

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

STAN IFSHIN

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INTERVIEW

Q: Stan, let's start with some background. Where were you born?

IFSHIN: I was born in Brooklyn, New York, so my accent is come by honestly, when I talk about the "boyds choyping."

Q: You were born in 1942?

IFSHIN: That's correct.

Q: That was a good year.

IFSHIN: Yes, excellent year.

Q: What month?

IFSHIN: December.

Q: Oh, no wonder your eyes sparkled when I said my birthday was in December, '42.

IFSHIN: [laughter]

Q: My mom always told me it was one year after Pearl Harbor.

IFSHIN: [laughter] Yes, well, that might be a connection.

Q: So that was born and raised...

IFSHIN: I was born in Brooklyn and spent the first 13 years of my life there and then my parents moved to Freeport, Long Island, where I went to high school. From Freeport I went on to Johns Hopkins University and I was going to be a doctor in those days. And I ran into...

Q: So you were taking science medic undergrad...

IFSHIN: That's right. My degree is in biology, in fact. And my sophomore year I ran into a course called "Organic Chemistry" which I've always maintained is what drove me out of the idea of pursuing medicine or even science, although I continued taking a science-oriented undergraduate program. I was graduating with no idea of what I wanted to do. I took the graduate records in history and my parents were anxious that I go on and do graduate work in history, but I didn't really want to do that. I wasn't sure what I would do with a degree in history.

Q: Well, is there interest in history?

IFSHIN: I think it was just the idea that when I told them of my interest in going into the Peace Corps that this was an alternative to the Peace Corps, which they weren't very enthusiastic about. But I did join the Peace Corps, and I went out and trained in Hilo, Hawaii.

Q: When was this?

IFSHIN: This was summer of 1964, right out of college. It was what they called a "higher education project" _ we were all training to go to the Philippines as high school and

college teachers. So I ended up teaching science, largely in a high school, Baguio City High School.

Q: That's on Luzon

IFSHIN: That's Luzon, that's right, in the mountains, it's a lovely city. When I was living there, it was a city of about 50,000 people, which the Americans had built largely as a summer vacation spot.

Q: Hill Station.

IFSHIN: Hill Station, exactly. Six months of the year it has an absolutely marvelous climate, a little boring, day after perfect day of temperatures in the 70s, cloudless, just beautiful. And the other six months of the year it rains, and it rains hard. It's chilly, actually the temperature never gets below 50°, but it's a very chilling 50°. You get a little stir crazy. But Peace Corps was great for me. I learned a lot, about myself, about other people.

Q: Let's back up a second. The training in Hawaii, what did that constitute if you knew you were going into education?

IFSHIN: We were being taught methods of teaching, for science, English, and math, because we were training in all three of those areas and we were also given some language training. I was trained in Ilocano, which is the language spoken around northern Luzon. Baguio is part of the Ilocano-speaking area, but in those days at least it was considered a center of English-speaking, because you had a mix of people speaking different Philippine languages and English was so often the lingua franca, but I was trained in Ilocano at that time. And that was an interesting discovery for me because I'd come through high school and college where I'd studied Spanish and German, respectively, convinced that I couldn't learn a foreign language, that I had no talent in foreign languages. And in the Peace Corps is where I discovered that I not only was capable of learning a foreign language but even had a little flair for it. I'm not one of these great language students, but when it's taught in the proper way and you actually have the incentive of the knowledge that you are going to use it, I found I could learn a foreign language.

Q: This is a language area that is not using Spanish? Is Spanish long lost in the Philippines?

IFSHIN: Very little Spanish is really spoken in the Philippines. There are people of Spanish descent who still use Spanish in the home, but that's a very small group. Despite the Spanish names, there are very few Spanish speakers in the Philippines. English is much more widespread and is one of the national languages. I'm not sure if Spanish is a national language, I don't think it is.

Q: But you're teaching science...at what level?

IFSHIN: It varied. I started teaching I guess the first year of high school; it was a general science course. They did not teach chemistry in high schools in the Philippines. I thought this was an inadequacy and I developed a curriculum and got permission to put together a class of chemistry students. These were largely seniors as I recall. Also, during the summer I taught at a teacher's college. So it ranged from high school through early... actually the summer program was largely teachers who were coming back for retraining, rather than full-time students.

Q: Now this is still the early days of the Peace Corps. How big a program in the Philippines was it by then?

IFSHIN: The Philippines had one of the largest programs. When I got there we were group 4. There had already been three groups before us and I think they were all still there when we arrived. During the time I was there I think it got up to 17 or 18. That is, they numbered them. Not all in the country at the same time, because by that time some of the earlier programs had left. But my program was still there and we were up to 18. I can't really tell you how large it was, but I think we probably were close to 1,000 volunteers in the Philippines at that point. It was a very large program, probably the largest in the world at that time, I think.

Q: When I was in Thailand in the '80s the Peace Corps had a reunion and the embassy sponsored a little ceremony. It turned out that there were thousands that appeared, of people who had been in the Peace Corps in Thailand, many of whom hadn't left.

IFSHIN: Yes, Thailand seems to have had that effect on people. I knew some Thai volunteers, in fact there were some in my A100 class in the foreign service, and there was something infectious about Thailand. I'm not sure it was always good [laughter] but they certainly were devoted to Thailand.

Q: You start out then in science education at the high school level, and then summer with the teacher training. Was that then the full two years that you were there?

IFSHIN: Yes, I got into a few other areas. We did some curriculum design. One of the big projects in my last year was designing and soliciting equipment for the science laboratory for the high school. It was a very fulfilling two years. There were enormous frustrations involved in being a Peace Corps volunteer. But I think for those of us who liked it, it was a great experience, and I did.

Q: Who were you working under? Were you assigned to that school and that principal as your director? What was the relationship to the educational institutions you were working with?

IFSHIN: In theory, we were co-teachers. We were supposed to be assigned to a teacher and we worked with that teacher. The general science course that I taught, that was the way we started out. I would teach and she would teach and we'd trade off. I was

supposed to be introducing her to modern methods of teaching science. Education in the Philippines, as in so many countries, tends to be fairly rote learning, whereas we were supposed to introduce things to make the students question. It wasn't terribly effective, by the way. But that was the theory of what we were trying to do: introduce some of the idea of scientific method and experimentation, questioning, and hypotheses and testing them. Subsequently, when I taught chemistry, I had a teacher I had working with me who I was training to succeed me as the chemistry teacher for that school. There was a principal, of course, and a vice-principal. I don't remember anybody really interfering terribly with my activities. There were four of us who were assigned to Baguio City High School. So I wasn't particularly isolated. There were other students in elementary schools in the area as well, in Baguio.

Q: So a fair Peace Corps presence in Baguio.

IFSHIN: Yes, I'd say there were 10, 12 Peace Corps volunteers in the city.

Q: What were your living arrangements?

IFSHIN: I lived with another volunteer. We rented the top floor of a private home. The Philippines government was paying for our living, and we were being given a subsistence allowance by the Peace Corps as well as having money deposited for us, I think it was \$75 a month, in the U.S. Our living allowances, this is interesting for those of us who are old enough to remember it, was \$50 a month and we lived very well. During the time I was a Peace Corps volunteer, the first 14 months or so and I didn't get money from any other source, this was money I saved out of my living allowance, I got enough money to take a trip to Hong Kong, Taipei, and Japan. I stayed at reasonable hotels, eat at reasonable restaurants...

Q: Japan.

IFSHIN: Those were the days when the yen was 360 to the dollar.

Q: Yes, that wouldn't break until way...

IFSHIN: Yes, Japan was expensive compared to the rest of those places, but not unaffordable. We'd gotten this special fare, of course, and Peace Corps volunteers are very good at, what's the nice word I'm looking for, soliciting people to give us the combinations and otherwise help us out. But as I said, I stayed at hotels and paid for them.

Q: So you were trading on the good name of the Peace Corps.

IFSHIN: Yes, frankly.

Q: Which means at that time people responded very favorably to it.

IFSHIN: Oh, definitely, definitely. The Peace Corps was still very well-regarded, for those people who were familiar with it, and I guess it still is, but particularly in those days. There was still a lot of idealism associated with it. I always felt a little guilty being in Baguio, I had a very comfortable life. And of course a lot of other volunteers had much more rugged experiences. I had one of the few sit-down, flush toilets in the Peace Corps in the Philippines and volunteers came from hundreds of miles around to use my flush toilet. [laughter]

Q: But you were talking earlier about some frustrations that came...

IFSHIN: Well, you are operating in a foreign environment and it's always hard getting things accomplished and getting people on board. The great lesson I learned from Peace Corps is that all sorts of things that I thought of as "that's the way people are" were the way Americans are or were, and that there are many ways of doing things. I am very fond of the Filipino people and think highly of them, generally. But one thing about the Philippines is people do not like to say no. So, whatever you ask, people will say, "yes," "fine," "good," whatever, and then do nothing. So pinning people down and getting them to follow through on what you think is a commitment is not the simplest thing in the world. This was sort of a learned skill on my part, to really trap people into following through on what they said they were going to do.

I remember in particular when we were designing the laboratory and getting commitment on facilities and things for that, it required a certain amount of effort and it helped. But in general, Americans still had a lot of prestige in the Philippines and we traded on that as well. I remember one occasion when another volunteer and I, over a holiday period, were going towards Manila from Baguio, we were on a bus, and we ran into an enormous traffic jam. The trucks, cars, and busses backed up for miles and it had the aspects of the traditional Chinese fire drill. The four-lane highway, or however many, had developed about 12 lanes of traffic all snarling and completely bollixing things up. My companion said, "Come on, Stan, we'll straighten this out." And we jumped down from the bus and walked to the front of this jam, a couple of miles, where of course there was an accident. We started to line cars up and signal them to come forward one at a time, and this one should get over there and that one, and we were doing our best traffic cop imitation.

Q: Sounds like a scene out of "Patton."

IFSHIN: And we really got it lined up and people were listening to us. And who are we? We are two 21-year old kids, or 22 in those days, who had no authority to do anything, but we knew that people should line up and go one at a time, which was something that not all people there understood at that time. It was fun. There were lots of things we did, and lots of experiences, and I generally look back on those Peace Corps days with great fondness. Of course, it led me into the foreign service. I took the foreign service exam when I was in the Philippines, just more or less on a casual remark by someone, "Hey, Stan, you should take the foreign service exam. Peace Corps will pay for you to go to Manila." Oh, a free trip, ok. So I went down to Manila to take the exam, and I really knew nothing about the foreign service at that time. I passed the written exam and

suddenly it became a very exciting prospect.

Q: Now, you did this before your tour was over?

IFSHIN: Yes.

Q: Let me back up to one little thing. Your tour spans 1964 to 1966. Things are getting interesting in Vietnam.

IFSHIN: Yes they were.

Q: Were you getting any feelings out of that? From the Filipinos anyway.

IFSHIN: Some of it. In 1966, there wasn't the great opposition to the war that was to develop later. If I can go back to my college days. I'd been on the fringe of certain liberal leftist movements, mostly involved in tutoring people in the ghetto and civil rights demonstrations. In 1963 SDS was founded but didn't reach Johns Hopkins until 1964. The word came down that these various organizations were to merge into SDS (Students for a Democratic Society for those of you who have forgotten). I remember at the time sort of reflecting on this and saying, "I don't have anything in common with these fair play for Cuba creeps and various other sorts of groups, and I don't want to have anything to do with them." Which I think was a wise decision, then and subsequently. [laughter]

So the ferment, the anti-war thing, was beginning, the 60s so called. But I've always maintained that the critical years were years I was out of the country. Between 1964 and 1966, something very fundamental changed in the United States and to this day I never really caught up or caught on, and am somewhat bewildered by the whole thing. When I came back from the Peace Corps, I remember getting together with friends, and those who had gone on to graduate school had really been radicalized. Those who had gone to work or done their military service, or any one of many other things, were much more as I remembered them being. So there was a definite cleavage, a split, and it seems to me that those are crucial years. As I say, I was in the Philippines in those years so it was always been a little bit of a puzzlement. I remember watching the Watts riots in Los Angeles, I forget what years they took place, but as I recall they are the years that I was in the Philippines. I know there have been race riots in the United States going back many, many years and some very deadly ones, but I'd never seen anything like this that I could recall in my memory and it really kind of shocked and puzzled me at the time. That's really neither here nor there, but anyway these things were happening and of course as an American abroad you are being asked about them.

Q: Right, and here you are in an academic situation.

IFSHIN: Right, but the students didn't question me. I don't ever remember my students asking me one word about that. But occasionally, some of my co-teachers would and other people with whom I'd become friendly and gotten to know in the Philippines would ask me about what was happening and why this was happening. I would admit to my

puzzlement and try to come up with explanations, but I didn't have answers.

Q: Looking at the educational situation that you were in, how were they organized and funded? Was it a central budget that came in from the province, or something like?

IFSHIN: I believe that it was actually funded out of Manila. It would often amaze me that some of the teachers would go for months without being paid. I used to be amazed and appalled, and I would say, "How can a government not pay its teachers? How can this possibly happen that they have to go for months without being paid?" Of course, subsequently, as a career bureaucrat, I learned that "they haven't passed the appropriations bill and it's possible we won't be paid this pay period." And I always thought this was the third world [management] of America which was taking place. It's a very centrally directed program. Language is interesting, because in the Philippines, at least in those years, the first 2 or 3 years of schooling is done in one of the local languages. They are taught in Ilocano or Cebuano or Tagalog, and then in those days they would switch to English. English became the medium of instruction; before then it had been a subject. Baguio was actually an exception to that because it was a mixed area. They would start teaching in English with the first year of school, and as a consequence, most of our students spoke relatively good English. It was strong in that regard.

Q: Do you recall who was head of the Peace Corps in the Philippines at that time?

IFSHIN: Maurice Bean, during at least part of that time. I don't know if you remember Maurice. He subsequently was in the State Department as a country director. I don't remember what directorate he had, quite frankly. I don't think he was a career officer. But he came into the State Department. He got angry with me at one point. I had written an article for the volunteer magazine in which I proposed that Peace Corps staff should be volunteers and that we didn't need another aid bureaucracy in every country.

Q: Sounds kind of radical to me.

IFSHIN: Yes, I know, and he took it kind of personally. Had me flown in to Manila and was chewing me out in his office, and I hastily retreated and explained that I didn't mean this in a personal sense at all, and I wasn't discussing anyone. It was a proposal, and it was just the way I thought it should be and the volunteer spirit of the Peace Corps should be reflected at all levels. And I thought then and I think now that it was not an unreasonable proposal, actually.

Obviously, there would be problems in carrying it out because the people who head the Peace Corps in countries and in regions do have representational responsibilities and do have to do certain things that require that they have residences which are representational. They need to be able to provide for their families, presumably they are somewhat older than the volunteers, but that's changed too, as many volunteers are older as well. When I entered the Peace Corps, we tended to be fresh out of college. That was the great majority.

Q: At the time the Peace Corps was set up, there was a conscious attempt to separate it from the embassy. Now when you were there in '64- '66, did anyone come by and say hello? There's not a consular up in that area is there?

IFSHIN: No, there is not. I don't recall anything like that. In Baguio, in those days, there was a recreational facility, a U.S. recreational facility. I hesitate because I think it's military, but the embassy used it to, and the ambassador had a summer residence called, Camp John Hay. In fact, many Filipinos had access to Camp John Hay, but Peace Corps volunteers did not. This was always a puzzlement to my Filipino friends. But I could go to Camp John Hay where you could get things like a malted or a hamburger. I could go as a guest of a Filipino. [laughter] So I occasionally I would get on to Camp John Hay. It was off limits to Peace Corps volunteers.

Q: This is interesting, because when I was in Thailand on Christmas and Thanksgiving, we would get a turkey up there, and that would draw a large number of Peace Corps volunteers. [laughter]

IFSHIN: I don't want to skip ahead, because I assume you like to follow a certain order in asking these questions, but when I was consul in Cebu in the Philippines, I of course wanted to be close to the Peace Corps volunteers, I found a certain amount of suspicion on their part... even though I was an ex-volunteer and I made that clear... there was a certain hanging back. Of course, I didn't press it, if people didn't want anything to do with...

Q: In the early days you were also told you aren't part of the U.S. government, you are this...

IFSHIN: Right, whatever.

Q: Anyway, while you are in the Philippines someone whispers in your ear that there is such a thing as the foreign service exam.

IFSHIN: Right.

Q: And you went down to the embassy and took it in 19...

IFSHIN: I would guess it was '65, I don't remember exactly.

Q: So you passed the written exam, taken at the embassy. But the next step is the oral exam.

IFSHIN: Right, but since I was overseas they postponed it in those days. You could take the oral exam when you came back to the States.

Q: You came back in '66. Mid, early or late?

IFSHIN: Well, summer of '66 I took the oral exam almost right off the bat, and I passed and was told I would receive an invitation probably for September of '66. Meanwhile my draft board contacted me and asked me to report for a physical and I was classified 1A. Then I was told September classes were already filled up, and that I would be coming for January of '67. I, being 1A and people being gobbled up for Vietnam at that point, decided I couldn't wait around and I said, "Well, in that case, I'll postpone my entrance until the summer of '67 and I'm going to take a job teaching, which I did. I got a job teaching on Long Island about an hour from my home. I was living out there and I'd come home on weekends. My draft board then did draft me. I got a notice that said in view of the fact that you are teaching, your report date has been postponed and you can finish your teaching contract and you can report to, I forget where the induction center was, as soon as your teaching contract is fulfilled.

I wrote to the State Department and said, please send me a letter stating that I'm entering the foreign service. They wrote back and said we don't do that; until you've entered into the foreign service we won't write the draft boards. So I took that letter saying they won't do that, and went to my local draft board and they said, oh, okay, and they waived my draft. So, in the summer of '67 I then joined the foreign service instead of reporting to the U.S. Army.

Q: [laughter] There is a difference.

IFSHIN: Yes, as you've already noted, I did end up in Vietnam.

Q: Let me go back to the exam. Given your academic training, the written exam wasn't any particular... sort of like the SAT.

IFSHIN: I did very well.

Q: Did any interesting circumstance come out of the oral exam? You took it down in Washington?

IFSHIN: Yes, I did. I scored very high on the written exam, particularly on the general knowledge section. I'm not sure what was involved. If you will recall the oral exam, they call you in and then they send you out and then they call back in and they tell you what you did, pass, fail or whatever. That was what happened with me. I'd prepared for the oral exam, I didn't study. They invite you to smoke and there's no ashtrays in there and there's this and that trick and they play these things and here's the kinds of questions and I had all these things prepared. I don't remember anything like that coming up. I remember they asked me to offer I think three areas of American foreign policy with which I disagreed, but not about Vietnam. Three areas beside Vietnam. As I recall, I spoke about China, Latin American policy, and I can't recall what the third area was at all. It was pretty sophomoric in any case as I recall my criticisms now. They were correct frankly, but pretty sophomoric. They were not well founded. In any case, after the exam, and they had me sit outside for maybe ten minutes and then called me back and said, well, I'd passed but they were disappointed. Which was kind of shattering for me.

Q: How can you pass but be disappointing?

IFSHIN: Well, they said they expected more from me.

Q: Oh, given the written grade.

IFSHIN: Given the written grade, they had expected more of an exciting interview. I've always been puzzled by this, and many years later when I had access to my files, I in fact went to see if there was anything about disappointment and there's nothing like that in my written record. I don't know whether they were saying that just to fake me out...

Q: When you took the oral, was there a line of people or one of a number...

IFSHIN: As I recall, I was there myself and there were three interviewers. I don't recall other people being in the waiting room with me or not. It's possible they were, I just don't remember anything like that.

Q: Was it in the State building itself?

IFSHIN: Yes, it was in Washington, DC. It was in a State Department building of some sort, but not in Main State. I don't really know where it was, it might have been over in Rosslyn, but I don't really remember. It was a small conference room type of setting. I did smoke in those days and there was an ashtray. I remember whenever I needed a few seconds to think I would take a long draw on my cigarette. As I said, I discussed China, and I remember in discussing it the kinds of objections or kinds of debating points they made opposite me, at the time I remember being somewhat impressed, thinking, "Oh, yes, I never thought of that." And afterwards thinking these are really trivial and not fundamental at all. This is nonsense. This is not why the U.S. pursues policy.

Q: So, you come into the foreign service in June, 1967.

IFSHIN: Yes, as I recall that was the month.

Q: So now you moved down to Washington, get yourself an apartment, get yourself squared away, and you show up for the A100 course.

IFSHIN: Yes.

Q: What was that like? Who else was in there with you?

IFSHIN: We had a big class. It was the 64th class and as I recall there were 80 or more than 80 in the class.

Q: That is large.

IFSHIN: Yes, but it included USIS officers. Quite a few of us were ex-Peace Corps volunteers, maybe 10 or 15 out of the 80. There were a number who had the Peace Corps experience. The people who became my closest friends out of that class, the person I roomed with initially was John Craig, I don't know if you know John, he's still in the foreign service.

Q: Yes.

IFSHIN: He's ambassador to Oman. The people I became closest to, Mike Carpenter and Tim Hamilton, who both ended up in Thailand, Mike was an ex-Peace Corps volunteer as you may recall in Thailand. But we became very good friends and remained friends throughout our foreign service careers. I don't know if you know Tim passed away about two years ago. A real shocker... he's a little younger than I am.

Q: Anyone else in that class...

IFSHIN: There are a number of people in that class, many of whom went on to have important careers and become ambassadors, but I can't really think of that right now.

Q: Well, You are coming in in June of '67. Vietnam is beginning to dominate things. Was there an aura, a sense, a zeitgeist of the class...

IFSHIN: Well, it was clear to us that all of us who had not done military service who were single, single males who had not done military service would be going to Vietnam, and in fact 11 of us were assigned to Vietnam, including myself, Mike and Tim. Ten of us were assigned to the CORDS program (Civil Operations Revolutionary Development Support) and one was assigned to the embassy, Tim Carney, as I recall. There were a couple of guys who fit the categories, that is they had not done military service and were single, who were not assigned to Vietnam and I have always been curious about that. At least one of them said that he made no bones about it, he'd told them that if he was assigned to Vietnam, he was going to resign. And having been lectured about what a disciplined service we are and how we all saluted and took our assignments and went off and did what was necessary, I always thought that was very interesting that he was not asked to resign or encouraged to resign. He was assigned to somewhere else. He made the senior foreign service and had a long respectable career. I went off to Vietnam and was assigned to, well, that was via a year of area and language studies.

Q: Getting back to the A100 for a moment, how did you feel... that was foreign service basic training. Did you feel it was foreign service basic training, were there things coming at you that they were presenting to you that was particularly interesting about the foreign service or foreign policy issues?

IFSHIN: I knew so little in those days that I should have learned a lot, but I don't remember learning a lot. I don't know what to say about the course... It just strikes me now that it wasn't terribly well done. That might be a misjudgment on my part. I remember lots of being bored and sitting there and trying to take notes in a kind of

academic way. My only relevant experience was college and I would sit and write and take down what people were saying. Occasionally there parts better than others. There was a linguist who used to do a very amusing kind of lecture.

Q: Are you thinking of Campbell?

IFSHIN: I can't remember the name. But that's one of the highlights. I encountered him three times subsequently in the next year as I moved through various training programs.

Q: Now this was all in the Rosslyn Complex, right?

IFSHIN: Right, FSI (Foreign Service Institute), in Rosslyn.

Q: So you get through the basic introduction to FSI. Now you get this assignment to Vietnam.

IFSHIN: Right.

Q: And before you go to Vietnam, it's language training.

IFSHIN: Right. Let me just comment. I was assigned to Vietnam, and I remember calling my parents and telling my mother, "well, mom, I've been assigned to Vietnam, but don't worry about it, because I've got a year of language training, and inevitably things are going to get better, or they will get so much worse that they won't send us." Well, I was wrong on both counts. [laughter] Yes, I was assigned to language training at the Vietnam training center.

Q: Now that was in the garage, down the hill...

IFSHIN: It was in the basement of what was called Arlington Towers. It think it has a different name, although it's the apartment complex that's still there...

Q: It was literally a garage or something, wasn't it?

IFSHIN: Well, it was the lower, it was basement. I don't know that it was actually the garage. Four of us in fact rented an apartment in Arlington Towers at that time. We had a really nice setup there overlooking the monuments, a twelfth floor apartment, furnished.

Q: It's right on the banks of the Potomac, on the Virginia side.

IFSHIN: Right. It was quite nice. But subsequently there was some bizarreness associated with that apartment because I recall in the 1967 riots after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King sort of looking over the monuments and seeing the smoke in the background. It was all kind of surreal, and kind of what's going on and where is the country headed and what is all this? But we were busy learning Vietnamese.

Q: So, four guys were sharing an apartment who were into Vietnamese and were going off to Vietnam. Who were they?

IFSHIN: Tim and Mike and myself, and Joe Romanelli who was not in the A100 course but was a young foreign service officer who I guess we met at the Vietnam training center. I guess he was on his third tour. He subsequently left the foreign service somewhere down the line.

Q: Were all four of you in the same language class? Was it very large?

IFSHIN: Well, we were in the same group. That is people started together and then we were broken up according to abilities I guess, or in any case broken up into smaller groups. Mike Carpenter by the way has a 78 MLAT (Modern Language Aptitude Test) and is one of the real- (end of tape)

Q: You were just starting to tell me about language training.

IFSHIN: Yes, the program went on for ten months. Every once in a while somebody would peel off. They were not making sufficient progress in the language, so they would send them off to Vietnam without the language.

Q: The feeling is, if you are failing, you go sooner. [laughter]

IFSHIN: So it was incumbent upon you to keep up the work of the language.

Q: It's got to be a fairly large program by now.

IFSHIN: Oh, yes.

Q: I've gone through Chinese and there were four teachers. In the Vietnamese program there must have been a fair... where did they get all the teachers?

IFSHIN: There were just a large number of Vietnamese in the U.S. then. I don't know where they recruited them from or how they found them. There were a number of attractive young ladies for the most part, and they would make us sit there like good little boys and do our drills and repeat everything back.

Q: What about the issue of local cuisine? There weren't any Vietnamese restaurants in Washington, DC, at that time.

IFSHIN: I don't remember. Subsequently when I studied Chinese, that was always a big thing to go out to the Chinese restaurants together and try the various kinds of Chinese cuisine. I don't remember that being an issue in Vietnamese language training. We were more concerned about learning how to say give me that rocket launcher, or I'm a French journalist. There was certain vocabulary we concentrated on.

Q: While you were in language training there though, Tet appears on the scene, didn't it?

IFSHIN: Yes, and that was a big shocker. I can't remember if it was Henry Cabot Lodge who met with us. He was of course the U.S. ambassador at the time. He came and spoke to us at the training center, and a number of other people came and spoke to us. Let me mention one thing, this is sort of retreating. In CORDS, we were on loan from the State Department to AID (Agency for International Development), who then in turn loaned us to the military. And when all the other members of my A100 class went off for consular training, those of us who were going through the CORDS program went off to some sort of an AID training program, which was truly one of the most colossal wastes of time I've ever been through, and I've been through a lot of wastes of time, but this was one of the prize ones.

Q: What did they cover, how to fill out forms?

IFSHIN: I can't remember now, it's been a long time. But we were really silly. Those of us who were State Department officers assigned to the program made ourselves really obnoxious. I can see why people don't like foreign service officers.

Q: Well, at this point, what did you understand about CORDS, because CORDS in fact has already undergone a number of changes. It didn't become CORDS until '67 I believe. It wasn't an AID program until Comer made it CORDS in '67.

IFSHIN: Right. Well, it was something that was undergoing change. Dick Holbrook had actually met with our A100 class, it wasn't our Vietnam training center. He was one of the young officers who had gone through a precursor type program where he had something to do in the provinces. He explained it to us how career enhancing it would all be for us and what a great opportunity it was and how exciting it was.

Q: He quit two years later. [laughter]

IFSHIN: Yes, I think we all recognized at the time that this is a bunch of bs, but we listened politely. We were young, and young people tended to be more polite to their elders in those days. In any case, returning to the Vietnam training center, we got area studies and lectures about the overall strategies and what was involved in the war, but basically it was language studies more than anything else.

Q: Actually, the Vietnam training center was a separate part of FSI wasn't it?

IFSHIN: Precisely.

Q: Why was that? Just because it was so large?

IFSHIN: So large. Yes, they were running through enormous numbers of people at that time.

Q: What kind of numbers?

IFSHIN: I don't know, I can't tell you. But in addition to those who were there for the full language program, which was supposed to be 10 months to a year, there were lots of short-termers, people who were there for six weeks, eight weeks, and various shorter programs.

Q: Of language and area studies. Were there anything else there doing language and area studies?

IFSHIN: There were all sorts of voluntary programs that they tried to set up. I remember I participated in a small arms program, and we'd go down to the national police training center and shoot pistols and try to improve our marksmanship. And then they were training people in self-defense. I didn't sign up for that one. It's interesting, they recruited somebody to teach them and this guy would come in and whack them in the knees with a broom handle and show them all sorts of painful holds where he'd grab them and do weird things to them. It turned out he had absolutely no credentials whatsoever. This was just some sort of sadist the State Department had hired [laughter]. I shouldn't say State Department; who the Vietnam training center had hired to take out his sadistic tendencies on these young trainees, as if they weren't miserable enough already.

Q: Who was head of BTC at that time, do you remember?

IFSHIN: No I do not. I can't remember the name. He had had some troubled experiences in Vietnam and had apparently a drinking problem, quite a bad one, and was being allowed to serve out his time preparing for retirement at VTC. I may be confusing whoever was the head of the program with someone who was in a senior position in VTC at that time. Well, as part of a Christmas show, a group of us in the usual way, putting a series of skits where we mocked various people including this guy, and I recall an audible gasp going up from certain segments of the audience when we hung a map and shook it and with pretense of delirium tremors, which was something that had happened, and we were using that incident for our amusement. But Tim and Mike and I formed what we called the Vocal CORDS where we wrote a series of song parodies and we would perform these at the drop of a chord. Some of them were semi-amusing and in any case, we liked them at the time.

Q: Actually, the idea of the Vocal CORDS expanded later. Because when I was in Bangkok, some of the guys would come over... Gormley and John Lisle and do that kind of routine at our little parties.

IFSHIN: Jim Gormley was in the Vietnam training center with us. This was like his second or third tour in the foreign service. He'd been in a while. We had a couple of more senior people who were preparing to go out as province senior advisors. I guess they were what is now an 02, but in those days was an 03 or 04. Seemed very senior to us as young officers.

Q: Those CORDS songs by the way are at Cornell University. There's an anthropologist up there who collected them, I don't know what her source was, but Cornell has one of the premier collections on Vietnam...

IFSHIN: Oh, well, I'm here to tell you that Mike Carpenter and I wrote 90 percent of it. We'd always recruit Tim to help us out.

Q: Well, [laughter] you might have a copyright problem with it...

IFSHIN: No, [laughter] no copyright problem.

Q: But it's an interesting thing we can get back to later, because I was a supervisor in China at the time of Tiananmen Square. We went through that whole thing and evacuated the families. One of the things that occurred sort of spontaneously with my younger officers, they started doing that same thing, taking contemporary songs and putting new lyrics in them.

IFSHIN: But actually the songs were not contemporary that we used, we used old mostly old standards. This shows something about our age or something about our culture [laughter] but Mike and I were very into the old standards and knew a lot of them and those are the songs we used for the Vocal CHORDS songbook, which I still have somewhere hidden away also, a complete set. Basically it was written in three periods and each was written for a specific performance that we were going to have for CORDS.

Q: Within the ten month language training.

IFSHIN: And we might have done one I think once we got there. We had some sort of reunion. But we obviously couldn't collaborate very well because we weren't assigned together.

Q: So, Tet comes along, and everybody says, whoosh what was that is that where we are going?

IFSHIN: Yes, well, there were a whole bunch of things that were happening that were very upsetting and disturbing and that was one of them. Then there was the May Offensive somewhat after that.

Q: That's right. And of course you are sitting there in language training watching all these trains come down.

IFSHIN: People in the embassy, you know, there's the Vietcong in the U.S. embassy.

Q: Hmm. That's interesting.

IFSHIN: But we would write another song. [laughter]

Q: So finally they gave you a ticket.

IFSHIN: Yes, we arrived more or less as a group, a large group of us arrived together and were all assigned to the same bachelor officer's quarters hotel. I remember that night...

Q: That was August...

IFSHIN: August of '68. We'd just arrived in Vietnam. First of all we are getting our debriefing and a bomb goes off. A motorcyclist with a bomb, just outside one of the office buildings where we were being briefed. We heard it go off and we thought, ok. Then we went out to this hotel and we were having a few beers, we were on the roof of this hotel as I recall and the lights were flickering across the street. A couple of the guys said, "Do you think those are signals? It looks like signals to me. I think somebody's signaling something there. Anyway, somebody called, I don't know who, some sort of security authority saying he thinks he sees somebody signaling. And they asked how long he'd been in the country, and he said he'd been there a little less than 24 hours, and they said, okay, thank you. [laughter].

And then we got our assignments. We were told what parts of Vietnam we were going to.

Q: So you didn't get that information until you arrived?

IFSHIN: Until we arrived in the country, yes. I was assigned to Three Corps, which was subsequently to become third military region, which is the area basically around Saigon. I was assigned to Thu Thua district in Long An Province. First they sent me to Bien Hoa, which is the corps headquarters and John Paul Vann was the head of CORDS in Three Corps.

Q: Just to get this straight, Three Corps extends from the ocean to the Cambodian border. It's a horizontal stripe almost.

IFSHIN: Well, I think of it more of a blob, frankly. But it's on the ocean, yes, and it goes right up to the Cambodian border.

Q: How many provinces were...

IFSHIN: I don't remember. 8, 12, I don't remember. It was the area around Saigon. Long An was about 20 miles south of Saigon. John Paul Vann wanted to interview everybody before they went off to their assignment. He wasn't there when I arrived so I sort of had to sit around Bien Hoa. And he also had a program where he wanted people to go out and observe CORDS activities in three different locations before they went to their assignment. I remember the first place he sent me, I can't remember the name of the province right now, anyway I arrived in a chopper or small plane that set me down at this isolated airport. Nobody is there. The plane takes off and leaves, and I'm standing there with a suitcase in the middle of Vietnam on a runway. When I say runway, this was PSP planking, a rudimentary type runway. There was a building but nobody was around. And

then a jeep came scooting up and they said, oh, yes, sorry we're a little late, and they took me off and they said we have a civilian here but he's not here right now. But you can watch what we do. I really didn't think they were doing much of anything, but I watched them for the day or 48 hours or 72 hours or whatever I was supposed to watch them for. I got picked up and flown back to Binwa.

And then they sent me to the city, a fairly big important place, and I flew in at the airport, mass confusion, no one's there to meet me and I hear there's VC in town. I have a contact number or I get one from some of the American personnel, this was a big airport and there was lots of American personnel around and I got some number to call the CORDS office there. And they said, well, we have VC in town and you better just go back. So I go back to the air traffic people and say can I get back to Binwa. No, there's no flights to Binwa. Are there any flights to anywhere? And there was a flight to some place I'd never heard of, and I asked, well, is that a big place, and they said yes, and I asked am I likely to get a flight to Binwa from there. Yes. So that's what I did in fact and came back to Binwa. I went in and I'd had two of my three trips and I said, "I think I'm prepared, I think I'm ready to get out there and do my thing. I've seen enough of what everyone's doing and how it's going."

So I went down to Thu Thua, where I was the lone civilian on a team that consisted of a major, two lieutenants, about 4 or 5 senior sergeants, when I say senior I mean 06s and 07s, and a couple of more junior specialist type, corporals, 03s and 04s. Basically, Thu Thua was not a bad little place with a population of about 50,000. It was about 20 minutes ride from the provincial capital. I got to the work as the lone civilian sort of getting into the civilian areas of the pacification program. And there were a number of things going in the civilian area.

Q: Were there teams assigned to each city? How did that team come to be assigned there?

IFSHIN: Yes, CORDS assembled the largely military teams.

Q: Yes, 80 percent were military.

IFSHIN: Right, and in the district, as I say, I was the only civilian.

Q: So this was a district in the district town.

IFSHIN: Right. In the province there were 6 or 7 districts, and there was a CORDS team in I think 3 or 4 of them, and a CORDS headquarters in the provincial capital with all kinds of advisors advising in this area and that area and doing that and this. Everything was going along reasonably, I think... I want to make a comment about the hamlet evaluation system. You've heard about that?

Q: Yes, oh, yes.

IFSHIN: We used to assign these letter grades, a whole string of letter grades, to each hamlet in our district.

Q: This was an attempt to sort of standardize what everybody was seeing.

IFSHIN: Right, and also to measure progress. You could see where it was last month, and this is where it is this month.

Q: What are some of the categories of things that are being observed?

IFSHIN: Were there VC in the town during the day? Were there VC in the town during the night? Were there tax collectors with VC infrastructure, when is the last time they were there? Had we carried out this program A, program B, was this instituted in the town? What's the last time there was a military incident? I can't remember exactly how many hamlets I had in my district... maybe 30? And we carried a couple of so-called VC-controlled. These are places we didn't go, except in force. And then we had a lot that as far as we knew, the VC weren't there and hadn't been there for a while, and we assigned them their ranking on that basis. One of the things that I was very determined about and felt strongly that nobody was every going to catch me exaggerating these things and I was going to call them as I saw them and be just absolutely accurate. This is the point I want to make: after you'd been there three or six months and you're evaluating things and you are working hard, and you say, "well, you know, things must have gotten better after all the hard work I'd put into this, so where this used to be a C, maybe it's become a B, in this particular category, and this one is now this. So there's a certain amount of grade creep in all this.

Q: How much of these evaluations... are you going around to the individual hamlets and chatting up the either the government people or tribal father, although that's not the right term?

IFSHIN: I wouldn't say...village chief... I wouldn't say that I got to each hamlet every month. Certainly the ones that we carried that were VC controlled I didn't get to. But I got around. I was assigned an International Harvester Scout, that was the vehicle that CORDS assigned its personnel. And I'd go driving all over the place and get into these various hamlets and talk to people. I spoke Vietnamese fairly well at that point, and about what was happening and how things were. I'm skipping ahead here. There's another point I wanted to make. This was much later in my stay.

We had what we called what we called our pacification offenses where we'd come in with military forces and then bring in all the Vietnamese government's services, these were the so-called VC-controlled hamlets, and we'd move in in force and be out to make them government hamlets. It was interesting, in many ways this was the first time I had visited these places and I'd talked with people. I think they were being honest with me and I'd say, "When's the last time the VC were here?" And they'd say, "Tet, 1967." What happened then, they rounded up a bunch of our young men and they marched them off to Saigon and they never came back.

Q: You mean Tet '68?

IFSHIN: Yes, you are right. I'm talking about in '69 actually when we were doing these offenses. Basically, it's quite true, after Tet, I don't know if it's conventional wisdom now, but it certainly widely acknowledged that while Tet was an enormous victory for the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese in the United States, a tremendous propaganda and psychological victory, it was in fact an overwhelming military defeat. The Vietcong at least in my part of Vietnam was essentially wiped out in that period. And from there on in, we were fighting North Vietnamese, largely North Vietnamese regulars.

Things were going rather well in my district, and the decision had in fact been made that I would become the district senior advisor, instead of the Army Major, that is when he was replaced and I would be the senior person on the team with the Army Major as my deputy. And just about this time... I smile, but it's kind of a very sad business... My district stretched all the way up to the Cambodian border, although basically there was no population and this was a free fire zone for a number of miles toward the Cambodian border and the population was all concentrated in the south of the district. And two, well, I don't know if it was two Vietnamese battalions, it's all become foggy, but in any case the North Vietnamese force infiltrated through this free fire zone and attacked a couple of hamlets that we'd always considered quite secure, and with a great deal of destruction. The American Colonel, Asa Grey, who was our province senior advisor, landed in a helicopter near the battle zone and was killed. On reflection, this is all quite sad. In any case, when he was replaced by another Army Colonel who thought this was a really rough district and bad things are happening and of course the whole plan that we could possibly have a civilian as the senior advisor there was thrown out. So I continued as the deputy in Thu Thua and was sort of unhappy about that situation, and was subsequently moved to the province capital as part of the pacification team there and had some province-wide responsibilities.

Q: Speaking of responsibilities, when you are in Thu Thua, what are you doing on a daily basis?

IFSHIN: I was on the road a lot, visiting various hamlets and trying to discuss the functioning of the civilian side of the Vietnamese government, and were they getting the services they were supposed to get. If they weren't, I would try to follow up to see that they in fact did get some of these services.

Q: That means that you hooked in to the Vietnamese government, at that level you are attempting to stimulate them to produce...

IFSHIN: Or I'm contacting an American at the next higher level asking him to get his Vietnamese contacts to produce for my Vietnamese contact who claim that they can't do what they're supposed to do because they don't have the inputs.

Q: Are your Vietnamese contacts suggesting that you are going to have more clout if he

needs a sack of concrete or some bricks or whatnot?

IFSHIN: Oh yes, sure, right. He's convinced that he's not going to get anywhere if he goes to his next higher level and asks for it but if the Americans tell them to deliver it maybe it will work. You could argue that we weren't really building government there.

Q: That's the next question, because if the decision is up to him to circumvent his own organization then his own organization isn't learning anything. On the other hand, CORDS guys were reporting at all kinds of levels that this one official is simply incompetent or crooked and he's the bottleneck...

IFSHIN: Well, in fact, after I'd been in Thu Thua for a while, we had the Vietnamese district commander who I recall was also a major, was replaced by a Vietnamese lieutenant colonel, who was terribly corrupt. I was aware of the corruption and was doing something about it and trying to get him to stop building some of the private projects he had going on using government materials for that. A fellow named Ev Bumgartner, was a longtime Vietnam hand who was based in Saigon, got in touch with me and said supposedly there was some sort of a contract out on me. [laughter] That I was interfering and they were going to get rid of me. I thought it was all a bunch of nonsense really, and Ev did, too, but he wanted to let me know, rather than...

Q: Just in case things looked suspicious from time to time. Are you armed or with an armed escort?

IFSHIN: Normally, I went out on my own. I had, by this time, acquired quite a bit of weaponry. I bought a Walther PPK. I don't know if you are a handgun enthusiast, I am not. But that was James Bond's weapon, after he got rid of his Beretta. So I figured if it was good enough for James Bond it was good enough for me and that was my personal weapon. But in fact, I also acquired an M16 and a shotgun and various other weapons of one kind or another.

Q: Did you practice with any of these things? [laughter]

IFSHIN: No, I never fired in anger, and seldom.

Q: Did you fire in practice?

IFSHIN: I might have shot my Walther PPK a couple of times just to see how it operated and what I had to do to shoot it. I guess I fired an M16 and some of the other weapons, but I don't recall practicing with them. We came under mortar fire occasionally in the district headquarters. You know, they can stand off 20 miles away and lob mortars, so that would happen. Once, walking across the fields with another American, he claimed that a bullet had whistled between us. I did not in fact notice that, but I don't ever remember coming under individual hostile fire of that kind.

Q: Some of the other people in CORDS remark on the resources they had to distribute.

Was that something you were in, could you control concrete or had funds or had administrative resources or were you prodding and poking rather than providing?

IFSHIN: I think I was prodding, poking rather than providing. We would get some resources and we could access things, but I wasn't in the direct chain of providing. It was more or less trying to get someone else to provide.

Q: So basically you are performing a reporting role. When I was next door in Thailand about the same time, that's what Tom Barnes had us do. We went to every district and most of the villages and talked to the police chiefs and the village chiefs and what's going on.

IFSHIN: We were doing that, but I'd go back to the province and say we need such and such for this hamlet. They've got a project, they want to build a footpath and they need so many bags of cement and some rebar. Can you get that for me? And eventually, usually, we'd manage to get it for them. I remember that there was a Navy Seabee detachment in the province for quite some time, and they'd put in a walking bridge, a hanging bridge across a large canal we had that was quite impressive, really, and there had never been a bridge across that canal before. And then they also put in a road for me toward one of the hamlets that we carried as VC controlled. That might not have been the greatest project in the world because shortly after that there was a command detonated mine on that road that sort of let us know it wasn't really safe to use. Putting in a road wasn't going to be sufficient to make this a marvelous safe hamlet. But I was convinced that if we just tie them into the market, we could do this, we could pacify them, win their hearts and minds.

Q: So, you went from the village level back up to the province, or the district, you...

IFSHIN: I was at the district.

Q: You started out at the district.

IFSHIN: Yes, usually I was trying to tie the hamlet to the province through the district, trying to get each to perform their functions and get them to do what they were supposed to do.

Q: From time to time, were CORDS people brought up from the district to the provincial center and discuss their problems... sort of a staff meeting?

IFSHIN: Yes. I'm trying to remember how many civilians we had at the district level. I can only remember myself and John Zerolis. I don't know if you know John.

Q: He just retired.

IFSHIN: He was in the neighboring district right next door. Then a fellow named Bruce Kinsey was at the province level. I think he had been in a district before that. Bruce had been in a district and then went into the provinces. I forget what title he was given, but it

was an important title at the province level. I used to work closely with Bruce as we got along well together.

Q: This is not the right time, but it occurs to me... what were you told as to why there were foreign service officers in CORDS.

IFSHIN: Because LBJ (Lyndon B. Johnson) had said that he wanted the foreign service to participate and I think that was the only reason. Now, subsequently we were told that this was going to be a great experience for us and we were learning all about rural southeast Asia and we were seeing a really unique side of things that would stand us in good stead throughout our careers. And all that was of course crap. But the bottom line was that LBJ wanted the foreign service there and rather than deliver officers who had by dint of hard work acquired a lot of experience and they said, well, let's send some young guys out there and hope they survive.

Q: My research suggests that about 10% of the foreign service was in CORDS at any one time or that 10% of the slots were for foreign service, 80% were military and then other agencies. But there's a book, I can't think of the author right now, it's called Pacification and he suggests that with Tet and literally the demise of the Vietcong, CORDS then put on a big push to really move the program and move pacification in the absence of the Vietcong which had expended itself in Tet. That was basically the period you were there. Was there a sense that now's the time to make some hay?

IFSHIN: Well, as I say, when we started our pacification offensives, which was after I'd been there for some time, but when we started that, we went into open areas and found that they were quite ready for our efforts. There were no Vietcong around.

Q: Now you're coming out of Vietnam early 1970?

IFSHIN: Yes. I left Vietnam with no orders, well, I had orders - you can't leave without orders, but I remember I hadn't gotten my orders for some time and my due date was coming up and I'd go up to Saigon and say, "Hey, I'm due to leave in February and I hadn't gotten orders yet." I suppose this was January.

Q: Who's in charge of you?

IFSHIN: Personnel in the embassy. I'm in the foreign service, so... And they said, not to worry this happens all the time... I remember when I was in Germany I didn't get my orders for three week after I was due to leave. I said, wait a second, that was Germany, this is Vietnam... I want my orders and I want to get out of here the day I'm supposed to get out of here. If I don't have any orders, I'm leaving anyway. You can find me in Bangkok. And she said, well, you can't do that, you can't leave without orders. I said, well, you better get me my orders then [laughter].

Let me go back for a minute and mention another part of my experiences. It was a brief window when Cambodia opened up, that is before the fighting expanded, when we

established...

Sihanouk was still in power. I went into Cambodia that year with a group of people, I can't remember who we all were, but we went to Angkor Wat. That's one of the most exciting things I've ever seen and I wanted to mention that.

Q: As a tourist you mean...

IFSHIN: Yes. Okay, back to leaving Vietnam. In any case, I did get orders and they didn't have any onward assignment, but I did get orders that allowed me to leave the country. I went to Taipei, where I got a call that I was supposed to report to Washington on such and such a date to begin French language training... I going to Niamey. I said that's fine. I got home to my parents where I was on home leave. And I got another call that said scratch that, I can stay on home leave a little longer because you're going to start Spanish language training. You are going to Fernando Po, Equatorial Guinea. I'd never heard of Fernando Po, or Equatorial Guinea and I went to the library and looked it up. I said there is absolutely no way that after Vietnam that I am going to Fernando Po. And I arrived in Washington and that assignment had been scratched as well and I didn't have an onward assignment. They put me on the West Africa desk to sort of pass time.

Q: What are we looking at? Is this just the system churning?

IFSHIN: Yes, they just didn't have anything.

Q: Because you're kind of off cycle and the standard cycle is the summer cycle.

IFSHIN: Right, but if I had gotten language training it would have put me right back on cycle. But in fact, the guy who went to Fernando Po [laughter], again it's another tragic foreign service story. If you remember, back in the early '70s there was a murder...

Q: Two guys...

IFSHIN: Right, in the vault. One of the officers killed the communicator. There were two people there. Very difficult place, from everything I've heard. I've never been there. But anyway, the murderer, who spent many years subsequently at St. Elizabeth's, was the guy who got my assignment. He snatched that assignment away from me. [laughter]

Q: And here you sit. So being in Vietnam and being in that particular situation seem to get you any extra brownie points with the personnel system?

IFSHIN: Not really, I don't want to complain too much. In fact, when I got back, there was a lot of talk about how they were doing great things for the people who were coming back from CORDS and how the CORDS officers were very enthusiastic... and it wasn't me, believe me...[laughter] but somebody said, oh you ought to talk to Stan Ifshin if you think CORDS officers are enthusiastic. I got to talk to Bill Sullivan who was then the deputy assistant secretary in EAP and kind of doing Vietnam stuff, and tell him all my

complaints and all my negatives. I also got to talk to, I think I got to meet with the director general... myself and I think it was Mike Carpenter. (End of tape)

Q: So you are making this presentation.

IFSHIN: Yes, were given the chance to vent and to talk to some fairly high level people about our feelings and tell them what we learned on our trip to Vietnam.

Q: What did you learn on your trip to Vietnam?

IFSHIN: Nobody has anything terribly original to say about Vietnam, and so many people had been through the experience. I try not to talk about it too much, frankly. It's sort of like picking at one of those scabs you do reflexively, and you hate yourself for doing. We handled it very badly. I remember at the time sort of consoling myself by saying, well, we're learning a lesson here. And we have hundreds of foreign service officers who are learning and will never repeat these mistakes again. About this time. About this time, I think Barbara Tuchman came out with her book, Stillwell and the American Experience in China. She was very deliberately drawing the parallels of course, but it was kind of shocking to see that by golly we already had this experience and we didn't learn. All these experiences of course are unique to some degree.

Q: What you're saying is the pacification effort that you saw was missing its target.

IFSHIN: We really didn't know we were doing, very well. Often, in the case of the foreign service, many of us were young officers, very inexperienced. Of course we were tremendously talented and had all sorts of innate abilities, but we weren't prepared to lead and make a significant contribution. My personal observation is that the U.S. military, again I met some very fine people in CORDS, but the U.S. military did not assign its best people to the CORDS effort. They were in combat units or doing other "more important" things, from the military point of view. This was an effort that there were people who were very interested in, but it wasn't top priority for most of the people who had personnel to assign.

Q: The military people that you worked with, was this their only exposure to Vietnam or had they'd been in combat units before and now this was their second go-around, how would you characterize it?

IFSHIN: It depends. Some of them had been in combat before and some of them had come in with other units and been assigned. I think many of the NCOs were screwups who people were getting out of their units because they were troublemakers of some sort or another. I don't know how they made these assignments, but I don't think they were people who were necessarily the best.

Q: What would you point to as a major failing of the program then?

IFSHIN: Well, the idea that anybody could be an advisor. All you had to do was call

someone “covan,” which is Vietnamese for advisor, and he was an advisor. It takes a certain amount of knowledge of the culture and some sensitivity to the culture, and obviously we can’t train millions of people to speak the language, but there are even hundreds of thousands, but you have at least to have people with a certain amount of empathy and a little feeling for the people. Basically, I’m convinced that there was a widespread recognition on the part of the American leadership that Vietnam was a lost cause and we were just spinning our wheels during the time I was there. Don’t let it happen on my watch, pass it along to somebody else.

Q: Now you are there during the period where John Paul Vann is riding high in third corps?

IFSHIN: Yes. I’m not really talking about John Paul Vann. I don’t know John Paul Vann from Adam. We interviewed with him. I had occasion to meet the fellow who succeeded Cumers as the head of CORDS, who went on to become the head of CIA. I briefed him on one occasion.

Q: Helms?

IFSHIN: Not Helms. William Colby. One of the unique things about my district was General Big Minh was from that district. So there was interest in him because he was a figure in Saigon, so what kind of a following does he have in the district, etc. With regard to that, just to repeat one anecdote... I recall on one occasion, Mike Skol, who was then with the embassy’s provincial reporting unit, came down to visit in my district and we went around together. We met with a village chief or hamlet chief, I think it was a village chief who should have been somewhat politically sophisticated. Mike asked him - I was serving as translator - about the five political parties. He started talking about the five political parties, which were the Buddhist party, the Catholic party, the Huahao party, I can’t think of the religions... he couldn’t think of the fifth religion then and finally came up with Protestant, and there were none in our area then. Politics was totally off the board. It had nothing to do with these people’s daily lives and the political parties were totally irrelevant. The political parties were strictly Saigon organizations which had nothing to do with life in rural Vietnam and had no followings in rural Vietnam.

I was never a fan of the Vietnam war, but I always thought that once we got into it that we should do our best and try to win it. I do feel that the way we left, and in particular the way we abandoned the South Vietnamese who were our allies, left us with no glory whatsoever. It was a pretty sad episode. But there we are.

Q: After personnel is communicating with you off and on over this time, you finally do end up with an assignment in 1970.

IFSHIN: Well, again, there’s a little bit more gyrations there. I was briefly on the West Africa desk, sort of filling in and sitting in a seat. I was offered a job in Durban, in South Africa where we have a 3-man consulate. I would have been the third officer. At the time, I said, well, having just learned to love the war in Vietnam, I don’t want to learn to love

apartheid and I really don't want to go to South Africa. So, I went down to talk to my CDO, this was Linda Feifle. She said if you can come up with something else then you don't have to accept this assignment, but you have to have something else, you can't just turn down an assignment.

Q: Now this is at the time in which what's open is known to very few people?

IFSHIN: Right, it's before open assignments. In any case, I'm told there's an opening in the operations center. I went up there and I interviewed and they decided to hire me. I ended up in the operations center where I did 13 or 14 months first as an associate watch officer and then as an editor. There were 3-men watch teams. You had a senior watch officer, a SWO, an O2 officer - what is now an O2 but in those days an O3 or O4 - and then the associate watch officer, which was a O6 or something.

Q: Now this was the Kennedy administration reform of the foreign service, the establishment of the operations center, which is supposed to be a 24-hour operation, watching the globe around the world, and everything that's reported comes into this and you are to alert people as things come up.

IFSHIN: Right, precisely.

Q: And these 3-men units are working 24 hours?

IFSHIN: Well, we each do 8-hour watches, 8 to 4, 4 to 12, and 12 to 8. As I recall, you rotated through that cycle and then you had two days off. I can't recall precisely how it worked. But...

Q: You'd work your 8 to 4 for a week, and then 4 to 12 for a week, and 12 to 8 for a week and then you'd get a couple of days off.

IFSHIN: In any case, it was a fun and interesting job in many ways. A number of things happened on my watch, so to speak. I remember when the political counselor in Amman disappeared into a Palestinian refugee camp. We have had a number of those incidents subsequently, but in those days it was pretty rare. It happened, and we got a flash message from Amman telling us what had happened. This was 12 or 1 o'clock and I called Al Atherton who was then the deputy assistant secretary at NEA.

Q: This is 1 or 2 o'clock in the morning that you are talking about, not the afternoon?

IFSHIN: Right. He listened to me and subsequently called back. I remember waking him up several times in the course of the night, in which he was always invariably polite and nice. Then he dictated a response to me and the embassy was instructed to go in at the highest levels in Jordan and make sure everything possible was being done to recover our political counselor safely. I turned to the senior watch officer after taking this message and dispatching it, and said, isn't the embassy doing that? And he said, well, of course they are, but tomorrow morning Joe Sisco is going to come in and Al is going to brief

him about what's happened, and Sisco's going to say, what did you do? And Al is going to say, well, I sent a message telling them to take this up at the highest levels, etc. So it was a useful lesson to me about what a lot of our work is and why we do it.

Q: Well, actually, from that perch if you will, you are watching the entire world. The middle East is coming in, things are coming in from Asia. You were seeing a very broad view of the foreign service, different from the rice paddies in Vietnam.

IFSHIN: Right, right, quite different from the rice paddies in Vietnam. Yes. Another incident that happened on my watch... I was on duty when we got a message from the Coast Guard which was very difficult to understand. I couldn't figure it out terribly well what they were trying to say. I showed it to the senior watch officer, who was Gifford Malone, who was an Eastern European type, and he told me to call the Soviet desk. This subsequently turned out to be about the defecting seaman.

Q: Seaman. Mississippi or something.

IFSHIN: Well, he jumped onto an American Coast Guard vessel, and the Coast Guard commander returned him to the Soviets. This sort of gets worse and worse, as you recall, because it turned out that he had in fact some sort of a claim to American citizenship, but that's neither here nor there. In any case, it subsequently became an enormous scandal and the operations center was very much in the middle of it, and a number of personnel in the operations center were debriefed and testified before Congress about what had happened and what they had done. I never had to testify and nothing I had done was questioned because I had done exactly what I was supposed to do. But I did not understand that particular cable and I subsequently asked Malone about it, why did you tell me to call the Soviet desk? I didn't understand what was happening in that message, and he said, well, neither did I but there was a smell about it. [laughter] That was another useful lesson: be alert to smells.

Q: Well, that's the whole issue of practice and professionalism, you just have a feeling...

IFSHIN: Yes, the finger spiel.

Q: That something's coming down the line. So from this office, you are calling people at night, you're calling the desks during the day, you are making sure everybody is linked up.

IFSHIN: Right.

Q: Basically.

IFSHIN: The last half of that assignment, I was an editor. The job of the editor was to take his selection of the most important cables that had come in during a 12-hour period, both before he came on duty and during the time he was on duty, and do a summary of those cables for the secretary. This was not an unimportant thing because it was your

opportunity to draw cables to the secretary's attention. And I don't want to talk invidiously about anyone, but particularly at this time when William Rogers was Secretary of State, I think he did not read a whole lot, so having this opportunity to draw cables to his attention was very important.

My great triumph on this job, that is when I was editor, is that I was on duty when the cable came in that the Chinese, the PRC, had invited the U.S. table tennis team, which was then in Japan, to visit China. I did a item in which I started out saying, Ping, Pong-China Calling, and then went on from there. I worked in the egregious pun about tabling tenets Communism, but people talked about that for a long time after I wrote it. [laughter] I had a lot of fun there.

Q: So this office is, as it's watching the world, is another platform for bring to the highest levels of the State Department various pieces of information and trends.

IFSHIN: Well, at this point in my career, I had no idea about the CIA's daily intelligence report, and I didn't know that INR is doing the same sorts of things. But this was the State Department's cables, that's all that we wrote about. We were supposed to...

Q: Single source sort of editing.

IFSHIN: We were supposed to boil it down to an 8-9 line paragraph. When I say nine, we were supposed to have eight and we were allowed eight and a half lines in describing the cable. It was good exercise in drafting because you had to be very accurate and able to extract the critical elements and get them into your eight and a half lines. It was challenging and interesting and it was the first real drafting I did as a State Department officer.

Q: This is one of the things I noticed moving from the field into Washington that summarizing things succinctly became more and more important as you got closer and closer to the seat of power.

IFSHIN: One of the other functions of the editor is that he made the initial cable distribution to the State Department principles. We had slots for each of the principles and I'm sure this would go to their office and I'm sure their staff assistants and special assistants winnowed the cables we had included.

Q: This is the under secretaries and the deputy secretaries...

IFSHIN: And the counselor... I bring this up because at this particular point in time U. Alexis Johnson was the undersecretary for political affairs and it was clear to me that we were overworking the man terribly. He was getting everything. He was covering the whole shooting match, every issue that was of concern to the U.S. government, he was getting the cable take. There was no one else who was really doing that. No one else was reading...

Q: Six or seven other slots on what we would call the eighth floor and Johnson's getting all the cables?

IFSHIN: Right.

Q: Because by then he'd been ambassador to Japan, he'd gone through Saigon...

IFSHIN: In any case, we had these instructions as to what people wanted, and he wanted everything. No one else did.

Q: I've always found his autobiography, very interesting. It's called The Right Hand of Power.

IFSHIN: I haven't read it.

Q: Any other observations of who's plugged in or who is getting things or how the place is organized that you noticed from that vantage point?

IFSHIN: I mentioned Al Atherton, and my calling him several times in the course of a night and having him always invariably courteous and pleasant to speak to even though he was being woken up every two or three hours. There other people who were notorious s.o.b.s and you hated to call them. I used to say, this is Ifshin calling from the communications center, I didn't want them to get my first name or my name, I'd try to slur that as fast as possible [laughter].

Q: [laughter]

IFSHIN: Let me tell you another story. I was the editor then, not the associate watch officer, one of our jobs, I assume it's not done this way any more, but in those days, the classified phones we had very few in the department at that time but there were several on the seventh floor. You had to change cards in them, the crypto cards, at midnight or whenever they had to be changed at the same time every day, and it was one of the functions of the editor to change those cards. So we were somewhat familiar with the phones and the phone system. On one occasion an office director had to call three ambassadors in EAP, and I was to escort him to one of the phones, maybe the secretary's or deputy secretary's phones, to make these calls. He had to convey certain instructions to them orally. He spoke to McMurtry Godly and Ellsworth Bunker and whoever was in Bangkok at the time.

Q: I think it was Unger, wasn't it?

IFSHIN: Maybe it was Sanford Unger, I don't remember, yes. But he'd asked for Sam Berger, but they gave him Ellsworth Bunker instead. He explained to Bunker who was very upset about this, can't I give this to a secretary to write this down. He said no under instructions from the President this has to be given to you personally orally. This is most unsatisfactory, most unsatisfactory... he subsequently ended up telling me Bunker's side

of the conversation. And after he'd made these calls and as we are walking back, he says, Gee I hope he didn't get my name.

Q: Did you have any opportunity from the operations center to touch base with the NSC or the Pentagon equivalents?

IFSHIN: I actually was sent over to the Pentagon for a while and worked in the National Military Command center where I was state rep. I'd said we had a 3-man team...we had a 3-man State Department team, but there was also a military rep who was a lieutenant colonel on each of our watch teams. At the National Military Command center, there was a State Department rep, I think they had a shortage and I got drafted to go over and do that job, although it was a more senior job for a couple of weeks, a month, 2 months. It was one of the more boring jobs I've had. Basically you look at cables all day and sit there. They have a TV going so you can watch the news.

Q: They didn't have CNN in those days.

IFSHIN: Yes. It was an interesting thing that happened. This was the period of the war of attrition along the Suez Canal, and it was the occasion where the Israeli's shot down a number of Soviet pilots, although they were ostensibly Egyptians, but they were actually Soviets who were flying the planes. And that of course caused a great deal of interest and excitement at the time. I think they subsequently did away with that position.

Q: The state position over at the Pentagon command center.

IFSHIN: Yes, it didn't really amount to a whole lot. I remember on one occasion I found a NODIS cable that had gone into general circulation and I had to make an effort to recall that [laughter]

Q: [laughter]

IFSHIN: But I don't know if we got it all back or not.

Q: From that exalted exposure to the seventh floor, you go back into language training.

IFSHIN: Right. Well, there was a change. After I'd joined the operations center, they made a change to make this a 2-year tour. And instead of a 1-year tour in the operations center, people were supposed to then go out as staff assistants...

Q: SSS.

IFSHIN: SSS or Staff. Either. And among the people who served with me at that time, Jerry Bremer who of course went on to exalted things after his service with Dr. Kissinger. I'd already bid for language training and was very anxious to study Chinese. They interviewed me, and I remember Karl Ackerman, who was then the head of the operations center, said we'd like you to take one of these exalted positions. I told him I

really didn't think I was cut out for staff and I was up for a line job. I was more of a hands on guy who wanted to get out there and do my thing.

Q: See, Vietnam did teach you some things.

IFSHIN: [laughter] These were all terrible mistakes in terms of building a career, but I did what I wanted to do. I started Chinese. I was offered either Japanese or Chinese at the time, I was given an option.

Q: How did you choose?

IFSHIN: I'd always wanted to study... I shouldn't say always, but at least since my Peace Corps service, I had been interested in particular in the overseas Chinese and was anxious to study Chinese. In fact, at that time, I thought I wanted to study Cantonese, and they arranged a meeting for with Chas Freeman, who was our great language guru although relatively a junior officer still. Chas said, well, it's fine we need people who speak Cantonese, but you'd be better off starting out learning Mandarin and mastering Mandarin first and then studying Cantonese. So I adopted that as my goal and decided I would study standard Chinese.

Q: But prior to your Peace Corps experience in the Philippines you hadn't focused on Asia or China?

IFSHIN: No, it grew strictly out of Peace Corps. In fact, when I entered the foreign service, I'm skipping around a little bit here, I told them I wanted to serve in Asia... any place but Vietnam. [laughter] What I really saw with Chinese in part, and of course at this time we did not have any relations with the Peoples Republic of China, and we had a number of these listening posts, these Chinese language positions around the periphery. While I recognized that Japan was more important to the U.S. than China, and was likely to be so for some time to come, at least from my point of view, it seemed to me that I had a chance to serve in more places and it would be more fun to do Chinese. So I chose to study Chinese. The year at FSI in Rosslyn.

Q: Who was the linguist in Chinese at that time?

IFSHIN: Sollenberger, Howard Sollenberger. He was the head of FSI at that time, but he was keeping his hand in as the China linguist because that was his background. He had been a China linguist and he wanted to do that and he continued to do that. I remember when I was just starting Chinese, he sat in on one of my early classes and he listened to me for a few more minutes and he said to me, you're from New York, aren't you? And I said, yes I am, how did you know? He said I could hear your hard Ps. I said does this mean I'll never be able to speak Chinese, and he said, no, it means you'll speak it with a New York accent which is as good as a Minneapolis accent or a Dallas accent or a Los Angeles accent, it's just another accent in Chinese. Not as good as a Chinese accent, [laughter]

Q: [laughter] I was always under the impression that the accent one had was also a function of the last language FSI had pumped into you so you probably were speaking...

IFSHIN: I had an initial problem in learning Chinese in that I had Vietnamese tones. And Vietnamese tones are different from standard Chinese tones. They're more like Cantonese tones actually.

Q: Right. Aren't there six tones in Cantonese and six in Vietnamese?

IFSHIN: I think there are five in Vietnamese but I could be wrong. It's been a while since I studied it. In any case, I made a very conscious, deliberate attempt to try to block out my Vietnamese and try to master Chinese.

Q: Were there many people taking Chinese at that time?

IFSHIN: When I started, there were four of us as I recall. Myself, and Ward Barmon, a fellow named Phil Myer who subsequently left the foreign service, I think that was his last name, and Tom Penfold who was really going to Singapore and was just doing this to fill in a couple of weeks he had between various other things when he had to leave or report, so they gave him a little Chinese training. Ward and I were the only ones who did this for the full year. Then Ward left for an assignment in Taipei and I went to the language school in Tai Chung.

Q: He gets one year and goes to Taipei probably in the consular section?

IFSHIN: No, I think he was in the economics section.

Q: Yes. And anything about that first year, about how interesting Chinese was? To begin there aren't as many [Chinese] restaurants or whatnot in Washington.

IFSHIN: [laughter] Well, maybe not as many as there are now, but there were quite a few. Matter of fact, one of the better ones The Shanghai, which still exists out here in Northern Virginia. But it was a lot of fun studying Chinese then. One of our instructors, well, they were both very nice, but one of them was Li Tsungmi, I don't know if you ever studied with Li, but he had been a teacher of Chinese in Beijing for FSI.

Q: Right, in the late '40s.

IFSHIN: So there was sort of a link there, you were in the middle of history and that's kind of fun. I remember some of the anecdotes he would tell. He would tell about being a member of the gentry in China in those days, and some of the things he had done. It was kind of neat and interesting.

Q: Now actually, the way the foreign service works is that you have to have an onward assignment before you get language training, so you knew what job you were going to...

IFSHIN: I don't think I did at that point.

Q: You were the luckiest thing. [laughter]

IFSHIN: I don't think I was assigned until I was in Tai Chung when I was assigned to Kuala Lumpur. I don't think I had an onward assignment.

Q: Yes. Interesting.

IFSHIN: In fact, while I was in Tai Chung, I think it was George Beasley. What was the name of our... he subsequently went into USIS and had a successful career as a USIS officer, a black FSO. But he was the scientific linguist in Tai Chung when I was there. When I was about halfway through, so I guess I hadn't been assigned yet, but he approached me and said I was making good progress and wanted to suggest that I do a third year. I might possibly or would get into translator or interpreter quality if I could do that third year of Chinese. But I said I'm going crazy as is, and two years is about as much as my brain can hold and I don't want to do it. I think that might have been a mistake because I might have imprinted the Chinese in a real way, but instead what happened is I had really decent Chinese when I left Tai Chung and it gradually declined.

Q: [laughter] Now the foreign service for Chinese, Japanese, Russian, Arabic, these are two-year programs. Generally, you do one year in Washington, one year in a field location. So for Chinese, you did one year in Washington in '71 and '72, and then FSI in Tai Chung in '72 and '73. Now if there's only one guy from the first year program going to Tai Chung, how many people were in language in Tai Chung when you got there?

IFSHIN: We must have had 20 or 30 people.

Q: Where did they come from?

IFSHIN: In addition to...

Q: If that's the second year...

IFSHIN: There were people who were coming there not directly from Washington, it's not always done as a 2-year straight.

Q: Refreshing one's second year...or they've had it one year at a previous time and now they're getting a second year...

IFSHIN: Or they're coming back, or there are people who learn their Chinese outside the foreign service. Of course FSI Tai Chung, I don't know about these other languages schools that we run around for the other languages, but FSI Tai Chung trains military and CIA and NSA personnel.

Q: Sort of senior language, senior Chinese for the government.

IFSHIN: Right, a number of agencies were represented at Tai Chung in those days. Now it's in Taipei. But that was an interesting experience too because getting to know these people... Most of them are really like the foreign service, of course the CIA guys are almost very little distinction between, you'd have trouble picking one out.

Q: Did they walk with a limp, or? [laughter]

IFSHIN: Sometimes there's a difference, but the military types tended to be very... the same interests and similar... The NSA were distinctly different, and that was partly their insistence upon protecting their covers. They were all DOD civilians as opposed to NSA employees and they'd all give you these cover stories and expect you to believe them.

Q: What foreign service officers were with you in Tai Chung?

IFSHIN: I can't remember.. Peter Smith, he subsequently left the foreign service and went to NASA where he was their Chinese linguist. He was there and he did the 3-year program. I'm remembering more USIS people who were there when I was there.

Q: Like...

IFSHIN: Rob Geary was there. John Thomson, John was one of the best Chinese speakers we had in the program and he's really very good. It just popped into my head.. Joe Lake was in Tai Chung the same time I was there. Joe and I became quite close at the time.

Q: One of the things I've always heard about Tai Chung was here you are studying Mandarin Chinese which is spoken in northern China, and you are sitting with a population that is Taiwanese and there are actually very few Mandarin speakers in the area.

IFSHIN: A lot of your contact is with the faculty, the instructors, and of course they are all Mandarin speakers by definition and speak with the proper accent. It was interesting being exposed to the accents. I remember very distinctly... we made a field trip to Taipei in which we were briefed by, I think the title was the head of the mainland affairs committee of the KMT who was a native of Hunan Province. He spoke to us for about an hour in Mandarin. We were all fairly advanced in our course and some of us were quite good. I'm not including myself in that. But I sat there and after losing track of what he was saying in about 10 or 15 minutes, I sort of wrote a note to John Thomson, who was one of the best speakers in our class, and I asked do you understand what he's saying. John said, no I don't. So we sat there for the hour and after it was all over we asked our Chinese language instructor what language was he speaking? And she said he was speaking Mandarin. I said, did you understand it? She said, I understood about 75% of it. Of course that's one of the notoriously difficult Mandarin accents, the Hunan accent.

Q: Which is Mao's accent.

IFSHIN: You were a Chinese speaker, so you understand what I'm saying. I don't think spoken Chinese is terribly hard. The great difficulty in Chinese is the number of nonstandard accents and adjusting to those nonstandard accents. To me that's the hard part of Chinese is understanding. So hearing a southerner speak wasn't necessarily a bad thing, especially for someone like me who went off to Kuala Lumpur. In addition to my Chinese, I tested in Hokkien Taiwanese, and came out at a 1+, big deal. But that's what most of the Chinese in Malaysia speak. So knowing a little Minan hua was useful.

Q: So you found living and working in Tai Chung comfortable?

IFSHIN: I enjoyed Tai Chung. When they approached me about staying a third year, it would have been a second year in Tai Chung, I turned it down. But I had a very nice time. I had a house. There was a large U.S. air base at the time, CCK, and there was a PX and commissary and everything was available. I had a good time. I don't know if I want to put this in the tape, but they used to tell me I was making great progress in my Chinese, but how come I sounded like a bar girl?

Q: [laughter]

IFSHIN: You got to practice where you can practice.

Q: How did you find the economic situation in Taiwan at that time? Now we see them as so successful.

IFSHIN: Well, it was already beginning to be successful and there was a great deal happening in Taiwan. It was very comfortable living for someone getting an American salary.

Q: Now you're there for language study, but actually isn't this the Nixon goes to China timeframe?

IFSHIN: Right. Just to retreat for a moment, just during the time I was studying Chinese in Washington, this is when Nixon's trip to China occurred. We then, as the language students, were among the throngs who went off to the White House lawn to see him off when he left by helicopter for Andrews Air Force base. Subsequently I think Mike Mansfield accompanied him on that first trip. If not, Mansfield went to China shortly thereafter. I always remember Mansfield came in and spoke to our class about his experience of China, his impression. Which I thought was a very gracious thing for him to do. He was the Senate majority leader.

Q: Nixon's gone to China, and but in fact you are only 1 or 2 people in the Chinese course. It doesn't necessarily look like anybody's necessarily looking to far ahead that there's going to be tons of consular s and need for Chinese speakers.

IFSHIN: [laughter]

Q: Did this get bandied about?

IFSHIN: Well, Chas Freeman wasn't senior enough at this point. [laughter] Subsequently I had conversations with Chas about how a quarter of the foreign service were going to be Chinese speakers, and we were going to have them all over, but I don't remember when that happened exactly, that conversation. I think that was somewhat later. We opened up the liaison office. But we had so many Chinese speakers who had never served in China and were anxious to get there. But I didn't compete for a job in Beijing. In fact, I went after the Kuala Lumpur job, that was the job I wanted. I had this interest in the overseas Chinese which I'd had for some time and that's what I wanted to do then. Probably another one of my many mistakes. But I had a good time in Kuala Lumpur... we'll get to that later.

Q: We were talking about the economic situation in Taiwan at the time. What are you seeing?

IFSHIN: Not so much in Tai Chung which was then a provincial city, and I guess still is. I haven't been to Tai Chung recently.

Q: It was the capital of the province, too.

IFSHIN: I first visited Taipei as a Peace Corps volunteer in 1965. When I was in Vietnam I also visited Taipei. So, I'd been to Taipei a number of times already. At this point, Taipei is a rather unattractive, a provincial city with rows and rows of shop houses, the climate which hasn't really changed. In the winter, it's this rather gloomy, gray, unattractive city and climate. But a lot of good restaurants even back then. I think the food was better then, but the Chinese food, back then there was more variety to it.

Q: Actually, there wasn't much in the way of Western food was there?

IFSHIN: No. The only place you could have a Western meal was at the various U.S. military officers clubs. And maybe at the Hilton hotel. Basically you ate Chinese food in Taipei, and it was great. Full of great restaurants.

Q: So you finish your language training, you test out marvelously at three 3s?

IFSHIN: Yes *three 3+s*, as I recall.

Q: In the Tai Chung system, were they teaching the abbreviated characters you used on the mainland too?

IFSHIN: Yes, you had to take both and you had to be able to read the simplified as well as the traditional characters. You started studying with the traditional characters and then they introduced the simplified and you had to do both. At first, it's I just learned this and now you're giving me this - this is a whole different... But after a while you begin to

see...

Q: You begin to see the common thread. Now handling the jentizi, the simplified character material, was not a problem, but something one had to be careful of.

IFSHIN: I don't remember. We were getting People's Daily, but I don't know if we were allowed to bring it home from the classroom and just protect it. I had a Chinese servant, I was going to comment on that. She was a marvelous cook. She was from Szechwan and was just great. Here I was this single guy, and usually I eat by myself. She'd make these fabulous meals for me, then stand behind me and say it was too hot this time, I made it too spicy didn't I. I'd be wiping the sweat from my brow and say, No, this is just the way I like it. Don't make it any less hot. [laughter]

Q: [laughter] So you are out of language training and you get home leave and then you go to KL.

IFSHIN: I don't know if I got home leave at that juncture or not. No, because I had home leave before leaving for Tai Chung. As a matter of fact, when I was supposed to leave for Tai Chung I was on home leave. And my father died in an accident that weekend. I was leaving that Monday and he died on the Friday before. Originally I was going to go to Europe on my way to Taiwan, I was going to go the long way. But of course, I stayed with my mother and her family I think a month or a month and a half, and then flew directly to Taiwan from New York. I was pretty shook up at that point actually, I was in emotional turmoil.

Q: But your foreign service assignment now is in Kuala Lumpur, were you in the political section?

IFSHIN: Right.

Q: Was it is a joint political/economic section?

IFSHIN: No. We had three FSOs, and one other officer. And one other officer in the political section. There was the chief of the political section, a Malay speaker, and myself as the Chinese speaker.

Q: So of the three, were you the lowest ranking, youngest officer then?

IFSHIN: Yes.

Q: So you that meant you got to do the biographic reporting, or... what were your duties?

IFSHIN: It's interesting, actually, because Kuala Lumpur or Malaysia, as you know, the politics are very much ethnic politics. You have these Chinese-based parties, and the Malay-based parties, even a couple of Indian-based parties, and a few mixed parties which tend to be Chinese. So I'm basically responsible for the Chinese parties. So in

addition to the usual, being the protocol officer and the biographic reporting officer and the normal cats and dogs, and map procurement and publications procurement and those other good things, I had these very distinct responsibilities for covering the principle opposition parties then, as well as component parties of the ruling coalition. Which was an interesting way for it to fall out.

Q: Fairly serious. This was basically your first foreign service overseas tour.

IFSHIN: Right.

Q: And you're talking to the highest level of the opposition party... senior gentlemen in their own...

IFSHIN: Yes.

Q: How did you feel? They were obviously older than you were by 30 years... the aura of being from the American embassy can carry a young officer quite a ways?

IFSHIN: In Malaysia, then at least, the U.S. carried somewhat less weight than it was to subsequently. They tended to be very British-oriented at that point. But I didn't find any problem getting in touch with people. Maybe I dealt with the second level people more than the first level.

Q: But that's good liaison anyway.

IFSHIN: Right.

Q: You have a very distinct portfolio and it's a crucial one. Malaysia has gone through the insurgency period and they're trying to integrate these groups so the trends and whatnot that you are picking up are telling. Where was Malaysia at that time?

IFSHIN: The traumatic event that pretty much hung over things was the '69 race riots. Just to trace the history there, if you'll recall Malaysia was formed of Malaya, Singapore, and Borneo provinces, east Malaysia. The Chinese-Malay balance tended to be fairly close at this point. At least from the Malay point of view, the understanding was that the Chinese would dominate economically but they [the Malay] would dominate politically. Of course, Lee Kuan Yu was not going to take a back seat to anybody. I think it's unrealistic to expect that, and he was making a bid for power nationwide, so they expelled Singapore. Subsequently the remnant Chinese still made a bid for political power and came darn close to winning the '69 elections. The Malays came out and rioted and all sorts of rules were instituted to ensure that the Malays would continue to hold political power indefinitely. Plus the various, for want of a better word, affirmative action programs which were meant to promote the bamiputra, the sons of the soil, the Malay, as opposed to the other communities. And there was a great deal of dissatisfaction on the part of the Chinese. There were Chinese who of course were interested in working out a different kind of accommodation and there were Chinese who were interested in

overthrowing things and radically changing them. There were all sorts of movements and currents and developments among the Chinese. And then quite a few Chinese were leaving, a big Chinese emigration to Australia at that time.

Q: So in fact from this position, you are talking to all kinds of Chinese groups, not just the established political opposition. You're getting around town and you have a fair arm around the Chinese community. What were their concerns at this time, which is '73-'75?

IFSHIN: Well, they were, what's our future in Malaysia. We've got it okay now, but what's the future for our children was the major question. Are we going to continue as second-class citizens here?

Q: You're there through the American withdrawal from Vietnam, which is just up the street, if you will. Is that impacting on the domestic situation in Malaysia?

IFSHIN: There was tremendous ferment in that part of the world at that time. I remember... a little back-patting here. I was out on a trip when somebody threw in some sort of anti-U.S. remark in the context of Vietnam. I was speaking to some group, I don't remember what it was. But I kind of exploded and said, let's remember the context of American involvement in Vietnam. You as Malaysian should remember Konfrontasi and the Pyong Yang, Hanoi, Jakarta, Beijing axis that was going to sweep Southeast Asia or Asia. America sacrificed to give you time to build your country, etc., in fact all of the southeast Asia countries were allowed to have that time, and now you have a chance to either use it or our sacrifice has been in vain. It cost us a lot but you've gotten a lot out of this. There was a lot of applause, and everybody was rah rah, and I felt very good about it at the time.

The other thing was we were dealing with boat people.

Q: The fall of Saigon in April '75.

IFSHIN: Right. A number of them evacuated to islands... Well, they evacuated to Malaysia and the Malay government put them on islands. They approached us and asked when are you going to take these people? We said we're not going to take them until we at least have a chance to interview them, or talk to them. Well, that was very unsatisfactory to the Malay government, they just wanted us to take them, pick them up and take them home to America. Eventually we did get a chance to talk to them and we formed a little team of about 4 or 5 of them and went off to this east coast Malaysian location. It was an island offshore and we'd take a banka over to the island every day to interview. We were staying in a rather ramshackle government guesthouse on the mainland. I tell this story because there was a fairly amusing incident. It's amusing now. I wake up one morning and I have an enormous welt under my eye. I don't know what it is, but it's this really ugly looking welt. It gradually goes down and I continue doing my work. We go back to Kuala Lumpur and I see a British physician who was the embassy doctor. He said, oh, it's a centipede bite. And I said, aren't centipede bites supposed to be fatal? He said, well, sometimes... obviously yours wasn't. [laughter]

Q: [laughter] Well, let's look at the fall of Saigon for a moment. Saigon falls, people start floating in to the isthmus both in Thailand, I was up in Songkhla, as the counsel there. Were you aware of any interchange we were having with the Malaysian government, or what was this and whose responsibility... and what not?

IFSHIN: I can't really tell you a lot more than I've already hinted at. They just wanted us to take them. They didn't want to give us access. I know that, early on. And our position was, well, we're not going to do anything until we've had a chance to talk to these people and interview them. If we can develop that they have a basis for entry into the United States, that is they have a relative, or they worked for the U.S. or there is some other reason, we're not just taking them. But if we can develop this, we'll take many.

Q: As far as the way the embassy handled this flow of people... most of that fell to the political section to report on the refugees, to carry the messages?

IFSHIN: I'd say it was a general embassy effort. The team that we formed included me, a political officer...

Q: With your Vietnamese...

IFSHIN: Yes, I knew that, that's why I was on the team I believe. Although, as I told them at the time, I'd made a deliberate effort to forget my Vietnamese when I was studying Chinese. In fact, it was interesting how my Vietnamese came back as I was hearing it every day. But we had an economic officer on the team, and I believe a consular person. Maybe a USIS person as well. It was just an embassy effort, we tried to get people to go off and interview.

Q: With the American withdrawal from Vietnam, which is '73, I believe, are you getting any feeling this is impacting on Malaysia. That they're thinking that their situation is more delicate than before?

IFSHIN: I'm trying to remember when Sukarno was overthrown...

Q: '65, I think.

IFSHIN: Yes. I think they were really more relaxed than they might have been. That really changed the whole constellation in that part of the world, when Jakarta was no longer hostile. When Malaysia was no longer being attacked as a creation of British imperialism. They now had friends and while they were sympathetic to us, they were not as anxious about their own situation as they had been.

Q: Your major reporting responsibility was the Chinese political parties. Did you see opportunities to touch bases with colleagues in other embassies who were also looking at the same issues?

IFSHIN: Yes, basically the Australians of course and the Brits had very good contacts in Malaysia. And the Japanese on occasion.

Q: This is a regular procedure? In Beijing, we had Tuesday monthly lunch.

IFSHIN: No. They were a group of youngish diplomats who sort of hung out together and gravitated together, but it was never... It was more social than work related. Although as Al LaPorta, who was number two in the section, used to tell me... I remember once something had happened, I can't remember what, but it had us all puzzled and I would say I'm going to a party tonight and maybe I'll learn something. The next morning I would come in and Al said, what did you learn? I said, it wasn't that kind of party. He looked at me all disgusted and said, Stan, they're ALL that kind of party. [laughter]

Q: [laughter] What did you think was America's priority in Malaysia at that time?

IFSHIN: Our priorities were almost strictly economic. Malaysia was a major provider of natural rubber and tin, and we were interested in its continuing in that role and being a trading partner of the U.S. Human rights did not exist at that time as part of foreign policy. We were sort of interested in democracy, out of our own personal predilections we favored those things. But our basic interests were economic.

Q: Just about the time you arrived...

IFSHIN: Let me just mention that during the time I was there, our ambassador was succeeded by Frank Underhill who had been political consular in Manila and then deputy chief of mission in Seoul before coming to KL as ambassador. He was really a brilliant political officer in many ways, a brilliant drafter, and a lot of fun. Again, another anecdote just popped into my head. The South Korean ambassador was calling on him. The Korean issue was coming up in the UN and he had been to see the Malaysian foreign minister and had gotten their agreement to support our position, that is the U.S. – South Korean position. Our ambassador, Frank Underhill, reported this conversation, whether the Malaysian said 'yes, I hear you', or 'yes I hear you and agree with you', or 'yes I hear you and agree with you and will do what you want' remains to be seen. [laughter]

Q: Free will always is one of the great diplomatic problems, isn't it?

IFSHIN: Bringing it back to my Peace Corps anecdote about getting people to commit. People don't like to say no in that part of the world. They will always say yes if they possibly can, but what they mean by yes is another question. Pinning them down and circumscribing their freedom of operation pretty sufficiently so that you can be pretty certain of what they will do is the trick.

Q: After you arrived in KL, the Thai government fell. Did that get any notice in Malaysia?

IFSHIN: When you mention it, I have vague recollections, but I can't say that it did. Part

of my responsibility was to cover the area around Penang because it was largely Chinese, so I would at least get that far up the coast. When I left Tai Chung and went to KL I got a boondoggle in which I had stopped off in Bangkok and Songkhla and the Philippines as well to discuss insurgencies and the Muslim problems in the border areas. So I was aware of these problems and of course they were always the Communist remnants in southern Thailand. But I can't say that people were terribly concerned with what was happening in Thailand. Maybe they were in the foreign ministry.

Q: Malaysia's focused basically in other places, they're looking at Indonesia, that where threat, danger was coming to them.

IFSHIN: I think so.

Q: As your first full tour in the foreign service, what did you think of your duties and what you were learning professionally?

IFSHIN: I found it professionally rewarding and very interesting. One incident occurred when I was there which we have not talked about which might be of interest, and that was the Japanese Red Army seizure of the American consulate and the taking of the consul and other persons as hostages at that time. The American embassy occupied the eleventh, twelfth, and penthouse floors of a downtown office building. The Consulate was on the ninth floor, a suite of offices. The Swedish embassy was also on the ninth floor, in an adjacent suite. I forget what floor, but the Japanese were in the same office building. The Japanese Red Army seized the consulate, and took our consul and a bunch of other people hostage. I happened to be outside the building when this all occurred and there was a big mob scene in front of the embassy when I was coming back. I spoke to police and they weren't letting anybody through. I called the embassy and they said, go stay with our consul's wife. I went off, she was Latin American, and I was doing my best to comfort here and various other American wives started showing up.

I went back to my apartment and spent the night in my apartment, a full night's sleep. The next morning I got up and the siege was still going on. I went up to the police and identified myself. They let me through and I actually went up to the embassy this time. They wanted me to go down to the Japanese embassy to act as liaison. I took a walkie-talkie and was in the Japanese embassy for the next 24 hours or so as this drama unfolded. What the terrorists were demanding was the release of prisoners as I recall. Eventually, the Malaysians agreed to their demands and the exchange was to take place at the airport where they were to get a plane and fly off.

I went off with our charge d'affaires, Bob Dillon, who was the DCM. I don't remember if Ambassador Underhill was out of the country or what, but in any case he was not there. I went off with Bob Dillon to the airport where the home affairs minister was on the phone with various heads of state around the world trying to persuade them to allow this plane to land. Eventually, we got Madame Bandaranaike to agree to let them refuel in Sri Lanka. Colonel Qadhafi agreed to let them land in Libya. Eventually we had our hostages released, and they left with the prisoners. I think the prisoners had been flown in from

Japan. They wanted Japanese prisoners. They flew in from Japan and the exchange took place at the airport.

Q: Your job as liaison at the Japanese embassy, were you talking to the ambassador or their DCM or their political consular ?

IFSHIN: I think basically their political consular, more often than not.

Q: He was finding out what was going on in Japan and then you would be able to pass that on to our own people?

IFSHIN: Right.

Q: Who was the consular officer?

IFSHIN: There was only one consul. It might have been Bob Stebbins. He was released eventually. There was also an embassy employee who was taken hostage. Everyone else was Malaysian, visa applicants of one sort or another.

Q: Anything else about that full assignment that struck you as an interesting description of either the foreign service life or how an embassy operates? Did you get the feel that we did understand what was going on in Malaysia, that we did have enough contacts?

IFSHIN: Yes, I think so. As I say, our interests tended to be economic rather than political. But I think we basically understood what was going on and we had a broad range of political contacts. More than I've seen in other places I've served, in fact.

Q: You're saying our interests are mainly economic and you're the officer liaising with the large Chinese community which is economically oriented, and I see that the next thing you're going to do is go to FSI for economic training. Is there any connection? [laughter]

IFSHIN: Well, I thought, this is making me a well-rounded foreign service officer. Again, this was lack of understanding of how the foreign service really worked and what the foreign service wanted me to do. But I thought I should know about economics and that would make me a better political officer.

Q: When did you leave KL then?

IFSHIN: As I recall it was December of 1975.

Q: So you did the January '76 FSI economic course?

IFSHIN: Yes, January to June. Six months.

Q: Do you remember that I was in that same class with you?

IFSHIN: No! I do not remember.

Q: I didn't either until I was looking at your scheduling. That's when I came out of Bangkok, same thing. Political officer, doing political parties stuff and realizing that what they're really arguing about is economic resources.

IFSHIN: Yes.

Q: I was thinking, "I better spruce up my economic background." I begged my DCM and he did some heavy shoveling for me and got me into that class. That was a beautiful place. It was the most stressful thing I'd been through in a long time.

IFSHIN: I did very well in that class...

Q: [laughter] I knew I didn't like you...

IFSHIN: I think this had to do with the fact that I had a science background and a math background.

Q: True.

IFSHIN: I remember everybody was in a terrible uproar about the math, and the math was all stuff I had done before, so it was all review for me. So I did well.

Q: But the individual courses came at a fair clip. In one week they would knock off a semester...

IFSHIN: Sure. It was intellectually challenging and fun in that way. I enjoyed that... and I think I got a lot out of it. I learned things which I think were important to know and have stood me in good stead over the years.

Q: I'm under the impression that when you talk about professions like the foreign service, that education or continuing courses are important to help the mind focus on things. Assignment after assignment after assignment gains a certain amount of skills, but...

IFSHIN: What I did not understand was that by doing economic and taking an economic assignment I was guaranteeing I would not be promoted. [laughter]

Q: [laughter] oops.

IFSHIN: I was condemning myself to language and grade. But that's just ignorance. I didn't get into the personnel system until toward the end of my career. That's when I learned all this stuff. [laughter]

Q: Some of us never learned it. Just do a quick description of the economic course. It was

six months long.

IFSHIN: Well, as you said, it included a number of courses and it's supposed to be equivalent to an undergraduate degree in economics of about 20-24 credits of economics. The math was basically at the differential calculus level so you could handle statistics. I found it interesting and challenging enough and quite useful. I think it gave me some intellectual rigor to back up some of my prejudices.

Q: As you said, one of the prices for getting into this course, and it was touted to me as a real plum, certainly my DCM turned up to get me into it, but the next thing you had to do was to take an economic assignment to pay your dues.

IFSHIN: Right. I don't know what the foreign service had in mind. I think the idea was that we would all become economic officers.

Q: Right.

IFSHIN: Of course, you and I did not.

Q: Were you coned in anything?

IFSHIN: A political cone. I wanted to be a political officer. I would maintain then and I would maintain now that the State Department or the foreign service should really have a reporting officer cone, and an admin cone. I guess they have moved to that to a certain extent. But that being a economic political officer shouldn't be that rigid a distinction. You should be able to move between both and do both if you're going to be a good political officer or a good economic officer.

Q: It's interesting that the term political economy is British, that's what in the early days of British education, in the 19th century, political economy did cover both what we now call economics and politics. It was the Americans and the Germans who split the two apart. And then later you'd have political cones and economic cones for the foreign service. So your reward for the six-month economic course was...

IFSHIN: I went off to Jakarta as an economic commercial officer. My portfolio was commodities. We had a petroleum officer, and that was perhaps the most important...

Q: Who was that at that time?

IFSHIN: There were two guys. I'm having trouble remembering their names... I think Larry Thompson was the second one. The name that is sort of on the tip of my brain is Gary, was the first name but I'm not sure that's right [Mark Johnson]. They both went on to have successful careers and occupy important positions, but I don't have their names on the tip of my tongue now. In any case, I did all the other minerals as well as timber and spices and basically commodities. That was an interesting portfolio because those were important parts of the Indonesian...

Q: Basic to the Indonesian economy at least as it entered into international trade. Who were the main traders on these economies? Was it the United States or Japan...

IFSHIN: Japan is their big maker and their big supplier although the United States in the petroleum sector is the big player. I guess it's Texaco and Chevron have a joint venture in Indonesia.

Q: Who was the head of the economic section at that time, do you remember?

IFSHIN: Henry Bardach was the head of it most of the time I was there.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

IFSHIN: Ed Masters succeeded David Newsom. David Newsom was there when I first got there and subsequently Ed Masters became ambassador. He came from Bangladesh where I forget whether he had been the DCM or the ambassador.

Q: I think he was the ambassador because he was DCM in Bangkok at the time I was there in '75.

IFSHIN: Yes I think he had been DCM in Bangladesh as well, which always struck me as strange that he would go from DCM in Bangladesh to ambassador in Indonesia, which I think of as a more important country. But of course, in Bangladesh we do have a big complicated embassy there with a big aid mission. Anyway, I thought he was DCM, but it might have been that he was ambassador.

Q: Given all the to-ing and fro-ing in U.S. – Indonesian relations, what did the embassy look like at that time?

IFSHIN: There was a large component of other agency personnel.

Q: Was there a big AID component there?

IFSHIN: Yes, there was always a big AID mission as well, yes.

Q: By this time there was also refugee issues out of Saigon.

IFSHIN: I didn't get involved in that terribly much, but I guess there were.

Q: As a commodities officer, did you get to travel around the islands a lot?

IFSHIN: Yes, I did. In fact a peculiar kind of expertise developed by coincidence. I became our man in Irian Jaya. Freeport Minerals had their big copper gold mine in Irian Jaya. I'm not sure if you are familiar with it. It's a fascinating mine. It was developed... The mineral deposit was discovered pre-World War II, but there was absolutely no way

to access it. The mine was built largely by Bechtel. It was really a product of Vietnam era technology because they used helicopters to bring in the large earthmoving equipment so they could start to build roads and slurry lines to access this mine. But it's an enormously rich mine in the middle of the jungle and mountains of Irian Jaya. I got about 2 or 3 trips there to see the mine and to visit an oil camp that was in another part of Irian Jaya. So I had developed a sort of familiarity with Irian Jaya. And the ambassador had scheduled a trip out there when they were suddenly troubled with the OPM, Organisasi Papua Merdeka, which is still around. This is the Popoem Freedom Movement. So the Indonesian authorities said the ambassador couldn't go. And he said we have to have an American go out there and check on the well-being of our American- (End of tape)

Q: Good Morning, it's the third of April now. We're getting back to talking with Stan Ifshin. Stan is there anything we want to add to earlier parts of our conversation so far?

IFSHIN: Well, in our last session, a few names had temporarily escaped me and I just want to fill in with those. You had asked at one point for the name of the petroleum officer in Jakarta. The beginning of the time I was there it was Mark Johnson, and he was succeeded by Larry Thompson. So those were the two petroleum officers during my tour of duty in Jakarta. We had also discussed the head of the language school in Tai Chung, and I described him and couldn't think of his name at the moment. It was George Beasley of course, and I just wanted to fill in with that. There are other names, but those two popped into my head while I was shaving or brushing my teeth or other things during this past week.

Q: Describe again, is it an economic commercial section in Jakarta?

IFSHIN: That's correct.

Q: It's combined.

IFSHIN: Yes. At least then it was.

Q: So how many... Were they all state people or were there some commerce people at that time?

IFSHIN: There were no commerce people. This was before commerce took over the foreign commercial service, or established the foreign commercial service. As a matter of fact, when I first arrived, the head of the section was Erland Higgenbotham, who subsequently headed the Foreign Commercial Service when it was transferred to Commerce, but at that time he was a State Department Foreign Service officer, as he was for the bulk of his career.

Q: And how big was the economic section at the time?

IFSHIN: It was quite large.

Q: This is what, the mid to late '70s.

IFSHIN: Yes, it was really quite large. I can't really give you the exact number, but it was like 7 or 8 Americans, officers, 2 American secretaries, as I recall, and a number of locals of course.

Q: Secretaries, what are those? [laughter]

IFSHIN: [laughter] Well, foreign service secretaries... That's probably something that perhaps I could comment on. This is only my second tour to Jakarta, I'm ignoring Vietnam. But my second overseas tour. I had previously been in Kuala Lumpur where we just had outstanding foreign service secretary after outstanding foreign service secretary in the political section. It was amazing the caliber of people we were able to attract in those days. I'm not putting down the people nowadays - I don't know enough about them. But they were really outstanding.

Q: I found it interesting, I think we mentioned it before... Chuck Cross has just done his memoirs, and in his introduction section he lists all the foreign service secretaries he ever worked for with a special thanks to them because they did play an important role in all of our lives.

IFSHIN: Yes, and they were really first class, top notch people. Incidentally, Chuck Cross figures in my story, but that's later down the road.

Q: A couple of quick ones... economic section vis-à-vis political section size wise...

IFSHIN: The political section was much smaller. There were four officers in the political sections.

Q: So one of the main... that's where we are representing one of the main interests the United States had at that time was an economic commercial interest in Indonesia.

IFSHIN: Yes, I think that's true. Of course there were other agencies, many of them doing what should have been political reporting, or at least one of them doing what should have been political reporting, as well as an important military relationship and a large aid mission. In addition to that, on the non-official side, you had a curious, I shouldn't say curious... a somewhat unique... American oil companies had hired a former military attaché, who had a very close relationship with a number of the Indonesian officials. This was an important unofficial relationship. So the embassy wasn't the only American representation in Jakarta at that time, and of course the oil industry was extremely important to American oil interests. (End of tape)

Q: You were discussing some of your travels around Indonesia to mines. You were just getting into a story about the ambassador's trip.

IFSHIN: Right, well, the ambassador's trip was canceled or the Indonesians withdrew the authority for him to go.

Q: How did they control that?

IFSHIN: For security reasons. I'm not precisely sure of what the formalities were in terms of our travel. There's another incident in one of my first trips to Irianjya. The reason I hesitate calling it Irianjya is the name is in flux. I think the Indonesians are now calling it West Papua. The name has changed over the years. This is the Indonesian half of Papua New Guinea, which only became part of Indonesia in the late '60s when the Dutch gave it up after an alleged referendum supervised by the United Nations. In any case, that was before my time and I don't really know all that much about that.

It was and remains a sensitive area. The very first time I went there, I went there with the U.S. DAO in the DAO plane. We had first flown to Bali and then to Darwin, Australia, then to Marouke, Indonesia. Marouke is just about the easternmost city in Indonesia in Irianjya. When we arrived there the security authorities apparently had not been informed that we were coming, although we had informed the foreign ministry, perhaps somewhat late, that we had filed our flight plans and we thought we were ok. We were not, I shouldn't say detained, because we were never custody, but we had a long interview with the security people and we never really got to see very much of Marouke because they were busy interrogating us and finding out what we were doing out there. So that illustrates the sensitivities that they had about the area. In any case, the ambassador had a scheduled trip.

Q: This is about when... this trip?

IFSHIN: I can't give you an exact date. This would have been during the second half of my tour in Indonesia which would have been I suppose '78, around '78. The ambassador had this trip scheduled, and for security reasons the authorities informed him that no he couldn't go. He accepted that, but said that an American consular official visit to ensure the safety of the American citizens in Irian Jaya, and although I was part of the economic/commercial section, I had an exequatur.

This is a sidebar here... I'd never gotten consular training. When I joined the foreign service, as is typical after your A100 course, you went through the consular course. But because I'd been assigned to Vietnam, I was sent off for AID orientation, and have never had consular training in my foreign service career, although subsequently I have been a consular officer on many occasions.

But that was the first time. I had an exequatur. It's a very nice document by the way, if you've never had one. I don't know what I did with it.

Q: I got mine in Thai.

IFSHIN: So I went out there and met with Americans on several occasions.

Q: What kind of Americans were out there?

IFSHIN: We had the Freeport Indonesia Mines, which we discussed earlier, it's a copper gold mine. At least in those days there were still American nationals, a moderate number of them, I really couldn't tell you if there were 10 or 20. But it was something on that order of magnitude. They had, in what was called the Bird's Head Peninsula in Sorong, in Irienyja, there was an oil camp where they were developing and subsequently successful in bringing an oil field on line. I couldn't tell you exactly how many Americans, but there were perhaps double digit Americans there as well. And then, and this is the people we were most interested in talking to, there were missionaries who in fact were in close contact with Irieneese and quite well informed about the feelings of the people in Irian Jaya. I met with and talked to a large number of them. They represented various groups. The people who were doing the Bible translation, it's a summer institute of linguistics. They're in a number of countries.

Q: So were there about 50 to 100 missionaries out there?

IFSHIN: Yes, you say 50 to 100, that's a wide range, but I think there probably are at least that many.

In any case that was the trip and I came back and wrote up what was going on. There had been a couple of instances of violence on the part of the Organisasi Papua Merdeka. Nothing really large scale and it certainly didn't threaten the American citizens in Irian Jaya at that time. Nor did it pose a threat to the province, but it was an indicator of the latent unhappiness of at least part of the population within Indonesia with the Indonesia authorities. That unhappiness continues as you know down to the present day where Irian Jaya remains an area of instability.

Q: When you made this trip were you using the defense attaché's airplane or commercial?

IFSHIN: As I recall that was commercial. I flew out to Biak, which is a large island off the coast of Irian Jaya, which has a big airport because it was part of KLM's Around the World flight back in the colonial days. They had built large facilities in Biak. Jayapura was the capital, and so basically I got around to a number of areas in Irian Jaya, covered the province fairly significantly. Then in the course of... Basically the end of that story unless you have some other questions.

Q: Just a few details. You take a flight in, you arrive. What do you use for ground transportation? Do you hire a taxi? Does somebody from the mine come to meet you?

IFSHIN: When I arrived at the mine, I may very well have used mining company transportation. I know on some of my trips I was met by helicopter. First I took the company plane into the base camp and then a helicopter up to the mine. Other times there

was ground transportation laid on by the company. The same thing with regard to the oil field where they laid on the transportation.

Q: So the American companies were interested in having the embassy know what was going on, see the environment that they were in.

IFSHIN: In this particular instance, yes. I say in this particular instance because I wanted to make... this is a different story in a different industry, the timber industry. There were two large American companies, and I don't want to go into details as to which one had which attitude. Weyerhaeuser and Georgia Pacific both had investments in Indonesia and one maintained fairly close relations with the embassy and kept us very well informed, and the other did not. And I was responsible for this area.

On one occasion I mentioned that, gee we really didn't hear a lot from that company and they didn't talk to us all that much, and they said that was a deliberate worldwide policy. That they try to avoid identification or entanglement with the American embassy and American officials, that they tried to do things on their own. In many ways, this particular firm seemed to be quite successful in operating in Indonesia. They had an ethnic Chinese partner who I guess steered them through the difficulties of Indonesia. He subsequently, and he's still around, that was 25 years ago, and he's still around but he's in trouble because he was very much identified with Suharto and was one of the people who were very close to Suharto.

Q: So actually American businesses overseas have a variety of policies about associating with the embassy or asking the embassy for help.

IFSHIN: They sure do. I think most of them, when they get in trouble, or when they have trouble, try to see if the embassy can help them out and maintain good relations, but at least some maintain a distance from the embassy as a deliberate policy.

Q: Do you recall at this time, whether there was an American Chamber of Commerce?

IFSHIN: Oh yes, there was.

Q: How big was it?

IFSHIN: It was significant. Again, it tends to be dominated by the oil companies and the oil service companies because that's overwhelmingly the American investment in Indonesia. But there were significant other extractive industries, and that's the area I was working in, extractive industries, basically commodities.

Q: You're the commodities officer at this time, weren't there a whole series of required annual reports?

IFSHIN: Oh there sure are. Yes. [laughter]

Q: [laughter]

IFSHIN: That was a major feature.

Q: I can't remember what the names were.

IFSHIN: I can't remember what they were.

Q: But there was a long list, very required, extensive reports for Commerce and State.

IFSHIN: For Commerce, and the Bureau of Mines, and for the U.S. Geological Service. We were reporting to a whole series of different agencies. Again, if I can relate an incident. We had a visit from an inspection group.

Q: Foreign service inspector?

IFSHIN: Right. A member of the group was Burt Levin who I had known in Taiwan. When I had been a language student, he had been in the embassy as a member of the political section. So I got together with Burt for dinner or something to talk, and he was telling me, well, things are really changing in Washington and we don't want to know about every sparrow that falls. Now we have to do more analytical type of reporting, and the people on the seventh floor don't have time to read all these trivial... The U.S. used to have to know about everything that was going on everywhere, but that's not the way things are anymore and we have to get away from that. I don't what particular thing had happened in Washington that this was the line. I kept making the point that we don't just write, at least in my job, for the seventh floor, certainly, and there are lots of other agencies in Washington and a lot of our reporting is aimed at them. And to the extent that we don't do it, they'll going to find other ways to get it done.

Which I think is what happened over the years, we withdrew from certain things, and they got their own people out to do it. I think that's sad in many ways. I remember when I joined the foreign service, we used to make a big deal about it not being the foreign service of the State Department, but it being the foreign service of the United States. That was a part of our official designation and this is what we were. We weren't just reporting for the State Department, we were reporting for the U.S. government. I think it's sad that over the years, we've neglected a lot of these functions, or that they got the impression that we were neglecting them, and subsequently we were doing less and less of that.

Q: It sounds like it was illustrated by the very commodities that you had, because you are reporting to the Bureau of Mines, and sucking up everything you can about the situation in Indonesia, not just for the State Department but for all the other agencies.

IFSHIN: That's precisely what was going on. Although I'd had the economic courses and I felt I wasn't totally uninformed about these areas and unable to report. I was far from an expert on mining or on geology. But it was interesting. I remember Shell was doing extensive surveys in Sumatra where there are apparently enormous coal deposits. But

they are very poor quality coal deposits. I remember discussing it with them as they were doing it, and are they going to go ahead, are they going to proceed with development, etc. And their bottom line at the end of this was, yes, there is a coal mine in Sumatra, but not now. At some point, the price of coal, and the state of our technology, is going to get to a certain stage where it's going to be economical to develop this mine, but it's not today. And it's not in the immediate future. They abandoned the project then. I don't know whether anyone's picked it up in the years since. It was an interesting lesson.

If you remember, this is about the time of the Club of Rome and the stuff about limits, and the conventional wisdom is that we're running out of everything. As someone who knew a little bit about economics and was talking to these people, I understood that we weren't running out of anything. It was a question of price, determining the market, where it became feasible to develop a lot of these mineral deposits, for example. The minerals were there. The prices were too low at that time to develop them, but we weren't going to run out of them. At some point, the price would increase to a stage where it was economically feasible or economically desirable to develop that particular mineral deposit.

Q: In your job as the commodity officer, did you liaise with the Indonesian government or offices?

IFSHIN: Oh, yes, I was...

Q: Was your understanding of their situation better than their understanding of their situation?

IFSHIN: I think frequently it was. You had some very sophisticated people. First of all, on the oil side, of course, they had a very developed... now I didn't really liaise with them, although there was a lot of the same people where people were in the bureau of mines and their bureau of mines, and petroleum... I think were in the same ministry. But for example, the people working in the area of nickel, where Indonesia is a significant producer. Excuse me, I meant tin, not nickel, tin. Indonesia is a significant producer second only to Malaysia and the people in that area tended to be very sophisticated and had a good idea of the market and what was going on. Perhaps not so much the mining aspect as the marketing aspect of the industry, but they were sophisticated and understood. And some of the other areas where Indonesia was a potential player but was not yet into it, they were perhaps less informed. But we kept very close track of mineral development in Indonesia.

I remember a French company, I can't remember the name, took over a significant American equipment manufacturer, and the Indonesia representative of the French company used to come in and see me and talk to me all the time. I would talk to him, and after a while I would say, "well, you're really representing the competition." But he'd say, "No, no, we have this American company" and I'd say, "that's why I'm talking to you, but I feel it's a little awkward here." He'd say, "But the French embassy doesn't know anything. You guys have all the information." In any case, the equipment sellers would

come in and talk to us to see where development was going and what was happening and what was the likely future...

Q: You just said something that I thought was very interesting and that follows my own experience, that even foreign businessmen would come over to the American embassy to find out what's going on. Why wouldn't the French embassy or German embassy know as much, was it a staffing issue?

IFSHIN: I think largely it's probably the size of the embassy, and I think they tend to be more I think traditional in their approach to these issues. Whereas we sort of had an interest in everything and wanted to know everything, and basically treated much of this information of course as completely unclassified, so we had all of these reports that we prepared that were just lining shelves so that people could just come over and pick them up. I don't think any other embassy was doing anything like that or anything near that. So if you wanted information, the American embassy was the place to come by and get it from.

Q: Now, your tour in Jakarta was coming to an end. Anything else about the embassy at that time or the environment you were in?

IFSHIN: No, I really can't remember anything particularly exciting happening at that particular time. Indonesia is a fascinating country. I felt that then, and feel it now, it's really terribly interesting. Jakarta at that time was not the most comfortable of cities. I understand it improved considerably in the years after I left. I remember one incident where, I don't remember how it developed, but one evening I was out and there was a traffic accident that involved some non-official Americans, I think American teenagers, and as is often the case in these kinds of countries, a crowd developed and there was a certain amount of tension in the air. I remember grabbing these kids and getting them into police custody. That's just an incident of something that happened. It kind of reminds me of my Peace Corps days where we were under instructions that if we were ever involved in an accident in a rural area of the Philippines, we were not to stop. If there was no one around we were to stop to offer assistance, but if there were people around we were not to stop but proceed to the nearest police check point and turn ourselves in there, because there was a certain amount of danger to being caught in those circumstances. I certainly felt at that time [in Jakarta] that those kids were in danger or potentially in danger. But everything worked out okay in that particular instance. I don't really remember that much about it, I just remember that it happened.

Q: Did you find that the embassy was receiving a number of visitors, congressional or otherwise, in your area?

IFSHIN: No. Not particularly, not at that time, not in our area. There wasn't that much of that going on.

Q: Now, your next assignment, from '78 to '80, is back in Washington. How did you go about getting that assignment, or did it fall out of the air?

IFSHIN: Well, no, remember, I had been on that job...

Q: You had open bidding at that time...

IFSHIN: Yes, as I recall, we had open bidding, and I wanted to go back to Washington. I don't recall where this was on my list of desirable jobs, but it worked out very well for me. I was assigned to INR as a China analyst. Before returning to Washington, I got a familiarization trip to China, this is '78, and I went to Hong Kong and got various types of briefings and meetings there. From Hong Kong, I took the train up to Canton and flew from Canton to Beijing, where I was met by the embassy. Now the embassy had a big delegation, as I recall the White House Science Advisor was heading a big delegation...

Q: Yes, Frank Press.

IFSHIN: Yes, Frank Press.

Q: I was in that delegation. [laughter]

IFSHIN: Oh, were you in that delegation? In any case, it worked out. It was interesting for me in the sense that the embassy was all tied up in this delegation and its care and feeding but I got included in their banquets, etc., and so it opened some doors for me and at the same time it left me free to do a lot of things on my own.

Q: Now, you are talking about your orientation trip between Indonesia and Washington?

IFSHIN: That's right.

Q: The one I'm thinking about was right after normalization.

IFSHIN: No, this was before normalization. This was still an embassy office; the liaison office was rather modestly staffed at that time. They didn't have a lot of personnel, so having a relatively large delegation meant that they were really kind of tied up and didn't have really all that much time for me. So I was on my own a lot of the time in Beijing, as well as elsewhere in China, obviously. This was a fascinating time in China, things were opening up, and I remember I'd go out to a restaurant, for example, and be seated at a table with a bunch of Chinese. These were modest restaurants. So I would be conversing to the extent that I could, I was somewhat out of practice with Chinese, but it was coming back and I was trying to use my Chinese. I would be conversing, nothing all that exciting with people, but people were talking with me. I even had people stop me on the street and want to practice English, but learning I spoke Chinese we'd go back and forth in the two languages and it was all very interesting. I'd rush into the embassy the next morning, and I'd say, do you know what happened? I did dot, dot, x, y, and z and this happened, and the people would say, oh, yes, they just started doing that about a month ago, where they actually stopped isolating us in a room by ourselves and letting us sit with the other people in the restaurant. The liaison office people were not astonished by what to me was

all very new, and it was new, and it was among the first times that it happened, but it wasn't the first time. So it was very interesting, China was clearly changing. In any case, after Beijing, I went down to Huangzhou and Nanjing where I visited various factories and schools.

Q: All on your own.

IFSHIN: Yes, I was traveling on my own. This was arranged through the Chinese authorities, so I was met in every location with sometimes an official party. I remember visiting a factory with a group of other people, I don't even remember who they were, but they were other foreigners. And then we went to Shanghai and from Shanghai I flew to Tokyo and off to Washington where I assumed my job as a China analyst in intelligence and research. And it was a fascinating time to be working on China because there was so much ferment going on at that time. The Chinese media in particular were opening up and we were reading things that were in fact news. It wasn't just a list of who had visited what cities and pronounced things good, or bad as the case may be, and it wasn't just a matter of propaganda diatribes. It was an actual discussion of issues and things being written that were fairly astonishing at the time. We were all kind of, what's going on in China?

Q: It was a question that could in fact be answered.

IFSHIN: We were convinced at the time, I remember, that there was a secret democrat that somehow-

Q: [laughter] One of theirs or one of ours?

IFSHIN: No, no, it was [said] that there was somebody who was interested in opening up the windows and letting some breezes blow through the... And subsequently, from what we know, I would say Hu Yao Bang, who at this point, I forget whether he was general secretary of the party at this point or became general secretary of the party subsequently, but certainly from what we know about Hu Yao Bang, he was a liberal in our terms. I always hate those terms, liberal and left and right, when we're discussing these countries because they're fairly meaningless, because we tend to call people we don't like "conservatives" and people we do "liberals" and those terms mean nothing in terms of actual policies and what they stand for. But it was an exciting time in China. Back in Washington, we were supposed to have four China analysts at that time...

Q: Do you recall who you replaced?

IFSHIN: I can't recall if I replaced Doug Spelman or whether Doug Spelman was there. We never had all four, we never filled all four slots during the time I was there, or we never filled them with four State Department officers. During the time I was there, sort of the constant was Carol Hamrin. Carol has been a China analyst for the INR for a long time. I don't know how many years she'd been there. She was certainly a young woman at the time. I don't know how much experience she'd had. She had a Ph.D. in China

studies and was very well plugged in and she was there. Doug Spelman, I can't remember whether he was there or subsequently left before I arrived. But I remember seeing Doug and meeting Doug and working with him to a certain extent. At one point, Lilian Harris, and I don't know what's happened to Lilian, but...

Q: She moved on to Middle East things.

IFSHIN: Right. But Lilian joined us as a China analyst. That was after I'd already been there for a while. And then we had various people who we'd borrow. I remember somebody from the Congressional Research Service came over and worked with us for a while. Someone from FBIS, one of the FBIS analysts, came over and worked with us for a while. That said, I'd say that we had a very strong analytical team in INR, and while there were many, many people in the community working on China, some of them were outstanding, very knowledgeable, very bright, very good in what they did, I thought INR stood up very well, because we were all kind of doing everything, so we tended to be very well-informed across a broad spectrum of issues. Where, I think for example in CIA, and particularly in DIA, people tend to be more specialized and don't get the kind of broad gauge familiarity with issues in a country like China that you do working in INR. In any case, during that particular period, I thought that INR was doing the best analysis on China of any of the various intelligence agencies.

Q: One of the stereotypes that I've always heard... the difference between a job at the embassy or a job at the desk in INR, is that the INR analyst can sit back and has a much more leisurely pace...

IFSHIN: In terms of China, that's absolute nonsense. Again, this is the same thing that I had always heard, that when you were writing something at length, that no one was going to read it beyond the summary, well, maybe the guy in INR would read it because he has time. Well, the guy in INR has no time. He's being inundated with so much, on China at least, he's got so much to read in terms of what is coming in from CIA, from other agencies, from the unclassified traffic. And as I said, what was both FBIS and academic writing about China was being published at that time was extremely interesting in the Chinese press, especially if you were able to read it informed by the classified reporting which we had available to us.

Yesterday, which is leaping ahead, but I was listening to a program about this U.S. plane that had been landed in Hainan island yesterday, and somebody made the comment that 70% of our intelligence about China comes from these kinds of intercepts. That's nonsense. I don't know what the percentages would be and I don't think anyone knows, and it depends on what you mean by intelligence and how you are discussing it, but 70% or even 90% of our intelligence is unclassified. If you know how to read the unclassified stuff and if you have all the classified stuff to give you the background and help shape it, it really helps opens up some new light on what is being published in the papers and what they are saying in unclassified areas. But that's neither here nor there.

Q: But that's important. Basically, the classified sets up a framework which...

IFSHIN: Absolutely, I'm not saying the classified stuff is not valuable, and when I say 70%, maybe I'm just talking about volume and not importance, but the numbers get very... Anyway I just heard that and reacted to it last night. Getting back to my tour in INR, it was a fascinating time to be working on China, and a tremendously interesting assignment. One of the things I got involved in, this was the time of the China-Vietnam war. I see you are trying to recall what happened there.

Q: It was January, 1979.

IFSHIN: Yes. It wasn't the most important fighting that ever took place, but it was an interesting time for us. In INR, in fact, the State Department never set up a task force and never did anything to follow this as we often do for international crises, but we set up one within our own office. I remember it was basically myself, Rafael Ungerich, who was a Vietnam analyst at the time, who subsequently has passed away, and Tim Hamilton who was the Thai analyst at the time. The three of us set up a 24-hour watch, we were all working 16 hours a day at that time, but we made sure somebody was on duty around the clock for the few weeks that this lasted.

Q: The stereotype of that action is that the Vietnamese used the national guard, they didn't even bring out the army, and they gave the Chinese a very difficult time.

IFSHIN: Well, the buildup, there was a long period before the actual fighting occurred, we were doing a lot of fighting at that time, and I think I was among the very first people to say that the Chinese were going to go ahead and do something significant, because I thought it was obvious that governments don't move this amount of money and equipment around without intending to use it, it's very costly to be moving this. It seemed to me that they were going to do something.

Q: Do you have a recollection of the time line vis-à-vis Deng Xiao Ping's trip to the United States?

IFSHIN: Oh, yes, well, he had come, and I think exploited his trip. I don't think he told us a darned thing about what their plans were, but he made it look like he had gotten American agreement. I think that's... Well, obviously he had bigger fish to fry in the U.S.-China relationship than making it look like we were supporting his efforts in Vietnam, but I think that was one of the additional benefits he saw. Clearly, a very clever man.

Q: But that buildup that you are watching, does that predate his trip?

IFSHIN: I believe it is concurrent. The buildup started and continued during his trip and after his trip. Of course, the actual fighting took place and this was a matter of... I think most people feel that the Vietnamese had the better of the fighting, although it was taking place on Vietnamese territory, of course the Chinese were the invaders. Then and maybe stubbornly, I've taken a somewhat different view of it... at the time the Chinese were

saying they were teaching Vietnam a lesson. And my point of view was always that the lesson was not that we could wipe the floor with you, but we're on your border, we're not going to go home, and you've got to live with us. And that means you have to take account of what we want. I think that was the lesson and I think the Chinese delivered the lesson. But other people felt that the Chinese got their eyes blackened and Vietnam had sent them home with their tail between their legs. Again, I never saw it that way.

Q: It was a costly venture for the Chinese. They had significant losses.

IFSHIN: Oh, sure, I think in the fighting the Vietnamese enjoyed more success than the Chinese did. The Chinese learned a lot about their inadequacies, and what they didn't have in the way of military strength.

Q: Can you give us a sense of how projects in INR were tasked at that time? When you arrived in the morning, did you know what you were doing, or you were already working on something, or were there rush projects? The desk calls up and says we want a study on...

IFSHIN: Well, they were always pressing us to do more in terms of longer studies, analytical studies. When I say they, I mean our superiors. Particularly, now there was a change in personnel which involves events. Shortly after I first joined the office, David Dean became head of the Asian analytical area. David subsequently got very involved during the time of normalization, with the process of normalization, and emerged as the first head of the American institute in Taiwan's Washington office, when the dust finally settled in that area. Bob Drexler replaced him. I can't remember whether it was David and Bob or mostly Bob who was always anxious for us to do longer pieces analyzing what was happening in China studies. But at the time, we, the China analysts, the shifting cast of characters with Carol and myself being the constants through most of this period, did a lot of short pieces which went into the sort of daily product that was being published for the secretary. We had pieces on a daily basis, sometimes two or three pieces.

Q: Okay, there was a daily INR report that goes up to the seventh floor..

IFSHIN: The secretary, right.

Q: And INR/EAP was getting a fairly constant placement in this...

IFSHIN: Yes, normally, the size of this report varied, let's say a minimum of five articles or as much as twelve or even larger than that. These are short, one paragraph, type summary items, just highlighting important event. But of that, every day there would be one, two, or three China items. It was just a very interesting and important time in China where every day things were happening, or we were learning of things every day. There was a constant debate within China about policy, and about political parameters, opening up of the system, changing of the system. And then we were always trying to see what was happening on the personnel side of China, although that tended to be fairly opaque

and remains fairly opaque. We were always convinced that there was a secret democrat and we were always debating who it was. At times, I think we were way off.

Q: So in some cases, you are deciding what you are writing on, say you need something for the secretary's morning briefing. Things are coming down from David Dean or from above. Is the desk asking for things out from INR?

IFSHIN: I don't remember ever being tasked by the desk. We were doing a daily briefing, of course, of SI material for the desk, and had fairly close contact with them. They always got the China items that we prepared for the secretary's briefing. I don't think people get the whole briefing, or that they are routinely circulated to the desk, but the specific items dealing with their country would be given to a country desk. I can't remember precisely what the procedures were then. During the Chinese buildup on the Vietnamese border and the subsequent fighting, I remember we did several oral briefings for a variety of individuals including then David Newsom who was Under Secretary for Political Affairs, and Dick Holbrook who was the EAP assistant secretary. These were at their request.

Q: You had arrived in INR summer of '78. And December 15, '78, Carter announces that he's going to recognize Beijing. What were you doing on the 16th of December? Does this pick up the pace significantly?

IFSHIN: No, I don't think so. David Dean disappeared at that point, or shortly thereafter, and got very involved in the mechanics of what was going on. I don't remember it really changing things at the working level all that much. We continued doing what we had been doing. Obviously we were doing a lot of sort of reaction reporting and what is going on and how various people are reacting to this change.

Q: The change in diplomatic recognition, the derecognition of Taiwan and the recognition of Beijing, would put Taiwan in an area that raised its profile for us. What was going on there? Were you also doing background pieces on Taiwan?

IFSHIN: Yes, we were.

Q: And the impact there and how they looked at it...?

IFSHIN: Yes.

Q: What were some of the trends you were seeing out of Taiwan?

IFSHIN: Of course, the initial reaction was one of tremendous dismay, and then there was some violence, with demonstrations in front of the American embassy. But I guess they came to terms with it. The handwriting had been on the wall, and the fact that we were going to establish normal diplomatic ties with China had certainly been in the cards with Nixon's opening in 1972. In fact, I always felt that Carter- Brzezinski handled it in an unnecessarily clandestine type manner. It seems to me that there was a tremendous

concern about the Taiwan lobby, or the China lobby as it was still called then. I think that concern was probably misplaced. It faded and there was generally widespread acceptance in the U.S. political circles that it made sense to establish diplomatic ties with China. In fact, controversy did emerge, because I think what the administration had in mind for AIT, the American Institute in Taiwan, and I'm not sure that name existed at the time, but for that institution that there would be a fairly minor operation that only concerned with conducting trade and other minor sort of relations. Congress, in drafting the Taiwan Relations Act, played kind of a useful role in outlining a much more developed and larger relationship. I know, typically we don't like to credit the Congress with any kind of useful role, but in this case I think they did in fact play a useful role, and what emerged with AIT was a much better instrument for U.S. policy.

Q: Now, INR is reporting on normalization... My impression is that there are a fair amount of congressional trips and cabinet level trips that go over. Are you doing any support of those? Background papers, or there was a standard background paper already, the Chinese economy is...

IFSHIN: I think that tended to be fairly standard stuff. A lot of, for example, biographical reporting came out of CIA, so that we weren't all that involved. The desk was extremely busy at the time, and sometimes I suppose would levy a requirement on us and ask us for assistance in putting something together. I don't remember being all that involved in preparing for the trips. Though, you are quite right, there was an enormous volume of them.

Q: One of the things that happens in late '79 in Vietnam is the Kaohsiung incident, which I presume is Taiwan processing its new relationship.

IFSHIN: In part, but although obviously there were domestic pressures there.

Q: Right. Did INR get involved in any of that? Summarizing and reporting?

IFSHIN: I'm sure that we did, but I honestly don't recall a great deal about it. We didn't have a great deal of Taiwan expertise, which is kind of strange when you think that's where we had our embassy all those years and people serving. I think there was a general feeling that we knew Taiwan and we didn't know China. That often seems to be the case... the more open a country is, the less a feeling that we are depending on intelligence to tell us about that country. Although, we are often more ignorant than we think.

Q: Of course, that's INR's forte, all the intelligence from all the other agencies is coming to one place in the State Department that's INR, so you are looking at all sorts of descriptions of things and summarizing that for the politically active.

IFSHIN: Precisely. There is an enormous volume of stuff that comes in.

Q: So this can be more than a 9 to 5 [job].

IFSHIN: Oh, yes, this was a very involved, very interesting job. And you can always take home unclassified stuff with you and try to do some reading at home and stay abreast in that way. But the image of the relaxed INR officer having time to sit back and read, at least as it applies to China, was a totally false image. Maybe if you were working on, let's see, what would be a good country to be working on? Some obscure country where we don't have to do a whole lot of reporting, and you have time to read all the available material to read on it. But that was not true about China.

Q: Anything else that would have come out in that timeframe of normalization?

IFSHIN: I can't recall a whole lot. There were a lot of interesting meetings, intelligence community where we would all sit around and try to figure out what was going on...

Q: So there were a number of sessions where you would go over to the agency and talk to their guys...

IFSHIN: The agency, and I remember at least one trip over to NSA as well.

Q: You guys were busy, but did you get an opportunity to go to academic conferences, or...

IFSHIN: Yes, the Association of Asian Studies annual convention, in New York, as well as events in Washington. We went around to the various sessions and listened. It was all very useful, very worthwhile. I'm leaping ahead of myself. I did a tour in personnel at one time and I'm going to get into this a little bit more. I always used to advise people to look hard at INR jobs, which are always difficult to fill, and nobody bids on them, at least that was the case then, I assume it's still the case... I think they can be extremely worthwhile and you could learn an awful lot on them. I've seen a lot of fairly senior people, or people, particularly on the political side, who in my opinion didn't fully understand intelligence and what it really was and wasn't.

I remember when we were briefing, I mentioned during the Vietnam-China clash period we briefed various high level officers. We'd always go through this is what happened, and they moved 70 planes, and they had this capacity, and 700,000 men in these various locations and they had this and they had this kind of support... I remembered that the questions always boiled down to intentions. What are the Chinese intending? I was always willing to give people my opinion, but I always wondered if they understood that that was exactly what I was doing, giving an opinion at that time. This was not based on any special knowledge. Their opinion was just as good as mine. If they wanted my opinion I was willing to advance it, but I had no direct line to the Chinese authorities. They weren't sending me a missive saying, well, we did this because we intend to do that. I was guessing as to what the intentions were, or I was analyzing and trying to figure out what the intentions were. But, having presented the information to them, presumably they were as well placed as I was to figure out the intentions.

Q: The point is, it's worthwhile to have an understanding of the intelligence that's

coming in, its capabilities and what it's able to do for you because at some time in your career as an action officer you're going to have to move on the basis of that intelligence.

IFSHIN: Precisely. And it's also important to understand the limitations of intelligence and how often we are operating in a murky situation and intelligence doesn't tell us what we need to know. We have to figure that out. I don't know if you have any other questions, but just preceding, the other interesting thing about the INR job is that coming out of that job I had very good contacts in the China area across a broad spectrum of persons and there was a great deal of interest in me for my next job, which is a fairly unique situation at that time. And I remember that originally I had wanted to bid on Mark Pratt's job, that is the job of the general affairs political section chief in Taipei, and Mark extended [his tour], so I thought, well, I'm not going to go after that job.

Then I was approached by Chas Freeman. I guess he was the director of the desk, and he wanted me to bid on a political section chief job on the desk. So I went to personnel to talk to them about bidding on that job, and I said, well, you know, the desk has talked to me about this and they want me to bid on this job and it sounds like it would be a good job. And they said, yes, well, except that it doesn't exist. I said, what? And they said, well, they're trying to create it and they'll probably be successful, but at this time, there is no job so there's nothing for you to bid on. I guess the reason I went to see them is that I'd tried to enter a bid and had not been successful, and that's why because the job was not in the system yet.

Q: Well, that's funny because I thought Gerry Ogden was sitting at that job. Or Gerry was his deputy at that time.

IFSHIN: I guess, well, in any case, this was a new job that did not exist, and at this point I got very upset and said, well, here I had this job and I let that go, and then I had that job, and the job I really wanted was Mark Pratt's job and now he's extended, and now you're telling me this job doesn't even exist. And they said, well, wait a second, we can give you Mark Pratt's job, we just have to figure out what we're going to do with you for a year. I said, oh, I can still bid on Mark Pratt's job? They said, well, it's a language job and it's still listed and you can bid on it. Ok, what are we going to do with you for a year? There were several possibilities, and then they mentioned they had a vacancy for the commercial officer position in Taipei. I said, oh, I have an economic background, I did economic commercial work. So I can go to Taipei and do that job.

So that's what I did, I went off to Taipei for a year as the commercial officer which was again a very interesting job. It was a new experience for me. There was a trade center there and there were two commerce department officers there and I was the State Department officer, and of course we were all AIT at that point, we'd resigned from our various agencies...

Q: Well, explain that.

IFSHIN: The procedure at the time, you submitted a letter of resignation and it was

understood that you would come back to your agency. It was interesting because we continued to earn seniority, we continued to have money paid into our pension fund, so this resignation was a strange one in many ways, and I'm not sure of what the legalities of it were. But in essence, they withdrew your diplomatic passport and gave you a so-called green passport, a normal tourist, civilian type non-governmental passport.

Q: My understanding was that the executive branch's version of the Taiwan Relations Act was done by a few lawyers in a back room to basically accomplish this. Take foreign service officers who had presidential commissions. Suddenly wash them, they resign from the foreign service, they happened to be picked up by this contractor, called AIT, perform very similar foreign service like duties, and at the end of their contract with AIT they can be rehired by State Department. That apparently was the original version.

IFSHIN: Again, this gets into my future reincarnation as a personnel officer as a career development officer. I had some dealings with people who served in the Sinai field mission. The situation that I subsequently discovered there, for example, I had young officer who I was the career development officer for who was promoted during the time he was in the Sinai field mission, but the promotion did not take effect while he's there. It only takes effect when he rejoins the State Department. So that subsequently, he lost pay and he lost various other things, eligibility to compete, all sorts of things.

I remember at the time I went through the system, and spoke to someone, and said I served in AIT and none of this stuff worked that way. We got everything. [If] We got promoted, we got promoted and we started earning our new salary and we started earning seniority in our new positions. Why is Sinai Field mission position being treated so differently? Subsequently, and retroactively, they went back and straightened it out with the Sinai field mission so that they were treated much more fairly, I think, in those terms.

Q: Actually, that impacts on the whole AIT thing too, because when they created this AIT, nobody knew how it was going to work, nobody knew what the impact was. In fact, at the time didn't they tell people who were at the embassy that if you want to leave and not sit this out, you may do so. Mark extended, but maybe he didn't bid fast enough, did he extend because he was enjoying it or they were afraid there wouldn't be any bidders?

IFSHIN: I don't know, but maybe he was prevailed upon that this was a very important and delicate time in Taiwan-U.S. relations and it was very important that continuity be maintained. For example, Chuck Cross was brought in as the first head of AIT and again, that was sort of they wanted somebody of ambassadorial rank who had been an ambassador previously. There were all sorts of issues attached to what they were trying to do.

Q: So, what you've done now is gotten yourself assigned as Mark's successor, but you do the year on the commercial side to position yourself.

IFSHIN: Right.

Q: So you've actually got two assignments.

IFSHIN: Yes.

Q: And how was that commercial year?

IFSHIN: It was an interesting year. First of all, you have an important commercial relationship with Taiwan, as well as just an important relationship in general. The U.S. figures very large in the Taiwan universe, in the Taiwan scheme of things. So being the commercial officer, I was important to a lot of Taiwan businessmen. In addition, I had a really outstanding staff. I had a number of Taiwan locals working for me who were just extremely able and quite familiar with what they were doing, quite capable people. I went over...

Q: Are you working in the economic center or the trade center?

IFSHIN: I'm in the trade center, physically located in the trade center, although my boss is in the economic center. I'm working for Sam Lee, who was a U.S. foreign service officer. Sam was State Department, I don't know if the foreign commercial service already existed at this point, I don't know when exactly that arrangement took hold.

Q: Do you remember who you replaced?

IFSHIN: When we met Stu Kennedy, I was saying he had served in Taiwan because I would swear that was the name of the person I replaced. I thought the name was Stu Kennedy but I've forgotten now. I don't think he was particularly a China type, the person I replaced.

Q: Can you describe some of your duties?

IFSHIN: With this excellent staff that I had, my duties were to brief American businessmen on the ongoing economic relationships and business opportunities and to identify business opportunities for Americans. We maintained a commercial library, largely for Taiwan businessmen looking for agents or to be agents or representatives of American businesses and to import the American products as well as to find representatives for their exports in the United States. We had various trade shows, those were largely the two commerce department persons who were responsible for the trade shows. I was responsible for the day-to-day facilitating of American and Taiwan businessmen finding each other and doing business with each other.

Q: Was there a fair string of American businessmen coming to Taiwan?

IFSHIN: Yes. That was still quite prevalent. Taiwan was then our fifth or sixth largest trading partner. An awful lot of it was Taiwan exports to the U.S., at that point they were running a big surplus. I don't know if they still do, but they were always interested in whittling down that surplus, from their own self-interest point of view of showing what

valuable customers they could be as well as sellers of products. There was a significant commercial relationship.

Q: It sounds like there would be a fairly large American chamber of commerce.

IFSHIN: Yes, there was.

Q: Larger than Jakarta?

IFSHIN: Certainly more heterogeneous. Where Jakarta tended to be dominated by the petroleum sector, this was a broader spectrum of companies and interests.

Q: You were saying that most of the local businessmen were Taiwanese as opposed to mainland Chinese that were running the government?

IFSHIN: Yes. Certain sectors had large mainland representation.

Q: Such as?

IFSHIN: Banking. China Airlines which largely comes out of the air force and is kind of operated as a fully owned subsidiary of the air force, so that tended to be mainland Chinese. But business, by and large the private sector, was then largely Taiwanese. But there were certain important businesses that were mainlanders' ownerships, just certain companies were traditionally mainlanders.

Q: Banks are sort of choke points for small businesses... if you can't get your loan..., I wonder if that's one of the reasons the mainlanders were into banking, it also served a political purpose.

IFSHIN: I don't think it was established in that way. A lot of the banks came out of the government, or were originally government owned, or were then government owned or controlled. And then you had the big Shanghai banking sector which had moved with the nationalist government. Taiwanese were increasingly involved in banking types of things, but I think they tended to have a slightly different legal personality than the traditional banks. They tended to be trusts. Whatever the distinction is, really, is not something I'm terribly familiar with, but like we had savings and loans, they had some other entity.

Q: Trust cooperatives or something like that.

IFSHIN: Right.

Q: While you are there in the commercial side, you were saying that the government on Taiwan wanted to be a good customer to the U.S. Do you remember any trade disputes or major things like that that came up, or major purchases?

IFSHIN: I honestly can't at this point. It's all kind of faded. When I was writing my, or

making input into my EER, I was responsible for enormous amounts of Taiwan purchases, but I honestly can't remember any of them now.

Q: Were they starting or had they been doing this trade delegations to the states? The different buying delegations...

IFSHIN: Well, yes. During that year, this was a big thing where we had a number of states visit Taiwan state delegations and they would also send Taiwan delegations to the U.S.

Q: My point is, did that start with derecognition, or had they been doing that state buying things at an earlier time?

IFSHIN: I honestly cannot tell you. It was ongoing during the time that I was there and it's hard for me to believe that they just ginned it up so quickly. But it was an increasingly important instrument of policy for the Taiwan side.

Q: Explain how they used that.

IFSHIN: Having lost the formal diplomatic ties with the U.S., they were interested in promoting all kinds of Taiwan sister city relationships, sister university relationships, sister this, sister that. Or they would entertain these trade groups from various states. I remember South Carolina coming out and was headed by then Governor Richard Reilly, the man who was just Clinton's secretary of education. But there were a number of others that came through during the time that I was commercial officer, it was fairly common. Lots of exchanges.

Q: And then Taiwan would send these buying delegations to the states and announce the purchase of wheat or...

IFSHIN: I don't know how much of this was actually additional purchases beyond what they would have been making in any case, but they would try and make it look like they were making a big gesture by announcing them together in large amounts, just in the normal course of events we bought so much wheat. Instead, they would give us some publicity and some play and do it.

Q: Now, as commercial person for that year, did you have much opportunity to drive around the island for business, visiting other businesses, talking to people, or were you mostly in Taipei?

IFSHIN: As I recall, I was mostly in Taipei. Although, I remember going down to visit some of the significant businesses that were somewhat south of Taipei, in the Taipei suburbs...

Q: Chin Hsu industrial park?

IFSHIN: Right, the industrial park, and the China petroleum company which is located outside of Taipei and a number of entities like that, but it was basically confined to the Taipei area. I must have gone down to Kaosiung to the trade center down there, but I don't remember a whole lot of travel. I had been around the island a number of times before I got there. As a language student I traveled extensively in Taiwan. We were encouraged to travel, in fact, we were given a lot of time to travel. As long as we were using the language we were supposed to get out. I'd been all over the island. I mentioned Burt Levin... when I arrived as a language student... I'm going back now... Burt made a comment that he wished he could take me around the island sometime, or that I could go around the island sometime. I don't know how sincere he was in saying that, but when I got down to Tai Chung, I told George Beasley that Burt Levin said he wants me to travel with him around the island. George said, that's great, sure. A month or two, three months after you've been here, that'll be fine. So I contacted Burt and said, remember that trip you wanted take? George Beasley says it's fine. So we took a trip around the island together, starting from Tai Chung and went around to Tai Nan and Kaosiung, and Taidong, and up the coast to Keelung.

Q: Visiting the government people?

IFSHIN: Visiting government people, opposition people and calling on all sorts of people.

Q: So, as a language student, you got an enormous introduction to Taiwan and its politics..

IFSHIN: Right.

Q: Well, given that introduction and the introduction you would have had to Taiwanese businessmen in the year...

IFSHIN: I found the introduction to Taiwanese businessmen extremely interesting and I think it was useful in filling in a lot of background for me in my subsequent job as the chief of the general affairs or political section. The businessmen for the most part avoided politics like the plague. This was the time when the Kuomintang was running a pretty tight ship, and it was not necessarily...

Q: Well, your arrival was after Kaosiung, which is a signal, they rounded up the entire opposition. They're all in jail now.

IFSHIN: Right. It was not economically healthy to be involved in politics for businessmen. But nonetheless, I got to talk to a lot of businessmen and establish a certain relationship with them where they felt a little bit more open and willing to talk. While they weren't talking politics per se, a certain amount of the unhappiness that they had with the prevailing political structures came through and they felt comfortable enough to hint at some of these things. It was a good background, that commercial officer tour.

Q: In that tour, what was your liaison with the local authorities? Were you going over to their department of commerce? (End of tape)

You were just coming to the end of your commercial tour.

IFSHIN: At that time we were pretty religious about not contacting the government, although I think it was somewhat more relaxed on the commercial area than the political area in our dealings with the foreign ministry. Nonetheless, we worked basically with the CCNAA (Coordinating Council for North American Affairs). I had a really outstanding team of locals working for me who conducted a lot of more official relationships, but I didn't know about that and didn't try to know about that.

Q: Did you come across a circumstance where the authorities on Taiwan wanted you to attend something or do something that was a little more official? Were they making the attempt that the relationship was more official than the Americans wanted it to be?

IFSHIN: I don't recall that when I was working in the commercial area. Now I would refer businessmen to the Taiwan authorities at times because they needed to deal with them, and I would have one of my locals help facilitate such a meeting. But I don't recall them ever trying to exploit that to get me involved to make that relationship look more official. I don't recall anything like that ever happening.

Q: Now it's 1981, and Mark is leaving. He had been in place before normalization so he had transitioned.

IFSHIN: Right.

Q: You were there after normalization.

IFSHIN: Yes.

Q: So you are the first general affairs section chief in this new period, if you will. What kind of a political relationship did Mark turn over to you?

IFSHIN: Yes, well, I think we operated very much like a normal political section would. We didn't meet with the foreign ministry *per se*, but in a sense, that was, we dealt with CCNAA, and in a sense that was more like a traditional embassy. The embassies of course tend to contact every ministry, and be in contact with all sorts of people. But the more traditional embassy goes through the foreign ministry. We were going through the CCNAA which was acting exactly like a foreign ministry, and whenever we needed to contact anyone, that's the way we did it. In addition of course, we were meeting with the opposition. You mentioned the Kaosiung demonstrations and subsequent arrests and imprisonment of a number the significant leaders of the opposition, nonetheless, the opposition continued to function in despite of the absence of many of these leaders, although, I always feel that there were a whole number of people I don't really know because they were in prison, a whole bunch of significant leaders. Nonetheless, I became

familiar with the people who were carrying on at that time. Some of them were very interesting people to get to know. Taiwan is a place that is undergoing very rapid change, political and economic, and it is always interesting to watch that.

Q: Just to set the scene, who's the head of AIT at the time that you now become the head of the general affairs section?

IFSHIN: You know, as I mentioned earlier, Chuck Cross was the first head of AIT, and he was the head during the time that I was there as a commercial officer, and I can't remember exactly what the transition was, and he was replaced by...

Q: Jim Lilly...

IFSHIN: Jim Lilly, and I can't remember whether Jim Lilly and I assumed our positions more or less concurrently or whether it's just fading in my mind.

Q: Because actually, Jim Lilly is as the Reagan administration comes in and Jim is basically NSC to start off the administration and then he gets that job. So if they came in at '91...

IFSHIN: '81...

Q: '81, yes, and then spent some time in the NSC and then he comes...

IFSHIN: Yes, I think Chuck Cross must have been in place when I first took over in the general affairs section, but it wasn't very long after I was in general affairs that Jim Lilly took over. I can't remember... Stan Brooks replaced Bill Thomas as the deputy and I can't remember what the exact timing of that, either. Bill Thomas was certainly there when I was commercial officer and I think for a while when I was general affairs. I think Stan Brooks replaced him some time after I had already become general affairs officer. But it was all more or less about the same time, the changing of the guard so to speak takes place.

Q: So we have a fresh crew after this traumatic event. Do you have any sense of either Chuck Cross or Jim Lilly's connection with CCK at that time?

IFSHIN: Let me just say that when Jim Lilly came on board, I remember attending some meetings with him and the Taiwans and CCNAA personnel, I believe, where he used what I thought of at the time as kind of retrograde language that sort of set my teeth on edge... he was talking about the Chi Coms and various stuff out of the '50s and I really had to sort of, what's going on here? But I became a big fan of Jim Lilly's and he's a very capable guy, and a lot of that stuff I think was meant to kind of put the Taiwans at ease and kind of establish, 'hey, we speak the same language here and we all know about the Chinese bandits or the communist bandits and you can relax with me'. He was extremely effective with the Taiwans, with Kuomintang, and with the opposition figures as well, just kind of putting them at ease, and making them recognize him as someone

they could talk to. I admired him, watching him operate. As I said, my initial reaction had been a little bit of being appalled at some of this, but he was very good.

Q: There's obviously a number of tensions going on, I mean there's the whole emotional reaction to the derecognition, and then there's the internal political turmoil, which is Kaosiung and the subsequent trials. How did your reporting priorities reflect some of this?

IFSHIN: Our reporting priorities tended to be focused on Taiwan, China, well, Taiwan-U.S. was always our main priority, and Taiwan-China was a second priority: how is that relationship evolving. And somewhere much farther back was how is Taiwan's internal politics evolving? That was of particular interest to me, and was of a higher priority to me than it was to the U.S. government, but I was very interested in Taiwan's internal politics and how that was evolving.

Q: How did you follow up on that?

IFSHIN: I tried to develop relations with both opposition figures and with Kuomintang figures, particularly the Li Teng Hui kind of Taiwan KMT, the bulk of the Kuomintang membership of course at this time was Taiwanese, although the leadership was still largely mainland. One of the things I kind of regret was that I never really got to know James Sung who was then in Tai Chung, where he was the governor, and the...

Q: At that time he had a KMT party position, head of the GIO.

IFSHIN: Head of the government information office, but most of the time that I was in Taiwan, he was not in Taipei, so I really didn't get to know him very well. I did get to know, his successor as governor, who was a Taiwanese, Lin Yang Gang. I got to know him a little bit and I got to know some of the other people who I identified as movers and shakers. I had this thesis for a long time that Taiwan mainland relationships would only be worked out at a period when you had an indigenous Taiwanese leadership that would be comfortable and would be seen by the Taiwanese population as representing their interests in a way that the CCK and the mainlanders never could. I always felt that they would be seen by the Taiwanese as trying to work out some sort of deal for themselves, whereas if you were a Taiwan politician, then at some point most of the people would accept that you were trying to work out something on their behalf as well as your own.

Q: Well, doesn't this come from the fact that it was the KMT position that there was but one China and Taiwan is part of China?

IFSHIN: I thought there could be a deal at some point, but that it required a leadership that was in some sense democratically selected by the majority of the population by the Taiwanese, or at least seen as representing the Taiwanese. I still feel that, and that is obviously the way that things have evolved to a certain extent, but it's not been as simple as I thought it would be. For one thing, I expected the Chinese to be more pragmatic than they've proven to be. I think they've gotten more ideological, nationalistic, perhaps as

Communism lost legitimacy as an idea, then they've had to depend on nationalism as their authority and that's complicated any attempt to work out relations with Taiwan. I thought this evolution of Taiwan's politics was critical to the evolution of Taiwan. Obviously it would be critical to the evolution of Taiwan-China mainland relations.

Q: Now along these lines, I remember reporting out of Taiwan that would indicate that OCKs put another Taiwanese guy as the head of something... the Taiwanization of the KMT and the legislatures that was something that people were watching. Were you seeing that at the time?

IFSHIN: Yes, well, it was moving very slowly. The legislature, through the whole period I was there, and I don't know exactly when the change comes, but the legislature was the legislature that represented mainland China.

Q: Yes, the election of 1947.

IFSHIN: Yes. When somebody died, they would replace him with someone who ran second if he was living in Taiwan. It was incredible that they were able to maintain this for as long as they were. They had all these ancient politicians who were extremely long-lived who managed to hang on there. It was inevitable, you knew that there were demographic changes that were coming because people do die, but it was hard to see just when it was going to change and how it was going to change. So the legislature tended to be less interesting than what was happening within the party, the KMT...

Q: The party was the focus of much of your reporting...

IFSHIN: Right, and then you had the opposition.

Q: Now in a professional sense, you had been there a year, and Mark had been there three years. When you take over, is there a quick handoff, or he's been including you in the last few months in his meetings and everybody knows you are taking over, or is it as though you just walked in from a different world?

IFSHIN: A lot of people knew I was taking over. In fact, I guess it had become common knowledge. I had not tried to broadcast it. And once I heard my locals talking about it, and I misunderstood what they were talking about because they used terminology that was not clear to me about a promotion or something, and I didn't know what they meant by I was getting promoted. I was hoping that they had some secret that I didn't know about. But of course, what it was they knew about my move to general affairs, and I hadn't told them, I hadn't told anyone. But it was common knowledge coming out of the personnel section of AIT, and obviously it got from there into the general community, and people knew it was happening and then it did happen. I think the handoff was sort of a mix between what you described as sort of a handoff and gradually working me into things. It was neither, but somewhere in between, there was a certain amount of introduction, but it was done basically at the end.

Q: What does a general affairs section look like? How many people?

IFSHIN: At that time, we had four American officers, including myself. One officer from another agency, and two junior officers, they were both second tour officers. Can't remember whether I inherited them or if they arrived after I got the job. I don't remember anybody before them, so I must have inherited them. And as with the luck of the draw, one was very good and one was not so good. There were two secretaries. I had a staff of four or five locals in the political section, one of whom was the social secretary receptionist who didn't really work for me but was nominally under the general affairs section. And then I had three other locals, the senior one was very knowledgeable about politics, the other two somewhat less so. But they all basically worked as translators, doing translating of Chinese press on a daily basis.

Q: So the political section put out a press summary. But now there's the USIS office, aren't they also doing a Chinese press summary?

IFSHIN: I honestly don't recall. But we would identify specific things that we wanted translated, and that's how that worked. I would want to say this about USIS. They were in a different location, in a different building, but nonetheless, I thought we had an excellent relationship and I thought the AIT relationship in general where we were all nominally separated from our various agencies and working for AIT that it worked very well. I thought it was one of the most cooperative organizations that I've ever worked for from all the various aspects and all the people that were involved in various parent agencies that they represented. Now it happened during much of the time that I was there, that the number two man, or the information officer for USIS, and I forget what its designation was called in AIT, it had a different name like general affairs in political section, but the number two guy was a State Department officer Joe Moyle. I don't know whether that improved things or not because we had good relations with his bosses as well, Harry Britton... But it was in general a good relationship. We had a good relationship with the military attachés as well, who were, in fact, retired U.S. military. The military was a little bit more scrupulous about not rehiring.

Q: One of the things that happens when [one] converts from an embassy to AIT is, there's a whole shuffle of facilities. We leave the old embassy building and now AIT is in a new building. Have all those administrative logistic changes been handled and you no longer have any particular problems... you have enough chairs, there's enough... no more logistics problems?

IFSHIN: Yes, I think everything was working very smoothly at the time I moved in. They were not the nicest offices I've every had but they were certainly adequate. From an administrative point of view, we were working smoothly. It was an adequately funded operation, and had a very high degree of operation.

Q: As head of the general affairs section, what is your relationship with the front office, Jim, Stan Brooks, are you dividing up contacts, how does that fall out?

IFSHIN: The way Jim Lilly and Stan Brooks operated, was kind of Jim Lilly was sort of Mr. Outside, and Stan Brooks was Mr. Inside. Maybe that's the way an embassy typically operates. Stan did less contact work than either myself or Jim Lilly. But we all had our contacts and tried to pool information. Jim Lilly, coming out of the NSC, had a good sense of how our reporting could have the most impact in Washington and was very interested in timing of reporting, and when we got our reports in and getting them in at the strategic moment when it would have the most impact. Very often, he would instruct us along those lines, that we wanted to do this at such and such a time so that it arrived in Washington when they were contemplating this or contemplating that. And then there was also a good deal of competition with Beijing, where when Beijing did a certain kind of reporting we wanted to come in with the other side or the counter report, or in some cases before they reported, and in some cases after their report, but we were always watching their reporting as well. And again, Jim Lilly was always very alert to that kind of nuance.

Q: That must have been very instructive.

IFSHIN: Yes, it was.

Q: You are head of the political section, this is a senior position within the mission. Are you accompanying Jim on a lot of his calls, or is he doing a lot of his own reporting?

IFSHIN: No, I'm accompanying him on a lot of his calls and subsequently writing the report.

Q: Did you ever get in on a meeting with CCK?

IFSHIN: I don't recall. This is a historic figure, and I remember seeing CCK, so maybe it was in a meeting. I remember a meeting between Jim Lilly and CCK, as I recall it took place across the street from the presidential palaces or the foreign ministry... I can't remember. But it wasn't held in the building, I don't know if it had an AIT non-recognition aspect to it. But a lot of these meetings would be held elsewhere. I don't think we would meet with CCK very often. Somewhat more meetings were held with Chien Fu, Fred Chien who was then foreign minister. A lot of it went through CCNAA. Raymond Hu was the head of CCNAA during a large portion of that period, and then John Chang was number two and he was a special figure and had special relations with the Kuomintang leadership, including CCK, so they dealt a lot with him.

Q: Did you at this time see circumstances in which Taiwan was trying to project an image of a more official relationship than we were comfortable with?

IFSHIN: Yes, occasionally we would call them out. We'd have a visitor, let's say an official U.S. government visitor and it would get into the press, and we'd kind of call them on it and say if this leaks or gets undue publicity, we won't be able to have these kinds of visits in the future and that would be very unfortunate. And they'd say, oh, well, we don't know how this happened or why this happened. But basically, it wasn't

tremendous strains, they were always trying to promote the look of official relations. But I don't think they were obnoxious about it. Obviously, they had their interests and we had our interests and we both understood where we were coming from, and they recognized that a certain degree of cooperation was necessary if they wanted our cooperation. Getting our noses too far out of joint would be against their interests.

Q: The main political situation is that much of the opposition is in jail now because of the Kaohsiung incident. There's a postponed election that takes place maybe when you were still in the commercial area.

IFSHIN: I don't remember any elections. [laughter] I mean elections were all that critical at that point. I remember that I was dealing with one wives of the imprisoned Kaohsiung figures at that time. And Kang Ning Hsiang who subsequently fades from the scene, I guess, although I remember reading his name in the... The Chinese apparently refused to allow him to accompany whoever was leading the Taiwan delegation to the mainland in a meeting a couple of years ago. But Kung was someone I met pretty frequently with and got pretty close to. I liked him, of course he was kind of a moderate figure, the kind that Americans tend to like, and I guess wasn't enough of a firebrand for the subsequently evolution of the opposition.

Q: The Kaohsiung incident itself raised a lot of thoughts of human rights and that sort of stuff. Were you getting anybody interested in the human rights situation in Taiwan or a lot of congressional inquiries?

IFSHIN: Well, yes, there were congressional inquiries and there was always an interest in the human rights situation. I wouldn't say that I was getting people interested in it, because for us it was a problem. But one of the... this is a slightly different aspect of things... in talking to... I remember John Chang in particular, making this point to him... I was always kind of pushing the line that their friends in Washington were the people who would be the most helpful to them in Washington were not the traditional lobby. Jesse Helms or people on the right in the American political spectrum, but it would be people like Steven Solarz, for example, who were interested in democracy and human rights, and that this was the line that they should be pushing and pursuing, that they are an evolving democracy, that they're not some right wing retrograde government and that this would be their natural line of support in the U.S. Congress. Again, I think that's the way that things have evolved to a considerable extent although they've maintained their support on the U.S. right as well. But they've managed to add a number of people who recognized that as they've evolved into a more democratic, I guess now you'd say fully democratic, government that they've added this support of people who are supportive of democracies.

Q: Does this new platform of the general affairs section give you more opportunity to do some traveling around the island again?

IFSHIN: Yes, I got out and visited various parts of the island, but again, because of our unofficial relationship, you don't call on the county magistrate and various governmental officials when you travel, but I managed to get out and see people, both official and

unofficial.

Q: There's always the stereotype that foreign service only sees the upper level of people and doesn't get down, and now you're in an unofficial situation where you're not supposed to necessarily see the upper level people. Yet, how would you describe your understanding of the environment in Taiwan at that time?

IFSHIN: I think it was reasonably good, but not as good as I would have liked it to have been. But we got around and saw people. It was still an authoritarian system where you couldn't necessarily talk freely with a wide range of people, or people would not talk freely with you, to put it more accurately. People were still cautious about contact with foreigners, at least most people were. It was problematic. We had a good sense of what was going on, but not necessarily firsthand. We spoke a lot to the press and to, there were some of these magazines that were coming as part of the liberalization of Taiwan, the number of magazines that were opposition inclined, or at least non-KMT, being an important one. We would talk to those people regularly, publishers, editors, reporters, and that gave us a somewhat broader insight into the society and what was going on.

Q: There's been some thought that evolved thoroughly and could be anticipated that there would be a shift in recognition, that there was still was hard feelings in some quarters of the Kuomintang officials. Did you get any sense of that... were there people who didn't return your calls or you couldn't... were you trying to keep up with the Kuomintang offices as well as the government offices?

IFSHIN: Yes, we were trying to work with the Wo Man Dung and get insights from them rather assiduously, in fact since we couldn't contact the government, I think we focused on the Kuomintang somewhat more than we would have otherwise. I don't remember anyone not returning any calls. I'm convinced there were hard feelings on the part of some people, generally a mistrust of the Americans and our goodwill and our faithfulness, but I don't remember anybody stiffing me or being overtly rude. I'm sure there were people who were less cooperative than they might otherwise have been.

Q: What else is Taiwan doing to then to maintain its relationship with the United States?

IFSHIN: One of the big efforts they had going on at this point was the congressional staff delegations that they were being invited over, ostensibly under the guise of private missions. It was a non-governmental entity, that is a non-Taiwan entity, that was sponsoring them.

Q: Sun Jo University...

IFSHIN: Yes, there were a number of them. There was a series of them, but obviously it was all government money that was in fact behind this. It was a very well-funded, very well organized operation and sometimes they'd run them by us, that is they'd inform us...

Q: Congressional staffers...

IFSHIN: Congressional staffers, they inform us that they had a group of four or eight or however many were in the group, who were going to be visiting in Taiwan and they wanted a briefing from the AIT.

Q: This would be the first time that you would know that these people were coming.

IFSHIN: Right, that would usually be the case. We'd arrange a briefing, and spend sometimes a couple of hours, sometimes a morning shooting the breeze. Sometimes we wouldn't really have any contact with them at all. We'd know that some people were in town, but we wouldn't be called upon to do anything. I suspect, I believe, that it typically was at the request of the group whether we were involved or not. That is, the Taiwan authorities didn't make any particular point, or it was not routine to set up a meeting with us, but they were willing to do so if the group requested it.

Q: So a fair number of congressional staff people are coming to Taipei at this time.

IFSHIN: Perhaps numbering in the hundreds.

Q: How about congressmen themselves?

IFSHIN: You know, I just don't really recall. There must have been some, but I don't remember any congressional delegations at this time.

Q: Hm. Because we're saying, this is a brand new relationship, nobody's done this before... well, the Japanese did it prior...

IFSHIN: Well, ours was just very different, a much larger relationship.

Q: Right, so you're feeling your way, they're feeling their way, and I guess the question is as the two of you are feeling your way around and bumping into each other, did it look like it was working?

IFSHIN: My sense is that it was working very well, surprisingly. Yes, there were bumps in the road, but nothing that we weren't able to work out.

Q: Now at this time we were also pushing them on some trade issues, if I recall.

IFSHIN: I don't really recall what you are referring to.

Q: I think there's some stuff on the copyrights stuff in the books and these were the last days in which Taiwan versions of...

IFSHIN: You could get those pirated versions cheap. [laughter]

Q: [laughter]

IFSHIN: I was not involved in that. There were a number of negotiations going on, on a whole series of issues. My colleague, Clarke Ellis, who was the head of the economics section, was deeply involved in those negotiations at that time, but I never got involved in that.

Q: So, you're building relationships with party people and dealing with government people through the CCNAA thing. Any other particular incidents or circumstances come to your attention that you...

IFSHIN: I don't recall anything particularly exciting at that time.

Q: We were talking about the Kaohsiung earlier, and you'd think that the opposition had been rounded up, but my impression is that those that weren't and the wives of those who were continued to be quite aggressive, and looking for contact with the AIT.

IFSHIN: Well, the politically active members of the opposition were very open about wanting to be in contact and criticizing the government and yes, that was going on. I always had the idea that there were a lot of people who felt that they were under the Kuomintang's radar who kept a low profile and were not anxious to be... But, I had frequent contact with the opposition and they were more than willing to meet with the Americans. They wanted to meet with the Americans.

Q: I would suppose they would have some fairly interesting insights on the local political scene or why a certain set of appointments were materializing.

IFSHIN: Yes, of course they always had their take on all of the developments, it wasn't always a complete take or the most accurate one.

Q: And you were saying you were watching the Taiwanization of the Kuomintang, or of the government.

IFSHIN: Yes.

Q: Wasn't Soong the vice deputy or premier?

IFSHIN: As I say, I never got to know James oong.

Q: No, I'm thinking of another Sung who had a heart attack or stroke and that's why Lee Teng Hui became the deputy. I can't think of the name.

IFSHIN: Lee Teng Hui became...

Q: You were saying Lee Teng Hui is within your radar screen, you're seeing him move up?

IFSHIN: Oh, yes. We did have an occasion to meet with him and I always found him to be a fairly impressive figure. I did not anticipate his becoming president or doing what in fact he did. In fact, I had identified some successive generation which I thought would do some of the things that he perhaps did. I didn't anticipate it happening as quickly as it did.

Q: But even against the background of Kaosiung, you were seeing reform and movement?

IFSHIN: Yes, I think we all saw an opening and saw that Kaosiung was a setback, but a temporary setback to what was an ongoing process. Again, it all happened so much faster than we anticipated, but we did see it happen. We did anticipate it. It was the speed that was surprising.

Q: Well, after Taipei, then you moved to the Philippines where you'd started out twenty years earlier. Did you feel your career was going in circles? [laughter]

IFSHIN: No, I'd always wanted to go to the Philippines, and was very pleased to get the position in...

Q: Now, it's open bidding, so you'd put in your bid for Cebu, you've written your career development officer and said, 'I'm burning incense out here'... [laughter]

IFSHIN: [laughter] Yes, I'd been bidding on jobs in the Philippines ever since we had open bidding, and ever since I'd entered the Foreign Service I'd always wanted to serve in the Philippines. While I don't know whether Cebu was necessarily always my first choice, it was certainly high on my screen at that point and I was very pleased to get that job. Now my wife felt very isolated. I think were the only foreign diplomatic mission in Cebu, or we were then, at least, the post has long since been closed now. There were about five or six honorary consuls.

Q: So you were the diplomatic community in Cebu. Now just for background, which island is Cebu on?

IFSHIN: Cebu is on the island of Cebu. It's smack dab in the middle of the Philippines, I'm going to point to it on the map that you have, although it won't show up on your audio tape [laughter]

Q: [laughter]

IFSHIN: It's right there, that skinny one.

Q: Okay, that one behind Leyte, to the east of Leyte.

IFSHIN: West of Leyte. That's Negros there, and that's Panay off further to the west. And Cebu in the middle. That's Leyte Samar to the east there.

Q: Now, why is there an American consulate in Cebu?

IFSHIN: Cebu is the very center of the Philippines and is the big shipping center and all the shipping lines tended to be out of Cebu to Luzon to the north and Mindanao to the south, and Negros and Panay in the west, and Leyte Samar in the east.

Q: Now that's internal shipping.

IFSHIN: Yes, I'm talking about internal. It's kind of a transportation hub for the Archipelago. And in fact, Tagalog has become the national language of the Philippines because it's the language of the people around Manila and central Luzon. But Cebuano probably has more native speakers than any other language group in the Philippines. In fact the languages that are spoken on many of the other Visayan islands, the islands in the center, are supposedly dialects of Cebuano and may not be separate languages. The linguists would have to figure that out. I'm not in a position to establish that out. In any case, Cebuano is quite important in the Philippines and in fact, Cebuano settled much of Mindanao, much of the Christian population of Mindanao is Cebuano. So the Cebuanos are an important part of the island.

Q: Now, is there a fair amount of American expatriate presence in that part of the Philippines?

IFSHIN: Traditionally, there has always been an American presence, although, no we didn't have the military bases that they have on Luzon, the Clark and the Subic, so we didn't have that kind of extensive presence. The second president of the Philippines, Sergio Osmeña, many of his descendants were dual nationals, or had American nationality, including the person who was the governor of Cebu during much of the time I was there, Emelito Osmeña, was a grandson - his mother was an American citizen, so he was an American citizen by birth. But at various times he renounced his American citizenship and did other things for political purposes as he was ascending the political ladder in the Philippines. But throughout the Philippines there is an important American connection. Being the U.S. consul in Cebu, as minor as the job is in terms of American bureaucracy, in the Philippines, or at least in that part of the Philippines, it's a big deal. I remember when we returned to the U.S., my then five year old daughter was quizzing me on how come I'm never on television any more? [laughter]

Q: [laughter]

IFSHIN: We used to be regularly on television in Cebu.

Q: Let's follow that up a little bit. Why would you be on television in Cebu? Moving around the island.

IFSHIN: Typically there would be a news coverage of some sort where they're doing a report and they'd ask for a comment from the American consul, or they're covering the

opening of something and among the people in the crowd or the honored guests is the American consul, this that or the other thing. I wouldn't say I was on television all that often, but enough to impress my five year old daughter.

Q: What was then the main focus of that mission?

IFSHIN: From the U.S. government's point of view, it was political reporting. It was a listening post for the southern Philippines, we had a consular responsibility for the Visayas and Mindanau, where the embassy was responsible for Luzon. But it was basically a political listening post.

Q: Does this mean that you are meeting people who are later who are later going to be important personalities in Manila, or political trends that start in that part of the country that are going to spread...?

IFSHIN: No, I think it was just simply what's going on in that part of the Philippines. It's a significant, I think half the population lives in the Visayas and Mindanau, and as in so many countries, politics tends to be what happens in the capital city. There are things that are happening outside of the capital and what's happening is not unimportant, and I was able to get into the grass roots and hear them there and listen to them. This is a country where, its not a democracy, it's more of an oligarchy than anything else. It's not a democracy in American terms, but it has democratic trappings and what happens outside of the metropole outside of Manila, is important, does count in shaping developments and shaping trends in the country. I was there when Aquino was assassinated, and of course there was a strong reaction throughout the country, including in Cebu and there were demonstrations and a growing movement against President Marcos. I was reporting on that and how people were reacting throughout the country. And Imelda Marcos was from Samar Leyte, which was part of the consular district as well. In fact, what year would it have been... I was there from '83 to '85, in any case it was the off year... the 39th anniversary of the Leyte landing, I ended up being the senior American representative at the anniversary celebrations, which was interesting of course because of course the Japanese sent a big delegation there... [laughter]

Q: [laughter]

IFSHIN: And President Marcos was there and Madam Imelda, and as I say I was there as the senior American. The following year, which was a ten year anniversary celebration, there was a much larger American delegation, and I was a relatively junior member of the American group.

Q: Now did your consular district also include the south, the Muslim area?

IFSHIN: Yes, in fact that was from my point of view an interesting aspect but unfortunate aspect of my whole experience there. Two persons were "kidnaped" during the time I was in Cebu, and it turned out that one of them was a dual German-American national. The German embassy paid a quick visit, found out there was nothing they could do and

left. But the American embassy sent the intrepid consul from Cebu down, and I ended up spending months, literally months, in the area, doing very little on the ground so I could report back to the embassy as to the lack of progress during this period.

Q: And who were you talking to?

IFSHIN: I was talking to the Philippine military and the Philippines constabulary, and occasionally to political leaders, including Muslim leaders in the area about what was happening and the various ransom demands which everyone was of course saying we are not going to meet. And this was dragged on and on. Fortunately when I first arrived, I went to Jolo, an island off of Mindanau, which is the capital of a Muslim area and the military command center there, and I was supposed to use Philippines military channels to patch back in to the embassy and I say fortunately they were unable to do it and our communications failed. So I went back to Zamboanga, which is a moderately nice city on the southern coast there, and was able to establish communications with the embassy. So I made Zamboanga my headquarters, which was a hell of a much nicer place to be than Jolo for the next few months as I fulfilled this function.

Q: Now this is not continuous for the next few months, this is coming down for a day or two...

IFSHIN: No, it was largely continuous for months and going back for a day or two.

Q: Goodness.

IFSHIN: It was ridiculous, it went on much too long, a big waste of time.

Q: Is this a decision on your part, that your personal attention...

IFSHIN: No, it was a decision on the part of the embassy that they wanted me there. Maybe toward the end it got kind of, "Oh, is he still there? Maybe we ought to let him leave."

Q: Who were you reporting to then?

IFSHIN: The DCM, Bob Rich.

Q: Yes.

IFSHIN: We were pretty much in constant contact. Oh occasionally I would call the political consular, Scott Halperin, but mostly it was Bob. One thing that happened, I was feeling very isolated and upset and lonely there, and my wife got in touch with some of our friends in Cebu and said that they should have their relatives take care of me, so after that I had my [caretakers] down there. [laughter] I had a whole bunch of people who sort of adopted me.

Q: But if the embassy is putting you up in a hotel or a guest house, that's costing money in addition to your time and talent.

IFSHIN: Right.

Q: What was so attractive about these two kidnapes?

IFSHIN: Well, it was a somewhat new situation at that time. Now, subsequently, I see people get kidnaped all the time, but at that time it was a relatively new phenomenon, especially for the Philippines it was a relatively new phenomenon. They were "hostages."

Q: Well, this is not that far after Tehran, so probably Americans are very sensitive.

IFSHIN: Right, there were all kinds of sensitivities involved. But even whether they were really hostages was a question mark, you know, exactly how they had been taken and whether they had more or less walked into this knowingly. It was a bad situation that went on for much too long, and unfortunately my role in it was an unwilling and unhappy one.

Q: Now how many consulates are there in the Philippines at this time?

IFSHIN: Just Cebu, there's Manila and Cebu

Q: But that's a small consulate, it's just you and one other.

IFSHIN: At that time, one other officer. During the time that I was there we moved our facilities. Our plan was to add another officer who would bring with him secure communications and a secretary, an American secretary. Obviously not a State Department secretary. But that happened subsequent to my departure.

Q: So that means that when you wanted to send classified information to the embassy, how are you... are you having to pouch it up?

IFSHIN: Yes, we had a one-time pad, which we never used during the time I was there. Basically I sent unclassified messages. Nothing much has to be classified if you don't want to classify it. You know, we would forward it as an OI, and they would put it in classified form and pass it on to Washington if they wanted to.

Q: So you have your long-going kidnaping saga going on. That really does cut into reporting on what the politics are or the impact of Aquino's assassination.

IFSHIN: Right. I don't remember exactly when I got involved in that but it went on for a long, long time. Literally for months.

Q: Saigon fell ten years earlier, but at one point there was a fairly large boat people presence in the Philippines. Was any of that in your consulate district?

IFSHIN: I don't think so. I was not involved in that.

Q: In Cebu then, you are running your own mission, looks good, you go back to the bid list for 1985 and you are looking for a job in Washington, or did you specifically go for the human rights bureau?

IFSHIN: I was very interested in the human rights bureau and bid for the human rights bureau at that time. Again, I don't recall how high it was on my list, but I understand that he's a very controversial figure and there are many people who have a very different appreciation than I do, but I was a big admirer of Elliot Abrams. I personally appreciated the way we had, under the Reagan administration, incorporated human rights into American foreign policy, so that the human rights bureau was no longer an enemy of the geographic bureaus, but somewhat tolerated, if not a particularly loved, part of the whole operation. Since I personally believe that human rights have to be part of American foreign policy and should be an important part of American foreign policy, incorporating it into that policy in a useful way, rather than in an antagonistic way, struck me as a worthwhile thing to be doing. When I came back to Washington, Elliot Abrams had already left the human rights bureau. And when I repeated this story to other people, they told me 'oh well, if he had known you were coming, he would gladly have stayed.' But he went on to ARA by that time, and Richard Shifter replaced him as the assistant secretary. I think we arrived more or less at the same time. I don't know how I would have worked with Elliot Abrams, but Richard Shifter was someone I admire and respect on a policy point of view and found extremely difficult person to work for. I understand his way of operating is very much the way a partner treats associates in a law firm, that is, he tells associates to "do this" and they are supposed to go out and service him in various ways. But it was a very un-State Department-ish way of operating, and very difficult.

Q: And you are coming back to be the acting director of the office of multilateral affairs. What does that cover?

IFSHIN: It covered among other things, UN agencies including the UN Commission on Human Rights. The bureau, the HA at that time, now the DRL? But in those days it was HA, Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs. It used to include refugee affairs, and then refugees were spun out into their own bureau, but the bureau also maintained liaisons with International Committee of the Red Cross. UN agencies, all sort of other local international human rights bureaus, like the Interamerican Commission for Human Rights, and the International Committee of the Red Cross. These were the sorts of things that we followed, the multilateral affairs. The bureau at that time only had three offices as I recall. There was Bilateral Affairs, Multilateral Affairs, and Plans and Programs. So it was a very small office and a very small bureau.

Q: So that means multilateral affairs and you are doing a lot of liaison with the bureau of international organizations.

IFSHIN: Right. It proved to be an extremely awkward relationship. Not to say a

downright unpleasant and awful relationship. For one thing, Richard Shifter had been a representative to the human rights commission and subsequently had served in the U.S. mission in New York as ambassador to the security council. So he was particularly interested in UN agencies and our relationship to them. At the same time, the various political appointees in IO bureau were determined to keep our nose out of it to the extent possible. In general, this made our life very difficult, very difficult.

Q: So, you'd want to talk to UNHCR, and IO would say, no we don't clear cable... or...

IFSHIN: Precisely. Every cable had to originate with them, anything to...

Q: A UN agency.

IFSHIN: Or to Geneva. I mean we weren't sending cables directly to UN agencies. Anything to Geneva or New York had to originate with them, and had to show them as the drafting office.

Q: Hm, that is pretty strict.

IFSHIN: Well, these things evolved over time. But that was one of those things. I have very little pride of authorship and I agreed that anything I wrote they could show whoever they wanted as the drafter, as far as I was concerned. Nonetheless, it was awful.

Q: Who was the front office of IO at that time?

IFSHIN: Allen Keyes was the assistant secretary at that time, but the problem wasn't so much with Keyes as with one of the deputy assistant secretaries, whose name currently escapes me... a woman, a political appointee. It just got really awful. The head of the Human Rights Office in IO, a very, very nice man - Warren Hewitt - who was a very senior career State Department civilian, not foreign service, found it so awkward that he eventually he had to leave. He left that office and joined HA as a senior advisor or some such thing just to give him a title and a job. But it was just an awful, awkward relationship where we were constantly butting heads and constantly at each other's throats. This shouldn't happen.

Q: You are saying this is a political appointee who is guarding the gate and this is the Reagan administration. Are these two things significant or is it just this individual's personality?

IFSHIN: I think it was personality more than anything else. Richard Shifter has subsequently endorsed Clinton and stayed on through the Clinton administration and was with the State Department, I guess he's gone now, but he was with the State Department for many years and he was a political appointee too. But he was essentially a conservative and someone who... I remember so many times when I'd participate in meetings between these two individuals and they would debate how to be more effective, and how would an embassy read a certain cable and how would our embassies react, how are foreign

governments reacting... and it struck me that this wasn't what the debate was about. I mean they would argue along those terms because this is a way of winning their argument, but all they were arguing about was which one of them was going to make the decision and be on top. That's what it all was about. It was all power struggle. It wasn't policy. Nonetheless we got some things done.

Q: Like what?

IFSHIN: Our great accomplishment during the time I was there, I was a member of one of the delegations to the human rights session six weeks in Geneva. By the way, it was very nice.

Q: Not like six weeks in...

IFSHIN: But we made our priority the passage of a convention on religion establishing a covenant religious freedom. We managed to get that passed.

Q: Did that take a fair amount of lobbying of other national delegations? Now that would all be done within the context of this one conference... you hadn't primed other delegations?

IFSHIN: Oh, yes, we'd been in touch, and in particular with our European allies. When I say European allies, I mean the WEOG group in the UN context, the western European and others. The human rights commission has a membership of about 55 countries or something like that, maybe less, but we'd been touch with a number of capitals and had primed them. It was a lot of intensive lobbying and drafting and redrafting during the session. A lot goes on right during the meeting. It's an evolving process.

Q: An how are the dynamics of the meeting going? I mean you're not head of the delegation, you are supporting...

IFSHIN: Right.

Q: The delegations are talking...

IFSHIN: It depends on the country involved. In some cases we are talking to our counterpart, but other delegations are quite small and we are talking to the senior members of their delegation. The representative of whatever.

Q: So a fair example of international negotiating.

IFSHIN: Yes, it was an interesting experience. It's my one international conference that I can recall during my career. It's quite an interesting process and I enjoyed it.

Q: Did you get any time to stick your head outside and see...

IFSHIN: Oh, yes, the other thing about these meetings is that nothing goes on during the weekends. So you work hard during the week and then you have your weekend off. I was there with the other two relatively junior members of the delegation. We'd rent a car and drive into France and Switzerland. They went to Italy, I did not, during that period... I forget why. We had a ball, really. That was nice experience, especially getting it paid for. Actually the head of the U.S. delegation, the U.S. representative, was a guy named Wallach, also a political appointee. The head of the U.S. delegation is almost always a political appointee, although secretary Shifter flew out to participate for a while. The DAS's name is escaping me, I'm sure I blotted it out. [laughter] Shifter flew out and participated for a while, long enough to get into a fight with me. But the head of our delegation subsequently had some sort of a scandal, the details of which elude me at the moment, but ended up in prison for a while. But that's another story [laughter]. These were all very high quality individuals. [laughter]

Q: [laughter] So, back in Washington, the tension between the two bureaus impacts on what you can accomplish. Are you also going to the regional bureaus from time to time, do you get to talk to the UK?

IFSHIN: Yes, right, in the human rights commission context, you always have these national resolutions. In those days, there was always a resolution on El Salvador, on Chile, a lot of it was with ARA. We worked a lot with desks in other bureaus. In fact, in a lot of our friction with IO, the geographic bureau would be our ally, typically we'd be allied with the geographic bureau and against IO, well, not against IO, but IO always had a different strategy in mind. They wanted to take the lead or they wanted to do something, and we'd be working with the geographic bureau and we'd be working on a strategy that they felt left out on.

Q: Multilateral affairs covers all these UN organizations, but the basic thrust of what HA bureau is supposed to do at this time, could you describe that a little bit? That's at the start of the Reagan administration, right?

IFSHIN: As I recall, there were the three offices within the HA bureau then. There was the Bilateral Affairs. That covered the world, and you had bilateral offices, each of whom had essentially one of the geographic bureaus. There was an officer doing Latin America. That job eventually got so big that it got divided up between two officers. There was somebody doing eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and there was an officer doing western Europe, and one who did Africa, and one who did the Middle East. I guess there was an EAP officer as well, yes, of course, I remember very well now. They covered human rights developments in each of those countries and what was going on. Excuse me I just thought of the fourth office within the bureau.

Anyway, that was BA. And then you had Plans and Programs, and although MA subsequently merged with Plans and Programs and I became the deputy in the office and I should have a better idea of what they were doing, I don't really remember what all those plans and programs were except that we were responsible for the human rights report. But at that time, basically it was done with contractors, retired foreign service

officers, who worked pretty much on their own under the supervision of the director of the office who was Ward Thompson at that time. Ward and I by the way go way back to A100, we were in the same A100 class.

The other office that I'd forgotten was also employing retired foreign service officers, and that was the office of Asylum Affairs, and that still exists, and in fact the human rights reports is now prepared by the office of Asylum Affairs. It's... what's the name of the office now? I worked for it so I should know. Human Rights and Asylum Affairs, I guess that's the name of the office. Anyway, it does the human rights report and whenever there were requests for political asylum in this country, those determinations are made by INS, but INS always gets an advisory opinion from the State Department and the advisory is prepared in the office of Asylum Affairs by an asylum officer.

Q: And that opinion would focus on the grounds for asylum for that particular country or that particular condition...

IFSHIN: Precisely, the human rights condition in that country, and the likelihood of this individual's claims being accurate.

Q: Because asylum follows a particular set of criteria.

IFSHIN: Right.

Q: Well-founded fear of persecution.

IFSHIN: Right.

Q: As acting director of multilateral affairs and then within some timeframe those two offices were joined.

IFSHIN: Right. They were both very small offices, so the idea that instead of two small offices, we'd have one small office. [laughter]

Q: [laughter]

IFSHIN: One moderate size office.

Q: But the whole idea of having a bureau of human rights, the information has always been out there, we've always known these circumstances go on, but this is a way of concentrating the information and giving a much higher profile to the whole process.

IFSHIN: We also developed a lot more information by having an office that was interested in it, somebody to report to who was really was following these issues, and suddenly there was a lot more information that was available.

Q: The joining of these two offices, this was just an administrative decision?

IFSHIN: Yes. Again, a lot of HA is fairly *ad hoc*, at least in those days. They kept adding supernumeraries, and people who were outside of the office structure who were, especially under Shifter, who had this kind legal partnership kind of mentality, where he was the partner and everybody else was associates. I think he would have been happy to have no offices but have 30 officers working for him. But the department insisted on having some offices. They kept adding people who were given special functions of one sort of another, but I can't even remember what all of those were.

Q: Did you have a special reporter for the Middle East, or something like that?

IFSHIN: Well, no, it tended to be somebody was usually given a functional title of some sort... public affairs, legislative affairs. Things that existed in other bureaus as well, but...

Q: But their function was related to something entirely different.

IFSHIN: And these were usually C Schedule people, political appointees.

Q: So was that responding to a need that the bureau had for work? If they were political appointees, the department is told 'you have to take 20 guys' and the department tries to figure out where to stick 20 guys where they won't do too much damage?

IFSHIN: I think it was a combination. Sometimes there was a need, and sometimes there an individual available who they felt, 'he might be useful... we'll think of what he can do after we get him on board'.

Q: He might be useful but we don't want him too close to the controls?

IFSHIN: No, some of them were actually... they tended to be young people. Most of them were fairly able. But they were brought aboard in kind of a strange way that was never clear to me but didn't have much to do in my area.

Q: So they weren't career foreign service people, starting off...

IFSHIN: No.

Q: They were career civilians getting a crack of the taste of what the foreign service or State Department was doing in some particular are that was of interest to them and this looks good on their resume.

IFSHIN: Right.

Q: Ok, that happens.

IFSHIN: Right, and as I say, some of them proved to be pretty good.

Q: Now, these two offices that come together to become the office of Plans, Programs and Multilateral Affairs, I gather you're saying there's not much difference in the workload.

IFSHIN: It didn't really change much at all.

Q: The fight with IO is the same, and the issues are the same.

IFSHIN: Right, my issues remained exactly the same.

Q: And your issues were?

IFSHIN: Depending on the season, a continuing HA relationship with the human rights commission...

Q: Now, depending on the season means that these international conferences meet at certain times of the year, and your focus is that's your deadline, if you will, to have your positions and your contacts in place, and to go to that meeting. Then once that meeting is over, there is either another meeting in front of you or you are prepping for the next go-around.

IFSHIN: Right. There's always something coming up, something on the agenda.

Q: Now the Europeans had CSCE, or...

IFSHIN: Right, that was a going part of our portfolio, although it tended to be handled by... That was somewhat more concentrated in the BA office. But you're right, we were involved in that as well. That was a big deal I think. And in fact, in the history of the Cold War, I think the so called third basket, the Human Rights Basket. (End of tape)

I could tell you the old joke... I grew up in New York of course and thought I loved Chinese food, but all I knew was the ersatz semi-Cantonese New York type restaurant of that era which was ersatz Cantonese. And that leads to the old joke about the guy who goes into the Chinese restaurant, there's lots of Chinese restaurant jokes, but the one I'm thinking of this guy goes into the restaurant and he's looking at the menu and he sees pizza. He calls over the waiter and say, "what's this, pizza on the menu of a Chinese restaurant?" The waiter says, "oh, we have a large Jewish clientele."

Q: [laughter]

IFSHIN: But the first time I went to Taiwan, which was as a Peace Corps volunteer, and they took us to the Szechwan restaurant, which was still in existence when last I was in Taiwan, Mount Mouchan was it? One of the sacred mountains. I'm sitting there and sweating and a Chinese gentleman had ordered for us, a group of Peace Corps volunteers, and I said, "This is Chinese food, this is great, I've never had anything like this before in my life." That was it, I was converted then and there.

Q: But that's just the interesting part of how we all came from these middle class backgrounds all over the country and yet for some reason were willing to be more experimental. I think the American overseas has always felt himself superior to the Brit, for example, the Brit trying to replicate the home, and the American trying to be more experimental and seeing what the local guys are eating...

IFSHIN: Get down and dirty, yes. Of course, both the foreign service and the Peace Corps were sort of self-selected group...

Q: Yes, because you wanted to be there.

IFSHIN: Right, we were interested. Those of us who went to Asia wanted to go to Asia...

Q: Strongly volunteered sort of circumstance. Yes, self-selected, so you're not getting the man on the street.

IFSHIN: No. Of course, you could say the same about the British Colonial Services and the company and the people who came out to make their fortunes in the Raj or in Africa or wherever they ended up. Although in there, perhaps...

Q: Only the second son had to do that, because the first son had to...

IFSHIN: Right, there were limited horizons in Great Britain at the time, so more people did that.

Q: It is the fifth of July. We had a very rainy fourth. We're back, talking with Stan Ifshin, and we've got a couple of more things... We wanted to pick up from the previous tapes. The material on the Vocal CORDS. Why don't we get into that? Oh, I see you've brought copies. Oh, yes, I see what you're saying, that this is old paper.

IFSHIN: Right. This is original Xeroxes. It's like, if there is such a thing, it's an oxymoron, it's an original Xerox. But in 1967-68 when we were in the Vietnam training center, we compiled these songbooks, and in the second set of lyrics which I have with me here, were done about a year later or at the anniversary of our first year in...

Q: Now remind us who was involved.

IFSHIN: Well, the Vocal CORDS, this was the fourth or the twelfth, I can't remember exactly what number of persons being cycled through the Vietnam training center. We were there doing the full year. The core group was made up of the 79th A100 class, or as we used to refer to it, as the Fighting 79th. Myself, and Michael Carpenter were the chief lyricists, and Tim Hamilton and Don Sutter, who were also from the 79th A100 class were also members of the original Vocal CORDS, I don't know if there were any

successors. And Joe Romanelli who was in our Vietnam training center class was also a member of the group. Mike and I did most of the lyrics and we were both sort of interested in and familiar with music from the '20s and '30s and '40s. I'm not sure when all these songs have their origins. And we wrote, I guess it's about 40 or 50 songs during our time in, well, maybe it's less than that, and then we did another 15 to 20 songs for our anniversary.

I don't know how many of these you want to go through, but I'm looking at our first volume, the Vocal CORDS Songbook, which was subtitled "Songs to Alienate Hearts and Minds By" and it had a dedication: "Our sincere thanks to the many training institutions which took so generously of our time and gave us the inspiration for many of these songs. Resemblance to any war, living or dead, is purely coincidental. The Vocal CORDS."

The lead song, the first song, I don't know if they were written in this order, but the first one that we gave pride of place to was called, "Whoops" and it was sung to the tune of "Making Whoopie." I don't know whether to recite it or sing it, but I'll try and sing it.
[sings]

Where _____ and _____

We're loving rice

We think the war now

Is awfully nice

We're making headway

We simply must say

We're screwing Ho Chi.

We've turned the VC

They're on the run

We're dropping napalm

It's lots of fun

We've reached the crunch point

We'll have the whole joint

We're screwing Ho Chi.

Picture a pacified hamlet

After ROK CORDS and ARVN are through

Picture that same sweet hamlet

When the VC return anew.

They're levyin' taxes,

They're zappin' farmers

They got the starch back

In their black pajamas

But don't forget, folks

That's what you get, folks

For screwing with Ho Chi.

The next song is, "Hello Blood-Sucking Running Dogs," and it's sung to the tune of "Hello, My Baby." [sings]

We are the VC

We are for Ho Chi

We're gonna take Saigon.

We're bombin' the streets at dawn, baby,

You'd better be gone.

Mommy and Daddy

Fought in the paddy

Against the Japs and French, boom boom boom.

We won at Dien Bien Phu

We can beat the Americans, too.

We'll build a new state

Right to the Golden Gate.

Dominoes fall in line

Blood-sucking running dogs

The VC are doing fine.

Q: [laughter] Now as I've said, I first heard this stuff when John Lyle and some of the guys came over to Bangkok for their R and R.

IFSHIN: Mhm. I've known John over the years, but I didn't even know he was familiar with these songs, quite frankly.

Q: And there was somebody else...

IFSHIN: Well, Tim and Mike both ended up in Bangkok, but that was after Vietnam.

Q: That was after. But these would be guys coming from R and R trying to decompress. There were three or four others.

IFSHIN: I don't know if you want to keep going, but they're in order.

Q: Well, do one more, and maybe we can type the others in later.

IFSHIN: Okay. Then we had "CORDS, CORDS, CORDSmen," sung to the tune of "Toot, Toot, Tootsie." [sings]

CORDS, CORDS, CORDSmen, survive

CORDS, CORDS, CORDSmen, alive

That punji stake that impales you

Gives evidence that your combat boots have failed you

Watch for snipers and then

Check the treetops again

Don't stay out late

Watch who you date

If you should get a rash

Why then you'll know it's too late

CORDS, CORDS, CORDSmen, survive

CORDS, CORDS, CORDSmen, alive.

That's as we say, just to give you a flavor of some of the others, "Talk of the Cordial Province Rap," to the tune of "Talk of the Town." "Feeling It," to the tune of "Once Upon a Time." "Your Assistant District Rep Wears Army Boots" to the tune of "Whispering." "A Package Deal" to the tune of "I'm Sending You a Great Big Bouquet of Roses." "Keefer Too," to the tune of "Tea for Two."

Q: [laughter] That sounds interesting.

IFSHIN: [sings]

Here's a job for old MACV

Just Kee for Tu and Tu for Kee

A coup for Tu, a coup for Kee alone

Nobody near them to see them or hear them

No pacification clearing operation

We still can hold the American embassy, we hope

Talk of peace now fills the air

For coalitions they don't care

They want to win for all the world to see

CORDS comes home to Washington

Pacification has just begun

Still so many hearts and minds to be won.

Next song was "Head for your Bunker, Ellsworth," sung to the tune of "Give My Regards to Broadway." "The Presence of Cambo" to the tune of "Everywhere You Go." "That Tet Offensive," to the tune of "If You Knew Susie." "The Vocal CORDS Whiffenpoof" to the tune of "The Whiffenpoof Song." "Green Steel Helmets" to the tune of "Put on Your

Old Gray Bonnet.” “Set ‘em up Ho” to the tune of “One More for the Road.” “Con Om Tee Sow” to the tune of “Are You Lonesome Tonight,” and I don’t remember my Vietnamese enough to know what that means. “One More Round” to the tune of “I’m Looking Over a Four-Leaf Clover.” “Westie’s Way,” of course, sung to the tune of “Yesterday.”

Q: Oh, yes, do Westie’s Way.

IFSHIN: [sings]

Yesterday, war was such an easy game to play

VC mortar seemed so far away

And I believed in Westie’s Way

Search and kill, that was how we hope to break their will

We were sure they had had their fill

And I believe in Westie’s Way

Why we had to go, we didn’t know, Dean didn’t say

We’ve done something wrong, but no that’s Westie’s Waaaaaay

Up in Hue, everything was going swell

Now they’ve bombed away the citadel

And I believed in Westie’s Way

Embassy, it was almost home to me

Now the Vietcong are having tea

And I believed in Westie’s Way

Why we had to go, we didn’t know, Dean didn’t say

We’ve done something wrong, but no that’s Westie’s Waaaaaay

Abram’s way, now they say there’ll be a change

He’s a general who’ll find the range

But I believed in Westie's Way

"Chow Tung" to the tune of "You Could Be Swinging on a Star." By the way, I should remind you that these songs were mostly, well, these songs were all written before we went to Vietnam.

Q: And so at this point when was that?

IFSHIN: Well, Westie's Way was obviously after the Tet Offensive, and that would have been February, March of '68. And we went in August of '68, that's when we actually arrived 'in country' so to speak in that famous race. And then we had "In the Hot, Muggy Swamps of Vietnam" to the tune of "In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening."

Q: This is actually all before you guys got there.

IFSHIN: All before we got there.

Q: Now, were you talking to people coming back?

IFSHIN: Oh, yes. We were constantly going through training, and we were constantly having lectures from people who had been in Vietnam, and as I said our dedication was to the training institutions which had taken so generously of our time. [laughter]

Q: [laughter]

IFSHIN: We were then at VTC, we had also gone through a short AID orientation course training, and before that, we had of course come out of A100, so we had been doing nothing but training for a fairly solid block of time at that point.

The next tune was called, "Tuy, Tuy, Tuy" and I don't really remember exactly what that means again, but it's to the tune of, the first Tuy I believe was "I," so it's to the tune of "I'm Gonna Sit Right Down and Write Myself a Letter." Then we had "A Strange and Wonderful Experience" to the tune of "Twelve Days of Christmas." And finally, the next one is in really bad condition, I can't even read it, but it's to the tune of "Tip Toe Through the Tulips," I can't make out what...

Q: Nice coffee stain there.

IFSHIN: Yes, well, it's some kind of stain... I hope it's coffee. The next songbook as I said was written for our first year anniversary. We had a little reunion, and I don't think all that many people made it, but those who did, we had a songbook for them. The dedication was, "Our sincere thanks to the war, our only source of inspiration." And it was called "The Vocal CORDS Go Vietnamese. More Songs to Alienate Hearts and Minds." The first song was, "No Forn" to the tune of "Shine on Harvest Moon." The next tune was "We Who HESitate Salute You." HES was the Hamlet Evaluation System. Sung to the tune of "Daisy." "A Bained Expression" to the tune of "I Don't Want to Set

the World on Fire.” Chet Baines was one of our trainers and I don’t really remember why we made him the source of inspiration there. “Tai See Du Doma,” again that was a Vietnamese expression that escapes me, but it was to the tune of “Zippity Doo Dah.” “A S Alphabet Soup” to the tune of “Mares Eat Oats.”

Q: So this represents nine...

IFSHIN: Less inspired, frankly. We were unable to collaborate because we were scattered around the country. If I recall correctly, these were Mike Carpenter products. Mike was in Saigon. I got to Saigon occasionally. “Making Friends the MacBeasy Way” to the tune of “If I Could Be with You.” “Oh, You CO lossal Co” to the tune of “Oh, You Beautiful Doll.” “Know Thyself” to the tune of “K-K-K-Katie.” “No Regrets Only” to the tune of “Yes, We Have No Bananas.” “Never Again” to the tune of “You Must Have Been a Beautiful Baby.” “Run, Don’t Walk” to the tune of “With a Song in My Heart.” That was it. Anyway it occupied some time.

Q: Well, it was an interesting intellectual adventure in that you understood what you were involved in and where you were going and a little bit afterwards. As I was saying, when we were in Beijing after Tiananmen Square somebody did the same thing, took some songs, put some new lyrics to them. It was a matter of how you handled the frustration, because we’d evacuated the embassy, there were no dependents, we’d pulled 1,400 Americans, students and businessmen and there was nobody but us for about two or three months. And this process boiled up these songs. “P L A” to “Surfing USA” was interesting.

But we were going to pick up a few other things.

IFSHIN: Oh, yes, I’m sure we were, but I don’t remember. It’s been quite a break between this, not that it’s your fault, I’m the one who became scarce.

Q: Well, let’s move on with our schedule. You were just finishing up ’85-’87 human rights and humanitarian affairs bureau and all its reorganizations and you were in this office and then you were in that office. I assume we covered all this, unless you want to give a five-sentence summary of what were the most important pressures or programs that you thought you saw in that two-year period.

IFSHIN: Well, as I said in our earlier tape, Ambassador Shifter was very interested in UN affairs and had come out of that as his background. He had been the U.S. representative to the Human Rights Commission. Since I was working in the same area, he was very interested in that and we got to go to one of the Commission session. Again that was a very interesting experience. It all just sort of came rushing back when the U.S. was in this most recent election of membership to the Human Rights Commission, the U.S. for the first time was denied membership and is not going to be in the very next session. Will not be a member of the Human Rights Commission and I think this is a very unfortunate, although of course we’ll be able to lobby and I’m sure we’ll speak as non-members. I’m not sure how restricted we will be in terms of our participation. It’s unfortunate. Anyway,

I think I covered what the strains were that went on between what was then HA and is now DRL and the IO bureau as we wrestled over various parts of the agenda.

Q: Okay. Subsequent to that then, you moved back to the regional bureau.

IFSHIN: Right, I went to EAP, in Pacific Island Affairs which was a small office, dealing with most but not all of the Pacific islands. At that time there was a separate country directorate for the freely associated states, which I think basically was an outgrowth of the fact that the negotiations that had gone on so long between those states and the United States to work out arrangement for dissolving the trust arrangements. But I was working on the other Pacific island countries and territories.

Q: Can you give us examples of these two categories?

IFSHIN: Basically, they had the federated states of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, and a third, I can't member... The Northern Marianas which continued their association with the United States. I'm not sure, but we had the rest of the Pacific, which was most of it. I was the deputy director of the office, but also was the country officer for the Micronesia states which are Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu, Vanuatu being the former New Hebrides, or as we called it, "the Pacific Pandemonium." It was the Pacific Condominium, when Britain and France had joint sovereignty over the New Hebrides which led to a great deal of confusion. But we also then had all the Polynesian countries, Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, and Fiji is sort of mixed Micronesian and Polynesian, and Tuvalu and Kiribati.

Q: None of which were UN trusteeship territories after the end of the war.

IFSHIN: No.

Q: So this differentiation between these two offices represent these trusteeship territories that had moved on to independence and then sort of others?

IFSHIN: The freely associated states had been U.S. trust territories. The countries that we had responsibility for had a variety of backgrounds. Some of them had been Australian trust territories after World War I. Papua New Guinea, for example. But after World War II... I don't actually know what all the colonial arrangements had been. The British had control over the Solomon Islands. I'm trying to remember what the background was, if the UN had the role or not. But in any case these countries had all become independent and were no longer under any colonial background and these were the ones we were responsible for. Subsequently, these two offices were combined, which made perfectly good sense, and they were then rolled into Australia and New Zealand. Which again made very good sense because Australia and New Zealand were terribly interested in these countries and terribly interested in our policy toward these countries. In addition, there are various regional bodies which we are members of and which the Australians and New Zealanders are also members of and play important roles.

Q: That's why I was asking, because it seems to me that State Department organization probably followed some sort of policy differentiation and as that differentiation fell off then these offices would be combined. I'm trying to get... you know, the State Department doesn't go around building offices for nothing. This represents some policy difference.

IFSHIN: Well, I think it was basically for nothing, but I think a lot of it had to do with, well, there may, in fact, have been a congressional requirement. I'm not sure. But the freely associated states, while we were negotiating, that was a big deal.

Q: In fact, there was a special negotiator for...

IFSHIN: Right, there was a special negotiator, and of course interior department had played a big role in all of this. I think there might have been a requirement, in fact I know there was some sort of legal requirement for a separate office for the freely associated states. Obviously those of us who were working on Pacific Island Affairs and freely associated states, although most of the people in freely associate states had come out of interior and were not State Department, or did not have a long history with State Department. We all recognized that this should be one office, and it didn't make a whole lot of sense as the arrangements with the freely associated states were worked out, it didn't make a lot of sense for there to be two offices. But there were legal reasons why there were two offices and it took a while for it to be worked out and it was worked out after my time, but the two offices were merged.

Q: Was there PIA first, and then the freely associated offices split off for the purpose of these negotiations?

IFSHIN: Yes, I believe so.

Q: And then you are walking in after that split.

IFSHIN: That's right.

Q: When does the recombination with the Australian New Zealanders come?

IFSHIN: It's after my time and I think it's some years down the road. I can't give you an exact date. It all did happen and it all makes very good sense from my point of view and I believe that it has all worked out fairly well.

Q: So sitting in PIA, what are your main pressures and what are your main problems that you are working on?

IFSHIN: The main problem we have is that we are such a small office, and from the State Department's point of view, a not terribly consequential area who is getting attention. In fact, in some ways that was nice. We kind of made policy in a way that if you are a desk officer working on China you don't get to make policy, I don't think, because the amount of interest that is being shown in China by all sorts of people. But in Pacific Island

Affairs, for the most part, unless there's a problem, no one's paying a whole lot of attention to what you're doing. We used to feel that basically that it was us and then it was George Schultz because George Schultz had been a marine in the Pacific in World War II and had some interest in the islands, actually. But up until that level, I don't think there were a whole lot of people who were interested in the Pacific Islands. But whenever we needed to get into see him or needed a decision we found that we had a friend in the office of the State Department.

Q: What were some of the policy areas then that you dealt with?

IFSHIN: There's a tuna treaty where we provide them, and then it was \$10 million, chump change from the point of view of the State Department or the United States, but we provided the countries of the Pacific with \$10 million for the rights to U.S. tuna boats to fish in their waters. It was always a big deal getting the appropriation out of Congress and keeping it going, but it was done. Nuclear issues were important. The transportation of nuclear waste and nuclear fuels basically between Japan and the United States. Plus of course the French were still testing.

Q: Yes, isn't this their main testing area?

IFSHIN: Yes, they tested in...

Q: In fact is this the main U.S. testing area after the war?

IFSHIN: Well, yes, but we were no longer doing above ground testing and hadn't been for some years. But the French, well, I don't know that they were doing above ground testing, but they were still doing nuclear testing in the Pacific. The Pacific islanders are sensitive to that. It was just coming on the horizon, but environmental issues were of increasing importance, although global warming was not yet on anyone's radar screen as far as I can recall...

Q: Just before you come on board with the desk, the New Zealanders, the Kiwis... New Zealand and the United States have this argument over nuclear issues and, in fact, the Reagan administration writes them out of the SEATO alliance. Was any of that impacting on your policy areas?

IFSHIN: Yes, it was. Obviously, we did not deal directly with New Zealand, but this was an area of great interest to New Zealand and it was an area where they wanted to show that they could show that they could still operate as an ally and be helpful. So that facilitated our work in many ways. The New Zealanders were very cooperative and helpful to us in the Pacific, as were the Australians for that matter. I think the Australians always had the attitude that they needed to educate us with regard to island issues and bring us along, which quite frankly is true. To them, this is an extremely important area, and to us it was obviously a secondary area. Although, I would maintain that again, in the U.S. government structure, although the State Department might not have put great emphasis on the Pacific islands, the defense department put a whole lot more emphasis

on it and CINCPAC for example was vitally concerned.

Q: So you found yourself liaisoned a lot with the DOD...

IFSHIN: Yes, we worked a lot with DOD, probably more than most desks would. They were much more interested in Pacific affairs.

Q: And they had presence out there...

IFSHIN: They had presence out there.

Q: They had bases...

IFSHIN: Right.

Q: Which brings me to the point, what did our diplomatic establishment that was associated with PIA look like?

IFSHIN: We had an embassy in Fiji and in Papua New Guinea, Port Moresby, both small. There was a regional AID mission at this time in Fiji, although I think it subsequently closed down. I think that is subsequent to my time there. During the time we were there, we succeeded in opening one-man consulates in the Solomon Islands and in what was then Western Samoa and is now Samoa, the country's name changed. The Solomon Islands officer was accredited to both the Solomons and Vanuatu and would travel between the two. That office has since been closed as part of the cutbacks that we do. We also had an officer, as I said, in what was then Western Samoa, Apia, and that office continues to this day as far as I know. That was one of our great accomplishments of course, getting that little office in the Solomons open, getting a U.S. presence there. It didn't last too many years. By the way the office address in Honiara in the Solomon Islands was Mud Alley.

Q: Mud Alley.

IFSHIN: The American Embassy on Mud Alley.

Q: You were saying that the Australians were always interested in educating us about the area. Are you talking local troubled politics on the islands, or why they considered these areas important, or their attitudes toward French nuclear testing?

IFSHIN: Well, there was the nuclear issue. I'm trying to remember what the big issue... The regional organization, or a regional organization which I guess we were not members of or we wouldn't have gone along with it, but a regional organization had a nuclear free zone...

Q: Yes, Southwest Pacific Nuclear Free Zone

IFSHIN: It had an interesting, unpronounceable acronymic name which we pronounced nonetheless.

Q: SPNFZ

IFSHIN: SPNFZ, right. That was an issue, and with the ending of the Cold War, in fact, I used to encourage the Australians to keep talking to us about it, that things were changing and who knew what changes might be possible.

Q: So the Australians and the New Zealanders were taking the lead on the...

IFSHIN: When I say taking the lead, they understood that we were not going to do anything in this area. Although they had carefully crafted it so it would not impact, or they thought it would not impact on our defense missions and our defense responsibilities around the world. Nonetheless, we were concerned about the precedent and just what was involved so we were not prepared to sign on to SPNFZ. They had been very careful trying to make it accurate.

Q: Trying to figure out what our interests were...

IFSHIN: Right, so it wouldn't impact us. Nonetheless, we felt that we couldn't go along with SPNFZ, and frankly all the nuances escape me just why, except basically it was a precedent sort of thing.

Q: That's my impression, because there's all kinds of nuclear free zones proposed throughout the Cold War, and however well the Aussies had crafted this one, we just weren't able to...

IFSHIN: It allowed for free passage and non-hostile passage, and all sorts of things were written into it that as I say were crafted to accommodate us and make it possible for us to sign it, but in the end we couldn't. I think the major issue was just the sense that it was a precedent that we couldn't set and it would open up a Pandora's box around the world. But that was one issue, and yes, the intratribal politics on the various islands, and frankly why the islands were important or the need for stability. It's the sort of thing where in Indonesia where the Australians take such a great interest there and think of it as their Near North, and Papua New Guinea even more so. It's a former colony and they have a fairly large expatriate community there as well as smaller ones in Vanuatu and the Solomons.

Q: So you probably had an officer or two in the Australian embassy with which you spoke quite often.

IFSHIN: Oh, yes. They were in close contact with us on a regular basis. I got a trip out to the area. I did not visit the scenic parts of the Pacific, although I did spend some time out at CINCPAC out in Honolulu. But I went to Papua New Guinea, the Solomons, and Vanuatu. Vanuatu, by the way, is a very... I only visited the capital and drove a little bit

outside of the capital and then from there I went to New Caledonia, the French colony, which is an interesting place. I only was in the capital city and you would think you were in the Mediterranean there and you do not see very many native faces, at least in those years it was very much a French town. Flew an awfully small plane between Vanuatu and New Caledonia. And from New Caledonia I went to Australia and spent some time there. I did not visit, I just landed to change planes in New Zealand, which was somewhat of a chagrin to the New Zealanders who of course were interested in talking to us and interested in visits even at my level at this point because they felt neglected because of their non-nuclear policy. But we weren't being hostile, we treated them as friends, but we didn't treat them as allies. We weren't warm and fuzzy.

Q: Right, and that proceeds to the present point actually with New Zealand. One of the things that impacted it before you start on the desk, don't the French blow up a Green Peace ship...

IFSHIN: Yes, they sure did.

Q:...in Wellington Harbor so aren't the Australians and the New Zealanders very sensitive about the French nuclear tests?

IFSHIN: Oh, yes, the French nuclear tests is a big, big issue. And in New Caledonia, there was an independence movement at that time. I think it was settled with various agreements, but I think the native populations were restive in New Caledonia as well, plus a certain amount of it in French Polynesia, although that was less important. Our responsibility for New Caledonia and French Polynesia was somewhat attenuated. The embassy in Paris and the French desk had a proprietorial viewpoint, plus of course the French constitutional arrangement was these are departments and not colonies.

Q: [Administrative areas] in metropolitan France.

IFSHIN: Right.

Q: Your desk covered Fiji. Now, Fiji would fall apart.

IFSHIN: Right, it started falling apart before I got there. But, yes, we went through a whole series of coups in Fiji.

Q: What were some of the issues in Fiji as far as we were concerned?

IFSHIN: The issue, for those of us who have worked in Asia, is a very familiar issue and that's race. The native Fijian population was I think something less than 50%, it was about 45% of the population. And an immigrant Indian population, and in many instances of two or three generations, who had originally been brought over by the British to work on the sugar cane plantations, were I think somewhat larger at that point, and in addition were economically dominant, except that the native Fijian population owned the land. And the land could not be alienated as it was owned by the various tribes and clans and

whatever their arrangement are there. I'm not an expert on Fiji. The Indians had won an election and formed the government, and the military, which was largely native Fijian, thereupon staged a coup. The first coup...

Q: 1980...

IFSHIN: As I said, it was before I joined the office, which was in 1987, so I would think that the first coup was in '87. The chronology gets a little dim here as to what happened when. But a number of native Fijian political leadership, the non-Indian, were nonetheless interested in constitutional arrangements and trying to restore rule of law and so you had a tug between those traditional political leaders and the new military leadership, General Rabuka. Again, the Australians were putting pressure on them, the New Zealanders were putting pressure on them to restore a constitutional order and restore civil and political rights to the Indian population. This goes on long after I left the desk. They did work out a new constitution which gave promise of more equal... they're still trying to work it out. Those who know Fiji well, and I don't include myself in that number, but I know people who know Fiji well, feel rather discouraged by the whole thing and rather saddened because apparently it's a rather charming, rather nice country with many nice people and it has one of these seemingly intractable kinds of problems which don't offer an easy solution. The Indian population, because of emigration subsequent to the coups, is now less or smaller than the native Fijian population, but they still are economically and culturally quite dominant. Although, as I mentioned earlier, the native Fijians own the lands and the land cannot be alienated. Most of the land was being farmed by Indians who held it in 99-year leases, and these leases are all expiring, and what kind of arrangements are going to be worked out is a big, complicated issue and terribly difficult... what kind of future is there for the Indian population which is still over 40% of the population. Very difficult.

Q: So I would expect that if Australia is particularly interested in this that your desk is probably writing a background paper on Fiji every time the Australian foreign minister goes through town or the osman comes up or... those kinds of circumstances.

IFSHIN: Precisely. And we hold annual meetings with the Australians. Various parts of the government get together regularly. It's a country, which you are well aware, that we have fairly close, intimate relations with, and cooperate in a number of areas.

Q: Yes. Do you recall now, we talked about this, the two island offices are then later joined with Australia New Zealand. Can you put a timeframe on this?

IFSHIN: It was about the mid-'90s.

Q: Yes, because I worked with Mike Carpenter and he was office director.

IFSHIN: Oh, was he?

Q: Yes, of Australia New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands, at that time they were all

together. So that was early '94.

IFSHIN: Well, maybe it was early '90s that it happened.

Q: Ok. After the Pacific island adventure, you are still in Washington.

IFSHIN: My next assignment was in Personnel, was it not?

Q: Yes.

IFSHIN: Yes, and that was a very interesting and enjoyable tour, quite frankly. I wish I had done it earlier in my career. I was a career development officer.

Q: Isn't that what we called "career manglement..."

IFSHIN: Well, "career destruction..." there's all sorts of those. But obviously you're handling too many officers, and I was doing political officers at the four and three level at this time. I don't know how many hundreds of officers that I had that I was the CDO for. Certainly it was a fairly large number.

Q: Can you back up and give us a sense of how the office of personnel is organized. You were saying you were doing fours and fives.

IFSHIN: This wasn't the office of personnel. The office we had was Career Development and Assignments, CDA. It has subsequently undergone different name changes. Within CDA, there are essentially two big divisions. One group of divisions that are handling officers' career development. And this consists of the normal cones, the political, the administrative, the consular, and the economic cone. We each had two or three officers handling all the officers in those cones. And there's also a senior officers' career development, but obviously they aren't really being developed at this point. Then you have the assignments. Each of the geographic bureaus has an assignments office that's part of the same CDA and they're trying to make assignments to their bureaus both domestically and of course their embassies. Those officers also were responsible for various domestic bureaus, political military affairs. I forget which office, whether it was European or Asian affairs did that, and IO had somebody doing them..., etc.

Q: So the regional offices were hooked up with a functional bureau.

IFSHIN: Right.

Q: So the NEA individual down there might have handled IO and he might have handled...

IFSHIN: I don't really remember how that was, but they each had a responsibility for certain functional bureaus.

Q: So on the one side, where you are looking at the officers' career development and the other side you've got assignments. So now that is the officers are divided into the cones and the conal system came in in the 1970s or so. Now we're working in a system where for some time now state and Washington puts out a list of coming available slots so that everybody knows what's coming up. In the old days, nobody knew what was coming up. Mentoring took on special meaning under those circumstances because it wasn't opaque.

IFSHIN: Right, sure. Well, it was an old boys' network.

Q: And now it's all very open.

IFSHIN: Well, pretty open.

Q: Pretty open. This list goes out, the individual officer is told give us bids off this. That comes in to you, depending on which ranked officer you were looking at, right?

IFSHIN: Right.

Q: So, you're saying within the political cone, somebody handled FSO 1s and 1-3s, and maybe 4s and 5s and 6s and 7s?

IFSHIN: Well, no, there was a senior officer and the junior officers (the Jos) who were being handled by another group. We had three people working in the political office. There was a guy doing 1s, there was a guy doing 2s, and there was me doing 3s and tenured 4s. And everyone who was not tenured was under the JO.

Q: What's a tenured 4? A little bit taller? [laughter]

IFSHIN: [laughter] Well, you remember the tenuring system where they are given permanent assignments...

Q: This gets you out of being a junior provisional officer.

IFSHIN: Right.

Q: It's that promotion, and now you are really in the system.

IFSHIN: Right. And as you say, the system is meant to be transparent and in many respects it is. It was a very interesting experience seeing the care and the enormous effort that goes into almost every assignment. You have routine assignments where somebody is bidding appropriately and there's not a whole lot of competition for a job and that guy gets assigned. That's pretty routine. Although, in some instances, a CDO might look at somebody's bid list and say, this guy doesn't know what he's doing. He's harming himself by bidding on these jobs. And you might advise him that you don't really want to pursue this, and even though it meets the needs of the service... well, if it meets the needs of the service you might let him harm himself, and just say, well, you know, everybody's

got to be their own CDO. That's another one of those slogans, which is true to a certain extent. I mean, you are responsible for seeing how your career should develop, but we try to talk to people. We try to help them, we try to push them along.

Q: Right, if the guy turns in his bid list and he's a FSO3 and these are all DCM-ships in Europe, the feedback might not be...

IFSHIN: You're not being realistic.

Q: You're not being realistic.

IFSHIN: One of the interesting things, one day a week we met in the so-called Panel. The Panel was a very interesting exercise.

Q: Who sat on the panel?

IFSHIN: Basically, we all sat on the panel. The director of the office, the deputy director, and all of the CDOs and the assignment officers. You had the front benchers, or the people who sat around the table, and you had the people in the back. But if one of my officers was being assigned or a job that I considered one of mine was being assigned, I would often be the one from my little division sitting at the front table and certainly speaking on behalf of my client. For the political officers, of course, it was always a question of outsiders trying to get political jobs. It was always the economics officer and the consular officer bidding on political jobs, and we would always point out that there weren't enough political jobs and there was a surplus of political officers. Every time a nonpolitical officer got a political job we were aggravating that situation and some political officer who was assigned to a nonpolitical job was not going to get promoted and was going to suffer, from our point of view, because of this.

Q: So, the system worked on the background that every job that was out there, whether in Washington or out in the field, had a cone attached to it.

IFSHIN: Right. Well, not every job. No. There were many jobs that were multifunctional as well. But overseas, just about every job is...

Q: Well, the list that goes out says ok here are all the political jobs and they are ranked FSO1 down. And you look at your rank and you say, okay, I'm a 3, I'm an Asia guy, here's the ten bids I'm going to send in. So now you are sitting on the panel, and one of these jobs has come up and the guy who is sitting... Honiara?

IFSHIN: Honiara. Well, the bureaus will often identify their candidates and if they identify one of your guys, as you described it, here's the EAP bureau has identified an O3 political officer for an O3 job, you're not going to fight that. For one thing, you'll lose. I'm talking about as a political CDO, I'm not going to fight it, I'm just going to go along with it. He's also my client, this guy that they've identified, and he wants the job and the fact that I have another client who I feel might be more deserving, or who I wish he could

have gotten it, or I wish they'd given him more consideration, I'm not going to make a big stink about that or try to change things that are not changeable. But, when they've identified somebody who is in another cone, or when the bureau wants to give a stretch assignment, and of course there were all kinds of rules regarding a stretch assignment, you can't assign somebody to a stretch assignment...

Q: Please define a stretch assignment.

IFSHIN: Well, an 03 officer is bidding for an 02 job, or an 02 officer is looking for an 01 job.

Q: You're looking for a job slightly above your current personal grade.

IFSHIN: Right, and the rules that were operative, and I may not have them exactly, and they may have changed since that time, but in those days, while you had an at-grade officer bidding on a job, you did not make stretch assignments. You couldn't. And there were also time frames when you couldn't make stretch assignments. Early in the bid cycle, you could not make stretch assignments. But at a certain point, if all the at-grade bidders had gone away, that is, been assigned, then the bureau would try to sneak in their stretch assignments. But meanwhile, you might have an at-grade bidder, who although he hadn't bid on this job, was qualified for the job.

Q: Or his other things had fallen through.

IFSHIN: Or his other things had fallen through, or didn't seem very likely to you that he would get them. So you would be encouraging him to submit a bid. But as a CDO you can't bid somebody. You can't bid for him. You have to get his authorization. But you try to keep those jobs available, even though the bureau is trying to slip in a stretch assignment.

Q: So you have this list of jobs to be filled, and you've got your people who say yes that's the one I want but my fallback position is this one over here. Is there any particular way that the panel approached this list?

IFSHIN: Well, the panel will not typically consider a job until the bureau has pretty much made up its mind. The bureaus determine when the panel will consider the job. At that point they'll have their candidate and say who they want. Assuming that he's at the right grade and the right cone, that's pretty much a fore-ordained thing. Although not always. Even then, sometimes we'll decide this is not a good job. On one occasion, it was a woman seeking to extend in Mexico City. The panel determined that it was not in her interest to extend in this job. Although the bureau wanted her and she wanted to extend, we felt that for health reasons and career reasons, we turned down the assignment. We wouldn't allow her to.

A point I'd like to make: the panel was extremely fair. Everyone was heard. And you would be amazed at the amount of time devoted to a single assignment at the 04 or 03

level, the amount of thought...

Q: This is midlevel people, this is not...

IFSHIN: Or even junior level jobs. Some of them go through very quickly with a minimum of fuss and feathers. It's just a rubber stamp type operation. But when someone, and a large number of people, and this was about the biggest office I'd ever been in. This was an enormous office. Bigger than some bureaus. It was certainly bigger than HA was in those days. This was a really big office. And everyone had the right to be in the panel room, and would be in the panel room, typically on an assignments day and everyone had the right to speak. Many people did speak. A great deal of thought and care went into assignments. If I say an hour was spent on an assignment, I'm not exaggerating. We would examine every aspect of it. People who knew the officer in question, people who didn't know the officer in question, people who knew the job, people who didn't know the job but had some other contribution to bring to the considerations. It was really a very thoughtful and I think a pretty fair process.

And the bureaus don't automatically win. I remember at least one instance where I succeeded in getting an officer an assignment that the bureau wanted to give to a former staff assistant as a reward and they made a big thing about how the bureau should have a right to reward people who had done a good job. And 'this person hadn't ever shown any interest in this country'... and I was able to show that this was untrue and that's why I think I won, that in fact he had regularly bid on jobs in the country involved, in fact it was Japan, in Japanese language training. It was a very interesting and very illuminating assignment for me. I wish I had done it early in my career.

Q: I'd had the same experience. I sat on a promotion panel one time and I came out with most of my negative stereotypes in tatters because I thought people really worked hard and they were trying to make it... In these panel meetings were there rules, professional rules or unwritten rules as to what kind of information you could bring to the discussion? Say the person being discussed was a good friend of yours and you'd just been on an assignment together. Would you be in a position to say, well, I just served with Dave and I happen to know him...?

IFSHIN: In fact you would. I don't whether there were any rules as to personal material that could not be covered. Of course, there were personal things we were not privy to. And I'd like to address that separately in a moment, because this does not deal with panel type things. But we had access of course to the personnel folders and we would read excerpts that favored our cause of course showing what sterling officers they were and how able they were and why they were the perfect candidate for the job we wanted for them.

What I wanted to say was, in addition to our, in my case CDO, responsibilities, we all had other jobs in CDA. One of the things I handled was handling people who were on short tours. I'm trying to think of just exactly what the job entailed. These were people who largely, for one reason or another, could not be assigned and often had lost their

clearance. Very often it involved alcoholism or some other reason for withdrawing their security clearances. Nonetheless, these people needed jobs. We would often find jobs for them. But sort of stuff was held very closely, just what the problem was. Often it was my responsibility to find jobs for people. I often knew there was a problem, I didn't know what the problem was, and I wasn't supposed to know what the problem was.

Another aspect of this sort of thing, one of my clients, in this day of... I had a client who I knew that the reason he had lost his security clearance was that he was homosexual. He had a court case where he was fighting to be reinstated, but in those days DS had withdrawn his clearances. That wasn't that long ago, but things have changed a lot, and they changed in part during the time I was in personnel.

I remember an officer came to me, in training in Arabic language training. He was going to a very conservative Arabic peninsular country or he was destined to go to one. But subsequent to his assignment he had discovered that he was homosexual. He had a lover. He said he was perfectly willing to go because of course he would be protected by his diplomatic status, but his lover would be going into what was potentially a life-threatening situation because this was a country where they executed people for homosexual behavior. So he wanted his assignment broken. I took this situation to the deputy director general, and we broke the assignment. The next panel that met broke his assignment. He subsequently came up with a very nice job.

Q: I remember an absolutely fabulous language officer, brilliant political officer, and in the 1970s it was discovered that he was homosexual, and he was gone.

IFSHIN: As I said, I had had an officer who gone through a similar process. He had been "outed" in some sense, not personally, but I really don't know how his homosexuality came to light, but he had lost his security clearance. He was still in his foreign service and was trying to have his clearances reinstated. But the whole time I was in personnel, I kept having to find jobs that didn't require clearances for him so he could work and continue as an officer. But someone who came along a little bit later, the deputy assistant secretary in personnel, took it on his own to break the assignment and find him a job and not call this to the attention of DS on the grounds, that as he told me, we'll never win this. "If he takes us to court, it may take months or years and this may go on for ever, but eventually he would win and the State Department shouldn't be fighting this because we are going to lose." This was in the period where we had already lost the women's suit, which by the way I think was an injustice and most of the people who were involved in it recognized that it was an injustice. Many of the assignments and many of the complaints, if they had known why the assignments were made and that in fact that they were supportable and could be backed up it could have been shown in court that these were not gender discrimination cases. But that's another story.

Q: I had to read one of the statistical reports that went into that case. Or at least a case in which they were trying to prove that women couldn't pass the foreign service exam and that therefore you had to dumb down the test. It was one of those things of bad statistics because it said X number of females took the test, X number passed it, and that's

not the same percentage as males taking the test. What statistic was missing was, why were those females taking the test? What they found out was they were wives or sweethearts of the guy who had a master's degree in international affairs and they had an art degree and the couple said, what the hell, why not?

IFSHIN: Sure. For example, and this was something that we used to discuss as panel fairly regularly. One of the things that happens in making tandem assignments is that often one part of the tandem has to take a down stretch. Now a tandem assignment is of course when a couple, both foreign service officers are assigned to a post. A down stretch is when say an O2 officer is assigned to an O3 job or an O1 officer is assigned to an O2 job. In putting officers into the same post often those are the only jobs that are available and it has to be done, if you want to keep them together, and they make the choice that they want to stay together and one of them is willing to take a down stretch. Usually, it turned out that the female half of the tandem was willing to take the down stretch. We would always note when we made such an assignment that this was going to look bad in our court records because it was another female being assigned below grade. We were doing it to accommodate the officer and it was voluntary on the officer's behalf. Nonetheless, it was going to look bad on our statistics, and the judge who was reviewing our statistics was not going to ask why was this down stretch made? It was just going to be another case of a woman being put in a job below her grade. So we would always want to put the man, but we couldn't always do it.

Q: So that woman's case was impacting on the way in which you were now looking at...

IFSHIN: Yes, this was subsequent to the judgment, but the court was reviewing our practices. We were subject to having all our assignments looked at on how we were treating women.

Q: Oh, so the court case was over the final judgment hadn't been made, but you knew what you were doing at the current time was going to be fed into the final judgment or the attitude toward the final judgment.

IFSHIN: Mhm.

Q: Interesting. What's the role of the director general, in assignments?

IFSHIN: In assignments of the highest level, and it's all kind of vague in my memory because I didn't participate in those assignments. But as I recall, the Panel would prepare lists of who got considered, for let's say consul generals and jobs like that, but those were decided by a special panel which was chaired by the director general. The director general, on occasion, would direct an assignment. It didn't happen often, and we were usually not privy to the reasons why it was being done. I think it often involved...

Q: But that was higher level people.

IFSHIN: Not necessarily. Sometimes you had a directed assignment at the lower levels.

But usually I think it involved a court case or some such type unique circumstances.

Q: You didn't get the idea that it was just because somebody was well-connected?

IFSHIN: No. I don't it ever involved that sort of thing. It was always some special reason which was outside. Again, I had a client, I don't want to dig up too many skeletons and I don't want to identify people. I had a client who was in the foreign service for compassionate reasons and it was a very difficult assignment always. And this often ended up being a directed assignment, her assignment.

Q: Yes. That would be interesting. On the basis of then what you saw and the system is pretty still pretty much the same way, right, in this year, 2001?

IFSHIN: I, guess, I don't really know exactly.

Q: What can they do in ten years? [laughter]

IFSHIN: There have been various name changes and reorganizations within personnel.

Q: If you were standing in front of this month's A100 class, just coming in, what would you say to advise them as to how to guide their own career?

IFSHIN: I would say that the system tries to be fair, but it is incumbent upon you to be concerned about your assignments and to work on your assignments. If you are bidding on a job and you're serious about that bid, you should be in contact with the embassy or the office or the bureau, the bureau at a minimum, that you are bidding on. Let them know who you are and why you would be good for the job. Often that's the only information they have to go on, the bureaus. The bureaus aren't seeking to school anybody by and large, and they occasionally have their fair-haired boys and they want their fair-haired boys to go into jobs, but they're not out to screw anybody. And many jobs, the only thing they know about you is if you came in and saw them and spoke to them. As a CDO, I don't want you, well, I want you to do it if you are my client, I want you to do what you can to promote yourself. But of course, it takes control out of my hands. But it's still something you should be doing.

Q: Would you find people who happen to be in Washington come in to you and say oh don't forget to mention this about me and I'm really interested in the PM job and...

IFSHIN: Oh, yes...

Q: Because I believe when people telegraphically submit their bids they also have a little paragraph or so that this is why I'm so fabulous for this job. And that helps you a little bit. And people could come or would come and you would say...

IFSHIN: Oh, yes. Some people in Washington came regularly, and others didn't. As a CDO you try and at least get a certain sense of the people. You try and talk to as many of

them as you can. You can read their file. You can have some sense of what kind of an officer this was... you try and have some sense.

Q: I was asking this because when I was mentoring my junior officers, I would always say, pick one or two people with whom you are stationed and keep in touch with them for the rest of their career. Because you may be overseas and your friend may be in Washington and he's going to be able to scope out who makes this assignment or what it's about. That's part of you having to be in charge of your career.

IFSHIN: A couple of things that I think I did wrong in my own career development early on. I was always interested in broadening myself. I went from being a political officer to being an economic commercial officer to being this or that and did a lot of things. I thought this was great, it was preparing me to be a manager and in charge and eventually an ambassador. But of course, promotions especially in the mid-levels are basically what you did in your cone. You are a political officer, you ought to get political assignments and that's important. Doing assignments out of cone is a multifunctional, promotional possibility, but basically it doesn't help you. You want to get promoted on the basis of what you did as a political officer. The other thing is I was always interested in the big fish in the little pond sort of thing. I was always looking for where I could be in charge, or close to being in charge. For the reason that you just pointed out of having broad acquaintanceships with people, I think there's a certain advantage to working in larger posts where you do get to know a large number of people and people get to know you. Subsequently, when you are competing for a job, somebody knows you. And if you served at small places where people don't know you, well, that's a handicap. It hurts you. There are tradeoffs for everything. Everything has its advantages and its disadvantages, but those are two things that I kind of noted.

Q: You just raised something that I think we need a little background on too. Promotions in the foreign service is a whole different process from the assignment.

IFSHIN: That is correct.

Q: Promotion panels are convened basically in the summer. They read people's files on the basis of files they rank people and that process goes absolutely separate from the assignment process.

IFSHIN: That is correct, except that sometimes we can't get a hold of files because the promotion panels have them.

Q: Doesn't it also mean that you might come up with somebody that is right on the cusp of being promoted and that would impact on whether he takes job A or job B?

IFSHIN: Yes. Occasionally we would get somebody had an assignment and he would seek to have it broken because he subsequently was promoted.

Q: It made he eligible for a whole new category...

IFSHIN: Yes, he doesn't want to go into a down stretch and this was going to hurt him. We were usually reluctant to break those assignments, in fact, we'd say oh it's not going to hurt you to do two years. You not eligible for promotion anyway...

Q: The timing... the promotion panels tend to meet in the summer and have their results by early fall. The assignments... of course they are meeting year round, but actually that timeframe is also rather compressed and unique, isn't it?

IFSHIN: The bulk of people are moving in the summer.

Q: So the panels are looking at them in the winter/spring?

IFSHIN: Right.

Q: Theoretically, the two cycles should meet each other smoothly.

IFSHIN: Yes. You have problems occasionally, but it's seldom major. We don't advise people on the basis of, well, I'm going to be promoted this next cycle. That is not a wise thing to do. You might be right, but you might be wrong. You do get people who are promoted and were assigned to a job which is now a down stretch for them, and sometimes they come in and they want to break the assignment. I don't think we allowed them do it very often, but sometimes it happens. Occasionally you have someone who has a job, it's a desirable job, the bureau feels that they're not going to have any trouble filling it. They are willing to accommodate this officer who is presumably one of their people anyway. So they will allow an assignment to be broken.

Q: As career development officer, you were looking at different regional bureaus, right? Not just Asia-Pacific?

IFSHIN: Right.

Q: Did you get a sense that the job requirement actually differed in different bureaus, that an O2 in Paris what he had to face and what he had to do is a different set of skills than an O2 in Africa?

IFSHIN: I assume that there are differences in the job, but there are enormous differences in the ways the bureaus go about filling their jobs. For better or for worse, the European bureau tended to be picky and selective and very clubbish, and it was hard to break into the European bureau if you hadn't done previous European tours. The African bureau tended to be willing to take anybody. If you'd been on an AF job, there were exceptions, but basically if you had bid on an AF job and you were at grade and in cone, you were gone. They assigned you. EAP was somewhere in between, more selective than most. NEA was also, well, once you had the language, you tended to be one of theirs.

Q: That was true for any regional bureau. Once you learned Spanish or Portuguese,

you're not going to end up in Africa or Asia. It's the ARA Bureau.

IFSHIN: NEA... now we also had what we called hard-to-fill jobs, where we would occasionally... a whole different set of rules applied, including sometimes forcing people to go into those jobs.

Q: Who would define these jobs as hard to fill?

IFSHIN: It was defined by the number of bidders. You have jobs that nobody bids on, but nonetheless they have to be filled.

Q: Somebody has to clean the...

IFSHIN: Somebody has to go into them. Depending on a whole series of circumstance, occasionally we would, again it was up to the CDO to sometimes to persuade people to bid on these jobs and convince them on the desirability of these jobs or the potential for enhancing their careers or how it's going to enable them to go on to another job which they wanted. I remember a good friend of mine and I think he had a good tour, and I was quite sincere in telling him... he had bid on Moscow and didn't get anything. A fine officer by the way. I convinced him to bid on Ulaanbaatar, or I discussed bidding on Ulaanbaatar with him. And of course, he bid and he went like that [snaps fingers]. [laughter] I think he did enjoy the assignment, but he never did get to Moscow, as far as I know.

Q: You're giving the impression that the regional bureaus had a strong sense of its people out there and how it wanted to fill those jobs. Did the functional bureaus have the same sense?

IFSHIN: Much less so.

Q: But they weren't exactly in a position of taking what the regional bureaus had left over.

IFSHIN: No, it depended on the functional bureau that you are talking about. INR always had a hard time filling their jobs. I had done an INR tour and we discussed earlier and found it very rewarding. I enjoyed my INR tour and often I advised, I mean this was my personal experience, I wasn't just talking, I would tell political officers who hadn't gotten the desk job that they wanted that if they could go into INR and working on the country or countries that they were interested in, that they would be working intimately with the desk. And if they did a good job, that the desk would think of them for their embassies. They couldn't just assign their desk officers, they had to look at other people as well.

Q: So that would you up with the flow of material in that area.

IFSHIN: Right, so I thought this was a good job for a political officer.

I enjoyed my tour in personnel and would certainly recommend it to anyone as something that would be enjoyable and useful to their careers, preferably doing it at mid-career rather than later in your career as I did.

Q: That's a fairly decent Washington job.

IFSHIN: I think so. Usually, they are not hard to fill. They attract a lot of bidders and personnel gets to pick and choose. They have everybody's records in front of them. They make a big deal about we want to be very selective about who we bring into personnel because it's important that we get the right officers because we are making assignments for other officers. I remember that they asked me to come down and interview for the job I had bid on. It was one of the more interesting interviews of that kind. Very frank. Obviously they had had complete access to my records and they knew a lot about me.

Q: From CORDS to personnel...is the start and the finish of your career. If you could summarize...

IFSHIN: I had one more assignment. I don't know what we were missing.

Q: Oops. You are right.

IFSHIN: My last assignment.

Q: Yes, your last assignment, 1991 to 1993. I turned the paper over. OES.

IFSHIN: It's an interesting office. Nuclear Safeguards was the name of the office... Nuclear Technology and Safeguards, NTS.

Q: Right.

IFSHIN: It's an office that was then assigned to OES when I joined it although it was subsequently transferred to PM. It's a non-proliferation office. Safeguards is a term of art which refers to the measures that are taken to ensure that nuclear material is not getting out of where it is supposed to be. It's people who have nuclear materials and nuclear technology, or it's people who are authorized to have it and it's not being used for any nefarious purposes. Of course, the discovery of Iraq's nuclear program, which again was just about contemporaneous with the time I joined the office, was a sign that safeguards procedures which were being instituted by the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna had not been adequate. A lot of toughening up of those procedures was what we were doing.

Q: So that nuclear oversight community, which would include state and the agency and energy, were focusing again... because safeguards is obviously an issue that was understood... but you are saying that this is further evidence that this is an important issue.

IFSHIN: Right. And it was also discovered during this time that I was in the office, that South Africa had also manufactured a bomb. A little known fact. They basically voluntarily dismantled their weapons program when the apartheid government realized that they didn't have that much of a future and they wouldn't be around that long and closed up shop and got rid of the technology and materials that would have allowed them to build a bomb.

Q: Somebody took it for them? For safekeeping?

IFSHIN: I don't really remember the details, but they basically voluntarily decided that they weren't going to do this because they weren't going to have control over the government very much longer.

Q: And that sort of thing would draw all kinds of pressure. When I was in Taiwan, the Taiwanese, Kuomintang, had played with the nuclear program back and forth. And we had been watching that and tapping them on the knuckles from time to time.

IFSHIN: Sure. Right. Then the other issue I got involved in in that office was nuclear safety, which has nothing to do with safeguards. This was post-Chernobyl and Three Mile Island... of course, it's well, post them, but because of the changes in the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, we were working very closely with the Europeans and the Eastern Europeans in developing international measures to increase the safety of peaceful nuclear reactors.

Q: Just for administrative background, can you give me that line structure? You are the deputy director in the office of nuclear technology and safeguards. Is there a deputy assistant secretary in OES?

IFSHIN: Right. Richard Stafford was our deputy assistant secretary. I don't recall who the assistant secretary.

Q: And OES for nuclear energy reported where on the seventh floor.

IFSHIN: There was a specialist, I can't recall his title, Richard Kennedy was a long-time head of the nuclear thing, and he was an S/... I don't remember what... but he was a special assistant to the secretary for nuclear energy and our delegate to the IAEA for many years. He had done this job for many years and one of the real nuclear experts in the U.S. government in international affairs. The office I was in had two foreign service officers. Myself and a junior officer, who was in fact a nuclear engineer himself, he had been in the nuclear navy and had come to the foreign service out of that. A relatively junior officer. The other people were all civil servants. My boss, the office director, was a lawyer. The other people were all nuclear engineers and nuclear physicists. There was at least one guy who was a long-time nuclear type but had his background in political science, I don't honestly recall. But people who were all very highly qualified.

Q: So this office has been in the OES for some time, and this is state's way of monitoring

the foreign policy implications of these policies.

IFSHIN: We worked very closely with the IAEA. That was our basic liaison. IAEA. There were other international organizations that we worked with, of course bilateral nuclear cooperation was also something we worked on. But we had a major focus on the international atomic energy agency to the extent that we were the principle office in the State Department dealing with that agency.

Q: And what kinds of policy issues came up during your tour?

IFSHIN: What could be done to toughen the safeguards regime was a consistent threat. Policies toward North Korea and their nuclear program was a major element, focus of the office's work. Not mine so much, unfortunately; I would have been interested in getting into that. And safety issues, which I did get into. We were then working on and eventually did achieve, I believe, we were pretty close to having a working draft when I left, of an international agreement on nuclear safety, that is... what kind of international cooperation could be established and what sorts of ground rules would be established for operating nuclear power plants around the world. And it was recognized that there was an international concern that if, as in Chernobyl, there was a nuclear accident that this did not just involve the country in which the plant was located, but involved its neighbors as well. So there was a need for international ground rules.

Q: How did the disappearance of the Soviet Union impact on your office?

IFSHIN: It had an enormous impact. For one thing, we were also involved with the various measures to control nuclear materials in the former Soviet Union, along with other people. But this of course became a major focus of the tension. The people working in our office were very much involved in that aspect of things as well.

Q: What did the office do to illustrate its participation in those kinds of policy areas?

IFSHIN: I'm trying to think of what was going on. We had people who were constantly visiting the former Soviet Union and working on the modalities of how we were going to control this material and what could be done, and how we were going to help their scientific establishment and in particular their nuclear establishment. We worked very closely with ACDA, ACDA may have had the lead in that area. Let me say that in some sense, this was not the most satisfying job that I'd ever had, and it was basically, although I was the deputy director of the office, you had these people who were not foreign service, highly trained, very technical people who had been doing these jobs for a long time... and this is something I've seen in other offices of this kinds, that there's a tendency to see this work as being, having a very proprietorial attitude to their work, and hold it very close to their vest exactly what they are doing, and how they are doing it, and not to want to share and bring more people in on it. It tended to be very closely held work.

Q: I'm sure you had very highly skilled technical people and then broad brush foreign policy types...

IFSHIN: Right.

Q: And you were trying to mix the two so that State could monitor these kinds of issues. If somebody dropped a briefcase on that office, what kind of documents would show up?

IFSHIN: Well, surprisingly, I don't think we had all that much paper, or not all that much highly classified paper. We had an awful lot of stuff classified at a low level. I don't think we normally kept so-called restricted data or formerly restricted data, although we were all indoctrinated, and I had all the clearances. I had cosmic and Q and everything else you could shake a stick at. I had all these clearances and sat in on all these meetings where highly sensitive things were discussed. But it wasn't on paper all that much.

Q: Still, it sounds to me like state's role in this was a liaison role. Was tapping into the technical expertise and then saying, look, here's the policy we need to follow to keep this technology within certain bounds..

IFSHIN: Right. And of course keeping the high level people in the State Department familiar with what was going on.

Q: Because obviously the Secretary of State is going to go to Russia, he's obviously going to need a background paper on this sort of stuff and it's your office that's going to put that in...

IFSHIN: Right. Nuclear safety was always a major area for discussion and working out of agreements. There was a general recognition that this was in everybody's interest, so it was something we could agree on. Although the former Soviets, the nuclear technology people in the former Soviet Union were sensitive to criticisms of their technology and didn't like to be told that some of the things they were doing were not safe. Nonetheless, I think it was widely recognized that some of their technology at least... some of their technology was excellent, world class, cutting edge, very good... but other things were seen as not so good. Major potential problems.

Q: Nuclear safety would have brought you into contact with other countries, like Brazil, the French, all of whom have peaceful nuclear energy programs, right?

IFSHIN: Right. And it did, and we worked closely with the Europeans on all these issues.

Q: Did you do some traveling?

IFSHIN: I went to Belgium for a negotiating session. I don't remember what the organization was but it included both the Europeans and the Eastern Europeans and we were working on a nuclear safety protocol, which I'm sure must have been enacted. We were very close. We had a good working draft by the time I left. By the way, this was all being done by... I don't know limited official use basis, unclassified. This was just to show that we didn't have a whole lot of highly sensitive material. We were exchanging

drafts of protocols constantly. It was not sensitive in that sense.

Q: In these large or multilateral delegations, were there one or two delegations that sort of spark plugged the whole thing?

IFSHIN: Yes.

Q: Or everybody was all on board and it was so obvious...

IFSHIN: There's always a certain delegation... Everybody always looks to the United States to take the lead on these things and sort of we are the number one nuclear technology nation with the former Soviet Union as the other country. France has a very extensive peaceful nuclear program, of course, and there are other excellent programs around the world. Yes, not everybody plays the same role. Everybody was active and I don't think there was any intransigence involved in developing these things. They tended to be more legal questions in just how we are going to word this in a way that satisfied everybody's needs.

Q: How about liaison with the Congress? Were they kept informed as these things went along? Or was that at a different level?

IFSHIN: That was at a different level. I had nothing to do with the Congress on these issues. There is a congressional committee dealing with nuclear energy...

Q: And you would be briefed by OES?

IFSHIN: Somebody.

Q: At what point did this office then move into the political military bureau?

IFSHIN: About halfway through. I think largely it was as a result of the Iraqi experience. This whole thing sort of comes out of the Eisenhower administration, Atoms for Peace. I think that's where this office gets created. That we are going to share nuclear technology with everybody for peaceful purposes. That is the IAEA's secondary role, or one of its principle roles is sharing nuclear technology around the world. We gave little reactors to all sorts of countries at this time. But safeguards is a term of art, became another important role in the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and became increasingly important. Again, IAEA has these inspection teams that go out and make sure that these little nuclear reactors which we had given to people were being used as they were supposed to be used, and that the enriched uranium, for example, is all accounted for. And any plutonium that has been produced has been all accounted for. This safeguards area, as I said in the wake of the experience with Iraq, got increasing attention and the need to strengthen our inspections and our procedures for safeguards.

Q: I assumed that that meant increased observation or interest in what other countries than Iraq... Iran is coming to somebody's attention?

IFSHIN: A number of countries. And of course, the United States and particularly the intelligence agencies had their own inspection methods and various technologies that had been developed over the years for seeing if certain ions are present in atmospheres or to be able to tell what might be going or what is going on. And they were more sharing. The policy here was sharing more with the IAEA so that their safeguards team could take advantage of some of these technologies and some of these observation techniques.

Q: Was there any unclassified, worldwide human rights report on non-proliferation being done at that time? That is, non-proliferation...we're worried about this country or that country?

IFSHIN: I can't remember an unclassified report being by a government entity. I've read such things, and I think they were done by non-governmental and these tended to be pretty good where they rated the various entities around the world and what's going on. Who has, what is the status of any potential nuclear weapons program in country "X."

Q: Now when this office moves to PM, is it just that office, or did the deputy assistant secretary move with it?

IFSHIN: Yes, and in fact, there's been subsequent reorganizations. But at the time, OES had three nuclear offices. NTS and I don't remember what the other ones were. We all worked closely together and we had our deputy assistant secretary for the three offices. This basically takes place after I left, but the three offices were all merged subsequently and the deputy assistant secretary became an office director. The various office directors became I guess deputies. Although the gentleman who had been my office director had already moved on to, what is the domestic nuclear agency... NRC... Nuclear Regulatory Commission, as the head of their international office. But I believe that is their current setup, they are within PM and what had been three offices in OES is now one office. There were other things that happened to work on nuclear affairs within PM, and I think there are new offices as well.

Q: In the whole range of nuclear affairs, and whatnot, do you think state's a viable actor? Did they make any contribution?

IFSHIN: Yes, there are certainly international issues that have to be done by state and there's always a tension, I think, that you have long-term career professionals who are not foreign service, their whole ethic and way of working is somewhat different from the foreign service way which obviously I'm more comfortable with the foreign service. We tended to be broader brush and kind of more open as the idea is that everyone in the office should be kept apprized of things that they need to know. Whereas, these people tend to hold on to things. That's just my impression. Everything is held close to their chest and they don't want to share. It's very secretive about what they are doing. But it was an interesting and fun kind of job. These were interesting people to get to know. I learned a lot.

Q: The liaison with other government agencies that were in the same policy area went smoothly...? Was there a policy issue that came up that there had to be an interagency group set up?

IFSHIN: There were a lot of interagency meetings, frankly. This was an area where obviously energy had a big interest, and ACDA had a big interest, and defense obviously. There were other agencies that got involved and we met with them on a regular basis for various issues. I don't recall any great problems or clashes. You always have different ways of looking at things, but there wasn't any great hostilities or problems. There was an international project to develop a fusion reactor. I don't know if you remember that. The Europeans, the Soviets, us and the Japanese were all working together in this multistage project and eventually of course the Soviets couldn't meet their budget. We were trying to accommodate them by accepting various forms of technology as their contribution and financing them. We were coming under more and more budgetary pressures about how we were going to finance our contribution and eventually the thing broke apart. The Europeans had devoted many more resources, it seems to me, to peaceful nuclear activities than we have. But then we have a big military effort, and peaceful nuclear activities in the United States, well, particularly reactors, of course, we saw a standstill for better than 20 years dating from Three Mile Island and those sorts of things where we just... our efforts just collapsed.

Q: Now, OES is a functional bureau as opposed to a regional bureau. Do have any final thoughts as to workload or...

IFSHIN: Well, as a nuclear area in OES, we were part of but sort of separate from... They were all doing environment and oceans and basically a lot of non-classified. We were doing much more sensitive kinds of stuff. For example, in the meeting that we subsequently learned was bugged by the Russians, perhaps by the Soviets before the Russians, the conference room was an OES conference room. We used to meet there fairly regularly. But whenever we met as part of OES, at least when I was our representative which was fairly often, I tended to be very silent at those meetings. Because the things that were being discussed were non-classified and if I had anything non-classified to say I would say it, but if I had anything classified to say, I just sat there quietly and didn't talk about it. Because it just wasn't people who needed to know about those things.

Q: Sounds like one of the benefits of a functional bureau job is that you get to touch base with a lot more countries. If you are on the China desk, you talk to China, but here you are going to international conferences, you are talking to the Brits, the Russians.

IFSHIN: But a lot of the job as you correctly pointed out is liaison with other U.S. agencies that were interested in nuclear affairs. That was a major part of our function. But I enjoyed it. I actually had taken that job at the time with the idea that I was going to retire and that it would help prepare me for something that I could do in the future. I still think I was correct. I applied to a couple of nuclear firms, pointing out that the future of nuclear energy was largely, for the foreseeable future, was in Asia. South Korea and

Taiwan and possibly China, and I had a background that I thought would be helpful to them. There wasn't very much interest shown in that. I still feel my calculation was correct.

Q: You retired in September 1993. What have you been doing?

IFSHIN: For a year I lazed around. My wife says it was for two years. Maybe it was for two years. And enjoyed myself. I took a part-time job for a while, but that was basically small beer and not terribly interesting. And then I started doing the human rights report in 1994 or 1995 and have done it ever since.

Q: Now this is the State Department's annual human rights report written out of the human rights bureau which is now HA?

IFSHIN: Right, which is now DRL, Democracy, Rights and Labor. When I was working in it, I think I described this, it was under Plans and Programs within HA that my office of multilateral affairs was merged into and they had oversight of the human rights report which was done by this team of former foreign service officers. When I joined it, the program had been moved to the office of asylum affairs. The office of asylum affairs at that time consisted largely of retired foreign service officers, WAEs working part-time on asylum affairs, and our group of human rights report officers of the same ilk, that is, retired WAEs. Subsequently over the years, the office of asylum affairs and, what's the office's full title now? They've incorporated human rights report into the name of the office, it's the office of asylum affairs and human rights reports or some such... I don't think that's the actual name of the office but it has the human rights report in the title.

Q: We can look it up.

IFSHIN: In any case, they've hired more and more permanent personnel. A lot of them are presidential management interns that they had brought on for two years and have subsequently stayed on in some instances. It's a much larger office and more and more people working on asylum affairs and on the human rights reports and they still bring back a handful of us who give them that surge capacity during the human rights report compilation.

Q: Now, isn't that a bit of change? Because, I remember working on the desk, and we wrote these things on the desk, well, actually you tasked the embassy... the their report came to the desk and the desk sort of continued to reformat and re-edit and then it went to an office, but it basically was in final already. Now is it not as in final or...

IFSHIN: The embassies and the desk still does what they always did, but because we have so many more personnel working on the reports now, there's much more fact checking. And with computers particularly and we now have access to the Internet and all that sort of thing at our desks as well as confidential data, the normal State Department databases, and these people have a lot of time, we do a whole lot of... how come you did a report on this and Amnesty International reported that such and such and such and such

happened, what about that? Didn't it happen, or don't you think it's reliable, this information, or what do you think? And there was a press report that two people were executed summarily on such and such an occasion, what was this all about? There's a lot more of that which makes the reports much harder to do, and much more time consuming than they used to be, for those of us who are working on them. When I first started, basically we had an editorial function. We wanted to make sure that the reports conformed to the style and format. Every report was supposed to follow the same format. Every report uses the same language to describe the same sorts of situation. We have lots of rules about inflammatory languages and avoiding them. Occasionally we would ask questions. For example, if I was working on the Malaysia and I was reading their religion section and they fudged around conversion, and I'd go back and say, isn't true that a Muslim can't convert to Christianity or any other religion? Well, technically they can, but it might be life-threatening if they did, was the embassy's response. But typically, we didn't do a lot of fact-checking. We just accepted the embassy's facts. We had a little bit where somebody would have kept the file and had some clippings and sometimes things got left out and we'd go back and say what about it. Or there was a major coup in the country and we've ignored that, does it have any impact on the human rights situation. This is not a human rights but surely the fact that the constitutional procedures were abrogated and people were arrested without due process deserves mention in the human rights report.

Q: In the fact-checking that you do with the embassy... are you sending a cable out to them, e-mail these days?

IFSHIN: Nowadays it tends to be much more e-mails and OIs than cable.

Q: Trying to keep it informal?

IFSHIN: Yes. We used to do it with cables. Now it's much more the e-mail process. Depending on the post. Not every post has classified e-mail.

Q: How long is the process to go from the desk-scrubbed embassy version to the final report?

IFSHIN: Well, last year we started in mid-October and our reports are finished the last day of February. And this year they want us to start in the middle of September. I think that's for bureaucratic reasons rather than work reasons. They want to bring us in on the old fiscal year, rather than on the new fiscal year.

Q: And there's more reports these days, right?

IFSHIN: Oh, yes. We are always adding new countries. [laughter]

Q: [laughter]

IFSHIN: And the reports keep growing.

Q: Congratulations, you're a new country and you qualify for a report.

IFSHIN: The reports keep growing and they are longer every year. We have more and more material. And now the Congress has added the international religious freedom report.

Q: Separate from or melded into the traditional...

IFSHIN: Separate from. Now we cover religious freedom in the human rights report. It's a major issue. It has to be covered. But we don't cover it to the extent...

Q: Now the format of the report, is that pretty set, or has that changed as to its categories?

IFSHIN: It's pretty set. We've added categories over the years. Labor rights came in and got major attention at one time, it still gets major attention, and now we are doing trafficking in persons that has become a major human rights issue.

Q: Who decides that? Responding to congressional pressure and activists groups out there?

IFSHIN: Yes, often it is. Women's rights began to get much more attention with the Clinton administration and became a major focus at the time of the Beijing conference on women's international... The rights of women, I can't recall what the title of the conference was, but in any case women's rights assumed a much higher profile. A year or two later children's rights and child labor suddenly got a much higher profile. And the last two years trafficking in persons has gotten much more. The original format of the human rights report as it developed... When I say original I'm not saying from the first year but as it developed over the early years is very much drawn from the universal declaration of human rights. If you sit down with the universal declaration and you see how it's laid out and what they laid out as human rights, that is the order with which we treat human rights in the human rights report. We are just taking it directly from the universal declaration and saying, the universal declaration said that was a right so how about this? How does country "X" treat that right, how is it handled in that country? That was the initial human rights report, followed very much from international instruments on human rights. But as international instruments have come to incorporate more and more areas, so has the human rights report come to incorporate more and more areas.

Q: As pressures or attention...

IFSHIN: Right. A lot of this is congressional, or coming from within an administration. With women's rights, the story was it was Hillary Clinton who wanted this. I don't know if this is true necessarily but that was always sort of the stick with which we threatened desks and embassies. We understand that Hillary wants this.

Q: At the highest levels. I would assume that if somebody wants to demonize a particular country then they generate pressure for something in that area.

IFSHIN: There's always a certain amount of adversarial atmosphere to the compilation of the human rights report where many desks and particularly embassies, less so the desks, want to defend their country or want to cover up or ameliorate or make it sound better or in some way not want to call their country a human rights offender. And then your pariah states, Sudan, Afghanistan, others, North Korea, that nobody's interested in defending and nobody cares what you say about them and it's kind of the job of us as the human rights gurus to write down the report. We don't use that language, this is not a policy speech or something, this is a human rights report. We write it in very dry, bureaucratic language. We try to keep the same kind of language to describe things in every report and we try to be as accurate as possible and we try not to speculate to the extent that we can avoid speculation. So for the countries that don't have any defenders, we end up not as their defenders so much as trying to keep the integrity of the reports more than the defenders of the countries.

Q: You are wanting to have some comparability across the board if you are talking about labor union rights.

IFSHIN: Right.

Q: And the last three years?

IFSHIN: In the last three years I have worked in the declassification business. What they call routine declassification, documents that have reached the age where they are supposed to be declassified. And it's been interesting.

Q: And passed to the national archives in College Park.

IFSHIN: Right.

Q: Where do you do that work?

IFSHIN: Well, the first year I did it in Newington, where there is a State Department facility, a repository or records.

Q: Does it look like the last scene in...?

IFSHIN: No. I understand that there are such places. Where is that?

Q: Indiana Jones...

IFSHIN: Raiders of the Lost Ark. I understand that there are such buildings and there's one in the Washington area and the name escapes me. The Newington facility is large, warehousey, we're in offices, but there's a warehouse attached to it where they have

stacks and stacks of cardboard boxes with these records. The first time I did this job I worked there. Some of the boxes are boring. They are really dull. They are chron files and you are going through page after page of really boring stuff. And sometimes it's exciting. You are looking at the Seven Day War, the Yom Kippur War, or whatever war was developing from New York, and I'm reading all the cables as they situation develops. That's kind of interesting and fun to see how that works. The last two years I've worked out at College Park, at the National Archives. Last year was particularly interesting. I was doing records from INR which dealt with... the records before there was an assistant secretary in INR. I forget the name, the director of intelligence and research. It was the files of the director of intelligence and research and some of these were dating from OSS creation of CIA and they are working out of their relationship between the State Department and CIA. Those were fascinating records as you might guess. Some of them dealt with... I remember one long memorandum which spelled out all the potential problems, and by God it was dead on. It was just exactly what happened. [laughter]

Q: [laughter] Potential problems in this bureaucratic organization...

IFSHIN: Right. How this relationship was going to impact on the State Department.

Q: Because basically, INR was the research end of OSS, and the CIA got the operatives and state got the records.

IFSHIN: Right. There were some very interesting records. And you were mentioning this year your having read U. Alexis Johnson's personal records. I was doing his personal files. We all were. I wasn't doing all of them. I'd get a box and somebody else had a box.

Q: His biography is one of the best ones I've ready about Foreign Service careers, called The Right Hand of Power. It was very interesting. Knowing who he was and what he did, again, very American Foreign Service guy starts out... He's a Midwesterner, Kansas or Missouri or...

IFSHIN: Actually he grew up in California, but his family originates in the Midwest and then they...

Q: Yes, they do and then he gets lucky and has the talent and the opportunity as he comes up through the system and gets involved in all these fascinating things. But those are his personal papers then?

IFSHIN: Well, I don't know about... well, basically his files, his mem-cons dealing with meetings he held. The ones I was looking at, he was already a senior officer. He was already the undersecretary for political affairs. Maybe he had two tours as undersecretary of political affairs. I think he did. He did that. He went to Japan as ambassador. He came back and was undersecretary again. Maybe he had some other job before he went to Japan. He was senior in both incarnations before going to Japan as ambassador. Those were the papers I was looking at, surrounding the years of his period as ambassador.

Q: As a segue into an overview of your own career, what advice would you give to a college student who asks you, gee should I go into the foreign service?

IFSHIN: I'm glad I was a foreign service officer and I enjoyed my time in the foreign service. I'm not sure I would advise, I mean everyone has to follow their own interests and do what they feel what they want to do. I think, in many ways, for a white male it has not been, it's harder than it used to be. The system is out to create greater diversity, and for better or worse, this results in a certain amount of reverse discrimination. But it can still be a rewarding career. It can still be exciting. I would also add, it's easier for a bachelor, it's a little harder for a married couple. It gets much harder for families. Many families do it and do it well. And the children thrive with the exposure to different cultures, but not every family. It is certainly a more difficult thing to do with a family. But if you are interested in international affairs, sure. Foreign service. Great. A lot of good people. You're going to have a lot of interesting experience.

Q: On the interesting experiences side of it, I would expect too, that there's different experiences with different generations. When you and I started, it was Vietnam and Coke bottles through the embassy window. Now I bet you probably couldn't get a good anti-American demonstration going in most of the old places.

IFSHIN: Well, maybe not the old places, but you still have...now we have globalization and... You know, the United States as the world's remaining superpower, to repeat a cliché, is always going to be the target of people who are against modernity or who are appalled at the world as it exists now or the direction we see it's probably going and we're around the world, and the flag's out there and there will always be people who want to throw a brick or what have you. Although the majority of the world is moving in that direction as fast as they can.

Q: Isn't that why we are talking about the foreign service as being the first line of defense overseas. That is, the people on the ground watching the changes, seeing how these trends are hitting the various countries and various societies...

IFSHIN: Yes, well, I think the United States needs a good foreign service in this era of instantaneous communication. Well, I was saying the United States needs a good foreign service... the United States needs good intelligence about what's happening overseas, good information about what's happening overseas. I think having a government agency, a foreign service gather that information is good and useful. It's clearly not the only way we will learn about what is happening overseas. But there is an important role for the foreign service, yes.

Q: On the analytical side, you've got capabilities and intent. It's the human intelligence that State Department collects that gets you to the intent issues.

IFSHIN: Well, I suppose. We have so many foreign students studying in this country... Well, we don't have so many Americans studying overseas, I guess [laughter]. This doesn't prevent the enormous misunderstandings. Obviously, relations with ourselves and

Iran hasn't been helped by the enormous numbers of Iranians who studied in the United States in the good years or the friendly years. Now we have significant problems with China and of course, we've had enormous numbers of Chinese studying in the United States. I don't know if that has improved things or not. But managing those relations requires people who are familiar with both cultures and can address the American needs thoughtfully and foreign service officers are in a position to do that kind of thing.

Q: I appreciate your coming down to talk to us.

IFSHIN: I've enjoyed it. I didn't know we were going to take as many tapes and as much time as we took, but it's been fun.

Q: Thank you very much, Stan.

IFSHIN: I hope to stay in touch with you, David. And do you want to make a Xerox of this?

End of interview