985 and came to Lusaka in July '85. The organization was Renamo, the Resistencia Nacional Mocambicana. Crocker refused to meet with Renamo because they were at the top of the feeding chain in Mozambique, not a viable opposition to Machel.

Q: Who was in charge of South Africa when you were there?

HILL: P.W. Botha.

Q: Ah-ha.

Q: Zambia, was this a place where -- first of all, did you have Peace Corps there?

HILL: We didn't have the Peace Corps.

Q: Did you have anything going on there?

HILL: We had a large AID mission.

Q: How was AID functioning?

HILL: I think they had some good projects. For example, in a project that I visited in the far northwestern province of Zambia AID paid people to dig fishponds and grow tilapia in the ponds. Ducks were kept on screens over the ponds so their refuse fell into the ponds and created nitrogen, which fertilized plants in the fishpond that the tilapia ate. And then the people could harvest the tilapia, which would give them some protein. Otherwise, they ate one of the root crops there, which was very low in protein and as a result they had a deficit in protein. I thought that was a good project. Some of the other projects I thought were rather complicated and AID had many rules imposed on their work by Congress.

One project that I carried out, sometimes in concert with my travels to various parts of the country, was the Self Help Fund. AID set up a fund with no more than \$2,000, which the embassy could loan to a village that was building something for the good of that community, for example, a medical clinic. The village would build walls with mud bricks but it needed money to buy corrugated metal sheets for a roof. The village would obtain an estimate of the cost of the roofing sheets and the embassy would loan that amount. The village was required to send us a receipt for the money after buying the sheeting. I would visit the project on my travels, either in the beginning or after the building was completed with the new roof. The Self Help Fund was also used to build or repair school buildings and other needs.

Q: Well, did you have much in the way of tourism there, American tourism?

HILL: Not much. Zambia was remote, located in the middle of southern Africa. You could travel to it on a long flight from London or Nairobi, or a shorter flight from Johannesburg. The only feasible road connection was from Zimbabwe. So it was hard for tourists to get there. In addition, most of its neighbors were in various stages of war or other difficulties except Zimbabwe and Tanzania. It had game parks but people interested in seeing game in the wild usually went to Kenya, Tanzania or South Africa. If one wanted to visit Victoria Falls, he probably did so from Zimbabwe where the grand old Victoria Falls Hotel was located. Occasionally we would see a few tourists, but not many.

We went to the two game parks in Zambia but I don't remember that there were very many people who came from outside Zambia to go to them. They had perfectly good accommodations there, and guides in Land Rovers to see the wild game. The good thing about being in a remote country, besides the fact that you got an extra allowance for serving there, was that it was remote for anybody who might have terrorism in mind. So we were somewhat safer because it was just hard to get there.

Q: Did the trouble in Angola spill over?

HILL: No, it didn't. The only contact we had with Angola, and the only problem with Angola, was the people who came to Lusaka to meet with people like Frank Wisner or somebody from Washington who was working on constructive engagement. There was one time when there was a brief concern that the fighting in Angola might spill over the border into the northwest province of Zambia. But that soon passed without incident. And the problems in the Congo did not spill over into Zambia.

Q: Yeah.

HILL: The copper belt in Zambia extended into the southern Congo. And they had copper mines there too and there were some problems about a local takeover of the mines. But that never spilled across into Zambia.

Q: Did you get any Cuban influence there?

HILL: No. That was in Angola. They sent doctors and I assume military advisors into Angola. No, we didn't have any Cubans in Zambia. The Soviets had military attaches in Lusaka. Zambia had an army, but it was really for internal control. If the country had ever been invaded by any of its neighbors I don't think it would have been able to protect itself. All of its neighbors had their own internal problems so there was no outside threat to Zambia.

Q: What was your impression of the Zambian educational system?

HILL: It was pretty good. That's one thing that Kaunda did fairly well. When he took over the country in '64 Zambia was not a magnet for British farmers to come there to settle. Some of them had already settled there but not to the extent that they had settled in Southern Rhodesia. Zambia was called Northern Rhodesia during the colonial period. It became a British colony because the British Empire wanted to build a Cape-to-Cairo railroad and the rail line extended through Zambia until the copper near the Congo border was discovered. The railroad ended at the mine. Northern Rhodesia remained remote from South Africa and it didn't attract that many British colonists. And the British didn't spend that much money developing the infrastructure in the country. The road system was poor when Kaunda took over, and the education system was weak. Kaunda created a paved road network of two-lane roads that reached the provinces on the farthest borders. And he created schools and the university in Lusaka. And I guess he took his model from Thomas Jefferson and made himself the president of the country and also the president of

the university. Every year Kaunda personally handed out the degrees. I remember going to a couple of those graduation ceremonies. In addition to the Zambian elementary schools and the university, a certain number of Zambian exchange students went to the United States. We started doing that when the country got its independence and we continued to send a lesser number in the succeeding years. Education was also assisted by the missionaries who were in the country. There were both Catholics and Protestants who had mission stations around the country for Zambian children.

Q: Well, did many graduate students who went to the United States from Zambia, did they come back and -- or did they basically stay in the States?

HILL: The one who went in the '60s, when Zambia got its independence came back. A number of them who were educated in the United States and in Britain moved into official positions in the government. They were intelligent, educated, and impressive people and they became important officials of the government. But because Kaunda and his immediate cohort of supporters stayed in power for so many years, there was no way for these people to rise to the top levels of the government. And it was frustrating for the younger educated officials. As a result, Zambia didn't receive the benefits of those intelligent people who could have gone to higher levels and perhaps taken over the top level positions in the country.

Q: Did you get the feeling that the government was sort of atrophying?

HILL: Yes, and you saw that in their economic problems. A certain amount of corruption appeared in the four years I served there. I went for two years and extended for two more. But by the time I left in '88 it was clear that some of the people in Kaunda's family, and some of the top people around Kaunda were involved in corruption. There was an advisor to him named Grey Zulu who was the subject rumors that he was involved in various kinds of corruption. For example, there were reports that he was connected to North Korean diplomats who were buying illegal ivory and transporting it out of the country and selling it to China at huge profits. Also Zambia had various kinds of gems, not diamonds, but more common gems such as amethyst and malachite that were being traded illegally outside the country.

Q: Ah-ha. Well, in '88 you left.

HILL: Yes. And as I said, I went for two years and stayed for four. I got along well with Nicholas Platt and also well with Paul Hare, who arrived as the new ambassador in '85. He stayed until '88. Both of us left about the same time. It was time for me to get back home. Our younger son had graduated from a Quaker boarding high school in Pennsylvania. In retrospect it was a mistake sending him to a boarding school five thousand miles away from us. When he graduated from high school in June 1988, my wife went back recover and resettle our rented house and create a place for him to live and begin a course at the Montgomery Country community college. And it was time for me to get back. I had been promoted into the Senior Foreign Service during the Lusaka assignment and I thought that I probably had only a few more years in the Foreign before

I would be forced to retire. I thought I should get back to Washington and put myself in a position where I could think about what I would do after the Foreign Service in terms of employment. But as it happened, we went back to Washington, I went to job in a senior officer assignments in the Bureau of Personnel and I was unexpectedly promoted to minister counselor, the top level of SFS. So I had more time in the rest of my career than I thought I would have.

Q: Well, in the department what were you doing now?

HILL: There were four of us in the office of senior officer assignments. We handled senior officer personnel issues including transfers of SFS officers for the Bureau of Personnel. I dealt with European assignments and I was also responsible for putting together the lists of candidates for assignments to DCM and ambassador positions. I had to consult with all of the bureaus in the department to compile the DCM and ambassador lists. I would compile the DCM list with the necessary supporting documents and submit it to the DG's (Director General's) committee to decide DCM assignments. The ambassador list would be sent to the D Committee (the Deputy Secretary's committee) with supporting information, to decide the department's choices. Both committees had representatives from various bureaus in the department. In the case of the list of ambassadorial candidates, the White House made the final decisions. The department was already informed if the president intended to make any non-career ambassadorial appointments to the countries under consideration. After the D committee made its choices of the career appointments, I would write a memo to the White House for its approval of the department's ambassadorial candidates.

Q: Well, did you find yourself in sort of a position of a Machiavelli in the Byzantine world or something?

HILL: *(laughs)*

Q: I mean all sorts of people coming up and whispering to you and --

HILL: Yes. If somebody came to me and said, "Have you put me on the list?" my answer was, "Listen, the only people I can put on the list are people nominated by the various bureaus. So you have to go to your bureau to have your name put forward."

One of the unpleasant things I also had to do was when people reached time-in-class limits, that is, enforced retirement, I had to send out letters informing them. And I had to send out letters to some of my personal friends and say, "Dear Friend, I'm sorry to inform you that you have reached the end of your time-in-class and as of such and such date you will have to retire from the Foreign Service."

Q: Yeah. Did you come away with any impression about the, let's say ambassadorial appointments? I have to say one of the things that has disturbed me is the fact that -- my impression is a significant number of ambassadorial appointments come through the bureaus of people who've served as staff aides to principles. And staff aiding is probably

the worst training you can imagine for, for, for somebody to go out and manage a post. They're mostly, you know, asserting the authority and the person they're representing and getting things done, and not really getting things done themselves. At least that's my impression.

HILL: Well, I certainly think that some of that happened. In Bulgaria the most important advantage a Bulgarian could have was connections. And, in fact a Bulgarian told me once that if you really want to put a curse on a Bulgarian you say "May your connections die," (*laughs*). And it was certainly true in the Foreign Service that some people benefited from their connections, including from having been staff aides of high level officials, but also in other ways, I mean, such as desk officers. I heard many times someone from a bureau's EX office say "this is our guy or this is our gal and we want him or her on the DCM list." And those nominations were signed off by the assistant secretaries of the various bureaus. But in fairness, during my time putting together the DCM and ambassadorial lists, the DG, then Edward Perkins, and the deputy secretary, Larry Eagleburger, would insist that the supporting documents, usually short write-ups of the candidate's qualifications, should include things like management experience and area and language expertise. And I remember that the reports that I received after the meetings indicated that those kinds of matters were discussed. But I will not try to convince you that connections, including having been a staff aide to an assistant secretary, were not influences in the selection of some candidates.

Q: Did you find some of the, you might say the high and mighties in the State Department throw their weight around as far as getting their person on the list?

HILL: Yes, in some cases. But when I was doing this the deputy secretary was Larry Eagleburger. My impression was that he didn't tell members of his committee whom they had to approve. A name would come up and, and the question would be what kind of experience does this person have, what kind of assets would he or she bring to a DCM job or to the ambassadorial job. In each case, when we would send names forward we would tell the bureaus that they had to write up a mini efficiency report as to why a person would be a good candidate for a job. But every ambassadorship that came up for consideration there was usually more than one candidate for the job. And there would be a debate as to who should get the job. Again, I'm not going to tell you that the system was entirely rational and, and entirely fair. The same thing happened really in the assignments panels. You know, names would come up for a job of consulate counselor in embassy X, or economic officer in embassy Y, and, and there would be a discussion as to who would be the best person for the job. Now, certainly in, in, in some cases one of the leading persons in the department could influence the decision. I told you earlier that when I went out as DCM to Bulgaria, the position of consul general in Zagreb was also on the market. I had been trained in Serbo-Croatian, and had been tested at the four-four level and I tried to get that job. And at the time the DG in effect said, "My person is going to get that job." He had worked for her in personnel and she felt it was important to give the job to him. And her person at the time had served in Bulgaria and had learned to speak Bulgarian, but had not learned Serbo-Croatian. Those things happened. There was certainly a personal influence in choosing people for various assignments.

Q: Yeah. Well, of course when one looks at this, with people changing approximately every three years or so, with a multitude of languages and places and jobs, I mean it's a very complicated process. I don't think any other organization has to deal with the complexities of our personnel system.

HILL: That's right. When I went to the Senior Officer Assignments office Bill Whitman was head of the office and I was one of the three officers working for him. After one year, Bill transferred to another job and I was moved up to be head of the office in summer 1989. George H.W. Bush had become president the previous January and as I remember his administration was slow making some of his cabinet and other appointments. And all the senior foreign service officers due for reassignment were waiting for Bush to appoint various cabinet level jobs appoint ambassadors to various embassies. Several embassies were opening as ambassadors who were confirmed during the Reagan administration were leaving them. And even though he was the vice president of Reagan, he had his own administration with his own supporters who would be considered for embassies. So senior officers wouldn't take jobs until they knew whether they could compete for ambassadorial assignments or for prime DCM positions, or for high level jobs in the department such as assistant secretary, DAS, and office directors. By the summer of 1989 over a hundred senior officers were unassigned. The undersecretary for management, Ivan Selin, and the DG, Ed Perkins told me that I, now the chief of senior officer assignments, had to do something to reduce the backlog of unassigned senior officers. Already comments were showing up in the newspapers that there was a large number of high ranking Senior Foreign Service Officers who were not in jobs. What was not yet printed was that they were walking the halls of the department trying to become ambassadors or take top level positions in the department and there was a large number of high level jobs in the department waiting for senior officers to be assigned to them.

And so Ed Perkins, who was the DG, and his deputy Larry Williamson, told me, "Start assigning the unassigned senior officers."

Well, if I waited for those people to put in a bid list and accept a job I would have been waiting for several more months because they wanted to see what would be available. So I started force assigning people. For example, an experienced economic officer was up for reassignment and there was a senior level position in the Econ Bureau that was vacant. I would say, "I'm assigning you to that job." And the way it worked if the officer was not assigned during the next three weeks of assignment panels, after the third assignment panel he would be assigned in the next one to the economics bureau job. You can imagine that doing that made me rather unpopular with a number of seniors.

Q: Yes.

HILL: But within a period of a couple of months I had reduced the 110 senior officers who were not assigned down to about a dozen or 15. But that meant that I had to force assign people into jobs that would have been their second or third choices. But that's

what my bosses told me to do and what was needed if the department was to continue functioning and SFSOs were going to earn their pay.

I was given one other task after the department lost a court case by women FSOs who charged that they had not been fairly assigned to high level positions abroad or in the department. The DG told me to assign at least one women DAS to every bureau in the department. The next year I was told to put more women FSOs on the candidate lists for ambassadorships. But in some cases I had to put women who had been put in DAS positions the year before, because there were not that many female SFSOs.

Q: (laughs) Oh yes, such is the joys of --

HILL: Yeah.

Q: So I'm looking at the time. This is probably -- what'd you do about your assignment?

HILL: Well, Ivan Selin, who was a very smart guy who had been involved in nuclear energy thought the State Department personnel system was irrational. He wanted people to be assigned two or three years out into jobs that would be coming vacant then, instead of the year when the jobs became vacant. He had an idea that may sound silly to you, but he wanted me to do up a list of ambassadorial assignments that would come vacant the next year, and the next two years, and then three years in the future. And he wanted a flexible arrangement so that names could be put on it and perhaps shifted around according to additional information that developed. And so I put together a magnetic board reflecting those conditions. And Selin and Perkins and others started looking ahead to future ambassadorial assignments. Well, one embassy that was coming up the next year, 1990, was the ambassador to Bulgaria. And one of the last things that Bill Whitman did before he left the job of head of the Senior Officer Division was to answer to Ivan Selin when he asked, "Who might be an appropriate candidate for ambassador to Bulgaria?"

And Bill Whitman said, "Ken Hill standing next to you is the best qualified person."

So my name went on the magnetic board in the slot for ambassador to Sofia. Not my doing but Bill Whitman recommending me out of the blue. And as it happened, probably the other people who might have been my competitors weren't interested in going out as ambassador to Bulgaria in 1990. One of them was at the NSC (National Security Council) and another one did not want to leave Washington because his wife had a job and he didn't want to take her from it. And as it ended up, the only person who was put forward in competition with me was a friend of mine whose name was put forward by the EUR Bureau. He really wanted to become ambassador to Cyprus, because he had worked on the Cyprus problem for a couple of years, but that job went to somebody else who had been in charge of security in the department. When the D committee considered my name and my friend's name for ambassador to Bulgaria, the D committee chose me because I had served as DCM in Sofia, I spoke the language, I knew a lot about the country and the names of some of the officials in the Zhivkov government. I had management experience

and my candidacy was supported by the DG, who was also in charge of the Personnel Bureau. My competitor also had management experience but no experience in Bulgaria. He was supported by the EUR assistant secretary. Finally, and frankly, I was in the right place at the right time, and the D committee approved me.

Q: Yeah. OK, well I think this is probably a good place to stop, Ken.

HILL: Yes.

Q: Yes, hold on a second. Let me get a -- yeah, would you be free the afternoon of next weekend, the 25th?

HILL: Yes.

Q: OK, I'll call you at two.

HILL: Two o'clock, OK. It's on my calendar.

Q: Yep, OK Ken, call you then.

HILL: I'm sorry to bore you with all these --

Q: Oh no, actually I -- look, I, I, I think people will be interested, they're going to go into this with all sorts of thing.

HILL: Good.

Q: And so I don't dismiss anything.

HILL: OK.

Q: OK, take care.

HILL: Thanks a lot, talk to you next week.

Q: Yeah. Wait a second, I got to -- wait a minute -

Q: I want to stop here for one second. I hadn't pushed the right button.

HILL: Oh, OK.

Q: So let me start over again. Today is the 25th of April, 2014, interview with Ken Hill. And we're covering the period that you're in Bulgaria from 1990 to '93. And I had asked you if you'd had any problems in getting through the Senate and you said no.

HILL: No, there weren't any real problems. There were just a few pro forma questions and I answered them and the committee recommended Senate confirmation, which was done.

Q: OK. So, so we'll pick up -- what was the situation in Bulgaria. It must have been quite different from when you'd been there before.

HILL: Very different. On November 10, 1989 the Politburo of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) deposed the president and dictator, Todor Zhivkov. Younger members of the Communist Party felt that the program of forcing Bulgarian Turks to leave the country in the late 1980s and also an increasing national debt had put the country in a difficult situation. So they got rid of Zhivkov and appointed a new president and government. In early 1990 they had discussions with the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF), a coalition of 17 parties that had formed in the previous year or so and was opposed to communism and wanted a democratic government. Secretary of State James Baker visited Bulgaria for just an overnight in February 1990 and the UDF marched to the hotel where he was staying and he came out and spoke to them briefly and encouraged them to work together and press for power through an election. And they were really energized. In round table negotiations the communists to give up their monopoly of power, and changed the name of their party to the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) and agreed to a multi-party election in June 1990. The BSP won with 54% of the vote while the UDF got 34%. The Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF), which was popularly known as the Turkish Party, won about 12% of the vote. The UDF and MRF joined together as the opposition in the parliament that, which was called the Grand National Assembly because its main task was to write a new democratic constitution to replace the old communist constitution. During the summer of 1990 there were some demonstrations which resulted in interim president Petar Mladenov, who had been the foreign minister under Zhivkov, to resign. The parliament elected the president of the UDF, Zhelyu Zhelev, to replace Mladenov as the interim president until the new constitution could be adopted and elections would be held under it. In August 1990 a group of demonstrators broke into the BSP's large party building, set a fire and burned some documents. Although some of the demonstrators were members of the UDF, there were suspicions that others were not and that the goal of the group was to destroy intimidating files of the Bulgarian Communist Party.

By the time I arrived in September all of these momentous changes had taken place, and Bulgaria was really a different country in many ways. The former communists, now called socialists, were in power and the Secret Police had not been dismantled. But even the Secret Police was less visible. One could see and feel the differences on the streets. People just looked freer and happier. Young couples walked hand in hand and embraced. Diplomats could meet freely with politicians. Newspapers published articles that were critical of politicians. And there was a palpable interest in what was going to happen in the country.

Q: Well, you'd been there before. I mean were, were sort of Democrats in training rising

up throughout the, the political -- in the political parties?

HILL: Not at all. During the time we were there in the early '80s nobody except people in the Communist Party and its so-called coalition party, the Agrarian Party, took part in the political system. And whatever they did was carefully controlled by the BCP. Nobody else could get any kind of political experience, to say nothing of democratic experience. We didn't even know then that there were a few dissidents in the country. Actually, Zhelyu Zhelev was one of these dissidents who was a communist party member when he was a student but he cancelled his party membership after Bulgaria joined with the Soviet Union to crush the Prague Spring liberalization in Czechoslovakia in 1968. Zhelev wrote a book in the early '80s named Fascism, which purported to be an analysis of the human rights abuses of fascism and Nazism, but which anybody in Bulgaria reading it would know that it was an analysis of the very same abuses that the Communist Party and government carried out in Bulgaria. A censor allowed the book to be published but another one realized its double meaning and stopped the printing after a small number of copies had been printed. But enough copies of the book got out to a small underground of dissidents so that Zhelev became known among them. When the UDF was organized in the late 1980s he was chosen to be its first president. We didn't know anything about a small dissident movement or Zhelyu Zhelev in the early 1980s.

Q: Well, I mean looking back on it, did you see why we didn't know, or?

HILL: Sorry?

Q: I mean in other words, you know, looking, say OK, fine, there was this development going on, maybe it was part of the secret process, but had anybody picked this up, or -- on our side?

HILL: We didn't know because there was such strong control by the Bulgarian Secret Police that the dissidents had to stay hidden and out of sight, unlike in other countries, including the Soviet Union, where a few dissidents were known to American diplomats. But changes took place in the late 1980s, for example, the Turkish Bulgarians were forced to change their names to "Bulgarian names," which meant Christian names, or they had to leave the country. And thousands of them left Bulgaria and went to Turkey. A non-communist labor union was formed also in the late 1980s called Podkrepa, as government control weakened due to the distractions caused by the name-change campaign. And by 1989, various groups had come together to form the Union of Democratic Forces. For example, there was a group called Ekoglasnost, which was very concerned about the environment in the country. People were upset because there were smelters that were belching great amounts of smoke with arsenic and other poisons in it, which were making children ill. And there were some other groups that joined the Union of Democratic Forces, including monarchists, social democrats, and agrarians who were opposed to the agrarians that were in coalition with the communist party. Embassy Sofia was in contact with these developments and other countries such as the French and British made contact with them and encouraged them to form a party and seek power. The deciding moment came on November 9, 1989, when the Bulgarian government

hosted an international environmental conference. Ekoglasnost and other Bulgarian environmentalists organized demonstrations in front of the conference building, whereupon the government sent police to forcefully disperse the demonstrators and few of them were clubbed and bloodied. The foreign government delegations to the environmental conference, including the U.S., threatened to leave. The demonstrators were back the next day and the police did not intervene. It was later that day, I think, that the Politburo deposed Zhivkov, which was the first step toward the election and creating a new constitution.

Q: Well, did you feel that there was a, sort of a bunch of democrats waiting in the wings?

HILL: No. The people who formed the UDF had no experience in politics or in democracy. They had aspirations. And they were united only in their opposition to communism and to the successor party, the Socialist Party, which many of them continued to call the communist party. But as it unfolded over the next year or so it became clear that even their opposition to communism and socialism wasn't enough to hold them together. By early 1991 they began to split into two parties, a conservative one and a more leftist one. Both of them democratic but after the split competing with each other as well as with the socialists, but with less power.

When I went out as ambassador my instructions from the Secretary of State and from the president was to support the transition to democracy and a market economy. And that's what I tried to do, and that's what our various programs over time tried to do. We provided advice and technical assistance but not very much money, to encourage Bulgarians to create a democracy and adopt a market economy. The socialists, as I said, had given up the monopoly of power of the Communist Party, and they said publicly that they also wanted a democracy. And of course those people had a lot of political experience. And that's the reason why the socialists won the first election that took place in June 1990 with 54% of the vote. They had the organization, experience, and Bulgarians still weren't convinced that the country was going to change into a different kind of country. So a lot of people continued to vote with the Socialist Party because they thought it was safer to do that.

The parliament's choice of Zhelev, then the president of the UDF, as the new interim president of the country in summer 1990 was an important signal that the country could change direction from a hard line communist satellite to an independent democracy. The Bulgarian desk at the department seized an opportunity to have Zhelev visit Washington a week after I presented my credential credentials to him, in conjunction with his visit to the UN General Assembly in New York. I accompanied him to Washington and President George H.W. Bush, who was heavily engaged in the first Persian Gulf crisis took time for a photo op and a brief meeting with Zhelev. That was an important boost for his popularity and power back in Sofia. And Zhelev and I established active contacts that would help both of us do our jobs in the years that followed.

Soon after Zhelev returned to Sofia his executive assistant contacted me that Zhelev felt he was under attack by the "communists." He asked if I could organize a show of support

of Zhelev by NATO ambassadors. I quickly invited president Zhelev and several NATO ambassadors to a dinner at the residence, and I made a statement to journalists underlining our support for Bulgaria's president who had been chosen for the position by the country's democratically elected parliament. USIS also created an exhibit of pictures of Zhelev with president Bush in the embassy's storefront windows.

I exploited my contact with Zhelev a couple months later when the embassy's security officer discovered a small hole in the wall opposite the door to the communication room. When he pressed on it, his hand landed on the lens of a camera, which had been taking pictures of people picking up telegrams at the communications room for who knows how long. I got approval from the department to make a demarche directly to Zhelev in the hope that it would help him to rein in the Secret Police, and he did so.

The Bulgarian Secret Police was not my only concern. During Zhelev's visit to Washington, he agreed to a Peace Corps program and indicated that he hoped the U.S. would extend Most Favored Nation (MFN) status to Bulgaria, to give a boost to him and the UDF in influencing democratic change. But a group of people in Washington whom I considered continuing Cold War warriors, who were connected to conservatives in Congress and in the Bush administration and had back channel contacts with conservative Bulgarian politicians, opposed MFN and other matters involved in the conduct of relations. I discovered the back channel contacts and I sent a telegram to Washington slugged for the seventh floor of the department, insisting that people in the department who were interfering in the conduct of relations with Bulgaria, which president Bush had appointed me to conduct, must cease and desist. Although there were a couple of denials that any such things was happening, the back channel folks backed off at least for a time, so I could conduct relations and concentrate on encouraging the development of democracy in Bulgaria.

The Bulgarian socialists, the refrocked communists, still regarded the U.S. as the adversary and me as its representative. The socialist newspaper, Duma, ran a series of articles in early 1991 titled, "Your Policy and Our Country." The articles implied that the U.S. intended to steer the UDF into power, establish military bases in Bulgaria, and favor its NATO ally, Turkey, in establishing hegemony over Bulgaria. The paper wanted to engage me in a debate with it but I circumvented it by writing a statement that I had USIS release to all of the newspapers in the country. I refuted the charges that I or other embassy officers had spoken at UDF "meetings," emphasized our relations with all Bulgarian political parties, noted our assistance to Bulgaria during the difficult winter just passed, and cited the meeting between presidents Zhelev and Bush. Duma backed off its attacks for a while.

Q: Well, when you got there, how -- sort of where did you initially think Bulgaria was going politically?

HILL: My first reaction was to be very optimistic about how it was going because both the UDF and the BSP said they wanted to transition to democracy. Very soon after I

arrived, I was interviewed on television. I was asked “How long will it take to complete the transition?”

And I said, “Oh, I think it will go quickly because everybody is in agreement that that’s what this country would like to have.” But soon afterward I began to realize that even though people used the same words, the socialists and the UDF had a different concepts of democracy. The socialists wanted to remain in control and keep their people in power. And they were the majority party in parliament that was writing the constitution. They were able to write some provisions into the constitution which in the long run benefited them. For example, the constitution could only be amended by a 75% vote in parliament. Well, you know from our country that it is hard to get a two-thirds vote to amend the constitution.

Q: Yeah.

HILL: But in a country like Bulgaria, which ultimately ended up with multiple parties, the idea of amending the constitution with a 75% vote was totally out of the question. So when the constitution was adopted in the spring of 1991 it would be very hard to change in the future. For example, when later the former king of Bulgaria who went abroad in 1946, it was not possible to change the constitution in favor of a constitutional monarch.

Q: Were we at all involved in the drafting of the constitution?

HILL: The American Bar Association had a pro bono lawyer in Bulgaria who would provide information to parliamentary deputies if they sought it. We also provided to them copies of our constitution. We tried to be helpful, but it was really their show. They also got advice from the European Union and over time other democracies provided advisors and technical assistance.

Q: But did you -- were you impressed that this was being looked at, or was it something we had on the side, but the Bulgarians were going their own way?

HILL: No. They respected the U.S. as the world’s oldest democracy and they were interested in our constitution and our political system. But after considering our constitution they concluded that they preferred a European style parliamentary democracy with a president who had largely ceremonial duties and a parliamentary system in which the majority party in the parliament would elect the government and with a prime minister and a cabinet under that prime minister that were from the ruling party in the parliament. They preferred that system over our executive type system.

Q: Well, how did you see this system in its initial phases working?

HILL: In those days, there were only three parties in the parliament. The socialists were the largest, and they were in charge. With only three parties the system seemed to work well. But what became clear pretty quickly, by October 1990, there were political groups that were unhappy with the results of the June 1990 election, who raised opposition. The

Podkrepa union, led by its leader Konstantin Trenchev who was a bit of a firebrand, called a general strike and demanded that the socialist prime minister, Andrey Lukanov, resign. I was surprised that he did so only a few days after the general strike began. That created a situation in which the interim president, Zhelyu Zhelev, had to choose a new prime minister after obtaining approval from the parliament. There was an interregnum for several weeks while this transition of leadership was being arranged. Zhelev finally chose a former judge named Dimitar Popov, whom I was certain had been a communist since all judges were members of the party during the communist era. He finally took office in January 1991 at the head of what was called a non-party government of experts, backed by the socialist party's majority in parliament. Popov invited me, my DCM and political officer to a lunch at which he indicated that members of the MRF, the so-called Turkish party, could not have a say in parliament. I said that I expected that my government, and I thought that the governments of EU members would not understand if Bulgarian citizens elected to parliament were denied a voice and a vote. He was clearly not pleased by my reply. The same view was later raised by politicians but the Bulgarian equivalent of our Supreme Court ruled that the party was legal.

During the interregnum the new leader of the UDF, Petar Beron, who was from an old and well regarded Bulgarian family, was exposed as a former informant of the Secret Police as the result of a leak to a newspaper. So he was driven out of power. Ergo, within four months after my arrival the apparent political stability of Bulgaria had unraveled. And by March of 1991 a group of the more conservative half of the UDF walked out of parliament and created a tent city in the lawn area around the parliament building. Some people in the group went on a hunger strike to try to force the parliament to disband, hold a new election and start working on a new constitution again. Well, the socialists wouldn't agree to hold new elections. The draft of the new constitution was nearly finished and the remaining deputies in parliament continued to work on it. People in the conservative UDF would have liked me to be photographed among the hunger strikers as championing their cause. But an election had been held and the parliament was working on a new constitution and I decided not to become involved in an extra-political effort to disrupt the process. I began to see that some members of the UDF were not only politically inexperienced but also believed that they could continue to create change through chaos and confrontation to overcome the results of elections.

Q: Well, it's a -- you know, I mean was this a, a time of people kind of wandering around figuring out what they wanted to do, or were there a lot of people who knew what they wanted to do, but just weren't getting it done?

HILL: No, I think it was the former. The UDF had led several "meetings," (they used the English word for demonstrations) throughout 1990. And they had pretty much gotten their way. The communist party gave up its monopoly of power and agreed to a multi-party election. They forced the first interim president, Petar Mladenov, to resign, then Podkrepa union, which was associated with the UDF, called a general strike and forced the socialist prime minister, Andrey Lukanov, to resign. So they had the idea that they could simply take to the streets and have a "meeting" if they didn't like the way things were going. It was not a stable and responsible way of getting things done.

Q: Well, did you find yourself -- I say this would be true of maybe some of your other western powers -- holding sort of seminars at your rooms? You know, this is how we -- you know, trying to use by example, pass on our experiences?

HILL: Yes. The NATO ambassadors met every month and consulted on what was happening and how we individually were advising the government. By early 1991 there was an American AID mission in Bulgaria and at least so all of the aid donor countries knew what was being offered, the AID director set up a wall chart that listed the various projects that we and other countries had going on in Bulgaria. I would certainly tell Bulgarians about our country's experience with democracy and how we did things. But they didn't always seek or want that kind of advice.

Q: Yeah.

HILL: And, and even if I gave it, they didn't always follow it.

Q: Well --

HILL: In the spring of 1991 they completed the constitution and it was approved by roll call vote in the parliament. The left or liberal wing of the UDF voted in favor of the constitution. The right wing of the UDF, the conservatives, voted against it. But because the socialists already controlled over half of the parliament, it didn't take that many more votes to adopt the constitution. And that began the split of the UDF. I tried gently to encourage the party not to split. I invited the UDF to a reception at the residence one evening and I made a little speech in Bulgarian about the U.S. supporting the transition to democracy. I urged them to keep Union of Democratic Forces a union so it could continue to achieve democracy in Bulgaria. But I saw Bulgarians heads going up and down, which is the Bulgarian gesture for no. And they went ahead with the split. In June Vice President Quayle was visiting several countries in Eastern Europe, and I convinced him to make a brief visit to Bulgaria. I wrote a speech for him to deliver to a huge crowd in front of the cathedral, which was close to the parliament building. I had him congratulate Bulgarians on their budding democracy and gesture toward the parliament building and refer to the recently adopted constitution, but some people in the audience booed because they were against the constitution.

Q: I caught -- got caught on something. So was there much consultation with other, all these other states in Eastern Europe were doing through similar but obviously disparate reconstructions. Were they cooperating, or what?

HILL: There wasn't much consultation between Bulgaria and Romania. Their relations were not very warm. The northern Eastern European states, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary were the favored states in the U.S. Congress. It didn't spend much time dealing with the Balkan states, Bulgaria and Romania. Congress passed a program called SEED, the acronym for Support for Eastern European Democracy. They set up a pot of money for each state, larger amounts for the northern Eastern European states, lesser

amounts for the Balkan states. The way SEED worked was the money was put in a pot for Bulgaria, for example, and any U.S. government agency or any nongovernmental organization that had a program that would be helpful to Bulgaria, could get approval for that program and then draw money from the common pot to carry it out. Ambassador Bob Barry, who was ambassador to Bulgaria during my assignment there as DCM, was the director of the SEED programs. He consulted with the deputies at State, AID, and Treasury in approving the projects that government agencies and NGOs proposed. The result was that programs from agencies like EPA (Environmental Protection Agency), Commerce, etc., and NGOs were approved. Some of the American projects were good and useful but some were “off the shelf” projects that were not as well targeted to Bulgaria’s needs as they could have been. In a couple of cases I tried to get some adjustment to projects, but found it difficult to overcome bureaucracy and politics. For example, one nongovernmental organization from a state with an important senator wanted to come in and create a program of New England town meetings so the Bulgarian town could talk about the cost and competing interests for addressing an environmental problem on the river that ran through the town. The NGO didn’t know much about the specific environmental problems in the town but was more concerned about staging the town meetings. The project involved three years of travel to Bulgaria. In the end, a small amount of money was contributed toward cleaning up the river. I suggested shortening the several town meetings and contribute more money for the clean up but my advice was ignored.

I tried to emphasize projects that would be useful. For example, EPA sent a technical advisor to brief the responsible Bulgarian office about EPA’s environmental policy. The Bulgarian official in the office quietly told me that he had a number of descriptions of environmental policies but no money to carry them out. So I suggested to EPA that I knew of a city that needed a pump repaired to improve its water filtration system. For not very much money the pump parts could be bought in West Germany that would provide clean water for the city and a brass plaque could be mounted somewhere stating that America had enabled the population to have clean water to drink. .But the EPA’s answer was, “We don’t do pumps.”

Q: Oh God. It sounded like you needed somebody back in Washington to coordinate it and direct and all, requests.

HILL: The problem was that the SEED programs proposed by agencies and NGOs were not vetted with the embassies overseas. In fact, embassies and ambassadors were discouraged and in some cases prohibited from commenting on proposed programs or from trying to amend programs proposed in Washington. For example, there were mostly conservative American officials and pundits who advised Bulgaria to go cold turkey in changing its centrally controlled economy that was left over from the communists and to privatize state enterprises and adopt a market-based economy. But there simply was not a stable government yet in place to make such sweeping changes. But Congress had appropriated a sum of money as I remember it was about five million dollars, to something called the Bulgarian-American Enterprise Fund (BAEF) that would be administered by a board of business people to make small loans to new private companies

that formed in Bulgaria. I was officially excluded from any say over the operation of the BAEF or proposing new businesses that it might consider for a loan. I welcomed its effort to promote private business in Bulgaria but became impatient that it was very slow getting organized which involved a trip of board members to Bulgaria and then back to the U.S. and time spent finding a CEO and a representative who would live in Bulgaria and line up prospects for loan consideration. When I expressed criticism about the long time being spent before any help would be forthcoming, the businessman in Chicago who was the chairman of the board was offended and I had to apologize to make amends. I was told that creating the organization would take several more months or a year and that proved to be accurate. Finally a year or more later, the board approved a loan for a large bakery operation in southern Bulgaria to bake croissants and other French items, freeze them, and market them on Guadeloupe, the French island in the Caribbean. I was skeptical that a French society would buy breads baked in Bulgaria and sent to them frozen but I was not consulted and kept silent. It turned out that the project was a hoax cooked up by Bulgarians who were connected with ex-KGB officers in Russia. The BAEF lost the funds that had been provided to the scammers and suffered considerable embarrassment. After I finished my assignment in 1993, BAEF did begin making small loans to Bulgarian start-up businesses and did some good. But on the one hand you had American economists including a high-ranking officer in Treasury, urging Bulgaria to quickly and radically change its economy through shock therapy or be “left at the station” by other Eastern European countries that applied that therapy. And on the other hand projects were hatched in Washington on which I and my staff were not consulted, some of which were not well targeted and others were very slow to provide benefit. I think we could have done better if we could have vetted them more carefully.

Q: Well, did you feel, did you feel there was serious planning back in Washington, or, or was it all sort of ad hoc?

HILL: It was ad hoc in the sense that there were members of Congress who had certain ideas. And people in the Bush administration had certain ideas. And both of those groups preferred that Washington control the aid that was provided to Bulgaria. The idea, for example, of having a loan program run by a board of businessmen was related to the notion that businesses knew how to run things better than government did, never mind that we had FSOs who spoke Bulgarian and who were acquainted with what was happening in the country. Another problem was that the U.S. was going through a recession at the time and there really wasn't enough money available to run a mini-Marshall Plan which is what Bulgaria needed after coming out of 45 years of communism. So a lot of what was done was to offer technical assistance with off the shelf programs from the various agencies of the U.S. government and NGOs without spending very much money. During my three years as ambassador I think the total that we spent in Bulgaria was about 75 million dollars in a country in which the communists had ruined the economy, environment, and political system. We did some good but I believe that we could have done more good without spending very much more money.

Q: Well, how about private institutions? Were you a wash of people coming in and giving advice, that kind of thing?

HILL: Yes. There were three economic advisors who in 1990 advised the Bulgarians that they had to go through shock therapy in order to get the economy straightened out. So they provided plans for the Bulgarians to do this. But as I previously noted, the Bulgarians did not have a government in place to undertake shock therapy even if they were prepared to make their economic situation much worse in the short term. They were still working on a new constitution to have an election to put a new government in place. Some American businesses were interested in investing in Bulgaria but it was a small country with just over eight million people. So it wasn't the sort of drawing card that Poland was. Bulgarians had done a lot of work on computers during communism, so they were trying to hook up with Silicon Valley type people. One American businessman wanted to buy magnetic heads produced in Bulgarian but the company was still a government enterprise and local politicians blocked the venture. Eventually American Standard came and started producing bathroom fixtures in the country. We in the embassy did what we could to encourage trade between Bulgaria and the United States. Commerce sent a new commercial officer to the staff. We got the Peace Corps. The first group of Peace Corps taught English. Some of them also helped Bulgarian "Babas" (Grandmothers) sell their hand knitted sweaters in the U.S. The second group of volunteers set up "American Business Centers" (ABCs) around the country. There were seven ABCs outside of Sofia. In each one there would be a couple of Peace corps volunteers who had business experience or MBAs (master of business administration) who could provide advice to Bulgarians wanting to start a business, and who could also provide assistance in connecting them with American companies if they wanted to get involved in trade. The local cities where ABCs were established would provide a space for them to occupy, a house or part of a building downtown, and also provide one or two volunteers who would help maintain the small American libraries in the ABCs containing not only business-related books, but also small collections of American literature. So the ABCs were not only there for business training but they served as mini American libraries.

Q: Well, first place, I think you'd have trouble sorting out which companies would be represented and which weren't. Was that a problem?

HILL: You mean represented in what way? In Bulgaria?

Q: Well, I mean -- in Bulgaria let's say three people were looking at fans. Well, guy from NSC or any of --

HILL: Well, as I said, Bulgaria was not a big drawing card for American businesses. I mean it wasn't the sort of place where you were going to have big companies coming in because of the small market there. And in fact the country owed about 12 billion dollars to western European banks. There certainly were Bulgarians who wanted to try and set up businesses. It was amazing, as soon as communism ended, and particularly after there was an adjustment in the exchange rate of the Lev in early 1991, small businesses sprang up all over Sofia. A lot of them were what I called "garage boutiques." Someone would set up a shop in a garage, bring in goods from Greece or Turkey, maybe sweaters or other

clothing., or they might sell food. And suddenly there were goods by the spring of 1991, that in communist days you never saw on the market. After the UDF won the plurality in the election in October 1991 and formed a government, parliament passed a law that returned urban properties to their former owners, properties that had been taken over by the government during communism. New restaurants began to appear. However, Bulgaria was much slower in returning nationalized farmland because it was very difficult to break up the big collective farms that had been created by combining a lot of small private farms. Also, it was hard to decide what to do with the large tractors and other equipment at the collective farms, and the irrigation systems that might be under ground. I tried to help future Bulgarian farmers by inviting a group of American farmers to come in early 1991 to travel around the country and brief Bulgarians on how to farm because farmers were moved to towns to work in factories when their farmland was nationalized in the late 1940s. Two generations lived between nationalization and the possibility of returning the farmland to the descendants of those from whom it was taken, and the generation in 1991 no longer knew how to farm.

Q: Yeah.

HILL: Until the farmland was confiscated, Bulgaria was an important agricultural country that provided a lot of food to Central Europe.

Q: Yeah, the peasant party was a major party before the war.

HILL: Correct. And the agrarian party divided when the communists took over. Part of the agrarian party was taken into the coalition with the communists. But leaders of the part of the party that refused to join the coalition were put in jail during the communist period. In 1990 those agrarians were trying to create a viable agrarian party again. They were a member party of the UDF coalition. .

Q: Well, I would have thought there'd have been an awful lot of talk, you know, with the various embassies, but particularly the American one, you know, you're present at the creation and just, you know, what do we do now, Daddy, or something like that.

HILL: Oh yeah. Well, as I say, we had lots of people coming in offering advice, some good, some not. The communists made a mess of everything. And everything needed to be resurrected, repaired, or improved--the environment, the economy, and politics.

Q: Yes.

HILL: Immediately after arriving I started visiting all the leaders of all the political parties. In Sofia I went to the UDF, the agrarians, the MRF (Turkish party), the social democrats, and also the socialists. The head of the Socialist Party was surprised when I came to see him, but I gave him the same spiel that I gave to everybody else, which was we were supporting the transition to democracy. Since the socialists had polled over 50% in the parliamentary election, it was clear to me that they would be an important part of the democratic Bulgaria we hoped would be created. After making the rounds of the

political parties in Sofia, I started traveling to cities and towns around the country. My very first trip was to go to southeastern Bulgaria to the area that had borne the brunt of the campaign against Bulgarian Turks. I met with a Turkish Bulgarian leader in a small town to make the point that the U.S. wanted people in that area to be part of the new Bulgaria. Then I met with a group of people in a town called Kardzhali who had set up a Friends of the U.S.A. Club within three months after Zhivkov was deposed in this small town in Southeastern Bulgaria. Embassy officers had been in contact with them before I arrived and recommended that I visit them. I was especially impressed that the club members included Turkish Bulgarians. That club became one of the best advertisement for the U.S. that we could have hoped for. I am still in contact with them today and they are still true friends of the U.S.A.

But then I continued, for the whole three years to visit 45 cities and towns around the country. Whenever I went into a town, I would meet with the local political leaders, the town council, and hold an open town meeting. I would give a little speech in Bulgarian about what U.S. policy was, to support Bulgaria's transition to democracy and a market economy. And then I would take questions. This was absolutely unique in Bulgaria. No foreign ambassador had ever done anything like it. As a result I got on television often or I would be interviewed on the radio. My Bulgarian was serviceable, it wasn't fluent by any means, but it was serviceable. And Bulgarians were quite patient with a person trying to express themselves in their language.

Q: I imagine they would be.

HILL: Yes. Bulgarian is a language that very few foreigners speak.

Q: Well, were the Russians trying to do anything, or were they so busy with their own business that they didn't have time for Bulgaria?

HILL: In November 1990 the socialist newspaper Duma interviewed me and the last Soviet ambassador, a Mr. Sharapov, together. I spoke entirely in Bulgarian and he did everything through an interpreter in Russian. My message was positive, that the U.S. supported Bulgaria's transition to democracy and a market economy. His message was negative, that Bulgarians had been relying on the Soviet Union and expecting assistance, and it was time for them to stand on their own feet. Which was kind of surprising. But a year later at the end of '91 the Soviet Union collapsed and then we got an ambassador of the Russian Federation. Before that, the Soviet embassy was very active in August 1991 when the coup attempt was made against Gorbachev. And all of a sudden the Socialist Party thought maybe Big Brother was going to come back. So there was a lot of activity around the Soviet embassy in Sofia for a day or two until it became clear that the coup plotters were hopeless and that the coup was not going to last. At the time, I was in the states, both on consultation but also taking care of a medical problem in the family. The flagship of the Sixth Fleet was visiting Varna. And President Zhelev, met with the admiral from the flagship and denounced the coup against Gorbachev 24 hours before Washington did. So the Bulgarians were on record saying that Gorbachev was the duly

elected president of the Soviet Union and they denounced the attempt to remove him from office by a coup d'etat. It was really the West, including the United States and the EU, the World Bank, the IMF (International Monetary Fund), and democratic countries in Europe, and Asia, that were active in Bulgaria supporting the changes that were taking place.

Q: Well, what about universities, American universities?

HILL: Glad you asked. In early 1991 the mayor and other leading people in the town of Blagoevgrad, which was about 50 miles south of Sofia were members of the UDF. When the Communist Party gave up its monopoly of power, there was no purpose for a big party building in Blagoevgrad and the mayor offered it to house an American university there.

Q: Good God.

HILL: I went with my PAO (public affairs officer), and we talked to them. It was an amazing opportunity and I talked with President Zhelev and brought him on board. With some help from USIA and a lot more from George Soros and his Open Society Fund, we were able in November 1991 to open the American University in Bulgaria, in the city of Blagoevgrad. And it's still in operation today, and it has expanded. It offers letters and sciences courses in English, emphasizing subjects like economics and computers that the students can use in the new Bulgaria. Originally all the students were Bulgarians but in recent years the university has included students from the other Balkan countries, Greeks, Serbs, Croatians, Romanians and Albanians, helping to promote cooperation among the Balkan countries.

Q: Well, were our universities in America adding faculty to it, or?

HILL: Yes. The University of Maine, with which the PAO, had contacts. It sent some professors and others came as exchange professors under the Fulbright program.

Q: Huh. Well now, this is done in the early '90s and the Internet and all was just beginning to become a factor. Did you find that this -- did the Bulgarians latch onto the digital age?

HILL: Yes. They had specialized in computers during communism. And so they were poised to get involved in the internet very quickly. And today I'm sorry to say that they also have some good hackers.

Q: Well, that sort of goes with the --

HILL: Smart people who apply their skills the wrong way. Bulgaria has traditionally emphasized education and I have heard that they have the highest percentage of university graduates of any country in Europe or maybe in the world. After they came out from under the Turkish yolk in 1877, they made education the prime emphasis for their

young people. The University of Sofia was opened in the late 1800s.

Q: Was there any connection in Bulgaria in the educational system, with Roberts University?

HILL: Yes. Roberts College was in Istanbul but it was well known in Bulgaria. Bulgarian students studied there and came back to Bulgaria after they graduated from Roberts and were among the early leaders of the country. Even earlier American missionaries, mainly New England Congregational churches in New England went to Bulgaria in about 1840, when it was Bulgaristan, a province of the Ottoman Empire, and started schools. There was one in eastern Bulgaria, I've forgotten where exactly. And later there was a famous one in the town of Samokov, which is about 25 miles from Sofia. In the 1920s, that school moved to just outside of Sofia and was called the America College of Sofia. It was not a college as we think of a college but actually a boarding high school.

Q: Yeah.

HILL: It taught in English and operated until the outbreak of World War II, when it closed because Bulgaria was an ally of Germany. After the war the communists took it over and used it as a training school for the Secret Police. During my ambassadorial assignment, people in New York who had preserved the money that they received then the communists nationalized the school, with the help of the UDF government in 1992, reopened the American College of Sofia. And it is still operating today.

Q: Huh. Well, was there much of a, a Bulgarian American community?

HILL: In the U.S.?

Q: Yes.

HILL: No. Nothing like Poland or other Eastern European countries. There is a group in Pittsburgh called the Bulgarian-Macedonian Cultural Center which has existed for 80 years. And there are little groups of Bulgarians around the country, in urban areas. But they do not have a constituency as large as some other Eastern European countries have.

Q: What about the Bulgarian-Greek connection? What was happening there?

HILL: The Bulgarians were on the side of Germany in World War I and also in World War II. And the Greeks were on the other side in both wars. After World War I, there was a treaty providing for an exchange of populations between of Greeks and Bulgarians. A lot of Greeks went south to Greece. Some Slavic speaking people, both Bulgarians or Macedonians, came north. Even today there's still a small group in Greece, which the Greeks don't admit, but who are descendents of Slavs. Historically, Bulgarians and Greeks haven't gotten along very well. But Greeks have been helpful after the fall of communism in Bulgaria. They have invested in businesses and engaged in trade. But one problem that continued between Bulgarians and Greeks was Macedonia. The Greeks

claim that the Macedonians have stolen a Greek name and recognize the Republic of Macedonia as the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, often shortened to the acronym, FYROM. The Bulgarians have long claimed that Macedonia should be part of Bulgaria, although the Republic of Macedonia doesn't agree. Under Tito it was one of the Yugoslav republics. When Macedonia declared its independence from Yugoslavia, Bulgaria recognized it as a state. Note the word.

Q: Yeah.

HILL: Not as a nation, but as a state. I think Churchill said that the Balkans produce more history than they can consume.

Q: Yeah, that -- I mean that, that's one of those things that has popular appeal there, the argument. It doesn't make any sense to those of us who are off to one side. But there it is.

HILL: Yes. Every month we had a NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) ambassadors meeting in Sofia. And one time the Greek ambassador told the other NATO ambassadors that we were obliged to support the Greek position against the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. And the Italian, who was something of a character, said, "I have a solution for the name. We will give it a Scottish name, *Mac Edonia*."

Q: (laughs)

HILL: I thought the Greek was would have a heart attack. But it is still a problem today although the U.S. recognizes the Republic of Macedonia under that name.

Q: I know, it's, there are so many other things to worry about, and to find that, something like that rising up and biting you.

HILL: Yeah, Macedonia has a population I think of less than two million. It's a small country. It has no real military force. And it has an Albanian minority. But the Greeks continue to imply that it is a threat to Greece.

Q: Well, what about relations with the United States? Did we have anything, any real issues, or it was just being a helping hand?

HILL: I'll mention several things. First of all, as I noted earlier, Zhelyu Zhelev, and I went with him, was the first Bulgarian head of state to ever visit the United States in September 1990. He had a short meeting with President Bush, mostly a photo op, but I mean there was a little brief 15-minute meeting with him. On that visit Zhelev approved a Peace Corps program in Bulgaria. Also on that visit I was able to get first 100,000 tons, and then a second 100,000 tons of American corn sent to Bulgaria because they had a drought and they were killing off some of their food animals for lack of feed. I proposed to the AID food office in Washington that we donate the corn to the Bulgarian government and it would be sold to animal farms in Levs, the local currency. The Lev proceeds would then be used to buy locally manufactured clothing for children in

Bulgarian orphanages. The AID office agreed. A year or so later I was invited to a wonderful Christmas program put on by orphans wearing the clothes that the corn had bought. So the corn helped Bulgaria in three ways.

The U.S. military was very helpful in visiting the Black Sea, the small Bulgarian navy, and the two main towns on its shore, Varna and Burgas. None of the rest of the government had any money, but the military did. The Sixth Fleet had long wanted to visit the Black Sea and they started coming in August 1991. They soon began to send in other ships. Besides delighting the Bulgarian navy with tours of modern guided missile cruisers and other ships, crews from the ships carried out charity projects along the coast, such as repairing and painting schools. And summer 1992 I was able to convince the Blue Angels to pay a visit.

Q: Yeah, that's a naval flying --

HILL: Acrobatic team.

Q: Yeah.

HILL: It was a fantastic visit, on September 8 and 9, 1992. I invited Bulgarian veterans and orphans, our Bulgarian employees at the embassy, and some diplomatic friends, to watch the rehearsal performance on September 8. And the next day I invited the entire Bulgarian government plus over 100,000 spectators to watch the Blue Angels' show. It was fantastic spectacle, of course, and I remember hearing a group of Bulgarian jet fighter pilots standing behind me draw in their breaths as the Navy's F-18s flew and passed by each other at hundreds of miles per hour. That evening the performance was shown on Bulgarian television and it was estimated that half of the population saw it. I tried to change the date of September 9, which was Bulgarian national day under communism, the day in 1944 when the Red Army captured Sofia and installed a communist government. But the Blue Angels could not accommodate a different date. It was either September 9 or not at all. When I informed President Zhelev of the dilemma, he said that I had to go on television and explain to Bulgarians why the performance would be on that date. I did so, noting that all Bulgarians who wanted to attend the Blue Angels' show could come to the military airport at Plovdiv and see it free. I said that others who wished to celebrate the traditional September 9 holiday would likely do so elsewhere. When I said Blue Angels in Bulgarian I slightly emphasized the word blue because it was the color on voting ballots of the UDF, subtly hinting that the air show had a democratic tint to it.

Q. What about relations with American military services?

The Bulgarians offered to sent small contingents of their military to take part in the first Gulf Crisis.

There was a young man in the UDF, by the name of Solomon Passy who began to talk

about Bulgaria becoming a member of NATO. He formed the Atlantic Club in the spring of 1991 as a precursor to Bulgaria joining NATO 12 years later. The U.S. military was very helpful, and they also sent assistance programs, mostly educational training programs, not military training, things like how to do a budget and how to set up a personnel system in a democracy and carry out promotions.

Q: Well, was -- during the time you were there, was NATO a major topic?

HILL: No. People talked about it a little bit, but it was far off. But there were people in the UDF, and particularly Passy, who later became the foreign minister of the country, who, who was really pushing the idea of Bulgaria becoming a member of NATO. But it was pie in the sky at this time.

Q: Did -- were the Russians making any noises or anything like that, or -- about what was happening there?

HILL: You mean --

Q: In other words --

HILL: No. The Russians never criticized the American military programs and the relations between the Bulgarian military and the American military.

Q: Mm-hmm. Was there a Russian am -- well, I assume there was a Russian ambassador.

HILL: Well, Sharapov, the man that I had the interview with at the newspaper Duma was the last Soviet ambassador. And he left just about the time that the Soviet Union collapsed. The next ambassador was from the Russian Federation.

Q: Were we trying to do anything about Romania and Bulgaria? I mean relations with them has always been a problematic thing. I was wondering whether we were trying to better relations.

HILL: No, not really. There was no conflict between them but they did not enjoy warm relations.

Q: Mm-hmm.

HILL: When the Bulgarians were trying very hard to overcome some of the environmental problems the Romanians had a smelter right across the Danube river from Ruse that sent smoke across the river.

Q: OK, yeah. I can't remember my last question.

HILL: You were asking about NATO and I said there wasn't that much. You know, they didn't see NATO as, as an immediate prospect for Bulgaria. And you were asking about Romania. What I said was at the time relations with the Romanians were correct, but not warm. And one of the issues was that they had a smelter right across the Danube river, from Ruse, Bulgaria. And that was sending polluted smoke across to Ruse. But I don't recall that there was much else going on with the Romanians. Now, there was a problem with Yugoslavia, because Yugoslavia was coming apart. And particularly when sanctions were imposed by the U.S. and indeed by the UN against Serbia, Bulgarian goods normally would go right through Belgrade and north to Hungary couldn't use that route because of the sanctions. Instead Bulgarians would try to send their trucks through Romania and then to Hungary. And the Romanians were very good at collecting bribes and controlling the trucks with the Romanian police. In 1993 the Bulgarians became impatient that the sanctions against Serbia were interfering with their ability to sell their produce in Central Europe. They saw themselves as the victims of the sanctions.

Q: Well, how did -- what was sort of the mood of the Bulgarians regarding our confrontation over -- with the Serbs and --

HILL: Well, as I said, they were willing to go along with the sanctions, but they were trying to find some sympathy within the U.S. government to send their agricultural produce to Central Europe. We worked on efforts to try to improve the routes through Romania, for example. There were also charges in western newspapers that the Bulgarians were violating the sanctions, particularly providing gasoline to the Serbs. I sent political officers to the border crossing into Serbia to monitor what was going across to Serbia and prove to Washington that there was not any significant amount of leakage across the border from Bulgaria. There was some, but I don't think that the Bulgarian government was involved and it wasn't significant in quantity.

Q: Ah-ha. Well, how did you find sort of social life in Bulgaria at that time? Was it a considerable change from what I assume had been --

HILL: It was, it was much better. We had a very active social life in our diplomatic position. But there were suddenly new restaurants open that had never existed before that produced hot food (*laughs*). During the communist period we used to say there was no place to get a hot meal in a restaurant. And in many cases they were restaurants that were run by (*laughs*), I thought anyway, by the Communist Party. But suddenly after the fall of communism you had new restaurants opening up in town and, and you could go out and get good food and there was a lot of social life. The Bulgarians always had a good opera. Even during the communist period they exported opera singers.

Q: I know in the '60s when I was in Belgrade we used to delight in particularly the Bulgarian basses, and the deep voices and all.

HILL: Yes. They had opera singers at La Scala in Milan. And even though they had allowed some of their best voices to go abroad, they still had good ones in Bulgaria. And so the opera was always available. There was a, a woman by the name of Raina

Kabaivanska who sang at La Scala. She returned to Sofia after the fall of communism and sang arias from various operas. She was just fantastic. When she finished the program the audience gave her a long standing ovation, hoping for an encore. She favored us by singing the song “Vilja” from --

Q: Oh yes --

HILL: -- The Merry Widow.

Q: The Merry Widow.

HILL: It happens that Franz Lehár wrote that operetta about a little Balkan kingdom that was based on Bulgaria in the late 19th century.

Q: Yeah.

HILL: And Vilja was the capital of the kingdom, that is, Sofia. There wasn't a dry eye in the house.

Q: Oh yes, oh God. Well. Well anyway, did you have any major visits or incidents while you were --

HILL: Well, I'm glad you asked. I mentioned Vice President Quayle. And you know, even, even though he was ridiculed a lot in our press, his visit was very good. He was only there for about six hours. But, but it was an important symbolic visit. And we had a couple of Congressmen come.

A less happy visit occurred in December 1990 when I was informed that a Palestinian terrorist organization had come into Bulgaria with the intention of killing me and the Israeli ambassador. They were supporters of Saddam Hussein who was even then raping and looting Kuwait. The department had me take my family at Christmas and evacuate to France, which was no fun because France was in the middle of winter and it was snowing and raining and we were not home where we wanted to be.

Q: Yeah.

HILL: Anyway, the Bulgarians provided good protection and eventually this group left without obviously killing me or the Israeli ambassador for that matter. And then about a month later in January 1991 the Bulgarians themselves discovered that there was a group from the Japanese Red Army photographing the American embassy and obviously trying to get into a position to bomb it. And again, they protected us and told this group that they were not going to do what they wanted to do, that times had changed, the government was no longer communist (and by implication not sympathetic to the Red Army) and they just better leave the country, and they did. (I learned what the Secret Police said to the Red Army because a retired member of the police gave an interview to a Bulgarian newspaper about helping to save the American ambassador from harm, that a

friend sent to me years later.) Those were two memorable events --

Q: Oh God, yes.

HILL: -- that happened during our time there. And then I mentioned the Blue Angels, which was a really big thing. We had several visits by the Sixth Fleet during the time we were there. And those visits went very well.

I would like to ensure that another important political development is mentioned in this oral history. After the UDF split in the summer of 1991, the conservative wing of the UDF won 34% of the vote in the October 1991 parliamentary election, the first one under the new constitution. The UDF earned only one percent more than the BSP, but enough to take control of parliament and the government in a coalition with the MRF, which received 18% of the vote. That government lasted a year and was supportive of embassy efforts to reopen the American College of Sofia and a new USIS cultural center, for example. As noted earlier, it also voted to return nationalized city properties that had been nationalized during communism, to the original owners. But the government lost power in October 1992 when the coalition partners had a disagreement and failed to overcome it in lengthy negotiations. I remember asking a UDF parliamentary deputy if his party had reached a compromise with the MRF. "Compromise?" he replied in a loud voice, "we are not going to compromise with them!" I commented that compromise is a common element in conducting business in a democracy, but he wasn't listening. The party negotiations ended without a compromise and the UDF prime minister called for a vote of confidence, which would clearly lose without MRF support, and the coalition lost power. It was another manifestation of the lack of political experience and a tendency to take rigid positions of UDF politicians

Q: Well, I'm a retired consular officer. Did you have any consular problems?

HILL: No, not really. The only consular problem that threatened was that one of the consular local employees, a woman I had known when I was there earlier and who I liked, was in contact with American organizations that were promoting the adoption of orphans. It was a really big problem in Romania and I did not want it to become one in Bulgaria.

Q: Oh yes.

HILL: There was almost an orphan market going on in Romania. It was a really big problem for the ambassador there. The consular employee was in touch with people who were trying to organize and promote adoptions of orphans in Bulgaria. I told the consular officer that he should please inform the consular employee that we could not tolerate a conflict of interest if she continued to do business with American organizations that promoted adoptions, since she also prepared the visas and other documents on the orphans whom American couples had adopted. And I told him to tell the employee that he was carrying out my specific instructions.

Q: Oh yeah.

HILL: There were certainly orphans in Bulgaria that needed to be adopted, but I wanted the adoptions handled legally and properly through the Bulgarian government without directors of orphanages seeking bribes. The consular officer passed my message to the consular employee. But a week later he saw a notice that there was going to be a seminar on a Saturday about adopting Bulgarian orphans. And so he went to it, and there was our Bulgarian consular employee handing out brochures for the organization. So we fired her on Monday.

Q: Ah.

HILL: But that's the only consular issue that I remember.

Q: Well then, how about -- how did you find your relations with the European Bureau?

HILL: Generally OK because their main problem was Yugoslavia. Bulgaria became pretty much their non-problem until the charges that the Bulgarian government was violating the sanctions, mainly by smuggling gasoline to Serbia. But as I already noted, we investigated and convinced the department that the charges were not substantially correct. We tried to convince the European Bureau to understand that they needed to find some way to help Turkey and Bulgaria to continue their trade with Central Europe by trying to find new routes to replace those closed by the sanctions. And it wasn't just the European bureau because the U.S. government had got the sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council. It proved impossible to put any conditions into the sanctions or to obtain alternative routes, so I had to try to convince the Bulgarians that I was doing as much for them as I could, but there was a bigger issue that we simply couldn't overcome.

Q: Well then, well then I guess you left -- can we leave here now, do you think? Is there anything more -- how -- by the way, how did you find the embassy staff?

HILL: Generally good. I had two excellent DCMs and for most of the time good consular, political and economic officers. I had a problem with an administrative officer who wouldn't actively engage in expanding admin support facilities, especially warehouse space, to accommodate our expanding staff. AID, Commerce and other government agencies sent representatives to Bulgaria which required us to find housing, bring in furniture, increase the local national support staff, etc., and we needed the facilities to handle all of that.

And I encountered difficulty with a political officer after the new government took power following the UDF loss of power in late 1992. It was led by Lyuben Berov, an elderly Bulgarian nationalist and government with no stated party affiliation, supported by a parliamentary coalition of the BSP and MRF parties. Berov's cabinet, including the minister of internal affairs, had several former communists in it. The new government was not as friendly toward the embassy as the UDF government had been. The minister of internal affairs refused to let the American College of Sofia recover a couple of its

historic buildings that the previous government had approved for return, buildings that the Secret Police had formerly used for their school but which they had abandoned in rather bad condition some months earlier. The political officer seemed to believe that communism had returned to Bulgaria and wanted to send reporting telegrams indicating that to the department. I acknowledged that a few former communists were in the new government and I readily reported that to the department but I did not report that Bulgaria was a communist state again. Having lived and worked in communist Bulgaria in the 1980s, I was confident that I knew the difference. But he was not easily deterred from his belief. The same officer was involved in two other difficulties, both indicated that he held strong and rigid opinions that distracted from an otherwise good job performance and the smooth functioning of the embassy.

Q: What happened? Did he stay on?

HILL: Yes. After I left I heard that he was assigned to another post. He was intelligent and spoke Bulgarian very well, better than I did, but he seemed to be ideological and rigid in some of his views.

I prefer to conclude this oral history on a more positive note. President Zhelev and I went to Washington in early 1993 for the opening of the Holocaust Museum. Bulgaria was an ally of Nazi Germany in World War II and in 1943 the Gestapo ordered the Bulgarian government to round up its Jewish population for shipment to the extermination camps. The minister of internal affairs had already issued the order for Jews to pack up and report to railroad stations. However, the deputy speaker of parliament, Dimitar Peshev by name, was aghast that Jews from northern Greece and Macedonia, occupied by the Bulgarian army, had come through Sofia in boxcars going north to the extermination camps. He was determined to stop the deportation of Bulgaria's Jewish citizens. He contacted other politicians, Orthodox church priests, and reached out to ordinary Bulgarian citizens to oppose the deportations. Bulgarians said that their Jewish neighbors were their friends and countrymen and they would not permit them to be deported by the Gestapo. Jews were hidden in homes of Bulgarian Christians, and some were dispersed to construction projects around the country to get them out of Sofia and the other cities, and away from Gestapo officers assigned to Bulgaria. The interior ministry tried to overcome the opposition to the deportation but parliament and eventually King Boris joined in saving the Jews. The result was that none of the approximately 50,000 Jewish Bulgarians were sent to Auschwitz and other extermination camps. As a result of Bulgarians' saving of their Jewish population, President Zhelev was supposed to be seated with the "righteous nations" at the opening of the Holocaust Museum. But the B'nai B'rith organizers were unaware of the history, and Zhelev was not scheduled to be given that honor. The socialist press back in Bulgaria got wind of the affront and reported that he had been insulted by the U.S. government, assuming that it was in charge of the event, and Zhelev announced that he would not attend the opening ceremony. My DCM in Sofia telephoned me and hoped that could resolve the diplomatic crisis. Fortunately, Zhelev was scheduled to meet with Vice President Al Gore the next day, a few hours before the

opening ceremony. I sent a memo to Gore's office describing the problem and requested that he attempt to change Zhelev's mind. When President Zhelev and I met with the Vice President he warmly welcomed Zhelev and said that Americans were not aware of what Bulgarians had done in World War II to save their Jewish population, "but I am. And when I introduce President Clinton to speak at the opening ceremony this morning, I will tell Americans about the heroic act of your countrymen." And President Zhelev smiled and said, "Then I must come!"

I wanted to relate that incident not only because I was pleased that diplomatic action and Vice President Gore's brilliant solution had avoided a crisis. But I also wanted to inform more Americans about Bulgaria's saving of its Jewish population from the holocaust.

I hope it is a fitting ending of a long tale of a diplomatic assignment in which I earnestly represented American interests and believe that I also did some good in helping Bulgaria become a democratic country and later become a member of NATO in 2003, and thus an ally of the United States.

Q: Well, you left there in what, 1995?

HILL: In September 1993.

Q: '93 I mean. And then what?

HILL: The department didn't know what to do with me. They offered to second me to the new George C. Marshall Center in Garmisch, Germany. This was a school that had been set up by DoD (Department of Defense) to educate the military officers from the former communist countries in how to run defense establishments in a democracy. And so the department offered to put me on loan to this organization in Garmisch, and I took it. I was there for a year and a half and tried to help that organization get up and running. And then after about 18 months there I put in for voluntary retirement because my wife's parents were not doing well. She was an only child and it was clearly time for us to help them. So I retired in March 1995.

Q: Well, all right. Well, let's pick up the Marshall Center situation the next time.

HILL: OK, all right.

Q: All right, I'm looking at -- how about Tuesday the 6th or 7th or --

HILL: OK. We're talking about -- so we're not going to do next Friday?

Q: No, I've got -- I think we probably -- how about either the 6th, 7th, or 8th in shall we say the morning at 10:00?

HILL: Could we do afternoon?

Q: Afternoon, sure.

HILL: I have things to do in the morning. Maybe the 6th in the afternoon?

Q: OK, 2:00.

HILL: Two o'clock?

Q: Yeah.

HILL: OK, I've got it down.

Q: This is going very well. I appreciate your candor and I think it'll be very useful.

HILL: OK, good.

Q: Today is May the 6th, 2014 with Ken Hill. And you -- we have you leaving Bulgaria and beginning an assignment at the George Marshall Center. When?

HILL: I left Bulgaria in September 1993. I went to the States. Our son was getting married and we also wanted to check on my in-laws. We went back to Bulgaria in early October to pick up our car and our two dogs and drive to Garmisch.

Q: All right. You explained a little about what it was about, but could you -- because this is an important era -- what did the Marshall Center do?

HILL: OK. First of all, the correct name of it was the George C. Marshall Center for Strategic Studies. And it was created in 1993. Both Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney and also the EUCOM (European Command) in Germany were involved in its creation and interested and supportive. The idea was to create a new relationship with the military services in the former communist countries, both the Soviet Union, which had collapsed, and the countries that split off from the Soviet Union and from the Warsaw Pact. The Marshall Center was not to teach military tactics, but to teach the former communist countries how to operate a defense establishment in a democracy.

Q: This is -- this is focused on the military in a, in a newly formed democracy, is that right?

HILL: Yes. There were three elements at the Marshall Center. One was called the College of Strategic Studies and Defense Economics, and in my mind that was the largest and most important element. And I'll explain a little more about that later. The second element was to create conferences. It was headed by a German officer. And then the third unit was a continuation of the Russian studies program at Garmisch. You probably know that during the Cold War, Garmisch was where defense attaches went to learn Russian to prepare themselves for assignments in the capitals of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact.

Q: Yes, I do.

HILL: Now, the college was in my mind the key part of the Marshall Center. An American Marine colonel was in charge of it, Ernest Beinhart by name. And the idea was to invite all of the new democracies, including Russia, to send military officers to the college for what amounted to four months of educational programs. The first semester of this college took place in the fall of 1994. When I arrived in October '93 EUCOM had had the opening ceremony of the Marshall Center in May 1993, and had invited I think over 20 defense ministers and heads of general staffs to the opening. Colonel Beinhart also organized that and he did it brilliantly. I did not go to the opening but I knew about it at the time. When I arrived in October the new director of the Marshall Center, Dr. Al Bernstein, had also just arrived. He had worked at the Naval War College and at the Defense University in Washington before he was hired by the Defense Department to head the George C. Marshall Center.

Q: Well now, what was your title?

HILL: I was a diplomat in residence. I was seconded there by the State Department under the Diplomat in Residence Program.

Q: Ah

HILL: It was thought that since I had been an ambassador in Eastern Europe that I would be useful in helping get this new institution going. I don't know how much detail to go into.

Q: Go into a bit of detail because --

HILL: Al Bernstein, the director, had encyclopedic knowledge but was weak in management. There were management problems right in the beginning. The Marshall Center overspent the budget buying furniture and making changes in the office building and were in violation of the Anti-deficiency Act. I got in touch with somebody I knew at the Pentagon to get an increase in their budget before they got into trouble. Bernstein also didn't know how he was going to use me. It wasn't very clear to him what an ex-ambassador, a diplomat, could do to help him to stand up the institution, as they say in DoD. I tried to make myself useful. I immediately got in touch with the embassy in Bonn and set up a series of appointments for him to call on people in the embassy and in the German Defense Ministry. The Germans were very supportive and keen on the Marshall Center, not only because it was located on their territory but it also gave them an important role in the post Cold War period and new contacts with neighboring countries to the east with which they had had very limited contact during the Cold War. On the American side, the commander of EUCOM, General Charles Boyd, a four-star who was in charge of EUCOM and of the Marshall Center. Boyd was a pilot during the Vietnam war and was shot down and imprisoned by the North Vietnamese for seven years. There was a concern in EUCOM that the Department of State might try to take the Marshall

Center away from Defense. It wasn't true at all. In fact, I had some difficulty getting anybody in the State Department very interested in it.

Q: Yeah, I was going to say that knowing the State Department I would think that, you know, I mean this would be farthest in their minds.

HILL: Yes. Richard Holbrooke had been the ambassador in Bonn and was just becoming Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs in the State Department. He wanted to be helpful, in part because the Germans were interested in the Marshall Center, but he wasn't trying to take it over.. It was really a Department of Defense operation and I thought it was a terrific idea. I suggested that Bernstein might make courtesy calls on officials in the Bavarian government in Munich for example, but General Boyd vetoed it, apparently because of concern that the Germans might want to take over the Marshall Center.

When the Marshall Center began planning to invite military officers from the 21 former communist countries to send people to the first college classes in the fall of 1994, Bernstein suggested that Colonel Beinhart and I should visit the capitals and try to ensure that successful middle grade officers who were on their way up would be offered by the countries involved. So Colonel Beinhart and I traveled to 21 different countries and my ambassadorial title enabled us to have meetings with ministers of defense or with chiefs of the general staffs, to explain to them the kind of people that we were looking for, basically to avoid giveaways to relatives. In general we got good candidates to come to the first class that started in September 1994. The colonel and I we were on the road from January until June in 1994 contacting the 21 governments. Each country could send two military officers and all the costs were paid by the U.S. government. It was very attractive to military officers in Kazakhstan, Estonia, or Russia to be able to go for several months to Garmisch. They had to go without their wives. But of course they probably went with shopping lists from their wives to bring German goods home when they returned in December.

I also knew many of the American ambassadors and DCMs in the 21 countries. And even if I didn't know them personally, the fact that I was a Senior Foreign Service Officer and a former ambassador who knew how things worked, helped get the embassies' assistance in identifying good candidates to invite to the Marshall Center.

Q: Well, did you find some countries were more reluctant than others, or --

HILL: The only country that we didn't go to and that didn't send military officers to the Marshall Center was Tajikistan. And at the time it was going through a civil war. So we didn't go there and they didn't send anybody. But no, I don't recall that there was any country that was reluctant to send officers. I mean they saw it as a benefit and readily identified officers. We tried to get majors or lieutenant colonels who had a future in their military services, so that the information that they would get at the Marshall Center would be useful for a longer period of time in their countries.

Q: Well, what about the -- it was a thought at the time of expanding NATO. And how did this play into this?

HILL: It was soon after the demise of the Soviet Union. Expansion of NATO was just being discussed. But I think that the Marshall Center would be a good preparation for countries to become associated with NATO, instead of members of NATO at that juncture. During the first class we visited NATO, and also the EU in Brussels. And we took them across the Atlantic to Washington and they had meetings in the Defense Department. I also suggested setting up a meeting with Holbrooke, the assistant secretary of state for European affairs, but that was vetoed by General Boyd. But we took them to NATO and they had a chance to talk to people at NATO and see what NATO was about.

Q: Well, I wonder, did you get a feel for the first class? Were they sort of, everybody was on pins and needles on something, or on tenterhooks?

HILL: No, The idea behind the classes was that they would get presentations on things like setting up promotion systems, personnel departments, and creating housing for married officers, for example. And also how to budget and present a budget to a parliament for approval. I don't have any feeling that those middle grade officers felt that they were on tenterhooks or there was some kind of concern about their future. I think, in fact, most of them saw that this was the threshold to a whole new life. The one thing that I do remember that I thought was a mistake on Bernstein's part was a class on the Cold War. I'm afraid the way it came across, especially to Russians, but to some degree to some of the other officers who had probably all been members of their country's communist parties, was, "You lost, and we won."

Q: Oh yeah.

HILL: And I think frankly that was a mistake.

Q: Well, how were you used?

HILL: Well, as I said, in the beginning I tried to offer myself to help Bernstein make contacts at the American embassy in Bonn and also in the German government. And then I was involved for several months with Colonel Beinhart recruiting the military officers for the first college semester. By the summer of 1994, I was pretty much out of work. There was some thought that there might be a second round of visits to capitals to start lining up people for the second semester, even though the first semester hadn't started yet. But that didn't take place. And, and it was interesting that at one point there was a thought that somebody might go with me from NATO. So there must have been some ideas about NATO expansion, although I don't remember that they were articulated openly. But that also didn't happen. My wife and I spent a week on a cruise in the Mediterranean.

When the first class began in the fall of 1994, I offered to teach an elective class on the history of U.S. foreign policy. I did some research on treaties that were made between the

U.S. government and American Indians. I began at the American revolution, and then covered the war of 1812, the conflicts and treaties with Indian tribes, the Civil War and WWI and WWII. When I talked about the treaties that were made with the Indians, I admitted freely that we would make treaties and violate them pretty quickly. I remember one of the officers from Kazakhstan asked me about whether America had practiced genocide against the American Indians, which I thought was a rather interesting question. I assumed that he was thinking about the Russians who had killed large numbers of people in the Five Stans, Chechnya, Circassia and other places that the Russians took over in the 19th century and that the Soviet Union kept subdued in the 20th century. I told him that I thought there was no explicit U.S. government policy of genocide. But certainly the result of many years of conflict with the American government resulted in the demise of large populations of Indians, in part because of their exposure to diseases to which they had no immunity. But also an industrialized and weaponized culture came up against a stone age people, and the latter weren't able to compete. And American soldiers and settlers killed many more Indians than they killed Americans.

Q: Yeah. Did the American Air Force and American Navy get involved in this too, or was this pretty much land?

HILL: There were officers from all the American services. There was a staff of perhaps a dozen or more people who worked for Bernstein, mostly full colonels. They did the administrative work. And they were really incredibly talented, well educated officers who served under him. And there were professors from American and British universities, and perhaps a German or two, who gave the classes. And I think there were military officers from U.S. services, and from British and German services.

Q: Well then, you say you did this for about 10 months.

HILL: Well, I was there altogether about 15 months. In the beginning of 1995 we discovered that my wife's parents were declining in health and we needed to take care of them. My wife went immediately to California to take charge at her parents' house. I applied for retirement and left Garmisch at the beginning of March 1995. I went back to Washington, had a retirement ceremony with the DG (director general), set up our house in Bethesda, Maryland. We found a house for her parents near our house and moved them to Bethesda.

Q: Well, how did settling your wife's parents work?

HILL: We were busy arranging for their care for a while. After settling them in Bethesda her mother's health quickly failed. We got medical attention for her and hired caretakers to help care for her. A few months later her mother had a stroke and soon after died. And then we arranged for her father to live with our younger son and his wife until he died four years later.

Q: Well then, what have you been doing since?

HILL: We built a house in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania and moved into it in 1996. We lived in Gettysburg for seven years. I had a consulting contract working with Richard Schifter in the State Department. Do you remember him?

Q: Yes, with Human Rights.

HILL: Yes, he worked on human rights earlier and later on other things. In the late '90s he created the South Eastern European Cooperative Initiative (SEECI) to improve trade and relations in the Balkans and Turkey. A lawyer who had worked in Bulgaria after my ambassadorial assignment and I worked together to improve international truck transportation in the Balkans. Goods produced in Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, and Romania were transported to Central Europe by trucks. All of the countries the trucks went through had different border crossing procedures and fees, which greatly interfered with trade. A truck might have to wait in line for two days to get across each border. Highway police in some countries also stopped the trucks and demanded bribes. The lawyer and I traveled to the Balkans three or four times a year for two years, meeting with ministries of transportation and trucking firms to encourage harmonization of border crossing procedures. There were also Turkish and Greek organizations that worked on the problems, and the Greeks led multilateral negotiations in an effort to create a treaty to coordinate border crossing procedures. There was some improvements but not enough to overcome national and bureaucratic obstacles to regional solutions. Those solutions had to await Balkan countries becoming members in the European Union, which could then impose uniformity and also improve roads and river crossings in the region.

I also did some Department of Defense contract work. The U.S. Military would have training seminars and often would hire someone like me who had been in the Foreign Service to role play (*laughs*) an ambassador. I also participated in exercises at the Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

Then we moved to Florida for seven years where I was involved in a lecture series in Sarasota. The lectures were heavily focused on foreign affairs. And I was president of the Sarasota UN Association and also president of the Foreign Service Retirees Association of Florida. In 2010 we moved to a new retirement community in Strasburg, Virginia, which unfortunately didn't develop. So we moved again to the one we live in now in Winchester, Virginia.

Q: Ah yes. How did you find -- I'm interested in Gettysburg. I -- my grandfather spent a rather difficult four days there some time ago.

HILL: Really?

Q: He was wounded and --

HILL: Oh.

Q: -- captured. He was kept in the town of Gettysburg. He was with the Eleventh Core in a Wisconsin regiment, and was wounded. And so when they withdrew to Seminary Ridge, he was left behind and was put in a hospital. It was in a church or something like that.

HILL: Oh yeah, the hospitals were set up in churches and houses and any shelter that they could find.

Q: Yeah.

HILL: There were no real hospitals then.

Q: Yeah, I've taken my grandkids up a couple times, and my kids, to -- it's -- by Barlow's Hill. Howard Lane or something where his regiment was hit.

HILL: Well, we got very heavily steeped in the Civil War living in Gettysburg. It's a remarkable town. But after a while we wanted to move on, like going to a new assignment in the Foreign Service. I was in the Gettysburg Rotary Club and also the Torch Club. Are you acquainted with it?

Q: No.

HILL: Torch Clubs are lecture clubs located in various places around the country. Each month one of the club members gives a lecture on any subject he chooses. A factor in our move from Gettysburg was that we had built a large house there and brought out all of our Foreign Service treasures. And then we realized that the big house and all the goods required a lot of work, and we were getting older and tired. We bought a smaller house in Florida with a swimming pool in our backyard that we could enjoy in the warm climate near Sarasota.

Q: In Florida, who were your --

HILL: I was a volunteer in the Sarasota Institute for Lifetime Learning (SILL) the lecture series, for six years.

Q: For the lecture series, who was your -- basically what was your audience?

HILL: Snowbirds. And also local people in Sarasota. We offered lectures from January to March every year, when a lot of people from the Northeast or from the Midwest came to Florida. We hired highly qualified lecturers at affordable prices. Our presenters were typically college professors, journalists, and retired Foreign Service Officers.

My wife and I visited Bulgaria twice while we lived in Florida. The first time, in 2003, was for a celebration of the 100th anniversary of U.S.-Bulgarian diplomatic relations. The Bulgarian Foreign Minister and the American Embassy arranged several days of

meetings and concerts for the former American and Bulgarian ambassadors who had served in the two countries. The second visit, in 2006, was arranged by Dimitar (Dimi) Panitza, who was the founder of the School for Politics. Dimi Panitza was a Bulgarian-American who was the editor of the European edition of Readers Digest for many years. After the fall of communism, he spent time in Bulgaria supporting the development of democracy. The School of Politics teaches young Bulgarians how to engage effectively and positively in politics, to make democracy function well in Bulgaria. Dimi asked me to write a book about my two diplomatic assignments in Bulgaria, which was published in both Bulgarian translation and English in a single small volume. During my visit, I lectured to the current class of the school and signed copies of my book.

Q: Well now, you're in Strasburg. What are you up to?

HILL: Oh, I'm in Winchester now. Which is, it's a big city compared to Strasburg. This retirement community is called The Village at Orchard Ridge. It was created by the National Lutherans. They have other communities in Rockville, Maryland and Staunton, Virginia. And they're thinking about creating one in Annapolis. We have 300 people living here and they're beginning now the second phase of construction, to add another 16 cottages and 80 apartments more. So probably in another couple of years, we will have 450 living here.

Q: Oh boy, yeah.

HILL: The Life Enhancement office has organized a large number of activities for all sorts of interests and activities. I'm on the committee for lifelong learning, and I lead a discussion group on foreign affairs every month. I have a regular audience of 35 persons. The last two months the crisis in the Ukraine was the main topic, but I usually have a list of half a dozen items that I glean from the New York Times and The Washington Post about issues in every part of the globe.

Q: If you have a chance, I hope you'll refer your students to our oral histories.

HILL: OK. I shall.

Q: And not only that, we have a webpage, which keeps changing because we have interns who act, as we call them, miners. They go into the oral histories and take out interesting excerpts which relate to either current events or historic period of times, you know, the --

HILL: Specifically that website is called what?

Q: Well, go to ADST.org.

HILL: Uh-huh. And then click on what? I mean obviously you're not talking about the oral history like the one we're doing now, but you're talking about some kind of shorter excerpts. Is that right?

Q: Well, yeah, actually the -- the ADST gives you these. It's basically the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. And you go -- I'm pulling it up right now. And you get oral history. You can go to the interviews.

HILL: Okay.

Q: And there are 1,800 of them.

HILL: Yeah, I've looked up a couple that you and I have talked about before.

Q: Yeah.

HILL: I looked up the Silberman one, for example, and I also looked up the one by my friend Larry Taylor.

Q: Yeah, and well, we've got 1,800.

HILL: Yeah, I know *(laughs)*. I saw the list. I haven't done all of them yet though.

Q: (laughs) We'll give you a little while.

HILL: Yeah, OK.

Q: But the point being that if people are interested in particular areas, you can refer them to the association, the oral histories, the interviews. They can run a search or there's Moments in U.S. History.

HILL: And that's a sort of list of specific subjects.

Q: Yeah.

HILL: OK, so Moments in U.S. History.

Q: And that's inside talking about -- let's see, A History of the Consular Service, and Ten Things You Learn in a Hostage Situation, Eight Weird Things You Don't Know About American Diplomats.

HILL: Say that again? I didn't understand that?

Q: This one was put together by some interns, Eight Weird Things You Didn't Know about American Diplomats.

HILL: Oh, OK.

Q: But you can click on that. But one of the things I've done, I've done an interview as

part of our broader program with Kathleen Turner. Do you know the movie star?

HILL: Yes.

Q: And she and John Hurt did a scene, I think it's called Body Heat in a movie, which is probably one of the most erotic scenes that's been ever filmed. And both of them are Foreign Service kids. So it shows that the family training is very, very sound that they got. But anyway, the main thing is it, it makes the Foreign Service, or more than that diplomacy, come alive.

HILL: Yeah.

Q: These are real people talking about being in difficult places at difficult times.

HILL: Yeah.

Q: And so this is why you might want to play around with it a little too, you know, call things by, by -- I've got somebody who -- I can't think of his name right now, but one of our first ambassadors to Bulgaria.

HILL: Well, one of them just died, Jack Perry.

Q: Oh yeah.

HILL: There was an obit in the latest Foreign Service Journal.

Q: Yeah. But anyway, I do recommend that you play with it, because I think you'll find things that your audiences may find quite interesting.

HILL: Yeah, no, that's a, that's a helpful suggestion. I'll mention ADST to my foreign service discussion group.

Q: Yeah. And by the way, if you run across anybody who's interesting, who's been involved in foreign affairs. They don't have to be a career ambassador or a Foreign Service Officer. They could have been a newspaper person or something, or maybe an interesting incident or something. Let me know and maybe we can have you interview them and then we'll -- we can have it transcribed.

HILL: OK.

Q: Put it in our collection.

HILL: It's interesting that the people who are in the retirement community here, by no means 300 of them yet (*laughs*) but a lot of people have had professional careers and there are some military retirees. There are at least a couple who were in the CIA. We've been here a little over a year now and we're still getting to know a lot of them.

Q: OK well, Ken --

HILL: Yeah?

Q: First place, I told at the beginning, when you get the transcript here, don't feel inhibited by length.

HILL: OK.

Q: Do, if there's, if there's a story you want to tell, you want to move, enhance something, do.

HILL: OK.

Q: And then -- and again, if you run across somebody, keep in touch.

HILL: OK.

Q: OK, it's been fun.

HILL: Very good, OK, I look forward to hearing from you. I guess I receive papers to edit. -

Q: Marilyn, yeah. I think I --

HILL: Copyrights and all that, I sent those things in.

Q: I think we've got it all set. But if we have a problem we'll let you know.

Thank you. Take care.

HILL: OK, thanks Stu.

Q: OK, bye.

HILL: Bye.

End of interview