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

RALPH E. LINDSTROM

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INTERVIEW

Q: This is an interview with Ralph E. Lindstrom, and it is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Ralph, can you tell me when and where you were born and a little about your family?

LINDSTROM: I was born in 1925 in Anoka, Minnesota. Anoka is a small city, older than Minneapolis, located at the junction of the Mississippi and Rum Rivers. I went to grade school in Anoka and I graduated from the Anoka high school in 1943.

Q: Where did your father and mother come from?

LINDSTROM: My father was actually born in Sweden, and was not able to finish high school because he had to support his parents and went into business in a small

supermarket business. My mother was also of Swedish extraction but born in this country, and had become a nurse and graduated from high school in Minneapolis.

Q: You went to high school in Anoka, is that right? What was the high school like there at that time?

LINDSTROM: It was a very excellent school, and the standards were very much comparable to those, as I learned later, in many private schools in terms of really focusing on the a-b-cs, grammar, Latin, and all that sort of thing, and had some excellent teachers.

Q: You graduated in...

LINDSTROM: 1943.

Q: Which was...

LINDSTROM: ...during the war.

Q: So that put you right in line for the draft. Did you get into the military?

LINDSTROM: Yes. I was drafted...actually I ended up volunteering for the Army and served there for about one year. I thought I was going to go to the ASTP training program but that was disbanded when I was at Ft. Benning so I was sent to a regular...

Q: ASTP was sort of a training program and all of a sudden they ran out infantry men.

LINDSTROM: That's right, and it's the same thing or equivalent to the Navy's B-12 program which was not disbanded but I had somewhat weak eyes and couldn't qualify for the Navy. Then just as I was going to go to Boston University, so I thought, they told us that the program was being disbanded, and I ended up in Camp Livingston, Louisiana in a regular Army infantry division. Then about that time I think I transferred to California and about that time I had taken an entrance exam for the service academies. And I passed this exam, and I got a telegram from my congressman who said, "You have a first alternate appointment to go into the Navy, and you can leave the Army if you want to." This was in the middle of the war, so I did that and went to Bainbridge, Maryland when the Navy had a Naval Academy Prep School. I finished that and took the exams successfully but the principal got in; I was the first alternate. Then I was assigned to regular duty in the Navy for about a year and a half, and I ended up in Washington, D.C., of all places, in the Office of Naval Intelligence. We were screening captured German documents, mainly the B-1 and B-2 missile programs.

Q: These are rocket missiles. So you did that until when?

LINDSTROM: Until the summer of 1946 when I got accepted in Harvard and I went directly up to Harvard from Washington.

Q: You had four years at Harvard?

LINDSTROM: Yes.

Q: You graduated in 1950. What were you majoring in at Harvard?

LINDSTROM: I was majoring in government, political science as they call it in most places.

Q: What were they teaching you at Harvard? Was there any thrust to the government courses?

LINDSTROM: No particular thrust. You could pretty much do what you wanted. I was an honors candidate and did write a dissertation on Annamite Nationalism, or Vietnamese Nationalism, I guess as we would call it today. They had some interesting papers in Widener Library there during the period of World War II, when we were actually helping Ho Chi Minh under Roosevelt's direction, rather than the Vichy French. There were quite a few things on Ho Chi Minh who still to this day remains a fairly enigmatic figure. So I wrote really basically a combination biography of him, and the movement such as we knew it, and concluded that it was primarily a movement for national independence. I remember one of my conclusions, this was back in 1950, was that the last thing the United States should do was get into a war of attempting to supplant the French. It was mainly a war for independence, rather than a war against communism purely and simply, although Ho Chi Minh was obviously a communist.

Q: You were in that class that came in in '46. I guess it was mostly veterans and very serious about getting ahead.

LINDSTROM: I'd say generally yes. We were somewhat overcrowded and it was the largest class Harvard had ever had and has ever had since then, I think. And at that time women were not integrated fully into it. They were still all over in Radcliffe.

Q: Had you heard about the State Department, while you were in the government course, or was this on your radar at that time?

LINDSTROM: I think I had first gotten interested in it when I met Hubert Humphrey back in Minnesota. I had actually gone to McAllister College for about three months or so while I was recuperating from a hernia operation before I went into the Army. And I went with him up to an international conference in Manitoba in Winnipeg and it was really my first taste of foreign affairs, and it completely changed me. Up until then I was thinking about being a major in some scientific subject or mathematics. Then I had two and a half years in which to think about this further while I was in the military, and by then I had concluded that I'd like to go into the foreign affairs field.

Q: Did you know of anybody during this time while you were at Harvard, or met anybody in the Foreign Service?

LINDSTROM: Yes, but Harvard is a very large place. They did send a team up there to talk to us a couple of times, that sort of thing, and some of my classmates did end up in the Foreign Service. People like Bill Harrop, I think he was in my class, but we didn't know each other.

Q: I was just thinking. I went to Williams and I can't recall anybody from the Foreign Service coming by but we had a big contingent for the CIA. I didn't go in but I made noises about going into the CIA, but it was the same period. When you graduated in 1950, what were you up to?

LINDSTROM: In those days, as you may recall, one had to meet the language requirement before you could pass the Foreign Service exam. By then I was married and my wife was working in Cambridge in the Visiting Nurse's Association and we decided to go to France on our own. Of course, the GI Bill was quite liberal in those days so we took a ship over to France and first I was going to study at ___ ___ and then I soon found out that the French universities were not very much hands-on and gave rather cold lectures, and I further calculated that I could use my GI Bill for semi-individual lessons in both French and Russian, which I did do at the Berlitz school, of all places. My French got to a very good fluency, and my Russian almost to passing level, and about time, or a year or so later, I decided to take the exams and study in the American Library in Paris on things I felt weak on, and did succeed in passing it. And one other member of my class was also in Paris, Fred Chapin. We went back on the same ship, the America, and took the oral exams over at the Walker Johnson building the same morning, and both passed.

Q: The exam you took was the old three and a half day exam, was it?

LINDSTROM: Yes. Then I passed it orally in French, but not quite in Russian. That didn't really matter at that time to get into the Foreign Service.

Q: Do you recall your oral exam at all?

LINDSTROM: Yes, I do, some parts of it.

Q: What were they probing for?

LINDSTROM: The heaviest probing in my case was my knowledge, or lack of it, of American history. I still remember one of the members of the board admonishing me to become more familiar with American history. I had taken, as I recall, probably only one major course in American history. But in other words, they were probing just to see what kind of a person you were and how nervous you were or not, I guess. So anyway then I went through the A-100 course for three months. We were a group of about 18, including two women. Our assignments finally came out at the end, we all got foreign assignments,

and my assignment was to Kabul, Afghanistan, which was a pretty remote place in those days.

Q: This was in '52, in the middle of the Korean War. Can you talk a bit about the role of the United States, and the Soviet Union at that time?

LINDSTROM: When I was still at Harvard there was at least some degree of interest in international relations, but I think, again going back to that post-war class, people were concentrating more on getting their education, and getting through with it as quickly as they could. I did go to a couple of meetings of the Harvard Liberal Union which turned me off completely. It was dominated by a group of young communists types who were always voting for resolutions to do this, that and the other thing, and it did not appeal to me at all. It wasn't an intellectual discussion of politics or anything like that which you could have with a faculty member or adviser. And even to our initial Foreign Service class, again I don't really think that we were that aware of international relations yet at the top of our agenda. Maybe we should have been.

Q: Was there a feeling that the Soviet Union was the enemy by that time?

LINDSTROM: Oh, I think quite clearly by that time. Then there is another factor. Bear in mind this was during the McCarthy period, and I think there was a lot of concern about that sort of thing, and whether we wanted to go into an organization. It didn't bother me that much, but certainly McCarthyism was overhanging that period to some degree, with jokes about it.

Q: Was there the feeling, particularly because of what was happening to what was called the China hands, that you better watch your step?

LINDSTROM: Oh, absolutely yes. It depended on the individual, but about the closest thing I'd come to anything like that was my going to the Harvard Liberal Union.

Q: I must say at that time you had a lot of people coming out and they were trying things on for size, and the young, at least communist-leaning students, were exercising power, but they were turning an awful lot of people off. This didn't take a real hold in the United States.

LINDSTROM: I remember in my very first year at Harvard, there was an instructor in English, I think it was, and our assignment was to write essays on whatever subject we chose, and while I had been in the Army I'd taken to reading some of the sort of left-wing publications, and anyway the emphasis was sort of the popular thing to do as a young person, I thought. And I remember on one of my essays I had a conference with my instructor and he said, and this sort of shocked me because I thought everybody would be very liberal minded at a place like Harvard, and he said to me, "Somebody must have given you a real left-wing brain washing." I can't remember exactly what it was I'd said in

my paper. So that sort of woke me up a little bit. There were other ways of looking at things than just purely from a left-wing point of view.

Q: You went out to Kabul where you served from '52 to '54. What was the situation in Afghanistan at that time?

LINDSTROM: It is, of course, a very poor country and I had never seen poverty like that up close before in my life. It's a country which still is, and always has been, caught in between other major powers and crossroads of invasion, and it had borrowed heavily from their neighbors. Their major political concern during the period I was there was with Pakistan, and Pakistan's seeming efforts to incorporate under their control part of Afghanistan which they referred to as Pushtunistan. We were, on the other hand, under the direction of John Foster Dulles, much more inclined to think about the Soviet threat. At that time we were putting CENTO together, Pakistan, Iran and Turkey. And the Afghans felt increasingly threatened by that. I was, during my first year or so, doing consular and administrative work, and when I'd go over to the Quang__ ministry on some visa case or something like that, or an American citizen matter, they would make it very clear that they weren't happy with our policy of supporting Pakistan and CENTO. They eventually, while I was still there, began turning to the Soviets, and the Soviets came in with their first well publicized, small aid program in a non-communist country, and built a bakery, and paved the streets of Kabul, and those were the main things. And I used to meet more and more Soviet diplomats who had been very well trained in Pushtu, a rather obscure language that practically no American, with one exception, had studied. I remember the (Soviet) director of consular affairs said to me, "You see, Mr. Lindstrom, this is what you people should be doing." So they were making an impression, a fairly favorable impression in that respect.

Q: I realize you were down the totem pole in a small embassy. Our policy towards Afghanistan was sort of watching?

LINDSTROM: And giving food aid, which was in many ways a mistake. It discouraged farming, this has happened in many countries as I understand it. Afghan farming became unprofitable in many instances, and began to create urbanization and other radicalization indirectly over the longer term. And also we did provide support and financial aid to some bigger programs through the Morrison-Knudsen Company. It built big hydroelectric projects in the southern part of the country. So we were trying to be friendly to them, supportive of them, but at the same time we were caught in a bind. I don't think we truly realized it at the time of the support of the anti-communist allies. So over the longer term, long after I left there, the Afghans pooh-poohed the Soviet threat. They said we know how to handle them. Increasingly they went to the Soviets for aid, and eventually got into military aid, and military training programs.

Q: What was your impression of how things were run by the Afghans? Was there much of a central government?

LINDSTROM: At that time, the leader was Prime Minister Daud, who was in for a time, was out, and then later came back in again. I think they had reasonably good control over things, but the other provinces, and the non-Pushtu tribes felt pretty much left out of things. But I think on balance they were making progress. And again, they were very concerned by the Pakistani propaganda on Pushtunistan. It was hard to have very much contact with them in terms of conversations on political subjects, not impossible, but a little bit difficult. I remember there tended to be cultural clashes of one kind or another. Women, of course, were in complete purdah in those days. I think I only met three or four wives of high ranking people who were not wearing purdah in their homes during the period that I was there.

We did bring in a Marine detachment while I was there. Before that we had relied on civilian security guards, and of course the Marines managed to get a couple of girlfriends despite the purdah, and this created an incident. They were expelled, of course, from the country.

Our leadership in the embassy was by one Angus Ward, about whom you have doubtless heard before.

Q: Would you describe him, and his method of operation, and background?

LINDSTROM: He was a naturalized American citizen, which I think was an important part of his make-up, a Canadian. He was also not a graduate of a four-year university, so he had chips on his shoulder, I think. He was a very smart man, and he had specialized almost his entire career in the Soviet Union. He had been consul general in Vladivostok. We had a post there then. He was a rather bitter man by the time I got there. He had been incarcerated by the Chinese in Mukden, and he then became sort of a political football to the China lobby. It made him into an unlikely hero. And this was the reason he got the post. He had never been an ambassador, and he was consul general in Nairobi. But the China lobby put a lot of pressure on the State Department to give this fine, deserving man an ambassadorship. They didn't have Ouagadougou in those days, so it was Kabul. And my very first assignment, I had only been in the post for I think one month, was to go down and meet him and his wife in Peshawar.

Q: And his cats too?

LINDSTROM: And his cats, oh yes. Jack Korner was the Chargé d'Affaires who gave me this assignment. I'm not quite sure what was in Jack's mind, but I was very inexperienced to be doing this sort of thing, and Jack knew very little about the man too, as it later developed. So anyway, I went down to Peshawar, and the ambassador was delayed in getting there. And finally, I remember, I was diving into the swimming pool at the Peshawar Club when somebody came up and yelled at me, "The ambassador is here." So that was the beginning of my not too happy relationship with Ambassador Ward. He'd brought his own Cadillac in, and had three cats, an East African cat, a Siberian cat, and something else, I can't remember what, in the back seat with Hermgard, his Finnish wife.

Then we made preparations to go into Afghanistan in sort of a safari, two follow-up trucks that had been furnished by the embassy, so he could bring all of his effects in with him at the same time.

So finally he said, "Let's go." And I said, "Would you like me to lead the way, Mr. Ambassador? It's kind of tricky going over the Khyber Pass." I had an embassy driver with me, and one old Chevrolet. "No, Lindstrom, I'm not going to eat your dust all the way." And, of course, he proceeded to get lost several times. But finally we did get to the border crossing point. This was about three or four days later than his expected arrival, and we had the usual tea at the border with the Pakistani officials, and then they dropped the chain, and we set off across the border. I told him there was probably going to be an honor guard there for him, and, at that point, the paving ceased and it was all just dust and dirt, and he again insisted on leading the way. And we did come up to this company of troops who were then standing at attention in the sun. He stopped, and I stopped and ran up to him, and he said to me, "Lindstrom, in Afghanistan do they review from left to the right, or right to the left." I said, "Mr. Ambassador, I'm sorry, I don't know." And he turned red in the face, very angry, jumped in his car and left them in a cloud of dust.

So we got up to the first border check point which was several miles in, and the colonel of the guard came to my driver who came to me, and said, "Wouldn't the ambassador please like to go back and review the guard because they had been waiting for him all those days?" And I raised this with the ambassador, and he sort of snarled at me, and said no. So we got off to a very bad start in our relationship. And another thing, neither he nor his wife would eat any of the melons that were laid out, and he explained to me that they often soaked them in the ___(?). So I ate to be polite and I didn't get sick or anything like that.

So then we started out, and again he was going to lead the way. By this time I realized, because I saw him racing up the mountainside on the left-hand side of the road, which is the way they drive in Pakistan, that I had forgotten to tell him to drive on the right-hand side in Afghanistan. And these big heavily laden lorries were coming down and they finally stopped bumper-to-bumper on the left-hand side of the road. So I had to go up and give my apologies. "Mr. Ambassador, the rule of the road in Afghanistan is on the right." Then we proceeded on over the mountains and up to a point midway between Kabul and the border where we were met by our Chargé d'Affaires, Jack Korner. And as I said before he was not a very well briefed Chargé. He came running up. I can still remember him with a thermos in each hand and said, "Mr. Ambassador, welcome. In this thermos I have martinis, and in this one I have manhattans." And the ambassador said, "Well, Korner, we don't drink." And Jack said, "Mr. Ambassador, do you mind if Ralph and I have a drink?"

Anyway, we over-nighted there. It was a German-run construction camp, and then went on into Kabul. So my beginnings with the ambassador were not very happy.

Q: He didn't seem to be very forthcoming to the Afghans. How did he get along with them? What was your impression?

LINDSTROM: He didn't get along with them terribly well. I remember an example, it was in my own bailiwick in consular affairs. At that time we were under instructions from Washington. There was new consular legislation that if we were willing to sign an agreement with other countries, a reciprocal agreement, we could liberalize our laws. Of course, it was being done all over the world. I can't remember the name of the Act now, it was so long ago, but anyway...

Q: The McCarran-Walter Act?

LINDSTROM: It may have been.

Q: I think it was the McCarran-Walter Act, in '52.

LINDSTROM: I raised this with Mr. Mohammed, the head of the consular section, more than once. And he said, "Mr. Lindstrom, this is fine but I'd like to have your ambassador's support on this. He could just say that this is a good idea and mention it to the foreign minister, and then we can do this." So I mentioned this to the ambassador on more than one occasion, and all I ever got was a lecture on the concept of reservoir of good will. That he didn't want to use up whatever reservoir of good will he had for this.

Q: This is a very typical attitude of you don't mess with consular visas. It's just too small a thing to mess with.

LINDSTROM: Apparently, but of course it didn't make a good impression on me, or least on the consular part of the Foreign Ministry. And I'm pretty sure they reported it elsewhere too, that the ambassador wasn't taking any interest in this. But I had many adventures with him. I can still remember one. I was working in consular/administrative affairs in a separate building from the ambassador's office, and he wanted to see almost all outgoing correspondence. In fact he made it very clear. And I remember preparing a telegram in response to a welfare and whereabouts telegram from the Department saying that in effect we were unable to contact so-and-so. And a while later the phone rang and it was the ambassador on the phone and he said, "Lindstrom, I have this telegram, a contact, isn't that sort of lower __ the knees?" I said, "I'm sorry sir, what should you have said? I was unable to ascertain the whereabouts of so-and-so." "Well, that's better." I could go on and on.

Q: No, no. I like to hear about this because he's an interesting character. I think it's worthwhile to talk about him a bit.

LINDSTROM: He dressed very formally, morning clothes quite often, that kind of thing. One of his little customs was, and he absolutely blind sided us on this, was to call on people on New Year's morning. I never could figure why he was doing this. Quite frankly

it was quite a partying post, as small hardship posts were, and in many ways I think the ambassador was a unifying influence because almost everyone hated him. I can still remember, having been out to one of these parties and being awakened by the servants about six o'clock in the morning, New Year's morning, and the ambassador came in in his formal clothes, and made his pretty little speech. I guess I put on a bathrobe over my pajamas. He did this with everyone else too, and all the other officers on the diplomatic list.

Q: Mrs. Ward was difficult, wasn't she? Because she ranks along with, I guess, Robert Murphy's wife, and Mrs. Loy Henderson. These were some of the old dragons.

LINDSTROM: She hated Mrs. Henderson. Mrs. Henderson was Swedish, if I remember correctly, whereas Mrs. Ward was Finnish, and Mrs. Ward was very proud of the fact that she'd gone to finishing school in St. Petersburg. She spoke this very quaint French that they taught the Russians in those days, often a direct translation of Russian. She'd say grande merci. I don't hear much people going around saying grande merci.

Oh, another thing that occurs to me, yes. My wife ended up being the senior--even though the wife of a third secretary--the senior American-born wife in the embassy, and this did not please Mrs. Ward one bit. She didn't really like my wife, but still from a protocol point of view, we did get invited once in a while to luncheons at the residence. So I remember Gloria, as the senior American, ended up at the ambassador's left at this luncheon which was for...I can't remember who it was for, but it was some foreigners of some nationality. But anyway, we were just beginning the meal, and I was over on the other side of the table, when I happened to look over in the direction of my wife and I saw an orange flash, an orange streak, and my wife yelled, screamed, and started mopping up blood on her arm, and the ambassador said, "That's all right, Mrs. Lindstrom, that's Ranger's place." That was one of the three cats, apparently the cats outranked me, with the ambassador's wife. That was his only apology, as she was sopping up the blood. You're ruining my career, I thought to myself. Anyway, that was another little tidbit.

Q: I've heard other stories about how he spent a great deal of time working on some packing crates made of the very best wood for his things, but also to have some fine wood when he got back.

LINDSTROM: Oh, yes, that was one of the things he did and I got tangentially involved in that. I knew it wasn't the right thing to do, and I would not ever certify it. John Bowie, one of my colleagues and more senior, said he would certify it. It was very expensive, high quality furniture wood, which is certainly not needed for packing cases. I remember once his driver came to me and said he had used embassy grease to grease his Cadillac, so I sent him a bill for that, and he got quite upset with me. But the board thing is certainly true, and he sent them to Spain and made them up into packing cases.

Q: Did he travel around the country very much?

LINDSTROM: He did, yes. To his credit he did a fair amount. At that time our embassies were very badly equipped. We did not have a nice front-wheel drive vehicle or anything like that; whereas our AID mission did have those things, and this also will tell you something about the ambassador's character. He didn't want to be indebted to anyone. But when he wanted to take a trip, he would call me in and say, "Lindstrom, I'd like to go to ___, or wherever, but I don't really have a proper vehicle." "Well, have you asked the director of AID for this? They have some." "Well, I thought maybe you could just talk to Bill Lathran." Bill was the other junior FSO. He had been assigned for two months to the AID mission rather than to the embassy. So I would go up and talk to Bill, and Bill would talk to Mr. Hayes, and would say, "Why doesn't the ambassador have the guts to ask me directly." So, yes, he did travel around.

Q: What does an embassy do when you've got an ambassador who is very difficult like this? How big was the embassy?

LINDSTROM: We had about 14 people on the diplomatic list. I can recall that from the presentation of credentials ceremony. The AID mission was already quite large, there must have been maybe 30-40 people in it including the people, not just administrative people, who were actually working in the field on seeds and things like that. The non-diplomatic American staff was probably 15 or 20, a lot of them military, and communicators and people like that. So it was already a sizeable staff for that period of time.

Another thing that did not endear people to the Wards was Mrs. Ward's habit of--she pulled this on every new wife--the hats and gloves problem, and if any woman ever put her hand out to shake Mrs. Ward's hand with a glove on, she would just shriek, and say, "No, I won't shake your hand. Haven't you been properly brought up?" and all that. But I think she began to have some cronies. She did get along to some extent with our embassy nurse, and they used to be able to go on the attaché flights out to other countries. And Bill Lathran, this is no criticism of him, he was just simply in a somewhat better position than I was. He had goodies to offer, and wasn't directly under the ambassador, so I think he could see some good points in Ambassador Ward.

Another thing, I remember about Ambassador Ward and his bitterness, was he mentioned to me criticism of Chip Bohlen, "Those young whippersnappers," like that. Very bitter.

Q: Were you inspected at that point, or not?

LINDSTROM: Yes, we were and I can't remember who the inspector was. I guess it was Gordon Madison.

Q: I was wondering, because when you're in a difficult situation like that, and you have an ambassador who obviously is not only difficult, but you're not getting along well with him, particularly on your first tour, this is where you can see a very short career staring

you in the face. And often it's the inspectors who can understand the situation, and kind of save one.

LINDSTROM: Actually it did. I ended up working that way and I can't remember if it was that inspector's report or something else that there was contrary evidence that maybe I had some potential. So I think when I went back to Washington it worked out all right. I've forgotten the details of it.

Q: How did the DCM business work out?

LINDSTROM: Our first DCM was a man who didn't really stand up to Ward at all, and not a terribly good DCM. I've even forgotten his name. He was later replaced by a very good one just as I was leaving, Leon Poullada, who went on to distinguish himself. I think he became an ambassador. Charlie Little was the first one, and he was sort of in trouble himself with the Department, and I think he retired not too long after that. Then we had a kind of a rogue CIA operation. I think many people had that sort of thing in other posts in those days, out of control, and he didn't do much to that. Again they had goodies they could give him to keep him happy.

Q: The first taste of the Foreign Service, I take it, for you and your wife must have been a little bit difficult to swallow, wasn't it?

LINDSTROM: Yes, and there were other hardships involved. My wife became pregnant during that tour. And there was one Danish doctor-midwife there who said she probably would have a somewhat difficult pregnancy and should go out to Pakistan. The only way to get out to Pakistan was on the attaché plane, and I went to the Air Force colonel about that, and he said, "You will have to pay $1800, if we are going to make a trip like that." And I said, "The State Department doesn't have any funds for that." And he said, "I can't help that." I think this case was one of the things that led to more support for evacuating people when necessary, and, of course, in those days $1800 was about a third of my salary. Well, we just didn't have it. So we decided she would stay and have the baby in Kabul, which she did do and she was delivered of the baby. I was there too and helping this Danish midwife. But it had been a long labor, 12 hours or something like that, and then everybody went home. Of course there were no phones in Kabul at that time, and then she started hemorrhaging. She's a nurse, so she told me what to do, get out the medical book, you have to massage the placenta, that's the uterus when it goes limp, otherwise you'd bleed to death. So I managed to get her bleeding stopped without getting in there and massaging the placenta. So that was kind of an experience. And we put Karen, the baby, in a whiskey box we'd lined with something, and then I got rid of the placenta by giving it to the jewey dogs. That's the way you disposed of almost everything on the streets of Kabul at that time. Finally everything did go all right, but it would have been better had she gone out to the Seventh Day Adventist's hospital in Karachi. But this wasn't possible. But I think that incident, and maybe many similar ones, may have gotten the Department to realize that they had to give a little more support to the Foreign Service personnel who were overseas.

And then about that time, when the baby had just been born, Vice President Nixon and his wife came to Kabul. He was described as the highest ranking foreigner to visit since Genghis Khan, which I think is essentially accurate. Again, I saw Mrs. Ward lose her cool. I was talking to Pat Nixon, and they were taking some pictures of us, and she was really quite nice, and all of a sudden Mrs. Ward came in screaming, "Get out of here, out of here, out of here." And Mrs. Nixon said, to me, "Is she always like that?" And I said, "Well, sometimes, yes." She said, "We'll move on."

Q: When you left Kabul where did you go? You left in 1954.

LINDSTROM: Then I went to Paris, which was my first choice, and I guess they felt I should be rewarded after that hardship post, and really got a very nice assignment as an economic financial officer in the office of the Treasury attaché. The Treasury rep, Don McGrew, who was famous for his skills in that area, and for being a good training officer. So I worked for him for three years, a very interesting assignment, and my main contacts were in the Ministry of Finance. These were the post-Marshall Plan days, so the French were still somewhat beholden to us and very willing to give out confidential information on the state of their balance of payments, etc., which is one of our higher priorities. At that point, I had never really studied economics to speak of. I had taken one course at Harvard. It was a rather badly taught course in those days and I barely passed the thing, and had no further interest in it. But I learned a lot about the balance of payments from this reporting, and from Don McGrew. So it turned out to be a rather rewarding assignment. I got good ratings on that. And one of the other persons I worked for, and more directly, was Dean Hinton. Both Dean and I were the two FSOs who worked for McGrew and he was quite an able person obviously in his own right, and I got along well with him. He only recently retired, I believe. There were other people around, Harry Bell, who was very good in the economic field too. And Jack Tuthill came in as economic counselor and took a liking to me. We had just had the Wristonization program and we had had to take on three very senior people in various parts of the economic section. Jack was getting very annoyed and I didn't like being used as sort of his private spy or anything like that, but sometimes people do that. He said, "You know, I can't understand, what is so-and-so doing, and so-and-so doing? I don't see any written work, or anything like that, why don't you nose around and find out." So I did talk to these people, and they said, "Well, we're still busy unpacking, and getting my wife settled and that kind of thing." So it was quite apparent they weren't doing much of anything that was of any value. He managed to get one of them transferred down to a consulate, I guess it was either Nice or Cannes. I can't remember which one. I guess it was in Nice, and he turned out to be a disaster there. He and his wife got into all sorts of sexual affairs and that kind of thing, and were an embarrassment to the United States. By and large we had a pretty good embassy and Amory Houghton came in as ambassador. He was a political appointee but quite sympathetic, and interested in what we were doing in the economic-financial side, as well as in the political side. In the political side, of course, we were already beginning to have troubles with the French. de Gaulle was in the background and some of our

officers were able to talk to him, or his people, from time to time. The NATO relationship was getting somewhat strained, but that hadn't broken apart yet while we were there.

Q: What was your impression of the French bureaucracy in the financial field?

LINDSTROM: First rate. They're the best in the whole world.

Q: Yes, that's the reputation.

LINDSTROM: Again I learned something by dealing with people like Ash Stuart(?), who later rose to the top in the World Bank. That's one of their elite services. They really are marvelous.

Q: How did they treat you as an American, although they might be beholden. I mean you're neophyte to this field and here you are up against world class...

LINDSTROM: They treated me very well. I always had to speak French. My French was by then fairly good, but I know these people spoke English better than I spoke French. But it was always in French which was good practice for me, and enabled me to keep my self respect in dealing with them. That was a very positive experience.

Q: What was the embassy like?

LINDSTROM: It was a huge embassy, and I guess still is, but generally a very supportive and friendly embassy. We had many friends there. Our first couple of years there we were not eligible for embassy housing so we lived out on the open market up in Montmartre, which was very nice and we enjoyed it. Later for financial reasons primarily, we moved to embassy housing on the other side of Paris, because the housing allowance wouldn't really cover too much when you're living outside. McGrew, the Treasury man as I said before, was really top notch, and to his credit they always allowed me as a third secretary to maintain these high level contacts with the French financial officials. They thought my reporting on this was very good, so that was a morale builder too. So often more senior officials try to do it all themselves.

Q: So you didn't feel, as sometimes one does, lost in the embassy?

LINDSTROM: No, I don't think I did at all looking back on it now.

Q: There's this traditional thing about saying the French are very unfriendly. Did you find that speaking French?

LINDSTROM: No, I never did, and never have. I never found this to be a problem. But the French do like to use their own language certainly in the diplomatic level, and I don't see anything wrong with that. We tend to use English on the diplomatic level in our country.

Q: So you left there in 1957, and went off to where?

LINDSTROM: To Hong Kong. That was a complete surprise.

Q: That was two years there, to '59.

LINDSTROM: That turned out to be a very fortuitous and interesting assignment with new people, and new problems. And my timing there was very good. It was in the late part of '57. We had three consuls general when I was there. There was a rapid turnover and one of them was Drumright.

Q: Everett Drumright, an old China hand.

LINDSTROM: I remember meeting him, not a very friendly person. He wanted to know where I'd been. I had taken full advantage of my home leave, and also time to go across the Pacific on a ship, as well as the Atlantic. But, anyway, I finally got in there and I was put in the China reporting section, along with Lindsey Grant and Paul Caukle(?). Most of our reporting was, because we couldn't go into China in those days at all, based on the press. Then we would switch portfolios with the economic side of things. There was a companion political section. Tom Ainsworth was in that, and the head of the economic section was a Wristonee, a very good man, and I learned a lot from him. Anyway, my service there coincided with the Great Leap Forward in China, when they thought they really had discovered the secret of economic development and were smelting iron and steel, if they could in the back yard. By then their relationship with the Soviets had really soured. We didn't know much about that at that time but subsequently, of course, it became very clear that they were separating themselves from the Soviets, and the Soviets were repaying this by cutting down on Soviet assistance. So I think this in part led to this Great Leap Forward that Mao kicked off. It turned out to be, as we knew later, a tremendous failure, but at the time the propaganda was such, and it was so hard to get in and see what was really happening, that people in the western world began to believe it. That they finally had found the secret of rapid economic development. So I ended up being right in the middle of reporting, and the New York Times in particular, and some of the other papers, became believers and were publishing daily stories about the successes of the Chinese which we in the consulate general tried to rebut, and tried to put into perspective. But it was difficult. We didn't have hard numbers.

Q: It's so easy now to look back and say, of course this thing was stupid. What they were doing was melting down steel and iron products which had been already done, and producing basically just hunks of unusable metal. I would have thought the New York Times or some economist would have tried to make some of these little furnaces themselves and see what happened.

LINDSTROM: No, I don't recall anybody having done that. Again, it was very much of a closed society, and the propaganda was pretty effective. People thought they were going

to take over all the export markets in the Far East, which they may do now, but this is 40 years later when it's a much stronger country. But in those days, they were a very poor country. I was talking to Ed Green about what we might do about this to put it in better perspective. And he said, "Why don't you go down to China Products..." I don't know if you know Hong Kong or not. China Products is a retail outlet for Chinese products as the name suggests and we were told by the Treasury Department in those days to never set foot in it. It would be against U.S. law to buy anything in there. But, anyway, people said I should go in there and see what's going on, what kind of things they're selling, are there shortages, or do they have availabilities, or not. So I did that over a considerable period of time. I suppose I was noticed by the Chinese, but I was never prevented and I made notes when I got back outside. I didn't go around with a note pad or anything like that. So finally I got together about a 18-20 page despatch on my findings, and it really established rather convincingly that if there was this great supply of consumer goods, and other exportable items it had vanished. It dried up in that store, which was a pretty good indicator that this whole thing was a fraud. And, of course, we learned many years later, it was just systematic lying within the Chinese bureaucracy about what they were doing, and went all the way to the top, with people apparently believing the reports that were coming in. So I felt I made my little contribution by putting that into better perspective. I got a commendation for that despatch from the Department.

Q: Just to get a feel for it. I mean Hong Kong was, and certainly until very recently, was the place one watched China. It was the only place we had that really had feelers into China, because we had nothing in there at the time and for a long time. How did you go about your business? How did you get your information?

LINDSTROM: Well, certainly the China mainland press was probably our biggest source. We had a big translation operation we ran in Hong Kong. In fact, Bill Thomas, one of my colleagues and Foreign Service classmates, was put in charge of that. He was a Chinese language officer. I think they had 100 people working for them. So that was one source, the China press, and very biased. Then we had many very good local employees working for us directly in the political and economic sections, who had come down from Shanghai and elsewhere. Then some of our best contacts were with the consular corps people who recognized China and who could go up there from time to time. So we cultivated them. I was on very close terms with the Australians, and people like that. They would be pleased to be debriefed when they came back from a trip to the Canton trade fair. So that was another way of getting information. And certainly our Chinese employees, although they never did anything you could call spying, or anything like that, they could certainly help us interpret what was in the press.

Q: As you say, papers like the <u>New York Times</u> were buying the propaganda. This happens from time to time. People in a way want to be true believers. It's sexy, it's different, and in a way it's a stick in the eye of the establishment in the western world. Did you in your position have any dealings with the American press, or media, that was stationed there and talk about this situation?

LINDSTROM: Yes. I used to, again as an additional source of information, go to the Press Club regularly and meet many of the American and other correspondents and that was very important to getting a balanced understanding of it.

Q: Did you get into, I won't say disputes, but find yourself trying to present what you felt was the true picture as opposed to how they were reporting this?

LINDSTROM: (?) Gurden(?) was the main reporter of this stuff and certainly Ed, my boss, did try to enlighten him without too much success, and he was an old Far East hand. I don't know why he insisted on doing this. But with other press people I think we were all beginning to see that there was a fraud in the building, and we all felt a little helpless as to how to deal with the thing.

Q: Although you're in the economic side, was there any feeling about when and if we should recognize Communist China at that time?

LINDSTROM: I think we could read the tea leaves back home, and see that it wasn't too likely from a U.S. point of view with the China lobby, etc. The main problem was our relationship with Taiwan, and we weren't about to jettison Taiwan. I was there when the Chinese started giving these serious warnings to Taiwan, the shelling of Quemoy and Matsu. And they started counting the serious warnings for the Chinese to come and put numbers on everything. It got up to the 244th serious one, I don't know what it was, while I was there. And in those days we self censored ourselves to some extent. I don't think anyone ever told me, but we always were careful to call it Communist China, or Mainland China, certainly never People's Republic of China. So I think all of us realized that it would be a long time off before there was anything approaching a normalized relationship between the United States and China. Of course, it took Nixon and Kissinger with their later opening that finally did it.

Q: How about Vietnam? Vietnam had sort of split, '55 is when both sides moved apart. Did you have anything to do, or see anything on Vietnam?

LINDSTROM: Not very much. We were virtually the only non-hardship post in the area, so people from southeast Asia would come up from time to time. I didn't do any peripheral reporting on Vietnam.

Q: We were taking a very hard line on trade with China, weren't we?

LINDSTROM: Oh, yes. And right in the Consulate General we had this Treasury rep who was in control of foreign assets, who was making certain that we only dealt with clean money lenders. And by chance my wife and I had made very good friends on a ship coming out there with some of the `Queen's Chinese', so they called them, people who had been knighted, and were a very nice merchant family. So this gave us an entree into non-Communist Chinese society. It was very interesting, and we learned a lot about etiquette, eating and all of that in many course feast meals. Anyway, some time later our

Treasury man, who was very much of a sleuth, implicated that family with buying Chinese caught shrimp, and marketing them in the United States as real clean shrimp. And that sort of temporarily soured our relationship with this family. They'd say, "Here he is in the Consulate, and he didn't even tip us off about that." Not that I would have, as I didn't know about it. The anti-Communist thing was there all the time, and very strictly enforced. There was China Products and getting permission to go in there.

Q: Just to go into the store. Then you left in '59 and went back to Washington?

LINDSTROM: Yes, and then my next assignment was a year of economic training at Princeton University, which was a very useful year.

Q: What was the state of economic training when you took at Princeton?

LINDSTROM: It was in a way somewhat beyond me. I was already becoming mathematical. But still on balance I was able to cope with it, and got quite a lot out of it, and even had my efficiency report written by Bill (?), who was one of the brightest economists still around. He was very young at that time, and a theoretical economist, and I got a pretty good report out of him. I used part of my time also to go over to the Woodrow Wilson School and I took some courses over there, part political as well as economic. It was all-in-all very good and a useful experience.

Q: Then you came back to the Department?

LINDSTROM: Yes, the Department, and I did not get the assignment I wanted, but the word was out to put people in INR, and I ended up being assigned there. I had wanted to be in the EB Bureau, and be on the policy side of things. That's the way these things go. I got into Communist affairs, on the economic side and then was assigned to language training at Oberammergau, later Garmisch Partenkirchen, and had a year's Russian language training, which led to an assignment in the Soviet Union.

Q: Backing up a touch, you were in INR for a little while anyway?

LINDSTROM: Two years.

Q: From around what, '60-'62?

LINDSTROM: Yes, and then I got my four year tour in with two training assignments with the INR thing in the middle of it.

Q: While you were in INR, you were looking at Soviet economy?

LINDSTROM: No. The main focus was on Soviet penetration of the third world. That was the big thing then., Phil Habib was involved in that at a high level and a number of us were put into it, and we started doing reports on everything every time the Soviets moved

a muscle. This was during the Cold War, and Roger Hilsman, I think, was director of INR at that time. This was a big item always, in the morning briefings which usually took place at some ungodly hour, 5:30 in the morning or something like that.

Q: I was in INR during the Horn of Africa about the same time, coming in...

LINDSTROM: Was Roger Hilsman there?

Q: Yes.

LINDSTROM: I remember he used to come in sort of bleary eyed. He was on the party circuit with the Kennedys. And he had all these TDCSs crumpled up in his pocket. It was obvious that he'd been out reading from those with his friends.

Q: What was our impression of what the Soviets were doing in the third world, the Soviet Union influence?

LINDSTROM: They were doing everything they could to assert an increased Soviet influence for all of these countries in the third world, and our major focus...no, it wasn't only on Africa, but I think I got a little more involved in that than other things, and we were very concerned about it, that they were going to take over the world that way.

Q: Africa was very sexy at the time, too. Duly emerging, and this was a great opportunity for the United States and for the Soviets, in fighting over the soul of Africa. It seems a little hard to understand today, particularly the Kennedy administration. What was your impression though that you were getting of the Soviet ability to produce things?

LINDSTROM: We looked at these things as critically as we could, and of course we knew that Soviet quality in terms of manufacturing and making things, was very poor. They were not in a position to be very good exporters of that sort of thing. But they would do as best they could, give scholarships, give food aid if they could in some kind of a swap. So they were winning, they were making inroads to some degree, but they weren't really getting permanent converts. I've talked to many Africans and other third world people who had been educated in the Soviet Union, and they ended up with no particular loyalty to the Soviets. I remember once, this was some years later, traveling with my family on a Soviet ship from Leningrad to London, and the ship was full of African and other students who had been in Moscow for a full year at the Lumumba University, going out for R&R if you will. Then there were some that were especially privileged, and I could see they would get special things on board the ship. I suppose future KGB cops and that sort of thing. We did entertain them at our embassy quite a bit and that gave them a way out. The Soviets didn't really like it, but there wasn't too much of anything they could do about it.

Q: One thing, what was your impression of how the information you were developing was being used within the State Department and INR?

LINDSTROM: This was a high priority at that time, whether it should have been or not in retrospect, I don't know. But it was being used by the policy makers, by Hilsman and others, no question about that.

Q: But you always felt you were handing him top secret things which he was sticking into his pockets.

LINDSTROM: No, I did see that a couple of times. I don't know if you did, the early morning things.

Q: It was during the Congo crisis and he was talking about...he kept trying to use his experience in OSS in Burma in the Congo, and Owen Roberts, who was the Congo man, every once in a while had to brief Hilsman when he had the morning duty, to make sure he didn't try to turn the Congo into an OSS type, and also World War II operations being thrust through here. Very hard to understand the Congo, such small little tribal conflicts.

You'd already taken some Russian, hadn't you?

LINDSTROM: Yes. I first studied it in France and had a good basis, then I took some classes at FSI. So I was pretty much up to the 2+ or 3 level, and then assigned to Oberammergau, which tries to bring us up to at least the 4-4 level. Some of my colleagues I was assigned there with, Bill Luers and Roger Kirk, both had quite a bit more Russian than I had. All the courses, as you probably know, were conducted in Russian on substantive subjects. We had a number of professors of various extractions. We had one who was very good, a Serbian, his Russian was excellent. And then we had many others who were pure Russians who had defected at the end of World War II. One man I remember defected, he was a top aide to Beria, the secret police chief, when I was in Kabul. He ended up in that school. I remember my first interview with him. He had just been brought in there, it was rather frightening, a typical secret police sort of interview asking all these questions about your personal life. But that was a good school. It's still running. One of my other fellow students was Bill Odem(?), who is frequently on television now. He got three stars, and I remember his telling me, he was only an Army captain, he said, "I never expect to go beyond Lieutenant Colonel in this Army intelligence business." He is a very bright guy, and a very good analytical mind, so he's gone a hell of lot farther than that. So I met some very talented people.

Q: Today is the 29th of November, 1994. Ralph, we basically finished with you at Oberammergau, is that right? So you went to Moscow from 1963 to '65. How would you describe the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union? When did you get there?

LINDSTROM: In the middle of 1963, and Khrushchev was still in power. I'd say the relationship was somewhat improving, but again against the backdrop of the troubles with Vietnam. But Khrushchev himself did visit the United States as you may recall.

Q: He might have come to the United Nations, but we'd gone through his big visit, during the Eisenhower administration. Then we had the missile crisis in '62, the Cuban missile crisis.

LINDSTROM: I guess maybe he had already made his major visit to the United States.

Q: He might have made a UN trip.

LINDSTROM: I remember seeing his train go by when I was up in Princeton. But anyway, Khrushchev was a very interesting leader. I had a chance to meet him several times in connection with American businessmen visiting the Soviet Union. He became very much aware of the economic problems that were beginning to affect the economy increasingly, and wanted to do something about them, but didn't really know what to do. He put, of course, a lot of emphasis, as they did way back to the Czars, on getting more ideas and inventions from foreigners, either buying them, stealing them, or however you could get them. That perhaps would solve some of the problems with the economy. He was, of course, deposed about a year after I got there, and this amazingly created very little stir inside the Soviet Union. I guess he was not particularly appreciated by the people. I went down to Red Square on the night that he had been toppled just to see what was going on, and there was absolutely nothing, no security precautions to speak of, only one militia vehicle, and people coming out of the theaters located in the Kremlin, and talking with each other. I sort of listened in to see if they wouldn't be talking about the major event of the world, and there was not a word about it. They were just talking about the theater, the weather, and personal things.

Q: When you went there, what was your position?

LINDSTROM: I went there as an economic officer the first tour, and the second tour, which was two years after the first, was back as Economic Counselor.

Q: Let's talk about the first tour, the '63 to '65 one. What was the embassy like at that time?

LINDSTROM: Foy Kohler was the ambassador, and we were trying, despite all the obstacles, to get some contacts with Soviets. It was almost impossible to do useful reporting which was based to a considerable measure on the press, just reading the press. It was a little easier for those of us who were in the economic section. We weren't as harassed by the KGB as the people in the political section, for example. The embassy was well run, comfortable, the same old building as I think we are still using even today, and very much run down now. It was much easier then to have contacts say with the artistic community under Khrushchev than it was later under Brezhnev, when it became more of a crackdown. This was of some interest. I managed to buy a few paintings and get acquainted with a leading painter, my wife and I. She was able to get some entree into the museums and that kind of thing, and go with other American women. She'd had the

opportunity to study Russian in Oberammergau as I had. So there were openings there. You had to work at them, and we tried to travel whenever we could. This was useful too. Often when you traveled you had more of an opportunity to meet people, as you could talk to them, and they could talk to you with relative impunity, in a railway car, or even sometimes in an airplane. So we did quite a lot of that, as much as we could.

Q: Here you're in the economic section, and we're now talking in 1994 when what was the Soviet Union, now is a broken up mass, just an absolute economic disaster, and the economic side the cause of disaster. The system didn't work. But trying to go back to the time you were there looking at this, how did we feel about the economic situation and the short-long term prognosis for it?

LINDSTROM: We could see the weaknesses. I made it a point to visit as many factories as I could, and I think I visited a couple dozen factories of various types. It was one of the things they did permit you to do. Of course, they only showed you the relatively nice factories, but even there you could see there wasn't much, morale was very low in the work force. The factories were real safety hazards. Russians are the least safety conscious people in the world, I think. It's something about the character. Typically you'd go around in a factory and there'd be pieces of broken frayed cable on the floors, grease on the floor, and that type of thing. Although everyone was supposed to wear a hard hat, they very rarely ever did. The crane operators were usually women, way up high in these big high overhead cranes. And I remember taking a group of American businessmen into a plant in Leningrad, its very much like the Schenectady plant up in New York, and I asked him why are the crane operators almost always women?

Q: This is tape 2, side A, an interview with Ralph Lindstrom. You were asking about why the crane operators were always women?

LINDSTROM: Yes, and the chief engineer replied to me, without any hesitation, in Russian. "Because they don't drink, so it's a safety measure." And in that time I think Russian women were very sober and did not drink. I understand it has changed quite a bit since then.

Q: What I'm getting at is, that somehow or other we acknowledge all the problems of the Soviet Union, yet we seem to think that here was something that would almost go on forever, and that the controls were such. How did we look at the economy in those days?

LINDSTROM: It was basically a command economy, run like a military institution, and this could go on, and obviously did go on for quite some time without really coming apart. They were beginning to see the weaknesses and the experimentation with economic reform, which Khrushchev encouraged. But they were groping with something obviously extremely difficult. They haven't really worked it out even today, how to reform that type economy and make it work like an efficient capitalist economy. So they started playing around with little indicators, and really didn't get much of anyplace with those.

Q: Were any of the Soviet economists, or the people you were talking to, reflecting any disquiet or asking questions, how does your system work, or something like that, or not?

LINDSTROM: It was hard to get to see Soviet economists. They were beginning to be concerned about it, no question about that. They didn't know what to do either. Some good work was being done, I learned later, out in Novorossiysk(?) and this scientific academy. One of the top economists there, eventually was brought to prominence, I think during the Gorbachev era, but he'd been kept under wraps during all that period. But yet he'd been allowed to continue doing his work, and he was attacked in the beginning for trying to tackle these problems. How can we make this economy more efficient? How can we borrow from capitalism? I still remember once when Khrushchev said in one of his speeches, and again acknowledging the problem they had, he said, "Even after the entire world has gone communist, we'll have to keep one country around as a capitalist country, so we'll know how to set our prices." That was in a public speech, because how do you set the prices in a system like that, and have them make any sense.

Q: There's this old story about they pretend to pay us, and we pretend to work, that type of thing. Were the indicators that it was a very productive work force?

LINDSTROM: No, from what my observations were, they had a lot of problems. Excessive use of alcohol for example, except perhaps by the women, and absenteeism. And then again, it was a so-called planned economy and they would have to towards the end of the month always have a storming--a literal translation--to achieve the plan, and then everybody would work twice or three times as hard as normal and somehow or other they would fulfill the plan. So that was another obvious thing. But you could see it too in their growing weakness vis-a-vis the rest of the world in terms of advanced technology. Their aircraft industry was falling way behind. Yet they had one of the largest airlines in the world, for example, Aeroflot. I remember being invited to go on board--actually this was in my second tour, but I'll mention it, it seems to be relevant--the IL-144, which was their answer to the Concorde, a supersonic passenger aircraft. They had stolen the plans from the French, and done a pretty good job of copying the Concorde, except they couldn't copy the engines unfortunately, so they had great trouble flying it. But I went on board that plane, took some American businessmen with me, and one of them was from a paint company and he said, "Ralph, run your hand along the side of the fuselage there. What does it feel like?" And I said, "Paint brush marks." And he said, "That's it." So here they are, a supersonic aircraft and they don't even have the technology to put spray paint on it, so you'd see a lot of things like that.

They were very defensive, of course, about their backwardness. It came up over and over again, and they really were aware of it. Many times when we were turned down for travel it was not because it was a military city that we wanted to go to. It was because it was an area with no paved roads and that kind of thing, and just mud streets and they didn't want foreigners to be seeing that kind of thing.

Q: Well, Foy Kohler was the ambassador. How did he operate?

LINDSTROM: He was a rather quiet man. In those days it was difficult to have very much contact with the Soviet leadership, but he did the best he could on that. And he had good relationships with the staff. One of the things we did in Embassy Moscow, and this went on for many, many years, was to have a press backgrounder for the American press corps, as I recall, was on Fridays. About 20 or maybe more American press people would come by and the ambassador would try to give them a few insights on what had happened. This generated a little bit of information for us as well.

Q: The press would respond?

LINDSTROM: And sometimes, if not during the group, they never liked to talk in front of the other people, some of them would pick up something that was too hot to report that might lead to their expulsion but they would share it with us individually. So this was a useful relationship to maintain, and all of our ambassadors tried to do that.

Q: What about security problems there? Really basic life in the Soviet Union at that time? I'm thinking of surveillance.

LINDSTROM: Surveillance was just terribly heavy at all times. But not particularly heavy for the economic section, unless we did something very unusual and then they would pick up on it almost immediately. But they were just all over the military attachés at all times. I remember a couple times taking trips with people and we always used the buddy system. If my wife couldn't go with me, take someone else, and if that person were more suspect than I was, we'd usually have somebody accompanying us in a rather obvious way. So that was a deterrent in many ways to getting to know what was going on in the country, and that is what it was intended to be.

Security in the sense of theft and that kind of thing was all right. For the most part we didn't even have to lock our doors in those days because, of course, the KGB was every place. I understand that has changed drastically. Once in a while some Soviet embassy cars have been stolen here in Washington, and we'd have tit-for-tat theft of vehicles from the American embassy in Moscow. But that didn't happen many times that I can recall.

Q: You were there at the time Kennedy was assassinated, weren't you?

LINDSTROM: Yes.

Q: How did that play out there?

LINDSTROM: I remember learning about it on the Voice of America. Roger Kirk was living in the same building with me and he came up to tell us that Kennedy had been assassinated. We rushed down and listened to the commentary on Voice of America. And insofar as the Soviets were concerned, Khrushchev personally came over and signed the condolence book in the embassy and was crying. They're very impressed by death,

perhaps because at that time they didn't believe there was any place else to go. I think insofar as the man on the street was concerned, I was traveling at that time, and we talked to taxi drivers, and the typical line was that Kennedy had been a great man. They didn't say so while he was alive. But then they'd say that Johnson is a very bad man. No real basis for that, just something they didn't like about Johnson's looks. It seemed to be almost a standard thing you'd pick up all across the Soviet Union. But they clearly seemed to be very sorry to see Kennedy perish that way.

Q: You had to deal with Soviet statistics. How did you deal with them?

LINDSTROM: Basically we'd leave the super interpretation up to Washington and the large number of people we had working on that kind of thing and in all parts of the U.S. government. This was an overwhelming task in trying to make some sense out of those statistics. It's not something we could do single handed. So what we did was just try to get whatever statistics we could get that wouldn't otherwise be available to Washington, and get them into Washington. We'd make a special effort to get an advance copy of the foreign trade statistics, which weren't classified by the Soviets, but which were of great interest to us. So that was our approach in the field to getting information, anything that Washington wasn't likely to learn about through some other means.

Q: I know getting information out of China, for years our China hands got an awful lot from local newspapers in China. How did you find the local press for that type of thing?

LINDSTROM: I would say it was somewhat similar to what we used to do when I was in Hong Kong reading the Chinese press. But we didn't have any large section translating it for us. So we had to do our own reading and analysis of the press, the major newspapers, to the extent we had time. And then, of course, we sent on much more than we could read to Washington for further analysis. This was certainly helpful to follow the workings of their economic reform programs and that kind of thing. We did a fair amount of that. Another thing we did in the economic section was to meet with our western counterparts at lunch, as I recall about every two weeks or so, during which we would just talk business, exchange information on our trips, and what experiences we'd had with the Soviets. We knew we were quite likely being taped, but we didn't care since there were not high grade secrets or anything like that. And I think it was mutually beneficial. We continued that during the whole time that I was there, both my first and second tours. And some of the other countries obviously had a little more entree than we did, because we had so relatively little foreign trade with the Soviet Union. Whereas the western European countries were making a much bigger effort which gave them more of an opportunity to get other insights as to what was really happening in the economy.

Q: You mentioned the fall of Khrushchev, and the rise of Brezhnev. Did you see any curtailment in certain economic activities and enhancement of others, or anything like that?

LINDSTROM: One thing that became pretty clear was that Brezhnev and his people didn't have much use for the quest for economic reform. They said it hasn't been successful, which was true, just a waste of time, so we'll go on with our military style economy, if you will. And that didn't completely cut off the work that I mentioned before in the academies on economic reform. But he just didn't feel it was yielding any great results, and thought all we've got to do is continue on the old way, and keep up the pressures of one kind or another through the planning system. It was much harder to get close to him, than it was to Khrushchev to find out what was going on. We screened the press as best we could and drew our conclusions from that.

Q: How about agriculture? Khrushchev had made a great deal about opening up virgin lands, areas which had not been under wheat cultivation, for example. What was the impression we were getting about Soviet agriculture during this period?

LINDSTROM: It was also having a great many problems. In the Soviet Union the land mass is not Iowa, and never will be. It doesn't have the same climatic conditions that we have in this country. So they have good years sometimes, and then very bad years, maybe two or three years in a row. I had the opportunity to visit Khrushchev's new lands on a train trip once, which was quite interesting. They took a group of diplomats out there just to show them what a fine harvest they had had that year. And it was indeed a good harvest. I went with our Agricultural Attaché, and he confirmed that. We would try whenever possible to visit the farming areas, and report on what the status of the crops was, which would help the Department of Agriculture make their estimates of Soviet crops.

Q: You then left Moscow for a while. You came back to Washington from '65 to '67. What were you doing?

LINDSTROM: I did a tour in what used to be called the E Bureau, the EB Bureau, working on international finance primarily for Dick Cooper, who later became Under Secretary for Economic Affairs. This was not a terribly interesting area, because we're not the main movers and shakers in the State Department insofar as international finance is concerned. It was more of a liaison with Treasury, releasing their telegrams and going to meetings.

Q: You went back to Moscow from '67 to '69. That's a rather relatively rapid turnaround, wasn't it? How did that come about?

LINDSTROM: Well mainly I was offered the job. It was a class 2 rated job so I did have to get permission from the Department...

Q: This was the old FSO-2, now Minister Counselor.

LINDSTROM: Right. So anyway I got the approval to go there. I liked my first tour and I welcomed the opportunity to go back a second time, and of course could do quite a bit

more having the higher rank. One of the most interesting things I did during that second tour was to negotiate the opening of Aeroflot and Pan American service between Moscow and the United States. This process went on for well over a year with daily instructional telegrams, and I would go back with what the Soviets would tell me. It gave me some insights into the military side of intelligence, GRU, because almost all of Aeroflot was staffed by GRU officers and when I first started going over there they'd be in full military regalia. I had never seen this before. As you may have heard, Aeroflot really started out as just an arm of intelligence, and they never quite broke away from that.

Q: There must have been on both sides very concerned ideas about what route they would fly, because obviously you have to assume that there are cameras going off. Were their routes over the United States very carefully monitored?

LINDSTROM: I don't think we were really worried much about what they might do from that point of view. But I think they were more worried about us. One of the things that complicated these negotiations was their insistence on introducing this new all-jet(?) aircraft rather than the old turboprops that they were using on their own runs, which made them look very backward. They were using these on their run to Japan, and the Japanese press would poke fun at them all the time. It really bothered them. So they insisted on waiting until this Ilyushin 62 was ready for flight, and of course, it had never really flown anyplace. So part of my job was to get the data on this, so we would be convinced that it was a safe aircraft to bring to the United States. This was like pulling teeth. I learned later they had never had to do this sort of thing. They just somehow or other put these planes together without too much testing, what speeds they'd do, this, that and the other thing. So I got these detailed instructions from FAA on what kind of documentation they would have to provide us. This is one of the things that slowed up the process a lot because the man who gave me this nicely printed book on the character, and the qualities of the Ilyushin 62, confessed to me, "We've never done this before." In the meanwhile, Washington suspected that the delay was being called by political reasons, and it wasn't political at all. It was just technological reasons. But anyway, once I got this book NASA said could I have an extra copy and he said, "There aren't any more." I sent that in and that quieted Washington down for a while. So finally they scheduled a proving flight. They had the rights to fly to Canada, to Montreal, and they would go to Montreal and there they would be met by a couple FAA pilots, and then they would go down and make a missed approach over Logan airport in Boston, and then a missed approach over Kennedy, and a missed approach over the Philadelphia airport, and then finally down to Dulles airport. They weren't allowed to land at any of these other airports, because the Port Authority in New York, for example, wouldn't even give them the rights until they had gone through all the tests on the ground. Finally we got around this because the federal government owns Dulles airport and they had to accept that. There were some other things that the New York authority required. I didn't go on that flight, but later I talked to one of the FAA pilots and he told me, "You know, if it had been any country other than the Soviet Union that sent these pilots over on this aircraft, I would have sent them back." But he said, "The pilots who he felt were fairly good pilots came over and the only flight paths they had were penciled lines on an old National Geographic map, over these congested

areas. That's all they had with them." The pilots though did accept the idea of getting additional training in the United States before they started flying. They could see how terribly congested it was around the New York area. They had nothing like that. But their bosses didn't want to agree to that. Again, Russian pride coming out. Eventually they did agree to it.

Oh, one of the things the FAA pilot told me about the inside of the plane was that this was one of the early models. It was so badly balanced that the attitude could only be kept on the level through big tanks of water which the pilots with very strong arms(?) could shift the water around, two tons of water, and showed how poor the plane was. They cracked up quite a few of those. I think they had improved models later on. I think they still use it even today, but it was four jets in the rear. So this gave me some additional insights into the weaknesses of the great threat to the United States.

Q: How about Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson who was there at that time? How did he operate?

LINDSTROM: He operated in sort of, to use his own terms, more or less in splendid isolation. He kept contrasting what he did during this tour with what he had been able to do much earlier. I can't remember the exact time frame, way before I was there. He was able to have direct contact with Khrushchev in the earlier Khrushchev period, and just be a one man embassy. So when he came back this time, he said several times, "It doesn't really matter because my boys," referring to the counselors of embassy, "now can have contacts that they couldn't have earlier." This was generally speaking true. But he found it rather frustrating, I think, not to be able to do that. I remember when I first met him when I arrived he said, "Now remember, always distinguish between my telegrams and embassy telegrams, if there's a first person in there I want to see it. It's nothing new but he was very much conscious of that.

Q: What about your contacts? Did you find as Minister-Counselor it was a different world?

LINDSTROM: It improved quite a lot, yes. I was doing more things such as that Aeroflot business. But I also got involved in merchant marine affairs. This was a very useful ministry, and I had quite a few contacts over there. This stemmed from the fact that the Soviet's actually goes back to my first tour, had really decided to import grain from the United States for the first time in history. I had to go down to Odessa to look at the port, and see how we could get that grain in because, Odessa had been created back before communism as a grain exporting port, not an importing port, so everything was sort of wrong. I remember negotiating with the Ministry of the Merchant Marine, and they said, "Of course, you don't have most-favored-nation treatment on the shipping rates. You'll have to pay the higher non-most favored rates." And I reported that back to Washington. I didn't know one way or the other. Washington came back and said, "But we do have most- favored-nation treatment. We signed an agreement with them in 1937, and we are pouching you the book on that, the published volume." So I remember taking that into the

Ministry of Merchant Marine, and they were really impressed, reading from this. So they had to acknowledge it and I heard later from somebody else in one of the other ministries (this was the talk of the Soviet bureaucrats at that time), that I had come in with that big book of treaties and found something they weren't really aware of. So they backed off. I found that if you did your guest list properly, you could occasionally have working luncheons with Soviets. Not with other nationalities usually, just Americans and Soviets, including someone who was a KGB type. That relaxed them a little bit. So we did a number of luncheons like that. We all had to speak Russian reasonably well to be assigned to Moscow in the first place, and have the luncheons in Russian.

Q: What was the feeling Leonid Brezhnev within the embassy? He was fairly new on the scene as a leader. How did you all evaluate him at that point?

LINDSTROM: He was so much less visible than Khrushchev, that he was sort of a puzzle, I think, to evaluate. This was something they worked very hard on in the political section just using standard Kremlinological techniques. They got more and more little insights into what the man was like and what he was doing. But he had a very different style, of course, from that of Khrushchev.

Q: Kremlinology is trying to figure out whose is doing what to whom, and who is ranking where.

LINDSTROM: Oh, all that sort of thing. Reading the press very, very carefully, looking for any little minor thing. It's a technique that did yield some benefits, not an awful lot.

Q: But in the economic field, you didn't have to worry about that too much, did you?

LINDSTROM: Not too much, no, except again we did our kind of detective work looking to see what they were doing with economic reform, and major plans, major industries and that kind of thing. But the real fine analysis had by necessity to be done back here in Washington in INR or CIA. They had the staff to really go through this stuff.

Q: Did you find that there was any economic analysis coming out of the Soviet press? Or was it pretty much just displaying whatever the bureau or the...

LINDSTROM: I wouldn't really call it analysis in our sense of the word very often. Again, you're just looking for reporting of things that are going on in particular industries, and their annual plan reports, and all of that sort of thing. So there was not too much that we could rely on there.

Q: Did you get any insight into economic training at the universities?

LINDSTROM: I tried to, and I did get a card to go to the Lenin Library, actually something of a privilege, which is quite an experience. The lady librarian there said, "You're free to look at anything here. You go from one room to another." She had a key

that would lock the door behind me. Also, I used to call, from time to time, at part of the Academy of Science that dealt with economics and these conversations were occasionally worth reporting. They didn't really open up the office safe or anything like that, but they were allowed some academic freedom.

Q: Economics is such an international science. Were they at all plugged into the economic international role? I mean would John Kenneth Galbraith come over and talk or vice versa.

LINDSTROM: Yes, sometimes somebody like that would come over. Galbraith came over, but not to discuss economics. But we did have other luminaries and they would be invited to go out to Moscow State University to give a lecture on some topic. And the approved people, the advanced people in their university could do that. But in terms of setting up anything that was equivalent to the kind of training we have in this country for economics, no. I understand they have great difficulty in even starting that up now. I read something just recently and they were still using old textbooks from the Soviet era. So there was very little of that going on. Yet there were some high level contacts--a man who was number two in the powerful State Committee for Science and Technology. He developed and it exists today, a special relationship with the Sloan Institute at MIT. He's a very powerful figure, his name, as you might guess, is a Georgian name. The Georgians would always get along, and he may have been involved in one of these spy scandals earlier, but it didn't hurt him. I always found that the State Committee for Science and Technology was a more useful place to go than the Ministry of Foreign Trade. These were my two prime ministries. But it was very much dominated by the KGB, and the GRU, the top intelligence organizations. But they had very bright people, and they were sufficiently confident so that they could talk to you. They were great door openers. If I wanted to go out to a visit out to the Baltic states, for example, I would see if I couldn't get their help and get me some appointments out there, as well as the Foreign Trade Ministry. But the mission of the State Committee for Science and Technology was, as the name suggests, to acquire foreign technology, by fair means or foul.

Q: Was there much interest in Soviet developments in science from the outside? I mean outside the Soviet Union.

LINDSTROM: Oh, yes, a great deal. In fact while I was there, during my first tour, we sent our first science officer over, Glenn Schweitzer, who has been working the Soviet beat ever since then, not out of the State Department, but out of the Academy of Science, our Academy of Sciences. I saw him just recently. Since then we have always had a science officer there, and they've been able to do some useful reporting. They were a little more independent insofar as security was concerned than other parts of the Soviet regime we dealt with.

Q: Did the Vietnam War play any particular role?

LINDSTROM: Oh, very definitely. It made it much harder for us to have really high level contacts, and they were constantly indicating their displeasure with us. However, it's interesting we mentioned Ambassador Thompson before. He retired from that job before the end of his tour and, to our amazement, Gromyko gave a dinner in his honor.

Q: He was Foreign Minister at that time.

LINDSTROM: Yes, and selected people down to the consular level with wives. It was one of the most interesting dinners I've ever attended anyplace, but certainly in the Soviet Union. They had it in a special room in the Dome Media, the Foreign Ministry's house, that we didn't even know existed. All of the silverware, well it wasn't silverware, it was all goldware stuff they'd gotten from the Czars, I guess. There were beautifully printed menus at each place, and all the waiters were wearing white tie, and the seating was all according to protocol in relative rank. There were the same number of Soviets as there were American embassy people. There were some of their prominent Deputy Foreign Ministers there. People that we had never really had much of a chance to meet before. But basically you could not have much conversation with anybody except your dinner partner. The two women surrounding me looked over with envy at my wife who was sitting between these two very interesting ministers. One of them, whose name escapes me now, was the one who was really running Czechoslovakia (this was after the invasion of Czechoslovakia), often called the pro-consul. He said a number of interesting things, and Ambassador Thompson did get a chance to chide him about, "I hope you get out of Czechoslovakia soon," and things like that. But it was just a beautifully done dinner and must have cost an arm and a leg.

So despite the other frictions, they decided for some reason or other to do that. I think they respected Ambassador Thompson.

Q: He played a major role in the Cuban crisis to help defuse the thing. I don't know if they knew how an important a role he played.

LINDSTROM: Yes, and certainly Gromyko would have known that. So that may have been a part of that. I think you're right there. I don't know whether that custom continued or not. I think Thompson was a very great exception.

Q: How did the Czech...well, it was Czech spring of '68 and Czechoslovakia seemed to be moving towards a much more liberal regime, and then it was put down very harshly by the Warsaw Pact led by the Soviet Union. How did that play on our relations?

LINDSTROM: Not so much on our own relations directly, but it was fascinating to follow this. In fact I began to listen to Radio Prague at night and wondered how they could ever say this sort of thing in their English language broadcasts. But they also had Russian language broadcasts. I remember discussing the situation with a Soviet economist who had just returned from Czechoslovakia where he had lectured. I said to him, "Do you really think they pose a threat to you?" And he led me over to the wall

where there was a big map of Eastern Europe and Czechoslovakia and you could see Czechoslovakia like a dagger aimed at the heart of the Soviet Union. It was about a couple of weeks later that the invasion took place. I first became aware of it as we had two Pan American flights. (After we'd gotten the Aeroflot flights, we got that air service started.) So we had an aircraft full of Americans trapped out someplace in the southern part of the Soviet Union. They weren't really trapped but I guess they were quite concerned.

And I did personally help the Czech delegation get home. It also coincided with the World Power Conference, which is something that still takes place every four years or so. The head of it at that time was the Chairman of the Board of the major utility in Detroit, I can't think of the name of it now, and he came to me as Economic Counselor. I was backstopping them, and he said, "The Czech delegation had come to him and they are so upset about what's happening to their country, they'd like to get back home." Then we somehow or other got transportation for them. I said, "Aeroflot is the only answer." So we did manage to get an Aeroflot plane that flew their whole delegation back home, so they could see their relatives. This certainly created great problems for the Soviets. We had been following it closely and we still don't know to this day at what point they put live ammunition in their tanks that were maneuvering on the border. Still I don't know why they didn't go in and take Yugoslavia. Somehow or other they were quite clearly planning...and the Yugoslavia ambassador, whom I knew fairly well, was like a cat on a hot tin roof, very nervous about that.

I remember talking to men and women on the street, at the skating rink about Czechoslovakia, "Well, these ungrateful so-and-so's. Here Dubcek, he was one of ours because he could speak excellent Russian. He had studied in the Soviet Union, and for him to turn on us like that was just inexcusable." Then of course, I didn't see it myself, but they brought poor Dubcek in the back of a truck to Moscow and, then the story was, he was later physically slapped by Brezhnev. Brezhnev had had quite a lot to drink, I guess, and he was pretty angry too. But poor Dubcek did eventually get back home, and went to Bratislava and was given some kind of a job. I guess he's still living today.

Q: You left there in 1969 and went back to the War College for a year--'69 to '70. That was just after the Tet Offensive. How was the Navy viewing Vietnam? What did you get from the people you were working with?

LINDSTROM: I think not only the Navy but I think all of us felt that this was still, at the time, a war that should be won, and wasn't being won.

The Naval War College at that time was a very fine place to study, had an excellent library, and I was able to be a part-time student at Brown in their political science department. The Navy expands. They had few out-reach programs like that so it was an interesting experience just working with the Armed Forces members of the other college on papers and that kind of thing, the same thing as at other War Colleges. Anyway, after that I ended up with an assignment in ACDA.

Q: Arms Control & Disarmament Agency.

LINDSTROM: The two fit together to some extent. I was chief of the Arms Control Division, conventional arms, a very frustrating business needless to say because nobody was interested in that subject either within the U.S. government or elsewhere. I ran it as sort of a research operation.

Q: At that time, the '70 to '73 period, it wasn't going anywhere. Gerard Smith was the boss, wasn't he?

LINDSTROM: Yes.

Q: How was he?

LINDSTROM: I only saw him a couple of times, and he worked almost exclusively on the nuclear side of things. I wasn't in that at all. It was very compartmentalized.

Q: And you were dealing with armament, is that right?

LINDSTROM: Just conventional arms, not nuclear arms and there are very few agreements in that field.

Q: Nuclear is the place where the real concern is. How about the Pentagon?

LINDSTROM: Well, again, there were very few things that came up for negotiation, although this all contributed to my background which was useful in my next assignment which was Kenya where I personally helped them acquire a whole squadron of F-5s to deal with the threat from Idi Amin and from Somalia, which the Kenyans were very much concerned about. We set up a special training program for them in the United States and I came back for negotiations under the FMS program. So all of this did...

Q: There's nothing like being in a disarmament agency to understand how you can get armory to a friendly nation. I think the Italians would describe this assignment as a parenthesis in a way. It was a holding action. Then you went to Nairobi from '73 to '77 as Deputy Chief of Mission. How did that come about?

LINDSTROM: Well, through the personnel system. I didn't have any inside pull. I heard later on they gave the ambassador at that time, Ambassador McIlvaine, three names. Mine was one of them, he knew the other two and didn't like them. I don't know that. That may be wrong. So that was a fantastic assignment and it is one of the nicest places in all of Africa.

Q: What was the situation, '73 to '77 period, in Kenya at that time?

LINDSTROM: Well, at that time Kenya was one of the leading countries, in our opinion, in Africa. It's a mixed economy but with a lot of freedom. It wasn't at all like the Tanzanian economy when it was being choked by Julius Nyerere, and other economies where they were pursuing a strictly socialistic approach. So the Kenyan economy was quite prosperous. President Kenyatta was alive during the entire period I was there. A very interesting old character, and a laissez faire type of man, but still not a great delegator. They always had trouble when I was dealing with military subjects. They'd tell me how difficult it was to get a decision out of him, and how he wouldn't delegate. By then he was somewhat over eighty, and his attention span was increasingly short. And one man told me, he said, "Every day I go over with a stack of papers this high, and then I come out with a stack about that high. Then I go back in the next day and I've got to rearrange everything again; so some things never got to the top," such as creditation of diplomats, which tended to be lower priority. Kenyatta's mind would wander quite a bit. I remember he had a certain speech that he'd say to all ambassadors, or chiefs of mission. For long periods I was Chargé d'Affaires because there was no ambassador there, and he'd say, "Please remember my door is always open," in English, which he spoke very well. I studied Kikuyu at one time too during his late reign. The Kikuyuans were so dominant in that regime that they would speak Kikuyu to each other in front of non-Kikulan Kenyans, which was very bad form. So I thought, "Well, I'll start studying this language." Terribly difficult, and 32 noun classes, and that kind of thing, really almost their secret language. But I did speak to Kenyatta in Kikuyu. I don't think he really liked it. It's a little bit like Arabic. You run into that problem, too. sometimes. But It's their secret language and if you speak fluent Arabic, which I don't, but I have seen people do it, you must be from CIA. I ran into a little bit of that psychology in Kenya.

Q: How long was McIlvaine there?

LINDSTROM: We only overlapped four days, and I was on my own. But he did stay on in Kenya, not in any official U.S. government capacity, in a wildlife organization. But it was fully a year before he was replaced by Tony Marshall who was a political appointee. It was his third political appointment, and his mother is Mrs..., well anyway, very monied and she had made a big contribution to Nixon's campaign and he'd been held up because of that. He turned out to be really an excellent ambassador. We worked very well together.

Q: I'm surprised because usually after someone has been a Chargé for about a year they become spoiled. They're used to running the show, and then a new ambassador comes and so the word is it is best to get rid of that person as quickly as possible because it doesn't work.

LINDSTROM: It worked it out very well. Somebody had talked to him in Washington. Somebody who wanted the job for more of an Africanist than I. He said, "No, I'll see how I do with Lindstrom." One of the things I did to put him at ease was to schedule a trip out of Nairobi just a few days after he got there. After making some basic introductions, we went to visit Ethiopia with my wife, who had never been there. Unfortunately our arrival

in Addis Ababa coincided with the first day of the revolution and we had to cancel all of our trips on Ethiopian Airways. We had to cancel our trip to the old caves and churches in Ethiopia, and retreat to Nairobi. But I didn't show up in the embassy. I went on down to Mombasa and spent the rest of our vacation down there. But that gave the ambassador a chance, I think, to be in direct touch with all of the other embassy officers and he did not have to feel that I was keeping anything from him. So we worked very effectively together during the rest of his tour.

Q: What were some of the major issues that you had to deal with?

LINDSTROM: The most important ones really did tend to be in the security area and the defense area. You may recall that the Entebbe raid took place at that time.

Q: You better describe what the Entebbe raid was.

LINDSTROM: This was a raid by the Israelis on Entebbe airport to rescue Israelis who were being held hostage by Idi Amin. It was quite a successful operation, and they could not have done it without the complicity and support of the Kenyan government. They had been in secret and very close contact with the Kenyans on this; so the Kenyans gave them refueling rights, after they had made the raid on the Entebbe airport, at Nairobi airport. They also dropped off their wounded who were taken to the hospital in Nairobi. Of course, this became known to Idi Amin. He was just furious about this, so he was determined forever after to get even with Kenya. He had more armaments than the Kenyans had. He had some MiGs, MiG-17s or MiG-19s. I'm not sure which, but it was more than the Kenyans had. They had some old outmoded British aircraft. So they began to take this threat seriously, and the head of the Defense Ministry with whom I dealt regularly, made inquiries. He said, "We're not having much luck with the British. They don't seem to think we need any more advanced aircraft. What about F-5s or something like that?" So I said, "We can look into that." So people from Northrop did come in and make presentations to the Kenyans. This, of course, didn't resolve the problem of how they would pay for them. That was another matter for negotiation. But it finally all went through, and they did get a squadron of F-5s, and the training to go with them, and stationed these planes up in the northern part of the country. Once, before they got these planes, Idi Amin was threatening to bomb Nairobi airport. We sent in all the way across the Pacific some aircraft that the Navy had.

Q: Orions, probably.

LINDSTROM: Yes, and we had them land ostentatiously at Nairobi airport, and kept them parked there for a time as a deterrent. It worked. Idi Amin, if he was seriously thinking about bombing Nairobi airport, decided not to do that. On another occasion, just to show support for the Kenyans, before they got their own aircraft, we did a fly-over on National Day off a flat-top off the coast of Mombasa. It worked quite well.

Q: A flat-top is a Naval aircraft carrier.

LINDSTROM: A small aircraft carrier. These were not enough for regular fixed wing aircraft. I remember later on my counterpart in the Soviet embassy was just furious with me. He said, "Ralph, why didn't you tell me about that? My ambassador saw these American planes come over and knew nothing about it." And I said, "Well, I'm sorry. We don't work for the same organization exactly." So then they landed the planes there in Nairobi, refueled them, and sent them back later. Up until then the Kenyans had been planning again with their Israeli friends. The Israelis had a very close relationship with them, as I mentioned before. They said they would fly some of their planes over and would put on black face. The ambassador and I thought that was the stupidest idea we'd ever heard of. So we conjured up this idea of coming in with our own planes, which were American planes, not with Israeli markings, or Kenyan markings, or anything like that. It went off well.

All in all, it was a very interesting tour. Both Ambassador Marshall and I did a lot of traveling around, meeting people in all parts of the country, very friendly people. I got to know more about Kenya than I did about the United States, I think, in political terms. They are always willing to discuss politics.

Q: What was the role of the British expatriates there at that time?

LINDSTROM: By then it was not very significant, and being phased out. The people who were staying tended more to be just retired people. Some of them even had gone to South Africa and thought it was so horrible they came back to Kenya. So they were playing less and less of a role. In fact, the head of the Defense Ministry, told me, "Well, Ralph, it's a very important day. This is the last day any British presence will be in our compound." And he said, "You're the only person who can come in." He would not allow us to bring in any attachés or anything like that. The Pentagon kept pushing us to put this up, "No, we don't need it." So I had my political counselor get training on how to do training assignments for the Kenyan pilots. Curt Kamman, who is now our ambassador in Bolivia, did an excellent job. He flew up to Germany and got the training necessary, and another one of our political officers too. So that satisfied the Kenyans that we weren't bringing in too many military people. We did later on have to bring in technical people when the F-5s were delivered, but I wasn't there at that time.

Q: How about tribal politics? Does this play much of a role?

LINDSTROM: Yes, a very, very great role. As I mentioned earlier, the Kikuyuans were overly dominant and were resented by the other tribes. And after Kenyatta went, there was more diversification, and they tried to balance constantly. They balanced within the armed forces. They'd have one tribe the head of the navy, one tribe head of the army, one tribe head of the air force. But there was no getting around that this was a major factor. The only troubles they had really were with the Somalis who are very difficult to get along with, as we Americans learned later on...

Q: They're a contentious crew.

LINDSTROM: There are about 400,000 Kenyans of Somali origin and the Somalis were a real thorn in the side of the Kenyans. They would come over, not necessarily government sponsored, probably not, raids way deep into Kenya territory to capture cattle, and game trophies, and that sort of thing, all the way over to Mombasa, and then up in the north. I later learned that they had this very careful balancing among major tribes when I asked about the Somalis in the armed forces. They said they had one, just a token. So they considered them to be something very much apart. I used to meet with the Somali ambassador from time to time for lunch, a rather interesting person. My ambassador didn't want to meet with him, so I said, "Okay, I'll meet with him." A very tricky sort of person, spoke excellent English.

Q: How about with Tanganyika? What were relations like as far as you were seeing them?

LINDSTROM: I went down there several times and crossing the border from Kenya into Tanzania was like crossing the border from Europe into a communist country. Immediately you got over to the Tanzanian side, it had that rundown, neglected look. Everything was state owned. Tanzania was blessed by having a large number of very small tribes, unlike Kenya which has a small number of very big tribes, which makes Kenya a little more difficult to manage. But still the Tanzanians did have one very aggressive and enterprising tribe that lived up around Mount Kilimanjaro. They were the coffee farmers, about 400,000 strong. They could not stand that socialist regime, so increasingly, since they weren't permitted to grow coffee very well, they would vote with their feet and walk over to Kenya. They were very much like the Kikuyuans in terms of attitudes. I've met many Tanzanian diplomats down there when I visited people and we would discuss the Kenyan way versus the Tanzanian way of running an economy. And, of course, they would always defend what they were doing down there, but I don't think very wholeheartedly. Since then Julius Nyerere has had to give up most of his control. He had a British woman adviser for many, many years.

Q: Who was straight out of the Fabian socialist thing. I think the Fabian socialists probably did more damage than Marx and Lenin combined.

LINDSTROM: And then I also did travel around. I did get down to South Africa too because this subject kept coming up and this was very useful to see first hand how things were in Johannesburg.

Q: Did you get over to Uganda?

LINDSTROM: Uganda, I did. I was sent there on an official mission to meet with Idi Amin, which was one of the more interesting things I did. We had closed our embassy by then because he had made it just impossible. Bob Keeley closed it.

Q: We sort of slipped out.

LINDSTROM: Yes. Anyway, the reason for my going out there was I guess I was more expendable than our ambassador. Idi Amin, at the time I went there, was head of the Organization of African Unity, first chairman. It's a revolving chairmanship. So I went up with instructions to see if I couldn't get him to support our policy on Angola. I flew up, all alone on a commercial aircraft, and went to the leading hotel there. Fortunately I had taken food along with me, as I used to in the old Soviet Union, because the hotel was so run down at that time there was practically no food to be had there. Then the next morning I was picked up by a government Mercedes and taken to one of Idi Amin's hideouts. I discovered that the young man in the car from the Foreign Ministry was Russian speaking, so I spoke with him in Russian. He had been educated in the Soviet Union. And the German ambassador who was representing our interests there, also rendezvoused with us at the hideout. So there were really only the three of us, Idi Amin, the German ambassador who didn't participate in the conversation, and I. I had a yellow legal tablet with me. Then there were two guys with tape recorders, two military people. We had about a one-hour meeting...I think it was actually longer than that. And the next day my picture was on the front page of the Uganda newspaper with Idi Amin. He agreed to everything I suggested in my talking points. He said, "All right, I'm going off to visit so-and-so, a couple of African leaders. I will tell them what you presented to me." And he actually held that position all the way up until he could see it was going to go the other way up in Addis, where the meeting was being held.

But the more interesting thing was his personal pitch to me. "Please tell your president that if you were as generous in your arms supply policy as the Soviet Union is, every black African country would be your friend." I said, "I would report what you have to say, but I have no instructions on this subject." And he said, "Do you think I would have these inferior Soviet aircraft if I could get first-rate American aircraft?" And, of course, there was absolutely no interest in Washington.

Q: That is one of the major terrors of the time.

LINDSTROM: So I was quite relieved in a way when I was sitting right next to this man who had personally and otherwise been responsible for so many untimely deaths. He ran this so-called state research bureau, and looking into his eyes I remembered people had said to me, "Well, the Israelis were peddling the story that he has tertiary syphilis. Did you look into his eyes and did you see it?" I said I wouldn't know what to look for, but he looked like a fairly healthy individual.

Q: He's still around in Saudi Arabia.

LINDSTROM: Yes, he was in Saudi Arabia when I was there, being sheltered by the Saudis.

Q: Okay, why don't we stop at this point? And then we'll pick up when you go to Dhahran.

LINDSTROM: Sure. I think I've said about all that's worth saying about the Kenyan experience.

Q: Okay, unless you think of something.

Today is December 6th, 1994. Ralph, you were assigned to Dhahran, which is sort of unusual wasn't it? You went there as Consul General, because you're not an Arabist. You'd been in Africa before and had other things, and all of a sudden to end up in Dhahran at a time when the area was particularly sensitive. Had the oil shock hit at that point? Or one of the oil shocks?

LINDSTROM: It was just beginning to hit.

Q: How did that assignment come about?

LINDSTROM: Well, this was an unexpected assignment. My predecessor was transferred I think somewhat unexpectedly, and the position suddenly came open. Ideally, I think, you'd put an Arabist in there, but there weren't any available and Joe Twinam, who was the Assistant Secretary, gave me a call and I went around and talked to him, and he said, "How would you like to go there?" He gave me about one month's notice, and I said I'd like to take a little bit of Arabic. I took a couple of week's worth and then studied it at the post. But, of course, with a difficult language you can't do a great deal there. One of my credentials, of course, was my economic background because it is a very important post economically and from the point of view of economic reporting. But my arrival there coincided with some very major political developments.

And coincident with my arrival, up until then everything was basically given to us. There was all the data just put in the mail and delivered to the Consulate.

Q: This is through ARAMCO.

LINDSTROM: The Saudis had been moving in a very Saudi-like way, to gradually take over ARAMCO, and about the time I got there it was widely considered to be Saudiized, and no longer would they be willing to give the details of their natural resources.

Q: Talk about your relations with the oil company. I was there from 1958 to 1960. The Americans were running things completely really. And our relations, of course, were very close, and also it wasn't seen as critical at that time as it became. Here you had the Saudis taking over all elements of ARAMCO. Could you contact the Saudis within ARAMCO, or was this difficult?

LINDSTROM: By and large, not. This was not a very rapid take-over. It was a very gradual take-over. It's not necessarily even completed today, and this was typical of the style of the Saudi ruling family, the royal family. Now I think a couple of the senior Saudis are at the point where they are primary sources of anything that is going on. But it was a very gradual process. I used to meet with the people in government affairs to some degree, but they were shut out of the thing pretty much once it became Saudiized. I mean in terms of being a contact for me. They still have an office here in Washington, and once in a while I run across a fellow who is working...I think he's the boss and then an American. So a lot of those things remain as they were.

Q: We had an embassy which had Petroleum Affairs and had his contacts. What was your beat. What were you supposed to be doing on the oil business?

LINDSTROM: Basically finding out what their production plans were, and how high they could go. This was no longer publicly announced, as I mentioned before. It was of great importance, I think, to the outside world to know what production they could manage, what obstacles they were running into, and making up for the Iranian shortfall.

Q: What were you gathering at least from the eastern province point of view, which was your beat? Was the attitude of the Saudis that you had contact with towards the Iranians, and what was going on in Iran at that time?

LINDSTROM: I don't remember having any prolonged conversations on that subject. I think they all opposed it, and, of course, the eastern province is where most of the Shiites in Saudi Arabia live. This was one of the most important developments during my tour there. You might say the politicization of the Shiite community which we estimated numbered maybe 20,000-30,000 and maybe a little more, partly in the oasis, and part in the oasis to the north. We employed quite a number of Shiites from that community in the Consulate General doing mechanics work, and that kind of thing. A very large numbers of Shiites were employed by ARAMCO, and had been by ARAMCO for a long, long time. ARAMCO is the one that first gave them their real opportunity to get out of real genuine poverty. And they did very well in ARAMCO. They kept their religion to themselves pretty much, and had not become political activists at all until Khomeini came along. And this, of course, was about the time when I arrived there. And then there began to be all sorts of political ferment, tapes of Khomeini speaking Arabic, which is a religious language, were best sellers, were going all around the province and in the worship houses, of the Shiites. I knew some prominent Shiites, businessmen primarily, but didn't really seem to want to get into political conversations particularly. But everyday the radios from Iran in Arabic were aiming right at the Shiite community and Saudi Arabia, in general, right across the gulf. And that added to the effect of the tape recorders of Khomeini's religious pronouncements of one kind or another. So everyone began to become much more conscious of security in ARAMCO at that time. There began to be graffiti around, anti-Saudi graffiti on the walls in ARAMCO. And yet, the Shiite employees were the ones working in the most sensitive installations because they were the ones, the plumbers and mechanics and people who worked with their hands, whereas the Sunni generally

were the office workers. So this created a problem, dilemma, for the Saudis in management of the oil company. Some people they no longer trusted fully, working in the most sensitive installations, Riyadh and Dhahran, the big pumping stations where the big super tankers were loaded. Anyone with skill and intention, and had a mind toward sabotage, could do an awful lot of damage there. Fortunately it didn't happen. And I think it was a relatively small proportion of the Shiites who became politicized, and later over time arrests were made and I don't know how many people were finally detained by the government but there were quite a number.

Ironically, I think, some of the Shiites became somewhat anti-American, and yet everything they had managed to achieve they really owed to an American institution.

Q: Just to put it in context, the Shiites were a minority living in an area which had been strictly a province. They were predominately almost fanatically anti-Shiite, weren't they?

LINDSTROM: Yes, but still they aren't that new. They came there very quietly and settled, and Sheik al-Ka told me about this. His family were a very important merchant family, and very friendly with the Shiite, even though he's not Shiite. They were there when they came and settled in that area, moving down from the head of the Gulf. There were a lot of very interesting migrations there. But as an example of their anti-American fervor among some of them, I was dis-invited from a speech that I had planned to make to a group, not Dhahran, and the person explained, he's was rather embarrassed about it, but he said, "There are a lot of feelings now because of what's going on across the Gulf."

So then moving on, this is in the following year...

Q: So we're talking about...

LINDSTROM: '78, I arrived in the summer of '78, and of course the revolution was just getting underway in Iran, and the oil was beginning to be affected. Then we moved on into '79 and things were sort of going from bad to worse. We had the taking of the Great Mosque, which I wasn't involved in, that was in the other side of the kingdom.

Q: This was by Sunni radicals.

LINDSTROM: I don't know if they ever analyzed it fully. Not long after that, the first day of the year 1400--and I can't remember what this was on the western calendar, I guess it was in October or November--the beginning of Muharram, this is when the Shiite traditional do celebrate the first ten days of the calendar. I think they were already in a high state of tension because of the things that had been going on, and the agitation by the Iranians. But on the, I think it was the seventh day of Muharram, things had been quiet up until then, there was a very serious incident up in the a Shiite town just north of, (its name escapes me right now). The young Shiite boys were out throwing stones at passing traffic, as they've always done. I've had stones thrown at me all over the Middle East, in Afghanistan, for example. And along came a Saudi National Guard vehicle, and if there's

anybody that hates Shiites it's the National Guardsmen who are real Wahhabis, and they didn't take kindly to having stones thrown at them. One of them just picked up an automatic weapon, and sprayed the crowd, killing four or five boys. This set off three days of what you might call rioting, and they had to send in helicopter gun ships to put it down. This had never been in the newspapers. We checked it out. My estimates of the number of people killed were estimates that I did get from Saudi security officials. Something like maybe 50 to 60 Shiite were killed.

Q: That's very serious.

LINDSTROM: This was mainly in Al Qatif where they started seizing police stations. It was a real threat to security in the eyes of the rulers of Saudi Arabia. Then they ended up even fighting over the dead bodies. The Shiite wanted to collect their dead and not have them thrown out in the desert in Wahhabi style. The Shiite believe more like as we do, having burial sites. So that led to further skirmishes between the two factions. But throughout all this period our Consulate employees disappeared. I remember when they did come back finally, our gardener at the Consul General's residence was an old Shiite they called Hajj because he had made the pilgrimages to the holy places in Iran. He wouldn't think of going to the holy places in Saudi Arabia. Everybody called him Hajj. He was in a really foul mood, and he came in and picked radishes from the garden he had raised for us. I was later told by our cook that he just threw the radishes at him, and said, "That's for these..." and calling us some kind of a name as Americans. He had been radicalized like everyone else, which rather surprised me. But again, the oil production did go on, and there was never any serious incident of sabotage. I remember getting some rather strange phone calls in the Consulate from people with sort of veiled threats, and wanting to meet with me. For the most part I brushed those aside as provocations.

So much was happening simultaneously that it's almost hard to pick up all the threads and how they interrelated. One of the things, of course, that was of great interest to the Saudis was the annual Hajj. That was a little bit before the rioting of the Shiite. The Saudi police would count the Hajjis who would come in at the border with Kuwait, and then notice that these same vehicles were half empty by the time they got through the eastern province. It turned out that a lot of them were mullahs, agitators. They were dropped off and stayed for a while to preach. I never got really good numbers on this. I think many of them did eventually go on to the Hajj. In subsequent years after we were there, this became the standard form of Iranian agitation against the Saudi regime was to have their own Hajjis do all sorts of disorderly things. This was really the beginning of that.

Q. *This is tape 3, side A, an interview with Ralph Lindstrom. With the Shiites, they would also go to Mecca, or were they making Hajj to...*

LINDSTROM: They'd make both Hajjis. My gardener being an exception.

Q: Just to capture the spirit of the times, the American political body, American populace, became very aware for the first time probably of the difference between the two

major sects of the Islamic religion because of what was happening in Iran. Before that I don't think we paid an awful lot of attention to it. Did they beef up our security at the Consulate General?

LINDSTROM: Yes, and very suddenly and almost unexpectedly. Unknown to me, I guess the ambassador over on the other side of the kingdom, the embassy was still in Jeddah at that time, had given an okay to the Saudi authorities that they could improve security around the Consulate General in Dhahran. But we had no advance notice of that, and all of a sudden lorries pulled up with National Guardsmen. Of course, we'd had ever since your days there, a small contingent of probably 15 or 20 National Guardsmen living right on the Consulate.

Q: In my day we didn't have anybody.

LINDSTROM: This dates back to another incident of the tearing down of the flag.

Q: I think this was after the '67 war.

LINDSTROM: I think it was after that.

Q: I think the '67 war, the Arab-Israeli war.

LINDSTROM: But anyway, all of a sudden and unexpectedly these truck loads of Saudi National Guardsmen showed up in the Consulate. Of course, my Arabic was almost nonexistent, so as a practical matter in terms of dealing with the situation, there wasn't anybody there to tell me why these people were there. They were pointing their guns at my wife and me, and asking us to come out behind the residence. So Gloria, my wife, said, "What's this all about?" I said, "I haven't the faintest idea." I said, "You better wear your hostage clothing," an extra pair of pants and that kind of thing. Well, of course, it was a mistake on our part. It was just these people being friendly. Then for quite some time they remained in strength in our compound, as protection against possible Shiite actions or other hostile threats. I can remember once, actually my wife witnessed this too, going back to our Shiite gardener. The Saudi National Guardsmen, one time they, I guess, frightened him. They loaded their weapons, and pointed them at him. They didn't shoot, but that's indicative of the animosity. With them on the compound, I had to ask all the women in the consulate to go around rather fully clothed. They could still go to the swimming pool. We had a nice swimming pool by then, but they couldn't go around wearing something that provocative with these National Guardsmen around there. Our whole security situation was enormously complicated by the fact that we had this very large American-run school on the compound by then. I forget when it started exactly. So we had large numbers of parents and people coming in cars to drop off their children, pick them up: I had asked the Marines to search the cars, to make certain nothing was being brought in to the compound. That slowed up the whole process, that there were no weapons or anything else.

I remember during this period I got a phone call from, I think the New York Times or Wall Street Journal correspondent. They had gotten as far as Saudi Arabia and they wondered if they could come down and visit me. I said, "Well, it's pretty dull here." Actually we had a 50 caliber machine gun in the main entrance, and 30 calibers all around the compound. I didn't see anything to be gained by having the newspapers in there. The Saudis were terribly tense about all of this, understandably.

One of the things I should mention is that unlike the Gulf posts, and this was a Washington decision, the decision was made to leave our post fully staffed. We didn't evacuate anyone.

Q: This was after the take-over of our embassy in Tehran?

LINDSTROM: Yes. It was one of the sparking factors and, of course, that almost coincided with the Shiite uprising we had. And then there was something else going on in Pakistan at the same time.

Q: Yes, our embassy was burned in Pakistan. It was a very tense time. This was around November-December of '79.

LINDSTROM: Yes, that's right. Anyway, although my post, Dhahran, was located right on the Gulf. All these Gulf posts were closed down. It was in the heart of the Saudi oil industry, and the decision was finally made that we should not drawdown, or close our post in the kingdom. Partly for political reasons, well, in large part for political reasons, it might undercut the whole kingdom and their major industry, thinking that all their oil workers go.

Q: It's interesting because I've interviewed people who were ambassadors to Oman and that area, who were screaming and yelling because they had to drawdown their posts, and they were saying this sends a bad signal, we had no problems, and why the hell do we have to do this? But Washington would not listen to them--not close them, but brought them way down...

LINDSTROM: Brought them way down, sent their dependents out of all of the Gulf posts.

Q: But there you are in the middle of the thing.

LINDSTROM: A stone's throw away from Iran. Yet I didn't have to close down. My own judgement was that the threat was manageable. But the main concern, as I understand it in Washington, was what it would do to Saudi morale, what it would do to Saudi oil industry. Because once you started evacuating people, what are you going to do about those Americans working in ARAMCO. What's that going to do to oil production? I can understand that these people were unhappy in being forced to drawdown, but I think they made a correct decision.

Q: Did you have a problem with the staff and family morale during this period of time?

LINDSTROM: I would say no. I met with them all, including the wives, and explained the situation as best I could. No, in fact one of the other things that I did throughout my tour in Saudi Arabia was to meet regularly with representatives of the American business community, and give them off-the-record briefings on what was happening, which they greatly appreciated. I think that had a somewhat stabilizing influence. And I said, "Let me know if you're hearing any rumors," and, of course, they were always hearing rumors and I'd listen to them, and I'd say, "I don't think there's any basis for that one at all."

Q: It sent tremors throughout the entire diplomatic world, particularly within the United States. The seizure of our embassy, and taking of hostages for 444 days by Iranians in Tehran. Did this weigh on everybody's mind all the time in what you were doing, or not?

LINDSTROM: No, I'd say very definitely. My own regret was that I didn't take the opportunity to visit Iran when I first got there, while it was still possible to go over by air on Iran Air. Then when the revolution came. I had to give that up. It would have been very valuable first-hand experience for me in view of my subsequent assignment. One of the things about Saudi Arabia is that we were always having high level visitors, the Department of Defense particularly, and they would regularly meet with Prince Bandar, who is now the ambassador here. I got to know him when he was Major Bandar, and the squadron leader of F-15s, and a very interesting person, very bright, very brilliant. Of course recognized by his father, although he was illegitimate...not an illegitimate child, but his mother was a black slave originally. Of course she begot him the most exceptional son of all, so that is why he has been pushed since then. When I first knew him he was still in his twenties, and a very useful contact. Now he only speaks with presidents. Anyway, that's sort of an aside.

I guess I might as well mention, I think there are still some more things we will discuss about Saudi Arabia; in January or February, the Assistant Secretary of...

Q: January-February of?

LINDSTROM: Of 1980. Hal Saunders, who was our Assistant Secretary in the bureau at that time, he'd come out a little bit earlier along with one of the cabinet level delegations, so I had gotten to know him a little bit. He was back in Washington then. I was up for reassignment the following summer, and they gave me a choice of head of the Interests Section in Baghdad, or the Director of Egyptian Affairs, or Director of Iranian Affairs. The feeling back there was that they could put Iran back together again. This was just two months after the taking of the hostages. This turned out to be a horrible decision. But it had an impact on me. So out of the three jobs, I ended up picking the one that was probably the least promising, the Iranian one.

Q: Back to Dhahran. What about the government? You had the Emir of the eastern province. How were relations? Did you have much to do with him?

LINDSTROM: No. He was very distant, and a difficult person to get to know. I did not really develop a successful relationship with him, and partly I think it was his choice. His family was in there as a reward for something they had done for...

Q: The one I had known was one of the 13, or whatever it was, who climbed the walls of Riyadh, and Saud. They were cousins. So he was sort of an old hawk at that time, and this must have been the son or cousin, but it was still in the family.

LINDSTROM: Not a young man, but not old, and a real non-doer. I would run into him constantly, because as Consul General, at least during that period, I was an honored figure along with the Emir of eastern province. But it was not a very interesting relationship. I don't think even if I spoke fluent Arabic that I would ever have gotten very much of interest out of him. He was a very timid man, just didn't want to make any mistakes. Of course, many years later, it took quite a while for the royal family to get up their nerve to remove him, and put in some members of the royal family. I understand they put in some rather competent people later on.

Q: Speaking as an old consular hand, what about consular problems, arrest cases, detention cases?

LINDSTROM: We had a lot of them. I had a first rate consular officer, a woman, mind you, Andrea Farsakh. I don't know if you've heard about her, or met her. As I understand it, the ambassador objected to Washington about accepting her because she's a woman. She functioned perfectly well. She was married to an Arab, and her Arabic was quite good, and a very reasonable sort of person. She handled, I don't know how many prisoners, that had to be visited from time to time--probably at any one moment it might have been 20-25, that kind of thing. People who had committed offenses, such as alcohol related offenses, which the Saudis took very seriously. So she would regularly visit these people. I would send one of our top Saudi employees along with her to help with the interpretation. Otherwise Saudi officials would not even have accepted her as a woman alone, because they could be accused of doing something or other, and that kind of thing. Anyway, she did a tremendous job. She would consult with me on particularly tricky cases as to how we should handle them, and there were a multitude of those coming in all the time.

Q: Did you have cases such as Americans being detained because they were having business problems? How did you deal with it?

LINDSTROM: That was a continuing problem. There's no formula for dealing with them exactly. You'd hope to mediate them, and get somebody in the economic section or the commercial section to see what they could do to find out what the root cause of particular

dispute was. If they couldn't fix it, they'd arrange to get the people out of the country, rather than have them imprisoned. This was a very difficult area at all times.

Q: You must have had a lot of congressional letters trying to explain what was happening. Did you feel any pressure, it may have hit elsewhere, on the non-welcoming of American Jews to the area? Did this cause problems on the part of the Saudis?

LINDSTROM: It didn't, at least in the eastern province, partly because of the presence of Prince Bandar. I sat in on a conversation between Bandar, two other princes, I've forgotten their names now, and our Jewish congressman from New York, who is now out. What's his name? It was a fascinating conversation, and they discussed very frankly in English all of these outstanding problems, everything from Jerusalem to you name it. This conversation went on for at least six or seven hours into the evening. He had aspirations to become at least in the position that Helms is going to go into now as Secretary of State, and it all dashed down the drain. Anyway, he was very smart brained. And the next morning Bandar insisted on taking him off to show him the line of F-15s, which he had all at attention, and Bandar had the Saudia flight that was going to take our visitor over to Jeddah stopped, just like that, royal prerogatives. So the flight was delayed for fully an hour while Bandar proudly drove his guest around the flight line.

But later on our visitor told me that when he reached Jeddah he was searched, and they took away some magazines, Time magazine, on the grounds of possible pornography because they censored all of the magazines coming in.

Q: He was nominated to be ambassador to India, we can add this. What about the defense side? Later Dhahran became the center. It was on the nightly news because it was the center of our opposition to Iraq's take-over of Kuwait. Were you involved at all in turning Dhahran into a military hub?

LINDSTROM: No. But this process had been going on quietly for many, many years. We had USMTM, (U.S. Military Training Mission), which was at that time located in Dhahran, and headed up by a two-star U.S. Air Force officer, one after the other. They were rotated through there. That was a very important relationship for me, worked very closely with them. They were, along with the Corps of Engineers--a very large contingent of Corps people, I think about 3,000 or so--working for the Saudis, or being paid by the Saudis, on military infrastructure, underground POL tanks. Then this fantastic military city in the north of the country to protect against the threat from either Iraq or Iran. I visited that in its earlier stages. Of course, this was fairly well completed by the time the Gulf war came along. We had, I think, a better infrastructure in Saudi Arabia (People didn't realize that), than we had in West Germany probably. Anything money could buy, they would buy and they were putting this in. So without that we would have had a pretty hard time winning the Gulf war. It was never brought out very clearly in the reporting, how important these facilities were to the U.S.

Q: How were relations, as you saw them, between the Saudis and the Bahrainis, and the Trucial states?

LINDSTROM: I think, by and large, they were good. The Saudis, of course, considered themselves to be the dominant power, at least from a protocol point of view. To an increasing extent from a military point of view, although the Saudi air force and other armed forces still remained pretty small, it had been beefed up subsequently.

Q: What about the third country nationals? I think of Pakistanis, Indonesians, Koreans. These were the people who were doing most of the work, weren't they?

LINDSTROM: Yes. Now I had in my own staff, just as an example, a Yemeni whom we inherited from a predecessor, a Chinese whom we brought in from Taiwan, and a Ceylonese whom we brought in from Ceylon. Three different religions, and kind of interesting. The Saudis began, of course, during this critical period being very nervous about people like the Yemens from a security point of view and were beginning to discourage them from coming in. They already had restrictions. I had a Yemeni driver and had to substitute somebody else, I can't remember of what nationality, to go up to Ras Tannurah, because he was on the banned list, while these Shiite of Saudi nationality could go in there. Very mixed up from the way of running things. But the military relationship was already a very important part.

Q: What was your impression of Saudi rule in the eastern province? And also Saudi business people? Because we had an increasing number of people coming back who had studied in the United States, or elsewhere, but the development of a governing class, business class, what was your impression?

LINDSTROM: Well, I had to do with the business class. These were people who were somewhat independent of the royal family and would occasionally express their views fairly candidly. I remember one man, a prominent business man in the largest town near Dhahran, who occupied sort of a quasi-governmental position--practically nothing was delegated. I remember how he would say, "For each ten riyals appropriated up in the capital [at that time Jeddah], only one riyal ever gets through to our public works projects here in the eastern province." I thought that was rather striking. There was somebody taking all the way along the line, and a lot of it the royal family probably.

Q: Each era one has a different view. I was there during the late '50s, and we were kind of dubious about the Saudi system remaining intact at that time. This was the times of Nasser. We thought it was probably a dying institution. Now it's 30 years later, and they're still around. What was the feeling when you were there? We're talking about the late '70s, early '80s.

LINDSTROM: Well, I think we still had the same concerns. Those of us who came in there and saw this remarkable institution of the Saudi monarchy said, "This isn't real. This isn't in keeping with the age we're living in. It can't possibly survive." But yet it did. I

used always to look around. Now who's the guy who is going to lead the revolt against this? And I never really found him. I'd look at some of these very good colonels in the Saudi army or air force, and they never did. For one thing the royal family was so numerous. I've forgotten now how numerous, up to maybe 2,000-3,000, I think at the time I was there, were certified.

Q: I've heard figures of 9,000, and that doesn't include the women.

LINDSTROM: They were very good at getting into things like the army and the air force, and that's a very good security device to be in by working there, and being respected by and large.

Q: I'm interested. How did you find them as a working crew? Because I had the feeling, at least from my time, that there was a disdain for getting out there and actually mucking around in the field and doing something on the part of, not only the royal family, but of people who'd get engineering degrees, and they would immediately head for the office and try to run a firm and get money, rather than getting out and learning the practicalities of the trade.

LINDSTROM: There was a lot of that. There was a checkbook society, I call them. The other answer to your question, I think, is how a stability has been maintained this long? It's just simply one word, money. As long as you've got this extreme amount of wealth, and almost everyone in the country has a piece of that, except for the Shiites and then later they began to give them some too, they realized that's a way of keeping them happy. But the young man coming back from studying in the United States, and being given a business with all workers, let's say, all he had to do was sit in the office and sign checks. So he could be a manager. He was in effect bought off by the system. Now, how long this will continue, I don't know, but certainly money has been a major factor.

One of the interesting things I found too when I was there, was the treatment of women. We got to know...this is something you could do in the eastern province...we got to know quite a number of prominent Saudi women. We even gave a discotheque dancing party one night for all Saudi couples, rather carefully selected by them. They all checked their purdahs there in the front hall.

Q: The veils.

LINDSTROM: Yes, veils, and the covering garment. They, of course, would have $5,000 Paris gowns underneath, very attractive women. I was able to dance with a number of Saudi women. I don't think many foreigners got that opportunity, but as I say, it was a very carefully selected group. But within ARAMCO there were several outstanding women who were trying to get ahead, advance things, and it was very difficult for them because of the system. But they weren't as downtrodden as some people might have thought. They still were not permitted to drive cars.

Q: Could the American women drive cars when you were there?

LINDSTROM: No. My wife could drive our personally owned Volkswagen on the Consulate compound to the swimming pool, and that was all. ARAMCO had a very limited thing just going out to Half Moon Bay, you had to drive out there if you were a woman in ARAMCO. We got into some very strange situations where the women were being encouraged to acquire skills, medical skills, for example, as nurses, and in some cases doctors. But then the religious requirements are such that they had to do absolutely ridiculous things. Westerners would go to get their shots, and there'd be a hand coming through a hole in the wall to give them their shots--a woman's hand.

Then we had problems with religions, particularly in the personnel in ARAMCO, and elsewhere, but more in ARAMCO. They had recruited a lot of Filipinos, and Filipinas also. And Filipinos take their Catholicism rather seriously. Whether they were out in a barge, or what have you. While I was there the religious police came by and seized all of the...I don't know if you're Catholic. What do you call the instruments, all the religious artifacts?

Q: The chalice.

LINDSTROM: There is a word for this. And this really upset, obviously, the Catholic community in general, so petty, but so typical. I managed to have a Christmas tree in front of the Consulate General the whole time I was there. But I think some people were not too happy about that. This was a tradition that went back quite a number of years. The Consulate General would always call generally on the Bin Jaluwi, as well as on other prominent Saudis. And in return they would call on my residence at Christmas. This was a custom that was started by one of my predecessors going way back.

Q: Well, we certainly would call. We'd be called at something like 4:00 in the morning and told to appear at dawn at the palace. And then there would be the call back. I remember my first thing, I arrived and here was a bodyguard in the middle of August wishing me a Merry Christmas, because it was part of their Eid.

LINDSTROM: We had a local employee, actually a Palestinian by the name of Fawzi, a very good man and he had done a lot to promote these relationships. He kept a very good relationship with the el-__ family for example.

Q: A major merchant family.

LINDSTROM: Yes. At the time I was there they had a big hotel and many other...

Q: They were already big in Pepsi when I was there, but it was small potatoes compared to what it is now.

LINDSTROM: But Fawzi had done a lot to encourage this cross-fertilization and calling back. I even bought frankincense and myrrh, so we could pass the thing around during their calls on me at Christmas time. Everybody would flap the perfume around, they liked it.

Q: Yes, it was kind of fun.

LINDSTROM: It was really an exciting experience, it was so different. Although I'd been in the Middle East before, I'd never been closer than Afghanistan, and never really been in the Arab culture. I'm still sorry that there wasn't some way in which I could have acquired better working knowledge of Arabic. But Arabic is extremely difficult.

Q: And at a certain age you're just not going to get it.

LINDSTROM: I don't know very many people who are certified Arabists who are really very good in saying much more beyond the greetings. Once later on I returned to Saudi Arabia and visited de Maurice, who was one of my successors. He invited a couple of people that I had suggested, including somebody from the consulate who spoke absolutely fluent Arabic. Whose name was Helms, incidentally, and one of the Saudi guests said, "You must be from CIA, you speak Arabic so fluently." As I mentioned earlier speaking Kikuyu, sometimes it doesn't really get you as far as you would like.

Q: You came back when in 1980?

LINDSTROM: Then I had agreed to take the Iranian job, and of course things just went from bad to worse as far as the hostages were concerned. So I finally came back, after consulting in the area. I did get a chance to visit Oman and the Emirates, and Kuwait, and Baghdad, and came back in June or July of 1980. Henry Precht was my predecessor, so I replaced him. But when I arrived there it was really the very lowest of the low points in the whole hostage crisis. We had just sent a letter signed by every congressman and senator to Rafsanjani, who was already rising in power. It was delivered to him by the Swiss ambassador who was acting on our behalf. He just gave a terrible anti-American diatribe. I remember hearing Muskie say...

Q: He was Secretary of State.

LINDSTROM: He said, "I can see the outline of a possible negotiation." And I said to myself, I didn't say this to anyone else, "These people are all batty if they think they can make anything out of Rafsanjani's anti-American diatribe." But in a sense Muskie's observation turned out to be true, because there were some points in there and we were able to get additional signals that indicated some willingness. But still the mind set at that time was that the ___ had no authority really to deal with the hostage crisis. It was just sort of hanging out there. I worked in the Operations Center for the rest of the hostage period and on for the first five or six months into the non-hostage period after their

release. I had a very large staff of volunteers, people from all parts of the Department, to handle phone calls.

Q: Basically for most of the time you were there, at least the first part of the time you were there, it was just hostages. That was it, wasn't it?

LINDSTROM: I'd say that was the center of it.

Q: How about the freezing of Iranian funds?

LINDSTROM: This was all a part of it, of course, and all the measures that we took, and eventually the releasing of many Iranian funds as a part of the release process. But I would say going back to the summer when I first got there, the emphasis then was on maintaining contact. I mean, establishing some kind of meaningful contact with someone who you might call a decision maker inside of Iran. As I mentioned on Rafsanjani, he didn't seem to be asserting himself as a decision maker at all. We had various people to maintain telephone contact directly with Iran. Fortunately the telephones never went out during this period. I had developed a contact with one of the leading Shiites in the United States, in the Bay area. We used to meet from time to time, and I went out and saw him in San Francisco. I first met him here, he had studied in religious institutions, mainly in Iraq, where the best students were, many of the present leaders in Iran, and the post-revolutionary leaders. He could also get through on the telephone to some of them. Most of the people were pretty afraid to talk, but he occasionally would give us some little tidbits of what was going on. As Hal Saunders used to say, we just keep tapping on every door, every window, in hopes of finding one that we eventually could open. So it was sort of a shotgun approach to the problem, which I think was probably a reasonable thing to do. We had contacts with some very disreputable people.

Q: Were we able to...because one looks forward a few more years to the Reagan administration to the time when you had what was known as the Iran-Contra affair where the National Security Council got involved with dealing with the so-called "Iranian moderates" and thinking that they were working a deal again about hostages but this time in Beirut. Were there attempts to get you into one of these deals with say disreputable people where caution would say, let's not do it? Were we desperate? Were there attempts to get you involved in things that probably would have been discreditable?

LINDSTROM: No. That certainly wasn't a part of the picture then. But we did deal with some people who had rather questionable backgrounds in an effort to get information. This, of course, was all cleared with everybody. One of my daily jobs from the time I first got here was to write a daily report on whatever information we'd gathered from our sort of informal channels of one kind or another. For example, I used to pick up from Henry Precht, the Frenchman in Paris, who had supposedly good ties in Iran. Again, leaving no stone unturned. We would report this to the Secretary of State, a daily report, and that same report went, without his name on it, to the President, Jimmy Carter. He became completely involved in getting the hostages out.

Q: How were your relations with the National Security Council?

LINDSTROM: I used to see Gary Sick, not a great deal. For example, they did keep the State Department from knowing, other than Warren Christopher, about the hostage rescue operation. Anyway, I did see a fair amount of Sick. This was more after the hostages were released. Anyway, going up to their release there was a lot of speculation about what held up their release to the last minute. I don't find there's ever been any really satisfactory explanation. Gary Sick wrote his book on so-called October Surprise, and I don't think this was something deliberate on the part of the Reagan administration...so everyone, and not just our agency, but in the whole government was working in one way or another. The Treasury Department was very deeply involved in all of this money business, constant meetings of committees to coordinate all of these things that were going on. Again, the feelings about whether we were going to get them out, we just simply didn't know, or if some of them were going to be killed. Rumors flew hot and fast. Let me say, I was in on the original involvement of the Algerians. This was, as I recall, it was on a Sunday--we worked 7 days a week--and I worked very closely with Hal Saunders, and we got a call that the Algerian ambassador wanted to come around to the State Department. He had something to say, and his only western language was French, so I was asked to interpret for Hal. At the same time up in the United Nations, a permanent Iranian had just come there. He was the Prime Minister. He had been up at the United Nations, and the wife of one of our hostages had met with him, and he seemed to be very sympathetic to her. This was the school teacher hostage, and she had an hour. I think it had some impact on him as a person. Then the Algerians also met with him. They came around to see Hal and me on a Sunday afternoon, and he was proposing that the Secretary of State might want to work jointly with the Foreign Minister of Algeria to facilitate the hostage release since it wasn't going anyplace very fast. The Swiss were doing an excellent job of representing us, but there were limitations. They just simply didn't have the same credentials as the Algerians had at that time. So we talked to him at some length about how this might go. Hal made it clear from the beginning that it would be Mr. Christopher who would be the U.S. representative, because he had the experience. Muskie could always be brought in, but he was brand new and not familiar with this. So that's how this special Algerian relationship got started. I remember initially Christopher flew over to Algiers with a number of other people, and they really got this other channel going. It fits in with what I mentioned earlier about having multiple channels to solve this problem.

Q: What was your feeling about the final agreement that got the hostages back?

LINDSTROM: I think it was about as good as we could have got. There were a lot of things that we did not give the Iranians. Of course there are some people that say we shouldn't have given them anything. We should have gone in there militarily. But we got every last hostage out alive, which we weren't sure of at all. Some think, and sometimes I lean towards that point of view, that we could have gotten them out politically, if we had not gone this very detailed route. We could have gotten them out sooner. I don't really think that was the case. Once you started down that path there were all sorts of

technocrats on the Iranian side, and the Central Bank, and all that sort of thing. It worked well, but it worked slowly because as you know the hostages didn't get out until even after the new President was in office. I can remember out to the hall going to the men's room in front of the Op Center, seeing some taking down the names of all the Assistant Secretaries from a board from the old administration, and still we didn't have any hostages out yet. It was rather exciting when finally they were allowed to take off. We were monitoring the flight of the two Algerian aircraft. The Iranians did give us a military escort. The Iran-Iraq war was on by that time, and they gave us an escort of three or four F-4s to go after the Iraqis, if they should come there. Then finally we got the word that they were over Turkish airspace. It was exciting, and then they refueled in Greece. Our ambassador there wanted to get on and greet everybody, but the Algerians wouldn't let him on. He was furious, I don't remember who it was. So finally they got all the way over to Algiers and made a safe landing. We had some threats that came in supposedly from Qadhafi, and that sort of thing. Nothing materialized, and the Algerians planes went on and landed there.

Incidentally, the Algerians did a tremendous job and never charged us a dime for any of that. They would never take anything whatsoever for the use of their planes, their people, and all that.

Q: The Reagan administration came in and what happened? The hostages arrived and Iranian affairs almost disappeared from the Department of State radar, or what happened?

LINDSTROM: No, not immediately. It was still a matter of continuing interest. In a sense, yes, but there were lingering problems. We were concerned with our property in Iran, for example, what was going to happen to that. And there were a couple of other people to still get out who were sort of private hostages, you might say, a woman. So it just sort of wound down more slowly. The Reagan administration gave a reception on the White House grounds for the returning hostages. They, as you know, spent some days getting back and were brought back via West Point. I remember one of the things is that the Reagan administration didn't seem to want to give much credit at all to the Algerians who played such a key role, and that rather bothered me. But I continued to work with the Algerians. They were managing our Iranian interests and I was still in that job.

One of the exciting moments, of course, too, was when not only the Algerian planes exited into Turkish airspace, but we did get a phone call from the Swiss ambassador in Tehran saying that he had 52 hostage signatures. Up until then we didn't know how many we were going to get out. A lot of the delay was apparently caused by disagreement among the hostage holders. A couple of the hostages weren't brought to the airport until the last moment. So I don't think there was any October Surprise, any conscious conspiracy, or anything like that. It was just the customary Iranian disarray.

Q: During the Reagan administration was there any change, you might say, in attitude or anything else like that as far as you were concerned in Iranian affairs?

LINDSTROM: Oh, Yes. They wanted to go through the policy making process. We had the SIG-IG thing at that time analyzing Iran and what it meant for U.S. interests and all that sort of thing. That's where I first met Ollie North. He came to one of our SIGs but stayed more or less in the background whispering to his buddies from you know where. So, yes, there was considerable interest.

But going back to one point, when we were trying to figure out how to deal Khomeini. He had issued this rather mysterious proclamation. Most other things seemed to call for our recognizing that we had been at fault in this whole thing. We would consult with all sorts of experts on Iran to see how we could satisfy this feeling. We started doing a lot of things in retrospect we weren't terribly proud of. They're humiliating almost. But throughout this period, once these basic contacts were established with the Algerians and with the key players on the Iranian side, who had been authorized by Khomeini to negotiate, it really went on pretty well. But there were always these uncertainties as to whether they were really serious, whether we were really negotiating with the right people.

That's putting in a capsule an awful lot of happenings but then after that we moved back up to Iranian Affairs in the NEA Bureau. There were some odds and ends to tend to but mainly dealing with the Algerians over the things that the Iranians were doing in the Interest Section, and trying to keep them under control. The Algerians did a marvelous job as far as I was concerned under a very difficult position.

Q: They're very professional diplomats.

LINDSTROM: Oh, yes. These are the people who now are being attacked by the Islamic extremists inside their own country.

Q: You left that job, your last job was it?

LINDSTROM: Yes, my last job was not a terribly exciting job. I was in charge of economic matters in INR. I'd say the hostage business was the last really interesting job that I had.

Q: Did you get any impression of how Alexander Haig as Secretary of State...did you get any feel for his operation from your perspective?

LINDSTROM: Well, I certainly was conscious, as was everybody who worked in the policy area in the Department at that time, of Haig's idiosyncrasies such as underlining key words in one-page memos, his military technique. That wasn't that important, but you were already being as brief as you can. I didn't have anything personally to do with him.

Q: While you were dealing with Iranian affairs, what about the multitude of Iranian students in the United States? Were they any factor at all?

LINDSTROM: No. They were, of course, an irritant to President Carter when they would come and demonstrate in front of the White House. He kept saying can't we do something about this. The President had to be informed that they were observing U.S. laws. To answer your question I don't think they had any important bearing on...

Q: Were we ever talking about checking visa status, and sending them home?

LINDSTROM: All of these options were considered. Of course, some of the Iranian students were perfectly reasonable people. Others from our point of view...so we didn't get into anything that was really punitive. I maintained quite a lot of contact with Iranians that I had met earlier in academics. It was rather a unique event in American history.

Q: It certainly was. Well, when you left the Iranian job, what was your feeling about whither American-Iranian relations. This is '83.

LINDSTROM: I would say the last time we looked at it from a policy point of view in a SIG context...

Q: SIG means?

LINDSTROM: Senior Inter-departmental Group. We thought at that time, and it turned out to be wildly optimistic, that within a few years the Iranians would find it in their interest to come back and reestablish a relationship with U.S., other western powers, etc. It just simply has not happened. We don't see much likelihood of it happening in the near future. We thought amongst other things there would be sort of an end to the educated Iranians all over the country and into western Europe, United States, etc. I thought maybe at one point they would start returning, but they were too afraid to return. They would send their wives back, because the revolutionaries wouldn't bother the wives. The wives could sort of secure the family property for a time. But that's not really transferred political power back into Iran, so it has turned out to be something more of the nature of the Russian revolution in looking back. So I don't think most of those people are ever going to go back. The center is still a very radical thing. Rafsanjani was called a moderate by North. Well, maybe he is a moderate, if he had his own way. He's never been sufficiently in control of the operation to exhibit genuine moderate tendencies, and the radicals, our former hostage holders...we did put them on our look-out list, every last one of them. We managed to finally to identify all ten of them. But several of them became high ranking officials in the Foreign Ministry. We did deny them entry into the United States. We were afraid of having scuffles on the tarmac in New York. So, anyway, the regime goes on with the radical factions within the Foreign Ministry tending to control it. Those ties would keep them in Sudan, I think, and other admiring governments.

Q: You can always add anything you want, including the name of the congressman ...Steve Solarz is the Jewish congressman from New York whose name we couldn't remember. Thank you.

End of interview