

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

**LAWRENCE ROSSIN**

*Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy*  
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**INTERVIEW**

*Q: Today is the seventh of January 2005. This is an interview with Lawrence Rossin, R-O-S-S-I-N. Any middle initial?*

ROSSIN: "G."

*Q: And you go obviously by Larry.*

ROSSIN: Larry.

*Q: And this is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. And I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. And Larry, let's start at the beginning. When and where were you born?*

ROSSIN: I was born in Newark, New Jersey, November 3, 1952.

*Q: Let's talk a bit first about your father's side. What do you know about where the Rossin's come from?*

ROSSIN: Well, my father's side is part Irish and part German. My father was a civilian engineer. He worked for the navy and worked for the air force during his career. And he was in World War II at the tail end of the war. My grandfather was Irish; he worked for Con Ed [Consolidated Edison], a power plant in New Jersey or in New York—I'm not sure where. My grandmother on that side was German. They were Germans from Newark. She grew up speaking German in the house. So that was my father's side.

*Q: So, your dad, as an engineer, went to college?*

ROSSIN: He went to Sampson College, one of a group of New York State colleges for returning GIs, for the first two years, then to the University of Miami on the GI Bill [the term GI Bill® refers to any Department of Veterans Affairs education benefit] and got his mechanical engineering degree there. And that's where he met my mother.

*Q: On your mother's side then?*

ROSSIN: My mother is from New York City. She was from mostly an Irish family. Her grandfather was a Tammany Hall functionary, as I understand. I think he managed the NYU [New York University] stadium. Her mother was actually a widow, my grandmother. My mother's father was a Cuban journalist in New York. He worked for a Havana newspaper but died almost immediately after my mother was born in 1931. She grew up going to boarding schools and so forth.

*Q: So, did you grow up in one place?*

ROSSIN: I grew up in different places. My sister, who is a bit over four and a half years younger than me, was very, very ill when she was a child. She had a problem that caused her respiratory difficulty. She had pneumonia and digestive problems, so my parents decided to move to California. They needed to go to a dry climate. We moved to a place called China Lake, a big navy research base in the desert in California. And that's where I grew up until I was in the eighth grade. Then we moved to Santa Maria, California, which is an oil and cow town, but is also a bedroom community for Vandenberg Air Force Base, which is where my dad worked.

*Q: Let's talk about China Lake a bit. You were there from when to when?*

ROSSIN: We got there when I was four-and-a-half years old in 1957, and we left there in the summer of 1965, when I was between the seventh and eighth grade.

*Q: What was China Lake like, from the perspective of a young boy?*

ROSSIN: It was a great place if you were a young kid. We used to go lizard hunting in the desert. Not hunting with rifles, but catching them. They had tortoises and snakes and all that kind of stuff. It was very isolated. At that time particularly it was very isolated.

We used to go shopping once a year to San Bernardino, which was about three hundred miles away, at a department store, I think it was called Harris and Company. We would come back with the trunk dragging on the ground, driving through Four Corners and up 395. And then we would go to Lancaster, to Sears, once every four or five months, which was eighty miles away. So, China Lake at that time was quite isolated. It's become a bit of a retirement community, or rather its non-military satellite town Ridgecrest has now. It was a good place to grow up. We used to go to the Navy Armed Forces Day, the air shows, all that kind of stuff.

*Q: Were you able to get on the base and play around?*

ROSSIN: We lived on the base. There was a tiny non-military community outside the base. But we lived on the base. Everybody lived on the base, practically speaking. Most people were civilians, not military.

*Q: What were they doing there?*

ROSSIN: It was military research. This is where the Sidewinder Missile was developed. Lots of different surface-to-air, air-to-air missiles. China Lake was a town, or a base, at one corner of a very, very large test range in the desert there. My father would drive out and do telemetry tests and things of that nature.

*Q: At home, would you all sit around the dinner table at night and talk about events? Did the world intrude much there?*

ROSSIN: Yes. I liked to read. My grandmother was a stamp collector. My dad was a stamp collector. So, I was always interested in foreign countries and events even though we never traveled to any foreign countries. I was always interested in the news and current affairs and was reading history. I was a big reader when I was a kid. And my mother was interested in these things. My father was not so much interested in that. He had his work. But my mother was interested in that kind of thing.

*Q: Do you recall any of the books you liked to read at the time?*

ROSSIN: I read a lot of history. There was one—he was an adventurer in the 1920s. Richard Halliburton.

*Q: He has kicked off more Foreign Service careers. Seven League Boots and all of that.*

ROSSIN: Yeah. It wasn't *Seven League Boots*. It was another book that my mother had. I read that book a lot. And then I got *Seven League Boots*, actually, at Goodwill at some point when I was in high school. And all that really got me interested a lot in foreign countries. And I followed politics and events.

I remember when Kennedy was shot. I was in the fifth grade and I was walking home from school for lunch. I stopped at the post office to see if there were any new stamps, and all the ladies were crying, the clerks. And there was something on the radio about the president being shot, and I remember thinking to myself, well, presidents in South America get shot all the time. Why are all of these ladies crying? And then I went home and my mother was crying and she said it wasn't the president of Brazil. It was the president of the United States.

*Q: What was the school like?*

ROSSIN: I went to public school. They were just standard California state elementary schools. There was nothing unusual about them. They were good schools. California at that time had the best schools in the country. It doesn't now, but it did at that time.

*Q: Did you learn all about Friar whatever his name was [N.B. Possibly Fra. Francisco Hermenegildo Tomás Garcés]?*

ROSSIN: Yes. This was eastern Kern County. So, we learned all about the missions. And we learned about Bakersfield. A lot of California.

*Q: I got a good dose of that. I grew up in Pasadena-San Marino, that area. California history is fascinating. A lot of people in other parts of the country don't understand the developments there.*

ROSSIN: Well, there was quite a bit about Kern County history, too. And Kern County is not a particularly special county in California, but it has its own history.

*Q: Did you go to Bakersfield at all?*

ROSSIN: We drove to Bakersfield. It was a long drive because you had to drive across the Sierras to get there. So, we didn't go there very much. We would either go north to Reno and Carson City, Mono Lake and that area. Or we would go south down to Lancaster.

*Q: So, you were still in grade school essentially when you moved over to Santa Maria?*

ROSSIN: Yes. It was between the seventh and eighth grade, so I was in junior high. That was quite a change. It's funny, when I think about myself being in the Foreign Service, I've always felt comfortable in the environment. I think it was a lot because of growing up in China Lake. Because China Lake was a little like being in an isolated foreign environment. Living some place where it's all government, where there is classified stuff—because the whole place was classified—was not unusual for me.

And when we moved to Santa Maria, which was a regular town, and we didn't have badges to get off and on the base, and would go shopping in the stores that everybody else went shopping in, that was quite a change, actually. Vandenberg Air Force Base was about thirty miles away from Santa Maria. I used to go golfing with my dad at the golf course there. But other than that, we never went to the base. That was quite a change.

*Q: Having been at China Lake, did the technical aspect, the sciences and all, did that take hold of you at all?*

ROSSIN: No. I'm terrible at math. When I did my SATs [Scholastic Aptitude Test], my verbal score was much higher than my math score. The only science thing that ever interested me was astronomy. I had a telescope and read all about astronomy. But other than that, I'm just no good at math. I was always interested in the written word and reading and that kind of thing.

*Q: How about junior high and high school in Santa Maria? How did you find them?*

ROSSIN: Well, the junior high that I went to there, I didn't really like it. It was a big change from China Lake. I don't remember too much about it, but I didn't do very well there. I was in the choir, but it was not a school that was distinguished, nor did I distinguish myself at it. And then there was a new Catholic high school, St. Joseph's, that had opened up in Santa Maria. Santa Maria is at the distant extremity of the Los Angeles archdiocese. And the archdiocese for some reason decided to open up a Catholic high school in Santa Maria. They had just done so. When I went there it was entering its third year. They added a class every year.

And this was actually a great experience. This was one of my formative experiences, if I can put it that way, because the archdiocese imported priests and nuns from England and Belgium to open this school. And so here we are in Santa Maria and we have all of these hyper-educated Brits and Belgians running this school. There were also lay staff, but it had quite a lot of the religious there.

*Q: How Catholic was your family?*

ROSSIN: They were average Catholic, I would say. We went to church, I went to confirmation, of course communion. But my parents were not overly religious or anything. We were just traditional Catholic.

*Q: Did that change for you at all when you went to this high school?*

ROSSIN: I think the religion part of it became a little more intellectual, actually. These priests were not your parish priests. They were from the Order of the Josephites, which is mainly a British and Belgian body of missionaries—a lot of missionaries in the Congo and so forth. And for some reason here they were in Santa Maria. They were also teaching at a school in Downey. But I think it became more intellectual because they were just very intellectual people. We had religion class, but it wasn't sort of rote, rather it was to think about your type of religion, the history of the church, other religions, how they play in. It was an academic setting and they were academic people. We didn't go to mass. It was not a Catholic school that you went to mass at. A lot of the kids were not Catholic.

*Q: Did you find yourself engaged in any particular classes or subjects?*

ROSSIN: Yes. I was very fortunate to go to this school. These teachers were great. My ability to write English just erupted during the period I was in the class, much more so than in university. The demands that they made for quality were enormous. We had one English class, for example. I remember that we used to do book reports every three weeks or so. My teacher was a young priest—he became head of the order later on—Father Mayhew. He got me to read *The Blue Nile* by Alan Morehead. That was his favorite book and I found it terribly boring. I wrote a really boring book report on it. Usually I got really good grades on my book reports but this grade was really bad. He gave me an "F"

on it and said, “You can think the book was boring, but you cannot write a boring book report about it.” This kind of lesson is important!

We also had art history. We had speech class. There were a lot of different things that were essential to a good education. It was at this high school, actually, that I heard about the Foreign Service. A friend of mine and I had a period in the school library where we were supposed to be doing study hall. But we didn’t do it. We just sat around in the school library. The school library was brand new. I think you can order a school library out of a catalogue because all the books looked new, and with the same covers and labels. But somebody had donated a lot of books that were in the back, and we were poking around in those boxes. And one of them was a book that was in the series *Your Career in* [fill in the blank], and this book was on the Foreign Service. So, I read about the Foreign Service and that’s where I heard about what I thereafter wanted to do.

*Q: What about national and foreign events, and even local events? Was this something you were beginning to get tuned into?*

ROSSIN: Yes, I was. I followed it. I just read the papers and followed the news. I went to debate tournaments. We didn’t have a debating team as such. But there were debate or speech tournaments, they were called, and some of us went for St. Joseph’s. I always chose articles on international affairs. I remember that the topic I was assigned for an impromptu speech where you had some time to prepare was euthanasia, a word I had never heard, and I kept looking for articles on “youth in Asia.” I didn’t know what the word euthanasia meant. So sometimes we were starting from a low level. There was something called the Junior Statesmen of America. Are you familiar with that?

*Q: No.*

ROSSIN: It was a high school student government-type organization, not of a school but rather a mock California government. There would be various events in Santa Maria, but then twice a year you would either go, either to Los Angeles or to Sacramento, and have a mock student state assembly or state senate, actually sitting in the chambers doing bills and debates. So, I became very interested in that. A friend of mine and I rewrote the constitution of the St. Joseph student government at one point. We did silly stuff.

*Q: It’s a hands-on experience.*

ROSSIN: This was of course the time of the Vietnam War, so I was interested in that. In 1969 a couple of us organized a petition signature drive against the Vietnam War and sent it off to whoever in Washington. I don’t remember who it was and we never got a reply. We were off at the extremity of California. I was a little bit too young to be really active on that issue.

*Q: Where did your family fall politically?*

ROSSIN: I would say mostly on the liberal side. But my mother voted for Goldwater and my father voted for Johnson. A little bit erratic. Now they have become completely Democratic, certainly, on the liberal side on social issues and things of that nature. I think my mother was really marked by the period when I was a little child in the 1950s when the atom bomb was a real threat, and then the Cuban missile crisis. That's why she voted for Goldwater, I suspect, in terms of national security. But on social issues they were always liberal.

*Q: On social issues, in Santa Maria did you run across Mexican or Hispanic laborers, or other ethnic groups?*

ROSSIN: Santa Maria has a lot of Filipinos. It has a lot of Chicanos and Mexican migrants. The two don't get along at all. I worked in a frozen food packing plant a couple of summers there and the illegals and the legals are really at each other. A lot of Filipinos, a lot of Portuguese, a fair amount of Japanese, hardly any African-Americans, hardly any blacks. I think there was one black kid in our school, not because the school was segregated but because there weren't a lot of black people. The layout there was that the blacks were white, basically. And then there were the Mexicans. And the Filipinos, they speak Spanish, so they are like Mexicans. The Portuguese were off on the side.

*Q: Was there a town and farming divide?*

ROSSIN: If there was, I didn't notice it. But there may have been. You had this town that was strawberries, beets, cauliflower—it was a farming town, although mostly big farms, company farms, not family farms. And then you have this bedroom community for Vandenberg Air Force Base. This fluctuated a lot. When we arrived in Santa Maria, we were looking for houses. There was block after block of VA [Veterans Administration] and FHA [Federal Housing Administration] repossessed houses because a huge construction phase had just ended at Vandenberg Air Force Base and people had been laid off and literally left in the middle of the night. You would see people's dogs running around because they had abandoned them and defaulted on the payment of their houses. Santa Maria was definitely not dominated by the bedroom community part when we got there. Now I think it is. And it's also become a retirement community. So, there may have been a divide, but it wasn't something I ever noticed. And it didn't manifest itself in the school, for example. There was none of that [although] there were people from all these categories.

*Q: On the Vietnam war, was this a dividing thing at all? It obviously didn't bite home because you were a school kid.*

ROSSIN: I was kind of on the young side. But there were a couple of people from the high school who graduated in the first couple of classes who were in Vietnam, and I think there was one who was killed, but I didn't know him.

*Q: I mean protests for or against?*



ROSSIN: Santa Maria was not a liberal town. I would assume that most people were supporters of the president. President Nixon at this stage. It was not very controversial. Or at least I don't remember it being controversial.

*Q: Did you get a feel for the news there? Was it pretty much TV? How were the newspapers?*

ROSSIN: We got the *Los Angeles Times*. And there was the *Santa Maria Times*, which actually had some international news in it as well as local news. And we had cable TV [television], so we got Los Angeles channels. It was not the days of CNN [Cable News Network] obviously, but we were not disconnected from the world in any way. We were as well informed as anybody was, I think.

*Q: You graduated from high school when?*

ROSSIN: Nineteen seventy.

*Q: Where did you point yourself?*

ROSSIN: I applied to school both in the east and in Lost Angeles and ended up going to the University of Virginia [UVA]. I was there for a year and a bit, then I transferred to California, to Claremont Men's College, which was one I had applied to earlier but didn't attend the first go round.

*Q: What attracted you to the University of Virginia?*

ROSSIN: I wanted to go east. The course catalogue had the most courses in international relations and history and the kinds of things that interested me. It is a good school, obviously. And so, I went there. When I got there, it was a big adjustment and eventually I don't think I really settled in. Living across the country from home was a bit more of distance at that time than it is now in terms of airfares and telephones and all of the rest of it. So, it was a good school but eventually I decided to transfer.

*Q: University of Virginia has had a reputation of being a good school but also very much a big party school, heavy drinking and all, which doesn't attract everyone.*

ROSSIN: Yeah. And it didn't attract me. I had never heard of "preppies." I just didn't know about that. And there were a whole lot of things I didn't know about. All the fraternities. I went to all the rushes and I didn't join any of them. I couldn't afford it and it wasn't my style anyway. It was the East Coast and I wasn't a person from the East Coast. A lot of it is not Virginia but really sort of the Northeast. That is really more dominant. And then you have this business where you have all these eighteen-year-old kids smoking pipes and trying to look like Thomas Jefferson, wearing docker shoes. You know, preppy shoes. For a guy from California—



*Q: It was a style at the time.*

ROSSIN: Definitely a style. No socks, chino pants. For somebody from Santa Maria, this was—I mean, not everybody was like that.

*Q: No, but this was kind of the dominant culture.*

ROSSIN: It was one element of the culture. The one that stood out, I would say. Academically it was a great school. I had some great classes there. A really good Russian history class. I was the Peru desk officer in the mid-1980s and my large class international relations professor all of a sudden showed up as the ambassador to Peru. His book was totally incomprehensible. The man couldn't write an English sentence that you could understand. It was really unfortunate. He was extremely conservative.

*Q: Well then you went to Claremont. Claremont was one of a number of schools.*

ROSSIN: The Claremont Colleges. There are Pomona College, Pitzer, Scripps, Harvey Mudd, Claremont.

*Q: These are located where?*

ROSSIN: The eastern Los Angeles area, out towards San Bernardino. Roughly halfway between Los Angeles and San Bernardino. I took time off and so I ended up transferring out from Virginia in my sophomore year. I did a bit of my sophomore year in Virginia and then I went home and worked in a frozen food packing plant for quite a long time.

*Q: What was that like?*

ROSSIN: It was really a worthwhile thing to do. First of all, it paid well for a student. I was making \$3.45 an hour, which was not bad at the time, and working forty-eight hours a week. It was mostly night time work, packing cauliflower and broccoli and then lima beans sometimes. It was very physical work. I'm not the most physical person and I certainly wasn't then. I weighed perhaps 125 pounds. And it was really very heavy physical work. It was a good experience. I put on muscle. And you also worked with people who otherwise you might not associate with. And it was also a good experience because I realized that I didn't want to do that for the rest of my life. It was worthwhile.

*Q: There is a very good section in a book by Tom Wolfe called A Man in Full where one of his characters works in a frozen food plant in California. You might want to just grab that.*

ROSSIN: I'll have to do that. It was mostly night time work. Especially with lima beans. They have to be packed right away or they rot. So, it was like ten hours a day, six days a week at night time because they've got to be packed fast. Night work was much better

than day work when you are doing something like that. So, I would drive home at five am, get home at six and take a shower and go to bed. My mother would call me from work at around 10:30 am and say, "Why are you in bed sleeping?" I mean, it was my night, my mother didn't really get the picture there.

*Q: Talk a little about Claremont. You were there from when to when?*

ROSSIN: I got there in the fall of 1972 and I graduated in 1975. So, I was there for three years. It was very different. UVA was a big school then and is a big school now. And Claremont had eight hundred students. The Claremont Colleges probably have four or five thousand students in the aggregate, but with individual identities.

Claremont Men's College is a much more conservative school. The philosophy is conservative. It was founded by a group of businessmen in the late 1940s. Business and government-oriented. A lot of accounting students. A lot of economics. A lot of international relations. But also, literature and humanities. Of course, you could take classes at all the other Claremont Colleges, which I did—economic history, literature classes, and others.

For me personally it was just a better place to be. I was used to smaller schools. I didn't want to be home, but I didn't want to be across the country either. I liked to be able to go home. I like my parents and I liked to go home and see them. And I liked to have them come and see me every now and then. It was a nice environment and a good academic environment. A nice place to live. I had great friends there. My roommate was a Canadian whose parents were missionaries in Taiwan. Another friend of mine was Ethiopian. He is now retired as the president of a big bank in Denver. There were a variety of different people, mostly from California, but not all. A lot from Colorado and places like that. It was a good school.

*Q: Now at Claremont, each of the schools has an identity, but also a kind of focus. What was Claremont's?*

ROSSIN: Claremont's was business and government and that kind of thing—accounting. It also had literature, psychology, and the like. But these were not at the time the main focus. It also had some mathematics. It had a program with Stanford, a 3/2 management-engineering program with the management part at Claremont and then the students went to Stanford to finish up the hard engineering. Scripps College, where my wife went, was a humanities women's college. Claremont was a men's college at the time. It went co-ed a few years after I graduated. Pitzer College was a college that was founded in the late 1960s. It was a new age college—social sciences. Pomona was just a standard liberal arts college. It was the anchor, I would say. Harvey Mudd was engineering and science.

*Q: Obviously the 1960s were over and this was a conservative area. Had there been any impact of the 1960s?*

ROSSIN: Apparently before I arrived there was some impact on Claremont. The first president had been the founding president and he left to become a deputy assistant secretary of defense in the Nixon administration. Then another president came in and lasted a year. There was some kind of a student demonstration, which was very hard to picture at Claremont Men's College, and he left. And then the man who came in as president was a man who had graduated from CMC [Claremont McKenna College] in the late 1950s, who had a bachelor's degree. He was not an academic. He was there until just three or four years ago and raised millions and millions. This was a very business-oriented college. They didn't need a big intellectual as president; they were focused on the bottom line and the president was good at the bottom line and built the college up.

When I was at the University of Virginia, I came up to Washington for one of the protests in 1970 or 1971. But at the University of Virginia the anti-war stuff had died down because it had gone off into a cul-de-sac; the real anti-war folks had gone off into the hard core. Do you remember there was a group called the Progressive Labor Party which was a sort of Trotskyite group; that is where they went off to and it became unpleasant. I remember the solicitor general of the United States came to give a speech at some point and they disrupted it. It was fine to disrupt it, but the way they disrupted it was not alright. These people had become too hard core. Claremont was not like that.

*Q: Had the sexual revolution hit Claremont?*

ROSSIN: I don't know how you define that. I mean people lived with their girlfriends, but it wasn't like how I picture Berkeley. It wasn't that.

*Q: Dorms weren't coed?*

ROSSIN: No, because the colleges weren't coed. I think that Pomona College may have had some coed dorms, and Pitzer did. But obviously not Claremont and Scripps.

*Q: Well what courses were you taking there?*

ROSSIN: Economics. I had decided to major in economics even though my interest was international relations, because I found with international relations I could do it myself. I didn't need the professor. I could just read the books. With economics I needed the professor to show it to me. So, I took a lot of economics classes. I didn't do any math until my senior year when I realized too late that economics was really just applied math. So, I went off into development economics, the kind you don't need math for.

And then I took a lot of literature courses. I like literature. I took it every semester because it was relaxing. And I guess I took a couple of history classes. But mostly it was economics. Economics, history, literature. I participated in a hands-on management class

at Harvey Mudd where we did a project looking at the impact of the Interstate 210 property acquisitions on the surrounding communities in San Bernardino.

*Q: Had some of the courses, political science and economics, gone almost overboard concentrating on figures?*

ROSSIN: No. I know what you are saying. When I was at Virginia, the introductory international relations course was all games theory and the like. I found that completely irrelevant. I couldn't get into that at all. What I enjoyed about the non-sciences was that it was human beings and you have to have an instinct for that. I couldn't understand the quantitative materials anyway.

At Claremont everything was very practical. The professors—the ones that I liked anyway—tended to be much more empirical and historically based, if you will, drawing lessons out of history. There was one professor, Leon Hollerman, who taught a lot on East Asia and comparative economic development. We studied Japan and Turkey and a variety of cases. It wasn't economic history, it was a little more theoretical than that. The economic history classes at Pomona College were more theoretical. But economic history is just applied math, too.

The only problem with the political science department at Claremont was that it was dominated by an extremely conservative, reactionary professor named Harold Rood. Everybody thought he was a guru. I thought he was a nutcase. So, I stayed away from him. I wasn't impressed with him.

*Q: While you were at college, were you looking at any particular profession or area?*

ROSSIN: Yes. I wanted to join the Foreign Service. That is the only thing I wanted to do, ever since I read that book in the library in high school. I wanted to go overseas. I wanted to travel. I wanted to do diplomacy such as I understood it to be, which I didn't really understand at all, I discovered. I wanted to leave Santa Maria. I didn't want to go back there, certainly.

When I was a senior I went and interviewed with a couple of companies. They have a lot of financial analyst kind of companies come to Claremont because that was a lot of the students. And I interviewed with them. I mean, they would never have hired me. Why would they? I was so uninterested in their job. The only thing I wanted to do was the Foreign Service. I did the exam when I was a senior and I did the interview and I got in. I did the Civil Service exam as a fallback and in fact took a job before I joined the Foreign Service. But that was the only thing I was interested in. And nobody was going into the Foreign Service from Claremont at that time.

*Q: Did you ever run across a real live Foreign Service officer?*

ROSSIN: No. The first time I ran across Foreign Service officers was when I did the oral exam. At that time, it was a three-person panel that would interview you.

*Q: This was when?*

ROSSIN: Nineteen seventy-five. I went to Los Angeles.

*Q: I didn't do it there, but I was giving the oral exam up in San Francisco about that time.*

ROSSIN: It was interesting.

*Q: Do you recall any of the questions that were asked?*

ROSSIN: I do actually. I recall a couple of the questions. They were sort of a mix—you did it, so you know—sort of off the wall substantive questions and then sort of management type questions. I had taken some British politics courses and they asked some questions about that. Things I actually did know about. But then they asked me, “Well, if you were in a negotiation with Ecuador, what might be on the agenda for the negotiation?” I hadn’t studied that, but of course living in Southern California I knew it would have to do with tuna, certainly. And there were a few other things. So, I was able to answer that.

And then another question was, “You get out to do your first embassy and everybody is kind of gloomy and the ambassador calls you in and says, ‘Can you go figure out why everybody is really unhappy around here?’ So, you do. And you find out that it’s because the ambassador is a total jerk. So how do you tell him?” My answer was “Very carefully.” And that seemed to be the right answer. They certainly seemed to think that was the right answer.

*Q: I recall one of our young candidates said, “Well, I would organize baseball games.” Okay. That would solve the problem?*

ROSSIN: I would never talk about organizing baseball games. The oral exam was about an hour and fifteen minutes or something. The thing that was great was that they actually told you right on the spot whether or not you passed. I waited out there for perhaps five minutes and they told me I passed. I was very excited and my girlfriend, who is now my wife, and I went out and had lunch to celebrate.

It was nice and rather surprising because when I had gone to take the written exam in December, there were all these people speaking languages who obviously had been places and looked distinguished, and had been to graduate school. None of these things applied to me. I didn’t speak any languages. I hadn’t been anywhere. I had never gone to graduate school. But I knew I would pass the written exam because I was always really good at Jeopardy, College Bowl, and all that. But I didn’t really expect to pass the oral

exam because I just didn't have that kind of experience. And they told me I was the only person that day that passed it. They said they had interviewed forty-two people. I thought it was quite remarkable.

*Q: Did you get the feeling that they were looking for somebody who could do things practically?*

ROSSIN: I just think that they were looking for somebody who was quick on their feet and actually knew something, just generally knew something, but was quick on their feet with it. I was quick on my feet. I was nervous, but I wasn't intimidated. You have to consider; I didn't own a suit. I was wearing a tie that I borrowed from somebody. The only shoes that I had at the time were work shoes, and I was sitting there picking away at the heel of my shoe the whole time they were interviewing me. So, I guess I just must have been quick on my feet or something.

*Q: So, you graduated and then was there any thought about going on to graduate school?*

ROSSIN: I applied to law school. I was interested in going to law school. I had taken the LSAT [Law School Admission Test] and done quite well. I'm always interested in the law and legal ways of thinking. I got into UCLA [University of California Los Angeles]. But then I took the Civil Service exam and took a job here in Washington, DC as a computer programmer. After I was here in Washington for about three weeks, I received a packet of stuff in the mail from UCLA, "Choose your parking place," et cetera, and realized that I had gotten into UCLA and forgotten about it. And so, I sent them a note back to withdraw since I knew I would be joining the Foreign Service eventually. By that time, I was just waiting for the call.

I was not interested in going to graduate school. First of all, I didn't really have a quality economic background because I had not done much math. Secondly, I just couldn't sit down and write another paper. I made it to the end of my senior year, finished my last paper, got up from the typewriter, went to the class, handed it in, and I was done. Every paper was finished closer and closer to the deadline. I couldn't envisage more of it. I wanted to go do something real; no more academic stuff.

*Q: Where were you computer programming?*

ROSSIN: At the Federal Highway Administration at the Department of Transportation here in Washington, DC. It was one of the job offers I got from taking the Civil Service exam. It was programming in COBOL [an early computer language].

*Q: That was the language at that time. This is pretty early in the game as far as computers go.*

ROSSIN: It was the job they offered. I had had a little bit of experience from college. At college at that time you would do programs that would print out with an IBM

[International Business Machines] Selectric typewriter. The mainframe would be accessed through punch cards, which was also how it was at the Federal Highway Administration. It was a GS-5 [General Schedule-5] job. They hired a lot of people at the same time. Basically, they had computer databases of highway repairs, where federal money had gone to fix roads around the nation. Most of the programming involved a congressman wanting to know which highways in his district got their potholes fixed last year, presumably for his campaign brochure. And we would do a program that would extract this information out of this giant database.

It was very desultory because if you made one mistake in one line of computer program it wouldn't run. But you had to hand the cards into the mainframe and it would take overnight to find this out. Then you would fix the error in five minutes and hang around most of the day. The window of the office overlooked the train tracks that go by the Department of Transportation down there in southwest DC, and I started keeping lists of all the railroads for which I saw boxcars. This being the Department of Transportation, I could go over to the library and look up the obscure ones. So, it was not much of a job. I only did it for three months.

*Q: You came into the Foreign Service in 1975?*

ROSSIN: Nineteen seventy-five, November. Yes.

*Q: What was your A-100, the basic officer course, like?*

ROSSIN: It was fairly large for that time. Not as big as they are now. But I think there were forty-five people in it. The class also had people from USIA [United States Information Agency] and a couple from the Department of Agriculture in it. Not all of the A-100 classes were like that. So, it was one of the larger classes and more varied classes. It was, of course, in Rosslyn [Virginia]. The A-100 class itself struck me as being a glorified version of "where's the men's room" and "how do you get your pass." There was very little substance. I know the guy who runs it now and it is much more substantive. Basically, then it was an intro to the State Department. I don't remember anything substantive about it.

*Q: What were you picking up? This is your first experience of Foreign Service? Did you find that the group was a corps that you identified with? Did you feel somewhat out of place?*

ROSSIN: I felt somewhat out of place. I had made a big mistake when I had come from California to Washington and took the job with the Federal Highway Administration because everybody else, I found out later—I didn't understand anything—was on per diem. They actually could afford a car and furniture. I was not on per diem and I had come with six hundred dollars from selling my van and that was it. In California you could do a lot with six hundred dollars but not in Washington, DC.



As for our A-100 class, we did not stay in touch during the years particularly. And people fell away and they quit the Foreign Service. A couple of people passed away. But now our A-100 class is, I think, one of the few that still actually gets together periodically. We have a reunion every year and I have been to some of them when I have been available. We still do it. Actually, this last year was the first time that there wasn't one. Most people have retired by now.

*Q: Was there a gender mix, an ethnic mix?*

ROSSIN: Yes. It was all of the above. Certainly, there were a lot of women. I don't know what the percentage was, but I have a picture of a very evenly balanced class. Age wise, myself and a woman who didn't stay very long were the youngest ones, straight out of college. A couple of others as well were younger. Then we also had a couple of older people. There was a woman who was a Mustang [Mustang program at the State Department was a program to allow people who had entered as specialists such as communicators to convert to the general Foreign Service]; she is still around I think although I don't know where she is now. She was already fifty-ish in the A-100 class. The average age was twenty-eight or thirty. There were people who had been in graduate school, who had been Peace Corps volunteers, who had been lawyers, worked for other government agencies, post-Vietnam War people. One man had worked for AID [Agency for International Development] in Vietnam. Another had been the city manager of Kissimmee, Florida, who was coming in the Foreign Service in the administrative cone [career track]. It was quite a varied group of people. They were mostly people like those people who had taken the Foreign Service exam—with more experience than I had, and more money. They had real suits. I didn't have a real suit.

*Q: What was your cone [career track]?*

ROSSIN: Political. That's what I was interested in. Also, when I did the sample exam in the book to sign up for the written exam, it was the one I did the best on. So, I decided that is what I would sign up for. The main thing was to get in.

*Q: While you were taking the course and learning where the men's room was, were you picking up any information where you should go, what you should do and all that?*

ROSSIN: I suppose so, but not too much. The assignment process at that time—it still is actually—they basically came in and said here are the jobs. You didn't really even bid on them. You could say where you wanted to go on the list. My single goal was to go as far away as I possibly could. I didn't have any area interest. I didn't have any specialty interest. I just wanted to go far away.

*Q: I assume you had been to Mexico?*

ROSSIN: I had been to Canada. And between my freshman and sophomore year in college my family went and visited England for a month. That was it. Vancouver Island

and England. My dad had been in World War II, obviously, and my mother had been to Cuba when she was a child. But other than that, we had not been anywhere. And the job that I got was general services officer in Niamey, which sounded great. That was really good. And then at a certain point for some reason I was switched over to be consular officer in Bamako, the capital of Mali, which was just as fine. I was happy with either one. The only thing I wanted was far away.

*Q: So, you went to Bamako. Could you describe Mali and where it fits in Africa?*

ROSSIN: It is a big Sahelian country, mostly desert or savanna. Bamako is on the Niger River. The river is not navigable though because of a set of rapids just below, and a set of rapids above Bamako as well, so there is not a lot of boat traffic. Bamako and Mali were very isolated at that time. There was a railway from Dakar that people didn't take much because passengers would always have their stuff stolen. My few consular cases would be people who had gotten their things stolen on the railway. You could drive to Abidjan, but it would take forever. You could drive to Ouagadougou, but where had that gotten you? You couldn't drive to Dakar because there was no road. You couldn't drive to Mauritania. It was really isolated. There was no TV. Phone calls had to be booked hours in advance. There was one radio station and one little propaganda government newspaper. It was a great place to be, actually.

*Q: What were American interests there?*

ROSSIN: They were humanitarian. There was a little bit of what you could call security interests. This was one of the African socialist countries, after independence. The first president, Modibo Keita, who was a Sekou Toure want-to-be, had been overthrown in 1968 by the military. But the military still retained extensive ties with the Soviets, with all of the East, actually, and with the Chinese. There were a lot of Chinese there. A lot of Russians. Pilots, military ties, all the rest of it. We had an AID [U.S. Agency for International Development] program, not a big one, mostly food aid and so forth, at least that was what I understood of it at the time. And there was obviously some modest interest in following what the Soviets, East Germans, Chinese, Cubans and everybody else were up to there, but I wouldn't say huge amounts of resources were devoted to it.

*Q: Who was the ambassador and what was the embassy like?*

ROSSIN: The day that I got there the ambassador left, a man named Ralph McGuire. This had been his retirement-gift ambassadorship and by all accounts he had no interest in or regard for Mali and the Malians. He was a NATO type. The new ambassador who came shortly thereafter was a lady named Patricia Byrne. The DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission] was Steve Dawkins. The embassy was small. There was one of each type of officer, or maybe two of a couple. And then there was a smallish AID mission, but bigger than the embassy. And we had the Peace Corps. I was the Consular Officer and jack-of-all-trades junior officer.

Pat Byrne had been at the Paris peace talks. She was tough as nails. She weighed about eighty-seven pounds and limped from what I think was a mild case of polio as a child. She was already in her fifties, I suppose, at that point. And everybody wondered, “How can you have a woman like that come out to be an ambassador in a Muslim and male-dominated country like Mali? Well, five minutes and she was in charge out there. She was up to that challenge and much more besides. She was very good.

I was a member of the country team because there was one of everybody and I was the consular officer. We were all on the country team. The consular work was very limited. Malians didn’t go to the United States. They went to France. You had mostly diplomats and government officials who would go to the United States. And then a group of art dealers, the merchants who would sell Malian statues and blankets and so forth. That was one of my big learning experiences as a consular officer.

*Q: How was that?*

ROSSIN: With most of the people who would come for visas were in that category, I would have to fill out their visa application forms for them because they were not literate. I would ask them the questions and then I would fill in the form in my office. This was not a “consular section,” this was just my office. This was two visas a day on a big day. This merchant comes in, in his fifties, wearing a boubou, traditional Malian clothes. He’s going to New York for ninety days, staying at the Algonquin Hotel, where they all stayed. I said, knowing my own limited finances, “Well, it is kind of expensive in New York. It’s going to cost you at least a hundred dollars a day to be there. Do you have that kind of money?” He did not look like it to me, naïve that I was. He said, “How much is a hundred dollars in Francs?” I said, “Well that is five thousand Malian Francs [which was five hundred French Francs].” So, he pulls out this huge wad. This was his money. And he starts flicking off five hundred Franc notes—eighty-six, eighty-seven, eighty-eight, and I said, “You got the visa.”

Then I said to him, “How can you go to New York? You cannot even fill out the visa application form?” It was so great. You learn so many things. He said, somewhat witheringly, “I pay somebody if I need something filled out. I don’t make money by filling out forms.” But he didn’t pay me. He was an art dealer, selling statues, and he was making huge money. You see what they sell for in the States. And they didn’t sell for anything in Bamako. And he traveled three or four times a year. Some of those guys have turned, I think, into drug smugglers in the intervening years, but they were all legitimate at the time. They were just supplying the art world.

*Q: Did you have consular problems with Americans getting into trouble?*

ROSSIN: No. Very few. Nobody ever got thrown in jail when I was there. Very few Americans got to Mali. Most of the very few were people who had gone on Roots trips to Senegal and the Gambia, because this was the time of Roots. They were African-Americans. And then they would go one step too far and decide to add on a trip

to Bamako. They would get there and were really off the tour route. They were in the real Africa. And of course, the Malians didn't view them as long-lost brothers and sisters. They viewed them as black people with money. They were just Americans. They had no affinity or anything like that.

*Q: They had probably been the slave traders anyway? Or not?*

ROSSIN: I don't think so. This may have been the area where people were gotten from on the slaving expeditions.

*Q: You are mentioning "Roots." There was a TV series called "Roots" which came out regarding—*

ROSSIN: Alex Hailey. The place where it took place and where the tours would go to was the Gambia and the Casamance area of Senegal. So, they would all come into Dakar, because you could fly from the States to Dakar at that time on Pan Am Airways. But I'm talking three or four people coming to Bamako in two years.

But I remember one poor lady who came in. She was the nicest lady. She was probably in her mid-thirties. She came in and she was so upset because the phone in her room at the Grand Hotel did not work. This was a country that had three-digit phone numbers. So, I walked her through, "Most phones don't work here. Even if your phone did work, who would you be calling? Even if you did have somebody to call, their phone probably wouldn't work." She felt much better by the time she was done with me. I was totally sympathetic to her. She had just traveled a step too far.

I only had one person ever wash up destitute. It was actually a Liberian who had been living in Germany somehow with the U.S. military. And he washed up in Mali with no money. This was before they had any of the subsistence loans that consular officers can make now. I loaned the guy some money of my own, but he kept hanging around. He was actually on his way to Liberia next and I said, "Go to Liberia, you are Liberian." I sent a cable at one point to the consulate in Frankfurt and they called up his wife there. His wife said, "To hell with him. I'm not interested in him and am not going to send a penny." And eventually he disappeared. That was the only destitution case I had.

*Q: Did Libya play any role there at all?*

ROSSIN: They did, but not a big one. This was before the days of Libya's involvement in Burkina Faso and Niger. There were Libyans in Bamako. When I first got there, I was living temporarily in the house of a colleague on home leave, which was situated in the crossfire between the Libyan and North Korean embassies. But they didn't play much of a role. I met them. The terrorism issue either hadn't come up at that time, or it didn't play in Africa. The Libyans were just not a big deal. The North Koreans were there and they were not a big deal. It was really the Russians and the East Germans.

*Q: Was there any contact with the Russians and the East Germans?*

ROSSIN: Yes. We had one of those “young diplomat” clubs, where everybody who is not an ambassador is a young diplomat. And so, we would see the Russians fairly often at those, and also the East Germans and the Cubans in the diplomatic community. Not the Chinese, they were very cloistered. But we would see the rest of them and interact with them. There was a GRU [Soviet foreign military-intelligence agency of the General Staff of the Armed Forces] officer who was just part of our circle.

*Q: GRU is?*

ROSSIN: Soviet military intelligence. Everybody from the Soviet embassy was either GRU or KGB [Soviet State Committee for Security] presumably. I don’t remember any particular individuals except for this one man.

*Q: This was your first exposure, but what was your feeling about the Foreign Service?*

ROSSIN: I was having a ball. It was great. My job, when I look at it in retrospect, had very little responsibility. But I was really having a good time. The ambassador liked me. The DCM liked me. They thought I was making my contribution to the mission effort. They gave me added responsibilities as time went on. I ran the self-help program. It was AID money, anywhere from twenty-five thousand to fifty thousand dollars a year, kind of walking-around money for the ambassador, basically, if locals needed a well or something. Our ambassador wasn’t really walking around, so I had charge of that money. And I would spend an awful lot of time traveling to visit with Peace Corps volunteers and other places to gin up projects for that money. That was great.

Obviously, Mali is a great place to travel around in. I flew up to Timbuktu and Gao. And drove back from Gao to Bamako, which is a huge drive, when there was a crash in Niamey that stopped the plane from coming back to get me. Air Mali just threw away that day’s passenger list and said, “You can get out of Gao however you want to.”

It was an enjoyable experience. I wasn’t married. My wife came out and visited me at a certain point, which is where we got engaged. Work was not onerous. I did a little bit of political reporting, minor stuff. I did some of the scheduled economic reporting. There was a guy in the embassy who was the economic officer who was my same age group, and we spent a lot of time partying together. We knew a lot of people in the French community and the international community there and we would go out most nights to the Trois Caimans bar or different restaurants. I had a really good time. But I was really ready to leave when I left. Two years is a long time in Bamako. It was very primitive. There were mosquitoes. And the power would go off and we didn’t have generators for a while when I was there. It was a rough place to live in many ways. But it was good. It was what I wanted.

*Q: How were the French? Were they feeling that you were barbarians trying to encroach on their territory?*

ROSSIN: I don't know if it was "barbarians" exactly. We didn't have a lot to do with the French embassy. I used to go over there and see the consular officer fairly often because one of my functions, in addition to issuing visas and passports, was to get visas for all of the embassy and AID people traveling internationally. This, I learned, is normally an administrative section function, but for some reason I did it in Bamako. Nearly everybody's visas were issued by the French embassy in Mali. All the visas for French countries except Senegal, were issued by the French embassy.

This was still their sphere of influence even though in fact it was not. I could tell there was some vague dislike of Americans in "their area." But really Mali was in the Soviet sphere of influence, even though it was an ex-French colony. There were not many French left. Most of them had gone. You didn't have the same level of stores that you had in the ex-colonies that hadn't gone socialist. And we just didn't have much to do with the French on an official basis.

Socially speaking, there were a lot of French there. But it was really an international community, not French dominated. It wasn't the Cote-d'Ivoire or Dakar, where you had tens of thousands of French. The French just weren't a big deal other than the fact that anywhere there are French people you can find good food. There were a lot of Lebanese people. There were people of all sorts who worked for CARE and UNICEF [United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund] and others. I had a Yugoslav friend, a guy who represented a Yugoslav company that unbelievably was building a supermarket in Timbuktu.

*Q: Was this the time of the great drought?*

ROSSIN: It was right after the great drought. The rains had resumed. The drought was about 1973 to 1975. It was pretty much over by the time I got there. I remember, at one point, when I was visiting Peace Corps volunteers and self-help projects, I took a Land Rover and drove about two hundred kilometers east of Timbuktu along the river to a place called Gourma Rharous to visit a Peace Corps volunteer. I had to go to a certain landing and then take a pirogue [boat] across the Niger to the town on the other side where this Peace Corps volunteer was living. At the landing there was an encampment of, not Tuareg, but Peulh people, sort of the intermediate between the Tuareg and the real Africans further south, the Bambara. There you still saw the tail end of the drought. Those people were starving. They were really poor. A lady brought me her baby wrapped in swaddling and asked if I could do something for her baby. Well, I couldn't. I gave her salt pills because I had salt pills with me and I could not give her anything else. They used to help my cook get better but they were placebos. But there was nothing I could do for this lady's baby, that I am quite sure was dead by the end of that day. But this was really the tail end. People were not generally starving by that time. But of course, a lot of



people had come to Bamako during the drought, and they never went back. Bamako had exploded in population.

*Q: What was the Peace Corps doing and what was your impression of the Peace Corps experience?*

ROSSIN: The Peace Corps volunteers were in two categories. There were people who were experts. This guy who I visited at Gourma Rharous, for example, was an agricultural expert and he was doing pit silos in his area. And those were really top-notch people. At that time the Peace Corps also had an awful lot of volunteers that they were sending out to teach English, which I don't think they do anymore, or at least Peace Corps stopped doing it at a certain point. There you would get essentially somebody with no applicable skill. In Mali skilled volunteers would be either agriculture or livestock specialists or maybe doing something in a government ministry. With the English teaching—and they had a lot of volunteers—it was a very mixed bag. Some of them were very problematic. I knew some of them. They were okay people, but they were not making a contribution. The other ones were making a big contribution. I dealt with a lot of those doing these self-help programs. I had applied to join the Peace Corps also when I was getting out of college, but had been disqualified medically because I was getting allergy desensitization shots at the time. But had I joined the Peace Corps, I probably would have been one of the English teachers, so this probably worked out for the best.

*Q: Well, you left Mali when?*

ROSSIN: Nineteen seventy-eight.

*Q: Where did you go then?*

ROSSIN: I came back to the States and got married. Then I went to Durban, South Africa.

*Q: What was the background of your wife?*

ROSSIN: She was also from New Jersey, but had also moved to California. I met her in college. Her father had passed away. Her mother lived there in Ontario, California, which is just five miles away from Claremont. And she was a student. She was going to Scripps, studying psychology. She was working at a job all the time since she had little money. Her mother was living on a Social Security pension from when her father passed away. So, she was going to school on Social Security and a California State scholarship and working at Sears full time.

*Q: So, you went to Durban from when to when?*



ROSSIN: I was there from 1978 to 1980. I was the consular officer in what was a four-officer and one communicator consulate in Durban, including a branch public affairs officer.

*Q: This was a consulate?*

ROSSIN: It was a consulate general.

*Q: Who was the consul general?*

ROSSIN: When I got there the consul general was Jim Farber. Jim left after the first summer and then it was Alan Logan. Jim Bumpus was there as the political officer. His wife was a USIS [United States Information Service] officer. And then we had a communicator.

*Q: What was the situation in South Africa, first, and then in Durban?*

ROSSIN: When I was in Durban, South Africa was in a quiet period. It was after the end of the Steve Biko period. And it was before the Soweto uprisings.

*Q: Well the ANC [African National Congress]—*

ROSSIN: ANC was around, obviously. But Durban was separate. It was Indians and Zulus. Those were the two salient factors in Natal. One was Chief Gatsha Buthelezi and the Zulus, and the second was the Indian community, which was centered in Durban. There are no Afrikaners to speak of in Durban. It's the English area, a big seaport. It is very different from what goes on in Transvaal, where you had Soweto and the riots. It was still South Africa, but it was different. And then you had Transkei [territory], which was "independent" at that time—independent in the way these places [ostensibly were]—and KwaZulu was not independent; it was Buthelezi's domain.

*Q: What were we trying to do vis-à-vis—*

ROSSIN: This was 1978 to 1980, the Carter administration.

*Q: I imagine there was some pressure on us to do something.*

ROSSIN: Not in Durban. It was the only time I served in a consulate. And I would never do it again after that because I didn't like being out of the loop. Not that I needed to be in the center of things, but we were certainly an appendage in Durban. There was no country-wide mission approach at that point in South Africa. We did our reporting on the Indian community and Transkei and what the Zulus were doing, but it was very autonomous and nobody cared about it. It was all done by airgram, which shows how much people cared about it.

*Q: You might explain the difference between airgram and telegram.*

ROSSIN: Well, a telegram is a telegram, transmitted electronically and instantaneously, also called a cable. Airgrams were basically typed-up memos, on a particular form, that looked like a telegram but was sent to Washington via the diplomatic pouch. It would get back to the department, and be photocopied and distributed to different offices and agencies. The whole process seemed to take a month. I mean, an airgram was definitely not for your breaking news. I probably did eighty or ninety airgrams while I was in Durban, on the Indian community and Transkei, and then I did consular work, which was quite busy in Durban.

In South Africa as a whole, the policy obviously was to reach out and try to empower the minority communities, which really mean the African community. Nobody knew anything about the Indians or cared about them particularly [thus reporting by airgram]. And the coloreds were, I think, a mystery too. Certainly, in Durban they were not a factor, although they were, I suppose, in the Cape. So, while my vantage point was really not well placed to see what our policy was, it appeared we were reaching out to the African leadership—not the ANC, these people were illegal and outside of South Africa—but the Bishop Tutus, the labor leaders, mostly up in Transvaal and Soweto and that area. I didn't know anything about them beyond what I could read in the newspaper like anybody else.

In our area it was reaching out to Chief Buthelezi, but we didn't have any political goals with him or the Zulus that I could make out. And Buthelezi was of course a traditional chief. I mean, at one point there was an English man who named his dog Gatsha, which was Buthelezi's first name. And Buthelezi insisted that the man have his dog put down because he was so insulted by this. Later Buthelezi turned out the way that he did, that was foreseeable.

*Q: Were the Indian people mainly business people?*

ROSSIN: Yes. There were a few who were politically active. There had been some political activism earlier, not tied up with the Soweto events, but during that same period, and the police had come down fairly hard on those people. There was something called the Congress Party, which was actually probably the origin of the Congress Party in India because Gandhi had lived in Natal before going to India. There were a couple of Indian people I knew who were politically active, but they didn't really have any scope for activity.

The most interesting political work that I did actually was covering Transkei.

*Q: Where is Transkei?*

ROSSIN: Transkei was the first homeland of the Xhosa tribe. Transkei had become independent in 1976. It was peculiar because, from the outside, everybody condemned these homelands and said they were just devices of apartheid. Well, they were devices of

apartheid. And the South African government could send people back there and dump all the problems of the excess African population onto them with no resources or anything. But the reality was that they actually did operate within South Africa as independent countries. South Africa had their police and agents down there, their secret services. But they really let them do their thing.

And Transkei in particular was interesting. It had a traditional tribal leadership. Chief Kaiser Daliwonga Matanzima was the head of Transkei. They had their own intrigues going on, their own corruption and coups. The South Africans let all of this go on. We couldn't go there ourselves. We were not allowed to go because we could not get our passports stamped with a Transkei entry stamp. And these independent places had passport control and passports and all the rest of it. So, we reported on Transkei from outside, and I did so a lot. I met people from Transkei when they came to Durban and it was quite interesting, and I once also went to Kokstad, a South African town near Transkei, to pick up what I could from there.

*Q: What were you doing consular-wise?*

ROSSIN: A lot of visas. In the two years I was there we probably issued twelve thousand NIVs [nonimmigrant visas]. I was the sole consular officer. I had one NIV clerk, one IV [immigrant visa] clerk, who also did passports, and that was it. It was pretty intensive. The department never gave me one of those signature plates, so I actually had to sign all of the visas myself and my signature changed rapidly.

The visas were mostly issued to people going on cruises or organized trips. Most of them were through tourist agencies. And they were legitimate, too. People from the Indian community you had to look at a little more closely because there was illegal immigration taking place there. These were the days of all the Patels going to the United States and buying motels and convenience stores. They are all there now. But the refusal rate was not high. If 1,500 of the visa applicants in a year were Indians, I would refuse maybe fifty visas. Another category, smaller but one you had to look at more carefully, was white Rhodesians. This was the period when Rhodesia became Zimbabwe-Rhodesia, and then became Zimbabwe. The end of white rule and the accession of Mugabe to the presidency were occurring in Rhodesia at that time. So you had a steady flow of white Rhodesians coming out. And they didn't have any home. They mostly had British passports, but they really didn't have any ties to Britain. Some of them didn't even have the right to go to Britain. So, they would come to us. You certainly could not be assured that some of them would come back because they really didn't have any place to come back to. So, we issued some, but we refused a lot.

*Q: What about your social life there?*

ROSSIN: It was kind of quiet. Being in a consulate that small, it all depended on the chemistry. We got along okay, but not great. The first year that we were there, my wife did a medical secretary program at the technical college in Durban, so she knew some of

the students, although they were kids compared to her. We did this and that but I would not say Durban was a highlight of my Foreign Service career. The problem in South Africa was whether the South Africans were white, black, colored, or Indian—they all wanted something from the United States. And the United States wasn't really in a position to give any of them what they wanted, things which were of course contradictory in any case. So, you were always under a lot of pressure to do things that you couldn't do for anybody. It was a tiresome place to be.

*Q: Did you feel you were under pressure to mix and mingle with black South Africans?*

ROSSIN: Not me. Policy-wise for the U.S. Government, that might have been the case up in Johannesburg or Pretoria or Cape Town. It was not the case in Durban. I didn't have the Zulus in my portfolio. That was the consul general and the political officer. So maybe they did. But I did the Indians and the Transkei. In Transkei there was no socializing because it was down there and we were up here. I did a fair amount of socializing with Indians and I liked them a lot, they were really nice people.

Some of them were very unfortunate. I felt sorry for them. Remember, there had been at that time a category of immigrant investor visas, under which a person would invest forty thousand dollars and employ three people in the United States and qualify for an immigrant investor visa. There was a court judgment that Mexicans had not been given enough immigrant visa numbers, so all of a sudden all of the immigrant investor visas were taken and used instead for Mexican numbers. I was in Durban at that period, and there were a number of Indians in South Africa who, in violation of South African exchange controls, had managed to invest forty thousand dollars in the United States in business, and then this event happened and they were stuck. They had moved their capital, or a chunk of it, into the United States and then they couldn't get the visa. They would come to me and I would express genuine sympathy, but I could do nothing for them. They never did get their visas. I don't think those visa numbers ever came back for immigrant investors. I don't know what happened to those people. I felt really sorry for them. So, I used to socialize with them. They would invite me out hoping that I might help them with their visa. And I would explain to them that this was totally beyond my control. But they were nice people anyway.

*Q: At that time, were there ship visits?*

ROSSIN: Not to South Africa. We certainly never had any that I remember. We had a lot of commercial shipping. Durban is the biggest port in Africa, or it was at the time, and American ships called there. But not U.S. Navy ships. There was no military relationship. This was the period when the South Africans broke into the DAO [Defense Attaché Office] C-12 aircraft when it was parked on the airstrip at Upington and "discovered the cameras," which of course they knew were there all along, and made a big spy scandal out of it for whatever reason.

*Q: Did the South African security service give you a rough time?*

ROSSIN: At this period, no. They were monitoring us. Whenever anything needed repairing at our house it was always a white person who showed up to repair it. Everybody else's telephone repairman was an Indian, but ours was white. They showed up to fix our phone when we didn't know it was broken, and knew the dog's name, actually, when he came. And the phone would make a ringing noise every morning at 6:15, which was obviously someone plugging into the monitoring dock or whatever. But apart from a few nasty calls when the DAO plane was "revealed," we generally didn't have any harassment. People later on in the 1980s—I heard stories about some really serious harassment, people being forced off the road into car crashes and the like. That was not going on when we were there.

*Q: What were our interests? I realize this wasn't your thing, but with the KwaZulu—and all?*

ROSSIN: I don't really know. There was no prospect at that time of South Africa becoming as it is now. I don't know that we had anything other than that idle kind of political contacts and reporting that one does because one is there. It was not relevant to the larger politics of South Africa at that time that I could make out. That was all what was going on up in Transvaal. And in the National Party, the evolution in the National Party itself, the P.W. Botha to Pik Botha and the de Klerk transitions that were taking place. I thought it was irrelevant. I actually didn't like being in Durban because I thought the whole thing was irrelevant. The consular part was necessary, but the rest of it was irrelevant.

*Q: By the time you were getting ready to leave you had already had two posts in Africa. Did you feel that you wanted to be an African hand or not?*

ROSSIN: Not really. And of course, South Africa was totally different from Mali. It was very isolated. You couldn't drive anywhere because every country to the north except Botswana, which you could go into but you couldn't go any farther, was blocked off to us by U.S. policy. Southwest Africa we couldn't go to. We couldn't go to Mozambique because the Mozambiquans wouldn't let us in. We couldn't go to Rhodesia because of our policy. So, we were stuck. In South Africa, fortunately, there is a lot to see. But I wasn't interested in becoming an Africa hand.

And when I did my bid list there were other things available. I just bid around, focusing on specifically political jobs. I think I wanted to go to some eastern European countries. And I ended up going to Barbados, which I had bid on. I didn't know anything about it at that time.

*Q: Did you feel a little bit restive that you weren't getting political? Or were you getting enough political?*

ROSSIN: I was doing a lot of political work in Durban, but I didn't care about that. I have never been one of those people who tries to scope out their career fifteen years in advance. It wasn't in my nature. I wanted to be a political officer. But the opportunity was there in my next assignment. I had gotten my tenure. I had been promoted to FO-04, or FS-06 as it was then. I got a political job and I was quite happy with that.

*Q: Nineteen-eighty you were off to Barbados.*

ROSSIN: That's right.

*Q: You were there from 1980 to when?*

ROSSIN: *Nineteen-eighty* to 1982. I was there for nineteen months. I was curtailed there.

*Q: What was Barbados like?*

ROSSIN: Barbados was great. It is a very small place. You fly at seven thousand feet and you look out the window and you see the entire country. You can drive around it in half a day. It's a fine place to live. It was the first place we lived where we had to rent our own house and have our own furniture. What I liked about it was that I was the political-economic officer. We had a section of three officers and a political-economic counselor. We covered all those small islands, including the north, the Leewards, because at that time there was no consulate in Antigua. It was opened during the time I was in Barbados. Antigua became independent during that time.

What was nice was that we split up the islands. I had actually no work that was associated with Barbados. I worked in Barbados. I wrote and I worked in the embassy. But I would travel off the island three or four days every other week and go to my islands, mainly, which were Grenada and Dominica. And I was lucky because these were by far the two most interesting islands in the region at that time. So, I would go off, call up people, go around and see them. We had no offices on those islands. I would just do pure political and some economic reporting. And in the case of Grenada try to pick up whatever little quasi-intel stuff I could about what the Cubans and the Russians were up to. Then I would come back and write up lots of cables. I was enjoying the hell out of it. I could come back and write and plan my next trip at my pace because I didn't have any work in Barbados itself. It was a nice setup.

*Q: Who was the ambassador there?*

ROSSIN: The ambassador when I got there was a lady by the name of Sally Shelton. She was a young political appointee, perhaps thirty-five, who had been a DAS [deputy assistant secretary] in the State Department as a political appointee and then was sent out as ambassador in Barbados. This was the very tail end of the Carter administration, the last couple of months. I accompanied Sally for many of her farewell calls in the islands. Also, Don McHenry came down and visited some of the places with her on those calls.



The new ambassador was a gentleman by the name of Milan Bish. This was the beginning of the Reagan administration. He was a political appointee who was a farm equipment dealer in Grand Island, Nebraska. He didn't know anything about the Caribbean. But he was the nicest gentleman you could ever hope to meet. He was really a class guy. Substantively we helped him out and made him effective.

What was interesting was that I had Grenada and Dominica, and he was not accredited to Grenada due to the U.S. distancing policy towards Maurice Bishop's regime.

*Q: This is the New JEWEL time?*

ROSSIN: The New JEWEL period. There was the coup in 1979 when Eric Gairy was overthrown and Maurice Bishop and the New JEWEL Movement took over. During the last part of the Carter administration, when first Frank Ortiz and then Sally Shelton tried to reach out to the Bishop government. But they were rejected. This was a Cuban satellite, essentially. Things deteriorated, even during the Carter administration. I wrote a long diplomatic study on this while I was there. When the Reagan administration came in of course their policy was a harder line anyway, because they were conservative.

*Q: Let's talk about Dominica first. There you had a rather strong president.*

ROSSIN: The iron lady of the Caribbean. Seriously.

*Q: Talk about Dominica first.*

ROSSIN: Dominica is poor. It is very mountainous. It is not a tourist destination. It has no beaches. The main airport is a two-and-a-half-hour drive from Roseau, across the island. Roseau is a little Caribbean town, but it's not a tourist place. I think now they maybe have a little bit of eco-tourism, but at the time I was there the only industry they could think of, which they didn't actually do, was they had 365 rivers, one for every day of the year, and enormous amounts of fresh water. They were always talking about schemes to fill up tankers with fresh water and export it to Saudi Arabia and that sort of thing. But they never did it.

Dominica had none of the political coloring that Grenada had. It was very unstable, the poorest of the islands. In a way it was like a little piece of Haiti that had broken off and floated down there. People spoke Creole. They were kind of like Haitians in a way. But it is a beautiful place. Dominica is gorgeous.

Eugenia Charles had come in an election in, I think, mid-1980. She had been in there for a few months when I got there. Her party had won every seat but one in the Dominica assembly, which had twenty-one or twenty-two members. One of the things I learned from this was that for a functioning democracy, it really helps to have an opposition, even if the government is as good as it could possibly get. And that was certainly Eugenia



Charles's government in Dominica. The opposition there was this character Patrick John, the head of the taxi drivers' union, which is a big racket in those places. He had been the prime minister and it had broken down in some kind of violence related to corruption at the end of 1979 or early 1980. That was when Eugenia Charles came in. During the time that she was there and during the time that I was there, there was a Rastafarian coup attempt which Patrick John was behind. The Dominican police chief got shot. We had to fly in with the Puerto Rico Air National Guard plane and evacuate a couple of Dominica policemen who had been severely injured to Roosevelt Roads Naval Base hospital in Puerto Rico. Dominica had a lot of problems.

It grew bananas, of course. All these places grew bananas. They exported them to England. There is a company called Geest which was a monopoly grower and export buyer. But they were really nervous because they were always on the brink of losing their market. Caribbean bananas are not competitive with Central American bananas due to appearance even if they taste better. As England joined the EU [European Union] there was nervousness that the protections for Caribbean bananas would go away. I don't know if that ever happened.

So, it was an interesting place to go. I traveled there probably fifteen times. I was taken out to dinner—this is me, twenty-seven years old at the time—by not merely the prime minister, but the entire cabinet at one point. I used to go and see Mrs. Charles all the time. The foreign ministry had three people in it and I would go and see them all. Not much was going on. The period where there was alarm about the Cubans getting involved in other countries in the Caribbean had been in the late 1970s when the New JEWEL Movement coup took place in Grenada. And you had elements in each of the other places that were kind of like that. But basically, people's guard was up after what happened in Grenada and especially after Grenada didn't go well. And each of the places has very much its own political dynamic. They were very different, one from another.

We had an assistance program that was actually significant for a place that size. We eventually funded repaving of the road across the island from the airport to Roseau. But mostly it was monitoring the stability of the place and periodically going there when it was unstable and giving assurances and so forth. That was it.

*Q: Well then. Grenada?*

ROSSIN: Grenada was different. And I was very fortunate to get Grenada as one of my islands. In a sense my whole career is built on that experience. March 1979 was the coup. So, by the time I got there in December, 1980 it was eighteen months or more later.

*Q: What was the coup?*

ROSSIN: The previous prime minister of Grenada, which had become independent in 1978, was a guy named Eric Gairy, who was a trade union leader. He had been prime minister or chief minister of Grenada for many years going back to the 1950s. He had

gone slightly nuts. You get these small places; they are like a town in the United States. You don't have a statistically large enough pool of people that you are necessarily going to have enough good people in a specific country. Or maybe you do. But Grenada didn't. So, they had this guy Eric Gairy. He had his so-called "Mongoose Squad," his thugs that went around and beat up people. He rigged elections. He went to the United Nations General Assembly and advocated a special UN organization to do research into UFOs [unidentified flying objects]. He had a phone on his desk on which he would receive calls from God. He had gone slightly over the edge. I don't think he was crazy so much as a megalomaniac. And it was not a happy place.

So, in 1979 you had a coup, an easy coup, against Gairy when he was out of Grenada, I think at the United Nations. The coup was led by a group called the New JEWEL Movement [NJM]. JEWEL stood for Joint Endeavor for Welfare, Education and Liberation. The NJM was a combination of a couple of different elements. Maurice Bishop and some of his associates were born in the late 1940s. They had gone to study in England during the period of the black power movement in Trinidad. It was not as strong in Grenada, but there was a little bit of it. And the black power movement in England. So, they picked up that perspective when they were in England. You had another faction in the New JEWEL Movement which was under the influence of the Workers Party of Jamaica crowd. This was the hard-core Marxist-Leninist party in Jamaica. That was Bernard Coard and his wife Phyllis, who was Jamaican, and some others.

They came together and staged the coup when Gairy was gone. It was a very popular event. Everybody hated Gairy. They then sort of went off track and, as had been the case in Cuba, the green watermelon had a red interior. They degenerated over a period of about six months first into a dictatorial approach, when they started arresting people, shutting down press, and doing things of that nature. Then eventually, and this was during the period that I was working on Grenada, they really started overly aligning themselves with Cuba, which came in strong very early on—Bishop was really a protégé of Castro—but then eventually also the Soviets also came in. I think what happened in Grenada in October 1983 was a reflection in some way of tensions between the Cubans and the Russians themselves.

By the time I got to Grenada, the NJM had shown their true colors. They were dictatorial. The Cubans were there in big numbers. They were building the airport at Point Salines, which was a security issue for the Carter and especially the Reagan administration. And Grenadian people just like your parents and my parents—very conservative, Congregationalist, nice people—were descending into a communist future, which was not good.

*Q: So, what were we doing? What were you doing?*

ROSSIN: I was the political-economic officer in Barbados who drew the straw for Grenada. So, I was going over there and doing reporting and trying to do a little outreach to the government. On my first visit I met with the education minister, a guy named

George Louison, a close associate of Bishop. There was no “there, there” when I went to meet him. I thought maybe we could find a way forward. I had somewhat overblown ideas of what I could achieve. In the event, I had a rather desultory conversation with a guy who clearly had no interest in me or what I or the U.S. government had to say. The regime had no interest in having better relations with the United States.

Then I went around and met with lots of private people, journalists, business people, and others and got a picture of what was going on. I went out to the airport construction site and got shown around that. You could actually go out and see it at that point. It was not hard to pick up a lot of information and understanding of what was happening in Grenada, and I reported it copiously to Washington.

*Q: There wasn't a control on you?*

ROSSIN: At that point I may have been being followed around, but if I was it was not very active. I went out to the airport and was taken around by the construction manager, who was a Grenadian, and he told me all kinds of things about it. It was not a big secret or anything, or at least he did not treat it as such. As time went on, I was followed around more and more. And doors started shutting. People didn't want to see me. They were afraid. Eventually, in the fall of 1981, there was a group of prominent Grenadians who decided to open up a private newspaper called *The Grenadian Voice*. They were all immediately arrested and thrown in jail. Some of them were still in jail when the intervention took place and I was actually able to help them go home to their families. Then I was essentially PNG'd [declared persona non grata or unwelcome] from Grenada. I went over one more time, but it was not really possible at that stage, in early 1982, to talk to people or do anything else, so I stopped going.

*Q: What about the medical school that was there?*

ROSSIN: There was a medical school, the Saint George's University School of Medicine, run by a businessman from New York. It had two campuses, one at the foot of the runway at Point Salines and another one at a former hotel on the Grande Anse beach. There were three or four hundred students. Of all of those offshore medical schools it was the only one that was actually developing into a real medical school. Students would get licensing in New York and you would be willing to go to that doctor.

*Q: Most of the students were American, weren't they?*

ROSSIN: Nearly all of them were. There were a few Grenadians as window dressing, giving them scholarships, but mostly it was Americans. These were Americans who couldn't get into medical school in the States.

*Q: I would think we would have great concern about them.*

ROSSIN: We were not concerned about them during the period before the breakdown. They were down there. It was a comfortable place to live. Lots of tourists would go down there. There was no threat to them. They were an asset to Grenada. The school was an asset to Grenada. The Grenadians took care of it. The man who ran it was not political in nature. He was running a business, so he didn't care whether Maurice Bishop was Fidel Castro's best friend. They were doing fine. There was some consular work to be done for them. The only other person besides myself who would travel to Grenada from the U.S. government was one or another consular officer. But I was the only substantive officer.

*Q: There was a British high commissioner there, wasn't there?*

ROSSIN: There was an office of the British high commission in Barbados. There was one British representative there, John Kelly. I would go see him.

*Q: What was his attitude towards all of this?*

ROSSIN: He saw what was going on. He reported on it. I don't think he was too thrilled about it but I had the impression that he came from the left of Labour [the British Labour Party], so he was not totally unsympathetic to what was going on in principle, just the execution was not what he preferred.

*Q: I think later, when we did intervene, the British high commissioner was critical of what we were doing.*

ROSSIN: In 1983, the British government itself was critical because we didn't tell them before we went in. Basically, we were intruding on her turf, from Margaret Thatcher's viewpoint. And President Reagan was quite put out about that because, after all, he had pulled their fag out of the fire in The Falklands. And the Queen had a totally different viewpoint about this. This was her "Queendom" of Grenada and her governor general, completely separate from the UK [United Kingdom] and its government and Prime Minister. This didn't have anything to do with Margaret Thatcher. Queen Elizabeth was quite positive about the intervention.

*Q: Well, what happened?*

ROSSIN: You had this deterioration internally and this buildup of Soviet influence. The Reagan administration was very concerned about the airport, which later turned out to be a reasonable concern, although nobody could ever quite figure out what the Cubans and Russians were up to in Grenada. There was no clear indication to me or in the documents what they had in mind with all those warehouses of uniforms and weapons that were found after the intervention.

Basically, what we did there during my time as a political officer in Barbados was twofold. One, we tried to maintain as good contacts as we could with the people of Grenada. We didn't have any relationship with the government to speak of. We tried to

maintain contact with Grenadians and help them out. At one point there was consideration given to trying to go over the head of the government and have AID work directly with private organizations. I came to the conclusion that you can't really, as a foreign country, go into a place and start doing assistance programs if the government won't tolerate it. And then the other thing was to try to figure out what the Russians and the Cubans were up to. So I would go around and talk to people and find out what ships had been in port, get little reads on what had been offloaded, to the extent people could tell, what was driving through the streets when the lights were turned off and the streets were shut down. There was a lot of interest in it, but not very many resources devoted to that subject during that period. Nobody knew it was going to break down the way it did a year later. I left in August of 1982 and the breakdown was in October of 1983.

The overt association with the Soviet Union was only at the tail end of my time in Grenada. It had been contained somehow, although people wondered what the relationship was between this and Nicaragua and this and Suriname. There wasn't a lot of activity going through the airport nor a lot of shipping activity and so forth. The initial concerns in 1979 and early 1980 about the export of revolution to the other islands of the eastern Caribbean had diminished.

So, I think that the Reagan administration's opposition to Grenada was as much ideological as seriously driven by security concerns. And the ideology was legitimate, because Grenada really was turning into a communist dictatorship and a Cuban satellite.

*Q: There was talk that the airport was designed to allow transport planes to make a better jump to Africa. But it's not that far from Cuba.*

ROSSIN: Well, it did make sense because the Cubans had used Barbados as a refueling point. It's not that far from Cuba. But I think then for the jump to Angola they needed to top off. And when you are coming the other direction, you need to refuel. So, I think it made sense. And it could have been used for that.

Of course, by the time of 1979–1981, I think the big period of Cuban involvement in Angola had passed. The big part of the war was over by that time. I remember going through Conakry in 1976 and 1977 and the airport was crawling with Cubans. They were using Conakry as a transit point at that time.

It was hard to tell what the level of Cuban and Soviet engagement in Grenada was for. The suspicion was also that it might have something to do with Central America. When the intervention took place, they found warehouses full of uniforms and all kinds of military supplies. Not just weapons. What were they for? Nobody ever could tell. But the airport was a big concern. And it could take heavy aircraft. Remember, we landed fully loaded C-140s aircraft on unfinished runways at that airport.

*Q: You were saying that you were sort of PNGed. Was that just for the government? Could you go over there on your own?*

ROSSIN: After the newspaper crackdown, when all of these people were arrested, the so-called “Gang of 26,” Bishop gave a speech in the stadium and named me—I still have the newspaper clipping—as the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] station chief. Actually, one of the documents found after the intervention was a three-page letter from Bishop to Castro complaining about me. I had it in my hands at first but then I went to visit the United States and when I returned it was gone, sent away to the archives. So, when I went back after those events, people who I knew were uncomfortable seeing me. They were just afraid. I could have tried to go back again, but they were overtly following me around. People didn’t want to see me, and I believed trying to see them would endanger me. So, I went back and said, “Somebody else has to take up this account. I’m not going to get anything else out of it and people might get hurt.”

*Q: What was your relationship with the CIA? I would think they would be extremely interested in what was going on.*

ROSSIN: There was no particular relationship during my time when I would go and visit Grenada. None. The peculiarity of Grenada was that because the ambassador wasn’t accredited, our DCM was the Chargé d’Affaires for Grenada. He had no interest in going there and didn’t. With the distancing policy, we wouldn’t want to have him meet with the government anyway. The next person was the political counselor. He didn’t want to travel at all and left the other islands to his staff. He did Barbados. That was fine. We did our visits and our cables. So, because of the distancing policy, the U.S. Government representative to Grenada was twenty-nine-year-old FS-03 Larry Rossin. That was it.

When the invasion took place in 1983, there was not a lot of ground truth about Grenada. This—I come to another piece of my story—was evident because when I landed on the U.S.S. *Guam*, the intervention command ship. They had the map there and Admiral Metcalf was there and they were carrying out military operations to rescue the students at the end of the Point Salines runway. They also had marked on the map the “police training academy” as a target, next to which was marked an unnamed hotel. Well, the police training academy had shut down years beforehand. It was not there anymore. But the unnamed hotel had in the meantime become the other campus of the medical school housing many of the students, which they were quite unaware of. I flagged this to the admiral. This was the case, documented in books about the intervention, where a student was calling on his phone through the operator to New York saying, “We are down here, can somebody come and rescue us?”

*Q: Well this is probably a good place to stop. We’ll pick this up. In 1982 you left Barbados and you went where?*

ROSSIN: I left in August of 1982. I was supposed to leave in December, 1982, but I was curtailed and went to Washington early to take up my next assignment as staff assistant to Tom Enders, the assistant secretary for Latin America at the time. I was curtailed because the guy I was replacing decided to quit the Foreign Service and go to law school.



*Q: We'll pick it up then. And to note, we want to pick up with your involvement with Grenada during that time.*

**[NOTE—the next interview was nine months after the foregoing.]**

*Q: Today is August 23, 2005. Grenada first. Did you get involved in Grenada?*

ROSSIN: I did get involved in Grenada, when I was posted in Barbados. I don't remember what I said a year ago, so I won't go on at length. But when I was posted in Barbados we split up the islands. It was a regional embassy. And I covered Grenada during that period of the Maurice Bishop government. I went there several times and eventually was effectively declared *persona non grata* and could not go anymore because nobody could see me.

So, I went back to Washington and was a staff aide in ARA [State Department's Bureau of Inter-American Affairs]. I got involved a little bit on Grenada during that period, but there wasn't too much going on. Then I went to be the Peru desk officer in 1983. And just as I went to be the Peru desk officer, the Bishop government collapsed in Grenada. I was asked to go down with Frank McNeal, who was sent down as a special envoy. He had been the ambassador in Costa Rica. He was a deputy assistant secretary in ARA at one point.

*Q: Okay, we'll pick that up at the proper time chronologically. How did you get picked to be staff assistant?*

ROSSIN: I bid on it. I'm not sure why I got picked. I don't think it was anything special. I bid on it and somehow got picked.

*Q: You started in 1982? How long were you working there?*

ROSSIN: It was a one-year assignment and there were two of us. With me was a man named Steve Olson. Our time in the job was pretty much the same. He had arrived perhaps two weeks before me.

*Q: How were you used? Staff assistants are used differently in different places.*

ROSSIN: When I was working in EUR [State Department Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs] they were much more in the nature of clerks and pure paper processing. We certainly did all the moving of paper for the bureau, but we engaged more on substance in ARA than I saw to be the case with the EUR staff assistants. We proofread the documents. We distributed the papers. We interacted with the State Department's secretariat to make sure the papers were tasked out and all that. What I enjoyed about it was that I spent a lot of time out of the office and around the building.



We had the Central America office in the ARA Bureau. It was extremely overtaxed with a lot of good people working in it. They were always behind on all their taskings because they had too many. I would spend a lot of time down in the Central America office, or in the other offices, seeing how I could assist them to meet deadlines and understand taskings. I liked to get out and not sit behind a desk. So, I got to know pretty much everybody in the bureau. I always viewed the job as facilitative, not just cracking the whip, but trying to cut corners for colleagues whenever I could do so.

*Q: Could you talk a bit about Tom Enders?*

ROSSIN: My colleague and I arrived there about the same time and we had a bet between the two of us as to who would first have concrete evidence that Tom Enders knew our name. And six months into our coterminous, one-year tours, I won the bet when I went in to put a piece of paper on his desk and he said, “Oh thank you Larry, that’s very good,” or something like that. Enders was, shall we say, an aloof, patrician individual. He was a good assistant secretary. It was a very, very tough period. He was eventually maneuvered out of the job by Jeanne Kirkpatrick, towards the end of my time there. And Tony Motley came into the job.

*Q: Did you get any feeling for how the people in the bureau viewed Enders? He was a tough taskmaster, also aloof, and tall, too tall.*

ROSSIN: Indeed. There were people that were working on the issues that he was most interested in, which were mostly in Central America, in whom he developed a lot of confidence. Obviously there was Craig Johnstone, who was the director of the Central America Office, and there were desk officers such as Pete Romero, the El Salvador desk officer. There were a few people around the bureau like that. But Enders was a person—at least in my experience—who worked with a small circle of people. He brought in Jim Michel as the principal DAS not too long after I got there. Steve Bosworth was there and then he went off as ambassador to the Philippines, and he was replaced by Jim Michel, a civil servant, the deputy legal advisor, who oversaw the rest of the accounts in ARA. And there was Tony Gillespie, one of Enders’ closest confidants, who basically ran the bureau. He was not a DAS, but he was the executive assistant, and then he was given a “deputy for operations” title.

*Q: So Enders just by-passed the system by giving people jobs but not the title.*

ROSSIN: He did that in at least one case with Tony Gillespie. And also, he didn’t want to have a lot of DASs. Most bureaus had five and he had two. It was a small front office. He used his office directors properly.

*Q: What was the situation in Central America when you got there?*

ROSSIN: It was the height of the Contra war and it was bad. El Salvador was bad. Nicaragua was bad. It was the Sandinistas. I had come back after having seen a little bit

of that from the Grenada perspective. This was the time when the book, *The Third World War*, was being written and you had Jamaican and Nicaraguan troops fighting alongside the Cubans and the Russians in Africa. That's kind of where we were. There was stuff in play on both Nicaraguan borders. There were issues going on with—being killed in Costa Rica. You had Guatemala. Central America was a huge mess at that time. Costa Rica itself was okay, but it had an unpleasant border. So, there was a lot of stuff going on at that time. The dirty war in Guatemala was definitely at its height at that time.

*Q: Did you feel the hand of politics? At the time you had various things going on. In American politics there were people who were siding up with the Sandinistas.*

ROSSIN: In one level we certainly saw it. I'm a Catholic and was hard-pressed to stay a good Catholic after seeing all the really hateful hate-mail that nuns can send. And there were lots of nuns sending really hateful hate-mail to Tom Enders and the State Department about Nicaragua and El Salvador at that time. It was very vitriolic. I was really at a pretty low level and so did not understand all that was going on at that time. But the constant battles with the Democratic congressional leadership, the Boland amendment, Tip O'Neill were going on. His sister was a Maryknoll nun and for that reason he had a personal influence from her. On another level, some of the stuff that was going on, either I was there before that period, or else in my position I just wasn't seeing it.

*Q: I take it you viewed this as being a serious conflict with serious American interests?*

ROSSIN: Oh yes. It was not a game or crusade. You had a situation where you had, first of all, Nicaragua taken over by a Sandinista dictatorship. I mean it was a dictatorship. And it was playing all of the strings in the United States and abroad. It had all of the connections back to Cuba and back to the Soviet Union. They were all the same people whether it was El Salvador or Nicaragua. This was not something that was purely homegrown. That's for sure. And if you thought it was homegrown, Daniel Ortega would take a trip to Havana or Moscow just to remind you that he had his friends. There were all the arms shipments coming in. It was very obvious.

*Q: Did you sense any split within the Foreign Service, liberals versus conservatives?*

ROSSIN: I imagine there must have been, but you didn't see it much from where I was sitting. Those of us who were working on these issues, there was not this doubt. You know, there had been a big split in the Foreign Service when Reagan came in. Reagan cashiered all of the Carter people pretty much on the spot. So, I guess if the split was in the Foreign Service, that was where the split took place. And what you saw with the people that I was working with, was people that were working very hard. Certainly, there was agreement that the situation was not good, that there were lots of human rights problems in Guatemala and El Salvador, and a different kind of human rights problem in Nicaragua. But I don't think there was anybody who had serious disagreement. If they did, they didn't express it.

*Q: I was just trying to capture the feel of things. Sometimes you have situations which represent real policy differences.*

ROSSIN: You could have that on Iraq, for example. I worked on Iraq more recently. There you had big policy differences within the State Department, within the interagency, about what we should be doing there, about the wisdom of being there, but now we are there and stuck, versus this is the right thing to do, about all kinds of tactical and strategic and transcendental issues. I didn't detect that on Central America. I don't have any memory of that whatsoever. Central America was pretty obvious.

Reagan was not viewed by any of us as being some kind of a cowboy who had come in. The Iraq issue, you have the neocons [Neoconservatives] vs. more pragmatic types of people. That was not the perception on Central America. And it's interesting because those of us who worked with the Reagan administration on every level were well aware—I was aware of it from my time in Barbados—that the Reagan administration substantially developed and advanced the human rights agenda. It is just that they combined it with a sort of hard line or hard-edged national security perspective. We were working the human rights agenda as hard as anybody ever did during those years.

*Q: You did this for a year, bringing us up to 1983. And then what?*

ROSSIN: Then I went to be the Peru desk officer. That was the job that I was really interested in because it had a lot of different issues. It has terrorism issues, drug issues, Soviet relationship issues, economic issues. It has all kinds of issues associated with it. But when I went down there, I only worked there for about six weeks and the Grenada invasion took place and I went down there, so I had only just started to settle in, really, to the Peru desk.

Then I went to be the Peru desk officer. That was a job that I was really interested in because Peru had a lot of different issues. It had terrorism issues, drug issues, Soviet relationship issues, trade and economic issues. But I only worked there for about six weeks, and the Grenada invasion took place and I went down there. So, I had only just started to settle in, really, to the Peru desk.

*Q: Did you go back to the Peru desk?*

ROSSIN: After the Grenada assignment, yes. I was in Grenada for three months. I started getting calls or messages from the office director saying either I had to come back or he was going to have to find somebody else to do the Peru job. So, one day I finally just got on an airplane and flew back to the States.

*Q: So, what was the Grenada thing? How did you hear about it and how did you get involved?*

ROSSIN: It was something I knew a lot about, obviously. I was at that time one of the U.S. government's experts on Grenada, such as that was. I mean there wasn't a big cadre, especially since there was no embassy or presence on the ground. I had followed it on and off when Maurice Bishop had visited Washington, when I was still a staff assistant, and had written a paper for Tony Gillespie with my own analysis and recommendations regarding Bishop's visit and intentions, which I know got some reading in the department. Then when I was working on Peru a colleague of mine, Barbro Owens—she was the Bolivia desk officer and had also been posted in Barbados—was called up when the government collapsed, when it imploded and Maurice Bishop and everybody were killed. She was called in to work in the operations center on the task force that had been set up. And I was not. And then I got a call asking me if I would, basically, come in tomorrow morning at eight-thirty. And they asked me some questions about Grenada. Then they said, "Can you come in the next morning?" And I came in the next morning and found out that they wanted me to travel on a trip to Barbados and perhaps beyond with Frank McNeal and Major General George Crist, who was the deputy director of the Joint Staff.

This was just when events were unfolding, obviously, before the invasion, when higher-level policy deliberations were going on about what we should do about this. What had happened was—and this is all in written histories by now—the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States prime ministers had voted to oppose the new Hudson Austin government. They wouldn't recognize it. They basically wanted it got rid of because, ultimately, they saw it as a danger to themselves. So, they asked if the United States would intervene. Frank McNeal and General Crist were sent down there in order to verify if they actually meant it and whether they would actually participate, and what kind of backing we would get. So, we flew down to Barbados and McNeal did that. That was the genesis of my involvement.

*Q: As you heard about this, what was the danger of the situation and what was the general feeling about what we should do?*

ROSSIN: Well, what would we do? We could invade. That was certainly an option, at least theoretically it was an option. I didn't know about troops being on their way to Beirut and things of that nature, which was key to the eventual military operation. There was the one danger, which was the American citizens protection danger, the American students at the medical school. There was another danger which was that for all of his faults, and they were legion, Maurice Bishop and his coterie were essentially—at least in my analysis—home grown, not Russian satellites. They had a certain legitimacy in Grenada. Grenada was a Cuban satellite, not a Russian satellite. Bernard Coard and his group—his wife Phyllis was Jamaican from the Worker's Party of Jamaica—they were in the harder line Stalinist, really, tradition of the old-line communists of the Caribbean. And there were a lot of these Jamaican and other outside Marxist people who had gravitated to Grenada and even gotten jobs in some cases. So, there was the danger with this airport and all of the uncertainties about what was going on, that whatever sort of lingering moderation there was in the Grenadian regime would be completely wiped out

by this event. You also had the fact that the place was a human rights disaster. Bishop and his whole crowd had now been killed. There were reports of a lot of killing, not all of which we were actually able to confirm, or even confirm in the form of dead bodies once we got there. So, there were a number of dangers that were perceived from this.

*Q: How did we view the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States at the time?*

ROSSIN: Did we take it seriously? Not really. This was small scale. These places were small. But you had a certain leadership cadre on these islands at the time who were bigger than the stage, the very small stage, on which they played. Tom Adams, the prime minister of Barbados, was a very serious person. He could have been a leader of a much larger country. He died not too long afterwards of a heart attack. He was only forty-eight years old. And Eugenia Charles, who was the iron lady of the Caribbean and very close to President Reagan, had a very dominating personality. You had others in the other islands who were less impressive but still adequate. But it was not a group that had ever done anything like what was now being proposed, obviously. I mean, this was the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States. They mostly worried about banana exports to the UK and small-scale things.

But there they were and they were faced with this situation. And they were a group of people who had barely put up with this Grenadian regime, the Bishop regime, because it was so alien to the traditions of the region, which are old British parliamentary traditions. This was just one outrage too much. Now the new Grenadian regime was taking everybody out and shooting them. This was one step too far. They had a united message.

*Q: When you got there, did you have an agenda?*

ROSSIN: We did. McNeal and Crist did. The president decided to send McNeal and Crist down and then there were myself and an army lieutenant colonel. McNeal was to meet with the Caribbean leaders, see what the situation was, and get their read of it, and then also find out—it's not every day, shall we say, that the president of the United States gets a call from a bunch of leaders on islands saying, "Come invade one of our neighbors." The president wanted to know, did they really mean it, and would they back him up in the event. So, McNeal was essentially on a verification mission.

And he went and met with them for a long period of time. The intention was that he would then—we had a special aircraft—fly from there to Havana and then to Moscow and basically meet with Castro, and meet in Moscow with whomever, and announce the plan that we were invading Grenada and to keep their hands off. That was not how things worked out. Crist and McNeal went back to Washington and I stayed and did my own thing there. The international diplomatic mission part of it never happened. Basically, it was—I think—they came down there and found everybody completely ready to roll, in a sense. And everything was ready to go. Invasion planning had been going on. You had had the Beirut barracks bombing the morning we left. And of course, the question was, would the president invade Grenada when he had this business going on in Lebanon. And

he did decide to invade and the marine unit that had just left on its way to Beirut to replace those marines was actually available. There were other forces that were used also.

*Q: You said that you had left to do your thing? What was your thing?*

ROSSIN: My thing was to go into Grenada with the Special Operations Forces and link up with the governor general of Grenada, who was now the only legitimate government authority. Governors general cut ribbons and open hospitals, and all of a sudden, he was it. I was to link up with the governor general, and do a couple of things. One was just to get him to say publicly that he had invited the invasion, which in fact he had done privately to the British representative on the island. And then to just coordinate between him and everybody else, the thousands of his closest friends that were going to show up. That was because I was supposedly an expert on the island. In fact, I was so expert on the island that I gave the impression in the pre-brief with Eagleburger before we went that I actually knew the governor general, whom in fact I had never met. In fact, the governor general was forty-eight years old, and this surprised me because I was under the impression, he was seventy-five years old. But I was really convincing in the pre-brief. I found that out later. I didn't realize at the time that they thought that I actually knew the man.

*Q: What about the British presence there, which later became important? We didn't clear this properly with Maggie Thatcher.*

ROSSIN: Well, there was a British presence. There was a one-man office. It's a small place. This was a year after the Falklands War, roughly speaking. And of course, President Reagan had gone to bat for the British on the Falklands War. And so, he expected that the British would do the same for him now. And this must have been the biggest falling out that ever took place between Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher because they didn't have many. And basically, yes, we invaded and we didn't tell the Brits beforehand. There was an interesting split. She was very upset, you know, "This is our area and you are invading it," was her attitude. But the interesting thing was that while Margaret Thatcher took great exception, Margaret Thatcher is the prime minister of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Queen Elizabeth is the queen of Grenada and many other places besides. And her prime minister for Grenada was not Margaret Thatcher. Her prime minister for Grenada, up until recently, had been Maurice Bishop, who had got shot and buried in an unmarked grave. And her governor general in Grenada was Sir Paul Scoon, who was very much in favor of this invasion, and she had heard that. So, she was quite positively inclined towards this invasion. And basically, she did not care what Margaret Thatcher thought, and she told her so. And so did we.

*Q: Which island were you on?*

ROSSIN: When we went down? We went to Barbados. And I was told in the early evening that they wanted me to fly over with these special ops [operations] forces, who were not in Barbados at that moment, and make contact with the governor general and so



forth. I said, “Okay.” So, I went out to the airport in Barbados at about one o’clock in the morning. It’s a big commercial airport but there were no flights whatsoever at that hour. Nobody was out there at all. It was a beautiful Caribbean night and I was standing on the edge of the parking apron with a Barbados Defense Force [BDF] officer and we were waiting for the special ops forces to show up. They did at about two o’clock in the morning, in three C-5s [aircraft], and unloaded the helicopters and did all of the things that they do for an invasion. Having three C-5s land in the middle of the night at a closed airport and taxi up to one on the apron is an impressive sight.

*Q: I can’t remember if we covered this before, but you were going in with the special forces, had you had any military experience or anything like this?*

ROSSIN: None whatsoever.

*Q: You were there with your diplomatic dispatch box?*

ROSSIN: No. I was wearing my sky-blue safari suit, actually. This was 1982, remember. No, I had no experience. I had never seen anything like it. It was quite remarkable and very exciting. But rather daunting too.

*Q: Tell us about when they arrived? Were people coming up and saying, “What is this?”*

ROSSIN: No. Nobody was there. It was just myself and this BDF guy, and he had left, actually. So, I’m standing just on the side of the apron and three C-5s come in.

*Q: C-5s are—?*

ROSSIN: The big transports. The really big ones. They are huge.

*Q: Quite a few stories high.*

ROSSIN: Yes. Very dramatic. Especially at two o’clock in the morning on a moonlit night. They came in one after another. They pulled up on the apron. They lift up the noses. Guys get off, come over and find me. They knew I was to be there. They had been told to look for me. And I linked up with the commander. They pulled out the Blackhawk helicopters, unfolded the rotors and did all these different things to prepare them for the flight over. And this officer came over and we introduced ourselves and I said, “I’m going with you guys.” Actually, the intention changed. When I went out there, I was told that I was supposed to fly over and would be dropped off at Point Salines airport, which would be the invasion’s focus. And then, once the governor general’s house was secured—which was above the town—then I would fly up there, get off the helicopter, and do my thing. And when the commander got off, he said that plans had changed and we were going to fly straight to the governor general’s house and go down ropes. So, he handed me a set of soft leather gloves, a flotation vest and a pilot’s helmet. He showed me how to shimmy down a rope and break the fall, which I had never done before. There



I was, in for a dime, in for a dollar. So, okay, great. Then I waited around while they finished their preparations.

*Q: What were you supposed to do?*

ROSSIN: It was still the same thing. Meet up with the governor general, make sure he was safe, make sure he made a public pronouncement about having invited the invasion, and then basically just be his liaison after that.

*Q: What had we been getting from the governor general?*

ROSSIN: Up to that point?

*Q: Yes.*

ROSSIN: He was confined to his house, at that point, by what was going on in Grenada. He had had a meeting with the British representative, and that was the last contact there had been with him. And that was when he had said, “Anytime you all want to come and help us out, you are more than welcome.” And that was the last he had been heard from at that point. Nobody thought he was dead or endangered, but he was incommunicado. So, when everybody showed up, they wanted somebody to be there who was not military to say, “We are your friends.”

*Q: Was there a feeling that this was going to be an opposed landing? Or was the feeling that if we showed up with enough force it would stop everything?*

ROSSIN: My understanding is that there was some belief it was going to be an opposed landing. There was more concern about the Cubans at the airport than there was about the Grenadians themselves. When we were in Barbados a piece of information came in indicating—it turned out to be true—that a Cuban plane had landed in Grenada and dropped off a planeload of regular Cuban soldiers. The Cuban airport workers were generally deemed to be, and in fact turned out to be, militia trained and armed. But the group of about eighty or ninety Cuban soldiers, with a proper military officer—a structured unit—arrived in Grenada right before these events. They were going to be there and clearly they weren’t going to welcome American troops. So, they were expected to put up some opposition, along with the airport workers. What wasn’t foreseen was the amount of opposition—sporadically effective opposition—that was put on by Grenadian soldiers themselves. The anti-aircraft emplacements were all manned by Grenadians, and they also fought in other parts of the island. It didn’t go on for more than about four days. But nobody had expected four days. In fact, at a certain point, General Schwarzkopf was actually—disciplined is not the right word—but was pulled off the lead command and somebody else was put on because there was more resistance than anticipated and he was doing a normal methodical kind of advance which was too slow. This was going on for more than the three hours that it was expected. So, they put

somebody else in command for a period to speed it up, basically. They landed marines up in the north and things like that.

*Q: You went out with basic instructions to say, “Here we are. We’re here to help—”*

ROSSIN: “—and you are the government now, by the way.”

*Q: Yeah. But other than that, you had to figure out what to say.*

ROSSIN: I had to figure out what to say, what to do. It would depend on the unfolding of the situation.

*Q: What was the attitude of the special forces? They are hard-charging people.*

ROSSIN: I think they don’t like having a passenger because it is in the way. They need to move very fast and they have a particular way of doing things, and you see it. But that was their order. And they do what they are told. And that was fine. And into the helicopter I went. They told me where to sit, what to do, what not to do. And I should just sit quietly and stay out of the way. That was fine with me. I didn’t have a different agenda.

*Q: What happened when you got there?*

ROSSIN: We took off a little late. It’s about a ninety-minute flight across from Barbados to Grenada. And this was on the other side of Grenada. There were about six or seven helicopters. And not all of them were going to the same place. They were going to various different targets. So, we flew over. I was dozing off on the way over because the doors were open and cold air was blowing in, and also one of the special operators had the butt of his M-16 [rifle] resting on my foot. When we got there, it was already light. I don’t know if the sun had actually come up, but it was certainly dawn.

They also had not had a lot of time to prepare and had a little difficulty locating their destinations. Usually when these people do these operations, they make little models, they study maps. They only had satellite photographs to study before they came and as a consequence, they had trouble actually finding places on the ground. It didn’t look the same. So, we and other helicopters—you could see them—spent quite a bit of time circling around quite fast, following the terrain, trying to find the governor general’s house, which our two helicopters finally did. And we were getting shot at, mostly by AK-47s [automatic rifles], from the ground.

But we found the house. SOF [special operations forces] soldiers dropped out of the other helicopter and out of my helicopter. I was to hang back. They were to secure the house and then I would rappel down. However, we started taking ground fire from the governor general’s house and another house that was below it—it turned out to be the prime minister’s house. So, after the SOF guys dropped down, we pulled up. And then we

started taking heavier anti-aircraft fire from two forts—we were in a crossfire. So, they decided to pull out and come back after the house had been secured. And then we took more anti-aircraft fire as we were going out over the harbor. We took quite a lot of anti-aircraft fire, actually.

*Q: Had you known about the Grenadian military?*

ROSSIN: In general terms. We didn't have very much visibility into what was going on there. There was no permanent U.S. presence or anything. I had been there in a slightly earlier phase. But there had been a lot of indications of arms shipments into Grenada. But all of the places that we were getting shot at from, these locations were obviously closed to me when I was visiting. Turns out that they had armed these places up. They had 28-millimeter quad rapid-fire guns and they can do a lot of damage.

There was another helicopter and ours. We were the second helicopter. And as we came out over the harbor, we were getting hit by 28-millimeter shells, obviously by AK-47 fire and also by a couple of 50 calibers. And we got really ripped up. The helicopter got quite ripped up; I later learned it was hit forty-eight times. The co-pilot got shot through the leg. We were getting shrapnel flying around inside the helicopter. We almost crashed.

*Q: Well then what happened?*

ROSSIN: Well, most of the guys were out of the helicopter, having gone down the ropes. I did not go down the rope because when we flew up, we took so much fire. We were getting fired on from Fort George and Fort Rupert, on high and low points. We were at low altitude. The co-pilot got shot, then the avionics were damaged. The stabilizer fin in the rear got stuck down, which limited our air speed to the lowest possible speed that a Blackhawk can fly and still stay in the air. So, we were really sitting ducks. We veered off and almost crashed into the ocean. We were reported as having crashed into the ocean by the other helicopter because it went around the point just as we veered off. But we recovered at the last second.

Then we flew around and flew to the U.S.S. *Guam*, which was off the northern coast of Grenada at that point. They cleared the deck. Because the avionics were all damaged and the rotor was free-wheeling, they shot seawater into the intakes of the engine to stop it. The deck has to be cleared because the engine can freeze up and the rotors fly off across the deck, which did not happen in our case. I ended up flying out to the U.S.S. *Guam*, which was the command ship for Admiral Metcalf. So, I never did go to the governor general's house on that trip.

*Q: Then what happened to you?*

ROSSIN: I went to the command bridge of the *Guam*. Admiral Metcalf was there and I introduced myself. There was another Foreign Service officer there, Ashley Wills. He had been the public affairs officer in Barbados when I was the political officer there. He had

been sent down with Admiral Metcalf as an area political advisor. They had a big map in the command bridge with all of the targets marked on it. It was a tourist ordnance survey map of Grenada. I introduced myself and then got out of the way.

I was looking at the map and I realized that two of their targets were wrong, basically. There were two campuses of the medical school, one at the end of the runway, that was covered. The other one was in what was a former hotel in Grand Anse beach. And that was not marked as a target at all. It was completely unmarked on the map, which had a target marked on a police training school. And the other thing was that they had the radio station marked, which was up near the airport, but they didn't have marked a new transmitter tower, a big one, that had been put up north of Saint George's on the coast. So, I pointed these things out, particularly the medical campus, to Ashley and then to Admiral Metcalf. I said, "Well, you are not rescuing the students at the right place. And that police training school that you are busy attacking actually doesn't exist. It hasn't been there for years. But that hotel is now the medical school and more than half of the students live there." And it turned out that one of the medical students had gotten through to New York on his phone card and called up somehow. So, they mounted a little rescue operation at the campus of the medical school.

Then I went down below deck and rested for a while. I went down and visited the co-pilot who had been shot. Then I went and sat in the mess, got something to eat, and just hung around for a long time on the *Guam*. The only things I did on the *Guam* after that that were substantive was to send a couple of cables back to Washington—it was the only time I had ever sent a "flash" precedence cable—about what had gone on and that I was still alive.

They had landed marines at the harbor at the foot of where the governor general's house was up the hill. They were supposed to go up and secure the governor general's residence because the special operations soldiers I had gone in with were basically under siege. There had been an inadequate number of people. And these marines were having trouble getting up there. And there was really some concern that the governor general's house might be overrun and he might not somehow survive. So, I talked with him on the special ops guys' sat [satellite] phone and got him to say, "Yes, I want you all to invade and, yes, I invited the invasion," which was duly taped up at Fort Bragg. I have a copy of that tape in my souvenirs. And then the next morning I went into Grenada.

*Q: How did you go in?*

ROSSIN: From the *Guam* on a helicopter to the airport.

*Q: Now was this the airport that the Cubans had been working on?*

ROSSIN: Yes. it was about 90 percent complete. The terminal building was not 90 percent complete, more of a concrete shell. But the runway was complete enough that

they could land C-141s and C-130s on it. They were concerned about that. The first one that went down, they were concerned it might go through the surface. But it didn't.

So, I went in there and mostly linked up with the governor general. He was in a house that the Cuban engineers had been using on a hill on one end of the runway. And still my main thing was to get him to say publicly that he had invited the invasion. When I got there, Ruddy Lewis, the head of the Barbados Defense Force, was there with the governor general in this house. He had in hand a signed letter from the governor general saying that he invited the invasion. And that letter became quite controversial over the years, as to whether or not it had actually been done by the governor general or given to him. My belief was that that letter was produced by the Barbadians. I recognized the typewriter, actually. Reddy Lewis himself brought the letter in and had the governor general sign it.

*Q: But he signed it?*

ROSSIN: He had signed it. The letter is a public document now.

*Q: How was the governor at that time?*

ROSSIN: He was fine. He was there with his wife. They don't have any children. He's a very conservative type of school master, and not a very flappable type of person. Very Grenadian in character. His wife was a bit more put out, but she wasn't panicky or anything. I was there probably by seven thirty in the morning and they had been taken out of the house earlier in the morning and taken to the *Guam* and then back to the house at the airport. They were fine. There was that letter. We chatted for a while and got to know each other. I introduced myself and he was happy to see me.

Then it became really annoying. I was talking to him and somebody came in and said, "You have a call from Washington." I had gotten it so that all the governor general needed to say was, "I am so happy that the Americans have come and liberated us." That was it. So, I go down and I get this call and they are having problems in the UN [United Nations] Security Council or something. Washington wants me to have him say, "Under Article 7 of the OECS [Organization of the Eastern Caribbean States] agreement—" and all of this sort of technical stuff. Well, by the time I went back up and saw the governor general with all of that kind of stuff, he had decided that he was going to take it a little slower and didn't want to say so right away. Then I was back on the phone saying, "Now look at what you have done." If you would just let Paul be Paul, that kind of thing. And he never did go on the radio and say anything.

Meanwhile, I got called down there again because President Reagan wanted to speak with him. So, I said, "Okay, I'll go up and get him." By the time I got back, they say that the president was meeting with a group of boy scouts. I say, "Well, I've got the governor general of Grenada here and you may have seen on TV that there is something going on down here. You really ought to go get the president because I really think he wants to talk

to Sir Paul Scoon.” And they wouldn’t do it. “No, no, his schedule,” and all of this kind of thing. That was something that really caused some unhappiness. My wife at the time was working for Lynn Nofziger, a political consultant by that time, who was one of Reagan’s closest friends. And when I came back to Washington at some point I was talking to Lynn and I told him about this. He was totally outraged. I said, “Whoever works on the president’s staff should be fired.” And he actually sent a memo to Ed Meese or someone about this. But then they never did talk. And that also made the governor general not want to go on the radio. He was irritated and felt disrespected, which in fact he was. Here he was running around at six in the morning and the U.S. president could not come back to speak to him on the phone for a few minutes.

*Q: I just was reading the papers, like everyone else, and you did have a feeling that the governor was not really on board.*

ROSSIN: He was on board. But he was a reserved person. He’s not a person to get carried away by the excitement of the moment. He is certainly not a person who will let other people make his decisions for him. And we didn’t strike well when the iron was hot and then the iron cooled off. Later on, when I was there, we would meet with him every morning, myself and Tony Gillespie and General Farris, the XVIII Airborne Corps commander, and we would go over the day. Eventually he appointed an interim administration. And he was very decisive, actually, once he decided he could decide. Part of the problem was at that moment he was not sure what he could or should do. One of the things that he wanted to do and was arranged for him was to talk to the Queen or the Queen’s private secretary.

*Q: In other words, he really felt his tie was to the Queen and not to Margaret Thatcher?*

ROSSIN: Zero. What does she have to do with him? She’s the prime minister of England. He’s the prime minister of Grenada. The Queen is the queen of both of them. And that is where his authority was derived from. He was the Queen’s governor general in Grenada. He talked to the private secretary early on that morning and the private secretary told him, “Go for it. You are in charge. There is nobody else there. The place has to be run and Her Majesty wants you to do it.” So, he said, “Fine. You told me and that’s all I need to hear,” and he started to work. He was a one-man government and we were basically his agents. But he became very decisive.

*Q: What rank did you have at that time?*

ROSSIN: I was an FS-03.

*Q: That is about a major level or something.*

ROSSIN: I think one is a captain at FS-03.

*Q: A captain. I would think at a certain point you would find yourself getting deluged by supervisors.*

ROSSIN: Actually, I didn't. It was partially because I was the only one there from the State Department. There was no other State Department person in at that point. Barbro Owens, who was an old colleague of mine, came in at a certain point. There were certain State Department people who were on the ground working with the evacuation of the medical students. Maura Harty was one of them. But they were only doing the evacuation of the medical students. And they were actually getting on the planes and flying up to South Carolina with them. In terms of doing anything else, it was only me for the first forty-eight hours or so.

I needed to get things done with the military. And of course, I didn't wear a uniform. And there, what I realized, for instance, all the Cuban soldiers and lots of other people had run into the Soviet embassy, which was behind the lines at that stage. And they sent somebody to us because they needed water and food. So, I had to go to General Schwarzkopf and persuade him to send water and food to the Soviet embassy, which was basically in a fire zone. He did not want to, but I pointed out that there were U.S. diplomats in Kabul in the U.S. embassy there, at the Soviets' mercy, and whatever we did or did not do in Grenada would likely be reflected in what happened in Kabul. I insisted and he acquiesced.

I wore my State Department badge around. I wore my blue safari suit because my other clothing had actually fallen out of the helicopter when we were flying around over the ocean. So, I had what I had. And I called myself ambassador. They didn't know anything else, but they knew that an ambassador was pretty important. They didn't really know what ambassadors were, so maybe I was one. And that's what I did and that's how I got things done.

At one point the Libyan DCM showed up and I brought him blindfolded down the length of the runway. I can't remember what his requirement was, but it was an odd sequence of events. And I was not deluged by supervisors. I talked to Tony [Gillespie] on the phone every now and then, but basically, I was on my own.

*Q: On the ground, what was the situation? Was there a controlling force? Were the Cubans doing their thing?*

ROSSIN: There was fighting taking place. I was in the airport area. I was not in the front lines area. Just behind Grand Anse beach there was a set of cottages from a 1960s Caribbean festival and there was some fighting taking place there. Some of them were destroyed by AC-130 gunships. In another part there were Cubans. Some were killed and others fled into the Soviet embassy. So, there were bits and pieces of fighting across the southern part of the island. But I didn't see too much of that. On the second day I was there, I flew over to visit the governor general in his house—he was back in his house—the area between the airport and the city was not secured. So, we actually flew



over the unsecured area. And I missed the helicopter flight back because I stayed behind to do something with the governor general. And I had to go find someplace to stay. So, I ended up walking down from his house to another house, where somebody had told me the Barbadian soldiers were. There was a little bit of sniper fire, actually. I was ducking in and out. I got down to where they were and that was great. They had water. I took a shower and was able to shave. They had baked beans, fried eggs, and tomatoes. One of the best meals I ever had!

*Q: What more could you ask for?*

ROSSIN: So that phase lasted for maybe five or six days.

*Q: Was there any way of opening negotiations?*

ROSSIN: No. There was no interest in negotiations. And I don't think it was really possible, the way things were working out. There was almost nobody to negotiate with. Coard and his people ran away and hid. They were eventually captured. So they disappeared. They melted away. The Grenadian army fought for three or four days here and there and that was the end of that. And the Cubans either surrendered or were killed or most of them went into the Soviet embassy.

So, the issue then became—at least when I was involved—we noticed that both the Russians and the Cubans there were active setting up stay-behind nets. They figured they were going to be out of there, but they were making contacts with people. Tony and I went to the governor general and said, “You go to break relations with these people. You got to get them out of here. They are up to no good.” And he was fine with that. So, I worked with the governor general and we typed up the diplomatic notes to the Soviets, Cubans, and Libyans and broke relations. I went around with the Grenadian policeman who delivered those notes to those embassies.

Then it fell to me to negotiate with the Libyans and to negotiate with the Soviets for their departure. Lino Gutierrez was down there and he handled the Cubans, who actually the governor general didn't break relations with, but he reduced them to a one-man embassy. I went around and did the Soviets. It took three or four days at the Soviet embassy. They were hampered because the communications were down, so they were unable to communicate with Moscow. So, we had to handle their communications with Moscow. This was an interesting thing because it was the first time I had ever seen a fax machine. It was October of 1983 and it was a fax machine that hooked up to a TACSAT [tactical satellite communications] radio. It was big. You put the paper on a cylinder inside it and it spun around and it faxed. Of course, it was encrypted via the TACSAT and it went to Washington. The reply from Moscow with their guidance to their ambassador came the same way. So, it made the negotiation a little bit unusual because I had to read to the Soviets their instructions for negotiating with me. Kind of a hopeless situation for them.

They were ready to go. But they had fifty-three Cuban fighters, plus they had North Koreans, odds and sods, who had been in Grenada at the moment of the invasion, in the embassy. And basically, the negotiation was about the conditions of their departure, which they violated, actually. Nobody was to bring any weapons. Everybody got out to the airport and they found rifles and pistols inside on top of the crates. We were flying them from Grenada to Merida on three U.S. Air Force C-9s and from there they were going to be picked up by Cubana or Aeroflot, go to Havana, and then on to Moscow. A crate was opened while I was on my way from the Soviet embassy to the airport after everybody had gone and they found a loaded weapon on top of the crate. So, at that point we searched everybody, looked inside the North Korean suitcases, which turned out to be full of toilet paper.

So basically, the Soviets and the Libyans were out of there November 3. And the Cubans were reduced shortly thereafter. And apparently—shortly after I was gone—they found a huge cache of weapons and ammunition under a newly laid concrete driveway or patio in the Cuban embassy when they went in there. It was newly laid so they wondered if there was something underneath it. Well there was. It was a huge cache of weaponry, funny enough.

*Q: Yes. It became quite a display item, I think.*

ROSSIN: Well, that was just the Cuban thing. There were a lot of peculiar things about Grenada at that time. One of them was these arms depots that were discovered there. The island itself was just awash with weapons. I had for a while an AK-47 that I found. We were finding RPGs [rocket propelled grenades] and weapons all over the place. But the real thing was these warehouses full of weapons and uniforms and tents, all the paraphernalia. Huge amounts of it. Much more than could ever be consumed in a place the size of Grenada. And nobody was ever sure what that was for. The guess was that somehow it had to do with Central America in some way, but nobody really knew.

*Q: Were you able to talk to the Soviet diplomats?*

ROSSIN: Only when I did the negotiation of the departure. I spent a long time with the Russian ambassador and with his young interpreter and staff aide, who spoke English. Those were really the only ones I dealt with. The rest of them were there at the embassy.

*Q: Were any of the Grenadians being flushed out who were part of the opposition, the military force?*

ROSSIN: They were captured. A prisoner of war camp was set up and it had about twelve or thirteen hundred people in it. The political types, Coard and his wife, Austin, and the ones that had been involved in the faction that overthrew the Bishop faction, were detained and were in the main prison there. Ramsey Clark came one time to see them. We had a CODEL [congressional delegation] visit them. People would go and visit them. The temporary prison superintendent was the prison superintendent of Barbados. He was an

extremely no-nonsense individual. Ramsey Clark tried to bully him but did not impress him at all.

The Grenadian army guys were let go after a few days. They were combed to see if there was anybody of interest. I used to go to the prisoner of war camp every day. I had been in Barbados and I would just look for names that I recognized from the old time. And you would find the occasional person that was not a Grenadian, who was undesirable. When we would meet with the governor general, I would say to him, “You know these people are around and they really shouldn’t be here and they are not Grenadian.” And he would say, “Yes, let’s have them fly out this afternoon.”

*Q: Was there a feeling that, as often happens, all the flotsam and jetsam of the socialist cause had washed up there?*

ROSSIN: Not really. There had been an earlier phase, I think in 1979 and 1980, when there had been a lot of concern that a lot of these eastern Caribbean types were gravitating to Grenada, that there were training camps—which turned out not to be the case. But by 1983 that wasn’t really the case anymore. They were back in St. Lucia or St. Vincent or Jamaica. You had a lot of Jamaicans there. And you had a few Guyanese and people like that. But the rest of it, no.

*Q: When you arrived, was the New JEWEL Movement over?*

ROSSIN: That was Bishop’s government. When I was covering it from Barbados, that was the government. New JEWEL meant Joint Endeavour for Welfare, Education, and Liberty. And it was a black power thing. It was certainly meritorious in the circumstances of Eric Gairy. But it had destroyed itself. That was the catalyst for all of these events. Bishop and his group were killed. Their bodies, or to be more precise, body pieces from them, were later found.

*Q: Was there any Grenadian cadre of people that came together? Were we trying to create a Grenadian government?*

ROSSIN: There was. It was brought together actually by the governor general, not by us. The governor general assembled an advisory council of distinguished Grenadians from different places—living in Europe, the United States, or Grenada. The prime minister—although he wasn’t called prime minister at that point—was Nicholas Brathwaite. The man who was named to the function of the foreign minister, Patrick Emmanuel, was not an attractive one to us because he had been somebody fairly senior in the foreign ministry during the Maurice Bishop period and certainly shared that ideology. But we did not interfere with the governor general’s choices and process and gradually they assembled their own government.

*Q: When we put troops on the ground, we tend to overplay our political hand. Was the governor general really taking charge? Were you getting instructions to go and tell him what to do?*

ROSSIN: No. That was not the case. Because Tony Gillespie was there. He was the head of our operation. Grenada is not Iraq or Bosnia or such. It's an island out all by itself. And as far as I could make out, we weren't getting a whole lot of instructions about anything. I mean, there weren't a whole lot of instructions to give. It was finished. The Russians were gone. The Cubans were gone. The Libyans were gone. Maurice Bishop was gone. Bernard Coard was gone. You need to reintegrate people and get them home. There was some damage from the war. But that was about the extent of it. Public order was not an issue.

The military that was there, the 101st Airborne, was replaced by military police. And even they left after not too long a period. Our troops were only there for some six weeks. Military police are real military too, but it shifted very quickly to a model of occupation—if you will—that was consistent with the fact that these people all wanted to become the fifty-first state of the United States. It was a very friendly environment.

*Q: Did we rush in with big policies of economic development?*

ROSSIN: No. This was all ad hoc. This was not a planned event. We didn't rush in with anything that I am aware of. One thing that we made clear was that damage from hostilities was something that we were not responsible for fixing. AID did come in and start doing various things. But there was initiative like we were suddenly going to give them 150 million dollars. This was an earlier era.

*Q: By the way, there was a critical point, at least in public perception, with the students landing. Some students in the United States talked about how they weren't in any danger.*

ROSSIN: Yeah. Then they come off the plane and kiss the ground.

*Q: In a way it must have been a feeling of relief.*

ROSSIN: Yeah. I mean, it was Grenada, who ever heard of it? I've got to tell you, those students had been living down there for several days in extraordinarily frightening circumstances, and they got on C-141s with gunfire going on around and a big military operation—they were glad to be out of there. They did not go down to Grenada to be in a war. They went down there to get a medical degree.

I don't know if you also heard about the West Germans? There were a couple of West Germans—I don't know if they were students or tourists, but they were down there. Pretty much anybody who was European, a NATO [North American Treaty Organization] ally, whatever, could get on those planes and leave. And these West Germans got on the

planes and landed in South Carolina and then pulled out their East German passports and said they wanted to go home.

*Q: How about the press?*

ROSSIN: The press was there. This was I think one of the first instances where the military put together a press pool arrangement. So initially there were not a lot of reporters there. There was also no way to get in since there was no commercial traffic going in and out of the place. After a while much more press came in. Of course, this was before the days of CNN [Cable News Network]. So, we had some journalists there. I used to do a lot of press briefings when I was down there. It certainly was completely different from today's saturation news coverage. I remember them and talked to them a lot but they didn't make a big impression on me.

*Q: You stayed there for how long?*

ROSSIN: I stayed there until around the end of January 1984.

*Q: After the shooting had stopped and all of that, what did you find yourself doing?*

ROSSIN: Well, we had a lot of CODELs and other visitors. There was always another CODEL or other visitor. We were doing political reporting. For those who were there at the time of the invasion, after a couple of months it kind of ran out. We were meeting with the governor general, starting to plan for the elections, the next phase. But that was it.

*Q: Larry, we move on to the Peruvian desk. You basically were doing that from when to when?*

ROSSIN: I started on the Peru desk in early September of 1983 and did it for two years.

*Q: What was the situation in Peru when you took over the desk?*

ROSSIN: It was the last two years of President Belaunde's presidency. He was an old Peruvian statesman and was back not for the first time, if I remember correctly. Things were slowly going downhill on a number of fronts, slowly but surely. First of all, there was the terrorism situation. *Sendero Luminosa* (Shining Path), Tupac Amaru emerged slowly during the time I was on this job. They were not as serious, but they became much more serious later on. Sendero Luminosa was getting worse and worse in the highlands and Lima, but also spreading out to many other areas.

*Q: What was Sendero Luminosa?*

ROSSIN: Sendero Luminosa was something of a Khmer Rouge Maoist movement. It was led by a former professor named Abimael Guzmán. It was like the Khmer Rouge in the

sense that their ideology was essentially a destructive nihilist ideology. They liked to harken back—although their roots were in students in the university in Lima, if I remember correctly—to the Incan period. And they wanted to do away with urbanization.

*Q: To me it does sound like an intellectual framework that came out of France?*

ROSSIN: Well, maybe. Guzmán may have had some French ties. But it was an extremely violent and extremely brutal group. They set off bombs everywhere. At one point, I guess when it was coming up to the elections in 1985—this was when Belaunde was defeated by Alan García—and you know that one of the things in elections is dipping your fingers in ink. And Sendero Luminosa would go around and chop off the hands of people when they saw they had ink on their fingers. They attacked everybody.

*Q: Now the other movement was more an indigenous native one, wasn't it?*

ROSSIN: The Tupac Amaru movement? No, it was more your classic urban Marxist type of movement. During the time I was working on Peru it was in its early stages. It became a serious problem, in a way more threatening to the system than Sendero Luminosa. But at the time Tupac Amaru would occasionally set a bomb off at a McDonalds restaurant or some other manifestation of western culture in Lima. But it was very sporadic at that point. It was not a group that was perceived at that point as being anything very significant.

*Q: How were relations with the United States during the period?*

ROSSIN: During the whole period it was essentially the same because the election of Alan Garcia took place right at the end of the time that I was in that job, the summer of 1985. Belaunde was very friendly towards the United States. We were very friendly towards him. They had severe debt problems. We were working with them to deal with that. All of Latin America had a debt crisis at that point. We were working with them on counter-narcotics. This was early days. Narcotics cultivation and processing was still more in Colombia and you only had mostly coca cultivation in the jungle areas of Peru. Peru was past the Soviet period. It had a military government in the 1960s and bought a lot of Soviet weaponry, which they still had. The military government had been left leaning—kind of like Hugo Chavez now—but more mainstream. They were out of that period. Belaunde was very pro-American. We had good relations with them.

They had the usual human rights issues, which you have in a place like Peru. And you had the fight with Sendero Luminoso. The relationship really only changed a little bit right at the end, after Alan Garcia was elected. He came in with a unilateral declaration that Peru would service only ten percent of its debt, which got people annoyed. But I was walking out the door at that time.

*Q: Prior to the time, maybe during that time, Peru had a lot of expropriation cases.*

ROSSIN: That all had happened during the period of the military government in the 1960s, if I recall correctly. There were expropriation cases, as I remember, but they were not a big part of the bilateral agenda. It wasn't like Nicaragua, for example. There were no particular such issues going on there. Copper mines and the like had been sorted out. When I went to Peru one time when I was desk officer, I flew down to Ilo, where the Southern Peru Copper Corporation had its big open pit mine and smelter on the coast and there were no issues raised at that point. Whatever there had been had been resolved by the time I got there.

*Q: What about our role as a guarantor, along with Brazil and somebody else—*

ROSSIN: That came later, the Peru-Ecuador border dispute. The fighting had happened before—well there was more than one round of fighting—but there was not a round of fighting during the time that I was the Peru desk officer. The dispute was active but not flaring up. And the real diplomatic effort, where Luigi Einaudi led the American participation, came later on. It was several years later on, well after 1985.

*Q: Tuna? Fishing?*

ROSSIN: Not an issue. A lot of fishing in any case was in bad shape during the period I was desk officer because of the El Niño [weather] phenomenon. So that was just not an issue. And that was more an Ecuadorian than a Peruvian issue.

The issues we had were the terrorism issues, the human rights issues flowing from them, a little bit the American citizen prisoner issues flowing from them, and from drug trafficking, and narcotics itself. But again, these were all on the rise during the time I was the desk officer. They became much worse later on. The aftermath of the legacy of the Soviet arms. Then there were trade and economic issues. We had terrible problems with Peru on civil aviation. Peru was like the North Korea of civil aviation at the time. I did two rounds of negotiations, one in Washington and one in Lima, on civil aviation, to try to negotiate a new civil aviation agreement. At that time Pan Am and Eastern were flying to Peru. There were problems with fifth freedom rights and other issues. The airlines wanted to pick up in Peru and go on to Argentina, which is a long flight.

*Q: What is—?*

ROSSIN: Fifth freedom is the right to pick up passengers at an intermediate stop in a foreign country and take them onto another destination country. For example, an American carrier flying between Miami and Buenos Aires and stopping in Lima could pick up international traffic in Lima and carry it onward to Buenos Aires, or vice versa. But it is basically anything other than two-way traffic. We were giving it to the Peruvians but the Peruvians would not give it to us. We went and did a negotiation in Peru and had to meet in a half-completed concrete shell of a building on the outskirts of Lima to maintain clandestinity. You would think it was the North Korean nuclear talks. There were demonstrations taking place over these issues in Lima. It was not successful. It was



an issue that was not resolved until sometime after I left, after we suspended all Peruvian airline flights to and from the United States to gain leverage, basically to get their real attention.

*Q: What was the problem?*

ROSSIN: It was money, for the most part. They wanted to preserve markets for their carriers. Initially it was a business thing that got wound up into one of these nationalistic, ideological, macho kinds of tests of Peru's ability to stand up to the United States. There were big demonstrations. You know, Peru will not capitulate to the United States.

Their carriers serving the United States were actually less dependent on Fifth Freedom traffic, but they insisted on having it. For ours, it made a significant portion of their actual business model to be able to do Fifth Freedom flights. As I recall it was not really economical for them to just serve Lima if they weren't carrying onwards.

*Q: So, did you just take Peru off the schedule?*

ROSSIN: Well, they took Peru off their schedule. But I certainly remember going through the airport in Miami afterwards—because my next post was in Haiti—and I would walk by and there were the Fawcett and the AeroPeru counters collecting dust and eventually gone. They were busy routes one day and the next they were shut down. It was a pure reciprocity thing.

*Q: You say human rights. What were the human rights issues?*

ROSSIN: The issues were the way in which the Peruvian military dealt with terrorism. Of course, the Sendero Luminoso phenomenon flared up and spread to a considerable number of departments of Peru. It was in a very small area at the time that I became desk officer, and it had spread to half of the departments of Peru—not only in the mountains, but in Lima—by the time I left. The army in the mountains tended to be heavy handed going after these people. You had the usual ethnic-class kind of distinctions in the society. They would go out in these Indian areas where people don't speak Spanish or only speak it as a second language and they did not really know who they were going after. Sendero Luminoso was very hard to track down. The army would imprison people. There were not nearly as many human rights violations going on as was alleged by Amnesty International. I remember going through the Amnesty reports and finding that they were compendiums of every allegation, rumor, falsehood, mountain legend that had been reported. Some of it was true. A lot of it wasn't. There was no distinction by Amnesty International. We spent a lot of time chasing around all kinds of allegations that were not true.

*Q: You mentioned Americans in jail. This was before that woman?*

ROSSIN: This was before the Lori Berenson case. She was associated with Tupac Amaru and, again, that organization had not really come up during my time. We had on the order of twenty-five prisoners in Peru and most were drug couriers or in some way associated with narcotics. There was even one who was a seventy-five-year-old lady and she was a drug courier, no doubt about it. She was a witting courier too.

The issue was not so much that they were guilty or innocent, because most of them had been caught red-handed. The issue was that the conditions inside of the Peruvian prisons were really awful. These were all prisons that subsequently became famous because at one point or another you would have Sendero Luminoso or some other uprising take place in them. They were really rough places. The kind of place where if you want to get fed, your family brings you food, where the prisoners run the prison, where there is a lot of brutality. It was like *Midnight Express* except it was in Peru, not Turkey.

So, there were a lot of problems with the prisoners who merited and received consular and American citizen services, but were living in these prisons where they were getting no worse treatment than anybody else, it's just that they were really bad prisons. That was the issue.

*Q: Were you ever able to do anything about them?*

ROSSIN: At the margins. I don't remember particular cases. I think we got somebody moved once to another prison. But it was inherent in the prison system. Not a good place to be caught carrying drugs.

*Q: How were relations with Chile?*

ROSSIN: That was not really an issue while I was there. The whole Bolivian corridor to the sea, the border dispute, none of that stuff really arose while I was there. It was a quiet period in a way. There were a lot of issues bubbling along, but there was no big flare up of anything. It was just this sort of deterioration across the board. Belaunde never met a problem that he couldn't sweep under the carpet. And he did that. That was his approach to things.

*Q: In this period, did you find that Latin America below the Panama Canal was sort of a forgotten area? Everybody was concentrated on El Salvador?*

ROSSIN: Certainly, there was more attention being given to Central America and the Caribbean, but it wasn't totally a forgotten area. At that time the drug issues were Colombia. The office I was in was the Andean Office and we had Colombia, Venezuela, Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador. Colombia got a lot of attention all the time because of the drug problem, really most of the focus. Venezuela got some attention because of oil. It was on one of its high rather than low points at that time. Peru in the sense of high-level attention by the president, no, it didn't get very much, obviously. But for example, with the debt crisis and the other problems that they faced there, I was able to shake loose

sixty million dollars a year of additional Economic Support Funds. That's not bad. But it was at the margin.

I remember at another point President Belaunde came and visited with President Reagan. And President Reagan—we had slipped it into his notes and he was looking for something to give to Peru when Belaunde was there—he committed an additional five million dollars' worth of grant money. There is nothing like having the president say he's going to give extra money to use as a stick to beat the system to try and get that money. But we still had to beat really hard to actually get it. So, you could see that Peru was still at the margin of consciousness.

There wasn't much more that we could have done. The issues in Peru that were deteriorating while I was there, I would not say were particularly susceptible to U.S. engagement. The scale of engagement to really solve the Latin American debt crisis at that time was, of course, enormous. The terrorism issues and the human rights issues were not something that we could very easily engaged on and make much of a difference on. They were so inherent to the structure of Peru.

*Q: You say the situation in Peru was deteriorating. Was it because of the terrorism? Was it the government?*

ROSSIN: It wasn't so much the government, although we looked for a more dynamic government out of Garcia, which ultimately became corrupt and disappointed. It was the spread of terrorism, the underlying economic difficulties of Peru. But mostly the terrorists, I would say, and the government's inability to get out of the debt crisis that they had.

*Q: The debt crisis was really something that was going to be resolved by banks, Treasury—*

ROSSIN: Yes, and after my time as well. And ultimately it was resolved. It recurred later. But it was eventually resolved. But Peru put itself—as I said, just as I was walking out the door, when Alan García came in and imposed his unilateral ten per cent cap on debt servicing—that's the kind of thing that puts you at the bottom of the list of recipients of debt relief. Nobody wants to give debt relief to somebody who has unilaterally given themselves debt relief. It's an attack on the system that the system does not like.

*Q: Then in 1985, where did you go?*

ROSSIN: In 1985, I went to Haiti as the head of the political section.

*Q: You were in Haiti from when to when?*

ROSSIN: Nineteen eighty-five to 1988, for three years. The ambassador was Clay McManaway and the DCM was first a guy named Steve Dawson—an old friend of

mine—and then Genta Hawkins Holmes, who was there the rest of the time that I was there. And then Brunson McKinley became ambassador.

*Q: Let's talk about Haiti. How did you get the job? And what was the situation when you got there?*

ROSSIN: I knew Clay McManaway. He was one of the deputy executive secretaries in the department. I had met him when I was a staff aide in ARA. We had gotten to know each other to some extent, as one does in such a position. When I was looking around for a job after the Peru desk, I wanted to be in charge of something. Haiti was not exactly the most popular place. I bid on other jobs, again hoping to go to Eastern Europe, which I did not get. But I was called up one day and they said, "We've got two 'ports' to offer you, Port of Spain or Port-au-Prince." I also had been selected for a congressional fellowship but ultimately, I decided to go to Port-au-Prince because I liked Clay and because I wanted to be in charge of something.

*Q: What was the situation in Haiti in 1985?*

ROSSIN: It was really bad. When I was a staff aide in ARA it was the one country in the hemisphere that never ever came across the front office's screen, except at one point when there was a question of denying agrément [the formal approval by a host nation of a proposed ambassador] to a Haitian ambassador-designate who had been convicted of arson at some point during the Papa Doc [Francois Duvalier] period. I think he actually did get agrément in the end. It was the period when Jean-Claude Duvalier, Baby Doc, was the president of Haiti, and had been for quite a long time. Papa Doc died in 1970 so this was quite a long time afterward.

There was very little political life going on in Haiti. There were a total of six politicians outside the government. The government itself was not comprised of what you would call politicians. They were Duvalier cronies and the like. The army was not much to speak of. It was a very dead period. If you look at Haiti now and compare it to then, it was actually much better off at that stage even though it was not well off at all.

*Q: How did we evaluate Baby Doc and his core of elite?*

ROSSIN: Not very highly. But there was a lot of really slogging work going on to try and open up the political system, to have political parties involved, to have more freedom of the press. It was one of these really slogging, very slow efforts that you have to have a lot of hope and optimism to pursue. You could debate whether there was any sincerity whatsoever going on there or whether the Haitians were taking just minimal steps to satisfy the Americans and keep them off their backs. It was not a high priority of the U.S. administration. And there was not a lot of congressional interest in it, including the congressional black caucus. But there was a little bit and actually the DC [District of Columbia] delegate, Walter Fauntroy was the champion of Haitian issues at the time, and was putting a little pressure on the administration. But it was modest because he was not

the most influential member of the U.S. Congress. So that was what was going on. That could have gone on forever without any significant happening. Except that it didn't, of course.

*Q: What about Mme. [Madame—Mrs.] Duvalier? I understand that Duvalier's wife and her family were very much involved in picking the plums.*

ROSSIN: Duvalier's wife was Michele Bennett. She came from a wealthy mulatto family. The class distinction in Haiti has always been between the blacks and the mulattos. In fact, Francois Duvalier was a black power candidate against the mulatto aristocracy that had come out of the American occupation. But then he married her and in a sense the cronyism and the family-ism took over. One of her family associates, Frantz Merceron, was the finance minister. They were plugged around in key elements of the government and the structure, so all the money was going off that way.

But, you know, it was one of those situations where, when Duvalier was overthrown, the Haitian government hired an American lawyer and investigator to try and track down the alleged Duvalier hundreds of millions of dollars stashed away. And if it was stashed away, they never really found it. We all assumed that the money was in France and that Michelle and Merceron went and got it. Certainly Jean-Claude didn't get it, because he ended up penniless in the south of France. We had reports that he was living in a house in Grasse lent to him by Adnan Khashoggi, but that Khashoggi tried to evict him when Khashoggi himself ran into some financial problems. But Duvalier would not leave—he had no place to go apparently—and French law favors tenants, and so Khashoggi began having the house fundamentally renovated around Duvalier—new roof and all—to try to drive him out, but it did not work.

That was the structure. And that was what was undermining tolerance for the Duvalier regime. In Haitian terms it was not that bad. There were human rights problems, but by Haitian standards they were really quite mild during that period.

*Q: The TonTon Macoutes thugs [a special operations unit within the Haitian paramilitary force]?*

ROSSIN: Well, the TonTon Macoutes, they were the militia—if you will—of the Papa Doc and post-Papa Doc period. Now they were called the *Volontaires de Service Nationale*—the VSN. If you went out in villages, there were still all these networks of intimidation. But it wasn't the same as when it was a structure of internal terror as under Papa Doc. They were pretty much gone in that sense. It's just a brutal society.

When I was living in Haiti at one point it occurred to me that Port-au-Prince—urban life—in Haiti was a bit like Hogarthian London, with a teeming mass of desperately poor people living on top of one another. And country life was like Europe's medieval period, filled with superstitions and people who never left their village in their whole life. In that

kind of society there is no real rule of law or anything. It is just brutal. It is a competition for the crumbs. It's not even crumbs off the table, because there really is no table.

*Q: I have heard at various times from people who have served there that sometimes our embassy got ensnared by the mulatto. There is a wealthy class there. How did you find it when you were there?*

ROSSIN: I don't think our embassy was ensnared by the mulatto elite. I don't think the mulatto elite tried to ensnare our embassy, at least at that time. It's hard to say. I got there at the tail end of the Jean Claude period. I got there in July and he was out in February of 1986. But really the period, the *dechoukage* (uprooting) they called it there, started in late August 1985 and went on—sporadically, building up in a snowball effect from then. Maybe in earlier periods when you had the total stasis that endured for decades, maybe then there would have been such a mulatto entanglement.

*Q: But I could see that there would be nowhere else to go, so you ended up with the elite—*

ROSSIN: I suppose so. I mean, you are not going to go to the home of a poor Haitian. So that might have been the situation. And it wasn't like anything looked like it was going to change. No reason whatsoever to expect change as of mid-1985.

*Q: So how did that change?*

ROSSIN: Well, it was weird. I got there in early July, and in late August there was an incident of unrest in Gonaives, which is a town to the north of Port-au-Prince. Nothing especially dramatic or overtly political. It was put down. But it was most unusual because it actually gathered steam before it was put down. And essentially, what this *dechoukage* was—it was leaderless as far as I ever knew—it was an expression of the kind of hopeless frustration that people had. They really had nothing to lose. Down in Petit-Goave there was another incident. There was a student demonstration at a secondary school in Port-au-Prince. Incidents just sporadically sprung up, but there was a sense of snowballing too.

I don't remember all the incidents now, but I do remember that—probably because I was new there—I took it more seriously than most people did, probably because I was new there. It was the adage, "It is good to be ignorant." It looked serious to me because nothing like that ever happened in Haiti that I knew of. Most other people who had been there longer in the embassy and diplomatic community tended to dismiss these isolated events initially simply because this system was what it was and it wasn't going to change. And there was no concrete reason to think it would.

So, you had little events. There was a demonstration by high school students in Port-au-Prince in December 1985. The police would always go out and knock heads for ten blocks around and maybe shoot somebody. That's what happened in December, and it



gradually built up. Somehow it caught steam after that student demonstration in Port-au-Prince. Of course, things have to happen in Port-au-Prince if they are going to make any difference. There were a series of demonstrations after the student one. They were repressed. They fed upon themselves then and became more and more prevalent in January 1986. Then what happened was a false rumor that Duvalier had left. Jean Claude actually left on the seventh of February, but a rumor circulated a week before that he had left Haiti. Steve Dawkins, the DCM, was called up by Washington, or called Washington—I don't remember which—and reported that there were these rumors that Jean Claude Duvalier had left.

And that news somehow got back into Haiti, but garbled—simply that Steve had reported that Duvalier had indeed left Haiti, which was not the case in fact. Everybody got excited and came out from their homes the next day thinking Jean-Claude Duvalier had left. Well, he hadn't left. He hadn't gone anywhere. Instead, he went on a tour of mostly shuttered Port-au-Prince—there was a general strike going on—with the police and thugs-a-plenty, and talked about how he was stronger than a monkey's tail and that he wasn't going anywhere. That led to a really tense week in which there was a general strike and a shutdown of the city. I don't remember exactly how the pressure came onto Duvalier himself, but it did through the army. They decided that the jig was up. And eventually on the seventh of February Duvalier did leave. He told us on the sixth that he was going to leave. We went through a long night and finally at three am he was put on a C-140 [aircraft] sent for the purpose and the U.S. Air Force flew him to Grenoble, France. And then he was gone. Then the military took over.

*Q: Were you seeing any issue or was it just a poor country that had enough of being a poor country?*

ROSSIN: That's basically it as far as I could tell. One of the things that had happened was that, sometime in the preceding fall, Michelle and a planeload of her closest friends went to Paris on a huge shopping trip. Jean-Claude himself was not a particularly extravagant individual. He had gone to France to take his baccalaureate when he was eighteen or nineteen years old, had failed and never went back to France. He didn't leave Haiti very often. He was a real Haitian, if you will. He was reputed to be not very smart, although at the end of the day I think he was smarter than his wife because he was the one that decided to leave, not her. He had to force her to leave. She was the jet-setter, going to Paris and New York all the time on these big shopping trips and for other jet-set events.

Her shopping spree in September or October 1985 got a lot of bad press around on the grapevine. As Steve Dawkins used to say, "There are not a lot of beans on anybody's plate in Haiti, but the Duvaliers are taking a bean off everybody's plate." So, it was just a reaction to her callous excess, I think. One of the things that struck me as I was driving home the day after Duvalier got on the plane was that people were driving in the main square in front of the palace—I guess it was civil servants driving to their real businesses at midday—and they were wearing the same suits as before, rather than guayaberas



[traditional Cuban tropical shirt]. I realized that nothing had changed. This was not a revolution.

*Q: You got there and something is happening and you have a political section—*

ROSSIN: Nothing was happening when I got there. It started a few weeks later.

*Q: But again, this was in the first six months of someplace, before you have absorbed the culture of the post. This is true anywhere: often your eyes are better than other people's because you are not used to the scene. But how did the political section work in a place that had no politics?*

ROSSIN: Well, there was politics. Or there were interests, we should say. There was all that work going on, for example, on trying to push the government to enact a political party's law. There was human rights reporting to be done. There were six politicians to talk to, and other people that the embassy kept up a lot of contact with. Some of them had friends in the United States. So, we did a modest amount, but I wouldn't say it was the busiest section. People could keep busy.

Also, the U.S. Coast Guard had a Haitian migrant interception and return program. An element of that program for which we were responsible was to follow up when they were returned to verify that they were not abused or punished for having tried to go away. Well, this was foolishness. This was a business. There was no such retribution. If the migrants wanted to leave, nobody cared except those who were making money off of them. It was not like trying to flee North Korea. The Haitian government could care less if its people tried to go, so long as they got their cut. This was a bit of a show for people who worried about this back in the United States. But it was also a frequent phenomenon. The coast guard cutters were in port returning migrants at least once a week if not more.

*Q: We didn't have the floods that we had during late-Bush I and Clinton administrations?*

ROSSIN: No. The Clinton flood was in 1994 when I was working on Haiti at the NSC [National Security Council] and was sparked by our not returning the migrants forthwith. And the reason we didn't have any such flood was because the U.S. Coast Guard would intercept everybody and return them. The success rate reaching the United States was very low. Even so, you had people who went six or seven times. The coast guard would interview these people and find people who had been intercepted several times before. But it cost money to go on one of these trips and after a while people didn't have money anymore. They had mortgaged everything they and their whole family had to pay the brokers.

As long as the return program was successful, it kept down the number of people who tried. People still did try, a fair number, maybe three thousand or five thousand a year. Whereas in 1994 when we had the boat people crisis—and the reason it picked up was

because we weren't returning people, so everybody said, Hey, now's the time—you had three thousand in a day. That was a huge thing.

*Q: Was there pressure from the Haitian communities in Miami or Florida?*

ROSSIN: In that first period, when I got there before Duvalier was overthrown, there was a certain amount of Haitian-American lobbying on the government, on us. But it was ineffectual. It was at the margins. And it was expressed via people like Fauntroy. During the later period, I wouldn't say there was an exceptional amount. It wasn't as with Cuban-Americans or Greek-Americans or one of the effective ethnic American lobbies. There are a lot of Haitian-Americans but most of them are not politically active in that sense. And this was evidenced in the theme that you have now, that every Cuban who touches his toe on American soil gets to stay and every Haitian gets returned. And what's the distinction here, anyway? No, we didn't really feel too much pressure from them.

Lots and lots of these Haitians of the political class, if you will, came back after Duvalier was overthrown. I had read a book before I arrived in Haiti called *Written in Blood*. It was a history of Haiti written by Robert Debs Heinl, the head of the U.S. military mission in Haiti in the first part of the François Duvalier period, and his wife. We had at that time a little military assistance mission, before people realized what they were dealing with in Duvalier. It was quite a detailed history and described all of these political figures of the 1950s. All of them were long gone from Haiti as of mid-1985; all of them came back after the *dechoukage* if they were still alive. Most of them still were. It was a tremendous thing. All the politically-dead revived and came back to life and there they all were in the flesh.

*Q: Now Haiti is really close to Cuba. Is there any relationship there?*

ROSSIN: Zero. At some point in the 1960s Fidel Castro had toyed around. He had sheltered a few Haitian opponents of the Duvalier regime. But that went absolutely nowhere. Essentially there was no interaction of any sort whatsoever between Cuba and Haiti at that time. During the time I was also in Haiti, there was no interaction between Cuba and Haiti. Later on, when Aristide came in, they restored relations and there was a Cuban flight established. But at that time there was zero.

*Q: You had this clear division on the island between the Dominican Republic and Haiti. It's racial and linguistic.*

ROSSIN: It's everything. It's topographical.

*Q: Is it like an iron curtain?*

ROSSIN: There was a bit of an iron curtain when I first got there. You couldn't drive across. It wasn't permitted, basically. I actually think I was the first person from the embassy to drive with my family over to visit a friend in Santo Domingo. I think we were

the first foreigners to drive over the border after Duvalier was overthrown. We talked to our friend in Santo Domingo and he arranged to have the Foreign Ministry send a telex to Jimani, the Dominican border town. We got out to the border on a very rough farm dirt road, then a track around the lake on the Haitian side of the border. We had to stop and talk for about an hour with the Haitian border guard because he was just so pleased to see somebody. He and his wife wanted to give us a chicken dinner, but we wanted to move on. Then we drove through a sheep dip at the border line and on into Jimani and had to wake up the customs officer and spend time chatting with him too. Nobody ever went that way.

I wouldn't say it was an iron curtain in the sense that it was a controlled boundary. But it was a closed boundary. Now, that didn't mean that hundreds of thousands of Haitians didn't actually go to the Dominican Republic, because they did, as sugar cane cutters. And the Dominicans always live in this fear—it's part of their historical tradition—of being swamped by the Haitians. Haiti is much more populated, overpopulated. There is a history of Haitian invasions of the Dominican Republic. There are a lot of Haitians in the Dominican Republic. They don't speak the same language. The Dominicans are afraid of them, actually.

In 1987, we went on vacation to the Dominican Republic. We were supposed to go to Puerto Plata on the north coast. There was a flight from Miami that came to Port-au-Prince and then alternating days it went on to Puerto Plata or Santo Domingo. The day we were to fly from Port-au-Prince on to Puerto Plata, our flight was cancelled due to a big tropical storm. So, we flew the next day, but ended up instead in Santo Domingo. We stayed with our friends overnight, then rented a car and drove up to Puerto Plata. We stopped at a currency exchange shop outside Santo Domingo to buy pesos and the man at the cash desk saw we were from Haiti. He was just totally amazed. "What's it like over there? Are they coming here?" It was an alien world to them. When I was working at the NSC in 1993 and 1994, one of the candidates in the Dominican elections, with some seriousness, proposed erecting a wall along the border. It made some sense, in a way.

*Q: After the departure of Jean Claude, what happened? Did we have links with the military there?*

ROSSIN: We had some links. We had defense attachés there the whole time. At one level, the Haitian military was not an opaque organization. This wouldn't be like being a defense attaché in some closed communist or African society. At another level, of course, it was a closed society because of all of the interlinkages. Like most foreign countries, you don't really know what and who they are. But we knew the military leaders, General Namphy and General Regala. These were the two men, along with a civilian, elderly, zombie-like lawyer named Jacques François from Cap-Haitien who Namphy selected, that were in the military committee. A lot of the military officers were known to the embassy.

They were the Haitian military and they had not been doing very much. Then all of a sudden, they became the government and ministers and were actually in charge of the place. They didn't start off all that bad, actually. For the first several months they were pretty good. They appointed a government with a lot of civilians in it, many of whom were good people that we knew. The education minister was a man named Rosny Desroches, a protestant minister and a good guy. The justice minister, François LaTortue, was a very good guy. We had never heard of him, but he came in and turned out to be very good. There wasn't anybody who was really bad. And that went on for several months. There were a few human rights incidents, but they were all things that were sort of reactive and typical excess in Haiti. They were accidents, basically. So, it looked pretty good at first, like things were moving along.

What happened though was that Namphy was an intolerant person. He just was intolerant of talking and politics and what he would have deemed to be the chattering classes. He just had no time for this. He got rid of all of the best ministers by October or November 1986 in a cabinet shakeup. The only conclusion that I could come to was that he found them deficient because they were actually doing something. He didn't want anybody actually doing anything. So, it gradually deteriorated after that.

*Q: As chief of the Political Section, did you find that after the departure of Jean Claude that things opened up? Were you able to get out?*

ROSSIN: We could get out before the *dechoukage*, there was just not much to find when one got out. Afterward, you had this huge flowering of political life in a completely random fashion. That is to say, you had all of these historical figures return to Haiti from Venezuela, the United States, and France. There were all sorts of political parties set up. Everybody had their own political party. A few newspapers were set up. There was a flowering of political and intellectual life.

Namphy let all this go on. He was not repressive in any way. He just considered most of it unworthy of his notice. For example, Haiti needed a constitution. Namphy wanted to control it. In August or September 1986 there was an election for a constitutional drafting commission. By that time a lot of people had lost their faith in the military government, so almost nobody voted in the election for the drafting commission; the members all were elected with twenty or thirty votes each in total in different geographical areas of Haiti. That was fine with Namphy, he did not care whether people voted or not. They came together, they worked hard, they actually wrote a constitution. It is still the Haitian constitution, and it is sort of the Rock of Gibraltar of Haiti's political life that people cling onto because nothing else is sturdy. The government held a referendum on the constitution in February 1987 that was completely sloppy in terms of how it was done. People were given one color slip of paper to vote for the constitution, another to vote against. We went out and observed the referendum. Everybody could see what everybody else was voting. Yet it was totally genuine and totally representative, with a very high turnout, and the Albanian level 99.98 percent "yes" vote for the constitution actually represented the popular sentiment. It was a totally legitimate event.

*Q: Was the military government sort of a mulatto clique?*

ROSSIN: No. It was not really class oriented. Namphy was actually a mulatto physically, but not class-wise. Most of the other military officers were black. The ministers were mostly black. Some of them may have been mulattos as well, but that was not the distinction of the government. It was a good first period, actually.

*Q: Was it corruption that finally changed the trend?*

ROSSIN: There was more and more criticism of Namphy. That just represented the passage of time, as much as anything. And of course, they weren't making Haiti any richer. As I've noted, Namphy didn't like criticism, he disdained it. Regala was a younger, perhaps more calculating, man. He did care what was going on with the politicians. François did not matter at all, he was catatonic.

I went on home leave in the summer of 1987 and during the period when I was gone, there was some kind of a breakdown. There were demonstrations, a serious breakdown of public order, and it really undermined the standing of the government amongst Haitians and also internationally. I don't remember exactly what happened since I was out of the country during this time, but it was a watershed event after which things were different.

Then we still moved forward towards the election to be held in November, 1987. These were elections for the parliament and a president of Haiti. The military cooperated in the election planning. I was de facto coordinating the international support for the election planning between us, the Venezuelans, the French, the Canadians, the O.A.S. [Organization of American States] with the Haitian authorities.

It was going along fairly well. There were a lot of candidates, but some who stood out. And then the candidate who looked like he was going to win, Marc Bazin, was not the candidate that the military wanted to win. In fact, I think Namphy had decided that he really didn't want anybody to win. He didn't like the process. Bazin was a former finance minister and the sort of Haitian who was on the international circuit. He had worked for the IMF [International Monetary Fund], he attended conferences and he always insisted on flying first class. He looked like he was going to probably win, so the military pulled the plug on the election.

There were tremendous massacres of people. It was very dangerous. There was a U.S. presidential delegation down to observe the election and they fled in a panic on the presidential plane. Other delegations like one led by the NDI [National Democratic Institute] and another sponsored by the Carter Center also fled. It was a very serious breakdown. The night before the election, we had outside our house a huge gun fight that went on for a long time. So, when I went to work on election day, I knew that things weren't going to work out well. It was already obvious. We had one embassy officer who was stopped in the street, forced out of his car to kneel with his hands behind his head,

and almost shot. Our public affairs officer had to drive around and rescue journalists from polling places where people were being chopped up with machetes. It was a serious situation. We evacuated all of the nonessential personnel and dependents, and were really left with only a skeleton staff at the embassy after that. We were in that black mode until the late spring of 1988. It felt like being in Isaac Asimov's story *Nightfall*.

*Q: Here things were going along okay and then all of a sudden this happened. Was this a normal military response? What happened?*

ROSSIN: It wasn't a normal military response or a military action. A normal response of the Haitian military I think is a little hard to describe. What is normal? We didn't have that much of a track record. They were doing pretty well on the elections planning and governance generally, although it was slowing down. I think it was the July 1987 disorders I missed that had caused a breach of confidence and comity, if you will, between the political class and a lot of ordinary Haitians on the one side, and the military leadership. The military leadership, Namphy, Regala, and the others had lost confidence in their ability to control and guide events. I also think they had lost confidence in the human *bona fides* [good faith] of the political class, and maybe also of the international groups. They had gotten a lot of support and then in July and afterwards they got a lot of criticism. So, they went a little into their own shell at that time.

But I have to say that the November, 1987 election implosion was something of a surprise, certainly the degree of it. The military leadership and the military itself had not really decided—at least as far as anybody could tell—to cancel the election until probably a day or two beforehand. It wasn't really even sure—for me anyway—until the night before that that was what was going to happen. There were some troubling signs, but nothing that would lead you to think they were definitely going to sabotage the election and certainly not with such violence. I think that at the end of the day Namphy just didn't like, trust, or respect these civilian political leaders. And when there was going to be an election that really was going to work and yield a new president of Haiti from among them, he just didn't want to give it up to them.

*Q: What was in it for him?*

ROSSIN: Being in charge is the only thing I can think of. Like a mother who won't let go. As far as I'm aware, he wasn't stealing much money. That was not his nature. That was definitely not the motivating factor.

*Q: Where did the Haitian military come from? I'm talking particularly about the upper officer corps, and maybe the troops.*

ROSSIN: It's your typical model of the military being the vehicle for upward social mobility for poor people.

*Q: It's a Latin American model.*



ROSSIN: It's an African model too. Haiti is more of an African country than it is a Latin American country. A lot of them had been somehow associated with the Duvalier regime, particularly in the officer class. Remember, this is all happening only a year or so after the overthrow. So, they had been associated with the Duvalier's in one way or another because Haiti is a small place. But that was not a distinguishing factor. The military was mostly an upward mobility vehicle. The officers were not wealthy people. They were poor people who got into the military somehow.

*Q: Well, then what happened? Here you were, you had delegations fleeing. Talk about black eyes. In the first place, Americans and others said, "Why didn't you tell us it was going to be like this?"*

ROSSIN: There was a lot of that. Brian Atwood, the NDI delegation head, in particular did a lot of that backbiting Monday-morning quarterbacking. I certainly lost any respect for him, but also for others who acted similarly.

*Q: How were you able to answer?*

ROSSIN: Things happen. We had had briefings for all the delegations. We had pointed out the troubling developments, but we said, You know what you know and you don't know what you don't know. This is what we knew. This is what happened.

*Q: NDI is?*

ROSSIN: National Democratic Institute. It had been active in Haiti for months beforehand doing political party development and the kind of things that they do. Their representative for this was Vivian Derryck, and she and they were good to work with. But Atwood's performance at the head of that delegation was really a panic. Life's tough out there. You shouldn't go out and observe elections in Haiti unless you are ready to put up with difficulties.

The presidential delegation was led by an otherwise unknown-to-us Washington lawyer who was politically connected, and it had various different people on it. Its key member was Fauntroy's main staffer active on Haiti. It was a mixed delegation like you get, some knowledgeable, some along for the ride. My wife and young daughter flew back on their plane to Andrews Air Force Base after the breakdown. We evacuated people every way we could. She told me delegation members including Fauntroy's staffer were literally panicky and crying. She said, "Why don't you people get a life? My three-year-old daughter has more composure than you do."

There was a delegation of observers from Jimmy Carter's former heads of state group, led by former Belize Prime Minister George Price. They all fled. It was a bad time. But then there was all of this backbiting. One of our embassy officers was talking to the press

saying, “Well, if they had only listened to me.” He had not said anything special beforehand but he was that type. You get all this kind of stuff after an event like that.

*Q: When all hell broke loose, was the embassy mainly concerned with getting Americans out of the line of fire?*

ROSSIN: Yes, getting Americans and getting ourselves. There weren’t too many other Americans. There were a lot of Haitian-Americans, but not many American-Americans. The Haitian-Americans took care of themselves, and could. But yes, it was mostly getting our own people accounted for, getting journalists accounted for, election observers accounted for, and getting them the hell out of there. And, as I said, there were a lot of incidents that showed that should be the top priority.

*Q: Basically, the observers and others, nobody was killed?*

ROSSIN: Nobody was killed. If I remember correctly, nobody was injured either. There were a lot of close calls and very frightening incidents. There was a pamphlet put out by the AFSA [American Foreign Service Association] around fifteen years ago. Richard Thompson edited it. It was stories of Foreign Service heroism. And this incident of our public affairs officer going around and rescuing journalists—his name was Jeff Lite—was recounted in that. He was extremely courageous.

*Q: What happened then? Obviously, Haiti was no longer on our “A” list.*

ROSSIN: There was a skeleton staff left behind. It was really small. And Brunson McKinley was there, and Genta Holmes, and Jeff Lite and others. As I said, it felt like *Nightfall*. There was effective martial law. Jeff and I went out to dinner in the Petionville suburb in the hills above Port-au-Prince one night. Jeff and I both lived farther down. There was one main road that went up to Petionville, and then there was another road under construction that was unfinished but everybody started using it. I remember coming down that—there were no lights—and getting stopped at a roadblock with a Haitian soldier pointing a gun at us and looking at our ID [identification] cards upside down. One of these standard things that happen, but it was just bad.

I don’t remember anything concrete from that period on the work front. Everything was just cut off. Aid was cut off. It was a dead period. And it went on for four or five months. The only thing I remember was that that was when I was looking for my next assignment, and I wanted to go someplace nicer. I kept reading the post reports every night in bed of Western European posts and especially the Netherlands with its ham and cheese, chocolate, whipped cream, and all of that stuff. It was my link to sanity.

*Q: Did we withdraw our ambassador?*

ROSSIN: No. We didn’t withdraw the ambassador. Brunson McKinley was the ambassador and he stayed. I guess that we interacted with the government, but I don’t

think there was much to be done. Everybody found it totally repugnant and the government wasn't trying to do the right thing. At that point, they were not doing anything. It was a dead period.

*Q: After this unpleasant interlude, where did you go? Did you make it to the Netherlands?*

ROSSIN: Actually no. This went on until the late spring of 1988. At that point, there re-emerged a politician by the name of Leslie Manigat, who was not a bad guy. In fact, he was a good guy. He is dead now, of natural causes. He was one of the politicians dating back to the 1950s, who had lived in Venezuela most of the intervening period and been active in the politics before the failed 1987 election, but not very popular. He was somehow installed by Namphy as president in April or May of 1988. He came in and started trying to do the right thing. He tried to govern. He was totally illegitimate but he tried, and he had some good advisors that he brought in from the United States and Canada and Venezuela.

We tentatively started dealing with him because, first of all, anything was better than what we had been through, and secondly, inherently he was not a bad guy at all, and thirdly, he was timidly trying to do the right thing. But he went too far. I don't remember what exactly sparked it, but he did something that got Namphy angry and Namphy overthrew him. He was taken out to the airport and put on a plane to Venezuela with his wife. Some of his aides were detained. Namphy moved back into the presidential palace.

This all happened in the last few days before I was leaving Haiti, and I remember it because I was copying a cassette of "Miami Vice" music before I packed up the tape recorder. All of a sudden there was this tremendous barrage of gunfire down the hill in town. It was like ten AC-130s [heavily armed American transport aircraft] all cutting loose at the same time. I thought, "Wow, something is happening down there." Given the prolonged gunfire barrage, it was surprising to see the palace unmarred the next morning. That night or the next morning Manigat was put on the plane with his wife. Then again, we were in one of these dark periods. I spent my last days in Haiti mostly getting Manigat's advisors out of jail.

The situation was funny because, when the advisors were jailed, all of a sudden, numbers of U.S. senators and U.S. congressmen and human rights groups were outraged saying we had to get these people out of jail. Well, we got them out. It took four or five days. But all those same people calling for us to act had been criticizing us for dealing with this Manigat character before the coup. All of these people who all of a sudden were exercised had been nowhere to be found or were critical of us for dealing with Manigat during the prior period. I remember being struck by how all of a sudden it became such a human rights crusade to break these wonderful civilian presidential advisors out of jail when two weeks beforehand they had been part of an illegitimate regime. That's Haiti, then and now.

*Q: So, summer of 1988, whither?*

ROSSIN: Back to the States on home leave to decompress, I must say. Debbie and I were both exhausted. Living in Haiti was just constant tension. Most days you woke up and nothing happened. But you knew that one day you were going to wake up and all hell was going to break loose. You knew it was coming, but you never knew when. That was very stressful.

*Q: While we are still talking about Haiti, were there drugs in the hills?*

ROSSIN: There were drugs in the hills but it was an unusual environment to operate in, and drugs were not yet a major issue there—DEA [U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency] opened a small permanent presence only midway through my tour. Haiti is a medieval society in some ways. Drugs showed that—at one point, we learned that a drug plane had been detected and decided to drop bales of processed cocaine out the side. They landed in a village and the local people, not knowing better, used the cocaine to whitewash their houses.

Perhaps due to its historical heritage, voodoo and its superstitions—if you want to call them that—pervade the society and are real because everybody believes them. In 1987, when I came back from home leave, there was a lot of malaise in society. Even though we were moving towards the elections, there was a lot of malaise. You could tell because there were outbreaks of witchcraft. You would have situations where an old woman or an old man would be accused of having put the evil eye on a child that died, and then the witch would be chopped up and the pieces of the body thrown on the grave as the child was buried.

There were other things. When there were fender bender traffic accidents in Port-au-Prince, there would be unusual manifestations of people superstitious in their coloring. An incident took place involving a talking cow. Port-au-Prince is on hills like a bowl that goes around the bay. The southern suburb Carrefour goes for a long distance petering out toward the southern peninsula. At one point a peasant was leading a cow into Carrefour, to the abattoir. I found out about this because I went to a meeting with the education minister Desroches, and came out and suddenly there were huge riots going on, with burning tires and the like, and I had to drive through this back to the embassy. I did not know what was going on, and it turned out to be the talking cow. The cow started talking to people as it was being led into Carrefour, first about the weather and ordinary things, then about politics and General Namphy. Eventually the police came and arrested it and also the owner—but it was really the cow that was being arrested. It was taken to the main prison across from the palace and put in a cell. People got very upset because they wanted to hear more of what the cow had to say, and the next thing you know tires are burning and there are riots taking place. You tell me? How do you report this kind of stuff to Washington? You don't. You can't. You would be medevaced [medically evacuated]. But in Haiti this was real and somehow important.

*Q: I'm sure as a political officer you were well trained on talking cows.*

ROSSIN: I could have written a cable about the talking cow. I didn't do it. But it was a serious challenge actually, one that we never really did get a handle on. How do you describe the dynamic of this place?

*Q: I was wondering whether Dessalines and Toussaint L'Ouverture were a presence?*

ROSSIN: No. Francois Duvalier had invoked a lot of this history to give his black power regime legitimacy. They were pictured on the money for example. But it was not like in Turkey where you cannot walk three minutes without seeing a picture of Ataturk. They are a presence, particularly up in the north. It's also a historical presence in the Dominican Republic because they remember the invasions as though it were yesterday even though they occurred two hundred years ago.

*Q: What about ties with France? Were the French a presence?*

ROSSIN: The French were a presence, rather as though Haiti was an ex-colony in Africa. France was one of the countries that Haitians looked to. People went and studied there, the Haitian Communist Party had French ties and so forth. But Haiti is not like an ex-colony where you still had direct French influence. So, the French role was ambiguous, but still significant. They were one of the main international players in Haiti, along with us, the Canadians and the Venezuelans.

*Q: Why the Canadians?*

ROSSIN: Because there were so many Haitians in Canada. Canada and the United States are the main places to which Haitians emigrate. Plus the way Haitians are concentrated in certain Canadian electoral ridings tends to exaggerate their political impact in that system, as I learned when working on Haiti at the NSC in 1994. So, they have the same interests in Haiti that we do: migration, trying to make Haiti a little better place so the Haitians don't all feel like they have to go to Canada or the United States. It is a little funny but in the Haitian scheme of things, Canada operates like a local superpower. It has a lot of influence, and it invests political and financial capital in Haiti.

*Q: Did Aristide run across your radar?*

ROSSIN: Aristide did. He was not a major player, but he was a figure at the time. He had had his falling out already with the local hierarchy.

*Q: You are talking about the church hierarchy?*

ROSSIN: Yes, the church hierarchy, which was very conservative, very tied to Duvalier. We presumed the bishops would be a net contributor post-Duvalier. They were actually net problems because a) they were inextricably tied to the conservative pre-Namphy

period and not apologetic for it, and b) they were mostly interested in, and not happy about the missionaries, Mormons, and four hundred varieties of Protestants, who were extremely active and successful in Haiti. They didn't like that at all and they held that against us because the missionaries were mostly American.

I didn't meet Aristide at that period. He was not somebody I dealt with. But one of my political officers met him. Aristide was a very controversial figure. He had a large following among school students. At one point the church hierarchy decided that he should leave Haiti and go someplace else for reflection, I think to France. He didn't want to leave. He correctly perceived his dispatch abroad as being political rather than religious in nature. But he should have left. He gathered about a thousand students—these were secondary and primary students in his thrall—and they surrounded the school where he lived to block him from being evicted. Eventually he was removed from there and the situation was defused, but you had the feeling at the time that he was a Fagan-esque [literary reference to a Dickens novel] character. My political officer who went to see him said he had a mannequin of a stuffed Macoute in his office. I met Aristide later, when I was at the NSC.

*Q: The embassy didn't particularly deal with the church?*

ROSSIN: We did deal with the church to some extent, but it had limited value. I visited most of the bishops during the time I was there, when I traveled. But they were not people you could work with. We were trying to make Haiti move forward, through economic assistance and improving the lot of the poor through aid programs and so forth. You would presume that the bishops would be, not necessarily on your team, but at least moving in parallel toward such social goals. And it just was not so, not possible. They just were not interested in social matters. They were interested only in combating this Protestant missionary wave. That was their sole interest. That's what sticks in my mind.

*Q: Well then, you are back in Washington and what happens?*

ROSSIN: I went to California on home leave and then I went to Rome to the NATO [North American Treaty Organization] Defense College, which was senior training. I didn't go to Washington except in transit.

*Q: So, you would be there from 1988 to 1989?*

ROSSIN: The NATO Defense College was a six-month program. I was there in the second half of 1988 until February, 1989.

*Q: How did that work?*

ROSSIN: It was a training program, at the level of colonels, lieutenant colonels, brigadier generals, and civilian equivalents from the NATO countries. This was before the expansion of NATO. It was still the last days—although we didn't know that they were



the last days—of the cold war. It was in Rome, two courses per year, with a lot of travel around the NATO countries. We visited almost all the NATO countries during the program. It was a war college course, in essence.

*Q: How did you find this? You were on the brink of the earth changing.*

ROSSIN: That was not my interest. I wanted a tour in Europe. Genta Holmes, who was the DCM in Haiti, I went to her one day and said, “Ma’am, I’m going to quit the Foreign Service if I don’t get a nicer place. I keep seeing all these people in the department and *State Magazine*, all these people transferring from London to Paris and it’s my turn now.” She happened to know Roz Ridgway, who was the assistant secretary for Europe at the time. They were actually very close friends. And so, she called up Roz and said, “I’ve got this guy down here. He has done a very good job. He really deserves a good onward assignment.” And it clicked, because when I did my bidding, I bid on only political counselor jobs in Western Europe and I got them all. In fact, at one point I took The Hague because it looked most centrally located and the post report talked about all that good food. I had not been to any of these places. At one point they called me up and said, “Would you mind going to Stockholm? But you don’t have to do it. I said, “No, I’ll stay.” It was the most unusual experience.

Apart from everything else in Haiti, in May 1987 my wife was seriously injured when a sugar mill engineer fearful of losing his job should the finance minister’s plans to shut the mill come to pass jumped the wall at the building housing USIS [United States Information Service], where she compiled a radio monitoring summary, and tried to kidnap her. He failed, but she was stabbed and had a collapsed lung. She was medevaced to Miami for a month, returned to finish our tour, and was widely-praised for her fortitude. But that was an added trauma and it was our turn to have a nice posting.

*Q: Obviously Ridgway—*

ROSSIN: She had just given an instruction. It worked out well. And I had not heard of the NATO Defense College. But I was promoted to FS-01 [Foreign Service Grade One] in 1987, which triggered eligibility for senior training at war colleges and comparable courses. I had actually heard of this NATO Defense College possibility from another FS-01 level officer at post who was interested in going for it. Well, they only selected one person per year, and sadly enough they selected me rather than him. This was paired with a follow-on assignment in NATO Europe, so I had the six-month program and was also selected to be political counselor in The Hague. I needed to do Dutch language training and there was a six month gap between the NATO Defense College and when the political counselor job opened up, and I was able to persuade the department to let me do my Dutch training in the Netherlands rather than coming back to FSI [the Foreign Service Institute], which would have cost them a lot of money. So, I was in the NATO Defense College course until February of 1989. Then we moved to The Hague and lived in an embassy transit apartment while my wife and I went to Amsterdam to study Dutch. Then I took over the political counselor job in July 1989.

*Q: So, you were in The Hague from when to when?*

ROSSIN: We got there in February of 1989, did the language training for six months, and were there until the summer of 1992. A three-year tour.

*Q: What was the situation?*

ROSSIN: It was a wonderful place in every way. It was a great place to live. My son was born there. It was a great place to have a child, to raise a family.

*Q: Was this your first child?*

ROSSIN: My second child. My daughter was born before we went to Haiti. She was a toddler when we lived in Haiti. Funny enough, this summer [of 2005] she stayed with me in Kosovo for a while and we went to an anniversary celebration of the Guardia di Finanza in Rome. We were invited over there as guests of the president of Italy. They had a big military parade, including a historical re-enactment with period-costumed police firing muskets. Afterwards—my daughter wasn't sitting with me—I found Claire was really upset. It turned out she could not stand explosions and gunshots due to her memory of all the gunfire in Haiti when she was a toddler. Her earliest memory is of gunfire. See what happens when you are in the Foreign Service.

But anyway, The Hague was a good place to live. We lived in three places. First, we lived in an apartment in Scheveningen, which is the beach resort section of The Hague. Then we moved into an embassy house on a street called van Soutelandelaan, designed by the most renowned Dutch Bauhaus architect, Gerrit Rietveld. Then when our son was born, that house was deemed unsafe for a baby, so we moved into another house in the Wassenaar suburb that was wonderful. We were very happy there. My daughter went to the British school there, which was excellent.

Politically, the Netherlands was a really interesting place to work. The Dutch at the time were the little ally that could. They punched far above their weight diplomatically. They were active in many areas and well respected. They had the strongest political-foreign affairs leadership that they have ever had. Ruud Lubbers was the prime minister and Hans van den Broek was the foreign minister. The government was a grand coalition of the two main parties, the Christian Democrats and the Labour Party. The head of the Labour Party, who later became prime minister, was the finance minister, Wim Kok. We just had an excellent relationship with them. We had the Gulf War and they were one of the allies that really went far to engage.

I was Chargé d'Affaires a.i. [acting in place of the ambassador] in August 1989, when the Iraqis invaded Kuwait. American diplomats everywhere were running around trying to get, for example, Iraqi assets frozen, ships sent to the Persian Gulf and contributions of that nature. In the Dutch system, in August, everybody leaves the country on holiday

except one minister who stays in the Netherlands and is, in effect, the minister of everything. I believe this was the education minister that year. He wasn't in The Hague, but rather was camping in a wilderness area known as the Veluwe. He was out there at his folding aluminum camp table signing these orders to send ships to the Persian Gulf and freeze Iraqi assets. That was fun because I went over to the ministries and had to actually arrange these things. At one point, for example, the Dutch told me they needed a formal request in order legally to be able to freeze foreign assets. So, I went back to my office and wrote a formal letter of request, and that was good enough for them.

*Q: When you got there, who was the ambassador?*

ROSSIN: When I got there the ambassador was leaving. His name was John Shad. He had been the head of the Securities and Exchange Commission [SEC]. This was in the first Bush administration. And the next ambassador was Howard Wilkins, who had been finance committee chairman for several Midwest states for the Bush campaign. He was from Wichita, and had no foreign affairs expertise, but was a nice guy. He eventually endowed the Baker-Wilkins award for DCMs that is given annually. I haven't heard anything about him since he left The Hague. He was a big Pizza Hut franchisor in the Midwest, which is where he earned his money, and he bought the Pizza Hut franchise in the Netherlands when he left, around eight or ten restaurants. He actually went back to the Netherlands periodically, as I understand, and stayed there a lot. He was a widower with five adult children and one of his children remained to live there.

*Q: The Netherlands, for the most part, is a political plum for the ambassador. It's an important figure in NATO and the world.*

ROSSIN: Yes, but a second echelon ambassadorship.

*Q: As you said, it punches above its weight. How does this work? Was the ambassador useful? Was he bypassed?*

ROSSIN: The ambassador—and this was not unusual for such political appointees—was a smart man, but not particularly interested. What were our issues? We had the Gulf War, we had constant arms control issues—this was the time of the Conventional Forces in Europe talks, START [Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty], MBFR [Mutually Balanced Force Reductions], and others—we had the fall of the Soviet Union and the eastern bloc, and we had the war in Yugoslavia, in Croatia, and Slovenia and Bosnia. Those were the main issues. There were also trade issues and other matters. I'm not so familiar with those since I was the political counselor.

Howard Wilkins was a person you could brief up right beforehand and he could go over and make a very good demarche. You would always accompany him. If the discussion went beyond a certain point you would pick it up. That's a standard thing when you have a political appointee ambassador. The only problem with him was that he was a little bit racy in his private life. He used to go out with younger women—shall we say—and that

got into the Dutch press. And the Dutch can be very much a finger-wagging kind of people. The queen took a dislike to him. We had two visits by President Bush, one for the EU [European Union] presidency, the other just a bilateral visit. The second time, I was the overall control officer for setting up the visit. Queen Beatrix was holding a private dinner for the president and Mrs. Bush and she didn't want to invite the ambassador. She didn't like him. Eventually I contrived to sort this out and he was invited. But it was very uncomfortable. And it was because he had this somewhat racy private life and she did not approve. Neither, frankly, did many in the embassy community—

We had the kind of relationships there, and the Dutch operated so practically and openly, that we didn't need the ambassador to go and meet with key people. We needed him if you were going to meet with the prime minister or the foreign minister, but that was about it. I could go meet with the defense minister. I could go meet with the political director at the foreign ministry. I could meet with almost anybody, as could the DCM.

*Q: Who was the DCM?*

ROSSIN: The DCM was a guy named Tom Gewecke, who has long since retired.

*Q: What were the political problems in the Netherlands?*

ROSSIN: It was a good period. I was fortunate. My predecessor had had to handle a lot of unpleasantness about issues like Central America and the Pershing Missile deployment, which occurred in the Netherlands, among other countries, and was highly unpopular.

*Q: This was in response to the SS-20. The other one was—*

ROSSIN: There were an awful lot of “Dutch Sandalistas,” as we called them. The whole Reagan policy was very unpopular. It reached a peak and then it just ended. You know the whole business of the deployment of the cruise missiles in Germany, in the Netherlands, in the UK, was extremely controversial. But at the end of the day, it was a success. It worked. We did it. The opponents were deflated. Then, of course, Ronald Reagan won the cold war. And it turned out that the cruise missiles had a lot to do with winning the cold war. That really took the wind out of those critics. And by the time I arrived at The Hague, Central America was finished. You had the election in Nicaragua. The Sandinistas had grumpily left. Jimmy Carter was there. Who can argue with Jimmy Carter? So Central America was also pretty much defused by that time.

*Q: Did Panama come up?*

ROSSIN: Panama occurred while I was there. But it didn't generate any of the Central America reactions. Noriega put things in a different context, plus the whole tenor of the relationship and perceptions of the United States had evolved in the Netherlands. I am sure part of it was post-Reagan; he was “the cowboy” and not popular in Europe.

*Q: We had by the end of the Vietnam War an almost perpetual demonstration against our consulate general in Amsterdam. There was this movement in Holland that sort of enjoyed that we were the person to be demonstrated against.*

ROSSIN: There was no particular security around the embassy in The Hague—there was around the consulate general in Amsterdam. You know, setbacks and stuff. There were demonstrations every now and again there, but not perpetual demonstrations. Nothing took place at The Hague that I can remember.

*Q: What were the divisions in the body politic?*

ROSSIN: Modest. It's a country of consensus, and managed non-consensus. The government was an all-party government. The opposition parties—the Labour party and the Christian Democrats between them—had around 112 of the 150 seats in parliament. Obviously, of course, then, the political debates happened within the government coalition. For example, there was a constant and ultimately unresolved debate—not about the Gulf War *per se*—but about the deployment of ground forces to the Gulf. We had not asked for them but the Dutch themselves had this debate. You may recall that after a while, General Schwarzkopf asked not to receive more little field hospitals and small military units from countries that didn't speak any known language. They were politically advantageous as flags in the coalition forces, but too much effort to manage and integrate, and he said, "Enough."

The Dutch agonized over ground forces. The Labour party was dead set against the idea, whereas the Christian Democrats were basically for it. Popular opinion was more against than for the idea, although if it had been tested, I think it would have flown. But other than that, the Dutch were mostly favorable about engagement in the Gulf War effort. Political divisions were over domestic issues such as wage policy.

*Q: There was no carried-over problem from the divisions in Belgium?*

ROSSIN: No. Those were not issues in the Netherlands. Those are Belgian issues reflecting the demographic makeup of that country, whereas the Netherlands is homogenous. The old issue for the Netherlands was religious divisions, but over the years they came up with structures to channel those tensions. This has faded over the years, but it used to be that each religion, the Protestants, the Catholics, each had their own TV station and all sorts of social structures. The religious parties used to be much larger. These days they are at the margins.

*Q: Was there any spillover from Germany?*

ROSSIN: No. The Dutch are ambivalent about the Germans. Scheveningen is a beach resort for a lot of Germans. Local people will say, "Where's my father's bicycle?" and that sort of thing, recalling the Nazi occupation. They complain that Germans have a

tendency to dig a hole on the windy beaches there and lay claim to it for their full week. But on the levels that count the Dutch and Germans work well together and are reconciled.

*Q: How did the events of October, November, December 1989—just after you arrived—in Germany and Czechoslovakia play? Did things change?*

ROSSIN: It is hard to say. Certainly, socially there was great interest. Everybody was glued to their TV set. We received German TV on the Dutch cable system, so everybody was watching the fall of the wall. I remember when the first West German TV team went to visit Karl-Marx-Stadt on the Oder River, reporting on unimaginable industrial pollution wastelands in East Germany. But the Netherlands is a little bit far away geographically. They weren't particularly affected by these changes. I only remember dealing with it in a political, diplomatic sense, for example when the Netherlands decided to recognize the Central Asia-stans and Ukraine and the other former Soviet republics.

*Q: I was just wondering if there was any disquiet at seeing a united Germany? They have had some problems in the past.*

ROSSIN: Occasionally you would see some press commentary, but not much. I think the Dutch had worked through their Germany issues at an earlier stage in 1966, when Princess Beatrix had married Prince Claus, who was German, and who actually had served in the German army in World War II. There were a lot of demonstrations, with tear gas and everything. It was extremely controversial. You still had the "where is my father's bicycle" remarks, but I think this affair had been cathartic for the Dutch.

*Q: When you say, "Where's my bicycle?"*

ROSSIN: When the Nazis were in the Netherlands they confiscated all the bicycles. And that was the main means of transportation, and still is; the Netherlands is bike paradise. But it was down to that level. So, the idea of Germany reuniting, a resurgent Germany, you didn't hear too much about it.

*Q: What about the immigrant community? You had a large one from Indonesia. Was this a factor at the time? It has now become a major concern because of Muslim terrorists.*

ROSSIN: Yeah, but that's not Indonesians, though. The Indonesian community—if you want to call it that—is not much of a community. These were people who had come in the late 1940s, early 1950s when the Dutch time in Indonesia ended. They were people who were basically somehow associated with the Dutch colonial administration. Those people were totally integrated and Dutch. Indonesian food is Dutch national food. That's how integrated it is. The immigrant community that was most prominent when I was there—now there was this Moroccan subgroup they periodically had problems with, but did not happen when I was there—was the Surinamese community. When Suriname became independent in 1975, Surinamese were given like four or six months to choose



whether they wanted to be Dutch citizens or Surinamese citizens. They could have a choice. And about half of them became Dutch citizens. And about four hundred thousand of them basically moved to the Netherlands. They were sort of a lower class, but not particularly troublesome, minority. You had some social problems with young Surinamese in Amsterdam and other places, but they didn't cause a huge number of social problems. We followed Surinamese politics from the Netherlands, which are always interesting. Suriname I won't talk about, but we used to follow it because it would flow over into the Netherlands, and Surinamese leaders would show up in the Netherlands. I happened to find Suriname extremely interesting because I had also followed it when I was working on Grenada and when I was working in Washington.

ROSSIN: Yes, immigrants were an issue, but not Indonesians. The Indonesian community—if you want to call it that—is not much of a community at all. These were people who had come in the late 1940s, early 1950s when the Dutch rule in Indonesia ended. They were people who were somehow associated with the Dutch colonial system. Those people are by now totally integrated and Dutch. Indonesian food is the Dutch national food. That's how integrated it is. There was a Moroccan immigrant subgroup that periodically gave rise to urban social problems, but the immigrant community that was most prominent when I was there was the Surinamese community. When Suriname became independent in 1975, Surinamese were given several months to choose whether they wanted to be Dutch or Surinamese citizens. They had a free choice, and about half of them chose Dutch citizenship. About four hundred thousand of them moved to the Netherlands. The Surinamese were a rather lower class, but not particularly troublesome, minority. There were some social problems with young Surinamese in Amsterdam and other places, but not a lot. We followed Surinamese politics from the Netherlands, which were always interesting. Suriname I won't talk about now, but we used to follow it because it would flow over into the Netherlands and Surinamese leaders would show up in the Netherlands. I happened to find Suriname extremely interesting because I had also followed it when I was working on Grenada and when I was working in Washington.

*Q: Was it British Guiana?*

ROSSIN: No, that's Guyana.

*Q: Cheddi Jagan was out of the picture by that time.*

ROSSIN: Actually, he was still in the picture. He came back as prime minister. And his wife Janet later became prime minister as well. But Guyana was British Guiana, and what I am discussing is Suriname, or Dutch Guiana, a completely different society. Anyways, we followed Surinamese politics and one of my political officers spent a lot of time doing that. It was a lot of fun.

The Moroccan and Turkish communities were not political issues, if I can put it that way, during the time I was there. They were definitely the non-integrated lower-class immigrant communities living in Rotterdam, The Hague, and Amsterdam, but the things

that have happened since then—the murder of Theo van Gogh, the whole business with Pim Fortuyn, all this anti-immigrant hostility, none of that was significant politically when I was there. There was no right-wing anti-immigrant movement going on at the time. It was just not a factor.

*Q: Looking back on it, were some of the seeds planted?*

ROSSIN: Certainly, the seeds were there. The number that sticks in my mind is three hundred thousand Moroccans in the Netherlands at that period. This is in a country of fourteen million people. So, I presume the seed was planted because they certainly were not integrating into Dutch society. Dutch society was seeking to accommodate them with social programs in the schools and the like. But they were not integrating in the way that the Indonesians, or even the Surinamese, had done. They weren't Dutch and they mostly did not expect or want to be. I presume that at that time you already had some of the mosques being set up, but it was something that was totally off the radar screen at that time. It is sad to see how this has now deformed Dutch politics and society.

*Q: Well, we talked about the fall of the wall and the Gulf War. Was there anything else?*

ROSSIN: The issue of the most interest in terms of our relationship with the Netherlands was the Gulf War. As I described, the Dutch were the little ally that could. At one point, van den Broek visited Washington and was unexpectedly invited to the White House. President Bush had a press conference and held van den Broek up as the model small ally. This was great for us—we were all happy about this and the embassy and we on the staff were getting a lot of reflected credit.

At one point the U.S. military was combing around for supplies for the imminent war. One of the things that they came to some embassies in Europe for was to buy back 155-millimeter shells from various countries in Europe, because the U.S. stockpile was not high enough. We got instructions to go ask the Dutch if we could buy about a hundred million dollars worth of their 155-millimeter shells. The U.S. Embassy in Brussels received a similar instruction but the Belgians, whose attitude was very different from the Dutch, refused on some principle to sell their shells to the United States. Our political-military officer was Charlie Peacock and he said, "Why don't we just ask the Dutch to *give* the shells to us for free?" That was not our instruction, but we thought it was a good idea. Why should we spend a hundred million dollars if we did not need to? So, we went over and the Dutch said, We'll give them to you. That was nice. It made a good cable back to Washington. We had a lot of that experience with the Dutch during the Gulf War.

The ground troop issue was a big controversy in the Netherlands, and it attracted a little criticism in Washington, but really only among those who were interested in the Netherlands. Otherwise, Schwarzkopf really didn't want them.

*ROSSIN: The Germans were going through the same problem.*

ROSSIN: The Germans, if I remember, came out somewhere between the Dutch and the Belgians.

There was another issue. You remember that during the whole period of NATO—when it was NATO against the Iron Curtain—there was an annual exercise called the REFORGER [“Reinforce Germany”], which involved shipping an enormous amount of war material into Germany to reinforce the front.

*Q: To practice what we would do if the Soviets invaded.*

ROSSIN: Yes, precisely—REFORGER stood for “Reinforce Germany.” Well, as it happened most of the REFORGER materiel passed through Dutch ports, particularly Rotterdam and the Ems harbor ports. Emden is a German city but the port is actually in the Netherlands as well as Germany and it is one of the other major railheads. At the time of Desert Shield, in the leadup to Desert Storm, there occurred what we called “Deforger,” which was masses of military equipment being sent out of Germany around to Saudi Arabia. Every night, from around eleven pm to five am, the U.S. military took over the Dutch rail network shipping war materiel to Rotterdam and the Emden ports for onward shipment. This was another area where the Dutch provided significant assistance.

The other issue that was of major interest was the conflict in Yugoslavia.

*Q: Well let's talk about this? Wasn't it the Dutch foreign minister or prime minister who said, “This is a European problem?”*

ROSSIN: Probably foreign minister van den Broek. Luxembourg had the EU presidency for the first half of 1991 and that was when the first events of the Yugoslav conflict broke out, in Slovenia. The Dutch assumed the EU presidency, and we assumed the role of liaison to the Dutch EU presidency, on July 1, 1991. July 1 was just about when the war started in Croatia. So, the Dutch—and we were the U.S. interface with them—were the lead for the European Union in dealing with the development of the civil war in Yugoslavia—in Croatia primarily—during the second half of 1991. This is when the EU Monitoring Mission was set up, van den Broek traveled down there, and there were almost weekly conferences for about three months in The Hague, when Lord Carrington was the EU envoy trying to deal with this conflict. It was very interesting for us because every week we had Milosević, Tudjman, Izetbegović, Gligorov and all the rest of the Yugoslav republic leaders coming to The Hague.

*Q: Did you find you were taking a quick course in Balkan politics?*

ROSSIN: Very quick.

*Q: I spent five years in Yugoslavia and it is basically a history lesson.*

ROSSIN: It is. And I've continued to learn that history ever since. This was when Warren Zimmerman was the U.S. Ambassador in Belgrade and Yugoslavia was breaking up. I remember well the first time I realized that there was something going on in Yugoslavia. There was a journalist for *The Economist* that used to write about Yugoslavia, Chris Cviic, and he was very, very good. The first article I read by him was when I was in Haiti. Already in 1988 it was starting. You had the preliminary signs with the death of Tito and Milosevic going to Kosovo. And then Cviic spoke at the NATO Defense College, talking about trouble coming down the line there that we all ought to be watching for. And sure enough it did.

We interacted constantly with the Dutch on Yugoslavia. They were the primary point of contact for the United States with the Europeans on the war, and the Europeans were in the lead. Lord Carrington's conferences would take place every week in The Hague and I would receive a debrief from Carrington or meet with the different leaders. We were doing a lot of reporting on it. It was also interesting to watch the process within the European Union and to try to influence it, although the Dutch were on our side in resisting recognition of the republics, but were swamped by Hans-Dietrich Genscher, the German foreign minister at the time, who was pressing to do so. The reason we and the Dutch and others resisted recognition was not because of Croatia, where the war was going on, not because of Slovenia or Macedonia. It was concern about sparking conflict in fragile Bosnia, because Bosnia during this six-month period, the second half of 1991, actually was not in conflict, but the potential was obvious.

By December Vukovar had already happened and you had reached a stalemate with the Krajina occupied by the Serbs. Slovenia was finished, obviously. Macedonia was not going to become a conflict. Bosnia was there, everybody presumed that it would be the witches' brew.

*Q: As an old Yugoslav hand, when Germany recognized Croatia—*

ROSSIN: And then it had to recognize all the other places.

*Q: Then you had almost immediately The Vatican recognize Croatia. I mean, I could not have thought of a worse thing for the Serbs, who—as you know—are paranoid anyways. This confirmed that you can be paranoid and still have enemies.*

ROSSIN: Well, a) that, and b) one of the things that was said was that the fall of the iron curtain revitalized all of the ethnic conflicts within Eastern Europe. But funny enough, it also revitalized old ethnic linkages between Western Europe and the east. The French-Serbian relationship, for example. What is that? It's First World War era. It was amazing. It was also terrible. In November there was an informal ministerial—these so-called "Gymnich" ministerials happened in every EU presidency, and supposedly were the foreign ministers getting together to brainstorm without an agenda, but they always ended up dealing with the issue of the day. This "Gymnich" ministerial was held at a castle in the Netherlands. Genscher was in a rush to be the first one to get to the press to

talk about the recognition issue, on which he had steamrolled the rest of the EU, most of whom really opposed this recognition due to proper concerns about Bosnia. Genscher actually commandeered van den Broek's car to get to the press center, which was not at the palace but another location. And van den Broek came out and said, "Where's my car?" There was really very bad blood between the Dutch and the Germans during that period.

*Q: While you were there, were we playing very much sort of the Jim Baker, "We don't have a dog in that fight"?*

ROSSIN: Yes. Actually, it was the Larry Eagleburger, "We don't have a dog in that fight" stance, as far as I could tell. The Dutch kept coming to us, saying that they were trying to manage the situation, and asking what the United States wanted them to do. They were coming to us in the embassy saying, Can you find out what Washington would like us to do in such a situation? We would appreciate some advice and would like to do what you think would be best. But we could never get an answer from Washington. We really pressed on this and finally we were told, "We don't want to give an answer. The guidance we have is that we are not going to engage on this." That was pretty disheartening, because how often is it when your hosts come in and say they will do what we want them to do?

*Q: Did you feel that we were thinking we could let this one pass? Was there a European feeling that they could handle this?*

ROSSIN: Well, the situation was not fully developed at this time, remember. The war in Bosnia had not begun. I did not have the sense of Europeans saying, "We can handle this and we don't want the Americans involved." Rather, it was two things: 1) Eagleburger, who had served in Yugoslavia a couple of times, just did not think it was a place the United States should or could be usefully engaged in. We disagreed. We thought that one sortie by fighter bombers over Vukovar or Vinkovci would have stopped the whole damn thing in its tracks. And I still believe that.

*Q: Warren Zimmerman.*

ROSSIN: He probably would argue the same thing. To me it was an abdication of responsibility. But the other thing was, I think there was a considerable degree of attitude in Washington about the EU, along the lines of "These Europeans keep talking the talk, now let's see them walk the walk" kind of thing. That was unfortunate because a lot of people paid for that with their lives, in my opinion.

*Q: It was almost petulant.*

ROSSIN: Absolutely. What's the phone number to call anyway in Europe? Well, we actually had the phone number. I don't know whether the Dutch could always have delivered the EU on everything. But the EU was fumbling around, and if somebody had

come in with a clear idea and said, “By the way, the Americans would back this one,” it probably would have had a big impact.

Look at the arms policy on Bosnia, where we wouldn’t give arms to anybody. We had a total embargo, which equated to giving all advantage to the Serbs. Of course, then the Bosnians started getting arms from the Iranians and so forth. But that arms embargo policy continued. The Clinton administration initially just didn’t want to step up to this problem. They thought they didn’t need to step up to it, that they could somehow let the Europeans solve it. That however was different from the Bush administration, which had that petulant attitude of “Okay, you Europeans have been talking about how you can do these things, okay, you go for it.”

*Q: Yes, and unfortunately, these things tend to spread if you don’t do something.*

ROSSIN: Yes. When I worked later on Haiti in the NSC and Kosovo at State, one of the things that Clinton pointed out regarding Haiti, and also Kosovo, was that the American people do not respond—now maybe it’s a little different since 9/11 with terrorism—but they don’t respond to geopolitical arguments. You know, arguments that Kosovo is the linchpin of the Balkans and so forth. Americans aren’t going to react to that. What they do react to is sixteen-year-old girls getting shot in Sarajevo, or hundreds of thousands of refugees being expelled from Kosovo, or people being massacred in Haiti. That is what the American people respond to. On both Kosovo and Haiti, you could never persuade them that the United States should intervene on the basis of anything other than the humanitarian argument. And Clinton overrode everyone else on Kosovo in 1999 and said, “Make the humanitarian argument.” He was right.

*Q: Where we are having the problem in Iraq, I think, where at one point there was a humanitarian argument, that Saddam was so awful. Then it was floated that this would serve as a beacon for the other countries. And that just didn’t go anywhere.*

ROSSIN: All that succession of arguments is gone, most of them proving to be fallacious. It’s hard to make the humanitarian argument when people really don’t want you there. It is easy to make the humanitarian argument when you are received as liberators and saviors, the rescue mission in Grenada and that kind of reaction. In Iraq there was a delusion that the same thing would happen and we would be driving on the road to Baghdad with people waving American flags. My own personal belief from working on Iraq is that some of the people who pursued that adventure did it primarily for humanitarian reasons, but it was a huge mistake and abuse. They let the Iraqi exiles wag the American dog.

*Q: Where did the Yugoslav issue stand when you left there?*

ROSSIN: Well, the Dutch EU presidency ended on December 31, 1991 at midnight. It was taken over by Portugal. When a country is the EU presidency, it is the presidency, and everything goes there. When it is not, it is not. So, at 12:01 am on January 1, 1992,



the phones stopped ringing for me and started ringing somewhere else. I got my first phone call from the Dutch EU Presidency at 12:05 a.m. on the first of July 1991—about Slovenia at that point—and it ended on December 31 as abruptly as it began.

The last issue that came up, because there was this stasis in Yugoslavia by the end of the year, was the recognition of the “-stans,” the successor states of the former Soviet Union. Everybody did that. That’s where James Baker was hanging back. He did not want to have recognition of the republics as independent countries. But when the Europeans did so, so did the United States at the end of 1991.

*Q: You are talking about?*

ROSSIN: Kazakhstan, Ukraine, all of the “-stans.” The Europeans decided to move forward and recognize all of these entities. Baker was unhappy about that. He did not believe geopolitically that the breakup of the Soviet Union was a good event. One can argue about that. Historically, I would argue differently.

*Q: But also, once it was done, there it was.*

ROSSIN: Precisely, and I think that the feeling of the Europeans was that it was done. And my feeling from looking at it from where I sat was that it was done. I think maybe in Washington they still nursed some thought that maybe this process would either reverse on its own or the Soviet Union could be put back together. And maybe that could have occurred if it hadn’t been for the internal politics of Russia itself. Who knows? But of course, you had all these republics with these party leaders who saw money, or saw glory, or just fell apart and nobody could make a decision if they wanted to.

*Q: And also, within American politics we tend to like the devil we know. This is true in Yugoslavia. We were hanging on to it altogether too long after it—*

ROSSIN: Yes, I agree, there was a failure to recognize that as soon as Milosevic took over it was not the same Yugoslavia anyway, because Milosevic was fundamentally a different breed from Tito.

*Q: By the way, the International Court was not much of a thing when you were there?*

ROSSIN: It was not formed when I was there. It was formed in 1993.

*Q: I just wanted to emphasize that with the European Union, when you are the embassy of the country that has the presidency, all of a sudden, your work goes way up. All of a sudden you are the point person.*

ROSSIN: And more so at that time than now, because since the treaties of Maastricht and Nice in the later 1990s, the evolution has been to move some functions from the presidency countries to Brussels. There is now more centralization of the political

functions in Brussels than there was at that time. At that time, nearly everything was done in the presidency country. There were enormous numbers of meetings in the presidency countries. I arrived as DCM in Spain in 1995 just as it started an EU presidency and it was still pretty much the same thing as when I was in The Hague. A lot of the committees that used to meet in the presidency country now meet in Brussels. So, a presidency is not quite what it was, but it is still a big deal.

*Q: Did you get any feel for the European Parliament?*

ROSSIN: No. At that time the European Parliament was pretty much of a joke, including within the EU. Within the treaty and constitutional set up that prevailed in the EU at that time, the parliament was almost exclusively a debating shop. It could pass “Sense of Congress” type resolutions, but it did not have the role that it does now of actually confirming the nominations of commissioners and controlling the budget and the assistance budget. None of those things were the case at the time. European parliament elections tended to be jokes. In countries that register 87 percent turnout for national elections, turnout for European Parliament elections would be 30 percent, and the candidates would be either definitively has-been politicians or fringe figures.

*Q: It's something where they got a lot of perks.*

ROSSIN: They got some perks. They got to be a member of the European Parliament. But it was something that was really, really derisory. It was not well respected or well regarded. It's still not in many ways, but it has actual functions now.

*Q: Okay, after this, where did you go?*

ROSSIN: After I was in the Netherlands I returned to Washington and I became the director of a new office. After my initial bids for ARA [State Department Bureau of Inter-American Affairs] deputy office director jobs did not pan out, I decided to do an excursion tour in the management area and I was selected as the director of the Office of Chief of Mission Authority and Overseas Staffing in the Bureau of Finance and Management Policy. And I was a fish out of water.

*Q: Okay, we'll talk about that. How long were you fishing out of water?*

ROSSIN: About ten months. We handled the NSDD [National Security Decision Directive] -38 process, which is the letter of authority for chiefs of mission giving authority over, mainly, staffing levels of all U.S. government agencies. This was the time of the change of presidential administration with Clinton coming in, so that letter had to be rewritten. It was a miscellaneous kind of office. First of all, the Finance and Management Policy bureau was 98 percent finance and 2 percent management policy. Roger Gamble was the principal deputy assistant secretary, a former DCM in Mexico, and he was trying to build up the management policy part. This was the period of mission program plans in their earlier stages. We handled the special embassy program, which

was an effort to keep embassies in small countries, especially in places like the former Soviet Union, small. There were various staffing databases we managed. It was a very miscellaneous kind of job. I took it, frankly, because I didn't get the other assignments that I had bid on. And by the time I realized that was the case, I was rummaging around for what was left. If I had held off accepting the FMP [Bureau of Finance and Management Policy] job six hours longer, I would have become the director of EUR/ERA [State Department Bureau of European Affairs Office of European Union and Regional Affairs] and been in charge of all European Union affairs at the State Department, but when I got that call I couldn't accept that offer because I had already committed to the FMP position and could not ethically back out. So anyway, I did it and it was not my favorite job in the State Department.

*Q: Did you get at all involved in trying to keep embassies from being overstaffed?*

ROSSIN: Theoretically, that was part of our mission. One of the key functions of a chief of mission, according to the authority conferred by the president under NSDD-38, is to approve, theoretically as the first and last word on it, all changes in staffing, additional staffing and even reductions in staffing. But in reality, we found—others already knew and I found out—that this system did not work at all. There was a fundamental imbalance when there was a disagreement between the ambassador and almost any other department of the government, if they decided that they wanted to add somebody or otherwise change their staffing, and the ambassador said “no.” The ambassador's recourse in case of disagreement was to the secretary of state who never, ever wanted to hear about this stuff or took any interest in it, whereas the head of the defense attaché office or other agency at post had no difficulty whatsoever working it straight up his or her chain to the secretary of defense or whoever was the agency head in Washington. The other agency heads would go to bat for their representatives in the field every time, the secretary of state never, and so the process did not work. This happens regularly, although with less and less frequency now because ambassadors realize that it is a losing battle. It's a big failing of the State Department, since management of people is a key function. The State Department complains that embassies have become platforms for all the other agencies, which, by the way, carry out real functions. But the leadership of the State Department does absolutely nothing to manage that issue.

*Q: Did you find you had any impact or anything there?*

ROSSIN: I didn't. Not to be modest or anything, but no.

*Q: So, this would be about 1993?*

ROSSIN: I arrived there in August of 1992 and was there until June of 1993. Then I got out.

*Q: Where did you go?*

ROSSIN: To the NSC staff. At the time I left the Netherlands, I had been approached by Tony Gillespie, who was then the NSC senior director for Latin America. He said he would be interested in hiring me, but he couldn't make any firm offer because the election was nearing and these jobs are totally dependent on the administration in office. And in the event, there was a change of administration. So Tony was replaced by a man named Richard Feinberg as the Inter-American Affairs senior director, and then to replace the person who was leaving that Tony had contacted me to possibly succeed, Richard instead happily hired one of my closest friends in the Foreign Service, Barbro Owens-Kirkpatrick. Then when the other director job came open, she suggested to Feinberg that he interview me, and I was hired, so that was my salvation from FMP.

*Q: So, this was with the NSC and you had it from when to when?*

ROSSIN: I had it from June 1993 until December 1994 for eighteen months.

*Q: When you got there in June of 1993, the Clinton administration really had not yet caught up to speed, had they?*

ROSSIN: They were new.

*Q: What did you find when you got to the NSC?*

ROSSIN: Well, I was new to it. It was interesting because, unlike at the State Department, when an administration changes all the NSC files go away, eventually to the presidential library. So, our office had four or five five-drawer safes, and about a quarter of a drawer of actual files. Everything else was gone. There was no corporate memory. It was a small office, only three of us. Feinberg was the senior director, then Barbro and myself. Feinberg did big things like the "Summit of the Americas," an idea he originated and pushed. He had come from private advocacy, heading the Overseas Development Council. Barbro and I split up the hemisphere. I took on the Caribbean and Central America and she did South America and Mexico. And we just started in on it. Haiti was the big problem in the directorate, because during Clinton's election campaign he had made commitments about restoring deposed President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to power. But there were other issues besides Haiti in my area. As I arrived the current issue was the *auto-golpe* (self-coup) that had taken place in Guatemala, in which President Serrano had, so to speak, staged a coup against himself, i.e. gotten rid of the congress and constitutional structures. But Haiti was the overriding issue during my time there.

The NSC as a whole was run inefficiently at that time. Sandy Berger, the deputy national security advisor, was an extremely hard-working individual, extremely intense, extremely dedicated, but he was really overdoing it and working very hard. I feared he was going to have a heart attack; he looked like he would. By the time I left, Sandy had found his feet a lot better and had a better work rhythm.

*Q: How about Tony Lake?*

ROSSIN: Tony was the national security advisor, and was a completely different person than Sandy. I also have a very high regard for him. He is very laconic and not one who confides, or has confidence in, a large circle of people. I found him pleasant to deal with on Haiti and we actually did develop a very good relationship. Somehow, I think I knew how to read his mind, because he would take a ten-page paper, make a check mark in the margin, and that indicated somehow that you were supposed to rewrite the paper. And I was able to do that in the way he wanted. Tony was quite different from Sandy in this regard; Sandy was very detailed and meticulous in letting you know when he wanted something different.

Tony to me was a very strong leader. He was very capable of taking charge of the interagency process and working for the president and working for the national interest. He did this on Haiti, which fell apart in an interagency sense. I think he also did that on Bosnia. I think he was actually the one who took hold of things after the market bombing in Sarajevo and started the process that became the Dayton process. He had a way of doing that.

*Q: When you got there, did you feel that President Clinton was much involved in issues that you were involved in?*

ROSSIN: I know he was involved in Haiti, although in my early stage there I didn't have much interaction with him at all. That came later on. At the end, I was having a lot of interaction with him. I had the feeling he was somewhat engaged in Haiti at the time I arrived, but maybe not to the degree needed to fulfill his policy commitments from the campaign, where he perhaps had gone too far in a number of different ways. First of all, at one level the pressure for the return of Aristide was being driven too much by the Congressional Black Caucus, but also by the Kennedys, particularly Congressman Joseph Kennedy and one of the Kennedy sisters. They were very tied up with Aristide, who was in exile at that time in the United States. Aristide had presided at the wedding of Joseph Kennedy and Beth Kelly in 1993. The Black Caucus was very involved in this and of course, the president had a lot of political equities with the Black Caucus. My impression was that they were guiding the policy on one level in a way that wasn't really enhancing the president's standing, because he was taking a lot of criticism for getting nowhere on carrying through on his promises.

And on another level, his special envoy, Larry Pezzulo, who had been the ambassador in Nicaragua during the Carter administration and who was dumped by the Reagan administration, was supposed to be negotiating the departure of the military regime and the return of Aristide to power. That was his mandate from the president. And he wasn't negotiating toward that end; rather he was negotiating toward some kind of complicated parliamentary solution that, as I finally analyzed it, didn't necessarily include a role for Aristide at all. Getting Aristide back and getting rid of the military regime was what it was all about. And it wasn't clear to me that either of those things was completely part of what Pezzulo was doing.

*Q: You had been away from Haiti for a while. What had happened that caused Haiti to be on our agenda?*

ROSSIN: Aristide had been elected president in 1990 by a landslide. The peculiarity of Haitian politics by that time was that if Aristide was on the ballot, everybody would go out and vote for him, but if he was not on the ballot, nobody would go out and vote at all. All the rest of the Haitian politicians were nobodies in the Haitian popular perception, and there were plenty of them. And so, the message of democracy was clear. It was much clearer than it would be even if you had a landslide against somebody else, because the reality was that most Haitian just wouldn't vote at all if Aristide was not on the ballot.

So, he was elected in 1990. Former President Carter observed the election. It was free and fair and in fact General Raoul Cédras, who later was the military ruler that we got rid of, was the army officer in charge of security for the election. Carter took a shine to Cédras at that time because Cédras made such a contribution to election security. Aristide, after he became president, demonstrated that he was not a stable nor an honest individual. He is no longer a priest at all, actually. He started agitating crowds against his political enemies, as indeed he did the second time he was president, after we got him back in. He was making speeches about necklacing people and the like.

He was finally overthrown by the military in 1991. This was during the Bush administration, which, rather ineffectively opposed the coup, but not with much vigor. So, when Clinton came into office this became a political issue with the Black Caucus pushing it, Haitian-Americans, the Kennedy family and some other liberal democrats, and a certain sort of Hollywood crowd. Aristide had this sort of Gandhi-esque appeal. Whenever you meet a Gandhi-esque character you should always put your hand on your wallet. So, Clinton made it a campaign issue. When he got into office, he was going to restore democracy in Haiti. He was going to get Aristide back into power there and get rid of the military regime. He also made a commitment to stop returning boat people since some might be victims of the military regime, a commitment he in fact reneged on after he came into office and realized what stopping returns implied. But then the president felt all the more the commitment to get Aristide back and restore democracy, so that returns of migrants could be carried out in good faith. The myth had arisen, which was maybe 95 percent myth and 5 percent reality, that it was because of the military dictatorship after Aristide's overthrow that you had boat people. For a change, there were indeed a few politically- and human rights-motivated individuals among the boat people. But the vast majority were still economic migrants. This was the dynamic that had developed.

Negotiations between Aristide and military representatives took place in July 1993, shortly after my arrival at the NSC, that culminated at the end of the month in the so-called Governor's Island Accord. This was part of this complicated parliamentary process that Pezzullo was pushing. I was not involved in this process personally but I will say it made no sense to me watching it unfold. It would have restored Aristide to office in



October 1993, via a complex set of interim legal steps, but the accord was never implemented. Part of the accord called for the United States to deploy to Haiti around 250 military engineers for reconstruction. None of us who were not directly involved in Pezzullo's process could ever figure out what that was supposed to achieve. What happened, in the end, was when the U.S. naval vessel carrying the engineers was approaching the dock at Port-au-Prince, a group of right-wing thug military regime supporters called the Revolutionary Front for Patriotic Haitians or some such—FRAPH was the acronym—demonstrated on the dock and the ship couldn't land. It couldn't land because it wasn't carrying any U.S. military units to land successfully if there was any opposition at all. There was the DCM of the embassy, Vicki Huddleston, at the dock, telling all these FRAPH characters to get out of her way—she was courageous and tough—and the navy ship could not and did not dock. So, it turned away and sailed away. This was the famous “Harlan County” episode, so-called after the name of the U.S. Navy ship. This was a low point; you could put it that way. The Harlan County episode was a major contributing factor to the departure of Les Aspin as secretary of defense; he had mismanaged this whole affair terribly within the internal policy debates and then on the day when he ordered the ship to depart.

*Q: When you got there, what was the feeling you were getting from people and that you developed yourself about Aristide?*

ROSSIN: It was funny because it defined itself. My going-in viewpoint of Aristide was that he was mentally unstable, dangerously mentally unstable. I think he is dangerously mentally unstable, but he was not as dangerously mentally unstable as he was painted at that time. A lot of reporting had been done on him to indicate that he was taking various medications to control his psychological problems and that he was seriously mentally ill. This came to a head in fall 1993 when the national intelligence officer for Latin America, Brian Latell, went up and briefed on this with Senator Helms, who of course was no friend of the president and no friend of the president's policy. Latell himself was a holdover from the Bush administration and not a supporter of Clinton's policy on Haiti. And this immediately came out. And I got a call from Sandy Berger at about 7:30 that evening, just as I was closing up my office. Sandy told me about Latell's briefing and charged me to immediately figure out two things—what was really the situation concerning Aristide, and what to say about it.

I spent the whole night digging out stuff from the agency [Central Intelligence Agency] and from State trying to determine whether the reports on Aristide were well-founded. I obtained a succession of intelligence assessments that had been done on Aristide and his mental state over time, then looked at original reporting, talked to people that were involved with these events, including the doctor that had done the report, and came to the conclusion that what had started out as being badly sourced reporting from a certain Haitian medical doctor who I knew had direct connections to the military claiming that medications had been found in his cabinet and that he had this whole history, had evolved into “fact” as qualifiers and caveats disappeared from successive analytical reports. You had a first report saying, “One source said,” the next says “sources,” and by the time you

reach the end, there is no source info or caveat at all, just an assertion of fact that Aristide is certifiably mentally unstable. But the research indicated this was not in fact the case. I was able to go in the next morning and have documentation and describe this all to Sandy. Latell and one of the other senior people at the agency were called over by Nancy Sodeberg, who was the number three person at the NSC at the time, and basically had their heads ripped off. I sat there with them and they said, This is the case. And I said, "Look at this error, look at that lack of caveat," and they actually didn't know any of it. Aristide's certifiable mental illness was received wisdom that was untrue and inaccurate. This was all quite interesting. It was an exercise that, among other things, built my own credibility with the leadership at the NSC, to whom I was an unknown to that point.

*Q: Where did you come out? Did you see at any time that there was a real problem with him?*

ROSSIN: There clearly was a problem with Aristide, but the problem was not nearly as systemic or congenital, or necessarily unmanageable, as it had been painted by the analysts and the previous administration. The Bush administration had decided to cut him off in large part due to this analysis. President Clinton had made a different sort of commitment. We decided that this needed to be worked just like any other issue, and to try to work Aristide like any other issue. Part of the problem that we had is that the United States is not used to hosting exiles and as a consequence we don't know how to handle them, as the French or others do. They just send people around to remind the exiles that they could always be sent back home if they did not restrict their commentary to the weather. We don't know how to do that and Aristide was in Washington as the tail wagging the president's dog.

*Q: You had the Washington glitterati? The ex-Sandinistas?*

ROSSIN: No. These were Hollywood types. They flowed from the Kennedys and from the Black Caucus and from Clinton's own associations. It was funny because all these Hollywood types, I had no idea who they were. I watch movies and other entertainment media but just that. I'm not interested in stars or directors or celebrities. Plus, I was overseas so much that I missed many Hollywood movies. So, there was the director of *The Silence of the Lambs*, Jonathan Demme, and there were some others. My wife knew who they were and everybody else seemed to know who they were, but I was just indifferent to them because I had no idea who they were, and I was not at all impressed. They didn't know what the hell they were talking about.

*Q: As you saw this problem in the first place, it was no more intercepting Haitians that opened up the case?*

ROSSIN: No, it didn't actually, because President Clinton reversed his going-in stance. There may have been a little spurt, I don't know, at the time of the transition, but he reversed on that immediately so there wasn't anything much if at all. The boat people crisis during the Clinton presidency took place actually the following year, in July 1994.

It was always just a political problem and a policy problem. The policy problem was how do you in fact get rid of the military regime and get Aristide back. There were a lot of human rights abuses taking place at that period. And the political problem was, the president made this commitment and here's another commitment not being fulfilled. Remember, you've got Bosnia, you've got Somalia, and Rwanda came along at a certain point. Things weren't going very well on the foreign-policy front and of course, he had this reputation of less interest in foreign affairs anyway. Remember, Clinton came in after George Bush, and George Bush's reputation was, whenever he had a spare moment he got on the phone to some foreign leader. And that didn't win him any votes. He was a one-term president. Clinton had come in and said that's not the way to win, that's not the kind of president I'm going to be, and he didn't want to go traveling overseas and he wasn't always on the phone to foreign leaders and he was more interested in domestic policy in many ways. He wasn't getting anywhere on Bosnia and Somalia had gone south really badly and so it was not a good moment. In fact, when Haiti eventually worked out the following year, it was actually the first clear-cut foreign-policy success that he had had, which was something he needed, frankly.

*Q: You had this going on, what did you see as the solution?*

ROSSIN: Well, the solution seemed to me first of all to revolve around getting Aristide back. You couldn't avoid the reality. Understand—that that was the president's policy, but that was not clearly to me what his envoy was working toward. So, you had to go to the basics. First of all, if you're going to be the envoy of the president, you're not going to be successful unless you're backing and implementing the president's policies. Somehow it just doesn't strike me that it's going to work out if you're asked to do A, and you do B. Somewhere along the line that's going to go off track. That was the first thing.

The second thing was that Aristide had to go back. We needed to get him the hell out of Washington where he was making life politically miserable for everybody and nobody had an idea how to control an exile. And also, you couldn't avoid the fact that this man had been elected before with 70 percent of the votes, but even more so was the only person that people would go out and vote for in Haiti, so you couldn't have a solution that didn't involve Aristide. You could think you could come up with something around all those parliamentarians, but it wasn't true because nobody in Haiti could care less about those people. They were not reputable. So that was my second thought.

The third thought, for me from the beginning, was that you had to be prepared to use military, you had to threaten military force to move this, and you should never threaten force unless you are willing to use it. You had to threaten military force because it was quite clear to me from the way that Pezzullo's negotiation process was going that the military had no intention of leaving.

*Q: You were saying it was clear that the military weren't going to get out voluntarily.*

ROSSIN: Yes. That was obvious to me. I thought that the negotiating process of Pezzullo was futile and I was increasingly arguing this. When I went over to the National Security Council, nobody knew me from Adam. I got hired by Feinberg and only gradually did I build up my own profile. I didn't come in known to the administration or anything. I was just a State Department officer on detail. But after the business with Aristide and his mental instability I started building up a reputation. So I was arguing to Tony Lake and to others, especially toward the end of 1993 and especially after the Harlan County incident, that what Pezzullo was doing was never going to work, was not really aiming at what the president wanted, and also was ill-founded because the Haitian military didn't look to me like they wanted to leave. They were showing no signs of wanting to leave, to the contrary. And so, any approach that was not based on the threat of military force to me looked to me like it was doomed to fail. So, I kept making that argument.

*Q: Your line to Pezzullo was how?*

ROSSIN: I didn't deal with Pezzullo. I saw Pezzullo fairly often at deputies' meetings but I didn't have much direct dealing with him.

*Q: It would be Tony Lake who—?*

ROSSIN: Tony or Sandy, oftentimes Sandy; they would deal with Pezzullo.

*Q: Were they sort of trying to rationalize the policy?*

ROSSIN: Well, I think they were doing what one does, which is to rationalize their envoy. After all, Pezzullo wasn't politically neutral. Remember, he was one of the Carter administration and one who was thrown out on day one by Ronald Reagan. And look what happened in Central America, and these were Democrats who were not necessarily supportive of the Reagan policy in Central America and now they were back in and they were bringing back in the guys who were their guys from before and so you know, they had a lot of loyalty to people like Pezzullo. I'm not saying he was malevolent or ill-intentioned. He was just wrong. They didn't want to, you know, it wasn't like they naturally said, Ah ha! Let's get rid of Pezzullo. Clearly things aren't working here. It wasn't like that at all.

I just argued based on my own reading of the problems, especially towards the end of 1993. I recall a meeting I attended in Tony Lake's office some time in December and various people were there. Strobe Talbott was there, John Deutch, the deputy secretary of defense who later became the CIA director. Sandy was there, and George Stephanopoulos was there. It was that level of people. I said, "You know, I think we're going down the wrong road." At that point there was a little bit of openness to start wondering whether we needed a course correction because this was after the *Harlan County* episode and also after we had some other difficulties related to Aristide. I don't remember what they were. That group grew in discussing these things.

Pezzullo was there until March 1994 and finally it was concluded indeed by everybody that his effort really was going nowhere. They had a lot of problems with Aristide, with the Black Caucus, with all of the groups but equally the policy itself was clearly failing. At that point Pezzullo broke with the administration and left, but really he was let go. It was very naturally done. He wrote an article that was very critical of the administration in a newspaper which was highly unjustified in my viewpoint because he had failed. That was all there was to it. Then there was an interim period where there was no special envoy, and then Bill Gray, the congressman was appointed as the new special envoy.

*Q: Is part of the policy that Aristide had back in power and then following that—*

ROSSIN: Once he gets back?

*Q: Once he gets back. I mean.*

ROSSIN: Every concept was broached at one time or another. As a Haiti expert, having been there, one of the reasons why I was gradually able to play a role in Haiti policy and eventually I was making the Haiti policy when I was there and part of the reason was because I knew the place. Two things: one was, I knew the place myself, I didn't need the intel people to tell me who was who; and the second reason was because—and this is a sad commentary—I could predict what they were going to do. That's not actually a very happy thing to be able to do when it comes to Haitians. There's something wrong about that.

The policy was to get him back and obviously to get him back durably. I mean, it wasn't a cynical thing like, Just get him back. I made a campaign pledge. Get him back. To hell with it. You know, that was not where the politics was for Clinton. But it was also just not where Clinton was. I mean, he was not that type of person and Gore was not that type. That was just not the way that the Clinton administration worked. They were principled.

At one time or another every idea was explored. I remember Tony at one point calling me into his office and he said, "Here's an idea. How about if we use Special Forces to return Aristide to the presidential palace, they stay for forty-eight hours and then leave. What would you think of that?" And I said, "Well, I'll tell you honestly, I think people would be in a state of shock and awe for about forty-eight hours. Then they would realize that we were gone. That would be the end of Aristide. They would realize that we had come but they would also realize that we had left. It wouldn't last. It wouldn't be durable."

I then told Tony I thought that was really needed, even if it were inconceivable that it would ever happen, was at the other end of the time spectrum—that Haiti be occupied by the United States or the international community or the Organization of American States or the United Nations for a generation. That would give an opportunity for a whole new generation of Haitians to come up, a generation of capable and caring people that Haiti totally lacked after the experience of the Duvaliers. That's probably the recipe for a lot of places. Haiti had that experience once before. It was occupied from 1915 to 1934 by the

United States. At that time, it was the Marines. There was no World Bank, there was no USAID [United States Agency for International Development], there were no NGOs [nongovernmental organizations]. None of these things existed at that time and even so, the marines made some difference in Haiti. Doing it the right way, with the development knowledge and resources now available, you might actually achieve something there, I said, but in my view that was all that would work. Anything less was not going to be durable, including even going in as we did, getting Aristide back, having assistance relationships for maybe three or four years. But then we started falling out with him over various economic issues. I made the point that you were going to have to take over for a generation if you really wanted to be sure of having Haiti succeed, but then that I never actually would anticipate this level of commitment happening for obvious reasons.

Every idea was put out there. Another that came up was to install Aristide on the island of La Gonave and declare a “free Haiti” there. La Gonave is the big island between the two peninsulas of Haiti. Only ten thousand people live on that island, which is the size of Martinique, because it has no water. I argued that this was not a realistic idea. It would look silly. So, that was that.

*Q: As this progressed, was Haiti pretty much a concentration for you?*

ROSSIN: It was. I mean I also covered Central America and the rest of the Caribbean, and occasionally there would be some other issue. There was an election in the Dominican Republic, there were events regarding Panama, there was a visit of Caribbean and Central American heads of state at two different times. But really Haiti was my job. I was at the NSC on a one-year detail and I was, very exceptionally, extended for six months even when my successor in the directorate Chat Blakeman arrived, at which point Haiti became my exclusive focus. I became a quasi-senior director for Haiti, working directly and constantly with Lake and Berger. There was a whole implementation plan that had to be done if there was going to be an intervention, which Dick Clarke was doing with the directors in his office, and I was working with them. In fact, I physically moved to their office suite.

*Q: Well, in a way in the ten years before, Central America was the focus of American foreign policy and now this thing was relegated to the, you know, back where it belonged, you know.*

ROSSIN: Yes. Central America was worked over in the State Department. There was not much going on; I hardly ever worked on it. We had a visit at one point of all the Central American presidents to meet with the president as a group. That region was now second echelon. This group visit was not a big deal; it took a while to get it scheduled. It was totally different from the 1980s.

I was a little disappointed in a way. I wanted to visit Central America, where I had never been, and at one point when I was at the NSC I was listed as a member of the presidential observer delegation to Salvadoran elections. But at the last-minute Sandy said no, he did



not want me to go there because something might happen on Haiti and he wanted me around in case. I really had become the Haiti focal point in the government. Haiti became extremely busy; we had three deputies committee meetings weekly, at 6:30 or 7:00 pm that went on for two hours, and then I would always have to write a paper for the next morning. I was working really long hours on that job.

But it was a big deal, and it was gradually coming to a head. At one point in March 1994, irritation rose to a new high with Aristide and his machinations. Vice President Gore met with Aristide to read him the riot act because he had been getting very active within U.S. politics and had caused a lot of problems for the administration. It was an odd experience. I wrote three pages of talking points for Gore, he proceeded to read them verbatim start to finish. I thought I'd better really be careful what I write henceforth because the Vice President would put them in his own mouth, and he did that in fact. Gore was actually quite good but he was completely ineffective with Aristide in this meeting. It didn't work at all. Aristide only increased his criticisms of the administration and jockeying with the Hollywood types and Black Caucus and his other supporters, and it was really quite unpleasant. These were supposedly the president's friends.

Then in April there was a significant policy review. We had a meeting in the Oval Office that went on for a solid two hours about Haiti. This was the first time the military option was raised seriously. Tony argued for it, Madeleine Albright [who wasn't a big player at that time as UN ambassador] argued for it, but [Secretary of State] Christopher argued very strongly against it and said we needed to pursue more diplomacy. The president decided to go that route. A group of us immediately repaired to Tony Lake's office, Tony and Sandy and myself, and a couple of other people who were totally put out by this outcome because it was obviously the wrong decision. It was more of the same. That was when we really started working on a parallel track on coming up with a policy that would involve the use of military force. I started working on that with Tony's direction. We prepared a whole lot of papers on that through April and May into June. The option was never actually put to a formal decision process—there was not an action memo, if you will, put forward to the president until August about using military force.

*Q: Well, two things. One, sometimes when somebody gets to be a pain in the neck, as Aristide obviously was, there was a tendency—I remember this happened to Yeltsin early on—you know, sort of downplaying him, undercutting him. It seemed to be coming from the White House. You know, he's a drunk, don't pay any attention to that man. In other words, demean him and marginalize him. Was that ever a consideration?*

ROSSIN: There was a little bit of that that went on but not too much, because that was a dump-Aristide approach and that was neither feasible nor the president's policy. It wasn't that people liked him or didn't think he was a problem, but you could never get around the fact that if you're going to restore democracy to Haiti, this guy got 70 percent of the vote. Bill Clinton would die to get 70 percent of the vote. You know what I mean? He's a politician, he recognized what that means, you know. It was more than that, in fact. There was the phenomenon in Haiti of, if it's not Aristide, it's nobody. So, you could never get

around him. And in fact, that was the discussion. You could never get around the fact that if you were going to restore democracy to Haiti it meant restoring Aristide to power. Nobody would let you get away with it otherwise in Haiti and the Black Caucus and all those other people weren't going to let you get away with it here in the United States either, by the way. Again, those were the friends of the president. This was not a maneuver of the Republicans or some political adversaries. There was no way around it. There was the initiative with Gore where we tried to take on Aristide. It failed. Then we had to regroup and figure: we can't beat this guy, so how are we going to manage this problem? It was not an easy situation. You could say it was an unworthy situation in a sense and it was, but there you are. I mean, that's democracy in action.

*Q: For people looking at this in later times, you mentioned you went back to writing papers and of course this is kind of, when in doubt, write a paper.*

ROSSIN: These are not academic papers to be published in a journal.

*Q: What happened?*

ROSSIN: Here's what happened. It's always in the Foreign Service basic approach that if you can't say it in a two-page memo, then you don't really know what you're talking about. Well, that was not true with President Clinton, and Haiti and its peculiar complications were not something that could easily be boiled down in a two-page memo. It required analysis, discussion of options, and their pros and cons, and background. I have always been kind of a long writer and that kind of thing was welcome. President Clinton was quite capable of sitting down with an eight- or ten-page paper and making his way through it. He actually liked that kind of thing. I could write them as fast as he could read them. I could write them fast and I could write them plentiful, and I did.

And my experience was that this is a useful process for building an educated consensus on a hard issue few understood at the outset. That went back to when I was the Peru desk officer. I had to write a paper about the debt crisis and why Peru should receive an extra sixty million dollars in Economic Support Funds [ESF]. Why, for whom, I don't remember, I am not sure there was any specific target. Nobody at the outset supported giving Peru an added sixty million dollars of ESF. I wrote and rewrote that paper many times over a period of weeks, and took it all over the department for clearances, not about the sixty million dollars idea but more basic clearances and inputs—was I describing the debt crisis correctly or what about this or that analytical point? I realized in hindsight, not by design, that after I'd had all the people in the department that had anything to do with these issues clear that paper about thirty or forty times, you know what? It was their paper too. They had taken ownership of it too. They wanted sixty million dollars of ESF for Peru too. This went on for three or four months but at the end of that period, the idea of giving sixty million dollars of ESF to Peru was a given and it happened. And that was only because people had internalized it through a sort of Chinese water torture, I guess.

That in a sense is how it worked on the Haiti policy discussion too. I wrote a lot of papers. I wasn't just inventing these things. We would have a deputies' meeting or some other discussion and then Sandy would say, "Go off and write a paper about this idea, write about that idea. Give a little thought to such and such, whatever." And I would write the papers overnight and they would be circulated and discussed at the next meeting, and I'd write them over again and then I'd get them back and they'd have some changes and I'd write it again. And just like on Peru, after a while people started internalizing what was in those papers. That's how education is done. The president did not know a lot about Haiti, Sandy Berger might not know a lot about Haiti. I happened to know a lot about Haiti. We had a policy difficulty. There were a lot of genuinely difficult choices to be made out there, with a lot of uncertainties associated, and in a sense, you rehearsed them over and over again. You'd say, "Well there's this consideration; well, there's that constraint." After a while people got to know who all these people were and got a feel for the thing. It took a lot of work and I was there a lot of times until one o'clock in the morning writing these papers, and then I'd leave them in the sit. [White House situation] room to go out to Sandy with his driver that same morning at 5:30 am. Over time I had an impact. It helped me formulate ideas of what we could do, but it also helped them think the issues through. That's what papers are for. They're not action memos in most cases, they are think pieces. They are thought but with action in mind.

*Q: How did this play out?*

ROSSIN: First of all, Pezzullo left in a huff, and after about a month during which ARA Assistant Secretary Watson made the most half-hearted and ineffective effort to give leadership, on an issue he wanted nothing to do with, there was a new envoy appointed. This was Bill Gray, the former head of the House budget committee. He had retired. He was a Baptist minister from Philadelphia, a very strong-willed individual. He nearly quit at one point because he couldn't get through the Southwest Gate into the White House parking area for a Saturday meeting in his car. So temperamental that when that happened, Sandy literally went running out of the West Wing to catch him before he quit and caused a political crisis. Sandy did not catch him, but neither did Gray quit. There was a big rollout for Gray's appointment, conveying a break with the past. It was used consciously that way. Gray was really empowered and he had a "can do" attitude—this is not beyond human ken and so forth. He brought a new level of energy into the effort, new blood basically.

After this April period after the meeting with the president that was not satisfactory to Tony and myself and others, we did a lot of back-and-forth work and there were a lot of meetings with Strobe Talbott and John Deutch, and people from the Joint Staff. Over time there was a lot of discussion that was crystallizing a realization on everybody's part that you had to have some kind of a military option if you were going to prevail. In other words, that idea gained general credence.

Meanwhile, the additional diplomacy that Secretary of State Christopher had sold to the president went nowhere at all. Just nowhere. There was no diplomacy to be done. Then,

in July there was another boat people crisis. Suddenly there were around thirty-five thousand people leaving Haiti in the space of a week. It became a big crisis, not only intrinsically but also because Florida state officials and its congressional delegation were clamoring that these people would land on their shores. What do you do with these people? You can't take them to the United States because if you take them to the United States and they get legal access, every one of them, they will be here forever. They would never leave.

So at first what happened was the U.S. government rented a cruise ship that was stationed somewhere near Jamaica, and the U.S. Navy and U.S. Coast Guard boats would pick up migrants off the Haitian shore when they hit international waters, and instead of doing what they normally would do, which was to return them to Haiti, they would take them to the cruise boat. This because it was now deemed politically untenable to return them to Haiti. Well, that folded up in a day and a half. That was not practicable given the numbers.

And then they activated Guantánamo [a U.S. military base in Cuba] as a holding place for the migrants. If we didn't have Guantánamo I don't know where we would be in this country, because it's our territory that's not anybody's territory. It's a land of no law. And then we went all over, to Panama, to Suriname, to thirteen or fourteen different countries looking for places where we could install temporary refugee camps outside of the United States for these Haitians. Anywhere outside the United States would do, because the Haitians did not want to go anywhere else and they would go back to Haiti from another place; they just wouldn't go back from the United States. In the end, we never had to use those camps. We did get authorization from some of those countries but we never had to do any of that.

Then my argument, because I had done this before, was look, as long as you keep picking those people up and taking them away, as long as they think they're going to make it to the United States, they're going to keep coming. First of all, we had to make it clear that they were never ever going to get to the United States, and secondly, we should consider pulling off shore, over the horizon where our vessels could not be seen and maybe somebody's boat would sink. You had to make it clear that you were not running a taxi service because they would keep coming and they would keep dying also because their boats could and did swamp within Haitian waters where we did not pick them up. And eventually that's what was done. Not that they were left to sink but that we pulled back and we sent everyone we picked up to Guantánamo. We made it clear that they were never getting to the United States and when the word got out, the outflow stopped fast, because getting to the United States is what drives the migrant phenomenon. It stopped at about maybe thirty-five thousand or forty thousand, maybe even fifty thousand, and it took a long time to get them back from Guantánamo. In fact, the intervention was what got them back to Haiti, but that was only three months later.

*Q: Were you still, during this time, looking to see if anything happened to anybody who returned?*

ROSSIN: Not at that time because people weren't being returned. At that point they weren't. We had been returning before the rush, and in fact now that I think back, I believe that what triggered the crisis was an announcement that as part of the political evolution, we would no longer return people. This was not something I would have agreed with. It was inevitably going to trigger this phenomenon. But there was a decision made that the political situation had deteriorated, the human rights situation had deteriorated to the point that you could not return these people to Haiti in good faith in case there were political refugees among them. There was a meeting in the Oval Office in July at which this decision was taken. Al Gore said it. You can't keep flowing the crabs back into the barrel. These are human beings. In fact, there were indications there really were some people among the migrants who could be endangered if returned. People were being killed in Haiti at that point at such a level that you could not be certain that if you returned somebody, they would not also be killed, especially if you got it wrong about an individual who might have fled for political reasons.

*Q: Who was killing whom?*

ROSSIN: The FRAPH [a Haitian death squad that terrorized supporters of exiled president Jean-Bertrand Aristide], right wing thugs associated with the military government. They were killing people and would pitch the bodies onto the trash heaps on the street corners. About three thousand people were killed, we estimated.

*Q: During all this time what were you doing with the military? Obviously, the Pentagon doesn't want to use troops in something like that. I would imagine that at all these meetings, the Pentagon representatives would be, "No, no, no."*

ROSSIN: Well, no. On Iraq for example, you could credibly do as General Franks did and say, well, sure, I can invade Iraq but I need four hundred thousand troops, which is what he said at one point. He didn't get four hundred thousand troops but that's what he said. You can't assert that with regard to Haiti. It's close by, it's small, it's got no security forces of any sort whatsoever, so you can't make the argument that we can't do this, or we can't do it without unacceptably high casualties or anything else. You can't make any of those arguments.

You could make the argument that it's hard to do without a lot of civilian casualties and when I was in Port-au-Prince with [former President] Carter, I was really scared that the place could go up like a tinderbox, it was so densely packed.

For a long time, the U.S. military did argue against threatening the use of force, but they also planned for it. I went with Tony and Sandy and others to a briefing in April or May at the tank [conference room] in the Pentagon where they described the work they had done on a feasible intervention plan. They had developed a plan as they were asked to do,

they took it on. I think that they saw over time that this was a situation that they might well have to intervene in and so they prepared for it.

*Q: Well, I would imagine right from the beginning it was the 82nd Airborne, wasn't it? I mean, wasn't that the—*

ROSSIN: In Grenada it was the 101st Airborne. For Haiti, it was paratroopers. They took off from Fort Bragg. I know several people who were on that. General John Abizaid was on that and he told me they were halfway down from Fort Bragg to Haiti when we were there with Carter, and then they turned around in midair and flew back to North Carolina, and it was quite a deflation for them. They were really keyed up. It would have also been an amphibious operation. There was a big LSD [Landing Ship, Heavy] type ship offshore.

*Q: Again, we come back to how it played out.*

ROSSIN: What happened was, we had the July boat people crisis and that made people realize that this situation had to be resolved one way or another. It had to be dealt with, and we went through August debating that. We had endless meetings in August about this, but good meetings actually. There were a lot of issues to deal with, but finally I was asked by Sandy and Tony to draft a paper to go forward to President Clinton that laid out possible courses of action using military force. I wrote a memo that laid out two different courses of action each comprised of several steps, and in the memo, I said you have to do all of these steps or all those steps. You can't treat it as a smorgasbord, you need to choose Option A or Option B. But I was asked to rewrite the memo to make each individual step a separate approve or disapprove line. I told Tony and Sandy that this would not work, but of course I rewrote the memo as directed. Sure enough, the president gets the memo and he's checked some of these and some of those and I said, "Look at it. It won't work, Tony and Sandy." And they said, "I see what you mean, so rewrite the memo the first way." I did that. It was only two pages long as I remember, maybe three, and the decision box was, do we use military force or not. The president checked the approve box.

And then the planning really got underway. After that it was just planning; the decision had been taken. We worked on planning up to when we invaded. But I went down with [former] President Carter. President Clinton, Tony, and Sandy still wanted to exhaust any diplomatic option, and we did things with the agency [Central Intelligence Agency] and then Carter came in.

*Q: I would think that the military planning was fairly straightforward, but the political planning, what do they do, just get rid of the military and dump Aristide?*

ROSSIN: The political part was easy. If you did the invasion, the political part would probably be easier than the military part. The military part was hard because of the inflammability, if you will, of Port-au-Prince and its warrens and slums. The Haitian



military regime had no support anywhere. This was different from Grenada for example. From a political perspective, you would go in and you would get these guys, bring Aristide back, put him in charge and arrest Cédras and company or do something with them. It didn't work out that way because Cédras reached out to Carter. We ended up with the Carter mission and its consensual entry, but that's how it would have unfolded absent Carter, more or less. I can't remember the details but that's how you would do it.

In the end, first we sent some people down there to talk to the military and say you have got to go or else we're going to come. They were basically brushed off. And then Cédras called Jimmy Carter, who he knew from the election period in 1990 when he was in charge of security and Carter had taken a liking to him while developing a dislike and distrust of Aristide. Carter developed a bad impression of Aristide because there had been some debate about whether Aristide had won the election, or how, and unlike the Sandinistas in 1990, Aristide was really difficult for Carter to deal with when [unlike Ortega] he had actually won. Cédras viewed Carter as potentially sympathetic. So, Carter calls up and says that he had been asked by Cédras to come help. There was some internal debate. We talked about it and finally the president decided to go ahead with Carter, to leave no stone unturned. A team was assembled which was Carter, [Senator] Sam Nunn, and Colin Powell. The White House did not want just Carter going, they wanted others to be present and witnesses and actors since they rightly did not entirely trust Carter's intentions. And then assisting were Carter's associate Robert Pastor, and from the government, myself and Mike Kozak from State and Major General Jerry Bates from the Joint Staff, as well as the NSC press officer. I was specifically designated as the interface between President Clinton and Carter.

*Q: Well, did you, was there a concern that we were ready to go and all of a sudden Carter comes in. Is this going to screw things up?*

ROSSIN: Absolutely there was such a concern. That was part of the debate. The president and the administration wanted to leave no stone unturned before a military intervention. The die was cast, you know. The president had given a nationwide TV speech from the Oval Office. I stood in the Oval Office watching him give it. He was ready to do it but he didn't really want to if he didn't have to. He didn't want people to get killed. Our soldiers might have gotten killed maybe, but certainly Haitians, a lot of Haitians, would have gotten killed. You only have to go to Port-au-Prince to see what I'm talking about, and it was worth trying things to avoid that.

My concern, which was borne out especially when I was down there with Carter in Haiti, was that Carter was a bit like Pezzullo. He was not necessarily down there with the same agenda that the president sent him down there for. The president wanted him to get Aristide back and get the military out and Carter, he liked Cédras. You know, maybe we can arrange something, maybe we can find middle ground. There were all kinds of intermediate steps in what Carter was trying to negotiate which involved the senate of Haiti and such things. I was the middleman between Carter and Clinton. I was on the phone to President Clinton. Carter came into the little aide's office next to Cédras's that

we had been given, got on the phone and described an evolving deal to Clinton, then went back in the next room to talk to Cédras more. I got on the phone and Clinton asked me what I thought of what Carter was doing. And I said, “I think you better watch yourself here. I think Carter is trying to pull a quickie on you and I wouldn’t accept that. I would tell him to go back and ask for what you want and not for what he is trying to do.” Which Carter eventually did, but only under duress. At one point when the invasion force was en route, they hadn’t finished the negotiations yet, and Carter started wanting to stay overnight, kind of like baring his chest to interpose himself between Cédras and the incoming invaders. I had [Secretary of State] Christopher yelling at me on the phone and saying, “Get out of there. Come back.” It was a very, very fraught kind of negotiation.

*Q: What would you do? I mean, when you flew there, how did you get there?*

ROSSIN: We flew down from Andrews Air Force Base to an Air Force base in Georgia, picked up Carter and Nunn, and then flew on down to Port-au-Prince. There was some question as to whether we would be able to land because the military had put barrels across the runway. The plane did a couple of overflights and the barrels were finally cleared away and so we landed. We were on one of the old Air Force Ones [former presidential aircraft], one of the old 707s. We went to the Hotel Montana and Carter et al [and everyone] met with the former foreign minister, General Abraham, a very good guy who was by then out of any official role, but there was some idea that he might be able to broker this thing. Well, he turned out not to be relevant after that, sadly enough.

Then Carter went out to dinner with Cédras and his family, which we were not allowed to join. Carter worked to shut the government people on the delegation out of his negotiation and in fact, didn’t let us in the room with Cédras and Biamby and François, the three military junta members. We were, as I said, in the office of Cédras’ aide next door to Cédras’ office where the negotiation was occurring, and we were managing the interaction between President Clinton and our cabinet and Carter. At one point, I got in a shouting match with Carter. There was a TV set in the aide’s office with CNN [Cable News Network] showing, and [then U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations] Albright was on one of the weekend interview shows as part of a purposeful PR [public relations] effort, talking about the human rights abuses and deaths. She was talking about that when Carter came in the room and said, “I haven’t seen all those dead people. What is she talking about?” as though she was making it up. And I said to him, “You know, you need to see the dead bodies here yourself? You call yourself a human rights president? And you’re making excuses like this?” We got in a big shouting match, actually, that Powell and Nunn calmed down. It was hot and we didn’t have enough to eat or drink at that point.

*Q: Did you feel that Carter was willing to give up certain things in order to keep the troops from coming in?*

ROSSIN: I think he was willing to give up certain things in order to keep the troops from coming in, all the more so because he himself did not particularly see that Aristide’s

restoration to power and the removal of Cédras was such a black and white issue. He didn't see Cédras as being all black by any means and he saw Aristide as far from being the greatest guy on earth or even a worthy object of our attention. He's entitled to his judgment. He may have even been right to some extent, but that wasn't what the president of the United States had sent him down there to do. But then you had Powell and Young down there who were saying wait a minute, the president of the United States said X, Y, or Z and Carter was doing something not clearly in line, which could not be tenable especially when word was received that our troops had actually taken off from Fort Bragg and were flying down. It's not a very long flight. The only tenable solution was in fact to do what the president of the United States wanted, which was to make arrangements for Aristide's return and the departure of the military government. Carter could do what he wanted down there, but President Clinton was the commander-in-chief and the airplanes were coming down.

So, what happened was, at a certain point Carter, Nunn, and Powell decamped quite unexpectedly from the military headquarters and went over to the presidential palace where there was the figurehead president, Emil Jonassaint. He was very elderly and he was drawn into it as they all sat down over there. We figured out what was going on, and Mike and I rushed over to the palace and got in, with some difficulty, and tracked down the group. We found they had made the deal then that, basically, the military would leave and Aristide would return in a month and there would still be some intermediate steps. They were not the Trojan horse intermediate steps that Carter had been talking about earlier, in my estimation, but I was still very wary. We then got on a little Princess phone in a nearby otherwise empty room; the presidential palace was not fully furnished. Carter got on the princess phone and described his deal, and then he was asked to put me on the phone, and they asked me what I thought of this deal. I thought about it for a minute then said I thought they should probably take it, but keep their powder dry and not pull back the troops and keep the invasion primed because I was very suspicious of some trick. I talked in succession to Christopher, Gore, General Shalikashvili, and I think Perry.

*Q: Perry being?*

ROSSIN: Perry being secretary of defense, Shalikashvili being the chairman of the Joint Chiefs. They all asked the same question and I told them the same thing, and Shalikashvili was smart because he said, "Well, you know you've got to recognize when you have won and I think we have won here and in fact, we have won." Meanwhile Jerry Bates, who was the general with us, had gone off and was doing some other negotiation with the Haitian military and also communicating with the U.S. military. The troops turned back and as General Bates arranged, there was a consensual entry of the U.S. military forces the next morning.

*Q: Was somebody taking care of the military government there? They were going to leave?*

ROSSIN: They were going to leave. The next month was a bit of a comedy because Cédras and the others wanted to come to the United States. Some of the officers were permitted to do so, some of them were not. Cédras was not permitted to come to the United State but it was arranged that he go to Panama. He didn't want to leave until he made sure that his house was rented to the U.S. embassy. This became a minor scandal. You know the headline, "U.S. government rents military dictator's house," but it was basically his price for going to Panama. Biamby, the number two, somehow ended up in Miami. I don't know how. I think we allowed it but I don't remember exactly why. The most thuggish of the three was Michel François, the police chief of Port-au-Prince, who at some point during all of this made his own way across the border to the Dominican Republic, where apparently his brother lived and owned a gas station.

—protective of him, always sympathetic to him. I called the sit. room from the plane after we took off from Port-au-Prince and asked that they fax to the military airport in San Juan any ticker items about the events. I wanted to be able to show Carter whatever press tickers there might be about all of this. When we got to San Juan, we were given numbers of ticker items. One of them was advocating that Carter should get the Nobel Peace Prize. He only woke up after we had taken off from San Juan en route to Andrews, and of course when he comes to this item it was, aw, shucks, with this big grin. He really wanted that and thought he deserved it. He was not a modest person, Jimmy Carter. He got on the phone in the plane and started talking to people in Atlanta, at CNN, arranging to have interviews the next morning after he was back to the United States. We got back to Andrews at around two o'clock in the morning and all went our separate ways.

We had been told there was to be a ceremony at the White House the next morning with the president and the congressional leadership, to welcome back [former] President Carter and Nunn and Powell to thank them for their efforts and announce the agreement and so forth. I woke up early the next morning to get ready to go into the office for this, and had the TV on in my bedroom, and there was Carter on CNN saying really, really unpleasant things about President Clinton and this whole situation, very ungracious and off color. So, I drove into town and walked into Lake's office and on the TV set there were the pictures of the first U.S. Army helicopters landing at the airport in Port-au-Prince. Tony and Nancy Soderberg were there, and they said to me, Well, what is going on with Jimmy Carter? Why is he saying these things? And I said to them it was because Carter did not like or respect President Clinton, it was as obvious and simple as that. This was fully to be expected now that I had seen him in action. I told them that in essence Carter believes Clinton should stand aside and let a real man do this, a real statesman, that Clinton did not know what he was talking about. That was Carter's attitude toward Clinton. He didn't have a lot of respect for Bill Clinton and he didn't mind saying so. I was very blunt about this.

That was not welcome news. They were having Carter piss on their party. Clinton of course was completely gracious at the breakfast event but was also glad as hell to see Carter get on his plane and go back home where he belonged. Carter had been a constant kibitzer during the time I was at the NSC about all the issues. He would send memos to

the president that were not appropriate. I'm sorry but the president is the president and the former president is the former president. These were "Memorandums for Bill Clinton, from President Jimmy Carter." It was one of our jobs to answer those things. I had complained about Carter's memos and obvious disrespect during my time on the NSC staff but nobody wanted to hear that, but then it was out there for everyone to see that day. So that was what happened.

*Q: When did you leave there compared to when Aristide was restored?*

ROSSIN: Aristide went back to Haiti in the middle of October and I left the NSC in the middle of December. I was there for two months after he went back. It was weird because I got constant phone calls and had constant meetings and hundreds of e-mails a day up until when we took Aristide back. And when I got back in the office the following Monday there were no phone calls, no emails, and no meetings at all. After a while it gradually picked up again although never to the same pace. It was like going off a cliff from Friday to Monday. I didn't know what to do in my office for about a week until work started picking up again.

*Q: In the short time you were there, how did Aristide handle coming back into power?*

ROSSIN: It was fine in those two months. I don't know when he started to go south but it was much after my departure. I went down to Haiti on four or five day trips in those last eight weeks with Tony Lake and Nancy Soderberg, with the deputies' committee at one point, another time with Jim Dobbins who was at that time the special envoy for Haiti. We called on Aristide, we traveled around with him a little bit within Haiti and flew around ourselves visiting the U.S. military. Those were the halcyon days, but it was only eight weeks.

*Q: What did you do after you left Haiti?*

ROSSIN: After I left the NSC, you mean? I went to Santa Fe where we had a second home. My sister and her family came, and we spent Christmas together. We went skiing. My ten-year-old daughter said to me after she opened her presents, "Dad, these are all really nice presents but my favorite present is that you don't have that job anymore." She didn't like President Clinton because she thought he took her dad away from her. And then I went back to Washington and Debbie and I did Spanish language training since I was assigned to Madrid as deputy chief of mission in the summertime.

## **GAP IN THE TAPE**

—electoral period. If the Socialists lost, is it working? And the *Partido Popular*, the conservative party won, which was interesting. This is where José María Aznar became president of the Spanish government, President of Spain and where there was a government change for the first time since Franco, well, since the post-Franco government, the first time that there had been an elective change, in fact, the first time

there had been an elective change of power from one power from one party to another in Spain. It all went very smoothly. Spanish democracy had taken root and Aznar took over from González sometime at the beginning of 1996. I don't remember exactly when it was. It was early in my time. So, there was about six months we were working with the Spanish, the socialist Spanish government. You know, that was that.

*Q: Just a question on that; one of the things that has always struck me is that particularly political sections get caught up in predicting elections. They put a lot of effort on to win or lose. In many ways it just doesn't seem, you know, a big deal. The interesting thing is we should be saying if party A wins, this means to the United States and so for our policy and if party B wins—*

ROSSIN: It's a resource allocation question, I suppose. How much time do you spend planning for the party that won't win? In this case *Partido Popular* won with less of a margin, as I recall, and this was a phenomenon of Spanish politics than predicted, the reason being that there were several reasons that were adduced for it but one of them was there were less telephones in Andalucía, and that's where the Socialist Party was strongest, so it was figured that in telephone polls the socialists were underrepresented.

*Q: That dates back to 1932 when in the United States a survey was done by telephone in the midst of the Depression and the poll showed that the Republicans were going to beat the hell out of Roosevelt.*

*Richard Gardner had been ambassador to Italy. Actually, I had served under him when I was consul general in Naples and he's a guy who really engaged. Some people found him rather difficult and his wife even more difficult. How did you find this?*

ROSSIN: He and I got along extremely well. I think he was less engaged in the breadth of issues in Spain than he was in Italy. Italy was his first love; his wife is Italian. He went there at an extremely exciting period in Italian history. He was still engaged in Spain but I would say he was probably choosing his issues more selectively, if I can put it that way, sort of high-level intellectual engagements. Spain is not a country that perceives itself as sharing American values, so he was engaged on that, so a lot of public diplomacy type of stuff. Basically, his approach was, if he felt like he could do it, and happily in our case he did, to leave the bulk of the work, therefore, to the DCM. So, I think I did the bulk of the work. He did the very high-level work. He did the high-level contacts and he did them well. The bulk of the day-to-day diplomacy, the management of this large mission and so forth, he left to me and I was happy with that because it was very interesting and we had a lot going on with Spain.

*Q: Let's talk a bit about the embassy. When you got there, did you see problems, management problems and things that needed to be done?*

ROSSIN: There were some problems. It was a difficult period in the European Bureau generally because this was a period where it was a period of transition. They were



downsizing embassies in a lot of Western Europe, partially just to downsize and save money, and partially to shift positions to other parts of the world. Madrid was an embassy that was very much a target of that kind of thing. It had been a very fat embassy. The old phone list and the new phone list ended up being like half the size of one and the other. I mean, it was a significant reduction and it came in waves. So, we spent a lot of time working on those things.

There had also been some management problems. I think that my predecessor had not necessarily been the most personable individual with a lot of people in the mission and there were also personnel problems because. Frankly, I was selected for the job as an FS-01 and there were a lot of people who felt that well, you know, this was an MC [Minister Counselor] job, an FS-01 is coming out to do the job and they didn't really think I could do it. Well, I did do a good job and it was universally agreed, including by the inspectors. But initially when I went out there, there was a whole lot of funny management and structuring changes in the embassy that had been made to accommodate this person who was too junior for the job and so the political counselor had been given sort of umbrella-type responsibilities and stuff, and none of these things turned out to be necessary but they were disruptive to the functioning of the embassy.

*Q: How come there was this jumped-up assignment for you?*

ROSSIN: Well, I had been working at the NSC, I had followed Haiti at that time, and so the deputy secretary and the deputy national security adviser and the national security adviser decided they wanted to give me a post that was commensurate with what I had achieved. So, I ended up going to Spain. I had been going to Zagreb and that was canceled because I stayed on at the NSC. I was going to go to Zagreb as the DCM and that had been canceled in order that I stay and finish Haiti, and so they decided that this was an appropriate assignment and the system went along with it. They didn't like it but went along with it.

*Q: What was your impression of Spanish political life?*

ROSSIN: It was very vindictive personally among the different politicians, and the election that took place that fall took place amidst a lot of acrimony because there emerged evidence—the big problem in Spain, one of the big problems in Spain was ETA [Basque Homeland and Liberty or Basque Country and Freedom was an armed leftist Basque nationalist and separatist organization in the Basque Country] terrorism and the socialists had been plagued by this. There had been a lot before I was there, in an earlier period.

*Q: This was Basques?*

ROSSIN: This was the Basque separatists and there had been periods where they were killing hundreds of people, seventy, eighty people a year, maybe more than that, which was not the case so much in my period, but the government had gone out strongly, and

there were allegations that there had been set up some kind of quasi-death-squads against terror, and Felipe González himself was a link to those. In a lot of press reporting I think there was some merit to that. I don't know how much substance there was to it. That became very bitter and of course, on the other side of the coin, the *Partido Popular* was actually arguing for a crackdown on that and was not inclined towards regional autonomy and so forth, as the socialists had been. So that added another dimension to it.

And the third dimension was that at the time, I don't think it's like that now, but at the time the Catalán Nationalist Party, a man named Puigdemont who was head of it in that period, was from Barcelona, held the balance of power. They were the king-makers because of the percentage of seats that they would get in the elections, and so you had this really divisive and sort of, you had this government that had been there for a very long time. These guys basically grew up as the government of Spain. They were all very young even as they were leaving the Socialist Party. González when he left the presidency was fifty-three years old and he had been—I think he started when he was thirty-five or something, and they were all like that. Because you have that sort, everybody of Franco's generation was discredited, and then the *Partido Popular* people were equally young. They had to prove that they were and there were arguments about it that they have moved beyond the sort of youth movement of Franco, kind of which was where their roots were. It got very personal. And that's what struck me about Spanish politics, how personal and how they could be vitriolic and kind of acidic in a way that you didn't see elsewhere. My previous European experience was in the Netherlands and you didn't see that kind of thing in Dutch politics.

*Q: Well, did you see a possible or were we looking at a possible almost Yugoslav sort of situation there?*

ROSSIN: No, no, not at all. In fact, later when I worked in Yugoslavia, I worked in Croatia and it struck me very much that Spain was a Yugoslav situation gone right. Yugoslavia was a Yugoslav situation that didn't go right. They were very similar in a sense; they were both sort of very, very authoritarian regimes that kind of had a contract with their people which was that as long as they stayed out of politics, they could travel, they could do everything economically. They were quite open, you know, tourism—was in both places, very important. The underlying ethnic issues were not nearly as profound of course in Spain as they were in Yugoslavia, but there was nothing in Yugoslavia to match ETA either, on the other side of the coin. And you had the same thing with this sort of very corporate kind of governing system that had evolved, and although Franco was not a communist in the way Tito was not a communist either, there were just an awful lot of similarities.

Later when I was ambassador in Croatia and working on the Balkans, I saw a lot of lessons that could be drawn from the successful Spanish transition that in Croatia I argued they should be applying in terms of getting rid of excessive state involvement in the economy, and reducing the size of the military and giving the military something useful to do and things of that nature; changing the exchange rate of the currency so that

they were competitive in the international tourism market and things of that nature. Spain was successful; I would say Yugoslavia is still digging itself out from the ruins.

*Q: Did you see, particularly the Catalan movement, was this—sometimes you get these movements in a country that sound you know, fine, nationalistic and all that, but when you peel away the onion you discover that this is a few families are manipulating this in order to—*

ROSSIN: That's not Catalan nationalism. I mean certainly there was Peugeot, who was the head of, he was the senior politician. I don't remember what his function was in Catalonia. This was his business, was Catalonia, his political identity and his source of power, but having said that, I think Catalan nationalism in a way is more a national identity kind of nationalism. They have their own language, they have a history that is, well, different parts of Spain—but it is much stronger in Catalonia—have a separate national history. Spain itself was relatively late united and also of course, Barcelona and Catalonia tended to be one of the wealthier areas of Spain. Spain, when you go there now, even when I was there, was a boom country. Not the least, of course, because it was benefiting from a lot of EU assistance. Catalonia itself had always been the richest area of Spain, the most industries, ship-building, and those kinds of things and also perhaps the most cosmopolitan in Barcelona, whereas Madrid until fairly recently was fairly backward. I think Barcelona and Catalonia were sort of the last refuge of the Spanish Republic in the civil war. It was a different history to some extent.

*Q: Did the language problem crop up in the embassy?*

ROSSIN: You mean between Catalan and Spanish? No, no. Catalan was used in Catalonia. There was nothing like in Belgium, for example, where everywhere in the country were both languages. Nobody expected anybody to do anything in Catalan outside of Catalonia or in Basque for that matter, outside the Basque country or in Valencia and outside of Valencia.

*Q: Did our consul general in Barcelona play any particular role there?*

ROSSIN: He did. It was not as nearly as big a consulate as it had been a few years previously. One of the well-known people in the Foreign Service, Ruth Davis, had been consul general there at the time of the Barcelona Olympics and I think the consulate was expanded for the Barcelona Olympics both in the consular field and also in the public affairs field and also in the security field. And it was shrunk again after that. The consulate was actually quite small and it was in quite a large building that was renovated. It was actually moved into a large building that was renovated because there was a bomb that was detonated outside of the office building where it was beforehand and so they moved into this renovated, you know, old mansion type of a place. They had a lot of extra room. The consul general was quite an active individual whose name was Maurice Parker and had a lot of outreach into the community, had a good staff of people. He only had

four officers but they were good and they really got around and they would do a little bit of reporting back to the United States.

The national politics of the Catalans was only relevant in the sense of how they tried to use their leverage as a swing party to squeeze more and more concessions from the center. So that's what happened in Madrid. It didn't very much happen in Barcelona.

*Q: You mentioned Gardner found that the Spanish philosophy, the governmental philosophy was different from the American one. In what ways would you say?*

ROSSIN: Did I say that?

*Q: Well you said that something to the effect that when Gardner engaged the Spanish they had a different outlook.*

ROSSIN: They had a different outlook, they perceived themselves and polling would show as well, I mean there was polling done a number of times that showed that Spaniards [not the government but the whole people] did not perceive themselves as sharing American values.

Spain was a peculiar country in Western Europe because Spain had a different history than almost every other country in Western Europe in terms of its relationship with the United States, which really is a postwar relationship with the United States. Other countries were either defeated enemies or they were allies during the war or were conquered by the Nazis, or some version of a common historical path that led to NATO and the European Union and all these different relationships that existed. Spain was a neutral that was definitely a neutral on the fascist side of things. It was actually the first target of economic sanctions by the UN after the UN was formed and wasn't fully recognized by the United States. I think we sent our ambassador in 1951 or 1952. And in any case, didn't have very deep historical ties with the United States because very few Spaniards actually ever emigrated to the United States, and a good portion of those who did actually were Basques who went to the Midwest as shepherds and things of that nature. So unlike France or England or Germany or most other countries that you can think of, there weren't these familial ties. There wasn't that sort of bond of, you know, common purpose in war. There wasn't the bond of, you know, generosity to the defeated enemy. There wasn't the bond of the Marshall Plan. Spain was not included in the Marshall Plan.

There was no particular bond and then it became very ambiguous because the bond that did develop, I guess in the early 1950s after we recognized Spain, was the bilateral defense agreement that we had with Spain. We had a lot of bases in Spain, which diminished by the time I got there. There were only two, but at the time there were a lot more. And that was viewed, I mean, the Franco government sort of felt like they had been blackmailed and sort of squeezed. They gave away a lot for a little, so the right kind of

was resentful of that agreement and of course, those who were opposed to Franco figured that it was to prop up the dictatorship.

So no matter how you cut it there was a lot of resentment toward the United States with no sort of countervailing foundation like you have now when we go through a storm with the French or the Germans, that underlying that there is a tremendous amount of fundamental people-to-people good feeling. Spaniards have a different schedule every day, they are ambivalent about religion, but in very different ways from how Americans are because of their history and the anti-clerical movements and so forth during the civil war. It's just a whole different viewpoint.

So, a lot of our outreach actually, and a lot of the ambassador's outreach, was actually things like promoting American studies in the universities. We had a particularly large Fulbright exchange program because under the bases agreement a certain amount of the revenue from the bases agreement was devoted to the Fulbright program, a very large source of funding and for various reasons just building understanding of America was something that had a different meaning than in other countries.

*Q: Did you, were there many students going to the United States?*

ROSSIN: There were some. I don't think it was as large as in some other countries. I know we saw the manifestation of it when the government shut down. I think it was 1996, if I remember correctly, and the consulate was closed and all those students were stuck back home during Christmas time and couldn't get their visas renewed. It must've been 1995–1996, but I don't know what the numbers were.

*Q: At any rate there wasn't a significant group, say, going to business school or that sort of thing?*

ROSSIN: No. They went to Spain or they went to the UK or they went to France or you know, they went around Europe, basically. Or they stayed in their own country. There were some who had been to the United States to business school and those kinds of things, learning modern methods, but it was not a remarkable phenomenon.

*Q: Was the European Union the European Union when you were there?*

ROSSIN: Yes.

*Q: How did you observe Spain fitting into Europe?*

ROSSIN: Well, you had big countries and small countries in Europe and of course, France and Germany, the UK, although they are always a little bit of a separate thing, are big countries. Italy jostles around but generally is on the big side and Spain was in between. Population-wise, economy-wise it was between, say, the next one which was the and then the four big ones so they jostled around a lot to become one of the big countries.

They liked to think of themselves as the Germans of the South, as being more disciplined than the Italians, for example, but their real relationship at that time with the European Union was making sure they kept their share, which was somewhat over 50 percent of the total of the cohesion funds of the European Union. It's basically European Union transfers of money to the poorer countries of the EU for development, and Spain was all over highways being constructed, roadways, ports, airport improvements, infrastructure of every sort. Always EU signs, Spanish government EU signs and the place was booming partly because of that.

I had been at the Maastricht Summit in 1992 when the EU was formed, in fact, some of the European communities—and I remember being there from the embassy watching this happen and all that was there for in 1992 was to make sure Spain kept its 50-whatever percent it was of the total that it got from this cohesion fund, the other countries being Portugal, Ireland, and Greece was the fourth one that got it. I know the Spanish were very nervous, this came later, but I know they were extremely nervous and I don't know how this worked out but it can't help them with the expansion of the EU to all these countries that are genuinely much, much poorer than Spain. Spain benefited hugely from this and they kind of developed the dole mentality, frankly, a little bit of that it was hard to get off.

*Q: Did you get any feel for the Franco-Spanish relationship?*

ROSSIN: The Franco-Spanish relationship was fine. It was nothing special about it but to be honest, a lot of it was dominated by, really a lot of it was dominated by the issue of trying to manage ETA because of course ETA spans the boundary. It's also in the southwestern corner of France. Spain was still kind of carrying in a way the baggage of its reputation from the Franco era and you had a lot of these ETA people who were using France basically as a safe haven from Spain.

One of the processes that was in fact evolving and has continued to evolve was France becoming more and more collaborative with the Spanish on police measures and intelligence sharing and all the rest of that on ETA. There were actually a couple of big arrests that took place, and they continue to take place. Other than that, the real relationship that was important to the Spanish was with Germany, which was probably more important in the EU at that particular moment, I think, in economic terms. That's when Kohl was the prime minister. The chancellor and Kohl loved González, although Kohl was a conservative and Gonzalez was a socialist. Kohl loved González because in 1986, I guess it was, when there was a cruise missile crisis, González had come in and made supportive public statements of Kohl about deploying Pershing cruise missiles in Germany and it was like an imprimatur from somebody. Who could question Felipe González' credentials? He had been anti-NATO, he was of the Left. I mean he was a person of real credentials and it had really helped out Helmut Kohl in a very difficult moment and Kohl never forgot it. So not only did Kohl love González; Kohl just automatically disliked anybody who was González' rival and he once referred to what Aznar looks like, and he once said about Aznar, he looks like a policeman with that mustache.



German and Spanish relations actually suffered after González lost and Aznar came in because Kohl just didn't have time for this guy and that was the relationship, that was the basis of the relationship, and the relationship between Germany and Spain was a little like the relationship between Argentina and Peru. The Peruvians like to think they are junior Argentinians, but the Argentinians don't really think a whole lot of the Peruvians at all. It was a little bit like that. Spain had some, there were difficult personal times. There was a difficult relationship time. They had the EU presidency at the end of 1995. There was the Trans-Atlantic Charter that was done between the United States and the European Union, and President Clinton came to Spain in December of 1995 and did the meeting that they do with the EU, regular EU meeting, and they signed this. You know, it was a fairly high-level thing.

The other thing that happened, of course, was that Dayton was launched in this period. Actually, it was sort of a small thing but because I had known Tony Lake working at the White House, I was kind of able to do sort of a little lobbying. It was right after I had arrived, but they actually decided to visit Spain in addition to the countries they would normally visit, in a sense when you were—the countries that really mattered in a sense, and as they were launching and going around doing the process they eventually led to the launch of the Dayton process and the end of the war in Bosnia. So, Lake and Holbrooke and all those people came, and what was interesting was their host was Javier Solana, who was the Spanish foreign minister, but on his way out, and who had a very, very iffy reputation in the United States because he had been there marching against NATO and doing that kind of thing. He was a socialist from the Spanish Socialist Party.

When they were looking for a new secretary general for NATO I can't remember who else they looked at, but there were problems with all the candidates that first came up, and they came to the United States one day and said, "Well, what about Solana? What do you think?" And, there were some people who said, "Don't say good things about him because there is a lobby who are all these communists and socialists." But he was actually somebody we said, "Well, there are pluses and minuses," but on the whole we thought he'd be a pretty good NATO secretary general, and lo and behold, he got the job. I always felt that in some small measure I helped make Solana NATO secretary general. He thought so, actually. He always thought afterwards that he never would have been secretary general if it hadn't been for me and so we've always been friends.

*Q: How did Dayton and the post-Dayton—did the Spanish jump in with troops or were they helpful at all?*

ROSSIN: They went in with troops. They went in with troops to Mostar which had a special administration at that time. They also had the Mostar administrator which was an EU function. It was going on when I got there. There were two people. The second was the mayor of Valencia. I don't remember now who the first one was. And then it went to somebody else. And they had a lot of Spaniards who went over there as what they called MSU [Multinational Special Unit—part of the Spanish Guardia Civil], that was this sort

of gendarmerie type of paramilitary for riot control and peacekeeping. They sent some troops over. I don't remember how many though.

*Q: Did they jump in willingly?*

ROSSIN: Yes, they were happy to send troops and the Spanish military was happy to go and it was not controversial, unlike the Gulf, for example, where it was controversial in many places. I mean ground troops. It was not controversial for the Spanish to send troops in a NATO mission to Bosnia. Everybody else was doing it too. There must've been thirty countries when I first started out. It was controversial to send *guardia civil*, not from a political point of view but I remember I went to Aznar at one point when we got a request to see if we could get more and this was when I was chargé d'affaires, which I was for my last year, and I went to Aznar and I said, "Well we have a request for more *guardia civil* because you know you've only got six or seven countries that have that kind of capability." He said, "Well, don't ask me for more *guardia civil*. I can send more, don't ask me for five more *guardia civil*. I'd prefer five thousand more troops. The troops are always in their barracks. Nobody knows when they're there or when they're not but when we have *guardia civil*. I've got people in San Sebastian saying, 'Where's my *guardia civil* on the corner when ETA's out there doing their thing?' " That was the controversy; it was a resources issue but not political. They were in Kosovo as well.

*Q: Did you get any feel for the Spanish embassy in Washington and its effectiveness?*

ROSSIN: I did and it didn't seem to be very effective. I've noticed this also about Spanish diplomats in other places. Oftentimes they tended to appoint cultural people as their ambassadors and even the diplomats tended to be very culturally oriented, which was fine in some ways but in Washington you really have to work a lot of political circles also at the same time, and the Spanish embassy was one of those embassies that seemed to think all you needed to do was go visit the desk officer at the State Department, kind of like you would do. Even in Madrid you couldn't do that, so, you certainly can't do that in Washington. The desk officer doesn't matter. So, they were not particularly effective.

They sent a much more effective ambassador afterwards, a guy named Javier Rupérez who was the president of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee equivalent. He was an excellent ambassador, he was a Foreign Service officer who had become a member of parliament, but the embassy was not very effective. I visited with them a couple of times when I came back and didn't find much going on.

*Q: Washington is an extremely complex place to play.*

ROSSIN: I don't envy foreign diplomats here at all.

*Q: No, because you get different seats of power; though departments don't talk together; the Treasury, the Pentagon, the State Department, the Senate, and the House.*

ROSSIN: Well, the other thing is that when you are ambassador in a foreign country, maybe with a couple of exceptions I mean, you know, you go see the president of the country periodically and you can go see them in many countries when you need to see them. Most foreign ambassadors in the United States see him when they present their credentials and when they say their farewell and maybe at the Christmas party, and I think that's probably hard to explain back home sometimes, I would imagine.

*Q: Were there any—you were there from 1990?*

ROSSIN: I was there from 1995 to 1998.

*Q: Were there any particular issues between the United States and Spain?*

ROSSIN: There were some Middle East peace process issues. There were no particular issues between the United States and Spain during that period that were troubling. I mean, the most troubling issue that came up was with King Juan Carlos; there was a King Carlos Award for Contributions to Peace or something. I don't remember exactly what it was called now and it was done by a commission. But you know, the King actually had passed off on it. It was always said to be a foundation and I'm sure all the people who sat on the award committee were government officials, and they gave an award to a journalist who was one of these propagators of the organ theft business that was going on back in the 1990s. This was some propaganda thing that had been originated in Indian newspapers by the KGB [USSR's Committee for State Security] actually, probably in the 1980s, and it was picked up and some journalist who had been huge on propagating this thing was awarded this for a series of stories on American organ theft from Central American children and stuff like that.

Well, I went in and I said, "You know, this is going to be a serious issue with our bilateral relationship." Washington didn't like it either. It was way over the top. Why they did it, I don't know. They would say, "Oh, it's a private foundation." I said, "You work for the government. Don't give me that. I don't want to hear it anymore. We're not going to look at it. We just simply refuse to look at it the way you're talking, telling us to look at it."

They did give the award. It was small but it wasn't demonstrative of anti-Americanism, although there was an anti-American streak in the Spanish political and cultural life. It was demonstrative rather simply of what I would call a sense of shared values or shared experience. You know, when we did that business of Freedom Fries and all that stuff you know, that was sort of almost purposeful. I mean, people were mad but they knew they were mad. They were doing it because they wanted to vent off their anger at the French. It was something very specific and, frankly, you've got the normal level of feelings about the French. When the Spanish did that it was almost like a stick in your eye "just because," for no particular reason. You know, just sort of have an instant stick in the eye, but other than that there was nothing else.

We had a very successful NATO Summit, we had good cooperation on Middle East issues, we cooperated on Algeria, we cooperated even on Equatorial Guinea for what there was out there, and we cooperated on things regarding Iraq to the extent that there was stuff at that period. It was kind of a dead period. And we cooperated a lot on things regarding the Balkans. They were very helpful within the NATO context. So was really a pretty easy period.

*Q: Did any of the islands play any role in the naval things?*

ROSSIN: No, the naval issues were all, I mean we had a navy base at Rota and we had an air base at Moron. They operated. I mean, there was no real controversy one way or the other. I was co-chairman of the binational committee that managed the bases, and mostly the only things that would come up were basically the United States wanting more, better status for people and for their dependents, and them wanting to squeeze a little more money out of it. The long-term historical trend was shutting down all the American bases in Spain, but after they shut down the Torrejón Airbase near Madrid and some of the others, it had receded very much to a distant plan.

The one thing that was interesting that we were trying to get, the Spanish had extremely restrictive rules on nuclear ship access and we were working constantly to get more nuclear ship access, partially because one of the ports that our ships didn't have access to was one of the three or four ports in the entire network in the Mediterranean that could take the largest nuclear aircraft carriers alongside, and also they were nice ports for liberty for the troops. And from a Spanish point of view, there was a huge amount of money in this. There were three ports: in Palma they could moor offshore, Barcelona they could moor offshore, and I think Rota, itself, the naval base at Rota. We wanted to get Tarragona which was where you could come alongside, and we wanted to get Valencia. I mean, there were a whole series of places. It was actually a very good location for American ships to come in and the U.S. Navy wanted to send in nuclear ships.

We were finally able to leverage out, I think, three or four more ports during the time I was there. We tried every argument, but the argument that ultimately worked was to bring officials from Valencia, for example, to Barcelona or Palma when there was a U.S. Navy ship in port and let them see a carrier battle group with about eight thousand soldiers each spending a hundred dollars a day in port and all of the services. They wanted some of that, too. At one time the foreign ministry tried to rebuke the United States for doing that and we said, Well, this is a free country. They can make up their minds. It's not our problem; it's your problem. That was what leveraged agreement over additional ports, actually.

*Q: You were mentioning how with the Spanish there was sort of this residual not connecting as much to the United States, you know, and allowing reporters to do business. It reminds me a bit of the relations with Sweden in a way in the same way. The Swedes, okay, but we never either fought them or allied with them.*

ROSSIN: Even there I think it was different between Spain and Sweden because there are Swedish-Americans. They're not very many Spanish-Americans. Very few, I mean there are like twenty-five thousand Spanish-Americans or something, which is nothing.

*Q: Speaking of Spanish-Americans, did the Spanish-American War rankle at all leading up to the hundredth anniversary?*

ROSSIN: It was the beginning of a long period of difficulty is kind of how it was. In fact, the anniversary of the Spanish-American War was coming along just at the time I was leaving Spain and there was a lot of, you know, sort of thought given about how to manage—

The Spanish-American War in the end didn't become as significant an issue as people expected. There was a lot of nervousness about that. The media culture in Spain, the intellectual culture and some of the political culture was of the nature that could have expected people to promote that kind of thing. But I think that certainly the media had not improved very much but I think the political culture had moved beyond Franco sensitivities, and Spain itself moved so far so fast from the Franco-era sensitivities that I think it lost some of its relevance, basically.

*Q: Was Portugal at all an issue?*

ROSSIN: No. Portugal is to Spain as Belgium is to France, except that it is not breaking up as fast. Portugal is not a Mediterranean country. Portugal is an Atlantic country and Spain is a Mediterranean country so they have their issues about their own relationship but they are modest, and they had to do with water and things like that. I never visited Portugal. I wanted to go to visit with them but never got over there. We very rarely had any interaction with the embassy in Lisbon. I mean, there weren't common issues that came up. Occasionally, we would have a CODEL [congressional delegation] or something and that was about it. It was not much.

*Q: What about the North African relationship?*

ROSSIN: Well, first of all, of course the issue that came up periodically was Gibraltar. And that plays into the North African relationship with Melia. Gibraltar would come up because, my own conclusion and I knew nothing about Gibraltar to speak of when I went there, but because Gibraltar would keep coming up and the Spanish would keep it alive, I actually presumed when I went in that the Spanish were just trying to grab it, and they didn't have any right to it, and the Gibraltarians didn't want to be part of Spain and had been a part of Britain since 1700, and on and on and on.

Personally, as I did a lot of research into it trying to learn about it and read some of the background. I came to the conclusion that the Spanish actually had a fairly good claim on Gibraltar, especially where the rock itself was, and probably the British had simply squatted on the land where the isthmus is, where the airport is. It was pretty obvious that

they had, and also, I think the Spanish had a fair amount of merit in their complaints about Gibraltar having turned into a haven of shady finances and so forth, which it had. It was pretty obvious that it had.

Again, the era of Franco, the era as you know of a sort of Spanish dictatorships and all that was gone and now, Spain is part of the European Union, Britain is part of the European Union. But the British of course, had this assumption that the United States would just simply back up their position, and it became an issue because during the time I was there, there was a redefinition of NATO command areas. Naples Atlantic Command of Britain was headquartered in Lisbon, and I don't remember the details, but the question was as to where and how did Gibraltar fit into this new NATO command structure? The Spanish, I don't remember the details, but I know the Spanish had objections to the British position and the British, and you know both embassies. The British wanted the United States to take this up and be on their side in NATO, and the position of the United States was to back the British on this thing. We did a lot of work on it. We actually listened to the Spanish, getting through the static of all their poisonous letters about it, and decided that fundamentally they had a pretty strong case, and we wrote to Washington several times and recommended that we should pull out of this thing. This is really not our fight; that there was merit on both sides and it was time for the British and the Spanish to start working this out, and that's what the State Department actually did, was stay out of it. The British didn't like that very much. It was sort of revenge for the Falklands—revenge for Grenada, actually.

The Spanish themselves were hypocrites because then of course they have the Canary Islands, which in many ways are very comparable to the territories they inherited from the Portuguese crown, when Portugal was made part of Spain in the fourteenth century, and they kept these territories when Portugal later was separated from Spain. I think they probably wish they didn't have them now. It's a little bit like Gibraltar: they really are Spanish places even though they are on the north coast of Africa. They have been part of Spain for six hundred years, the people who live there are Spaniards and like Gibraltar or like the Falkland Islands, you are stuck with it. They don't serve any other purpose but there they are. It complicates their relationship with Morocco, which, normally speaking, is a pretty good relationship.

When I was in the UN Mission in Haiti just last year [2004] there was a joint Spanish-Moroccan brigade that was in Haiti as part of a UN force, and there was a lot of back and forth. When I was there the migrant issues hadn't become as important as they are now. Drug trafficking was growing as a concern but it was really transit through Morocco, not coming from Morocco, for the most part.

*Q: Wasn't the huge wave of migration?*

ROSSIN: It was only beginning. We did have the situation where Spain was learning what it was like to become a migrant target country. There have always been a lot of people coming through Spain but going through on their way to France or somewhere



else. Who wanted to stay in Spain? It was too poor. It didn't have the job opportunities, and now it did and people were staying. But not mostly Africans; they were mostly Arabs and thugs. They were mostly Moroccans from Algeria and stuff. The difference that you see now is people coming from Mali and Senegal and all of these places, but that had not really begun when I was there.

*Q: Take you, yourself, and the embassy. Did you have servants and where did they come from?*

ROSSIN: I had a staff. I had a big house that was the better house of mine and the ambassador's. I had a Polish butler, a young guy probably thirty-two, who had come to Spain a few years beforehand to get out of military service at the end of the communist period. And I had a Filipino cook, an older man. There were a lot of Filipinos in Spain also for language reasons. And then I had a Filipino maid which was just like the Filipino maids anywhere in the world, and I had a Colombian maid who is like a lot of South American immigrants. I think that was it. And then we had a Spanish lady who was the laundress.

*Q: What about Cuba? During the time you were there, how did Cuba play in this?*

ROSSIN: Cuba was important for Spain. Spain was important for Cuba. Spain was important for Cuba because Spain has always had an ongoing relationship because Franco and that stuff doesn't matter. You know, it's natural. I have Cuban relatives and they're Spanish you know, I mean. So, the Cubans had a big diplomatic presence in Spain, and they had a big intelligence presence, it occurred to me, that they had in Spain. There was also a big economic relationship. The Melia Hotels, which is one of the big Spanish companies, had invested a lot in Spanish tourism.

*Q: Well, if you invested in Spain and property—*

ROSSIN: Exactly. That's what it was. The Melia is a big hotel chain. They are big in a lot of countries. They are the biggest Spanish industry, and one or two of their hotels were said to be either on expropriated property in Cuba, or one of them was, actually, an expropriated hotel that had been refurbished, and there was a big dispute. And they also had investments in hotels in Florida, and so forth. I think basically what they did was they ended up disinvesting in the United States rather than having problems with the U.S. government's Cuban Liberty and Democracy Solidarity Act of 1996 [Libertad Act]. I mean, the Libertad Act was not a popular piece of legislation in most foreign countries and not in Spain, either.

*Q: Did Cuba matter much or?*

ROSSIN: No more than any other place. I think there was more interest in Cuba in Spain than there was in some other European countries because of language and family relationships, but Cuba gets thrown in your face everywhere.

*Q: In general working there, did you get the feeling that, not that it was a hostile place, but this was not a collegial place or not?*

ROSSIN: Well, it could be a collegial place. It was on Middle Eastern issues; it was on African issues where there were common interests. It was on Yugoslavia. I found it more collegial than not, but it was definitely not like I suppose it would be working in Britain or some countries, but not like in the Netherlands when I was there. You felt like you were working with partners, you know, and we were allies and, you know, you shared your classified information with them and vice versa.

Spain was not that kind of a place. You were dealing with a foreign country, if I can put it that way. They had their interests that were not always ours, but I have to say when Aznar came, part of that was socialist legacy. When Aznar came in on Cuba, for example, quite unrelated to any American policy toward Cuba, the Partido Popular and Aznar didn't like Castro. They were great on Cuban human rights issues and they were obviously interested in promoting Spanish investment but they had a balanced approach so quite independent of any American policy. In fact, they found the American policy counterproductive, because they found it over the top and it undercut serious efforts, in their viewpoint. The Spanish changed overnight when the Partido Popular came in. That's what happened when the Czechs went from communism to Havel. They became one of the most active countries in Madrid on human rights issues and therefore developed a lot of tensions in the relationship as compared to the one they had previously.

And Aznar had no time whatsoever for Egypt, he didn't have any time for people like Castro. He thought he was a phony. He was a phony of course. He didn't have time for people like that. I thought it was pretty much that he wasn't impressed by celebrities.

*Q: Did Spain take any active interest in the developments in Central Europe or was that just too far away?*

ROSSIN: They took some interest in it. They thought that there were lessons that they could transfer to the Central European countries from their own transition and we encouraged that kind of thing because they had been successful. There was less uptake, perhaps, in Central Europe than there was willingness to offer on the part of the Spanish, but there was some. And they were also active economically. I mean, countries like certain growth in the Spanish economy of internationalization of Spanish investments, and so you have companies like Panasonic and some of the other utility companies and info-tech companies going into Central Europe and buying up the local telephone company and such. They were big on that, just as they were expanding a lot into Latin America and becoming the biggest foreign investors in Latin America. That was the growth period for them.

*Q: How about American investment and connections to Spain?*

ROSSIN: There were some. Hewlett-Packard had an assembly plant; a manufacturing plant, not just assembling like you have in the Caribbean, for computers and printers and so forth. There was other American investment. I don't remember what companies were there but I think Spain was viewed as somewhat of a difficult environment. The legal system was not very—it was extremely slow and it was not deemed to be very reliable and impartial. In fact, when I went to Croatia where the judiciary is also one of the weakest systems there, I was struck by the similarities between them. Spain had a lot of problems with its judiciary. It was the same thing that they did to South America, the heritage was politicized with the two bars. It was very cumbersome.

*Q: Was the digital and computer revolution hitting Spain?*

ROSSIN: These were the days when we still had Wang word processors in the embassy. I had CompuServe but no, I mean Spain was not an advanced country in terms of information technology or was not a cutting-edge country in terms of information technology.

*Q: Had the cruise ship business been taken care of by the time you got there?*

ROSSIN: It had not come up, actually. We are talking now 1995 to 1998. Interestingly, the prosecutor was the prosecutor for Pinochet later on. I could never really figure out the judicial system and the prosecutorial system. It was like they had three or four prosecutors or prosecuting judges. It was that system, investigating judges who handled all the cases. Every case you ever heard of anyway, big cases, Mafia cases, ethics cases, government corruption cases, Pinochet kinds of cases. They seemed to be handling all the cases at the same time. I could never figure out how in a country of thirty million people with a proper judicial system there were like two investigators who directed the entire docket.

*Q: Was there any criminal or a Mafia?*

ROSSIN: I don't really remember that. Maybe it's because the memories are washed out by having served in the Balkans. I don't remember; there were criminals and there was organized crime. There was a guy who was just arrested, for example, a Syrian guy in Spain, I don't remember his name. He was one of the big global arms dealers, but I don't really remember organized crime being a big factor.

There was a lot of drug trafficking. It was transit drug trafficking. Coming in really on the coast line as well as through the airport. At that time Spain and the Netherlands were the two big entry points for drugs from South America, and also heroin and stuff. They became a transit place for all of Europe. There was a lot of activity that we did with DEA and so forth, working with the Spanish, trying to interdict and break up drug rings and so forth. The Spanish were more into it than the Dutch were. The Dutch were ambivalent about drugs and about our approach to drugs, but the Spanish were not. Other than drug

kinds of stuff, I don't remember it being run by the Colombians, no, I don't remember that.

*Q: I remember going back to the 1960s or early 1970s there was concern about in Spain or at least as I heard this that the Germans had bought up the coast along with some of the British.*

ROSSIN: Well, they certainly bought huge amounts of it. I mean, they did.

*Q: Is this still having an effect?*

ROSSIN: It is not a big issue. I mean, it was true. I mean, they finished the job by the time I got there but there are, you know, there are thousands and tens of thousands of Britons, particularly, living down on the coast, down there on the south coast, and you could go down and there were British everything, British pubs. Not necessarily the highest-class Brits either. That was interesting.

And there were Germans, and particularly the island of Majorca had become a place the Germans liked but, you know, there is an evolution in Europe about this. The European local elections, local government elections in Spain and European Parliament elections, and now the European Union except for national level, at the local level of government in the European Parliament, any European Union citizen can vote where they live, so you have German mayors in Majorca because there are so many Germans there as voters. Also, on the coast. There you have huge numbers of Brits voting in the local elections and I think another couple of British local government officials down there as well. No one seemed to care very much about that. In America people would go berserk over that kind of thing. You know, it just shows these people have come along further than we have.

*Q: After that really strenuous and dangerous assignment, where did you go?*

ROSSIN: I came back to Washington. I wanted to go somewhere else as DCM, but I think I'd been out of Washington and I didn't get any snaps on my bids so I ended up bidding on and getting the job right away, the Balkan South Central Europe, the Office of South Central European Affairs in the European Bureau which is the Balkan States, essentially.

*Q: You did it from when to when?*

ROSSIN: I left Spain in 1998 and came back and was back for one year because it was a two-year assignment but I got curtailed out of that to go open the office in Pristina after one year.

*Q: We haven't talked about the state of the Balkans when you took it over and this is 1998 to 1999?*

ROSSIN: It was 1998 to 1999, that's right. When I came in Bob Gelbard was the special envoy, special adviser to the president and secretary for Dayton implementation, and Dayton implementation was still the main issue at that point. Remember, he had been brought in because after one year they didn't have anybody and it wasn't being implemented, basically, and Bob Gelbard is a pretty tough kind of guy. He pushes things fairly hard. He was the special envoy.

I came in as the office director, and the first day I came in, I flew in from Los Angeles overnight the night before, and the next day I flew out to Frankfurt overnight to be the head of the delegation of experts. It was good Foreign Service practice, you know? I read books all the way over on the airline trying to have a clue to what was going on. I knew something about it because I had been working on it, but not all that much. That meeting in Frankfurt, in Bonn, was mostly about Bosnia. That was what the Contact Group, which was the group of Russians, the Americans, the Brits, Germans, the French, and the Italians. It was actually at the special envoy level mostly about Bosnia, but Kosovo was also an issue, and Gelbard was the envoy just because Kosovo would come up, and he was the envoy so he took that one on as well. There was a little bit of discussion. I don't remember what was done concretely; the meeting was extremely long. It was a good introduction to Contact Group diplomacy on that trip, which would just go on forever, but then very early on in my time, before I really had my feet on the ground and I really knew any of the players and knew what was going on, I think, within the second week, Bob Gelbard was essentially fired by Secretary Albright as the envoy for Kosovo and told to just stick to Bosnian implementation.

*Q: Do you know why?*

ROSSIN: Because it was deemed that he had a certain way of working which was very aggressive and very confrontational with all, and that was great for Bosnia because you have all these Serbs and the Croats, and they are all crooks and all the rest of that stuff, and nothing is moving, even in the high level and, so forth. He didn't get out there and really do that. That was what it took to make things move in Bosnia. That was not, however, necessarily the approach that was going to prevent the conflict from breaking out in Kosovo and bring the Serbs around to stop doing what they were doing to the people of Kosovo. And things were in fact deteriorating. The Serbs were starting the first of their two main offenses, which was in the fall of 1998, so it was decided.

Dick Holbrooke did not like Bob Gelbard. And Dick Holbrooke already was out of the government by this time so had a lot of influence, and he basically caused Gelbard, I think he recommended, that Gelbard be removed, which he was, and he recommended that Chris Hill, who was at that time the ambassador to Macedonia, be appointed as the special envoy for going back and forth and doing some kind of shuttle diplomacy, to decrease tensions about Kosovo and find a formula for the way forward that would give autonomy to it.

That was within two weeks, and I was then, as the officer director told, “You’ll be the principal backup for Chris Hill here in Washington as he does his shuttle diplomacy.” That was fine. I would do whatever they told me to do. What did I know? It was a difficult job because I still worked for Gelbard on Bosnia. I worked for Dick Schifter who was the guy doing the Balkan stability, what was that called? Stability pact?

*Q: He was involved in human rights.*

ROSSIN: Yes. But he was running SECI [Southeast Europe Cooperation Initiative], which was a precursor of the stability pact, doing various small, confidence-building projects between the countries of the Balkans. I didn’t deal with him very much and he was not helpful when I did deal with him. He was a lot of high maintenance for very little gain. And then, of course, I worked for Marc Grossman, who was the assistant secretary, who was in fact the person I really worked for, so I worked for a bunch of different people. And they would all ask me to do stuff all the time and it was a very, very schizophrenic kind of a job.

But it mostly became Kosovo pretty quickly because I arrived at the beginning of July and at the time I arrived nobody in the U.S. government had any expectation or desire to become involved in Kosovo in the way that we did become involved in Kosovo within a year. There was no inclination for military engagement, no inclination really to be more of a diplomatic engagement than would be required to manage, to tamp down, a growing potential for conflict. Kosovo had been left out of the Dayton process where all the other republics—I think it wasn’t a republic although it had all the prerogatives of a republic, it was not a republic. So, it didn’t get anything. That was one of the reasons.

I started working for several people and I think it was in late July or early August that the first wave of conflict in Kosovo had started with the Serbian army and police going around and burning villages, and the Kosovo Liberation Army [KLA] emerging as an organization.

*Q: Did the Kosovo Liberation Army, its quick development, come as a surprise?*

ROSSIN: It did develop quickly. It didn’t come as a surprise to me because I had no prior expectations, but to others it came as a surprise. Nobody knew what it was. At some point in maybe like April or May of 1998 Dick Holbrooke had been out in the region and had met with some guy who was supposedly a Kosovo Liberation Army person, a long beard who turned out afterwards to be something of a literary eccentric rather than a KLA guy.

When I took the first trip, I think it was, out to Bonn or maybe it was the second trip I took with Gelbard to Bonn, we met in Bonn with a guy named Bukoshi everybody knew. He was the prime minister of the Kosovo government that had existed for some time. He was a rival of Rugova who was the president. He was living in Kosovo. They had had a falling-out at some point over the years, and he was quite wealthy because he had access to all the money and the Kosovars kind of had a tax system, not entirely voluntary, where



they paid for the parallel system of education and health in Kosovo, and Bukoshi promised to bring along a guy who was in from the Kosovo Liberation Army.

It was sort of a great thing. We thought we were going to meet a real KLA commander from the field and we met up with this guy and he didn't say anything. Everyone was kind of tired and I was extremely tired. I had been up for hours and hours and hours and I finally pulled out my cigarettes; I just couldn't stand it anymore, and so I pulled one out. Immediately all the Kosovars lighted up cigarettes and they all started talking because they like to smoke, and this guy started talking, and he was showing us pictures of operations in the field, and he was a retired JNA [Yugoslav National Army] I think colonel from the Yugoslav army. He was ethnic Albanian but he was from the Yugoslav army. Later it turns out—well, first of all, the guy was assassinated in Tirana in September of 1998 in a fight because it turned out he wasn't from the KLA, he was from Bukoshi's faction, which was something called the FARK [Armed Forces of the Republic of Kosovo]. And the real KLA and the FARK tried to fight a battle against the Serbs together during the 1998 offensive, and these guys fled the field, and one of the KLA commander's brothers was killed, and a short while later this guy was assassinated in Albania. He seemed like a nice guy. Ahmet Krasniqi was his name. And that just shows how low the knowledge and understanding was of the KLA at that point.

And then we drew a much bigger understanding of it when the Kosovo diplomatic observer mission was set up in Kosovo, which I think was also in maybe August. I think it was already there, small, and then it grew in July and August, with Americans in Kosovo going around and observing conflict, observing combat. There was also an EU mission and there was a small group of Russians who were there as well, and they all worked together, and they would go out basically and be observers of whatever was going on.

*Q: Was Bill Walker there at the time?*

ROSSIN: No. That was then transformed into an OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe] mission in October, and then Bill Walker went out to head that, but this was headed by a guy named Shawn Byrnes. He was a great guy, very much a tough lawyer. They went out and did some amazing things and people got shot at, and the local staff later on became the core of our local staff at the U.S. office in Pristina. They had some amazing stories to tell.

*Q: Where is Shawn?*

ROSSIN: Shawn Byrnes is retired. His wife, I think, is also retired. She was also a Foreign Service officer and they're both retired and they are around here somewhere but I'm actually not in contact with them anymore. Shawn has great stories to tell.

*Q: The KLA, in a way this is probably a very new phenomenon—I mean, arms are readily available almost anywhere now.*

ROSSIN: Certainly, in the Balkans, and certainly after the 1997 meltdown in Albania they never moved.

*Q: So that sort of force can be created rather quickly. It's a different world.*

ROSSIN: Kosovo Albanians, Albanians have kind of a martial culture and they were operating in an environment where, you know, the KLA was formed. We found out some facts about that when they were demobilized because the International Organization for Migration handled their assembly points, where all of the KLA members came under the demobilization agreement. About ten thousand came. Some of them were not really KLA members, they were just looking for a job, but most of them were.

What was interesting was the KLA itself had been founded by some people who were still around back in 1996 or 1995, but it was before the conflict came into the public eye, and they carried out a couple of raids on police stations and things of that nature. What we found afterwards was people were asked in the assembly points, "When did you join the KLA?" This was in September of 1999 when there was the demobilization of the KLA and they were asked, "When did you join the KLA?" and the KLA only became a factor that anybody ever saw at all after the spring of 1998. There were ten-thousand, eleven thousand people registered in those assembly camps. Leave out a thousand who were just trying to get a job, ten thousand of them, and 287 people had said they had joined the KLA before 1998, so it was all after 1998. They had a little base to build itself on and far and away the largest group of people joining was in reaction to the Serb offensive, which was a self-defense ploy, basically against the Serb military.

*Q: You mentioned Gelbard as confrontational. What did you observe when he was, when you were working with him?*

ROSSIN: I worked with him a lot in Washington. I only traveled with him to Bosnia two or three times because then, frankly, I got pulled away to Kosovo things. During that period when I traveled with him and it was, you know, stories were legion, when others traveled with him from my office all the time, and even in Washington, he was very, very aggressive. He was put in charge to try to make Dayton happen. Dayton was essentially a process of making all kinds of really shady people among all the ethnic groups in Bosnia do things they didn't really want to do that were the right thing to do. None of them wanted to do it.

The high representative's office was not very strong at that time. The high representative at the time when I came in was Carlos Westendorp. He was the former Spanish foreign minister that I knew. He would go visit his girlfriend four days a week in Spain. So, nothing was moving forward on Dayton implementation after a year, so the approach we thought was to get a very tough guy, and Gelbard is a very tough guy. He had a reputation, and well earned, to go out there and kind of kick ass and take names and eventually push, and that's what he did. And the times I did go out he was very, very,

very, very direct to all of these different people, telling them what they needed to do and telling them that they would feel the lash in one way or another if they didn't do it, pushing the high rep. [high representative], Bonn Powers, to remove people and all the different things the high rep. could do in Bosnia.

*Q: The "high rep" being?*

ROSSIN: The high representative: it's not a UN, it's an ad hoc thing. There's a thing called the Peace Implementation Council which are all the guarantors of Dayton and they appoint the high representative, and for a long time it was Paddy Ashdown. I mean, there have been a succession of them. And at the time it was, there had been Carlos Westendorp who was a Spaniard, and then Wolfgang Petritsch came out there, but that was after Kosovo. None of them was all that distinguished until afterwards.

*Q: You had the UN—*

ROSSIN: The UN was there, the OSCE was in Bosnia, NATO was in Bosnia.

*Q: It went from bad to worse, it was almost counterproductive it was so ineffective; you would think that it would be*

ROSSIN: When I was head of the U.S. Office at Pristina, at a certain point Dick Holbrooke came out. The war ended there and we opened up in July, maybe it was like September or October, maybe it was earlier than that, August or September. Dick Holbrooke came out and we organized a dinner for him with the special representative of the secretary general of the UN Mission, Bernard Kouchner, with the military commander of the Kosovo force, the NATO force, who was Mike Jackson, the British general and with his deputy, and maybe with the representative of the OSCE. The OSCE was one of the pillars of the UN mission in Kosovo, and then I was there. I was there as the American ambassador if you will, or the American head of office and Dick [Holbrooke] said, you know, the most remarkable thing about this dinner—how we were all getting things done. We were all working together as a team. And Dick said not only because everybody was working as a team out here, we were making progress and stuff, but he said:

“This simply could not have happened in Bosnia when I went out there after Dayton. They didn't sit down at the same table. If they did sit down at the table, they were at each other's throats and they couldn't stand each other, they were not working together. You know, it was a horrible unproductive, counterproductive paragon of international presence, and when the Kosovo international presence was set up, there was a real effort to learn lessons from Bosnia, and so the UNSRSG [United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary General] was put, on top of the entire civilian presence of the EU and the OSCE and the UN, and then to have the military with the KFOR [NATO Mission in Kosovo], you couldn't take

them all literally and then you had to be depending on personalities to work all together.”

*Q: What was the problem in Bosnia, assuming this wasn't your thing particularly, but was this personality or was it just that you had the UN terribly circumscribed by its membership?*

ROSSIN: The UN [in Bosnia] only had a certain mandate; they only had certain tasks. This was not like Kosovo or even like the mission in Haiti. It was the international police that was their main function, actually, if I remember. I think they had a little bit about civil administration but not much, and that was about it. This was a big deal at that time, but all the institution building was under the OSCE mission. That was separate. Then you had the military out there, obviously guaranteeing security and so forth. That was under NATO command. Then you had the high representative who was there, and you had the EU doing some economic activities, and then you had the high representative who was there theoretically over Dayton implementation, which ought to encompass all these things, but nobody had bought into it and it was not formal at all.

And then you had the Americans and other governments who were there and had very strong programs of their own, and very strong equities of their own, without any kind of structure to carry forward those things. I only saw it a little bit, but apparently it was horrible, and again when I went to Kosovo, one of the issues we found for example in Kosovo was that people who had served in Bosnia by and large were not the people to have in Kosovo. Everything they brought with them was wrong.

And of course, Bosnia was an “independent country” but of course, it wasn't really at all, whereas Kosovo was actually governed by the United Nations.

*Q: You were moved to Bosnia and you say you were in the Balkans. You really didn't touch Macedonia, Romania—?*

ROSSIN: Romania was not part of my area. Romania was part of the North Central Europe Office. I had Bulgaria and all the countries and entities that made up the former Yugoslavia. Most of my countries were not countries, it seemed. Albania was coming out of the meltdown of 1997 and there were issues going on there, including a major, major al Qaeda terrorist effort that broke out in late 1998 that caused the embassy to practically go into a huge bunker mentality. I had Bulgaria, which right before I arrived went through a bit of a meltdown period. But also, they came out of it with a decent government and I never did much of anything. I never visited Bulgaria.

*Q: Albania—what was the problem?*

ROSSIN: Albania was so poor and Albania was coming out of the Enver Hoxja period, and then Albania kind of took off nicely—in the sense that who expected anything from Albania—and it kind of was moving forward after the end of communism. And then what

happened in 1996 and 1997 was there was an enormous spread of these pyramid schemes, financial fraud in Albania, and everybody in the state and everybody in Albania invested their money. They were so unsophisticated coming out of this isolated period that they had had under the Communists, that everybody invested their money in these pyramid schemes. They were classic pyramid schemes. They lost their life savings. So, the country was operating almost from one day to the next. Everybody lost all their money. This caused huge uproar and that caused, in turn, people to essentially pillage and loot their own country so buildings were broken into and the copper wiring was torn out. The country was set back an awfully long time. The military just collapsed and disintegrated. The armories were broken into and all of the weapons, of which they still had huge numbers of weapons from the Hoxia period because they always thought they were going to be invaded by the United States or Russia or Yugoslavia were all dispersed and those weapons showed up on the international arms markets and in Kosovo and elsewhere.

The country was recovering from that when I showed up there for the first time in the summer of 1998. But they had an extremely poisonous political duo in Albania that have oscillated really. I think now Albania has finally passed that. Fatos Nano, who was the Socialist leader, the successor of the communist regime and then a guy named Sali Berisha, who was a heart doctor and he was a right winger if you will, anti-Communist, anti-socialist also. Now he's now the prime minister. That's the guy who all you had to do was just touch him a little bit and he'd kind of wind up and there was no limit to his sort of winding up and he was crazy. He's certifiable, I think, actually, unless he has suddenly mellowed out. I went there when I was in Zagreb at the end of my time as ambassador when I was named as the deputy assistant secretary, and so I went down and visited all the countries in the region so I can update. I met with Fatos Nano, with the DCM and Berisha was the prime minister at the time. He and I talked about how the Albanians are cleaning up corruption at the airport, and I knew that this guy was living corruption. So, he was telling me about all the things they were going to do to clean up corruption and the guy is corruption. They've got this corruption and you've got this crazy vengeful tradition for a long time. They are coming out of it now.

*Q: When you were going to Bosnia—*

ROSSIN: The first trip I took was not to Bosnia; it was actually to Cologne or Bonn on one of these Contact Group meetings, this Contact Group was an ongoing process. I went to Bosnia maybe three weeks after I started the job with a delegation with Gelbard and with various military officers. One of these delegations where every agency has a representative on it.

*Q: You were saying that there is something special about contact diplomacy.*

ROSSIN: About Contact Group diplomacy. It is something I work on with Darfur now as a private citizen and I recommend it. We need more structured diplomacy on Darfur, so I am recommending it. I've been pushing and lobbying that there ought to be a Contact

Group for Sudan, for Darfur. I do this in spite of my better judgment because it is a little bit like democracy. It is terrible, except everything else is worse, and Contact Groups, you know, have one meeting after another.

This was the Russians, the Americans, Brits, the French, the Germans and Italians were the Contact Group on Kosovo, first on Bosnia and then it evolved to Kosovo as well.

I held the job as office director for South Central Europe for eleven and a half months. I took twenty-four transatlantic trips in that period, of which probably fifteen were to Contact Group meetings, where you had enormously wordy sessions. The Russians were always a pain in the ass. We always tried to avoid, but you could hardly avoid, getting into a word-smithing session about the joint communiqué—which there had to be a joint communiqué, God forbid there wouldn't be such a thing—and it would get diverted into word-smithing about the joint communiqué rather than actually trying to make a decision about anything.

But it had its advantages, and also it was a six-sided thing. It wasn't just everybody and the Russians. The Russians were definitely the farthest away from the center of gravity but, we were on one side, the Brits were even more so, the French might be apologists for the Serbs, the Germans—the Italians would just be talking about what was going to be the meal at the next meeting, that kind of thing, they were very poor.

But it had the virtue of keeping everybody in the mainstream, just by the fact of constantly meeting, of keeping the nose to the grindstone on a diplomatic process for the Balkans. And in the long run it actually achieved some things. It is what we're missing on Darfur now, to take one example. But it was extremely tiring. The only advantage is that I'm still living off those frequent flier miles.

*Q: Speaking of Bosnia—*

It's hard for me to say very much about Bosnia because I only worked on it for a short time; people in my office did and I just didn't do it. At the time there was progress being made. In the Republika Srpska [province of Bosnia] there was Biljana Plavsic was prime minister. This is the woman who later pled guilty to war crimes and is now serving a sentence in I think a Swedish prison. She was sort of the person that we were promoting, not because we didn't care about her war crimes, but because you have to work with what you've got. At that time she could move things forward; she had broken with SDS [Serb Democratic Party] which was the nationalist party of Karadzic. She had broken with them and was trying to at least appear to be trying to push forward on Dayton implementation. Also Milorad Dodik was the other Bosnian Serb leader at the time. He ran another political party that was opposed to the SDS, which was the Karadzic party. There was a little bit of the thing where the enemy of my enemy is my friend, but it was also that in some ways Plavsic and Dodik were actually trying to move forward some reforms in the Republika Srpska and kind of playing along in terms of building up Bosnia and Herzegovina's central institutions and cooperation with the high rep.



So that was actually, you know, very promising. But what you find in the Balkans, and certainly in the case of Bosnia more so even than Kosovo, is the illusion of progress oftentimes, rather than real progress, or progress that is made but it is so fragile that you know the moment there's a change it all just disappears. Also, I think the international community is not without its faults, e.g. inconstancy. You know you have international judges. It takes a long time to develop and prosecute a case. An international judge goes on leave all the time, just when the case is coming up, or the person decides not to renew and a new judge comes in and they start over from scratch. There were a lot of different reasons why progress was very slow.

My own belief is that the Dayton Accords themselves were a good formula for ending the fighting and in a sense freezing the conflict in place. Nobody won or lost that war, really. In fact the defeat of the Bosnian Serbs was prevented by the Dayton Accords because under Operation Storm the Croats were basically sweeping across the Republika Srpska.

What it is not good for was building the Bosnia-Herzegovinian state. You had the two entities, the Republika Srpska and the Federation. The Federation is Croats and Bosniacs, who don't really see any common interests. On the Croat side, progress was being made at that point in pushing back on the really reactionary Mafioso Bosnian Croats, but that didn't really get done fully until after the Croatian government changed in 2000 when Tudjman died. It was very illusory progress, I would say.

*Q: Did you get any feel for the venality of the Bosnian apparatus?*

ROSSIN: Directly, not much. My colleagues who worked on it did. One of my favorite colleagues who shall remain unnamed but is actually working in Bosnia, his term for the people that they dealt with, universally, it didn't matter whether Croats, Bosniacs, or Serbs, was "lying sacks of shit." And that pretty much did really sum up the people that you were dealing with. I'm sorry to say that in Bosnia they were liars, they were all corrupt. There is no tradition of any other thing and every effort of building a new Bosnia pretty much was undercut by corruption and by venality of every sort.

And the Croats were nothing but a huge mafia ring. I mean there is timber in that place and there were these massive illegal logging operations. The public utilities were all being just pillaged and ransacked by the authorities. If things were broken down to the entity level, then the entity leaders would just ransack their part of it, that kind of thing. It was awful.

*Q: I was interviewing Janice Elmore recently. She was doing a political tour at the UN at NATO and I asked her, "Well, what about the role of the French?" And she said, "Well, in our embassy in Sarajevo they considered the French to be one of the four warring powers."*

ROSSIN: Personally, not much experience with it but that was certainly the reputation. The French were strongly reputed at one time to have given Karadzic—there was a raid that was really going to capture Karadzic and they sort of tipped him off.

*Q: You went to Kosovo?*

ROSSIN: I sort of started working on Kosovo. It became 90 percent of my job, if you will, after a month or so. I did this job for a year. It really took off. In 1998 there was this first Serb offensive. I went out to Kosovo and then I went with Dick Holbrooke on the delegation that went to Belgrade to negotiate with Milosevic and the Serbs about being under threat of NATO airstrikes. This was in October of 1998 that they stopped doing what they were doing, and they accepted an international presence which ended up being the OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation In Europe], Kosovo Verification Mission. So that took off at that time and then my work was almost entirely associated with Kosovo. I will say, you know, I traveled with Secretary Albright many times. I met with her a lot. It was a big issue and I became part of her group talking about Kosovo a lot. I traveled with her to Moscow twice; I traveled with her to the region. I did a lot of traveling around myself during the bombing, reaching out to the KLA [Kosovo Liberation Army], reaching out to the Albanians, not so much on the Serb side, others did that.

*Q: We will focus on Kosovo, on Secretary Albright and her attitude as far as towards the planning on the bombing which as you know, took an odd turn in that it was really concentrated on the cities as opposed to being on the military, which seemed actually, rather effective. And then your various dealings there and if you have anything just to tie into Bill Walker's experiences because I have interviewed him so I would like to get the tie in there.*

*Today is the fourteenth of August 2007. In the first place, what was your position when we are talking about Kosovo?*

ROSSIN: At the time I was the director for South-Central European Affairs in the State Department. I don't think I had yet become the chief of mission at the U.S. office in Pristina.

*Q: Let's talk first; one of the questions they ask—was our attitude towards Kosovo heavily media driven, CNN showing the people fleeing from there and all this? Was there a deeper thrust within the State Department?*

ROSSIN: I think there was some element perhaps—Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission, the State Department and military people who were on the ground, EU people and others and I think it was also driven by the dynamic of diplomacy with Milosevic through the fall of, I guess it would be through the fall of 1998 into 1999. In other words, it was not geopolitically driven; it was humanitarian driven, and the humanitarian issue that drove it was not what happened in 1999 but what happened more in 1998 when the

Serbian army and police—well, the VJ [Yugoslav Army] and the police—made their first push through Kosovo in, I guess it would have been July until September. Remember that the first big negotiation about Kosovo under threat of military action by NATO was actually in October of 1998 and was the reaction to the first major Serbian offensive in July and through October of 1998. It was that that led to the formation of the OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission. It was done through the mission that Dick Holbrooke led in October of 1998 to Belgrade. NATO actually at that time was threatening to bomb if Milosevic didn't stop his offensive in Kosovo, and that was also a period where the KLA [Kosovo Liberation Army] was little known, and during the process of that negotiation we began to know something about the KLA, which was something I played a role in because that's how I ended up doing that.

*Q: Let's talk about the KLA. There have been lots of so-called liberation armies. It's sort of a generic thing but some of them absolutely ineffective and some not. How did it come to our attention and how did it become a significant force?*

ROSSIN: It came into being as, I think I mentioned in my last interview, in about 1995 or 1996 maybe. I just don't quite remember but it was in the mid-1990s when in the Drenica area of Kosovo which is sort of between Pristina and Peja, maybe a little bit to the north, there was an attack by a small group on a Serbian police station in that area. So that went on and to some extent the Serbian offensive of 1998 was a reaction to the KLA, to some extent debated by historians. It certainly was disproportionate, whatever it may have been. The KLA really came into its own, and we found this out through the discussions with all the KLA people who came to the assembly centers at the end of the conflict during the demobilization. The KLA really came into being in 1998 and 1999 and it seemed to be very, very, well, it turned from a small group that were perhaps half guerrillas and half criminals—I'm not sure what the distinction would be or this differentiation would be. It turned into what looked to me like sort of half a freedom-fighter movement, if you will, but also more so than that, even a self-defense mechanism by people in these various villages, just as the Serbian army and police were carrying out their offensives through fairly large central and eastern Kosovo areas. The statistics, the census if you will, of the KLA people that assembled in the assembly areas, of whom there were about ten thousand, indicated that just under three hundred had belonged to the KLA prior to January of 1998 by their own statement, and that most of these people had joined the KLA in 1998 and particularly after the summer of 1998 or in 1999. In other words, it seemed to be as much a reactive as a proactive phenomenon.

*Q: What was the Serbian army doing to cause the growth of this?*

ROSSIN: Well, basically in July [or early August] of 1998 the KLA took over the town of Mališevo and then Orahovac. Those are two towns in central and eastern Kosovo, small places. The army reacted and then what the army did was something that obviously they were ready for—I don't know whether they were planning to carry it out, but they were prepared to carry it out—a systematic sweep throughout all of eastern Kosovo. Kosovo is two north-south-running valleys with the mountains going down the middle

and they basically went from north to south in a horseshoe [pattern]. After 1999 they did the same thing and it was actually called Operation Horseshoe; and it was a horseshoe-shaped [operation] where they systematically went through villages burning houses. It was not like Bosnia where you had a war, so you had a lot of artillery damage and pitched-battle damage in buildings and so forth. This was house burning, essentially, and village burning, and forcing people out, and that's what they did in 1998. They systematically went from one place to another. This was all documented and tracked by the Kosovo diplomatic observer mission: our people, EU, and a couple of Russians who were there. That went on until October when they stopped as a result of the negotiation in Belgrade.

*Q: Was it strictly to drive people out or were they doing the thing the Serbs have done in Bosnia and that was ethnic cleansing?*

ROSSIN: In 1998? I'm not clear myself what was going on in 1998, whether it was to drive people out or whether it was just to terrorize. I think it was probably more just to terrorize them and try and snuff out the KLA in its early stages before this rebellion spread. Nineteen ninety-nine was different. Nineteen ninety-nine was clearly a calculated effort by Milosevic to drive people out, not to resettle Serbs in, just to drive people out in order to change the ethnic balance of Kosovo. When you would talk to Milosevic in 1999, he would insist that there were 60 percent [ethnic] Albanians in Kosovo when it was clear there was about 90 or maybe a little bit more than 90 percent Albanians in Kosovo. It became clear when you looked at the pattern, the numbers, the style of the ethnic cleansing that took place in 1999 during the conflict, that what he was doing was in fact erasing a certain number of Albanians from Kosovo. He wasn't killing them all; he was killing a lot in order to terrorize the rest and drive them out, but as they crossed the border into Albania or Macedonia, they would be deprived of their car license plates; they would be deprived of their identity papers. They would be, in a sense, deprived of their identity as residents of Kosovo or former Yugoslav citizens, whatever it is. And it was reaching the number such that it would be 60 percent Albanians in Kosovo; but in 1998 it was a lot less clear.

*Q: As this was going on, what were you getting from the secretary of state and from the White House and from your colleagues in the NSC and all? Was this something that we're going to have to do something about or shucks, this is another Balkan thing?*

ROSSIN: Well, in a sense Kosovo was the unresolved issue of Dayton. Vojvodina [province] didn't want to become independent or anything else, so there was no issue with Vojvodina, so you had this one autonomous province, sort of pseudo-republic that was not dealt with at all at Dayton for various, I think, constitutional reasons. There were actually Kosovars at Dayton outside the fence saying, "What about us?" They were just not dealt with. It was kind of insistence, in that regard.

When I came on board as the South-Central Europe director in about the beginning of July of 1998, there was no particular indication that anything special would be done other

than just diplomacy with regard to Kosovo. I don't think there was any particular—I don't think anybody would have pictured that a year later the UN would be in there, there would have been this NATO bombing and all the rest of it. It grew as a result of what happened in the late summer and fall of 1998. Reporting from the Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission, Shawn Byrnes and his colleagues, many colleagues and then built up to October 1998 when there was the NATO threat of bombing, which was really a humanitarian response, and then the attempted diplomacy that took place by Ambassador Holbrooke, and then you had the OSCE, the verification, and gradually the monitoring of a breakdown and violations of that that led to the events of 1999. It was gradual; it was not.

If I can give you an idea; for example, Secretary Albright became very, very intimate with and involved with Kosovo diplomacy in that year that I was the EUR/SCE director, 1998 to 1999. She and President Clinton went to Moscow at the end of August of 1998 for a summit with Yeltsin. On one of the trips it was just her, I can't remember. One of the trips was just her, the other one with Clinton. I think it was the first one. Anyway, I went out ahead to do the Kosovo part. She came. I found myself to my great surprise and I must say to my great pleasure, it was a thrill, to be invited to a formal dinner that she was having with Foreign Minister Primakov, who was the Russian foreign minister at the time. She brought me along. Well, the conversation topics turned out to be primarily Iraq and Kosovo. This was August. Basically at that time I did probably about 40 percent of the talking in the entire dinner conversation; not because, you know, I was that big of a deal or anything and I didn't know any of the Russians at the table—that's not my area—but rather because the secretary didn't know a lot about Kosovo and her senior people that were with her were the Russian experts, and so Kosovo became a big topic because of what was going on at the moment. I ended up doing a lot of the talking. It just shows that at that particular time she was very interested in it but she didn't know very much about it because it was kind of in a way a new issue, and obviously she became much, much more engaged on it and much more knowledgeable about it fairly quickly but at that particular moment not.

*Q: Did you get any feel for the Russian side that in terms of their blood-brother thing practically and so they were—?*

ROSSIN: Blood brothers, I don't know. There was certainly an affinity between Russia and Serbia, and Serb conservative and defense circles, if you will, in Russia and Serbia. That was apparent. That was characteristic throughout the entire—it's a characteristic up until now, in point of fact. The good fortune that we had was that the two times I went to Moscow with the secretary—the second time was in late January of 1999 when Kosovo was again on the agenda. Both times Milosevic tended to do something in Serbia that made it very, very difficult for the Russians to defend him, so we got off easy, to put it bluntly. In January it was right after the Račak massacre and the way Milosevic handled Račak with the Russians got them mad and that's what allowed Rambouillet [The Rambouillet talks were held to negotiate a settlement between the Federal Republic of

Yugoslavia and a delegation representing the Albanian majority population of *Kosovo*] to take place. He mishandled the Russians.

In August of 1998 it was simply that the Serbian offensive was at its height and was documented as such, and so it became very difficult for the Russians to defend what he was doing. I mean, they could make the larger legal geopolitical, whatever you want to call it, defenses, but what he was actually doing in Kosovo at that moment was pretty indefensible by any definition. So, we were kind of lucky in that regard.

*Q: You have this offensive. How did we react to it?*

ROSSIN: Initially, and it happened right after I started as the South-Central Europe director in the middle of July, the first or second week, the first reaction was an assessment by Secretary Albright and others at the leadership level that we needed a different diplomatic-type approach to Kosovo. Ambassador Gelbard, who was the Balkans envoy and working on Bosnia and Dayton implementation, had a certain style which was a very, very sort of rough kind of diplomatic style, well-suited to Bosnia, what was needed to get those people moving. But the assessment was made, correctly in my view, that that style was not really what was needed to move things forward with regard to Kosovo. For that reason or for whatever reason that it was done, perhaps it was just workload spread, Ambassador Gelbard was taken off the Kosovo account and Ambassador Chris Hill was put onto Kosovo. He was our ambassador in Macedonia. He was asked to do this kind of shuttle diplomacy, trying to come up with a diplomatic package essentially between the Albanians and Belgrade that would defuse the conflict and would also set up a new political regime that was more acceptable to the Albanians and take out the reason for conflict.

*Q: You say “Albanians.” You are meaning—?*

ROSSIN: Kosovar Albanians, nothing to do with Albania.

There was that. At the same time this Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission was set up. This was a cadre of usually short assignments: TDY [temporary duty] FSOs and Civil Service people, some military people, a variety of different people who went out to Kosovo, and the EU set up a similar kind of thing, and there was even a small Russian one that went out there, basically to monitor the conflict in Kosovo. They drove around sometimes in the line of fire—people were almost killed—and monitored and reported back and did a superb job. That was headed by Shawn Byrnes. There were a lot of people involved in that. That was another step that was taken. It was all diplomatic and it was all mediation and monitoring, if you will. There was no military engagement whatsoever.

What happened, though, was that this diplomacy was all aimed at basically getting Belgrade to stop doing this and also getting the Albanians to be diplomatic, and Milosevic didn't do any of that stuff. Chris Hill's diplomacy was not making progress really on either front, but also not with Belgrade. Belgrade as is normal to me in such



circumstances, Belgrade bore the greater responsibility because: a) they had had a greater amount of forces and, b] they were an organized state. They weren't being cooperative at all, which is what led over a period of two months or so to this buildup of agitation among the allies, led by the United States and Britain, but obviously not only the United States and Britain because NATO works by consensus, that what was going on was unacceptable, and gradually there was the threat that NATO bombing would be carried out to prevent this offensive from going on indefinitely, displacing and killing people. This was in 1998. That was when the Holbrooke mission came about to Belgrade.

*Q: Well, we were talking about military action. How serious were we?*

ROSSIN: I think it was pretty serious in late September-October 1998. NATO had moved to, and I'm sorry I forget exactly the precision of the Act Ord [action order]; there is a series of action orders, preparation orders that NATO uses to prepare for military action if you will, warning orders to the actual military forces that will carry out an action, the political decisions to send those military warning orders. NATO had come to the stage, if I remember correctly, had come to the stage of issuing an action order which was a notice that would go out in this case to the air units, the bombing units forces at Aviano and wherever else that would put them on some kind of an automatic timeline to actually carry out bombing. That's what is called an Act Ord essentially. That's roughly where NATO was at that stage. We went through Brussels with Holbrooke on that visit. We also went up to Brussels for a NATO meeting in the middle of October, negotiation with Milosevic, and we had the commander of, I guess the Southern Air Force, U.S. Air Force, allied air forces in southern Europe. General Short came into our delegation then for the second part, if you will, of the negotiation with Milosevic. It was very serious. I think that nobody can say for sure whether if Milosevic had really not given in, whether they would have pushed the button, but it felt like at the time that that was going to happen.

*Q: Let's talk about the Holbrooke mission. This is the first Holbrooke mission, was it?*

ROSSIN: Yes, the first related to Kosovo.

*Q: In the first place, how did you find Holbrooke acted and operated? You know, he's a sort of an elemental force.*

ROSSIN: I didn't know him. I had never met him before. I had met him once when he was assistant secretary and I was DCM in Spain, but it was really just in passing. Now he was out of government and was working for Credit Suisse, the First Boston Bank and I don't believe, I may be wrong but think he may not have even been at this stage nominated to be UN ambassador, but he was available and this is what he does. He is a public servant and all the rest of that, and an ambitious individual, by the way.

*Q: So, you hadn't met Holbrook before?*

ROSSIN: I hadn't met Holbrooke before and rather with short notice I was asked by Marc Grossman, who was the assistant secretary, to accompany Holbrooke on his mission. Other people were Chris Hill, General George Casey probably, and a couple of others. I was asked to go on fairly short notice and I remember going into the State Department to get my stuff together over a weekend when we left and I asked Marc, I said, "Well, you know I have never been with Dick Holbrooke before and I know he is a personality. Can you give me any advice as to what I ought to do?"

He said, "Well, there're only two things I'll give you advice on." Typical Marc. He's a personality too. "One of them is to make sure he always pays attention to and keeps Secretary Albright briefed, and the other one is, don't let him talk too much to the press." When I got back I said to Marc, "Gee, you were really pulling my leg." He laughed and said, "You did okay, but not very well on those two counts." Anyway, that was Holbrooke.

*Q: What were you trying to do and how did it go?*

ROSSIN: What we were trying to do was to find a device to get the Serb offensive stopped in Kosovo and to really kick-start the diplomatic work that Chris Hill had been doing in his shuttle diplomacy that had been going on from July, I guess it was, with Belgrade and with the Albanians in Pristina, and come up with some kind of way: a) to end the Serb offensive, and b) to verify, if you will, a cease-fire that then would leave space for a political process. We didn't really know what we were going to do and how we were going to pursue those things. We didn't really have concrete proposals of any particular sort when we went out there. But when we went out there and met with Milosevic and we spent every day, I think it was ten days, and except for probably about thirty-six hours when we flew to Brussels and London for meetings in the midst of it sort of at the midpoint, it was all Milosevic and his buddies all the time while we were in Belgrade. It was from early morning until late at night.

How it ended up working out in fact, well, there is a standard negotiating dynamic that I saw every time we went with Holbrooke to visit Milosevic, and of course Holbrooke knew Milosevic from the Bosnian stuff, was we would get out there, we would all sit, we would all be introduced, it was on TV at the Beli Dvor Palace, which is the government palace in Belgrade that is not used but is a formal facility. We would all be sitting around; we would chat with Milosevic, and Holbrooke basically would chat, but he [Milosevic] would sort of talk to everybody. He's a personable guy in his own way. We would all have a discussion for about half an hour or forty-five minutes, you know, with slivovitz [plum brandy] and all the rest of it, at which point Milosevic would invite Dick Holbrooke to go into the next room and they would sit there and talk for however long, and that's where really, I think, the meat of the discussion obviously took place. The rest of us would sit and make talk. We didn't really have anything; there was no point in a way. And that could go on for hours and there could be breaks and we would reassemble as a group and then they would break off again, and we would break for meals and they were always trencherman meals of the Serbian sort, with meat with your meat. And then

we would sit down; sometimes Holbrooke and Milosevic would send one or two of us off with one or two of the Serbian guys to work on some aspect of it, which increasingly became the case as we got past the initial period and it got down to actual concrete work.

Substantively, the framework was actually set, I guess, in that first discussion between Holbrooke and Milosevic where Milosevic said he was willing to have the OSCE, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, be the organization that would monitor and manage the ceasefire and disengagement process in Kosovo and establish a presence in Kosovo. And from that, over a period of several days—that was not actually agreed to formally by Milosevic in a sort of a “nothing is agreed until everything is agreed” mode until the second phase of the negotiation—after meetings in Brussels and London because we insisted, NATO insisted, on also having a NATO verification mechanism of the withdrawal of the Serbs from offensive positions. Milosevic didn’t want that. He didn’t want NATO in Kosovo, and eventually what was agreed upon was the so-called NATO Air Verification Mission, which was a reconnaissance [operation], including a no-fly zone in Kosovo itself for Serbian aircraft and various things. So, there were actually two agreements that were negotiated; and the OSCE one which Milosevic was happy to do, had a lot of detail in [it] that was dependent on the NATO Air Verification Mission, which was only agreed upon at the very last minute.

*Q: The OSCE had already played a significant role in Bosnia during the election process there.*

ROSSIN: Yes.

*Q: I know because I was part of that as an observer. Was that an arrow in your quiver when you came out there? Do you know where that came from?*

ROSSIN: It came from Milosevic. I don’t know why he picked on that. Maybe because they are members of it and Russia is a member of it so they can have more control or voice, anyway. I’m sure that that’s what it really had to do with and how it was executed; maybe because OSCE was kind of weak and unstructured and so he figured it wouldn’t be as effective. The alternative was NATO, and since he didn’t want NATO, where is Russia, where is Serbia? The OSCE—and I think he decided he was going to accept something. He probably wanted something that he thought he could manipulate to his advantage and control, and the OSCE was in a sense the obvious candidate. For us, in a sense also, the OSCE had nothing to do with it. OSCE had done various kinds of missions; they had observer missions or elections or different institution-building assistance but it was very case-by-case in various member states of OSCE, and always by invitation and very loose.

That was the advantage of OSCE I think that we saw as well, was what it was not. It was whatever you made of it. It had no tradition, it had no regulations, it had no structure. That was the weakness of it as well, but it was both its strength and its weakness, so we were happy to see if we could make the OSCE thing work.

How that happened was— So there was all that discussion about ending the conflict, about verification and monitoring, about disengagement of forces and all that. But the other aspect was to try to jumpstart the political process and in terms of jumpstarting the political process, there of course, you had Milosevic and Milan Milutinovic, the prime minister [formerly foreign minister, but he was the prime minister at the time] saying, “Well, we’re happy to do this,” although they had a pretty set position which was at variance with the Kosovo-Albanian position. Holbrooke was not particularly sympathetic to Ibrahim Rugova and the Kosovo-Albanians. Neither was Chris Hill.

*Q: They weren’t a very lovable group.*

ROSSIN: Well, I don’t think they were lovable or not. I think they were extremely frustrating because they were just very indecisive and very divided, were prone to sort of café chat kind of work instead of what I think certainly Chris Hill, and Holbrooke by derivation [sought], because Chris really was the one who told Holbrooke what to think about that part of the thing, and Holbrooke and Chris are really close. They [the Kosovar Albanians] were hard to work with. They were almost not *interlocutor voluble* because they were so disorganized and indecisive. What happened was one particular day Dick Holbrooke decided to go down to Pristina with the delegation in order to talk to Rugova and to talk to others down there and see if he couldn’t get things going a little bit down there with Chris, about Chris’s efforts, essentially. I was presuming I was going to go and then I was asked to stay behind and to think through this OSCE mission business and see if I couldn’t come up with some ideas on it. They were gone till early afternoon and while they were gone I basically sat— Dick Miles was the chief of mission there [in Belgrade] and he gave me his computer and gave me his office, and I basically sat in his office and I drafted up what became the OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission agreement between the OSCE and the Yugoslav, the Serb, the FRY [Federal Republic of Yugoslavia] government which was the basis for that. I basically drafted it up in the morning and made it up as I went along, but it was basically what eventually became the agreement.

*Q: Did you know the OSCE or did you kind of make up what the OSCE should do?*

ROSSIN: I would say it was probably equal measures to be generous to myself, but actually I think it was probably much more of the latter, making it up, because that’s how the OSCE was, you could kind of make it up.

*Q: In other words, you didn’t have to know intimately OSCE’s capability.*

ROSSIN: No, because they didn’t have any capability. All capabilities would have to be created. They didn’t have any. This wasn’t like working with DPKO [Department of Peacekeeping Operations at the United Nations] or something in the UN or even with NATO. They had no capability to speak of, and anything that was assigned to them, especially on the scale of the Kosovo Verification Mission, which was, you know, bigger than a breadbox for them, would have to be created out of scratch. So, we could make up

whatever we wanted as long as we, essentially the United States, were willing to pay for it and create it, which we were basically willing to do. So, I could write whatever I wanted on Dick Miles' [desk] and I did. I think I put down that the total number of observers, I did some kind of, you know, have offices here and there so that the total number of observers—would be, you know, seven times X or whatever. I don't remember what number I put down. Maybe fifteen hundred or something and Dick came back and said, "Let's ask for three thousand." And that's what we did. In fact, the negotiation was basically about the prerogatives of these OSCE observers, their independence and their immunity, if you will, and about the numbers and where they would be located.

*Q: Was there such a thing as an OSCE representative?*

ROSSIN: No, I don't remember that there, I can't remember. I may be wrong but I certainly don't remember either dealing with an OSCE representative [or] I don't think, they had presence in Serbia or anybody else.

*Q: So you couldn't say, "Hey fellows, can you help us out?"*

ROSSIN: That's what it means to be a superpower. Basically that's what it means to be the United States. There may have been conversations going on, for example, between Secretary Albright and the Russians and others, or people in Washington or others. There must have been, but from our perspective on the ground in Belgrade, we were making it up.

*Q: Was there any input from the Brits, the French, the Scandinavians?*

ROSSIN: I know while we were there, Holbrooke and—I may have been in the meeting as well, I think I was—talked with the British ambassador who was there. To my recollection I think we may have also met with the German ambassador but it was us. I think Dick was consulting with the British ambassador during the course of the discussions and there may have been a French. There may have been a tad little bit of that kind of thing. But other than some British consultation, and not really on this part of it. I mean it was really keeping the British briefed on what we were doing but I don't think it was saying to the British, "Well, we need to get your approval; do you think we can get three thousand people or fifteen hundred?" That was not the nature of the discussions. It was basically Dick and his group.

Obviously, there was sort of a midpoint opportunity to check when we traveled up to Brussels to meet with NATO, and then went to London, and there was a Contact Group ministerial at Heathrow Airport. At that point I think—I didn't go to the ministerial, I went into London to meet with a KLA guy, so I wasn't there. But I think at that point I have to presume that they ran the general concept by the NATO ministers and at Brussels with the NATO perm reps [permanent representatives] and got a general kind of agreement.

*Q: Was there such a thing as OSCE headquarters?*

ROSSIN: There was. They are in Vienna. That's where OSCE is located. It was somewhat less institutionally developed in 1998 than it is now. We had for a long time—as you know, the United States for a long time opposed the Conference [Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, CSCE], the process, the CSCE [from turning into an organization, the OSCE]. But eventually at some point during the 1990s when I was working on Haiti we agreed to it becoming an organization. It is not a large organization. And even now it is not a large infrastructure, so no.

*Q: Getting a feel for the dynamics, the Serbs had made the point and you know for all of this, Kosovo really is sort of the guts of the Serbian heart. Nobody wants to live there but that's home. That's where they come from sort of. I mean this is—what was the dynamic that made Milosevic pay attention? Was it the threat of war?*

ROSSIN: No, I don't think that. Well, the threat of the NATO bombing made him pay attention, no doubt about it. There was a famous point in the negotiation, which Dick Holbrooke has often mentioned in his different public statements, which were true, where he sent General Short, the American Air Force commander from Italy within our delegation, to talk with Milosevic. This is when the hard part of the discussion was about the NATO role and the NATO Air Verification Mission, and Short basically said to Milosevic, "Look, I've got reconnaissance aircraft in one hand and I've got bombers in the other hand. You decide." And that was where it was.

[End of tape 6B.]

This is a fundamental, I think, of diplomacy: dealing with people like Milosevic or like Bashir or like Raúl Cedras in Haiti back in the 1990s; which is that besides doing what they're doing that is unacceptable in Kosovo or in Darfur or in Haiti in the 1990s, not because something's making them do it, but because they want to do it and they're calculating. It's their own cost-benefit and that's what they calculate, and so what you need to do is change their cost-benefit calculation, and no amount of diplomacy alone is going to change their behavior because this is what they want to do, and if they get away with it, so "get away with" becomes the operative phrase. These things, the cost-benefit costs them more to keep doing it, plus usually some form of military action. There were already a lot of sanctions and stuff associated with FRY at that point so that was probably not going to be enough, even though huge efforts were made, it was hard to run an effective sanction under Yugoslavia. So, yes, it was military pressure motivating it.

*Q: I understand that earlier on, prior to the Dayton Accords, that some of our delegations where we were talking about, this is about Bosnia, some of the Serbs were talking to their delegations about the number of Americans who were killed when the Blackhawk went down in Somalia and were using it as a signal that the United States couldn't stand losing people, and so they weren't going to commit military. Of course, about the only—but then you know, all of a sudden, we did in Bosnia.*



ROSSIN: We did in very special circumstances but I don't think the commitment of U.S. forces was, or for that matter NATO forces or IFOR [NATO Implementation Force] in Bosnia, was *per se* something that would have changed that kind of the Serbian calculation about our own willingness to sustain it. That was probably something, by the way, I would agree with. Technically, they were right. But remember that the nature of the military in Kosovo was never anything but airborne. It was always bombing. It was never a threat of a military engagement. There was during the 1999 NATO bombing in Kosovo, and it went on for a long time and it didn't seem to be making a lot of headway in actually changing Milosevic's behavior for a good part of that ninety- or whatever-day period of bombing that took place. In fact, the British concern in maybe the second half of the bombing period was that the political rope to continue the bombing would run out before the bombing was effective, which would be really bad considering all that bombing if we didn't achieve anything. And the British started talking to the U.S. administration a lot about making a ground forces commitment. That was never done. The United States was resistant to whatever the UK and other Europeans were resistant to. It was never a component of the military threat actually levied against Milosevic. It was the bombing. Eventually that was a surprise, and it was a different kind of threat then that became effective.

*Q: But again, you know in your mindset while you were doing this you are pretty good, you know if we didn't get it, we were going to bomb.*

ROSSIN: Oh, yes. At Rambouillet it was used as a basis for negotiation, as a fulcrum. And Milosevic apparently believed it, too. I think at the time and I don't know, hypothetically whether it actually ever would have happened, but I don't think anybody at the time believed that it was phony.

*Q: What about the KLA [Kosovo Liberation Army]? Was this part of our characterizations? Okay, if you don't come along, we're going to really make the KLA pay for it?*

ROSSIN: No. There was never any consideration given, partially because the KLA was so poorly known and partially because I think the image that it had was that it was deemed disparate and disorganized and undisciplined. There was never any thought given, as far as I'm aware of, certainly not, you know, that went to any length, arming the KLA and turning them into a surrogate. I mean, the dynamic of the bombing campaign in 1999 was, to some extent, the bombings that supported the activity of the KLA, and the KLA in a sense learned to use the bombing in our effort, too, even though there was no direct coordination. There might have been some but it was modest at best as a tool, but arming the KLA, creating a proxy force, never came into their mind. I am confident of that from my own knowledge and I don't believe that was ever seriously considered. Perhaps earlier, but I was uninvolved in that.

*Q: Well, going back up to the Holbrooke mission, what did Holbrooke and company come back from Pristina with?*

ROSSIN: They didn't come back from Pristina on that day trip that I mentioned with anything. Holbrooke didn't even pay very much attention to the Albanians. He spent most of his time doing press. I think he kept Rugova waiting for an hour while he talked to reporters. It was a habit of his. He kept Albright once in 1999 waiting for an hour while he talked to a reporter.

*Q: So much for your concern.*

ROSSIN: So much for my—yes, exactly.

They didn't really come back with much of anything that I can remember, certainly nothing significant. That political part of it really was not the most significant element of that negotiating process. The significant element of the negotiating process ended up being the negotiation of the disengagement of Serbian forces; their return and staying in barracks. The disengagement from KLA front lines and the mobile air verification mission, the exclusion zone in Kosovo and a certain number of kilometers around the edge of Kosovo had been a Yugoslav fight; things of that nature. That was the big game in that October negotiation.

*Q: Was part of this the Kosovars who were forced out were scared now to come back?*

ROSSIN: Well, in 1998 not so many were. They were mostly displaced internally but the big displacement out of Kosovo was in 1999. I don't recall, there may have been some who fled to Albania or Macedonia but if it was, it was very modest and not significant. It was internal.

*Q: Okay, you're coming back and what, you have an agreement signed?*

ROSSIN: Yes. The two-week negotiation. We had a signed—the negotiation had been signed—agreement on the OSCE Kosovar Verification Mission, and we had—and really this was the last event. General Short and I led the negotiation team that finally negotiated with the General Perišić and General Valuchkavic [as heard] in the NATO Air Verification Mission. That was a day nine or ten effort to make progress at the last minute. Finally, Milosevic gave a signal to the military that they could in fact go ahead and negotiate the Air Verification Agreement. Once they got that signal, that political signal, then the negotiation became mechanical fairly easily because, you know, it was a political decision to affect the air verification mission. It had to do with things like the turning off of certain anti-aircraft batteries, you know, practical measures that would relate to an air verification mission; the size of the exclusion zone, the technical aspects of it. What was interesting was it was done at the Air Force Ministry in Belgrade, and we did it and it went fairly smoothly once that political green light had come, but at the end of the thing when we finished it up, General Valuchkavic [as heard] who was the Air and

Air Defense Forces commanding general was not signing the agreement. He was an associate of Mirjana Marković, Milosevic's wife, a very sort of left radical type and he wouldn't sign it at the end. He refused to sign it. He was the one who was supposed to sign it because he was there, and he wouldn't sign it. General Perišić at the time was the chief of defense guy took it and signed it. He said, "Oh," basically, "to hell with it." And he signed it. You know, we've come this far, this is where we are. But Valuchkavic [as heard] wouldn't sign it. He just couldn't bring himself to sign this agreement that violated Yugoslav pride and his pride. Valuchkavic [as heard] was killed during the bombing.

*Q: What was the feeling of Short and others on our military side about how good aerial verification would be?*

ROSSIN: Well, they thought it would be okay. Usually for technical, I mean there are technical issues in that part of the world; the cloud cover and the fog are important considerations. There are all these valleys in the Balkans and there is always fog. I saw it when I was over in Kosovo, we were planning a presidential visit and I realized it. They showed us a satellite map and the valleys are full of fog and the mountaintops are above them, and it's just a particular characteristic of the region. And there's cloud cover in the winter in Southeast Europe. But even leaving that part aside, they were confident that they could carry it out, the Aerial Verification Mission. That was not going to be a big challenge. You know, like bringing in both the OSCE mission and the aerial verification mission was technically political wealth. That is to say, once you really have an agreement and the Yugoslavs agreed to disengage and to allow that signing over that happened, then it became more technical in nature, just an implementation challenge.

*Q: Well, then sort of what happened? You have the OSCE. Did it say, "Okay, here are ten thousand men"?*

ROSSIN: Well, a couple of different things happened. First of all, Bill Walker, who was hanging around in Washington at that point, was selected to be the head of the OSCE. We were—

*Q: Bill Walker has been a rock in American hands. It had been during the siege of Senitza or whatever it was in the Croatian—*

ROSSIN: He was after that, he became—Jacques Klein was the first head of UNTAES [The United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium ], which was the UN mission in eastern Slavonia at the eastern edge of Croatia, with the purpose of seeing to the disengagement of them, and gradually reintegrating eastern Slavonia into Croatia, which it did over time. Bill Walker was the second head of UNTAES and the one who saw it through to a very successful mission.

He then was back in Washington and I saw him around, you know. I knew him, not well, but I knew him. He was selected to be the head of it even before we got back to Washington. The decision had been made that Bill Walker would be the head of it which

was fine with the OSCE. So when we got back to the Hill [U.S. Congress], Bill Walker was finding, from scratch, resources to put together this OSCE mission and Jim Pardew was put in charge. Of course, I was put in charge the first few days and it was not possible for me. I was swamped. It was not possible for me to do all the political work, if you will, and also the logistical technical work with the assembling resources and all this stuff including people, and finding buildings and the money and all the rest of it, and so Marc Grossman after a few days told me, “Do you mind if I ask Jim Pardew to take charge of that?” and I said, “No, I don’t mind at all. I’m really happy. I like Jim and we’ll work great together.” And Jim was there and he was still running the training and equipment program in Bosnia but that was basically done at that stage. So, he was hanging around and it was a great choice on Marc’s part. Jim was really good at that kind of thing. Jim took over the mobilization of resources for the OSCE mission, working with OSCE and all the rest of it.

The biggest challenge in the short run, and I was glad, by the way, that Jim took over logistics because Bill Walker was, I have to say, importuning people for an airplane. You can’t fly from one part of Kosovo to another by plane, it’s too small. There’s only one other airport besides Pristina. I don’t even know if it was operational at the time. Bill turned out to be a high-maintenance figure, if I can put it that way, much more so than I expected. I was glad that Jim worked with him. He was so high maintenance that when he went out and met with Milosevic and started talking about his plane, I knew Milošević was inclined to work constructively with Bill Walker and with the OSCE. That was the way he worked. Once he decided to do something, he would do it. He would do it his way and only eventually but he would do it. And Bill made so many demands that Milošević considered unreasonable, that I thought were actually over the top as well, but I think Milošević turned against Bill Walker and I have to confess it was the only time I felt a little bit of, I probably wouldn’t have taken the same position, let’s put it that way. But that was somebody else’s work.

The other issue that became very important, or the most immediate issue, was while we had negotiated an air verification agreement, while we had negotiated the KVM [Kosovo Verification Mission] agreement which called for disengagement of forces, there was actually no timeline agreed in Belgrade during the Holbrooke mission about how long it would take to disengage; what was the deadline for disengagement, what was the deadline for forces returning to the barracks. I believe there was a reduction of the number of police and military in Kosovo which I remember was part of that. What was the deadline for those people leaving? In other words, there was a big open issue here that could be the Achilles heel of the whole agreement if it wasn’t handled properly.

What happened was General Wes Clark who was American NATO commander at the time and General Naumann who was the chairman of the military committee of NATO—German General Klaus Naumann went to Belgrade about two or two and a half weeks after we returned this was later October, to work with the Serbs, with Milosevic, with Palkovic [as heard], the head of the general’s staff and so forth to actually hammer out these issues. Well, nothing is easy with Belgrade and this was not an easy issue

anyway. So, there was a very, very difficult negotiation that took place during that mission, and it was successful but just difficult. Interestingly, one of the concerns that I think was legitimate on the part of the VJ [Jugoslav Army] and the military and with Milosevic and the people in Belgrade was they were concerned that as they withdrew—essentially they were engaged sort of behind the lines with the KLA [Kosovo Liberation Army] in a number of locations around Kosovo. Their concern was as they began to withdraw, they would be attacked by the KLA. I think that was a legitimate concern on their part. I think it was also a legitimate political concern because if they were attacked, naturally they would fire back.

And so, I became involved in being the sort of—I had gotten to know some of the KLA people during an earlier period than the October period, so I went again out to meet with those people in Switzerland while Clark was in Belgrade. Clark sent a couple of his military aides to be with me in Geneva and I was talking with this KLA guy, named Mahmouti, who in turn was communicating with KLA guys on the ground. They actually had pretty good, you know, what you call inbox type of telephone communication to coordinate the disengagement to make sure that in fact there was an agreement that they wouldn't shoot VJ [Jugoslav Military] in the back.

*Q: Was the KLA at a point where its leadership could control it?*

ROSSIN: Well, that was what we were finding out and we didn't really know. We had to test it and in fact, it did happen. I didn't even know if the guy I was talking to at the outset of that was actually anybody other than a poseur. I didn't really know. It turned out he was not a poseur. He was talking to people on the ground who were making things happen. It was the only vehicle that we had for doing that, so we did it and it turned out to work.

*Q: How did things work out? I mean, initially. Did the OSCE respond to the challenge?*

ROSSIN: Yes, they did. I don't remember the details of the mobilization timeline but the OSCE—one of the things the OSCE had—and the OSCE mission by the way, also had people as human rights monitors. In a way, it was like a UN peacekeeping mission in terms of the range of, I think they're called nation-building and monitoring activities they had. It was too ambitious. I don't think in the end the OSCE could really sustain it, but they certainly built up to it and they got up to the number of twenty-five hundred or whatever the final number of observers was. They built up regional—offices. The OSCE mission after the war became part of the UN Mission in Kosovo, the umbrella structure. There was basically the KVM reconstituted building up on that. It was mainly the same people, which was a difficult problem in some ways. So, they built up reasonably fast.

I think the biggest concern that I had about the KVM was that we felt that a certain day in which the Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission [KDOM] ceased to exist. Shawn Byrnes led the U.S. Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission, very much of a cowboy operation. It ceased to exist and the Kosovo Verification Mission took over and aspects were handed

over. There were super legal issues that they couldn't use the jeeps and stuff and still work and stuff. But never mind that.

What we noticed in Washington was we had become extremely dependent on the extraordinary, vivid, factual, to the moment, timely, reliable reporting that we were getting from the KVM. Every day we got that. Every day it came by secure fax, somehow.

Q: The KVM?

ROSSIN: No, the KDOM, Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission. It was the U.S., European, and Russian thing. Extremely high-quality stuff. The next day we started getting the KVM reporting, the OSCE reporting and the OSCE reporting. Today, there were sixteen groups that went out. They drove these vehicles, they talked, covered this many miles, they consumed this much gas. You know, there was nothing about what the hell actually happened out there that we could use for—I mean, this was the basis for policy making of a high degree. And there was none of it. We got that for a couple of days, and then said this is awful. I mean, it was just like we had somebody tie a blindfold around our heads about what was going on in Kosovo. It was just remarkable and we complained about it. I think Tom Pickering or somebody talked to Bill Walker about it. You know, we felt like all of a sudden, we had been burned by somebody who had turned out the lights. It never really improved.

Q: *Do you have any idea why?*

ROSSIN: I think part of it was it got bureaucratized because it was a big mission. I think part of it was it wasn't just sort of an *ad hoc* American type of thing. It became multinational and my experience in the UN is well, that the level of the reporting tends to go down because it is multinational. It's European. Europeans have a much more bureaucratic way of reporting than Americans do. I think part of it was that we were deprived of Shawn Byrnes' leadership. He was a brilliant and courageous and daring guy who really knew what we wanted. He knew why he was out there. He knew what the purpose of this thing was. And I don't think these KVM people were consumed with building up their mission, and it was just worthless. It was awful.

Q: *You were saying, though, the diplomatic side was better. Well, where were you getting your reports?*

ROSSIN: Well, we weren't. Not in the same way at all, no. It was a big problem. I think what happened was, if my recollection is correct, was that Shawn [Byrnes] and a few KDOM people stayed out there. There was a sort of stay-behind KDOM presence for technical reasons. For one thing, we weren't allowed to transfer the vehicles to the OSCE for some technical legal reason, something really technical about getting rid of government property. That led to some of the KDOM people having to stay, so then you would say that you had KDOM driving the jeeps and stuff like that. Well, when we saw



that we weren't getting any good reporting out of the KVM people, we sort of then got the residual KDOM people to do some reporting, so we set up an *ad hoc* mechanism. We also had the odd person on the ground. There was a little U.S. aid. One way or another we managed to cobble together different bits and pieces, but it just wasn't the same, so we were kind of blind. Those people were still going there doing their diplomacy that was also a way that we got some reporting about what was going on.

*Q: Well, you know, was the feeling that the pot was boiling out there?*

ROSSIN: No. The feeling was that there was an arrested conflict that was frozen in place and there was a process building to whoever or not could get out of it. In other words, the conflict had been stopped in place. There had been a disengagement of forces that took place. There was the creation of an international structure to maintain that situation and monitor it, and there was the creation of the international structure. And then there was the Contact Group envoy working on the political process that hopefully would end with the OSCE cease fire and all that had created could flourish, the political process could start between the Serbs and Albanians to come up with a model that then would avoid the need if, you will, or avoid the risk of need of military engagement. Which didn't happen.

*Q: Was the hope that somehow you could bring Kosovo into being an integral part of greater Serbia? Was that what we were after? Or was the feeling, this place is not ever going to be part? You know, sort of as you looked at it, how?*

ROSSIN: I don't think people were looking towards the independence of Kosovo. For example: I don't think we had a clear sense that well, we want it to become this or that; what we wanted was a process that would lead the Kosovar-Albanians and the government in Belgrade to decide what that would be. I think the expectation was that we would probably end up, if the process worked, with something similar to what had been the case before 1989, when Milosevic had taken away all the local institutions and fired all the Albanians from government jobs and abolished all of the autonomy of Kosovo; that he would return to a heavy autonomy kind of a model within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. That was where I think we all expected it to end up but I don't think there was anybody who was a partisan for Kosovo independence at that time in the policy practice.

*Q: One of the things about Kosovo before the Holbrooke mission and that was that after 1989 the Kosovars had created their almost own state, their own schools, their own, you know, and sort of extra governmental. Was that continued or how did we see that?*

ROSSIN: That continued during that period. I mean those parallel structures, as you say, had been set up in the Albanian side of the LBK, by the main Kosovo political party, which was a national movement, if you will. After 1989 they had to. I mean all the Albanians, ethnic Albanian teachers were fired, all of the ethnic Albanian doctors, and so it was a situation where they almost had to set up those structures. And they did, but I don't think any of the Albanians considered those to be a great alternative. I mean, they

were teaching their kids in garages, you know. The medical facilities were marginal and supported by a kind of a tithing process among the Albanians diaspora, the Kosovo diaspora, in Europe primarily. It was not second-best; it was like sixth-best, you know. There was nothing between first and fifth so it was what they had to do. It continued on but it was not a model for the future.

*Q: Was there any attempt on our part to say, okay, we've got this thing. Let's put the teachers back in the schools?*

ROSSIN: That wasn't part of the settlement that was developed through the negotiating pact.

*Q: Was that a continuing negotiation?*

ROSSIN: Yes, it was a continuing negotiation.

*Q: That was part of your mandate?*

ROSSIN: That was not part of my mandate. It was part of the U.S. government's, but the person who was very much, Chris Hill, was the envoy, and the fact is he sort of shifted from being an American envoy to being the Contact Group envoy. I think it was at that Contact Group meeting at Heathrow Airport during the midst of that October negotiation, Chris Hill became a Contact Group envoy and Europeans appointed a Contact Group envoy, Wolfgang Petrich, who was later appointed the high representative in Bosnia, and the Russians then, although much later on and much more for show, appointed a Contact Group envoy, Boris Mayorski. But that political process was carried out on behalf of the Contact Group by primarily Chris Hill and to a secondary extent, Wolfgang Petrich. In a sense what all of this other stuff was, was stopping the conflict, creating a space in which that process then could take place, that negotiating process. The KLA was not involved in this very much. Chris really didn't like the KLA. He considered them to be thieves and bandits. I think he blamed them in a sense for having triggered this whole thing. There were a lot of personal viewpoints that everybody had.

*Q: What was the feeling that you were getting from Rugova?*

ROSSIN: Well, Rugova was extremely passionate. He passed away at the beginning of 2006. He was widely acknowledged as the leader of the Kosovar Albanians, by the Kosovar Albanians and by outside as well. A very passive-resistance kind of a figure, that was his approach. He was a very sort of enigmatic kind of figure, didn't say very much, didn't go out a lot. You know, he was an unusual personality and not a forward-leaning guy. He would be very frustrating; I know he was frustrating to Chris and his team because he was weird. I mean, I remember one cable came in from the team where it was remarked upon how as Chris and them were talking to him in his house which is where he worked from, he was flipping through the TV channels and lingered too long over the cartoon network. This was a peculiarity. He was very frustrating to deal with but I think

Chris's judgment and his team's judgment was while he was frustrating and almost impossible to work with, very unyielding in his own way, he also was the guy you had to deal with because he was the leader of by far the largest faction. And this is where I didn't have quite the same view, maybe because I worked with him more. I thought that Chris's viewpoint of the Kosovo Liberation Army was: a) too negative about their own sort of bonafides, but also, b) kind of too dismissive of them when, in fact, they were a growing important factor and couldn't be dealt with through dealing with Rugova because they rejected Rugova's method. They thought the passive-resistance thing was a string that had run out, and what they were getting for it was this Serb offensive, and I think they had a point.

*Q: Was there a Kosovo Serb element that you had to deal with?*

ROSSIN: Not during this period because the Kosovo Serb viewpoint was and largely still is that they are not a minority in Kosovo because Kosovo is part of Serbia, and so the Albanians are a minority in Serbia. These are just Serbs who happen to live in the Kosovo part of Serbia. Belgrade viewed the Kosovo Serbs as being some kind of hillbillies and pawns and they would screw them in a second, and they have more than once. But the Kosovo Serbs, of course you know, don't see it that way; the typical Peru-Argentina relationship. But no, there were some dealings with them, you know, monasteries and bishops and stuff, but the Kosovo Serbs as a separate factor really only became important after 1999 because all of a sudden, they were a minority, whether they accepted it or not, within Albania.

The only exception to that was that in July of 1998, right after I started. I went to a meeting with Bob Gelbard when he was still doing the Kosovo account in The Hague, set up by Milan Panic, an American, the Serbian-American former [at that time] prime minister of Serbia, the FRY, who was then trying to use his resources—a very wealthy guy—to assemble and unify the Serbian opposition, and Gingrich a variety of people with it and the numbers who were there. And among those who were there and who I actually met and talked with a little bit was Bishop Aretmy, who was the Serbian Orthodox bishop of Raska, the fellow I told you about, and Trajkovic, who was a Kosovo-Serb politician at the time, I don't remember which party. He moved around a lot. And they were there as part of the Serbian opposition to Milošević, but not really from a Kosovo perspective, from a Serbia perspective. That was the case; they were very—at not being represented by Milošević. They felt like Milošević was leading into, you know, he was leading Kosovo down a bad path and that was going to hurt them. Well true, but then after 1999 they became more Belgrade than the “Belgradians,” because they were isolated.

*Q: What about the Montenegrins? Were they a factor at all?*

ROSSIN: Not really. Montenegro, I think, always saw Kosovo, they only saw Kosovo as how it could impact on our own ambitions. Milo Djukanovic, who was the prime minister and the president at different times in Montenegro, a political kingpin of Montenegro, was a separatist with a variety of arguments as to why anybody that was

basically—because it was every place, everybody. It was an extremely corrupt place, with the drug trafficking and all that and he was the political kingpin and he was running all these rackets there, and whatever the reason was, it was something that was fed by the United States, and particularly by the United States, this separatism. Montenegro kind of *de facto* became carved out from Serbia under the communist leadership. Its geography assisted him in that regard. But all along I think the Montenegro angle was basically having Kosovo involved in such a way that it didn't damage their own chances of maintaining their separate status without their separate status. It increasingly became—including a separate currency. They adopted the deutsche mark and then the euro. Eventually, of course, their independence aspirations, which however much they really meant it—while it was formally part of Djukanovic's program and eventually of course as we've seen—had come into fruition. But that was even the case when I was with the UN in Kosovo in 2004.

The other thing the Montenegrins were working at—they didn't have anything against the Albanians. They've got Albanians in Montenegro which they thought was okay. During the war they welcomed a lot of Albanian refugees and treated them fairly well. It was only sort of how does it affect their own aspirations.

*Q: Your part ran through south-central Europe near Macedonia?*

ROSSIN: I had Macedonia.

*Q: Did events in Kosovo make you concerned about the stability of Macedonia?*

ROSSIN: There was always consummate concern that pan-Albanianism or the impact of independence for Kosovo, for example, might drive separatism in Macedonia. My own theory was that that was not really a big risk. First off, pan-Albanianism in my own assessment until now is that it is hugely exaggerated. You have Albania and the Albanians in Albania, who have a very much different historical provenance and on this path: from the Albanians in the former Yugoslavia, in Kosovo, in Macedonia and Serbia itself and in Montenegro, they were isolated. There was not a lot of intercourse between Yugoslavia and Albania during all those years. There was a little bit, like Albania for a while provided textbooks to Kosovo during the Yugoslav period, but there was a sensitivity because the Albanians in the immediate World War II period were actually under the sway of the Yugoslav Communist Party, and then there was the falling-out of the Comintern [Communist International] in 1948, and so this was the first exposure the Kosovo-Albanians had to Albania. This was in 1999 really when masses of them, hundreds of thousands of them, became refugees in Albania where they were ripped off, where they saw how poor the place was. It was a big shock.

And so, the Kosovar Albanians didn't really want to have a lot to do with Albania. The Albanian Albanians were actually quite generous to the Kosovars even though they were sort of ripping them off but considering the fact that after 1986 the southern-run Albania began opening up and then through the 1990s when they did open up, the

Kosovar-Albanians were kind of their sharpie cousins from the north who came down and were ripping them off. There was a lot of, you know, “Okay, we are all Albanians but we don’t necessarily have a pan-Albanian vision.”

*Q: I must say I was impressed, having gone through the 1960s in Kosovo, to see the refugees fleeing out of there in 1999. You know, going to the houses, the houses looked great, the cars looked, you know—*

ROSSIN: Kosovo was the worst part of Yugoslavia. Albania was in an entirely different region. I visited Albania. I only visited starting in 1998 but Chris Hill had opened the U.S. embassy back when he was a consular officer there in about 1992 or something like that. The place was really backward. I mean, when I went there in 1998 I got in trouble with my desk officer, I think I mentioned it, for talking about how it looked to me like Haiti looked before. And I said things to my desk officer who was working on the trip, I said something to the Albanians, “Well, in Haiti, such and such worked,” until he sort of kicked me under the table and said, “I don’t like hearing that,” but it was just so much like Haiti. But Yugoslavia, poor as it had been, certainly was a new frontier.

With the Macedonian Albanians it was a different thing. This wasn’t until ten years ago they were working in the same country. We see it even now. All these Macedonian-Albanians come to Kosovo, vice versa—you know this is an artificial border for them, but at the same time although they were growing, at that time there were growing tensions between Macedonia and Albanians. The Macedonians are hypersensitive about the Albanians. The Albanians are kind of autonomy-oriented and second-class citizens in Macedonia. This always seemed to me and still to this day seems to me it’s a little country that, in spite of all of its weaknesses, can. They somehow managed, somehow found their way to the subsequent conflict in 2000, that was 2001–2002, so they are “the little country that can.” I don’t care for it very much. I mean, the more I went there, the less I liked it, and I went there fifty or sixty times and they’ve got really nasty-minded people. The current government and party is nasty-minded. There are Albanians who are nasty-minded but somehow they worked it out.

*Q: During this time are there any reflections from Greece on Macedonia? I mean, I served four years in Greece and five years in Belgrade and so you know, I’m very aware. Was that cropping up at all or was that—?*

ROSSIN: One flight that I took to the States, I was in Skopje and I got on a plane, maybe it was a flight from Skopje to London, and I sat next to a woman and I mentioned Macedonia. We were chatting and “where have you been,” you know. Well, this lady turned out to be a Greek-American and I said Macedonia, and sadly enough, it was in an early part of the flight, because I had to listen to her for the whole damn way talking about it. It’s really an obsession with the Greeks.

It is a sad, pitiful state of affairs. It really just shows, they are a Balkan country too. This just happened to be “our” Balkan country during the cold war, that’s all it is. They are

caught up in all of those things. You know, on the one hand you do have that happening and on the other they are by far the largest investor in Macedonia and I actually—everybody in NATO. You know, my viewpoint in 1999 when I was the head of the U.S. Office; in 1998 when I was the office director; in 1999 when I was head of the U.S. Office in Pristina; and in 2004–2006 when I was the deputy head of the UN mission was, I didn't like Macedonia very much. But you know, we really need these people. It's the only way out of Kosovo. The main roads are out of there, and everything good comes from Macedonia to Kosovo.

We need these people, and all the military people, the NATO people, were always going around talking about FYROM [Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia]. Well, you know what? Macedonia is Macedonia. They didn't like to be calling their country FYROM, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, which is some device that was come up with in the early 1990s so people could recognize Macedonia, they could teach them. I refused. I actually put out an instruction when I was the head of the U.S. Office that nobody was allowed to say "FYROM." It was not allowed. I did the same thing when I was head of the UN mission. Nobody is ever allowed to say "FYROM." We need things from these people and we don't get things from them by insulting, by calling them or their country something else. If you talk about it, you will say FYR Macedonia, but when we talk about the people, we will not talk about "Fyromi," we will talk about Macedonians because that's what they like to be called and we need things from them and it's stupid anyway. I got into fights with the Greeks, which I was happy to do because I thought it was bullshit and also, they weren't doing anything for us anyway. They were just, you know, Greeks.

*Q: Greeks are not that lovable.*

ROSSIN: No, they are not. That was my viewpoint and it was also my viewpoint on something which I am not knowledgeable about, which is the Turkey-Greece tensions. But I remember saying to Marc Grossman one time, "You know, it irritates me because this country is Greek because of Greek-Americans. They have this lobby and all the rest of it—and all the rest of it and they are extremely active. And yet Turkey is the country that does more for us." And Marc said, "You know, that's really not true, although the Greeks are a gigantic pain in the ass, and the Turks overtly are really easy to deal with," this was before Iraq, "the fact is that we get a lot more cooperation and stations and all that practical kind of stuff with Russia than you do from the Turks. The Turks are a pain in the ass to deal with when it comes to implementation and the Greeks are easy to deal with on implementation. They make all this noise, but underneath they are actually fairly easy to work with."

*Q: I think this is because he spoke as the former ambassador to Turkey.*



ROSSIN: But he was talking about Greece. I guess what he was telling me was that, maybe you said it, I was DCM, I was ambassador in Turkey, it is his area, and he said in respect for the Turkish system worked, the pain in the ass were the Turks.

Also, when I was in the Netherlands earlier on, the Dutch had the strong feeling that the biggest mistake up to that point that the EU had ever made, and I think the biggest mistake they have ever made now, is to have invaded Cyprus and imported the Cyprus dispute into it all.

*Q: Absolutely. How did you see the mission at that time?*

ROSSIN: Well it was primarily occupied in setting itself up. It was a big operation in setting itself up very fast. There was no advance notice that they would have to set up such a mission, two thousand or three thousand observers and so forth. I only saw it once myself. I went out there in December of 1998 and visited Pristina and visited Bill Walker, and walked around and saw the setup there. So, from our perspective in Washington, the major thing that we detected from it was a dropping off in the reporting that we got back in Washington about what was actually going on down on the ground, as I described in our last conversation.

The mission had a number of elements, a human rights section, I don't remember what all it had because it never really you know, it never truly got up to speed before, of course, the conflict broke out again and I left Kosovo. I don't have much of a sense of having done a whole lot other than setting itself up but I did observe the campaign in theory.

*Q: I have interviewed Bill Walker and he talks about getting out there and particularly going to one place where he discovered quite a few people who were killed; in a grave, you know. It was sort of on TV.*

ROSSIN: You mean that was his sort of ultimate moment?

*Q: His ultimate moment.*

ROSSIN: You are talking about the Račak massacre.

*Q: Back in Washington were we basically gearing up to take action, do you think?*

ROSSIN: Well, I don't really think so. There was a sort of crescendo of gearing up to take action that took place here and in other NATO capitals up until August of 1998 or August-September, and then when Ambassador Holbrooke and the delegation went out and did that long negotiation with Milosevic and were able to negotiate the OSCE agreement and also the NATO Air Verification Agreement. And then there was the period after that when General Clark and General Neumann went to Belgrade to negotiate the disengagement of VJ and KLA. I don't think there was an expectation. Well, everything was solved and Kosovo was over; you know, Milošević had suddenly seen the light and

the conflict would go away, but I think there were two things: one is there was certainly an expectation that there was a new period now with this OSCE mission and so preparation for NATO military operations went to the back burner.

And I think secondly, and traditionally this had been the case, there was an expectation that the environment for the kind of military operations either by the Serbian forces or by the Kosovo Liberation Army would diminish, and there would be a diminishing of such operations until next spring because of the winter, and so normally there had been a lull in any kind of activity. Also, in Bosnia there was that pattern as well during the winter. So I think there was the sense that, while this thing wasn't resolved and while it was far from certain that the OSCE mechanism was going to be something that was actually going to create a framework in which there would be a resolution of the Kosovo crisis at the political level, certainly it was likely that we had bought some time until next spring.

*Q: What happened in the fall and spring of 1998?*

ROSSIN: I think what happened was—you mean the fall of 1998 and the spring of 1999? There was a period of quiescence, I guess you might say. This OSCE mission really only set itself up until late October-November and only existed for about four months. Initially during that period there was a period of quiet. The VJ and the Serbian police withdrew. They ended their offensive. The KLA sort of withdrew and didn't come into contact with Serbian forces, so there was a lull, I guess is what I would say. And it looked like that pattern of not much happening during the winter was in fact going to play out. However, by the middle of December we started seeing some worrisome signs that, in fact, that was not necessarily what was going to happen. And we were concerned about the KLA trying to push themselves forward incrementally in certain areas around Sarajevo and other areas of Kosovo. And there were contact lines developing between the Serbian forces, the VJ, the military, and the police on one side, and the KLA on the other side, who were entrenching themselves, and they were too close for—they were close enough to each other such that it was likely that there would be contact.

There was also an incident, I'm trying to remember the exact details, where there's some Serbian mining engineers and military who wandered into a KLA barrier and were taken prisoner, basically, in the area of the zinc mines outside of Mitrovica. That was defused. I actually traveled out with Ambassador Jim Pardew to Serbia just before Christmas of 1998. We met people in Belgrade and then I went down to Kosovo. He stayed and had more meetings in Belgrade. I went down to Kosovo and went out with Shawn Byrnes who was still there with Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission, and went out to the area of Nalijevo and met with KLA commanders in a public meeting—well, in a private meeting but it was publicized—in order to talk to them about the need to not take provocative actions basically, the—of the new confrontation with Serbian military forces. And Shawn also worked on particularly dealing with this issue of the soldiers who had been captured. That was moderately successful and we talked with them about pulling back their lines near Podujevo, so it was a management situation during that time into January. Then in January the incident that Walker mentioned to you, which was this

Račëk massacre that was in the south of Kosovo down near Kachonik, which changed the entire dynamic of it.

*Q: Was there a reasonable contact with the Kosovo Liberation Army, the KLA or not? I imagine you could talk to the Yugoslav Army, I mean it's a regular army, but not to the KLA. Did you have good contact with them?*

ROSSIN: Well, we did. We had a couple of different levels of contact. I think by now we were developing a picture of who we were talking to and what influence they had, and we were starting to get a little picture of what the KLA was, which was new. As he said, the medium of Shawn and Navarro and lingering remnants of the Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission people had contact with KLA people. The U.S. Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission maintained a house at a place called Malisheva, which is somewhere to the west of Pristina, sort of halfway between Pristina and Paja, and this was a stronghold area of one part of the KLA. They had regular contact with KLA people in that area from that base, so that was one way in which we had contact. I still maintained the contact that I had with this guy in Switzerland, Mahmouti, whom I had dealt with earlier, ever since the time of the Holbrooke trip to Belgrade in October, and then the Clark-Neumann trip to Belgrade at the end of October when the disengagement of the KLA and VJ was worked out. There was a reasonable degree of contact with them, but I don't think they were so extremely well known. They were not really extremely well organized.

*Q: I was going to say, looking back on it now, was the KLA beginning to sort of develop into an organized force or was this a time of regrouping?*

ROSSIN: Not really. I mean, they had, I don't think they developed any new organization during this period, but they had certain people who were like leaders. It was somewhat regionalized and I don't think there was a dynamic of events that caused them to need, in their perception, to get any more and of an—organization. They didn't really become more organized in command structure until the time of the NATO bombing itself during that wartime period when initially they suffered a lot of defeats. And then they changed the commands and Agim Çeku came in as the head of the KLA military operation.

*Q: What happened about the massacre?*

ROSSIN: Račëk is a village down in the south of Kosovo, down on the way toward Macedonia, and there was some KLA activity taking place down in that area, and there were also indications that we had from both the OSCE from our own KDOM guys who were still there of Yugoslav military activity, kind of low grade, going around after these KLA guys. There was a report that came into Bill Walker and he has described it, I'm sure, in more detail. He was firsthand and I was not. There had been a place discovered where there were lots of dead bodies where there seemed to have been some kind of a massacre or something at a location where it had been known that there had been contact between the KLA and the VJ and police going on. Bill Walker went down there and found the forty-some dead bodies scattered around, and had photographers or press or

something with him. In some way he was able—he described it so I won't try and substitute for him, but he was quickly able to get out the word and in very strong terms, and he spoke very clearly and I think very eloquently about this massacre that he had discovered, which was not commensurate with any kind of normal military fighting, and it was pretty clearly a case of people who had been shot afterwards. It was a massacre. This quickly got out. Bill Walker stood up publicly and, as the head of the OSCE mission, denounced this massacre that had taken place. This caused a lot of publicity. It caused a lot of publicity and it caused a lot of diplomatic activity. Also I think it crystallized a realization which was taking place ever since December, when I had been out there, and we were dealing with this other problem; that the wintertime was not turning out to be a period where there was going to be a lull in fighting, and the winter time, as we were thinking, of renewal, but a renewed deterioration of the security situation that was likely going to lead the new line. Here it was leading to renewed conflict and Račëk was the thing that sort of crystallized that realization.

*Q: I'm trying to capture the mood, where were you? In Washington?*

ROSSIN: I was in Washington.

*Q: Was there a feeling that, Oh, my God, I wish Walker hadn't? What was the reaction?*

ROSSIN: I think the reaction was that in terms of genocide, it was extremely possible. He had done what they were there to do, which was to observe and to report and to call attention to any violation of the agreement that was reached back in October there in Belgrade. What happened in Račëk was clearly a violation, not only of sort of basic loss at war, humanitarian loss, but also of what they had agreed back in October in Belgrade. And also, there had been an agreement in the disengagement by Clark and Neumann with Milosevic later in October. So no, I think it was, I mean they weren't pleased that this had happened, but nobody was critical of Bill Walker. To the contrary. This is what he was paid to do. He had done a very good job of it. It had taken a great deal of diplomatic activity in how to respond to this. It reignited the Kosovo crisis in a certain sense.

*Q: Was there a point where you say, okay, either the Serbs do such and so or it's going to be military?*

ROSSIN: Not quite at this stage yet. It was coming to that. This started that ball rolling; the Račëk massacre started that ball rolling. The Račëk massacre coincidentally happened just before the visit of Secretary Albright to Moscow. I went to Moscow twice with her. It seems to me it was the second visit which was also with President Clinton there. But one of the two visits had President Clinton there and the other didn't. I don't remember, but I guess it doesn't really matter. This was the one with President Clinton there. So, it was a little bit of a reprise of what had happened in August of 1998 when the Serbs had acted up the first time and there was a meeting in Moscow with the Russians. The Russians were normally defenders of the Serbs and are to this day, obviously. There was this meeting taking place and among the subjects on the agenda was going to be Kosovo, and

normally it would be very difficult to deal with the Russians and get them to do anything critical of Serbia, or anything that would help move the diplomatic process of controlling the crisis in Kosovo.

What happened was, however—and again I went out to Moscow just before the main party in order to work with the Russians to negotiate a joint statement on Kosovo and Račak. Račak had happened just before that, so when I got out to Moscow to negotiate this joint statement as had been the case in August, the Russians, who normally wouldn't have been agreeable to anything useful, were put in a corner by Milosevic's own actions, and were unable really to agree to a joint statement that was fairly full of meaning and that set the stage for further diplomatic action related to Kosovo. It's not that they really were as outraged as we were, for example, about what had happened in Račak. I remember being in the Russian Foreign Ministry negotiating this thing, and we negotiated it and then sat there while the secretaries worked on typing it up and doing the final version, and doing the English and doing the Russian and all the rest of that. The guys that I was dealing with were mid-level officers. Also were talking about how it was probably really KLA soldiers who had been dressed up in civilian clothes after they had been killed, which was, in fact, something that got out there afterward and which was likely untrue because those who analyzed it said that by that time you wouldn't have been able to re-dress the corpses in that way because bodies swell up and all that sort of thing, but the attitude was like that. But the Russians were unable to mobilize themselves as they normally would to support Milosevic because of the fact of what Milosevic had just done.

One of the peculiarities of timing was that the Račak massacre occurred when the Russian first deputy foreign minister, Alexander Avdeev, who was responsible for this portfolio, was visiting Kosovo. He was down there on an orientation visit when Račak happened. He went down and had a look at it and his next stop was Belgrade on his trip and he was quite outraged personally, and he went to Belgrade and wanted to see Milosevic to say, "Well, what's going on here? I want an explanation." And Milosevic, in one of those mistakes people make, Milosevic refused to see him. You can stiff your enemy but you shouldn't stiff your friends and he did. And that got Avdeev really personally annoyed and that had consequences down the road, not only in this joint statement, but in the following event, which was a Contact Group ministerial in London.

*Q: In the first place were there Russian observers in the OSCE, I assume?*

ROSSIN: I presume. I don't know for a fact.

*Q: The Russian participation didn't, wasn't one thing or another, was it?*

ROSSIN: It was nothing special.

*Q: How about Secretary Albright? Did she talk to you or others about what had happened? Was she pretty outraged about what happened?*

ROSSIN: She was certainly outraged and I think she also realized and saw that this had changed the dynamic about Kosovo, and demanded a new sort of approach. Not only the Račak massacre but also the education it gave that this conflict was continuing before her eyes and was deteriorating, and she had the realization that it had to be dealt with and there had to be renewed diplomatic activity to control this crisis and to try to defuse it. Yes, she was constantly engaged in it. She came to Moscow right after I did as part of that visit and spent a considerable part of the time that she was in Moscow dealing with the Kosovo issue. I interacted with her on that constantly, mostly in the context of drafting up this joint statement that was the matter of the moment that we were in Moscow. Also, she was active on the margins of Moscow, talking to people like Robin Cook, the British foreign secretary, and other Contact Group foreign ministers about the way forward. What do we do now? What that led to before we left Moscow was the decision that there should be a Contact Group ministerial meeting on Kosovo in London a few days hence. The secretary was actually going to visit Egypt and Saudi Arabia and then do things related to Iraq and the Middle East and then go back out, so now it was decided there would be a ministerial meeting in London at which the way forward on Kosovo would be mapped out.

*Q: What was, you might say, after the Moscow meeting what in your mind and others who were dealing with Kosovo issue, what did you foresee would happen?*

ROSSIN: I don't think we knew. If nothing was done, I think what we saw was there would be a resurgence of the type of military activity by the Serbian military that had taken place in the summer and fall of 1998, the last summer and fall. Where that would lead to, I don't know. But it would lead to a lot of people being killed and villages being burnt and stuff, and that was basically what we were trying to avoid. Diplomatically I'm not sure where we saw it would lead to beyond that, but a diplomatic process was obviously needed in order to move this process forward, and I think the goal at the time was to find a way to really reinvigorate and get off of, get moving toward a goal and bring to a conclusion the diplomacy that Chris Hill and the other Contact Group envoys had been doing since the previous summer, which was trying to develop an agreement, a political agreement, between Belgrade and the Kosovar Albanians that would remove the need for the circumstances and contexts for this kind of violence. So I think the goal was really a twofold one: when the diplomacy survived in January, the primary one was to really reinvigorate that political process; the second one was to bring leverage on Belgrade particularly, and a little bit also on the KLA, to stop a violation, in the sense of a ceasefire that had been agreed the previous October.

*Q: Were you at the London meeting?*

ROSSIN: Yes.

*Q: What was the attitude of other European powers there?*



ROSSIN: Everybody agreed that something had to be done. There was not a tremendous amount, as I remember it, but the recollection I have of it was that there was pretty much a consensus that there needed to be the steps that I just mentioned. There needed to be a reinvigoration of the diplomatic process that needed to be structured more, and there needed to be pressure brought on Belgrade to stop its military actions. And I think this was obviously where the spark was reignited of the leverage of, you know, that there would be NATO military action if Belgrade did not stop its military actions. I mean, in a sense it was like if the October agreements were being violated and discarded in a sense by Belgrade, then the other side of that deal with Brussels was also off, which was that NATO had suspended all its military planning and tracking activities based on that agreement, so obviously that also would come back to life.

So the agreement in London was essentially that there would be a conference held on Kosovo a couple of weeks hence, maybe not even two weeks, in Paris, in France actually, what became the Rambouillet Conference; that it should try to be a Dayton-like event where you bring all the Kosovars and the Serbs together and try to isolate them and do a Dayton type of a deal. And that would be what came out of the London summit.

*Q: You mentioned that you went to Saudi Arabia. What was this about?*

ROSSIN: That was because the secretary was going there on stuff totally unrelated to Kosovo. I thought I was just going to London from Moscow and wait for her there and she just said, "I want you to come along so I can talk to you about Kosovo during the period while we are there and you can do work." I went and did that. It was nothing significant.

*Q: With Secretary Albright, did you feel that she was clearly informed and truly engaged on the Kosovo problem?*

ROSSIN: Absolutely. When we had been in Moscow in August and had this dinner with Primakov, I had ended up doing a considerable amount of talking on Kosovo, it was because at that time I think she was engaged but not very knowledgeable about it. She was concerned. She thought it was an issue. That took up half the dinner but her knowledge was very, very shallow. By the time we got to this period, she was very, very well-informed and very much engaged in the policy making and the analytical sort of brainstorming and all of the rest of the stuff that you do when you have an issue like this. I was meeting with her and with her senior advisors on the whole Kosovo issue constantly when I was in Washington and when I was outside of Washington.

*Q: Who were the people in Washington that you would say were closest to the secretary in dealing with this issue?*

ROSSIN: Marc Grossman, who was the assistant secretary for Europe at the time. Jim Dobbins was not on the scene yet, so not him. And then Jamie Rubin, Elaine Shocus, Mort Halpern was involved on it in the discussions. Wendy Sherman. She had a circle of

people who were her advisers on any issue and those were primarily the people. Plus Marc and myself, I guess, would be the two primary regional type people that worked on it.

*Q: All this time was there anybody who was sort of in the planning or dealing stage on the Kosovo thing from the Department of Defense? I mean, taking a look at say, if or maybe if have to? I mean beginning to start looking at this as maybe a—*

ROSSIN: I don't really. I'm thinking back. At least from where I sat, I don't really remember anybody being from DOD [Department of Defense]. I mean the DOD person who played a military role on it was really General Wes Clark. You had both an American and a naval guy and he would wear one or the other: the supreme allied commander of Europe. I don't remember. I mean the person who would've done it would have been Walt Slocombe who was the under secretary of Defense for policy, but I remember dealing with Walt when we would go to deputy meetings and stuff like that but in terms of outside of that, I don't particularly remember.

*Q: I can't imagine there would be any particular role for the Central Intelligence Agency in this?*

ROSSIN: Not anything special.

*Q: Is this a good time to do Rambouillet?*

ROSSIN: Yes. That was the next event.

*Q: What was the setting and all and what happened then?*

ROSSIN: Rambouillet was—as always the French offered; they're always going to have the venue for any international conference. That was sort of part of the regular event. They offered this chateau which is about maybe forty miles outside Paris somewhere. I could never quite figure out where we were but it was out there and it was a chateau, but Rambouillet itself is a small, little small town just off the highway. There is a chateau which is one of the homes of the president of France; it was an inheritance, I guess, of the royalty. It was where they offered to have the conference. It turned out not to be a particularly suitable venue physically for such a conference, but it offered the advantage, or at least it appeared to offer the advantage of having lodging for the two delegations, as well as rooms that were suitable for meetings, and that is what it was. It was also somewhat securable. It had a perimeter.

*Q: This was in a way Dayton had set the—*

ROSSIN: It was trying to mimic Dayton; that is to say, isolate everybody and keep them there until they agreed to something. It turned out not to work because in the intervening period cell phones had come into existence. That was the intent. It was not that great of a

facility in practice because the meeting rooms were—it was very difficult to control movement of people through the building. There was a large conference room reserved for the Kosovo delegation and a large meeting room was reserved for the Serbian delegation. But then there were also a lot of other little meeting rooms. The French were not great at controlling access or badge issuance, I guess. Initially they wouldn't even issue badges to all the members of our delegation, and the next thing you knew you'd find all these hangers-on lingering around the place; outside advisers to the Kosovo delegation and outside advisers to the Serbian delegation, just outsiders. The place was shaped like an "L" and there is a rotunda with a big sort of place where they had food and also a lot of couches and stuff and people would sit. All these other people would sit there and I always thought they were kind of couch-fishing for something interesting as people would walk by. In fact, if I were ever to write a book, I would call it *Couch-Fishing Around The Edge*. So that was part of the problem.

Another part of the problem was there were really no office facilities for the different delegations that were there. The Russians quickly and very artfully—I had to give them credit for it—grabbed the best remaining room and called it their office and just sort of defied anybody to kick them out. We had managed to grab something that was little more than a closet. Others didn't get anything, but there was a sheep husbandry school out on the grounds of the chateau and that was devoted to them. The French sort of handed that over to various delegations and it was amazing because the condition of the building inside and outside was similar to what you might expect to find in an Albanian sheep husbandry school somewhere outside of Tirana. It was extraordinarily primitive. It was really awful. And that's where we worked for three and a half weeks. We stayed in a motel that was a few miles down the road. It looked like the kind of motel that people would check in by the hour. That's where we worked. Physically, it was not a very good setup. It didn't restrict access and with the cellphones of course, it was impossible in any case to keep people from communicating with the outside: the Dayton effect. That was something that was at the time of Dayton and I don't think anything could ever be done like that again.

*Q: Let's talk about the delegations. How did you view the various delegations?*

ROSSIN: The Kosovo delegation? The thing opened when the two delegations arrived and the meeting opened in one of the rooms there with a speech by President Chirac. The two delegations and ancillary people like myself who were there were maybe eighty of us in all. There you had the Kosovo delegation, the last members of which had just arrived. This was a mixed delegation that was composed by themselves and was just an aggregation of representations of different factions, if you will, within Kosovo. There were five KLA members. You had four or five LBK [a political party in Kosovo] people there with Rugova; you had a couple of independent people like Dharamshala and Veton Surroi, who are both newspaper types, publishers and journalists. You had a couple of political figures who had been in the LBK which was Rugova's party but who had spun away from it, who at times seemed to be politically significant but later came back not to be. There were fifteen of them if I remember correctly in all, but not a unified delegation

arrived, just a bunch of people who arrived from different directions, literally and figuratively. Some of them could travel officially. We had to negotiate to get these KLA guys from the airport without their getting arrested or killed, and some came from overseas. It was a very disparate kind of thing.

And then on the Serb side you had Nikola Šainović. He was the guy who came to head the delegation. He was the deputy prime minister and he was really Milosevic's point man for Kosovo. And what the Serbs had done, and it already sent a signal when they arrived. What they did was put together what we called "the rainbow delegation," which was, you know—Kosovo has a number of smaller ethnicities, five or six of them. What they did was dealt one of this and one of that and one of the other people whom nobody had ever heard of.

*Q: Flaks and—?*

ROSSIN: No, not Flaks. Actually, that's not one, but Gorani and Bosniaks and Egyptians and Serbs obviously, and Albanians and Croats, and there were one or two others. And there were Roma.

*Q: Roma being?*

ROSSIN: Gypsies. Ashkali are a kind of Roma. Everything is so complicated. Egyptians are people who claimed ancestry from Egypt but they are probably a kind of Roma. It's all complicated.

So, they have this rainbow delegation and all these people were nonentities. They did have Šainović and maybe one other guy with him and it was quite clear that from the moment they arrived at the place that the instructions that they had from Milosevic were to not negotiate. They were there to be there.

*Q: What about the others? Was there an American delegation or was there OSCE or—?*

ROSSIN: There was the Kosovo and the Kosovar and Serb delegation. Those were the actual two negotiating parties. There was a Contact Group negotiator, that was Chris Hill, Wolfgang Petrich and their little staffs; I mean really small. Mayorski, the Russian Contact Group negotiator, was then also the head of the Russian delegation. I was the head of the American delegation. I was not the Contact Group guy outside of the American delegation. There was a French, British. The French were special; they were running the thing. British, Italian, and German delegations and a Russian delegation of various sizes. And our functions as the Contact Group delegation were twofold: one was to offer whatever support we could as the dynamic of the thing unfolded, and to the Contact Group negotiators. Not to do the negotiating, not to facilitate between the two sides. And the second thing was there were side negotiations that took place.

The text that was used as a basis for the negotiation was the text of the document that Chris Hill in particular had been negotiating for all these months, now, between Belgrade and Pristina. It had features in it like: under the settlement, all Serbian police and military will withdraw from Kosovo except that there would be some three thousand troops to be on the border between Kosovo and a foreign country in order to still stay in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia so they control the border. Things of that nature. Those things themselves became subject of side negotiation unrelated or not directly related to the Kosovar-Serb negotiation, because not only was there negotiation to get to the political part, the core settlement between Belgrade and the Kosovars. But then there was also the negotiation about when you reach that, what is NATO going to do? How many troops are they going to put in? Who are they going to be? How many Yugoslav troops will there be? What will be the relationship between the NATO troops and the Yugoslav troops on that border? And so forth and so on. So, there were side negotiations that were taking place. Those were what the national delegations were also engaged in.

*Q: Was there any carryover on our delegation from the Dayton Accords? Was there anybody who could say, "Well, this is the way we did it in Dayton?"*

ROSSIN: Only to a very minuscule extent. I mean, General Brian was an adviser to Secretary Albright at the time and he was one of Chris Hill's associates. He was one of the Contact Group negotiators, and of course, Jim was at Dayton. He was the one who basically wrote the Bosnian constitution, so he brought some insights. I really think he was the only person, well, Chris Hill himself had been at Dayton of course. There were a few other people who had been at Dayton. I don't think there was a tremendous amount of overlap between the two. I am not an expert on Dayton but I don't think— The dynamic of the conference was very different.

*Q: Well, I was just wondering whether someone was saying, "Well, what we need—" One can say a lot about Richard Holbrooke but he can be a very tough, very dominating and domineering person. Was there a feeling ever, saying what we're going to need is somebody like this?*

ROSSIN: No. I never heard that. Dick was not there but was on the phone to Chris very often. I mean, you know, Chris could never sit for five minutes but that Dick was calling. He welcomed that on one level. As Marc Grossman once said, "You know, you will never do yourself any good by not listening to what Dick Holbrooke has to say," but on the other hand, Chris was the guy who was doing this. Dick was in fact not part of. It wasn't that he was outside but he was really running it. He was just a kibitzer. Others were kibitzing with varied degrees of legitimacy. I mean, Secretary Albright was on the phone often enough and other people from Washington, Marc Grossman thought he—Chris. And the other kind of kibitzing that took place was there had been an agreement, sort of, at the beginning of Dayton that people would leave it alone and let the negotiators do their job with the parties which, among other things, meant that senior officials, political level officials would basically stay away. Because when you have a person above a certain level it's inherently disruptive because they are a big personality and they have to

be cared for and fed, so they have to meet with people and that doesn't work out. Political directors of France and Britain, of Italy and to a lesser extent Germany, hung around practically the whole time and basically tried to intervene directly into the negotiating process with varying utility. Ministers to Europe—you know, I mean it's a trip down the road for the French foreign minister—and they would show up. Secretary Albright only showed up twice; once after two weeks when things were kind of dragging to see if she couldn't do a little bit on it, and then at the end, like everybody did.

*Q: Well, was Milosevic, was he sort of a cloud off to one side but making communication or what?*

ROSSIN: Well, he was sort of a presence off to one side, clearly, because the Serbian delegation responded to his instructions but he wasn't an ongoing presence except in a passive sense because again, as I said, it was clear from the beginning that the instructions he obviously had given to Sainović and to the rest of the delegation didn't account for anything. They were really nobodies. It is hard to underscore how much they were nobody. But the instruction that he had given to Sainović, who is not a nobody, was, don't negotiate. So, they weren't negotiating. They would talk but they wouldn't negotiate. They would talk but they wouldn't engage substantively and, in a sense, therefore you had the presence of Milosevic off on the side but as this sort of passive, sort of just saying "no" kind of a presence.

*Q: Well, was there a point during this, you're in the American delegation, meeting the other European delegates, realized okay, we are doing this but it's not going to go anywhere?*

ROSSIN: Because of Milosevic? In part because of Milosevic. And the part that it was due to Milosevic, yes, absolutely. I don't remember exactly when it was. The negotiations were supposed to last for two weeks. So, the event went on for three and a half weeks. And at the end of two weeks was when Secretary Albright came out the first time and it was kind of an unpleasant situation because there was really nothing going on and you know, she was out there to make something happen but there was not an easy way to do it. I believe it was at that time that it was decided to have Chris Hill go down to Belgrade and meet with Milosevic and see if he couldn't get him off the dime. Chris did go down to Belgrade and, if I remember correctly, Milosevic wouldn't meet with him when he went down. Either he met with Milosevic and got nowhere, or Milosevic wouldn't meet with him. I don't quite remember now. It turned out not to be significant to the course of events, except that it showed that Milosevic, it confirmed what we all felt was the case, which was that Milosevic was totally stonewalling the process.

*Q: If nothing was happening, why were you hanging around for three and a half weeks?*

ROSSIN: Well, because here was the logic: the logic was, well, at some point Belgrade might decide to negotiate, obviously. The other was if you couldn't get Belgrade to negotiate, you couldn't get Belgrade to sign any agreement, at least as things were



unfolding, that didn't mean you couldn't work on the Kosovo-Albanians. So much of the effort, therefore, was focused on the Kosovo-Albanians. They, as I mentioned, showed up in disparate groups of people. They did manage to organize themselves into something of a delegation. Initially, of course, the person who was put in charge of the delegation in deference to age and standing was Rugova, President Rugova, but he was almost like catatonic throughout the whole Rambouillet thing. I mean, he was in a trance, almost. He never really made any contribution at all. I mean, I think he was really a deer in the headlights.

In that context, the leadership that emerged, practically speaking, of the Kosovo delegation was Hashim Thaçi, the political head of the KLA who was a very operator kind of guy and Veton Surroi, the big publisher in Kosovo. He was the publisher of *Koha Ditore*, which is the main newspaper in Kosovo and he was a sophisticated political sort of activist and spoke perfect English. He went to the American School in Mexico City and his father was a Yugoslav ambassador who eventually was killed in one of these murky Yugoslav political score-settling types of things. He was killed in a car crash.

But anyway, they sort of emerged as the leading members of the delegation. There were plenty of other dynamic people in that delegation: Edita Tahiri, who was an LBL associate of Rugova, Dharamshala was this journalist who was close to Chris Hill and others. There was a tremendous amount of work that went on with the Albanian delegation to try to get them to sign this agreement. Because they were to have had—in fact what ultimately turned out to be the case—then what you would have would be at least a half-clear situation that actually would make it easier to pursue the other kinds of actions related to settling the conflict. You would have a more black-and-white situation about who was at fault and who was trying to work to end the conflict. It would clarify who was who, and who could speak for Kosovo. So that was really what the thrust of the activity became. There was constant pressure on Serbs to negotiate but you know, as I say, “Four hundred Greeks at the pass at Marathon.” I mean, you know, it's easy to defend their issues if you could do that. So that was what most of the activity was.

*Q: Well, in a way Rambouillet really formed the Kosovo movement or government, didn't it?*

ROSSIN: I wouldn't say it did but it set up the shape for what later became the Kosovo government. That was not what people were intending to do at the time. In fact, it had pretty much the whole Kosovo political spectrum and then even some superfluous people at that conference, and so in the aggregate you had loquitur basically at that conference.

*Q: Was there one of these things that you have one side that doesn't want to do anything, i.e., the Serbs and the other side was forming together. Did anyone sort of gang up on the Kosovars to get something out of them? This happens.*

ROSSIN: Yes. Right. That's what happened. Chris, Petrich, and Mayorski constantly brought pressure. They worked with people like Surroi and Shala, who were really very,

very sympathetic and on the same wavelength with some of the LBK politicians. And then Jamie Rubin, when he would be there as he was often, developed a relationship with Hashim Thaçi. So, he was very much engaged in it. In a sense, the effort was to bypass Rugova in a way that he wouldn't just wake up one day and say no on the one hand and, on the other hand, to get the KLA, but particularly Hashim Thaçi, to agree to the thing. In fact, that turned out to be extremely difficult.

At a certain point during the Rambouillet Talks, the one Kosovo political figure of import that was not part of the delegation was a guy named Adem Demaçi. Demaçi was an older gentleman in Kosovo, had been a political prisoner for twenty years, a man of great moral standing. But frankly, from my viewpoint he was nuts and in Chris's viewpoint he was nuts. I mean, anybody who met him and dealt with him for a long time felt he was nuts. And you know, he was a swirl of conspiracy theories and was a rejectionist of the worst order: he was spun up, he was crazy, and he didn't come. From the outside he was agitating a lot to prevent the Kosovar-Albanian delegation reaching any kind of agreement because there would surely be a conspiracy. At a certain point Thaçi insisted that he had the— This was the phenomenon, of course, of Dayton not working and people calling on cell phones and stuff. And at a certain point Thaçi insisted before he could do anything at all, he needed to go meet with Demaçi in Slovenia in order to sort this out. So, it was allowed, and he went down to Slovenia with a couple of people from the Contact Group accompanying him. He met with Demaçi. Demaçi told him, "Don't sign anything." In fact, he was not going to persuade Demaçi. And Thaçi came back and through the whole thing, Thaçi was just saying, no, he wouldn't sign anything. He was really that lone holdout in the delegation.

And eventually what happened was, Secretary Albright came out after two weeks. She tried to move the discussions forward. She was really frustrated because it was very ineffective. Other ministers came out. There was a meeting of ministers with the Kosovo delegation where they tried to pressure them and that was ineffective. They actually backed off of something they had agreed to do, and ultimately what happened was toward the end of three and a half weeks that again all the ministers came out, there was a lot of pressure, and then Chris and Jamie and Veton Surroi and a couple of other members of the Kosovo delegation did something where they basically tricked Hashim Thaçi into signing it, or agreeing to sign it. It even became more complicated when Jamie Rubin took Thaçi on a walk out in the garden while everybody else did up the document and got it ready for signing and signed it, and then when Thaçi came back it was there. And then what happened was Thaçi said, "I can't sign it right now. We've got to go back and consult in Kosovo but we will sign it two weeks hence, provided we are told by the people in Kosovo that we can sign it." And that was where Rambouillet ended.

*Q: What was the agreement?*

ROSSIN: The agreement was a version of what Chris Hill had been working on since last summer. It was the Rambouillet text. It was a text that allowed for self-government in Kosovo. It called for the withdrawal of most Serbian authority and troops and so forth. It

called for an international presence. It had provisions for minority participation and rights and all this kind of stuff. It was quite a comprehensive political settlement and, again, it was something the Albanians left saying, We will sign it two weeks hence, provided that our consultations in Kosovo don't tell us we can't. The Serbs basically said, We're not signing that crap. We're out of here. In fact, Chris Hill tried to go down a second time from Rambouillet to meet with Milosevic to try to talk with him one more time, and the second time he was told don't come.

*Q: Was there the feeling in a way, the Rambouillet agreement that was signed at least by one side seems to be kind of what is operating today, isn't it?*

ROSSIN: It is referred to, it's incorporated by reference into, by some reference, into Resolution 1244. A lot of what we see is comparable in shape to what the Rambouillet agreement laid out, but the Rambouillet agreement per se is not the basis for what goes on in Kosovo now. What goes on in Kosovo now is based on agreements and documents that were created during the post-1999 period, during the UN period. Many of them are similar; many of them would be similar because many of them just responded to the shape of Kosovo society.

*Q: You reached this point where the Serbs won't sign and I mean, were they in a way at a certain point sort of put out to pasture while everybody focused on Kosovars?*

ROSSIN: To a considerable extent, yes. At a certain point, you know, why bother? You have something else to do. They weren't entirely neglected. One of the things that was extremely annoying for us to discover, although sadly not entirely surprising, was that they were there the whole time. In fact, Milan Milutinović, who was I think the foreign minister at that time, came and joined the delegation as it got closer to the end. I think Milutinović wanted somebody else to help out Sainović. What we found was that the Italian political director and foreign minister, when they were there, would be both preventing meetings of Contact Group ministers and going straight to meet with Milutinović and tell him what was going on. You know, they were spilling the beans all the time with the Serbs. It was not very surprising; the Italian government of the day was in bed with Belgrade.

*Q: That's surprising because usually Italians are, you know, a very solid ally.*

ROSSIN: You know, the whole thing in Yugoslavia from the beginning was kind of curious. The Germans sided with the Croats in the conference; the Greeks sided with the Orthodox, the Vatican. Everybody was 1930s Europe. It brought out the worst in everybody.

*Q: I imagine, particularly after this, you probably came away with something you probably really never wanted; you had a pretty solid knowledge of the Balkan situation.*

ROSSIN: You mean personal? I think I followed it and followed it all the time, up close and personal. Yes, there is nothing like participating in making history in the Balkans.

*Q: How about the Turks? Had they sort of written off both the Albanians and the Kosovars?*

ROSSIN: For the whole period of post Dayton on Kosovo, including the most recent period when I was there with the UN, also in that post-1999 period when the Turks were quick to set up an office in Pristina, the only interest the Turks ever had with regards to Kosovo was regarding the small Turkish minority. That was their only interest.

*Q: At that time was there any reflection from say, Iran, from the fundamentalists or Islamic fundamentalists?*

ROSSIN: Not at the time of Rambouillet. Right after the end of the war when we set up the U.S. Office in that postwar period, we saw nibbling of Iranian interest in what opportunities Kosovo offered, might be a way to put it. I don't know. There was an Iranian, there were some Iranians who came down from Bosnia, we heard. We didn't see them ourselves but they were followed around to look around but they never showed up again. I guess they thought there wasn't much prospect there. We had problems in the immediate post-conflict period with al Qaeda coming in, with radical Muslim nongovernmental organizations, al Hari Maya and stuff, coming in and there was a period in the late fall of 1999 after the end of the conflict when we were concerned about that. They all left after a while for the most part, so with some small exceptions that was a transient phenomenon. The Kosovars themselves were extraordinarily unreceptive to that kind of thing.

*Q: Well, Rambouillet is over. At that time did you say okay this is a failure or what?*

ROSSIN: No, no. The feeling was actually one that it had been, it hadn't failed and it hadn't succeeded, but on balance it had made forward progress. Clearly making forward progress with Belgrade. But the sense was that Belgrade was an actor of ill will and Milosevic was really an actor of ill will on Kosovo, and so to the extent that there had been progress with Serbia, it probably would have been deceptive and undercutting, actually, the pressure to do what really needed to be done.

With regard to the Albanians, there was a sense that progress had been made. Although they hadn't signed the agreement, they certainly had come together to some extent. We knew the personality better. The shape of the agreement that they would sign was there. They had made it a commitment in principle to sign it. There was clearly a difficult two-week period ahead while they went back to Kosovo to consult, whatever that meant. There was an agreement to reconvene in Paris, to resume the conference, and hopefully to have the Albanians come back and sign the thing. And who knows? Maybe in that intervening period Belgrade would have given a second thought to the fact that they could get caught short if the Kosovars did come back and sign it and they didn't, and then

they would be very disadvantaged. No, I think there was a sense that there was forward progress made, and then Secretary Albright had a press conference at the end of the Rambouillet conference in which she was quite positive about the outcome and I think that was the general sense.

*Q: Did Montenegro raise its head as an entity or something like that?*

ROSSIN: Not really. I mean, Montenegro was there. It was a separate diplomatic track that the U.S. government had going on with Montenegro.

*Q: It was at that time part of Serbia, wasn't it?*

ROSSIN: It was part of Serbia but it was fairly separate. It was under Djukanovic. It was a government that was not, that was opposed to Milosevic. It operated semi-independently in fact, even at that time. I met once, had lunch with Secretary Albright with Djukanovic. I met with Djukanovic a couple of times to talk. Montenegro's attitude from then until it became independent—now it has a different viewpoint—, but up until that point the only Montenegrin take on Kosovo was, how is this going to impact our interests? Generally speaking, you know, the Montenegrins didn't have anything against the Albanians; they were just concerned how it would play in their own circumstances.

*Q: What was the situation at the end of Rambouillet on the ground? Was there pretty much a division? The Serb portion was under Serb control and the Kosovar portion was under Kosovar control or were there lots of units of the Yugoslav National Army around?*

ROSSIN: There were lots around. It was not a situation where you had fixed lines or anything like that. If you looked at a map of Kosovo it would be the kind of map that would say planes showing up here, you know, where conflict was taking place. It was very mobile and shifting around and not fully understood of course, because although the Kosovar mission was still on the ground, again their reporting was not of the highest quality in our viewpoint.

Clearly, what was happening was deterioration. There was more and more conflict being reported. There was worsening conflict being reported down in the south around Kaçanic; quite considerable military activity by the military and police taking place down there, burning villages, and there were other areas of that taking place as well. It was not a static situation.

*Q: The Rambouillet negotiations had been taking place during—*

ROSSIN: In the context of a deteriorating situation.

*Q: Displacing refugees or?*

ROSSIN: Not refugees; I mean, some internal displacement but not the refugees you associate with the hundreds of thousands who went out. It was just a constant sort of Serb military police sweeping into another village and burning it. Some KLA attacks.

It was a deteriorating security situation but we were working to prevent it from deteriorating and really going over the edge. It had a sense of urgency about it, and when the Albanian delegation returned to Kosovo for those two weeks with the KLA guys smuggling themselves back into Albania, and people like Rugova going back overtly, if you will, they went back into a difficult situation. And particularly, of course, the KLA members of the Rambouillet negotiating team, this—amounted to, committed to—on the ground. It became a difficult challenge for them because you had people like Demaci and a lot of the KLA commanders on the ground who had not been at Rambouillet, extremely skeptical about this, and engaged in fighting and saying, “Well, cut the deal here while here they are burning our villages?” and “What are the other countries doing?” So, it was a very tough two-week period while they were back there and a lot of pressure brought on the delegation members to sell this agreement. And Thaçi was playing this game that he played all the time. In fact, he disappeared from communications for a while, not in the sense that we thought he had been kidnapped or something, he just turned off his phone. Bob Dole was sent out there at one point.

*Q: Senator Dole.*

ROSSIN: Senator Bob Dole, who had been engaged on Kosovo for some time, went out there at one point at our request to go out there and try to put pressure on Thaçi in particular, and we were quite tough on Thaçi. So, it was back and forth. I don’t remember the exact unfolding of those two weeks but I do remember that at the end everybody came back to Paris, and when the Albanians came back to Paris they came back saying, We’re going to sign the agreement. Right there. I mean before there was a meeting or anything. They were ready to sign the agreement right there.

Then the whole week became, what about Belgrade? Because the Kosovars have sort of—they could be sitting enjoying Paris for a week because they said they did, they would, they were going to, sign the agreement. What more could we ask? It was the purpose of Paris, and so then the whole thing became Belgrade. What were they going to do? This was again, as so often with Belgrade and the Russians, one of these things where the Serbs shot themselves in the foot with the Russians because the week of the Paris negotiations was rather uneventful, but at the end of it there was a large meeting, a lot of ministers and all the rest of that, and the two delegations. Basically, it was a kind of “come to Jesus” thing around the table. The Albanians sat there and—which is again significant. He was the toughest of the characters, the one who signed it for them. Literally, the figures of the document were then put in front of Milutinovic and everybody, including the Russians who were there said, Sign the document, Milan. And Milan said, “I’m not signing it.” And that was the end of the conference. So, they left them the general excoriation of the document including the Russians, to the extent of



course which set the stage for NATO bombing and military action against the rejectionist Serbs who had defied the role of the international community.

*Q: Was there a feeling during or after that the Kosovars said, Okay, sign this because we know the Serbs aren't going to and so we came out looking like the good guy?*

ROSSIN: Absolutely. And you know, the Serbs set themselves up for it. I don't think the Kosovars would be thrilled with the content because otherwise they would have agreed to it months ago when—was going around. They saw a tactical advantage to be gained. The tendency among the Europeans, certainly among the Russians, was to assume the Albanians would do something stupid or bad. The Europeans tended to give more credit to Milosevic as being a legitimate governmental leader than he deserved because he really wasn't. So, this was a big opportunity for the Albanians to stand up and do the right thing. The big question was, would the Serbs do the right thing, and they clearly didn't.

We had moved on to Holbrooke and a delegation of us went to Belgrade in that two-week period between Rambouillet and right after Rambouillet, and it was an extremely interesting experience. We stayed for a couple of days, I guess. What was interesting was that in all previous visits to Belgrade, I mentioned, I think, an earlier discussion we took. We would sit there all together and then after Milosevic and Holbrooke would go off into another room, the rest of us would be entertained by his staff, his foreign minister Ivanovic, who is this really wooden "apparatchik" [bureaucrat], and he would say things that were just absolute bullshit. And every five minutes I would just go off and go to the bathroom just to get out of the group.

What was noted after Rambouillet when we were sitting with Milosevic, was that Milosevic was saying things to us that Ivanovic normally would say, detached from reality. This was something I flagged on immediately. A lot of us flagged on it immediately. If Milosevic is saying to us what Ivanovic normally said about for example, 60 percent Albanians in Kosovo, it was so weird. I don't remember the details. It was just "apparatchik" stuff. This was the problem. Milosevic may not be a good guy and he may be always tactically maneuvering, but he's never a person who wasn't in touch with reality. He might have been making a different interpretation of events or reaching them a different way, but he was not a person who was deluded, if you will. He was talking deludedly. And I thought, "We're bombing. I mean, this is clearly the case. If Milosevic is talking this way, we're bombing," which is how it turned out.

*Q: Why would the Serbs go back to Rambouillet if they're not going to sign?*

ROSSIN: When they came back to Paris they clearly presumed, and this was their assumption, they were certain the Albanians would not be able to get their act together to sign. They were clearly thrown off their balance when the Albanians got off the plane and said they were signing and stuck to it through the week, too. I think the Serbs thought well, they may say it now but give them a few days and they will be fighting among

themselves; you know that kind of a thing. But they did stick to it. They were quite disciplined when they got back to Paris and this really threw the Serbs for a loop. They didn't adjust and there was clearly a lot of back and forth going on. You know, the phones were ringing and we saw evidence of it, but I think it was a miscalculation and they are arrogant people, and especially they are arrogant when it comes to dealing with the Kosovars. How could they possibly be outmaneuvered by the Albanians?

*Q: At any point did the Serbs and the Kosovars get together and talk over things?*

ROSSIN: No. I think there were a few instances of sort of courteous chat at Rambouillet. Paris was different. Paris was not one of these off-site isolated type things. It was in Paris and the Serbs were staying in a hotel. They were meeting at their embassy; the Albanians were staying in a hotel and meeting with the Albanian ambassador. It was an urban event and so it didn't have anything like the hothouse character that Rambouillet had or attempted to have. It was like a commuter event, if you will.

*Q: Well then, the Serbs won't sign. What happens then?*

ROSSIN: Well, what happened was basically the Serbs wouldn't sign. There was this last conclave but they wouldn't sign. It broke up into a general criticism including even by the Russians, who after all were there as part of the Contact Group and therefore put on the spot. Criticism of Belgrade and the general expectations, because in the meanwhile, during the whole Rambouillet process and then the two weeks and so forth, and in fact, the lead-up to Rambouillet, there had been the revitalization of the NATO operations planning procedures, and if you don't sign, you're going to get bombed. So there was the expectation.

*Q: We were really saying that?*

ROSSIN: Absolutely, yes. Not only were we saying it but the North Atlantic Council was taking votes. They were doing the things that they do with political authorizations to shape and to do planning.

*Q: All this, of course, obviously in the public eye.*

ROSSIN: Absolutely. And after Paris, Holbrooke and his delegation then immediately went to Belgrade to say well, you know, Think it over again, Slobodon. You know, this is it. I mean, this is our last visit. And Milosevic was even more in that "sounding just like his foreign minister mode," and in that visit, really there was debate between the members of our delegation, the Holbrooke delegation. I think myself, Greg Schulte, who was the White House representative on the delegation, the NSC staffer, some of us thought right from the onset when we met with Milosevic that he clearly was not budging, and we should get the hell out of here and just go with it. Start the bombing. Let's not get wound up in this, let's not get compromised in some way. Holbrooke and I think Chris Hill to some extent, clearly, hopeless certainly, was really holding out, let's

just see. They're going to talk about it in the national assembly, they're going to change the policy, to be debated on TV. It got to quite a strong fever.

Also talking to Washington, people were saying there was a debate about whether or not we should stay or leave. Holbrooke wasn't taking advice from Secretary Albright. He didn't like her. There was a rivalry there. He would hold everybody off, basically, in some hope that—and Albright. There was a big dispute within our own delegation, and myself and others were pressing to go. It was obvious what was going on. Here we were just putting off the inevitable and possibly complicating the evacuation of the embassy for the few people who were left. And on the other hand, if we had one last chance to avert military action then we should hang out for it, which was legitimate. Those of us who were arguing the other way said there wasn't, it wasn't a real chance. It was obvious this was not real. The Serbs had the debate in the national assembly on TV, we all watched it, and it didn't play out the way Dick Holbrooke hoped it would play out. We all said, well, it's time to get out of here now. At that time everybody would leave.

*Q: Were there any Serbs who were coming up to the delegation saying, "Oh, for God's sake. Don't start doing this to us?"*

ROSSIN: Not really. When you deal with people for month after month as we were doing with Milosevic and with the Serbian authorities, you get to know people, and you know that there are guys who are more pleasant to deal with and more facilitative, even to the point of trying to find a way to reach an understanding, and then others who were not, who were more hard line. Amongst those advisers to Milosevic there were some who were one type or the other, but in the last days they were all united and very bitter and critical about a bomb of every type. You know that kind of thing. Milosevic was in charge, Milosevic was defiant, and we were making our decisions on his decisions and there was not really any debate we could have.

*Q: Do you think the Serbs really thought, Well, gee, they really will bomb, or not?*

ROSSIN: Well, I think by the time he got around to them they realized that we were really certain and we were wondering ourselves whether we were going to be out, wheels up before the bombs started falling. You know, there was this C-9 [aircraft] sitting on the ground at the airport in Belgrade ready to take Dick Miles and the rest of the embassy staff out. We had our plane out there. We didn't think they were going to block us and they didn't. But no, at that time it was not a question of if; it was just a question of when. It was kind of dramatic; and then after the thing was over we went over to Novobeograd, which is on the other side, and Christiane Amanpour was there and there were some other journalists there.

*Q: From CNN.*

ROSSIN: From CNN. Dick was interviewed by her. You know working across the river and all that kind of dramatic stuff. And it was dramatic, because the next morning we left

Belgrade. Dick Holbrooke and the rest of us were there. The U.S. embassy staff left Belgrade and went out to Budapest. We had our plane that was an air force executive jet type of a plane which flew to Brussels, dropped off Holbrooke who was doing some stuff in Europe, and then Schulte and myself and a couple of other delegation members continued on to Andrews Air Force Base. We arrived at Andrews Air Force Base in the late afternoon and it was like a movie. We get off the plane and we walk across the tarmac and into that little VIP lounge at Andrews. There's a big TV in there with CNN on it and literally, just as we walk in there, they have "Breaking News—First bombs drop on Belgrade." So it was just like a movie, you know, how the TV is always showing the right thing at the right moment.

*Q: Was anybody in the delegation helping pick out targets? Did you have any feel for how the campaign would go? Because in a way if one looks at this, one would think, okay, we're going after Serb forces in Kosovo, military forces, but actually the concentration turned out to be the cities.*

ROSSIN: It evolved, as I remember. We were not involved. Even during the wartime period of the bombings we were not involved in picking out targets. I remember on one trip, I think it was the last time we were on our way to Belgrade, we stopped in Brussels, and there was the NATO secretary general and Wes Clark and Sandy Vershbow who was U.S. ambassador to NATO, and we talked about targeting, but it was more just of the nature of what you know about what's on the ground in Belgrade. It wasn't our role to do targeting, it was just ground knowledge, that sort of thing.

I think the initial thought on bombing was that the intention was to bomb in Kosovo itself to affect the military operations there. One of the difficulties of that was that you weren't allowed to come below fifteen thousand feet and we saw them— They were along the road and could be mistaken for a military convoy that was bombed at one point. The nature of the conflict was not with large—lines—even like, for example, when they bombed Sarajevo. When the bombardment of Sarajevo was taking place it was hard to pick out targets and so forth. And it was also not having much of a political impact on— The real thing was to get Belgrade to stop fighting, not to intervene in the war. So the decision was made at a fairly early point to carry out the bombing to bring the war essentially, if you will, to Serbia proper, because diplomacy was all going on down in Kosovo. Even Milosevic and the Serbian government and the people of Serbia, who were in Milosevic's thrall, could care less. It was down in Kosovo and so they needed to feel a little bit of the cost of the war up in their own neck of the woods.

The effort was always to pick out targets that were at nighttime for example, so that nobody would be in the building; targets that were not civilian targets. So they bombed the Air Force Ministry and they bombed the Defense Ministry and they bombed the police headquarters. They bombed things that were related in some way to Kosovo and the conflict in Kosovo.

*Q: Could you talk about the contacts that you were, both the Washington scene and the diplomatic scene, that you are dealing with?*

ROSSIN: The Washington scene as I said, at one level was just hard work. It was running the busiest office in the State Department at that time, producing all this constant paper and talking points and demarches and doing those cables.

*Q: Let's talk a little bit about who were cables going to and the talking points? I mean, what sort of things—?*

ROSSIN: It's ten years ago now, but I mean generally speaking the talking points were: well, first off the key talking points every day would be ones to Secretary Albright for her call to the other foreign ministers. It was half points to keep them on line, and the other thing, frankly, when you're calling foreign ministers every day, half of it was to figure out something for her to say to those people every day. But it was really important. Jim Dobbins was adamant that she call them every single day and he was correct, completely right. As for most things, Jim Dobbins was completely right and it was essential to hold hands, cajole, "consult" in quotation marks and really consult, so that was very important, and that would be about technical questions about the bombing. There would be targeting issues even when you did have occasional issues in the bombing. There was once, just as a train was coming up in Serbia and the train went off the end of the bridge and people were killed, that kind of a thing. There was another time where pilots over Kosovo mistook a caravan of refugees for a military thing. This would happen every now and then. These weren't all the time but they did happen.

The other kinds of talking points obviously were to our embassy in Moscow. The Russians were not part—although they were part of the Contact Group they were not part of this daily discussion, but they certainly were constantly criticizing the United States and NATO for carrying out this bombing, and at the same time I think the general conception all along was that they were somehow going to have to be part of the diplomatic formula that would bring an end to it and bring Milosevic around. That turned out to be the case.

And then there were lots of miscellaneous demarches. There were times, for example, about the state of people on the ground inside Kosovo. Nobody really knew what was going on in Kosovo. We knew there was a lot of burning in villages and stuff taking place. That we could see from photography. We knew that there were movements of people taking place within Grosomoto [as heard]. You can see that kind of thing from photography. But there was actually very little intelligence about what the situation was on the ground, so at one point there was a lot of work being done to conduct humanitarian food airdrops, IDPs [internally displaced persons] in Kosovo, although nobody knew exactly where they were. I don't know if we ever actually did it or not. I think not, because we tried to get pilots and aircraft that could do that at low level and of course, that was dangerous because there was anti aircraft fire in Kosovo. I remember initially they were looking at having Moldovans do it and then the Moldovan government

wouldn't let the pilots fly, and then they were discussing assistance from Belarus, one of these kinds of things. At the same time the Belorussians were shipping material to Belgrade. I don't remember what the other demarches were.

*Q: That gives an idea.*

ROSSIN: That's one level. Another one was the interagency stuff.

We were firing a lot of cruise missiles, and they get used up or they cost money and they have to be replenished. So there were a number of deputies' meetings about diplomacy, about coordinating the diplomacy with the military and that sort of thing. I can't say I remember any details because everybody was pretty solid on taking this thing forward, so it wasn't like when I subsequently worked on Iraq, where it was not well coordinated.

For myself anyway, there was the travel. I don't know, I probably took five or six trips during that bombing period, to Contact Group meetings, to meet with the Albanians: Rugova, the LBK, the KLA people who were in Albania and Macedonia, and then I basically put together a trip and visited lots of different places in Europe, meeting all of these people to see who they were, just to see if there was anyone or anybody worthwhile, or if they were crazy, and I met different people. One of the guys actually works now for the U.S. Office in Pristina as a political assistant. He was in London at the time. He was the LBK person.

*Q: What was your reading on the dispersed Kosovars?*

ROSSIN: Most of those who counted were dispersed in Albania and Macedonia. They were displaced as a result of the conflict, and they were nervous. They didn't know when they were going home. There were eight hundred thousand of them displaced out of a population of maybe two million, or maybe 50 percent of the Albanian-Kosovars. And at the same time they still had all their politics going on. They were also, I would say, to a degree on the one hand grateful to the United States in particular. They did not trust anybody else except the United States. The Europeans were distrusted, but they were certainly grateful to the United States for the fact that: a) we were finally taking strong action to deal with their problems; and b) we were not wavering. I mean, we were sticking with it. And so I would go to Tirana and meet with these KLA guys who were now leaders in the Democratic Party of Kosovo, one of the parties in Kosovo. People like Yakokreznichi [as heard] and others.

In Macedonia I tended to run more into the LBK people and they were all showing the real nervousness that they had. And the reason that I needed to travel and meet with them, other than just to maintain the linkage and to identify new people, was also because every time there would be some development in international diplomacy and statements would come out. Whenever there was a statement done after a Contact Group meeting or G-8 [Group of Eight] meeting, it was always a compromise. So from a Kosovar-Albanian perspective, since the United States and Great Britain tended to be on the more assertive



line than say, Germany and France, and whoever in the G-8 were not, we would have something that would work for them. It was giving ground, it was softening, like it was going to—like we were going to conclude a deal where they figured there were countries out there that would conclude a deal with Serbia and the bombing, that they would give away stuff that should not be given away. That principle I described about nothing less than what had been agreed at Rambouillet.

So for instance, when there was a G-8 statement I went out on the road. It came out while I was in Macedonia actually, and I had to sit down and spend hours talking to the Albanians there, and talk to Tahiri and people like that and assure them, don't worry, we're really here and are going to see this through to the end. It was always successful because they knew me and I knew them. They knew that President Clinton was strong about this stuff and that Madeleine Albright was strong, and at the end of the day, at least at that time, the United States pretty much at the end of the day called the shots on this stuff in NATO and the Contact Group, especially with the Russians.

*Q: Could you explain what our bottom line was at Rambouillet?*

ROSSIN: At Rambouillet there was an agreement that was at the end signed by the Albanian delegation and it set up the regime, you know, a transitional regime, something comparable to what is in Resolution 1244 but not the same. That is to say, an interim period of minority protection and things of this nature. And they signed this thing. And the Serbian delegation at Rambouillet and then at Paris, which was the second phase of the Rambouillet process, had never really negotiated and certainly refused to sign anything. Basically, Milosevic said, "Well, go and bomb me if you want. I'm not signing anything."

So the bottom line of the U.S. government, which the secretary was very strong on—U.S. policy was that whatever outcome, whatever negotiated outcome there was out of the bombing, however it ended, whatever arrangement was made that ensued from all this, it would not be less favorable to the Kosovar-Albanians than the deal that they had accepted and Serbia rejected in Paris. That was a firm position throughout, and some of our European partners were on points during this. They were more nervous about continuing the bombing.

In that, we were blessed with an administration leadership that were people of principle and willing to stick to it; and multilateralists, by the way, too. All the things that we don't have now.

*Q: It's interesting because Clinton—did you have the feeling that here was a man who was sort of come to maturity on foreign policy because you know, before you didn't have the feeling that he had a full—*

ROSSIN: Well, we're talking here about the last year and a half of the Clinton administration and I will say if you compare this to the earlier time when I worked in the

White House, when I worked on Haiti at the NSC at the beginning of the Clinton administration, I would say there was a more confident grasp of the leadership. I would also say that Secretary Albright was clearly a superior rank in this kind of situation or a superior leader to Secretary Christopher. She was, as is so often the case, secretaries of state are more willing to use military resources than secretaries of defense are. That was not something so much between Colin Powell and Albright, but the reality was that the Clinton administration was a mature administration by this time and they dealt with it in a mature and fairly straightforward fashion. But you know, there's a lot of credit to be given. It's no joke. I mean now here we are in 2007, but it is no joke that it's a lot of credit to be given for taking the effort to build and sustain an international coalition and build international understanding. It worked. These things don't happen in our hemisphere; they happen in other people's hemispheres and you hope to bring other people along with you.

*Q: Let's talk about, as you did these trips and talked to people, let's talk with the British and we'll take a tour of the horizon on this.*

ROSSIN: A problem, if you want to call it that. I wouldn't call it a problem. The disagreement between the president and Tony Blair was that as the bombing progressed and there was no clear movement, you really didn't have a situation where every day that the bombing went on you could feel yourself getting incrementally closer to an end, to an end to the crisis. The British came to the conclusion that now we were in this and we were doing it, we needed to bring it to an end but we needed to bring it to the right end, and that would require the commitment of ground troops. This was a frequent, constant topic of discussion between the British and the Americans at the top level. The president was not willing to commit ground troops to Kosovo. I think in the last stages there was beginning to be some consideration given to that, but then the Tessari efforts began to bear fruit and it became muted. But the British much earlier on started talking about committing ground troops both out of concern that the bombing was ineffective in bringing Milosevic around, but combining that with the fact that they were increasingly concerned that, on the ground in Kosovo itself, you could be producing a significant humanitarian crisis for all those people whose welfare we didn't know about in Kosovo.

*Q: What were we seeing on the ground?*

ROSSIN: Well, we weren't seeing anything on the ground. We were seeing aerial photography of burning houses.

*Q: I mean you had borders that were essentially friendly of Albania, Macedonia, and all of the people coming out.*

ROSSIN: Most of the people came out early on. There was not a continuous flow of people out the whole time. You had this very large flow in the first maybe two or three weeks or something like that. It was a conscious expulsion effort by the Serbs. They would gather up people, put them on trains, take them down to the Macedonian border

and they would march across. Or you know, through the border crossing into northern Albania and they would be deprived of their identity documents and their license plates and other Serbian documents. Milosevic had told us in Belgrade that there were 60 percent Albanians in Kosovo, when in fact they were probably 90 percent, and it was pretty clear in retrospect that what he was doing was actually changing the numbers. He was getting rid of a lot of Albanians to make it 60 percent. But they mostly came out in the early stages and after that not very much at all. So information was very spotty and really there was very, very little knowledge.

*Q: Did we have FSOs or military intelligence people on the border of the countries monitoring the CIA, trying to figure out?*

ROSSIN: Well, the agency [Central Intelligence Agency] was in Albania. And then there were some additional Foreign Service officers stationed at the embassy in Macedonia and Albania but not very many, really. It's a little difficult in Albania because in late 1998 there had been a really, really serious al Qaeda terrorist threat against the embassy in Albania that nearly succeeded. It was a big bomb type of thing. As a consequence, the embassy had been significantly reduced in size and it was like a fortress, a tempered fortress, and it was very difficult therefore to operate much in Albania during that period of time. It had started loosening up of course, of necessity a little bit, but it was really constricted.

In Macedonia there were also difficulties, maybe in late 1998 or early 1999. The embassy was actually overrun by a crowd of people who had been stirred up by Serbian agents and parts of it were set on fire. The embassy staff was down in the basement. It was quite a situation, and so there also was some limitation felt as to how wide a presence we should have.

Although you have a lot of people there, it didn't take that many people to maintain contact with them. Most of them you didn't maintain contact with, most of them weren't the leadership.

*Q: Back to our tour of the horizon—the Germans?*

ROSSIN: The British were the most forward leaning; you had the Russians who were out of it now, out of the daily stuff. They were obviously the most backward leaning. And then you had the Italians, French, and Germans.

The Italians were basically pro-Serb. At Rambouillet, Lamberto Dini, the Italian foreign minister, would leave a meeting of the Contact Group foreign ministers and troop right up to Milutinović's room and give him a rundown on what everyone was saying. It was pretty blatant. The Italians were always just very pro-Serb so they were always reaching out to Belgrade. They had their own contacts. They were also always bringing in Italian intelligence, which is truly a thing and not something that one takes with a grain of salt at

all times, and they were not very helpful. They were also the least influential members of the Contact Group.

*Q: I might add, though, that that is where we were doing our bombing from, wasn't it?*

ROSSIN: We were doing the bombing from Aviano but that's not relevant. I mean, those are two separate things.

Then you had the French. I don't have a very clear picture of the French. At Rambouillet the French had been like the hosts more than anything else. I don't remember any particular French take on it, one way or the other.

The ones that I do remember were the Germans, and the Germans are always in these things, and we see it again now on the Kosovo thing, now as it now reaches—it hopefully reaches its—and becomes independent. They are very, very weak. They are always trying to find an amenable solution that everybody can be happy with and when you reach a stage where you're bombing somebody like Milosevic, you are past the stage of an amenable solution that everybody can be happy with. So really, managing the Germans, I think, was probably the most challenging. The Italians are always out there but then the other ones were the Germans. They were big on the Easter pause, for example, along with the Italians.

*Q: Did they really have a goal in mind or were they trying to assuage their public?*

ROSSIN: The Germans? Their goal was always the same, at least it was at that time and I suspect it is still, and that is to manage Kosovo in such a way that Kosovo, as the black hole of crime in the Balkans, somehow doesn't become more of a problem for them. They actually don't have as many Albanians as do Switzerland or Austria, but they do have Albanians. All these Europeans think that Albanians are congenital criminals. There is crime in Albania; there is crime in Kosovo but there is also crime in Serbia and Bulgaria and Romania. Really, that was their goal. It was a management issue for them.

I used to go to Contact Group meetings with Marc Grossman when he was assistant secretary for Europe at the time and he was also the G-8 political director. His family had come from, I don't know where, Poland or Ukraine or something; part of the big Jewish emigration to the United States at the turn of the century, and he would always end up making some comment about how he was so glad that his family had come to the United States. We used to talk about it. There was a lack of a moral compass, somehow, with the Europeans. Everything was fungible; everything was to be negotiated. There were no real basic bedrock principles going on there at all. We did have some bedrock principles.

*Q: In doing these oral histories, somehow the Europeans in so many things as human rights and all come across as being rather relativist, yes all this and never quite wanting to face up to things. Sometimes we face up to things and get ourselves into deep trouble.*

ROSSIN: But we do face up to things. Sometimes things are really bad. Sometimes really bad things, there are really bad people out there and you know, it's not the case of where you can look into anybody's eyes and find the good guy in there. I mean, maybe God in the next life can take care of that but we don't have time for that stuff when people are getting killed. Yes, you're right. There is always this "relativizing." There's never an issue where there are not two sides to the story of equal legitimacy, but that's just not the case, I'm sorry to say.

*Q: Well, again it's so obvious often in our embassies in very small matters but in Africa, where we would take a strong stand on a human rights issue or something like this, and the Europeans would sit off to one side.*

ROSSIN: One of the things, when I was ambassador in Croatia—this is a country where some of the European countries had significant roles to play, not just the United States—we were trying to get out of the Balkans to some extent by that time, anyway. The war was over and so forth.

One of the things I always noticed was how many of my European colleagues knew much more about Croatian politics, and they knew much more about Croatia than I did. I used to feel embarrassed about that. I would have a conversation with them and I would just cover up the fact that I didn't know those things they were telling me. But I knew enough because I was actually doing something. This wasn't an academic exercise. I was not going to write an article for a political science journal, which is partly what it did seem like they were doing. And, if you go into these things and you over-analyze them you can find all these nuances and stuff.

It's a little bit like, we have now a special envoy for Darfur, Andrew Natsios, and when you hear him talk he goes well, you know you've got the—and all these things, and he begins such a complicated description of the situation in Darfur until you wonder why would you want to be involved in it at all. Everybody is bad, everybody is good. It's just that probably at some level, that's true. It has a long and complicated history. But the man was appointed as a special envoy to end the conflict in Darfur and there's a point where it's good to start getting a little bit black and white. If you get yourself too complicated, you're given a job to do. You're not just sent out there to understand everything there is to know about Kosovo or Darfur. You're supposed to go out there and actually make something happen. So you know enough, and then you make decisions and you start doing stuff. Europeans don't normally have to do that because they don't normally have active foreign policies, but we do.

*Q: Did you find any, like the Russian diplomatic effort or the Norwegian or others, was anybody trying to undercut us?*

ROSSIN: Well the Russians were obviously trying to undercut the bombing and end it in a way that would be, I would say, favorable to Serbian interests. They were certainly advocates of an outcome that was less than what was agreed upon at Rambouillet, let's

put it that way. I think the Greeks to a limited extent, they just have this strong natural affinity with the Serbs and they don't like the Albanians that much. The Albanians are similar to Turks in some ways. Greeks are not. I would say every now and then the Italians in their unilateral contacts with Belgrade, would probably do things that were not helpful. I wouldn't accuse them of treason to the Allied cause, but I don't really think there was any country, maybe with the exception of Belarus trying to ship some arms in at one point, I don't think there was really any other country that was actively engaging on behalf of the Serbs or actively trying to undercut this thing. How do you undercut a bombing?

*Q: What about countries such as the Scandinavian countries? Were they a factor at all?*

ROSSIN: Not that I can remember.

*Q: At that point were the Baltic countries, were they part of NATO?*

ROSSIN: No. This is before, I don't think even Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Poland were part of NATO at that point, or they were just coming in.

*Q: Were we worried that someday that the bombing might continue to such a point that some of our countries like Hungary or one of the other countries might say enough is enough?*

ROSSIN: Well, they weren't a part of NATO. More generally speaking, yes. That was a concern, really, because for most of the time that the bombing was going on and increasingly so, people started asking, everybody started asking themselves—because nobody wanted to carry on bombing longer than they needed to—, What's the way forward here? In fact, during this period basically what happened was I was traveling every other week to Europe to meet with the Albanians, to go to Contact Group meetings; for whatever purpose, I was traveling and the other week when I was not traveling, Jim Swigert, who was the DAS, the deputy assistant secretary, for the Balkans, was traveling in the delegation with Strobe Talbott and some others. Strobe Talbott, who was deputy secretary of state, was leading the delegation and Strobe was carrying out our diplomacy with the Russians. This was the Russian angle of diplomacy, to try to get the Russians to engage in a way with Belgrade to help bring Belgrade around. Eventually that evolved into what became the Ahtisaari [former president of Finland] Plan.

Jim [Swigert] is now the director for Latin America at the National Democratic Institute. When he was travelling with Talbott, I would be home, I would be the acting at DAS, so I was always the acting DAS when I was in Washington because Jim was always on the road when I was home and vice versa. That was a separate track. I was not particularly involved in that part of the diplomacy. I was knowledgeable about it but not involved in it. But it was a worry.



*Q: Was there concern at the time of the media beginning to focus on the horrors of the bombing? You know, bombing is not a pretty thing.*

ROSSIN: Bombing is not a pretty thing and there were incidents of casualties. There were not constant casualties. This was not carpet bombing of Belgrade. That was the Germans in World War II. This was not bombing a population center but you would have the occasional incident, like this train bridge thing, or an occasional incident where people would get bombed in Kosovo because they were mistaken for Serb military. And of course every time somebody did get killed in Serbia the Serbs would make as big of a deal as they could out of it, naturally enough. But even with some of those it was a little bit like the first Gulf War. There was the bombing of Baghdad and there were some questions about whether some of the things that the Iraqis put out really happened in that way. There was concern about that, and every time one of those things happened it was a big deal. But it wasn't like one of the situations where well, I think that you have in Afghanistan now, when you have so many friendly-fire and so many collateral-casualties situations that it's really eating away in Afghanistan. It was not like that.

*Q: Was there, looking back on it, or even at the time, were we seeing or was there sort of a turning point, do you feel?*

ROSSIN: Only right at the end. Only right at the end when, what happened was Ahtissari being the former president of Finland, and Chernomyrdin being the former prime minister of Russia—I don't think he was serving as prime minister at that moment—started traveling to Belgrade and working together. It was very much, the presentation of it was Ahtissari, Chernomyrdin, not Chernomyrdin, Ahtissari. But I think the sense was that while Ahtissari was the one who was leading it and he would be the guy who would do the visible talking with Milosevic, and Ahtissari is a very skilled sort of mediator, but at the end of the day the guy who was really going to tell Milosevic something that mattered was Chernomyrdin. And what Chernomyrdin really needed to tell Milosevic was that the jig was up, that Russia wasn't going to back him up anymore. Eventually that's as far as anybody can make out, that's what happened at a certain point. The Russians decided that NATO wasn't going to give in, that it was going to cause problems for them, that Milosevic could not win this thing and so they needed Milosevic to give in to protect their interests, and then they could help Serbia salvage something out of this thing. Once that took place it all happened really very quickly.

*Q: Were we trying to knock off Milosevic?*

ROSSIN: Not to my knowledge.

*Q: I mean, that wasn't a particular target?*

ROSSIN: No. Not that I'm aware of, although Milosevic was the guy calling all the shots. I don't think there was a sense that if he were knocked off somehow the peaceable kingdom would emerge or anything like that.

*Q: What about the bombing of the Chinese embassy?*

ROSSIN: It was an accident, the Chinese embassy. The information about where the Chinese embassy was physically located was out of date. I mean, you think about it. When you served in different overseas posts, you were sometimes given the location of the previous address of the American embassy, when in fact it had been moved in the interim. The same thing happened when I participated in the intervention in Grenada. The U.S. military planners were supposed to rescue the U.S. medical students but they had old maps, and the medical students were not where they thought they were. They were attacking the wrong place and trying to save students at the wrong place. That was the case also in Belgrade. There was just very imperfect information about where the foreign embassies were. And not so long beforehand, the Chinese had moved from wherever they were before, to an area on the other side of the river. They were in a building; I don't know if it was the Chinese embassy or it was a commercial building they had rented. And it got bombed. There was actually something else nearby that got bombed. It was an accident. It was obviously something that was not good.

*Q: Did that cause any—outside of the fact that we had mobs parading in front of the Chinese embassy in Beijing—did that cause any concern or did things just keep going?*

ROSSIN: Things just kept going. Certainly there was a whole huge exercise undertaken to determine the location of every embassy in Belgrade. I mean, you know, one of these worldwide “contact the local government and find out where their embassy is,” including people like the North Koreans. They really left no place unturned in the effort, but it didn't stop the bombing or anything like that. It was in the same league as the train or the fleeing people, you know. You have too many of them and these things eventually all have a corrosive effect, but there weren't that many such incidents.

*Q: Was there a concern about the American public?*

ROSSIN: Not that I remember.

*Q: I was just wondering, the corrosive effect of any long-term campaign.*

ROSSIN: The corrosive effect on the American public, what's the corrosive effect on the American public about Iraq? It's about American casualties and it's about Iraqi civilian casualties and about the “unwinnability.” None of those things really pertained in the Kosovo situation. You didn't have any American casualties. You had one American who was shot down and there was one of these heroic rescue exfiltration types of things. You had the odd sort of Serbian casualty, the Kosovo casualties and people didn't like it but it wasn't like in Iraq or Afghanistan. I mean, you had the “unwinnability” thing and there was never any sense of that going on. I don't think the American public—remember, this wasn't a war where you had Americans on the ground fighting. It was a bombing thing,

and so it wasn't the kind of thing where people were following it as closely day-to-day as we were.

*Q: How did the thing play out?*

ROSSIN: It happened so fast that I don't quite remember. And again it was not the part of the diplomacy that I was directly involved in and I think that's also why I don't remember the details. But what I do remember is in the beginning of June all of a sudden Milosevic blinked and it had to be because Chernomyrdin sent a message from Boris Yeltsin that said, "The jig is up. We're not going to support you. You have to give in." Very quickly then I found myself traveling to Helsinki for the last Strobe Talbott meeting with the Russians. Ivanov was the Russian defense minister at the time. The discussions were about where the Russians were going to be in the sectors and in KFOR [International Security Force], and things of that nature. Really it wrapped up very, very quickly when it did wrap up. All of a sudden you had the NATO generals there meeting with the Serbs in Macedonia to negotiate the modalities of the Serbian withdrawal from Kosovo and NATO entry into Kosovo.

Things happened very fast when it came to a mop-up. From my perspective it happened very fast in the sense that all of a sudden we found ourselves in Cologne at a G-8 [Group of Eight Highly Developed Economies] meeting. I don't know why it was a G-8 meeting instead of the Contact Group; maybe it just happened that the G-8 was meeting to work out the details of the UN Resolution 1244. And then we went down with Secretary Albright to Macedonia to visit the refugees and tell them not to go home too quickly. When we landed at the airport in Skopje, Jim Ellis, who was there as the commander of NATO, and Mike Jackson, British commander of the Allied After the Action Corps, had come over because this is when the Russians made their run from Bosnia to the airport in Pristina. You know, things happened very fast when they happened. That's my recollection of it because I was very much in the parade rather than watching the parade, so I only saw my part of the parade.

*Q: You have this rather peculiar thing. Everybody on the Soviets sent, what was it a battalion or—?*

ROSSIN: They were Russians. They sent a, I don't know if it was a battalion or what the size of it was, but they sent a military unit through from Bosnia through Serbia into Kosovo, and so you had a situation where the, it was such a "turnabout is fair play" kind of a situation, I think, on the Kosovo Serbs, and so I didn't have a lot of sympathy. On one level I did, on another level I did not. On a human level I did, but at a practical level they made their bed and they were sleeping in it now. When the bombing began the Serb police and army just went through Pristina systematically and just kicked out, drove out all of the Albanians, practically. You know, lists of people to arrest, entire apartment houses emptied, put on trains, shipped down to the border, activities that were very sort of World War Two-ish.

Then what happened was that at the end of the war the Kumanovo Agreement [the Military Technical Agreement between the International Security Force [KFOR] and the governments of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the republic of Serbia, commonly known as the Military Technical Agreement or Kumanovo Agreement] was negotiated, and all the Serbs pulled out. I mean they all pulled out. As they left, they had all these Serbian soldiers making V [victory] signs, but they were on their way out, all of them, not like in the Rambouillet agreement where they would have had a certain amount of stay-behinds. They were all leaving. So of course, all of a sudden then it was the Albanians' turn to be happy, although most of them weren't there. It was the Serbs' turn to be really dejected, the ones who had been six weeks sitting on top of the hill. Then a couple of days later you have the Russians come in from the north back down toward the airport in Pristina, and all of a sudden the Serbs think, well, maybe this is coming out all right after all. They were all happy again, but that was short-lived because what happened of course was the Russians got to the airport trying to set up camp, and there they were, out in the middle of nowhere, out away from everybody and beyond the end of their supply lines, which was a big weakness in the exercise. There really was no role. And then KFOR came in and you had the proper deployment of international military forces.

*Q: What was your involvement in that? The Serbs are pulling out of Kosovo. Then what were you doing?*

ROSSIN: Well, I was with Secretary Albright. I guess we flew from Cologne, I think it was, where there had been this big G-8 meeting that had decided that they needed to test UN Resolution 1244. Then we went down to Skopje [Macedonia] and the idea, the purpose was for Secretary Albright to go visit this big gathering of about fifty thousand refugees. It was just north of Skopje on the road between the border and the city of Skopje. The plane landed on the runway. I think this was the eleventh of June, for some reason that sticks in my mind, in 1999 that would be, and as we got off the plane and went into the VIP lounge at Skopje Airport, in comes, walking across the tarmac, Admiral Ellis, who was the commander of NATO forces in Naples. And I think it was Mike Jackson who was the British commander, commander of the Allied After the Action Corps. That was actually his position.

They came in and they informed Secretary Albright and her delegation of the fact that the Russians were on their way to Pristina from their base in Bosnia through Serbia and they were on their way. And that was a surprise, a total surprise. We had no knowledge of that. So Albright was trying to call Igor Ivanov, the Russian foreign minister, to find out what was going on. The whole time while we were there, while we were visiting the refugees and all that kind of thing, while we were even flying back, Ivanov basically didn't know what the hell was going on. Convincingly, it was clear he really didn't know what was going on. This was some kind of a move behind the pro-Serb defense community in the Russian establishment to, I don't know what. We never could figure out what it was supposed to do, if it was a gesture and they did it and they came in. Everybody was happy to have them in KFOR anyway. They had a sector, a subsector of the American sector and they did a good job there. These guys were just camped out beyond the end of their

supply lines getting drunk and never getting paid for probably well, the whole time I was in Kosovo they were there.

*Q: Wasn't there some move or threat of trying to supply them from the air and we blocked it? Could you talk about that?*

ROSSIN: I can. It happened right after I got back to Washington from that trip. What happened was the Russians were going to fly into Pristina Airport, which can take heavy aircraft, and were going to fly into Pristina airport with aerial whatever. I mean, it was supposedly provisioning, but who knew what would get off the plane? We quickly mobilized and made demarches to all the countries that were between Russia and Kosovo to deny over-flight for those planes. We were successful with that. We pulled the area over Romania and you have to look on a map. It was mostly Bulgaria and Romania; I'm not sure where the planes were supposed to be coming from. So that was prevented.

*Q: Do you recall were the Bulgarians and Romanians kind of happy to be able to do this for a big brother?*

ROSSIN: I don't remember that it was very difficult to get them to do it. This was 1999 and the government in Bulgaria was a very friendly government. I don't think either of these governments had any problem with it; I know it wasn't the sort of thing that you had to have the president call or something like that. It was pretty easily done and was done very quickly.

*Q: What happened with you?*

ROSSIN: Then what happened was, well, in Cologne in fact, when there was that G-8 meeting, it became apparent to us, and everything was happening very quickly, it became apparent all of a sudden that we were going to need a presence in Kosovo in very short order; that the war was over and it dawned on everybody that we ought to have some kind of a representation there. So basically Elaine [Shocas] and Marc Grossman conveyed Secretary Albright's request that I would go out there basically and hear that. I mean, I say head that office, but that's too fancy a word for it, but set up whatever we needed to have out there, which was really the way they put it, and I agreed to do that.

So then what happened was we basically went back to Washington and I informed my colleagues that I was leaving and that I was not going to be the officer there at the end of the week, and then I went to New Mexico for ten days or so of leave. I had a long leave scheduled and I took a short part of it and went out to New Mexico where we had a house, and spent a lot of time on the phone with Shawn Byrnes, who was in Kosovo. He had gone up immediately. There was also a USIA [U.S. Information Agency] branch post and a little bit of this and that in addition to Shawn. And so I was in a sense taking over from him to open up this office and we were on the phone a few times. Then I went back to Washington and flew out to Kosovo. It was about two weeks.

The last thing I did as a Washington person was around the twenty-fifth of June, I don't remember exactly the day, which is that I flew out with Jamie Rubin to Macedonia and together with General John Reed, who was the commander of NATO forces in Albania, and with a British officer who was a British staff member of General Clark. We flew into Kosovo and negotiated for the disarmament of the Kosovo Liberation Army, Jamie, myself, Reed, and the other guy.

*Q: Jamie Rubin being the spokesperson?*

ROSSIN: The spokesman of Secretary Albright.

*Q: A close confidant of—*

ROSSIN: Of—was the so-called political czar of the— In fact, he played a key role after that in— All of the KLA commanders were there; there were thirty or forty, their regional commanders, I guess. We sat in a big room with them a couple of times and went around the room and that kind of thing. And that was the thing; it took a couple of days flying. We stayed in Skopje but we would fly up to Kosovo by helicopter and spend long hours there doing that, and then finally we went to Pristina. This was when KFOR was still in tents. They had just gotten there before they moved into Film City, which was where their headquarters were and which was an old film studio. The agreement was signed. You know, General Jackson signed the agreement with—and then Jamie got the president on the phone to talk to—and that kind of thing. It was a very difficult negotiation but it was one that we eventually got done.

*Q: I was going to say, there is nothing worse than having a guerrilla army disarm because there isn't really a real central command.*

ROSSIN: One had evolved in the case of the KLA. Obviously, it was not a central command in the sense that a state would have a central command, like the Serbian forces or at the Sudanese army, but there was something of a central command that had come about, for really what was a fairly loose grouping of regional local military leaders, if you want to call it that, had come about because they had sustained so many defeats when they tried to carry out pitched battles against the Serbs in the first part of the war. Then—and these other veterans of the Croatian or the VJ had come in and the Albanians who had been in the Yugoslav army in the old days, some of them had served in the Croatian army, and then they came to Kosovo and they created some order in all this chaos; set up some proper military command and turned it into a fairly effective fighting force against the Serbs for the remainder of that bombing period. I think because the vast majority of members of the KLA had only joined the KLA very, very late in 1998 and 1999, and the vast majority of them, according to the answers they gave when they were demobilized by the International Organization for Migration [IOM], had joined really in a defensive posture. Their village had been attacked so they joined in self-defense then. They were ready to go home. This was not their full-time occupation. They had not been guerrillas for years and years.



*Q: This is always the real problem when people become sort of—*

ROSSIN: It becomes their life.

*Q: It becomes their life.*

ROSSIN: That was not the case with the KLA. I wouldn't say there were no individuals in the KLA who were not like that, and most of those were people who went one of two ways after the demobilization. Disarmament was negotiated in June, the demobilization was negotiated in September with General Jackson, and then there was a process. Most people just demobilized and went home. IOM was funded to set up some vocational training but that really never got going very much, I don't think.

Two things happened. One of them was some of them who were criminal types beforehand became criminals again and they are still out there. The largest number of them were just demobilized altogether, just returned home, joined the Kosovo Protection Corps [KPC], which was created basically as a holding pond for ex-KLA members, where they could be given something to do and kept an eye on and made to feel good. And for years afterwards the debate was, what will happen with the KPC, which now is likely to become the Kosovo defense forces.

*Q: Was it a major concern to protect the Serbs that were left in Kosovo?*

ROSSIN: Not initially. I don't think there was any sense on anybody's part that this was going to be an issue. It didn't take long to materialize as an issue and of course, it's now one of the major continuing issues in Kosovo; minority protection, which really means Serbs and Roma to a limited extent because some Roma had collaborated with the Serbs during this wartime period. Initially, it was not one of the issues. I got there 17 or 18 of July and maybe a couple of days later there was an incident that took place in which several Serb farmers who were out harvesting their wheat in a town not too far south of Pristina were killed in the field and that became one of the things that flagged the concern.

The other thing that kind of flagged the concern was that many Serbs fled. They left with the Serbian armed forces at the end of the bombing. Albanians started burning their houses when they left, which I found peculiar. I would think that they would have occupied their houses, especially since their own houses had been burnt out by the Serbs. That's not how it works in that part of the world. And so there were indicators, and then quickly there were multiple indicators that this was going to be a major issue and it became a major issue.

The first year or so there were many murders of Serbs. There were maybe five hundred or so murders of Serbs and many people expelled from apartments in Pristina and things of that nature. KFOR and police were pretty successful quickly in getting a handle on that

situation, and the murder rate even by the time I left Kosovo in February of 2000 had gone down quite, quite substantially. But it was a real challenge. I don't think anybody understood the depth of ethnic hatred between Albanians and Serbs, the history of it. Nobody really understood all the other nationalities that existed in Kosovo and it was something that people were not really prepared for.

*Q: What was your job?*

ROSSIN: I was the head of the U.S. Office in Pristina, charged with setting up the U.S. Office in Pristina and representing the United States to whomever was there. We debated the name of the office. It's still called the U.S. Office in Pristina. It's not called the U.S. Liaison Office in Pristina. There were U.S. Liaison Offices in other sort of odd places but because we weren't sure who there was to liaison with, and if that conveyed something politically that we didn't want to convey, so we figured well, it's the United States and it's an office and it's in Pristina. That was about the logic of it. It didn't say anything other than a physical description of a fact. My job became to set up the office.

So the other thing was the formulation with the Kosovars whom I knew by that time. I was well known to them and they were well known to me, and managing the U.S. government presence in Kosovo, which was growing like Topsy. We had one of these DART teams, Disaster Assistance and Recovery Teams, from the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance. They were already on the ground when I got there doing food distribution and similar activities. There was the Office of Transition Initiatives that USAID had just sort of set up when I got there. They were beginning community outreach and organizing activities to enhance conflict control and an AID office as well. The main kind of AID activities such as projects and contractors had not really begun yet. And then we had the military there; the U.S. military though. This was the difference between a lot of other places and Kosovo. The U.S. sector was actually different from Pristina so of course we kept a lot of relationships with the U.S. contingent task force—it was called in KFOR. Our main liaison was actually with KFOR headquarters and with the other commanders of KFOR, which you know was a multinationality. In the first instance it was all British, or nearly all British, because it was the arch; it was months after—it was staffed. After three or four months they left and there was a German general who came in and he had more of the classic multinational NATO as far as headquarters. That was it.

*Q: How did you find Mike Jackson, who was quite well known?*

ROSSIN: I think he became more well known after than he was before. He became the commanding chief of Defense Staff. I liked him. I found him a value to work with. We worked together fairly well. He certainly can put it away. He was a solid guy. He really could put it away.

*Q: Compared to what you had seen before, was there really developing a Kosovar general structure at all or not?*

ROSSIN: At that early stage, no. Kosovo was in a state of perfect anarchy in the immediate post-war period. Every currency circulated, you would pay in one, get change in three or four others, another exchange rate. There was no government, there was no government whatsoever. They were all basically a Serbian colony. As a consequence it was the perfect dodge because there was no court, there were no police, there was no nothing.

*Q: But the problem was when the Belgians pulled out.*

ROSSIN: I guess so, yeah. I wasn't there but it must have been a similar kind of thing and so there was no government. There were no license plates on cars, there were no road signs, there was no nothing. I mean it was just, you know so—to do any administration—actually was the one who came out to set it up. He wanted to show the children Iraq and then Bernard Kushner came out and Jacoby, the American deputy came out and David Albright. So they had to start setting up a government from scratch. In fact, because there was a vacuum of government, what happened, and something that left a legacy that took a long time to be worked through, was that as the Serbs left, the KLA people would come into different towns. They would set up these local provisional administrations and the KLA guys set up a provisional government of Kosovo in Pristina with Hashim Thaçi as the prime minister, and ministers and all that kind of thing.

A lot of outsiders in Washington and in other places were outraged. How dare you, said the United States, How dare the KLA come in and set up this sort of a thing? My reaction to it was that nature abhors a vacuum. People need basic services. The UN you know, takes a while to set up. This was overnight. In some of these places people actually did a pretty good job; in other places they didn't. Very valuable qualities, some of them were crooks but in some of the places, they did a pretty damn good job of it. They were very creative. License places started licensing and they set up police and all of that kind of thing. It was a natural and necessary reaction to a total vacuum of authority. People need public services. They need security, they need basic public services. They need police.

I remember going out maybe a week and a half after I arrived, I went out with people from OCI, from the USAID with the transitioning initiative to a town in western Kosovo that had an old bazaar, a historic one that had been destroyed. The Serbs in the first two days had completely burned this thing down. They torched the whole place. So OCI had organized with the local Serbs a cleanup campaign. The cleanup at that level was in a Kurdish market that had been burned out, and I went out there to see it and so forth. I got there and there were police with armbands on, crowd control, very well done. And the guy who was running it was now one of the leading highest-quality members of the Kosovo government. They were good. Some other places it was really criminal intimidation. It was really bad. It was an amazing period to be in.

*Q: I imagine the usual thing happened that after the war was over, you had what, eight hundred thousand refugees outside—*

ROSSIN: The backup. Secretary Albright's message to those Kosovars was that first they heard, "Let us find out what the landmine situation is, let us find out what the food situation is." Nobody knew. "We'll let you know." There was planning going on in Washington and elsewhere to set up refugee camps for the winter of 1999 to 2000 and all that kind of thing. And everybody would think about just, of course, the status between Madeleine Albright, yes; Madame Albright and you looked through on the other side of the fences that this is not enough to trust. You know, at home. And they did. And I think they all went back, I mean, it couldn't have been more than a couple of weeks before all eight hundred thousand— And also to the Kosovars' credit, and I give them credit, there had been a program set up during this period where several tens of thousands of Kosovars were resettled in a variety of third countries, including the United States, which took about twenty-five thousand. All over Scandinavia, lots of different places.

The challenge became for us in Kosovo, then what are we going to do for all of these people? Winter comes early, none of the houses had roofs, they didn't have means of heating. They were going to freeze to death. And then suddenly it dawned on everybody, it suddenly dawned in late October when it started getting cold, and there was a big campaign to get blue tarps and one warm room in the house that first winter, which was achieved through a huge effort by a lot of people.

*Q: How did you find the international, was there essentially a UN and NATO, initially when you were there who was sort of the non-Kosovar sides doing what?*

ROSSIN: That was the administrative authority of the UN, but the UN was very soon outside of Pristina. KFOR was out there in larger numbers. They were doing a lot of what you might call civil affairs work, but civic affairs is defined very differently by different countries. The United States has a very developed civic affairs program in the military and of course, a lot of reservists were out there for the United States, serving out in the field to look after these kinds of things, but fairly *de rigueur*. We had the built-in capability in our reservists to do it.

The British were pretty good on civil affairs but not as good as the Americans. They compensated for their lack of civil affairs capability by their more in-the-community style of military compared to the United States. And they did embarrass themselves to the effect that the Germans kind of overcompensate and their soldiers only do humanitarian work, and then when it comes time to actually do some sort of military activity, a peacekeeping situation for example, they sometimes fall short. The French and the Italians basically had no civil affairs capability to speak of. I think the worst situation was probably with the Italians who were in charge of the sector that is north-northwest Kosovo centered around a fair-sized city.

The other side of the coin was that the United States military was occupying no public facilities in their sector. The Italians were occupying every public building in their sector, all schools and such, which was in July. When September rolled around, school started

late. It starts at the beginning of October in that part of the world. But people started saying, including us, well, it's time for all these kids to go to school. You better get out of these schools, and more so because under the Serbian regime the Albanian kids were not attending the public schools. They had been attending a parallel system. So this was their big chance now to go to school in their own country, in their own schools, and you have the Italians occupying all of the schools. And this became a big stink. You know the economic recovery of tourism. How is this going to happen? You're occupying the one nice hotel. You know, that sort of thing.

The French were a little bit like that too. I think the French were the worst because while they had some civic affairs capacity and some civility, they had gone up to the river and really hadn't done the basic North and allowed this divided city to emerge. Paris was constantly telling the French that they were not to provoke the Serbs, and I think the French, by their own actions, became identified as somehow being pro-Serb or more equivalent to that kind of setting. And the French became the enemy to the people in the north of Kosovo. That's worn off a little bit now. The KFOR commander when I was there was such a good general and they had some good leadership. So the Serb guy was there from coast to coast. He was running things, if anybody was running things, for a while.

It took the UN maybe four to five months to really get a reasonable stocking level in the provinces or in the municipalities, such that they were there.

*Q: You were there for how long?*

ROSSIN: I was there for eight months, I think it was. I arrived in the middle of July and I left at the end of February. Seven or eight months.

*Q: It must've been a very rough winter, wasn't it for everybody?*

ROSSIN: It was terrible. Even now when you talk to people who had been there the whole time with the UN, it was the worst winter; apparently it was the worst winter in the Balkans. But also the infrastructure, I mean, you know there was the electricity; there was very little electricity. There was not enough water, and everything depended on electricity, and there wasn't electricity. The State Department quickly rustled up some military surplus generators for us that worked half the time for our U.S. office that were really, really loud. Only later when we got other kinds of generators did I realize how loud those darned things were.

It was cold and it came on overnight. I went on a trip for a couple of days to Germany to brief all the officers and then all of the noncoms. When I left it was okay. We flew up and when I came back, it was just as cold and had no power. It was like just overnight. And that was the entry period, just no power, no electricity. It was freezing cold there and it gets cold in the Balkans. This was in the mountains, but I remember when I was ambassador in Croatia years later, we went to Bosnia for Christmas with our family. It

was just as cold as could be. It was just biting, bone-chilling. I've never been anywhere else as cold as it is there. No matter how many layers of clothes you put on, it doesn't matter. And of course it is colder inside than it is outside.

*Q: How about the Serbs? I guess the French had most of the Serbs in their—?*

ROSSIN: Actually, not. People didn't realize that right away off the bat. You had this area above—which is nearly entirely Serb. But that's only about a third of all the Serbs in Kosovo, and the rest of them are scattered around in all these enclaves. They weren't enclaves beforehand; they became enclaves when things changed because of security reasons. They had to be protected by KFOR. Funny enough, most of these Serb enclaves ended up being in the U.S. sector, in the southeast of Kosovo. People just didn't know a lot about Kosovo before they went in there, and I remember when we were in Helsinki negotiating with the Russians, we wanted to have our soldiers out without any problem so they took what they thought was probably the quietest part of Kosovo because the Italians and the Germans ended up with the part where the KLA had been most active and where most of the fighting had taken place during the war. It turned out that the Americans took the area that had mixed Serb-Albanian villages and they were all within a stone's throw of each other; or mortar shot of each other, or a rifle shot of each other. They really took on what turned out to be a very difficult area. Over the years they did a great job in managing. I thought it was funny because the people in the Pentagon didn't want to take any chances with the wrong people, and they took the wrong place.

*Q: How were things playing out during the eight months you were there? For example, you've got all these Serbian villages. Did people travel around or—?*

ROSSIN: The major issue actually was not that, although that was a constant sub-theme of Serb security. The major issue was actually demobilization of the Kosovo Liberation Army and getting the Albanians together because the factions of the Albanians, Rugova faction and the KLA faction if you will, despised each other, and there was every possibility that they could've gone to war against each other. There was a lot of political work done by us, the U.S. Office, our political team.

In this and by KFOR there was just a lot of work done and that led to the demobilization of the KLA, which was an agreement which was reached in September. That was a big project. The establishment of the Kosovo Protection Corps, the agreement on parameters which was something obviously the KLA guys wanted to do militarily, if possible. We had problems with that. And then, too, the establishment of the initial institutions of self-government in Kosovo, which were interim administrators, I think that's what they were called at the end of 1999.

The issue of the Serbs at that early stage was more a pure security military issue. KFOR in areas where you have these villages in most cases had surrounded them, basically facing outwards not inwards, to protect them. So we had places like a town where a lot of people had been killed by the Serbs, a lot of Albanians had been killed—in south-central



Kosovo. The Germans were there and they had been with the Serbs, quarter, third-quarter of Iran, Iraq, and basically the Serbs. They were all hovered in that quarter and they were German troops sort of winging it. You had—this is a major Serb town, just outside Pristina to the south, the Swedes were there. They had checkpoints going in on every side and all that. This was a frequent phenomenon. The U.S. troops were set up like that all over their sector. You had lots where there is a Serb minority and you had Serb like monasteries and such. Still to this day some of them still have some sort of military security. They don't really use it anymore in some cases. That was the feeling that at this stage it was purely a military, purely a security undertaking to get the UN police to try to prevent these people from getting killed. The politics of it, with the exception of the North, came later. When I went back for the UN in 2004, that was a big piece, so it wasn't a big piece in 1999 to 2000, with the exception of northern—

*Q: What about, you mentioned monasteries. There are some real gems of monasteries there. How did they come through this?*

ROSSIN: They came through much better than the Albanian mosques came through, that's for sure. The Serbs had shot down every minaret and torched a lot of mosques, some of them were very historic mosques in Kosovo. A number of Serb churches were destroyed. The Serbian Orthodox bishop of Kosovo had a book printed and made a big deal about this destruction, and in many cases his complaints were legitimate. I actually thought in some cases however, that the Serbian government may actually have had agents in there destroying these churches to create an uproar because the placement of the destructive devices was a little bit too well done. A lot of the churches came through fine.

*Q: You mentioned schools. When kids go back, Kosovo had developed their own school, their own school system, a nonofficial school with language and all. How did the school system come out?*

ROSSIN: Well, basically you had all these school buildings and such and they were used for the Serbian children's education, previously the Kosovar children were being educated in garages or wherever the classes were being held, and now the Kosovar children went to the regular schools. The thing about Kosovo that emerged and was both a great thing and a problem, was that you had teachers and companies, state enterprises administrators, and all of the infrastructure of an Albanian government civil service that existed in Kosovo. They had all been fired by the Serbian government by Milosevic in 1989 or 1991. But they also lived there. They lost their jobs, they became waiters, or maybe had gone overseas in some cases or set up a little business, or whatever they did. Kosovars became quite entrepreneurial in the service sector, because they had to. But they were all there. What happened was all the people showed up to their old jobs whether it was to the electricity generating plant or in the mines or in the government or teachers or health-care workers, they all showed up. This was good in some ways. It was sort of bad because they weren't always directors or people capable of doing these jobs. Still the schools opened, you had teachers. You had the teachers who had been working in

parallel, many of whom had been teachers before. They just went back and started the schools.

It was also bad in some areas because in most of the former communist world there had been a transition and people didn't think in terms of the way they did in the 1980s. A lot of socialist economic concepts had been discarded but not in Kosovo. These people arrived there, they were waking up from a Rip van Winkle sleep, and a lot of the problems that came up about running the electric plant, about running other of the state enterprises in part came from the fact that you had these old state functionaries, Albanians who came back and wanted their jobs and if you paid less it was still functioning and these places could be functioning. They had been run into the ground, they were just not functioning after the war, it had been ten years.

*Q: What about the Serb case?*

ROSSIN: In the Serb case very, very initially there was an effort on the part of the UN to have integrated schools. This was a doctrine kind of thing. We come in, we're not going to have ethnic cleansing, we're going to have Serb kids and Albanian kids and for that matter Turkish kids and Roma kids and Bosniak kids, you've got all these nationalities, go to the same schools.

Krajisnik put a stop to that really, really fast. He said, we're not going to do social engineering on the backs of children who are going to get hurt. It is difficult to do. First of all, in Yugoslavia everybody spoke Serbo-Croatian. In Kosovo, Serbian kids speak Serbian and Albanian kids speak Albanian and they're not the same language at all. They are two completely different languages. There were curriculum issues and of course, all of that type of thing. Actually what happened was Serb kids started going to school in these Serb enclaves in the schools there, and Albanians went to the schools outside the enclave and what happened over time was Serbia actually started providing teachers and textbooks for the Serb schools, and for the Albanian schools the UN provided these things as part of their administration. And then the provisional institutions, the self-government, which the Albanian and the Kosovo government institutions, were set up.

*Q: Well, I was—with John—the other day. John was talking about how in Macedonia they had the language problem in the university and they came up with the idea of having the university taught in English. I was wondering whether this, you know, the idea that a lot of English is—*

ROSSIN: They did that, there is an American University of Kosovo that was set up in Pristina after it opened its campus while I was there as the deputy head of the UN mission. It was done with charitable donations; France, from some wealthy Kosovars, and others. They did a lot of their courses in English and I think they even had a few Serbian-Croatian young people, but that was not the way it was done in Kosovo.

Macedonia is a country. They can decide to do these things. For all the ethnic problems that they have in Macedonia, my impression was that a lot of Macedonians and a lot of Macedonian Albanians wanted to get along, and they overcame their hurdles. In Kosovo those kinds of things are for the future.

I was the chief of mission of the U.S. Office in Pristina. I was designated chief of mission. I was not subordinate to the U.S. ambassador to Serbia or Yugoslavia. I was the designated chief of mission.

*Q: Could you talk a bit about Bernard Kouchner, who is now French foreign minister? And then we will move on.*

*Today is the ninth of November, 2008. Let's talk about the governmental situation in Kosovo. Here you are in technically a foreign state, Serbia, and you are the ambassador but you are not the ambassador to the government of Serbia that supposedly owns the country.*

ROSSIN: Well, I wasn't an ambassador. That was very specific. I was the head of the U.S. Office. From the internal American system I was just designated chief of mission, which is sort of a quasi-ambassador. To the outside I was simply the head of the U.S. Office and the U.S. Office was just kind of there. There was no legal regime that governed us being there, there was no law or regulation or anything else. One of the things that went on during the time I was there that got completed sometime after I left was the drafting of the—regulations—withdrawal for Kosovo that basically set up a framework for diplomatic offices. So we were just there, I mean basically.

*Q: Well, the UN, was—he was part of the UN?*

ROSSIN: He came to Kosovo when I came out, sure. We arrived on the same day. Actually, the first UN officer, UN mission had begun not as a permanent designee but as an adviser, sent out to get this thing setup was Sérgio Vieira de Mello, the man who was later killed in a bombing in Baghdad, Iraq. He was a New York UN official. He was under secretary general for Humanitarian Affairs. Anyway, he went out to set it up and I knew him and I dealt with him when I had gone out with Jamie Rubin to negotiate on the demilitarization of the KLA, but when I went back in July 1999, when I arrived there in Pristina, that was the same day or the day after or the day before Bernard Kouchner and the real first leadership team of the UN mission arrived.

*Q: What was your impression of this gentleman and how did it meld together?*

ROSSIN: Well, Bernard Kouchner is a very well-known individual. As I said before, he co-founded Medecins Sans Frontieres [Doctors Without Borders] and he's one of these advocates of the responsibility to protect doctrine; that is to say, the right or obligation of the international community to intervene in a place without the permission of the host

government if there is an appropriate human rights situation unfolding, even though that government there is responsible for it. That was the case in Kosovo certainly at that time.

With American backing he was named as the special representative to the secretary general, and an American was the deputy, Jock Covey, who was retired not too long beforehand from the NSC. That was his last Foreign Service job; he was the Balkans director there. When they arrived the UN was a very small presence. The UN agencies were a big presence; there was the UNHCR [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees] and others that were involved in refugee relief and refugee government, but the DPKO [Department of Peace Keeping Operations], the peacekeeping mission, was very small. They had the responsibility to govern the country under Resolution 1244. Yugoslavia's sovereignty over Kosovo was theoretical in 1244 and the exercise of it was completely defended. The government of Kosovo existed in theory but of course the physical entity hardly existed because there were so few people.

*Q: How was his method of operation?*

ROSSIN: Well, Bernard Kouchner is very outgoing; he's an extremely extroverted individual, he wears his heart on his sleeve. He's not a great administrator but he is a man of great obvious moral character, which was something that was good to have in that particular situation. You had people coming back within the fold with him when members have been killed. There were all these things. He wasn't the administrator to set up the mission. It was a good choice for the United States.

The way the thing was set up was that a European was to be the special representative and an American was to be his principal deputy, and that's how it has been throughout the life of the UN Mission in Kosovo. Obviously, there was a principal deputy, myself. Not by design necessarily but as it happened Kouchner ended up being the image of the mission, the voice of the mission, the voice of the mandate under the resolution, the voice of the international community's engagement, the digital message to Kosovars about that and certainly an active participant, in that regard, in the day-to-day work, the real sort of setting up the mission. The real dealing with the hundreds and thousands of issues that came up every day in that immediate post-conference environment was really his principal deputy's job, Jock Covey, and he was extremely well suited to the job. I think he was a bit of a micromanager, but that was my own criticism of him and it's a small one in the context. He did a super job organizing the mission. He was my major counterpart. I dealt with him fairly often but so many of the things that came up were really in Jock's domain so I probably saw Jock every day I was there.

*Q: Well, let's talk about what you all were doing. The first question I suppose, one was peace and the other was resettlement.*

ROSSIN: Even in a certain order, the first priority issue had to do with the security of Kosovo and security meant two things; one was security in the sense of the demobilization-demilitarization. Eventually in September an agreement was negotiated

on the demobilization of the Kosovo Liberation Army, and so handling all of the issues related to that. KFOR had come in the NATO force. KFOR was the only authorized security force along with the UN police when they were set up, and they were set up fairly fast; that is, the international police, not the Kosovo police. Then there was this sort of continuous process by which the KLA and the administration—set up all over Kosovo in the vacuum were gradually superseded by the international administration as people came and there was an international administration to supersede these *ad hoc* KLA administrations. But really that process went through not just September when the demobilization process took place, it really went through the end of the year when there was the agreement signed that set up the intra-administrative structure that superseded the provisional government that the KLA had set up. It also superseded the longer existing—government of Kosovo, which was the one that the LBK, Rugova, had had for ten years by that time. It also superseded all of those local administrations, so that was going on through the end of the year.

The other security issue, of course, was the security issues that arose as the phenomenon of violence against Serbs in particular, and to a lesser extent Roma and other minorities, surged in the immediate post-conference period.

*Q: On that—was there a great deal of—or something that was?*

ROSSIN: Northern Kosovo has a river that runs through it and the French when they came in and occupied their sector of Kosovo, which was the northern sector, went up to the bridge and really didn't go beyond the bridge. There were a lot of Serbs who had fled other parts of Kosovo when NATO came in and their Serb army left, and often in the immediate post-conflict period, there was suddenly a surge of violence against the Serbs. They went to the northern part of Kosovo and it just so happens that the southern edge of the northern part of Kosovo is the northern bank of the Ivar River. In any case the northern part of Kosovo was almost exclusively Serb even beforehand. In fact, I believe, I was always told but I never saw it documented, that those three northern counties, if you will, of Kosovo had only been administratively attached to Kosovo in the late 1940s by Tito, and they previously hadn't been part of the province of Kosovo. There were a few Albanians living in these counties but not a whole lot.

*Q: What did you find as your day-to-day occupation?*

ROSSIN: I was interacting with the mission and with KFOR, with the UN mission and with KFOR, with the KLA and other security issues, interacting with them on beginning steps of setting up the Kosovo protection program; which was the holding pool that was set up for the ex-KLA guys, interacting on the establishment of the U.S. mission, for example on budget issues. We had a lot of budget problems, keeping a cash flow. So it was always very near the edge of going bankrupt.

On personnel issues: for example, the fourth pillar of the UN mission was the economic pillar, which was basically under the EU and supported by the EU, but the EU personnel

hiring process was extremely slow, so through USAID and their input we actually provided the first staff of the EU pillar. They were dealing with these issues, dealing with energy issues—the electricity is terrible there—and also with our own issues. We were not the UN mission, we were the U.S. mission. We were the U.S. Office there. We had Secretary Albright come to visit eight days after I arrived at the place and we had no resources to handle it. We had a flood, I mean a flood of congressional delegations, nonstop congressional delegations came through, and we had a lot of other visitors coming through. We were receiving people into the mission every single day and figuring out what to do with them. We were dealing with things like property issues and mission security issues. We had an al Qaeda surveillance threat through much of fall of 1999 that we had to deal with. There were a lot of internal issues that I felt we had to deal with.

*Q: What about, Washington was thumbing its nose at your fat policemen?*

ROSSIN: The United States was one of the many countries that contributed policemen to the international police in Kosovo. In the international police in Kosovo the UN police were exceptional because, unlike Bosnia and other places, the UN police of whom there were over three thousand, had executive police power. They carried weapons, they could make arrests. They were police, not trainers or something like that. They later changed as the Kosovo police service was set up, but initially they were the police in Kosovo.

You had lots of countries contributing and you had Germans and Swedes. In fact, they were sending their best guys. I mean, they were really sending people from elite counterterrorism squads and SWAT [Special Weapons and Tactics] guys and similar. The United States, of course, didn't have and doesn't have a national police service. We have local police. So sending police to an international police force is always a financial challenge for the United States and just a practical challenge. In Germany they just get some of the police to go down there, and they make an executive decision to send some of their police there, but in the United States you can't do that because they are involved in local police forces. So we do it through a contractor. In that case it was DynCorp, a previous incarnation of the DynCorp that is around now, and they were sending a lot of police out and they weren't properly screening them. They were overaged and overweight and over there. The contrast was remarkable between our policemen and—

We got a guy whose name I forget now who was a former sheriff of Orange County, Florida and who was a real professional policeman, who came out as a contract advisor and frankly, he himself was a fat policeman, but he wasn't out there in the communities. He was our adviser but he could recognize one when he saw one. He was the one who really went to bat and cleaned up that mess. They had started recruiting guys that would have to pull a hundred-pound weight, you know, a hundred yards down the field and do things to show that they could really do the job. I have to say when I went back to Kosovo with the UN mission in 2004, even when I went back in 2003 on a visit, the American police had turned into one of the best contingents in the UN police. I mean, it worked.



*Q: How about the Russians? What sort of role did you find them playing?*

ROSSIN: Minimal, actually, at this stage. They didn't open a representative office like ours in Pristina until when I was there with the UN mission in 2005, actually. They had a guy; in fact, they had two guys, I think one after the other, who were their one diplomat down there in Pristina, dependent upon the Russian embassy up in Belgrade. But really who was down there would be the political adviser to the Russian military that was in Kosovo, and particularly the Russian military they had at the airport, and they lived out by the airport. They lived with the Russian military out by the airport, which negated their utility in terms of day-to-day work in Pristina. I had fairly good relations with them. I would meet them fairly often, and keep them briefed up as much as I could on what was going on. My viewpoint always was that the Russians were part of this thing. It was better that they be as well informed about what was really going on down here because left to their own devices the things that their imagination would create about what was going on in Kosovo and the poison that the Serbs would feed them about what was going on in Kosovo, was obviously more harmful. I kept them really well briefed as much as I could, but they were really on the edge.

*Q: Well, talking about the poison—the evidence we talked, you know, about newsreels of massacres and horrible things which were put out by the Serbs and the Croatians and maybe somewhere else, would you think you know, I mean, they just change the captions on the thing about who tore off the heads and who was doing these horrible things? Some of them went back almost to the First World War, but was there much about the war?*

ROSSIN: No. I mean there were, particularly in the immediate post-conflict period. I'm not talking about the prewar period when Serbia was doing its oppression of the Albanians, but in that immediate post-conference period there were numbers of attacks on Kosovo-Serbs who had stayed behind, all over the place. Some of them were fairly gruesome. Some of them were more roadside shootings or something like that but that kind of stuff tapered off fairly quickly. There was a lot of very, very active engagement by KFOR and the UN to push it back. A lot of really active law enforcement, arresting people, taking direct action to stop it.

It has never completely tapered off but in the period I was in Kosovo again from late 2004 until 2006 when I was with the UN mission, you would still have Belgrade putting out this massive propaganda about the living hell the Serbs are in down in Kosovo and this incident and that incident, and it was almost always a fabrication. Very occasionally something did happen. I mean the place was not at all the happy, peaceful kingdom, but if somebody was in a car accident, a Serb was in a car accident, you know it didn't happen by chance, was their philosophy. We were able to debunk nearly all of those things. That's just the way Serbia operates.

*Q: How were some of the basic things: water, sewage, electricity?*

ROSSIN: The infrastructure in Kosovo at the end of the conflict was really, really bad. It wasn't great anyway, I don't think even just in general. Serbia had been doing asset stripping and not investing in infrastructure in Kosovo during the whole period of the 1990s. A lot of stuff had deteriorated in any case; roads and water and electricity and whatnot. They never changed the scrubbers, for example, on the stacks at the electric power plant so there was still this tremendous air pollution problem. Then there was also damage to the telephone network, for example, from the bombing. I mean, all of the towers had been bombed out so it was really very, very difficult to live there.

Water supplies were sporadic. Where we were, where the U.S. Office was, there was no city water supply. There were pipes but there was no city water that came there, and so one of the challenges that we had was to get water, and the GSO [General Services officer] that we had was very resourceful. She found a guy who would come by with the water truck, and he had to come by with the water truck every single day to fill every single cistern, because we found that the cisterns in each of these houses that we had on the street which housed the U.S. Office held a thousand liters which, when you have ten people living in each house, a thousand liters doesn't last very long at all. She eventually got new cisterns put in all the houses but there was a huge amount of things like that that went on. We were short on water. Electricity would go out all the time and still does, actually, in Kosovo. The heat would go out; it was really very, very difficult to work there. It is so cold in the Balkans in the winter.

*Q: If it was difficult when you all were there, it must've been much more difficult for the Kosovars.*

ROSSIN: Absolutely. In some ways they were used to it because they had been there the whole time but, yes, it was very difficult. Especially, for example, Pristina was a city that used, as they often have in Eastern Europe, a district heating system where there was one heating plant that would send steam heat out to all of the apartment buildings and other structures. That wasn't functioning when we got there at the end of the war, and I remember the day when it was turned back into operation—it ran on really, really heavy fuel that had to be imported and they had to clean up the boilers, I guess they are, and I remember the day. The cold hit in October, and it was maybe November or December when they finally got that thing operating, because we were all there, and there is the plant over there, lying cold in bed. And one day we were all there and all of us saw this huge plume of really heavy black smoke shoot up into the sky from the smokestack of that thing, and that was the district heating plant coming back on line. I remember it was very cold, and I went over on a Sunday to go visit with the ICTY [International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia], the tribunal representative, and it was so funny because it was really, really cold outside and snowy and everything, and he had all his windows open, and he was there in a T-shirt because district heating had just come on that day and it was malfunctioning. It was like 175 degrees in his office and he couldn't figure out how to turn down the radiator. And they were probably all frozen stuck anyway, and there were these huge clouds of steam floating out of his office window

because it was so hot inside and so cold outside. It was too much or too little; usually too little, occasionally too much.

So, there was a lot of hardship in those big apartment buildings, the socialist apartment building blocks. They were cold. I used to worry a lot about our FSN [Foreign Service national] staff, actually. I wanted them to come to the office and hang around and bring the family, even, because they needed to keep warm. You know, it wasn't that warm where we were but it was warmer than, maybe, where they were. And it's always colder inside than it is outside in those kinds of places. All that concrete holds the cold.

*Q: This first go around, what period are we talking about?*

ROSSIN: When I was there? I arrived there in July of 1999 and I left at the end of February of 2000, so it was eight months.

*Q: During that time, what were the main concerns, greatest accomplishments in the whole mission and maybe setbacks?*

ROSSIN: I think the greatest accomplishments were dealing with the KLA, the demobilization that went successfully and also this beginning of setting up this Kosovar self-administration, self-government structure, in a very rudimentary form in that first iteration. Something that the UN could believe in. But one of the roles I played and that we, the U.S. mission, our political officers played was to be facilitators for the UN. We were the United States; we were the most popular, most trusted, most respected, and really the only ones who were trusted and respected along with the British, a little bit.

So very often what my job would be was talking to Bernard Kouchner, talking to Jock Covey, talking to the KFOR people. I used to go out and do the behind-the-scenes kind of lobbying and facilitation and greasing the wheels with the Kosovars to bring them around to what the UN mission was trying to do. My governing philosophy was that we had no national interest in Kosovo that was distinct from the success of the UN mission. The success of the UN mission was our success, in my viewpoint. We didn't have any competition whatsoever with the UN mission and I felt that generally speaking the international community's success in Kosovo would be with the success of the UN mission. So my vision of our work and what we did in our work was to try and understand what the UN mission was doing, certainly try to advise them if we thought they were doing something wrong. There was a lot of space for everybody to do something wrong in that very fluid environment. But then also to do whatever we could to make ourselves available to facilitate behind the scenes, using our particular influence and our particular access to success of their work, whether it was with the Kosovars, whether it was with other countries.

When this Kosovo Protection Corps [KPC] concept was established in the agreement that demobilized the KLA, well, okay. If we're going to set up some alternative, civil disaster relief and that kind of thing, the National Guard—not the military side of the National

Guard but the other side of the National Guard—that was the model. The problem was, no country wanted to give any resources to do that so it was like all these guys were going to be hired and then just stuck in some barracks and left there. They were supposed to do good things, but with what? With their hands, you know? And this was an extraordinarily frustrating exercise. I used to get into shouting matches with other diplomatic colleagues there because they were saying, Oh, the KLA, can't do anything with those guys. And I said, "Well, you've got to do something with them because they exist, they are here. People didn't all evaporate in June. This is the model we had all chosen and you've got to put your money where your mouth is." Over time after I left in the longer stretch, some of the other countries did start putting their money there. The British did, big time. The French were helpful in some ways, some of the other countries were helpful. The Germans were never very helpful, and the United States continued to be of assistance. So the KPC gradually took off, but I think that was an achievement getting that going.

I think it was an achievement also to get the UN mission on firmer financial footing. We really did a lot of lobbying work back in Washington about the budget revenue, and there was a sense that in most aid programs with countries, donors give money for projects, for capital activities, but they don't give money for running expenses, for ongoing expenses of the host government: salaries and stuff. The problem was this is what was really needed. They needed money to pay salaries, they needed money to operate, and everybody in their traditional way was saying, Well, we're not going to pay for that stuff, and our message to Washington and also teeing up other diplomatic colleagues to do was, we are in this, this is us. This government is us. We can't say we're not going to pay your running expenses. They are our running expenses and we were gradually able to get that across and to get on a firmer financial footing until such time as the Kosovar structures, the customs and things that would generate revenues for Kosovo, came into being such that it became more self-financing, which it is now; self-financing the governmental structure. So that was I think a big achievement as well, to get across that point and to begin to see some progress on that.

I think the UN mission itself, as set up, obviously, was a big achievement. When I got there it was just a couple of us with really no infrastructure, or any stuff and now it is a properly operating U.S. embassy. It's a little funny to be in these houses still but that's a temporary area. FBO [Department of State Foreign Building Operations] sent out somebody to revamp those places and turn them into more like offices instead of just houses. I think when I left we had about ninety Americans and maybe two hundred or three hundred Kosovar FSNs. We had cars, we had computers. We had all that stuff. We had furniture. We had the infrastructure of a diplomatic office, none of which we had before when I was there. So that was a big achievement as well. We were actually functioning. I joked with my colleagues that it was time for me to leave because I was starting to fill out forms here. It was time for me to go. That was my philosophy.

We got communications equipment, we could send cables; all these things were not the case when we first got there and for some time after our arrival. So those were big

achievements. I think getting the security situation sorted out, seeing off this al Qaeda surveillance that we had, and getting the physical facilities sorted out was good. I think they overshot the mark like most embassies nowadays do.

I mentioned that the little street that we were on turned out to be—it was little, it didn't look like much, but it turned out to be an important thoroughfare in that part of town. Without it you had to go through all these contortions to get from one side to the other. My big argument was to block off the street. We can't have people driving down the streets. We had a couple of situations, actually, of people getting hit by cars. There was a Danish guy, one of the NGOs that was just off our property, who couldn't seem to find where the brake pedal was. I almost pulled him out of his car and strangled him at one point, literally and physically because he actually clipped one of our staff. I always argued that we should let pedestrians, we should let local people walk through our property because they were our friends. They were our security. They were the ones who were going to know whether there was somebody unusual in the neighborhood. They all loved us. We wanted them to keep loving us. They would be our first, second, and third line of defense and, in fact, they were, with the al Qaeda thing. They were the ones who came to say, There is some weirdo over there. But security being the way it is, they said, No, no, no, we don't know who those people are, and they blocked it off and neighbors got a little unhappy. They didn't turn against us but their kids had to walk an extra mile to school. This was just not a good thing. After 9/11, you can't say anything about security.

*Q: How did the school system work out?*

ROSSIN: Do you mean the Kosovo school system? It actually worked out quite well. It started in late September. In that part of the world that is when school reconvenes. Although there was this anarchy and not a Kosovo education ministry or anything, the Kosovars did not do as many other areas do. They just knew what to do because they had been doing it in this underground way for all these years, and because they are a very self-starting kind of people. They are different from people in Bosnia. They are real self-starters, and so when September rolled around the only real issue was in those sectors where the military was occupying almost all the school facilities as well as military bases. We and NATO had to press them to get out basically, and give the facilities back over to the community, along with the Italians in particular and with the French to some extent, and they mostly did, and the Kosovars got off to a fine start and school went well. There were no real issues.

One of the things about the Kosovars, and all of us noticed it—it was noticeable because some of the people who were serving in Kosovo had previously served in Bosnia and had their way of doing things formed by their Bosnian experience. The Bosnians, whatever their ethnicity, for that matter, Croatian people who were in the war zones as well, they kind of wait around for the international community to come and fix their place and resolve their problems, reconstruct their house, or whatever the issue is. And you go around Bosnia years after the end of the war and you still find places that were bombed out are still uninhabited, people living and waiting basically for foreigners to come and

fix their situation. I remember visiting when I was ambassador in Croatia. We visited a village that had been severely damaged and a really nice high school there. Six years later there was still broken glass on the floor and everybody was complaining there was no place where kids could go to school.

In Kosovo those people would have, in a comparable situation, they would have cleaned it up themselves, they were self-starters and they got it going. They were very much self-starters in every sense of the word. Really, the international community, starting with the refugee return situation where they all rushed back, going to these self-governing situations to the independent situation which is always a challenge but on every front what the international community, or the international representatives found themselves doing was holding the Kosovars back and saying, well, Slow down a little bit. Let's do this in a structured way. Whereas in Bosnia it was always trying to put a kick up their backside trying to get them off their butts and actually do something. It was a really remarkable phenomenon, which is one of the reasons why I am basically hopeful about Kosovo, because they are a go-getting kind of people. They are very entrepreneurial.

*Q: I was tasked to Naples in 1980 when they had a very bad earthquake in the area. I remember going out to the earthquake zone and noticing a whole bunch of young, able men just lounging around and we had military troops in there, equivalent to a division and they were working like mad but there was no effort on the part of the—to do a damn thing.*

ROSSIN: The local victims of the earthquake.

*Q: —and then said in an Italian fashion about how nobody is doing anything, and there was a whole division!*

ROSSIN: Kosovars are not like that. And speaking of big achievements, we were really blessed in the U.S. mission in Pristina, the U.S. Office in Pristina, was a very movable kind of feast during that early period. When I arrived, and it was only a couple of weeks after NATO had gone in, we already had a big office of foreign disaster assistance DART team on the ground, plus a lot of capital services and Mercy Corps and these other nongovernmental organizations were in there doing things like food distribution and, you know, blue sheets for the works distribution. UN agencies were in there, so it was right from the outset that there was a fairly substantial humanitarian relief effort going on.

We had this woman, Kim Maynard, who was head of the DART team. She was a tiny little, you know, eighty-nine-pound dynamo who had been a fire-jumper and all the rest of this stuff. But what happened was, it's a learning exercise when you go into these places, and one of the things that Kim realized and people generally realized, and it came upon everybody, was this realization all of a sudden that there was a lot more damage out there than they had realized. The damage that they were used to seeing from other conflicts was rural damage; you know, farmhouses. Farmhouses can be more substantial structures in that part of the world. They're brick and all that, with the roofs burned off



and they had a standard strategy for that, which was for the first winter to create one warm and dry room in each house to get people through the first winter. Then the next year they could rebuild their houses more. But what they didn't have any prior experience with was massive amounts of urban damage of this sort. You don't get a burnt-off roof in an apartment building because there are other kinds of damage to apartment buildings that cause the same end result. The places are not habitable in the winter. You can't use the same approach. You don't need blue tarps and you can't give a wood stove because if you put a wood stove in an apartment everybody is going to die of carbon monoxide poisoning. So they had to come up very, very fast with a package for urban assistance. Plus they had to come up very fast with a plan for both urban and rural all at the same time, and then they found that winter comes on quicker in Kosovo for some reason than it does in other places. So winter hit one day in the middle of October and then in early November this massive push took place over a couple of weeks that was everybody's top priority. It was to get out these warm-dry-room kits which consisted of rural area stoves and so forth, and I don't remember what the urban setup was, but it was something different, as well as all that blue tarp and all the other things that were needed to get this done, because it was winter all of a sudden and people realized the freeze was coming on.

Totally successful, it was. Nobody froze to death, nobody was stuck out in it. Everybody was housed at least in a warm, dry room or a warm and dry apartment. That was a huge thing because the realization hadn't come, and this massive coordinated effort was really well done with the EU and the United States and the UN agencies and so forth. The military played an extremely important role in it. There would have been people, I think, who would have frozen to death.

*Q: Were you able to use the KLA corps?*

ROSSIN: To a limited extent but not really. They were not really set up at that point. The agreement was in the middle of September and we're talking about six weeks later. So individual Kosovars may have played a role but this was an international effort.

*Q: Did the right-wing Republicans in the Senate and elsewhere, who vowed not to get into nation building, did that affect you all at all?*

ROSSIN: Nothing that I can remember. I think as we see from the Iraq experience in the absence, when you have a situation like this where the United States intervenes and it is universally popular among the host population, who were clearly people who needed our help, I mean, demonstrably so, it tends to defuse that kind of criticism in the United States. That was the case in Grenada where everybody wanted it to become the fifty-first state of the United States, and it was the case to some extent in Haiti in 1994. It was certainly the case in Kosovo. Bosnia was more complicated, obviously. It was more complex. Kosovo is not really very complex in the sort of visuals that are produced. To this day Kosovo is America's greatest ally. We cannot do anything wrong as far as Kosovars are concerned. It's a little bit like Albania, where it's the only country where

President Bush has ever gone to where people were happy to see him. They issued stamps and all and named their kids after him.

I think also the nation-building component for the United States *per se* was not particularly large. I mean we had troops, you know, our proportion of troops stationed in one sector in Kosovo. We had a small U.S. presence, nothing radical, about the size of the USAID mission or at the U.S. Office in Pristina. It was being done through the UN. It was such a multilateral effort that I think it would disarm the, “We don’t want to be nation building.”

The only issue that arose and was not too difficult to deal with was the strictures that came out. I’m not sure it actually came out from anti-nation builders or the “no foreign engagement” people, but that the United States should have no more than 15 percent of the total troops in KFOR and that was achievable.

*Q: It’s one of these things where they get a lot of satisfaction from having a percentage to deal with it.*

*Am I right in your perception that the UN over the—achieved a rather dubious reputation about how it went about things? It was cumbersome, bureaucratic, et cetera? This was really sort of a more lean and mean, effective UN?*

ROSSIN: That was certainly the UN sense. I was the deputy head of it and I was also the deputy head of the UN mission in Haiti, which is what we had just last year.

Kosovo was a particular kind of mission: it was unique. Well, I think the one in East Timor was somewhat comparable to it. It was a government mission. It was called the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo. There were no UN peacekeeping troops in Kosovo. There’s a NATO force in Kosovo which is not part of the UN. The mission was quite distinct and also the powers of the special representatives were extraordinarily broad. It really had totally plenipotentiary dictatorial powers of the Resolution 1244, and also I think that this is something that I learned as I went along with the UN missions, and talked about with UN headquarters at a certain point when I was doing my after-action report. The fact that the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo had or developed its own sources of revenue from Kosovo, customs primarily and a little bit from other internal revenue sources of the nation, if you will, gave that mission a flexibility to operate and to do things between its authority and its resources that other UN missions don’t have. For me it was a shock when I went from Kosovo to Haiti. It was the exact same job, but the situation was completely different, and the resources issues for doing programs work for the UN Mission in Haiti, like most UN missions I realized, are extremely challenging because there’s no assessed contributions for doing the nation-building elements of the UN mandate. You have to find the money and you often can’t.

*Q: During this first period, is there anything we should talk about before we move to the next step?*

ROSSIN: No, I think the only other thing that I would just say about the Kosovo experience is that for me it was one of my best experiences in the Foreign Service. The thing that I found useful about it, and was subsequently announced, was when the department was trying to set up CSO, its Bureau of Conflict Stabilization Operations and they talked about having a corps that they could deploy for these kinds of things. In a sense we were that in this period. The State Department needs to be very flexible and they need to reward people who go out and do these things. Not that I felt un-rewarded; I got promoted. I got one of those Presidential Distinguished Service Awards where they give you the highest amount of performance pay. I felt we were rewarded. And I went off as ambassador to Croatia.

All the people on my team were rewarded in one way or another. They all did extremely hard work under extremely primitive and difficult conditions and they achieved a lot, and they were a very varied group of people, and this is the point that I like to make: I had Foreign Service officers, I had Civil Service officers, I had a Presidential Management intern, I had Schedule C political appointee, not a low-level person, from USIA. All these people just showed up. I had contractors, I had every category of appointment that there is, I had them on my team and they all worked as a team and they achieved a huge amount. I'm not sure of the perfect way to do this. One was trying to get the right people. I mean, you get things done, and how important it is to pay attention to people.

But the other thing I guess I do want to say is the Foreign Service tends to think we are the only people who can do anything. There are a lot of lousy Foreign Service officers I've run across in my time. There are a lot of really good Schedule C and Presidential Management interns and Civil Service people and I was fortunate to get the best.

*Q: All right. Then you left in?*

ROSSIN: At the end of February of 2000.

*Q: Where did you go?*

ROSSIN: I came back to Washington. I had been nominated to be or I was in the process of being nominated to be the ambassador to Croatia. So, I came back to Washington and started going to Croatian language training at FSI here while all these nomination processes went on with the intention that I would go to Croatia probably in the fall like one does. That's what I did for months.

*Q: How did you find Croatian as a language?*

ROSSIN: Very, very difficult. I have a high language aptitude. I have prospered with the Romance languages and even Dutch I didn't find all that hard but Croatian, because it is

such a complicated language grammatically, you can't do the kind of drill exercises that FSI is best at, where you just go around hour after hour after hour and just hammer it into your head. Every word changes in every sentence depending on what's going on, and you can't do drills that way. It's a hard language. I actually found the grammar, once I got the hang of it. I had studied Latin in high school so I knew something about noun declensions and the verb conjugations were fairly simple in Croatian. There are only about three tenses. Just when I was rejoicing over the fact that they have only three tenses, I found out that they have a completely parallel set of vocabulary for the imperfect and the perfect past, past perfect and so there were two verbs to learn for every verb, and then the vocabulary of that language is incredibly difficult. Plus of course, my nomination in that end period of the Clinton administration, my nomination and that of my fellow nominees ran into a whole lot of delay. Croatian is the kind of language that unless you know you're going to be using it, it's really hard to maintain morale to study it week after week. So, I became modestly adept at it and now I can't speak it so well.

*Q: You said you were doing this to get ready to go and then you didn't. What happened?*

ROSSIN: What happened was, well, I don't even remember all of the things. I remember it took a long time, longer than I thought it should, for the nomination actually to be announced. You know, they said the department had some internal process with the D Committee [Deputies Committee], then they sent it over to the White House and the White House would either find a political appointee or approve the person who the department had nominated, and then they started doing a—up on the Hill somehow. Usually when they send it to the Foreign Relations Committee, that's when they announce the nomination and usually they have gone through the normal cycle in the fall of all that internal stuff. Usually it's about February or March, but maybe earlier than that, January, when the nomination gets sent up and announced, and mine didn't get announced until late March or early April as I remember, and I don't remember why. I'm not sure there really was a reason. I always had the feeling it just fell in somebody's inbox or something like that.

But then what happened was there was a hold put on all of the nominations. I think it had something to do with Senator Grassley being unhappy about an agricultural commission nominee or something. That was lifted, and then what happened was we had our hearings in June and that went fine, and then Senator Bob Graham of Minnesota put a hold on maybe seven or eight nominees who had too many security violations and this is the thing that took place at that time. I've had maybe seven or eight security violations over the course of my career which were the usual sort, such as leaving a classified document on your desk at lunchtime and stuff like that. There were seven or eight ambassadors, a whole variety of good people. I don't remember who all it was now.

That dragged out. That dragged out actually until Christmas time and so it went on much after I should have arrived in Croatia. It went on into the school year. I had to decide whether to send my daughter to boarding school in Switzerland because there was no school in Croatia, or pull her out in the middle of her junior year here. But I kept on

doing these Croatian studies when I didn't even know I was going to go. It was a very, very depressing, actually, period. Eventually the hold got lifted because Graham basically, Graham didn't get reelected. Basically I ended up getting confirmed along with the rest of the group right at the end of the Senate in December and left almost immediately thereafter to go out to Croatia.

*Q: So, then you went out to Croatia.*

ROSSIN: At the beginning of 2001.

*Q: You were in Croatia from when to when?*

ROSSIN: From January 20, 2001. The Croatians were adamant that I must present my credentials signed by President Clinton while President Clinton was still president. Otherwise, they wouldn't accept them and the department had said well, the White House has said we are not sending over another set of credentials if this happens. I didn't know what would happen. I couldn't figure out how you get through that. I managed to get out there and get off the plane and practically go straight to the presidential palace and present my credentials even the day before on inauguration day, but because there is a time zone shift before the inauguration Bill Clinton was president. I was there until June of 2003.

*Q: You're leaving Kosovo and so I don't know if I asked you, but at that time, whether Kosovo in your opinion—?*

ROSSIN: —at the time that I left in early 2000? I don't think that in terms of the final status of Kosovo, my expectation at the time was that it was eventually going to become independent, and my belief was that U.S. policy was that it was eventually going to become independent but that was not a near-term prospect at that time. At the time that I left Kosovo it was more a question of getting the license plates on cars and getting a single car key and getting electricity and really basic internal structure, getting people through the first winter so the place could recover. I didn't expect it to be as difficult as it is now because Russia was a more productive player than they are now.

*Q: How did the Croatian assignment come? It seems natural but—*

ROSSIN: It was actually, I was selected for that when I was still a director for EUR/SCE [State Department's Office for Southern Europe and the Caucasus in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs] for the Balkans and basically, I was sitting up as acting DAS [deputy assistant secretary] one day and Tony Wayne, who was the principal DAS stuck his head in and said, "Do you want us to put you forward to be the ambassador to Croatia?" And my reaction was, "Can you put me forward to be ambassador to Slovenia?" because Slovenia always sounded like this little alpine kingdom. Slovenia wasn't open and so I said, "Yes, sure. That would be great." I guess that was in May or April or something like that in 1999. Shortly after I got out to Kosovo I got a call from

the DG [director general] saying that I had been selected from the shortlist and my name was going to the White House and all that. It came to me; I didn't go get it.

*Q: So, you left Kosovo. Did you go through the confirmation hearings and all that?*

ROSSIN: I did. I came back here to FSI and studied Croatian. It's a very difficult language. I went through the normal confirmation process. At the time that I came back my name was over at the White House and I think that's when the name came back from the White House. That's when they sent the announcement to the Hill and for some reason they didn't do it quite as quickly as that. I don't know why. I don't know if there was any reason why. So, it wasn't until March or something like that that the announcement that I had been nominated and my forms were sent up to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. And then I was going through all the processing, really through the whole year of 2000. We were the last group of ambassadors nominated and we became corks bobbing on the ocean at the end of the administration with Congress. There were issues about judges and some agricultural commissioners or something, and we were held hostage for that, and there was one thing and another. So it wasn't until right at the end of 2000 that I and a group of colleagues were confirmed.

*Q: Did you run across the Croatian lobby?*

ROSSIN: No, not really. I met a few Croatian-Americans when I met the Croatian ambassador and had a little interaction, but when I had been the south-central Europe director; Croatia was not a country I actually dealt with. The desk officer dealt with it, the deputy dealt with it because he had been to Croatia or had worked in Croatia or something. So, I actually didn't really deal with Croatia very much. So, it was really new to me, actually. I think it was the only country, that and Bulgaria, were the only countries in the South-Central Europe Office that I had never visited during my time. So, it was actually not the most appropriate country but it was the one that was there.

*Q: Were any questions raised during your confirmation hearings?*

ROSSIN: The hearing was with a panel. There were four of us on the panel. There was myself, there was the guy going to Ukraine, the guy going to Azerbaijan, and the guy going to Uzbekistan. The hearing took place in, I want to say in May or June of 2000, and this was right after there had been the death of Tudjman, the Croatian president, right after an election that had brought the opposition into power, and election of a new president, Stejpan Mesić, in Croatia and there was a golden period because the new government came in and they were talking a lot and started to do a few things. There were really positive things that we had wanted the Croatians to do for a long time, but under Tudjman, with the very nationalist government that they had, they weren't going to diminish relations with the Croatians, with the Croats in Bosnia, or to stop doing things that were an outrage to minorities in Croatia. They were making some economic changes, things that would reduce corruption and so forth, and so there was a feeling that Croatia was one of the countries making big steps forward in the Balkans at that point. There



hadn't been a whole lot, and this was one of the big steps. The United States had done a lot of work to help bring the opposition together into a coalition during that election period. So, it was viewed as a policy shift that we had helped to promote.

In the summer of 1998 there was a group of Croatian opposition political leaders that came in as a delegation to Washington. I didn't really know anything about it. I was just listening but their urging was that they form a coalition. They did form the coalition; they won the election. The coalition didn't last very well and the government was a disappointment, but that was the government I dealt with when I got there.

*Q: How did things stand when you went there? Did you have anything on your plate, for example, with war crimes and that sort of thing?*

ROSSIN: There were war crime issues. Croatia went over a threshold during the time I was there. Going in, the major issues and, during most of my time there, the major issues were war legacy issues, so there were war crimes, there were refugee returns, a little bit of division of assets was still out there at that time. And of course, there was the aftermath of this democratic, this transition, that had taken place, which was a big event and something that really threw politics up into the air in Croatia for a while.

There were also, as time went on, issues that were not post-war issues. War legacy issues became important. With the change of government in the United States, Croatia went from a pariah, really, under Tudjman, and all of a sudden we wanted to bring Croatia into NATO and EU membership processes. And so, we spent a lot of time during my time promoting Croatia for Partnership for Peace and then especially for the Membership Action Plan, which was like the next step, really. We did a lot of work with the Croatians, with the foreign ministry, with the defense ministry, with other elements of the government to get them to do various things that would qualify them, if you will, for the Membership Action Plan.

We also were building up the military to a military relationship with the United States; things like ship visits and joint exercises and reforms in the Croatian military. So, it was a lot of stuff. It was a transitional period.

One of the things that I realized very quickly, was that the embassy was still operating in the wartime crisis mode. The war was over, and with the election it was really over, and so one of the things I had to do also and I did, and I was pleased with it, was the rotation of people, to move it from the wartime to a peacetime mentality.

*Q: In other words, everything wasn't a crisis and people settled down.*

ROSSIN: People felt like they had to work all the time. They had to be available all the time and they felt like it was higher profile than it was. High profile is actually not a good thing. Low profile is an indication of success. I think transitioning from that and getting people to go home and getting people to take it easy and getting people to get out and see

the place and things like that was important. Part of the people did adapt and part of it was transitions. Some people had been there so long they didn't really make that change and didn't need to. They were leaving the following summer. That was a transition.

We also had an AID program that had run rapidly again with the change of government there, so we were getting into a lot of various economic, advising justice, sector advising, trying to build up business relationships between the United States and Croatia, trying to encourage investment in Croatia. We had almost uniquely, it seemed, for some reason in the world we had representatives of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation and the Trade and Development Administration in our embassy. We were using those to try and promote investment. In the end it turned out that a lot of the early promise didn't pan out because old habits die hard. People in that part of the world, you know, they did carry along their old way of doing things. Ivica Racan was the prime minister from the Social Democratic Party which is really the old Communist Party, and he had been the head of the Croatian Republic Communist Party during the Yugoslav period. I remember the Finnish ambassador, who was a very taciturn individual but had spent a lot of time like any Finn of that generation, had spent a lot of time dealing with things Soviet, and he said Racan was an old communist and was the head of the Republic Communist Party and this as was the Soviet experience was certainly the case in Croatia, too. They didn't want to hear any brilliant ideas; they didn't want to have lots of initiatives coming. They wanted to keep it quiet over there and that was kind of his way of being prime minister of the Republic of Croatia. The problem was now it was a country that had a lot of work that needed to be done to move past the war-time period, to prepare itself for NATO and EU membership, to do a lot of economic reforms and justice reforms, and he was sort of a do-nothing at the end of the day. Big talk, that was the way with the government, and it ended up being more talk than action.

At the end of the day, when they handled war crime issues they tended to revert to form. One of the things we found with economic reform in Croatia and really a lot of different reforms, was that unlike other former Communist countries such as Hungary, when the Soviet army left, the Red Army didn't leave Yugoslavia. The Red Army left Hungary and Czechoslovakia, and basically the attitude of the people was you can take it all with you. There was nothing from the socialist system that people in those countries wanted to retain. It was merely an imposition as far as they were concerned. That's not the case in Yugoslavia. They'd say, Oh, it didn't all work and there were a lot of problems but this was our system and we see a lot of value in it. So when you go and promote the kind of economic reform advice that the United States was doing and the Europeans were doing all over Eastern Europe and making great traction in countries further to the north, you didn't find the same thing in Croatia or in any of the other former Yugoslav republics because they liked it that way. It was their system and they hadn't had the Red Army leave, and hadn't been conquered in the first place.

*Q: Can you characterize the Croatians? You dealt with different groups. How did you find the Croatians?*

ROSSIN: They are reserved people. They have a reputation for being reserved and distant. Cold is a word that some people apply. I don't really think cold is the right word but they are very Central European in that way, not different from Hungarians or Austrians or something. As a matter of fact, that is their cultural milieu, so they were kind of that way.

They're not as arrogant as Slovenians but they are pretty arrogant. I mean, Croatia is a nice country but it isn't as nice as they think it is. It is not a front for great things. It is a nice country but it was a marginal area of the Hapsburg Empire and it is a marginal area now. Croatians wanted to make a lot of changes in their country and they would say, intellectually, we need to change this and we need to change that, but really they liked the way it was. That was all right in some ways, and some parts were nice the way they were and they didn't want to change it. It is one of the greenest countries in Europe, for example. Vegetables and farm produce were very, very abundant, with little artificial fertilizers and pesticides.

On the other hand, they really needed to modernize the place. I knew people living in Zagreb. I knew people that had been there, very old people who had been there at the end of the war in the early 1950s, and back then Zagreb was kind of a nice city but no maintenance had been done on the city, and the exteriors of the buildings were like fifty years old and it was really horrible. A beautiful old Hapsburg provincial city. The buildings were all stucco falling off the facades, we are talking serious here, and things of that nature. They just didn't proceed very fast. They didn't have a sense of urgency. They always would talk about how strategically located they were, as if they were some kind of a nexus or hub of Europe and they weren't, really. They thought they should get into NATO because we needed them. They thought they should get into the EU because they were essential to Europe. I think they still live in history and of course, at one time they were the frontier against the Ottoman Empire and I think they still have that idea. That's not the way it is now, of course.

I like Croatians in many ways. I was there in September after a wedding and it's nice but I don't think I would ever go back again. Some people stay. A lot of people buy houses on the coast and stuff. It is a beautiful country, not only the coast but the interior as well. We have a project with AID where we were working with the national park there, also working with young people of all different ethnicities, getting them to work there in the summer, do interpretive trails or brochures. It is a beautiful place with a series of limestone lakes. It is one of the top tourist attractions. Really, it is a beautiful place.

During the socialist period all the tourists came from Poland and East Germany and Czechoslovakia and Hungary. I mean, that was the world. They still do. A lot of tourists still come to Croatia from those places but the Croatians said, We don't want any more of those kinds of people. We want Germans and we want people who have more money and are kind of higher class. The problem was twofold; one is that most of those people don't go. They go to Turkey or they go to Greece or something like that, or they go to Spain

because there is more. There is more to do on the coast. There are more hotels but there is more to do. The Croatians aren't very much for having anything to do.

The other thing is that it was just post war, you know, it hadn't really recovered. So, they still had all these Hungarians and Czechs and everybody, so we were helping them do brochures. So, they did a brochure in German, English, Spanish, and French. I said to the director of the national park, "Well, why didn't you do the brochure in Czech and Hungarian and Polish? These are the people in the parking lot, you know?"

This was kind of the consistent attitude. It's not like they were better off. They had been wealthier during the communist period. I remember driving one day up across the border into Hungary with my daughter and her friend to visit a village in Hungary in which my daughter had done a Habitat project when she was in school. The infrastructure was better in Croatia. The structure was better in Croatia than it was in Hungary but you could tell there was a lot more money floating around in Hungary than there was in Croatia now, and when you went to Pest in Hungary, there was a lot more money floating around in Pest than there was in Croatia. It was kind of the stick-in-the-mud, we are "all right" kind of attitude, and they were falling behind. It is a little bit of a strange mentality.

*Q: You were there from when to when?*

ROSSIN: I was there from the beginning of 2001. I presented my credentials on the last day of the Clinton presidency. In late June 2003 I left.

*Q: Was there any particular interest in Croatia from the new administration?*

ROSSIN: There was a little bit of interest.. It was not a top-tier country in terms of interest but as a general principle, the new administration wanted to move it forward towards NATO, move it into the EU as part of the postwar stabilization in the Balkans, those were certainly of interest. This was most of the time right before I got there, before 9/11 obviously. It was before Iraq and so forth.

The Balkans as a whole was not of an interest level to the new administration the same as it had been for the Clinton administration, and it was quite clear to me that the new administration basically considered the Balkans to have been a Clinton administration project. It was a diversion in a sense, foreshadowing where we are now, a diversion from the things that really counted.

Compared to when I was the office director, for example, a year or two beforehand where we were a really, really big center of attention, that was clearly not the case. You could tell that in Washington. One deputy assistant secretary, my predecessor, and then I was the DAS after my ambassadorship, covered the Balkans, and her experience and my experience both were, and my successor's experience I understand as well, were like well, everybody else does everything else in Europe and they are all engaging everything,

and then there's this DAS and the bus stops there. You know, that kind of thing. I would talk about and she would talk about what was going on.

*Q: Who was she?*

ROSSIN: Janet Bogue. And my successor was—who is now the P/DAS in East Asia and Pacific. Dennis—is there now. We all had the same experience, I think. Even when I was working on the Balkans when it was the center of attention in 1998 and 1999, it was really that same attitude in the European Bureau. Marc Grossman was the assistant secretary and Dick Holbrooke and John Kornblum, I think they all had the experience that either you worked on the Balkans when it was high profile or you did the rest of Europe, but you couldn't do both. Marc had a huge vision of NATO enlargement and EU, and building European-American relations, getting the Europeans more engaged on global issues, that kind of thing. He did the Balkans when he had to do it but he was very happy to have me and the DAS do it and not do it if he didn't have to do it. When I would go to the morning staff meeting, I would come in, make my spiel and usually I had to go somewhere else and that was fine. They'd heard about the Balkans and now they could move on to the real business of the bureau, which was fine. It was like that.

*Q: Two big things while you were there were getting Croatia into NATO and the European Union. Did we consider this important and why?*

ROSSIN: We did because we wanted to stabilize the Balkans and we wanted to expand NATO. When I got there, we had only had the expansion of NATO by three: the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland, so most of the countries of Eastern Europe were not NATO members at that time and were not EU members. The EU had not expanded, either, so they were in these various preparatory phases and so the preparatory processes for the EU and for NATO were stabilization devices and reform-driving devices for all of Eastern Europe. Romania and Bulgaria were sort of at the front of the pack but there was a sense that, and it was true, too, that the magnet that was the gold star, especially of the EU membership more than NATO membership over time, was really something that would keep the Eastern Europeans focused on doing reforms. The EU was more effective than NATO was in that regard because NATO is a political position. With the EU you really have to go through the nineteen chapters and make a lot of legal reforms and change things. EU membership really is much more than a club. It's an organism. So, it was a reform-driving thing and so also in the Balkans.

In the Balkans really Croatia, Slovenia; well, Slovenia was out of the Balkans by that time, but Croatia, Slovenia, and to a lesser extent Macedonia, were countries that had some reasonable prospect of becoming NATO and EU members in some reasonable timeline. With Milosevic and after Milosevic Serbia certainly didn't. Albania actually had made great strides, going along on the coattails of Macedonia and Croatia and also because we like them so much. They were a strange country but they made progress, but they didn't look very promising. Bosnia, of course, was not really a country at all. I guess Croatia was a country that looked like it had real prospects.

*Q: While you were there was there somebody who was Mr. NATO? Was there an EU officer?*

ROSSIN: There was not a NATO rep in Croatia. They have opened an office now I believe but there was not one when I was there. When I was there the British ambassador, the French ambassador were there, the German. I mean there were a lot of NATO reps in the diplomatic corps and so in that sense you had NATO represented there. I think generally there was a belief that Croatia, some of us were more enthusiastic about it than others, but generally there was a desire to see Croatia move in that direction.

With regard to the EU, there was a European Commission representative there. He was quite inactive. The first one was not so active but the second one that came while I was there was quite active. Myself, him, the OSCE [Organization for Security and Confidence Building in Europe] mission—there was a very large OSCE mission in Croatia—the UNHCR [UN High Commissioner for Refugees] rep and some of the other ambassadors worked as a team on leveraging, the EU leveraging NATO, leveraging the EU, leveraging all these different processes to push for refugee return issues. Those were the main issues. War crimes were dealt with in a separate way, and other issues were not directly our business although we always tried to make sure our aid programs and our general diplomacy was conducive to Croatia making progress on the EU objectives because they were good objectives, with a couple of exceptions. Whenever a country enters the EU, it raises trade barriers against the United States, but that was sort of down the road so we weren't worried so much about that. So, we worked a lot on that. We worked as a team. It was a very good teamwork effort.

*Q: When you say, worked on it, what does this mean?*

ROSSIN: When it came to war crimes there was an indictment of a man who was a senior, a young guy actually, in his mid-thirties but who had been a Croatian general during Operation Storm which was the Croatian offensive in 1995. There were atrocities that took place during Operation Storm. He was indicted and it became a big issue. This stuff really inflames Croats and there is a huge ultranationalist right wing. Croatia has a fascist past and one that is still present, so this was inflamed. This was early on in my time so it would have been sometime during 2001. The government actually did a fairly good job of taking it down. This stuff is centered around the coast in the areas which had been bombarded and really suffered during the war. So, there was a huge movement, uprising. People marching, ten thousand demonstrators burst into Zagreb and all that. There was concern that it could destabilize the country and destabilize the government, but I didn't think so. My advice to the government was they should stand firm and they should be tough. I kept using the phrase, "kick ass and take names." It apparently does translate into Croatian and they did. They actually stood firm and the thing fizzled out. The whole nationalist thing was on its decline in Croatia.



Having said that, what they didn't do was what we would do. If the government won a victory over the opposition like that, then the administration would be working twenty-four hours a day seven days a week to move everything they had forward, using the momentum before it ran out. These guys went on holiday, basically. They didn't do anything with it, which was the general way of governing. So, I was lobbying constantly about this kind of stuff. We did a lot of pressing the Croatians to fulfill their commitments to The Hague tribunal.

On refugee returns, which was one of, I think probably the single largest group of issues that we as the U.S. mission dealt with. AID had lots of programs in the towns in the war-affected areas, providing community reconstruction assistance in return for more positive attitudes on the part of the local people towards the return of Serbian, Serbo-Croatian refugees. It worked in many places. It didn't work in every place, but it worked in a lot of places and caused attitudinal changes over time, more tolerance. I wouldn't say reconciliation, but the beginnings, but certainly a tolerance of people coming back. It worked when AID changed its policy from only assisting refugees to assisting the entire community so there was a rising tide because in fact everybody was in need. In fact, those places that had been destroyed during the war were really horrible to look at. Add economic work there, which was one element of our refugee work.

It was also policy stuff. The Croatian government was really not, when it came down to it, willing to do much of anything to help refugees return in terms of dealing with legal issues, in terms of changing laws or policies that were inimical to return, in terms of leveraging local authorities who were obstructing returns.

We had a thing called the Article 11 commission which had been set up. Article 11 was Article 11 of the Erdut Agreement which had severed the eastern Slavonia situation and had then returned eastern Slavonia to Croatia. There was a commission set up to monitor the implementation of the Erdut Agreement, which extended to all the Krajina [borderlands] areas of Croatia, that is to say, all the areas along the border with Bosnia including down the coastal area.

Numbers of foreign ambassadors and so forth, EU, NATO, the Russians, others were involved in this commission, and would go travelling around with and without Croatian government officials, always trying to leverage progress in refugee returns. It was very difficult. The OSCE rep, the EU rep, myself, and the UNHCR rep would write letters periodically to the prime minister, really more and more harsh and strident in tone over time, because Croatia was really not applying at the end of the day its obligations and what it needed to do to get refugees back and allow people to return home.

One of the big issues that is still out there—I know when I was there in September, I saw the ambassador who is there now, there had been these socially owned apartments. People would work for a company or the government or something. They didn't own their apartment but they didn't rent it either. It was the pseudo-features of Yugoslav socialism. Basically, it belonged to a social group or something. In the end it didn't have

a legal basis. In the end we found out in Kosovo, when we started looking at it, this really was a form of state ownership because no individual person could demonstrate their ownership of this social unit, or their share of the ownership of it. There were tens of thousands of Croatian Serbs who were expelled from Yugoslavia during the war, many of whom were people who would never return. They were army officers and they were other officials of the Yugoslav government who tended to be predominantly Serbs. There were many people who did return and they wanted to get their apartments back. There had been a big redistribution of apartments to homeland war fighters and people like that during the postwar period. The Croatian government during the time I was there would never acknowledge that this was an aspect of returns. This was no issue there as far as they were concerned; they simply denied it. We got more and more vigorous and vocal about that during the time I was there.

A lot of the other issues were getting under control. I understand now the Croatian government has acknowledged it and it is beginning to address it but people tell me it is not very serious.

*Q: They by now are pretty well settled in.*

ROSSIN: They were already pretty well settled in by the time I was there.

I think the other thing is that things have evolved in such a way that what you have been able to leverage out of the Croatians using NATO and using the EU, pretty much has been done. The war crimes issues are no longer on the table and the other stuff, it's just you can only ride that horse for so long.

*Q: How were things working on—?*

ROSSIN: It's a difficult area. I would say it and the area inland, the hinterland area of—and—were the worst affected areas during the war and were also the areas where not only was reconciliation not in sight, but tolerance was not yet near being achieved. I think that it is still the case out there. Certainly, when I was out there, the returns situation in both of those areas of the country was really dismal. The attitudes of the government officials and political leaders in both of those areas of the country were really dismal and extremely retrograde. We didn't make any progress in either of those areas.

I remember going down to visit a project. There was one municipality down in the hinterland area on the coast where we had projects, but it was like one island with a mayor who happened to want to be constructive and have people return, but even then, the people who returned there— isn't very big, and so the people from the neighboring municipalities would abuse them and they were subject to violence. It was the same thing in the east. The places were really damaged.

I think the United States and the West tend to expect a standard of forbearance and amnesia and big-heartedness from people of the Balkans and other conflict zones. We

haven't had those wars, but if we had, I don't think we would find ourselves quite so tolerant.

*Q: It took a hundred years to get the—*

ROSSIN: It is 150 years and you still see the civil war aftermath.

Here we are. The war in Croatia and Bosnia had ended when I was there, five, six years beforehand. Thousands of people in Bosnia were killed and displaced, and in Croatia there were many people hurt and displaced, places destroyed. For them this happened yesterday. This was really a very, very short time ago. There is a missionary aspect to American foreign policy that I find very unattractive.

I thought it was pretty good that they could reach the stage where they could just be tolerant five years later. In Kosovo, when the peace process failed and when NATO bombing started and the Serbs started their onslaught of the people of Kosovo, you had Kosovo Serbs standing on their balconies cheering. The Albanians were the majority of the population while they were being marched down and expelled from their hometowns in Kosovo. You had that in the Krajina area as well. It was like when the Serbs were on top of the Krajina area, they were extremely abusive of the Croats and well, you know, the pendulum swung.

I really wonder what the hell Americans—after 9/11 and all this stuff that is going on in this country. Tolerance is not a strong feature of American society right now.

*Q: Did Croatia have other countries that sponsored, sort of acted as big brothers?*

ROSSIN: Acted as champions for it? As you know, one of the things that was unfortunate about the whole Yugoslav breakup was that all the countries around Yugoslavia started acting in a manner of behavior. So, you had the Greeks backing the Serbs because they both were Orthodox. You had the Germans backing the Croats and the Slovenians because they were part of the western thing against Islam. All this extremely unattractive behavior on the part of the Vatican was like that. The Italians were like that and the Austrians were like that. The Austrians were the great champions of the Croats and the Slovenians.

When I was in Haiti, Canada was a superpower in Haiti. Well, in Croatia, Austria is like a big country for them. It is not a big country. It is not part of NATO. At that time it was just in the EU, and the unfortunate part about it was that they, and also the Germans to some—the German ambassador at the time when I was there, particularly felt this way—could only see good things happening in Croatia. They were not willing to work on anything dealing with refugee returns. They were not willing to work on war crimes issues. They were not really willing to work on any foreign-type issues or postwar legacy issues. They were looking for commercial advantage. It was almost as though they were looking for some kind of building up allies, nineteenth century kind of stuff. It doesn't

exist. It doesn't make any difference anymore. Who cares if Croatia is big buddies with Austria?

I think the low point came when the Bavarian Christian Social Union was sponsoring, was parading the Croatian Democratic Union [HDZ], the Croatian nationalist opposition at the time I was there, around to meetings of the Christian Democratic National or whatever. At the time that party had not demonstrated that it had moved beyond entrenchment and hyper nationalism.

I remember at one point talking to the German ambassador, who I was not a big fan of, being a tough sort, pushing the Croats to reform, and he said the reason they were doing this was because eventually when Croatia came into the European Union they would have a few more votes for the European People's Party and the European parliament. I think it's a stupid reason to be backing a fascist party.

The reforms were in Croatia's interest, of course. They could live in the past or they could move to the future as the rest of Europe is moving to the future, and they really needed to do so too. There were these very shortsighted, nineteenth century kinds of things that were being done by their sponsors.

The Hungarians to some extent also wanted to be sponsors of the Croats. Of course, Hungary and Croatia had this horrible relationship. Croatia historically had been part of the Hungarian crown lands during the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Croats were standoffish about the Hungarians because part of their Hungarian crown land and—to 1848 had tried to get Croatia to become part of the Austrian crown lands at the time of the 1848 revolutions and was betrayed. There is a long history that lives in the Balkans.

*Q: You have had this early-on recognition of Croatia which helped break up the Balkans and break up Yugoslavia by Genscher, the German foreign minister, sort of on his own.*

ROSSIN: That happened when I was political counselor in the Netherlands. It was spring of 1992 or very early 1992 when that happened, maybe it was the end of 1991. I don't quite remember.

The civil war had already begun, the Slovenia intervention had taken place. The war was going on in Croatia and had stabilized, reaching its status in Croatia. There was a pause at the end of 1991 or early 1992. Things were holding together in Bosnia but boy, oh boy, were they fragile. All of the pressures were for breakup. Everybody knew that Bosnia was going to be a really, really gruesome place. This is where the real war was going to take place. The Dutch and a lot of the other EU countries at that point were really, really opposing that there should be any recognition, and the United States was really opposing it.

Genscher, yes, he was the—had been the foreign minister of Germany for sixteen years and he basically was an arrogant German who knew more than anybody else and it was

all this attitude about their friends and their foes in these Balkan ethnic groups. The Germans just did it. They just jammed it down the throat of the European Union at that time. Everybody said this is the spark that lights the fuse, and it was the spark that lit the fuse. I will tell you something. It was the tenth anniversary when I was there; the tenth anniversary of the international recognition of Croatia came along during the time I was ambassador, with big festivities in Zagreb, a big concert in the symphony concert hall there. I went to the concert; we all did, and Genscher was there and he was the honored guest. He walks on water in Croatia. The man is a national hero; there are statues of him, there are streets named after him. By that time, he was years out of office. He was loving every minute of it. I guess everyone wants to be famous somewhere but that is a pretty shitty way to get famous.

*Q: What about the other element in this recognition? When you were there, how did you see the role of the church, the Catholic Church?*

ROSSIN: Very retrograde. The archbishop of Zagreb was a moderate individual, relatively. In Croatian church terms he was, I wouldn't call him progressive, I mean, moderate I think is a good word, and not very skilled or active. I used to meet with him periodically and ask him to do things that he normally didn't but he wasn't contrary either. There were a lot of Albanians and other Muslims along the coast and they were trying to build a mosque, and you can just imagine what the attitude of the Croatian Catholic Church was towards that. The church was not a helpful influence at all in Croatia. Every now and then, and even before I went to Croatia, the U.S. government would decide to make an approach to the Vatican to see if they couldn't get the church to be more constructive in Croatia and even more so in Bosnia where they were really bad. The Franciscans were horrible in Bosnia.

*Q: The Franciscans, they were the people who pushed orthodox into churches and set them on fire.*

ROSSIN: They were the—priests and extremely retrograde. Of course, the Vatican would say well, you've got all—it doesn't work that way. We can't tell the Croatian conference or the Bosnian conference of bishops what to do and they can't tell any more than they could tell the American bishops to pull up their socks and stop giving all these ultramodern things. They really didn't want to either. Pope John Paul paid three visits to Croatia. They kind of like that. It is a Catholic country. We never got any help from any Catholic Church people anywhere. They were not advocates of tolerance or reconciliation anywhere; they were keeping the flames alive.

I mentioned the archbishop emeritus of Zagreb, Franjo Cardinal Kuharic died in 2002 while I was ambassador there. There was a big funeral service for him, or a memorial service for him in the square in front of the cathedral in Zagreb. All of the ambassadors were sitting in the same section intermingled with members of the government, so I was sitting with the prime minister and you know, we were all chatting and stuff. It was extremely cold. We were in the shade. It was in February or March, I think. On the side

there was this big raised platform with an altar on it, a large platform. There were obviously going to be many bishops celebrating this funeral mass. There were all these extremely long benches, maybe ten or twelve rows of them between us and the altar, and they were empty; there was nobody there. It didn't occur to me what this was going to be for. Well, all of a sudden hundreds of priests and monks came out from the cathedral and filled up these benches in their church garments. They were all sort of weather-beaten: white hair, weather-beaten red faces like people are in the country in Croatian Balkans. I thought about Stalin and his thing, well, what about the Pope, you know? Show me the Pope's divisions. I thought, here they are. Here are the divisions and here we are. We go out and we go to these towns with our aid programs and we try to encourage tolerance and returns of Serb refugees. Every day every one of these guys is in every little village out there, and they are not working in the same direction that we are working in. It was a real eye opener, actually for me.

*Q: Well, you have the Serbian side, their own orthodox.*

ROSSIN: The metropolitan, or archbishop, I can't remember what his title was, in Zagreb was Orthodox. I used to go see him every now and then. There were some Orthodox priests around and monks. I think they were beleaguered people, what could you say? I found them to be quite decent people. I am not pro-Serb but I am not anti-Serb either. We tried to do a little bit to help them when we could. I visited a Muslim community in an area in the hinterland near Bosnia. They were completely cut off and we were able to get some school assistance from the government for them. These were not religious divisions but the religions only exacerbated the ethnic divisions.

*Q: What about 9/11? How did that hit you all and the reaction?*

ROSSIN: September 11 hit us hard. For myself, we had Bechtel building this freeway. We had a helicopter at the embassy for a month for some reason. I don't remember why. So, I flew out to visit the construction site on the eleventh of September and went out and visited the construction site. Got on the helicopter and took off. When I landed at the airport in Zagreb, my chauffeur said, "You need to call Kathy," who was my secretary, "because she needs to talk to you." I called Kathy and she said, "There was an airplane that just hit one of the World Trade Center buildings." It was early in the morning in New York. And then she says, "Oh, my gosh. Another airplane just hit another one!" This was in real time.

I got back to the embassy and this was 9/11, obviously. None of us knew what was going on. We didn't know anything. I immediately talked to the prime minister and the president, who were extremely forthcoming with offers of any assistance they could do, echoing what happened around the entire world on 9/11. The other thing I did was I immediately decided to close the embassy; that is to say, not send people home that day—it was already the end of the day by the time I got back—, but to close the embassy the next day. I didn't ask Washington or anything. The State Department had moved itself



out I think on that day and so as a consequence, they couldn't be reached. In fact, wasn't there something that they thought there might be an attack on the State Department?

*Q: I happened to be coming into the State Department when all the guards came out looking around.*

ROSSIN: The State Department always wants to be like DOD [Department of Defense].

*Q: I think the thing was they didn't have any procedure and somebody pushed the button, a bomb threat. I think that's where it came from.*

ROSSIN: In any case, I decided to shut down. Our embassy in Zagreb was a nineteenth century building with a six-foot setback from the sidewalk at a major intersection. The security experts had told us if a six-foot hole was blown in the unreinforced brick wall, the entire building would come down. So I didn't know what the hell was going on but I knew I wasn't going to have all my people in this building if there was something going on in our neck of the woods. There are people, there were at that time anyway, people in the Balkans from the Arab world and I didn't know who they were but I didn't want to find out either. So we shut it down.

We had the memorial service and all the things that happen in countries. We set up a book of condolences. The prime minister and president of parliament came and signed it, not at the embassy but at the Croatian American Society. We went through all the same things that everybody else did. The Croatians were very supportive, candlelight things set up across the street from the embassy and all that. That was great. I think two or three Croatians were among those who were killed in the World Trade Center, as was the case. There were ninety nationalities or something, and them too. It was that moment of American history and of American international history with everybody in the world wanting to be American or felt solidarity with America. It was a big opportunity that has been lost in the meantime, of solidarity to really fight terrorism instead of this unilateral junk we have from this administration. So that was that.

It didn't change things, I don't think, too much. We were able to determine that: a) nothing was going on in Croatia. I mean, 9/11 itself clarified fairly quickly. I can't remember that it had any long-term impact.

*Q: Did you as the administration, we are talking about the Bush II administration, progressed while you were there, did you have the feeling that really the Balkans were really cut off from interest?*

ROSSIN: I would say so.

*Q: That we wanted to withdraw troops. Almost anything the Clinton administration had done was an anathema.*

ROSSIN: That's right and the Balkans was a Clinton thing and so they didn't feel anything. It may happen in other administrations; changes take place as well. I am sure it does but I think this one was a little more pronounced. I think it is unfortunate because when you take over as ambassador, all of the acts of your predecessor are your property now because the United States did it, not Bill Montgomery [former U.S. ambassador to Croatia] or Larry Rossin or Madeleine Albright. This is the United States of America and this administration, I don't think really had that mentality.

One other thing about Croatia I would mention is that it became more important, like all countries did, at the time of Iraq and the build-up to Iraq. This was the thing that was most interesting to me. Our policy in the Balkans was all about the Balkans. When I got to Croatia, everything we did was about making Croatia a better place. There was a reason: regional stability, European stability, human rights, our higher ideals, but everything we did was about Croatia. It was the same thing in the other countries in the region and they got very, very used to that kind of thing. After all, what would we really need from those countries? What could we possibly need from Croatia or Slovenia or any of these countries?

When the Iraq thing started happening, there actually was something we needed because we needed all countries around the world to ideally stand up and support us on Iraq in the buildup. We needed perhaps troops for Afghanistan and then for Iraq, even token contributions that they might be, a coalition that is so tattered. We needed people on our side, basically.

Afghanistan was a post-9/11 development. September 11 was the queen event in the sense it didn't excite any anti-American prejudices. Then it was realized that Osama bin Laden was in Afghanistan and really you needed to go clean out the nest of terrorists, and the activity in November-December to get rid of the Taliban eventually started and then the post period. The Croatians, like all the Europeans, were a little bit sort of iffy about it but basically supportive. Croatia sent some military units or something to Afghanistan. Basically, they were supportive of it but we had to deal with some public diplomacy stuff on that.

The Iraq stuff, as everybody knows, elicited quite different reactions from Europeans. This was a very, very interesting phenomenon in Croatia because we needed something from Croatia. We needed Croatia on our side on Iraq and there were countries in Europe not on our side on Iraq, notably Germany and France. The Germans and the French put a lot of pressure. The Germans put a lot of pressure on the Croatian government: "You want to come into the EU, right? Well, if you want to come into the EU, you have to act like a European country."

One of the things about the EU is the candidate countries always align themselves with foreign policy positions taken by the European Union. That's one of the things. There was a certain point with the German ambassador, I was going into the president's office just as the German ambassador was leaving, and I realized afterwards that the German

ambassador had gone in there and basically said, "Look at the speech the president was going to make about Iraq and said, yes, this is fine. This is what we want," and it was exactly what we didn't want, which was extremely critical of America, extremely critical of American intervention in Iraq.

All of a sudden, the whole shape of our diplomacy in a lot of these countries and in Croatia certainly changed because all of a sudden it was a two-way street. We had been doing all this stuff. We had our aid programs, we had all this assistance, we had been bugging them about refugee returns and stuff, but basically it was all one way. Now we wanted something from them. We wanted them to take what would probably be an unpopular political stand. Maybe we wanted them to send police or military or something and they didn't want to do it. They had gotten used to, like, "you're kidding," you know? We want you to do all this stuff and that's a wrenching transition, like when kids have to start doing that when they get to be older teenagers. It became a really, really sore point of contention.

There was this, and then the business of the Article 98 agreement happening at the same time about the International Criminal Court. Croatia wasn't going to do that, either. Basically, the Croatians opted for the Old Europe, if you will, rather than the New Europe, to use Rumsfeld's terminology. It became an extremely tense period, which still has a lot of ramifications even now for U.S.-Croatian relations.

*Q: Were we talking or were we doing anything? The Croatians no longer were coming along. You had aid programs and all.*

ROSSIN: The only aid program that got cut, it was not about Iraq, was equipment assistance and that was because of the legislation about Article 98 agreements. I can't remember what the legislation was, but basically it said that if a country didn't sign the Article 98 agreement that exempted Americans from prosecution by the International Criminal Court, it was a commitment on their part not to refer Americans to the tribunal, to the International Criminal Court, then U.S. security assistance would be cut off. This was a phenomenon all across Europe and elsewhere. The Croatians wouldn't sign and a little bit of this military assistance was cut off, really right at the end of my tour.

Really all we were looking for from countries like Croatia at the end of the day was rhetorical support and solidarity and affirmative solidarity. We didn't get it. In fact, the Croatian president and the Croatian government bent over backwards, I think, because they were trying to please the Europeans, and they were unsophisticated so they overshot the mark and they came out with these speeches that were extremely hostile to the United States and finger wagging at the United States. Even the European ambassadors who were not on our side remarked to me that the Croatians had overshot the mark and really didn't need to do that much. I was quite critical of them publicly in their press. They took offense at that. I remember the prime minister called me up to see him and he said, "Well, how can you say these things?" I said, "Because you said those things, because I am the American ambassador, and because our interests in Croatia at this stage and our interests

in the world are such that we don't normally have a monochromatic relationship with you now and you need to get used to that." I completely rejected his objections to my public statements.

*Q: Today is the twenty-fourth of May 2012 and a continuation after about a three or four-year hiatus with Larry Rossin, R-O-S-S-I-N. And Larry, we had left it, we're coming to the end of your time in Croatia. What were you doing in Croatia?*

ROSSIN: I was the ambassador to Croatia. I had gotten there at the beginning of 2001 and I was there through June of 2003. So, I was doing that. And I know what I talked about last time, but I could run through it again.

*Q: By the time you were leaving, what was the state of affairs in Croatia?*

ROSSIN: The country had—in the time that I was there, Croatia had gone through a couple of transitions. First of all, I think it had transitioned from being a country dominated by conflict and post-conflict issues from the breakup of the former Yugoslavia, into a country that still had a lot of those issues, but where the primary focus was on the Euro-Atlantic integration path, and being more like a normal country. And these are trends of course that we see confirmed over the last nine years now since I left Croatia. It's a member of NATO now, it's accepted as a member of the European Union. I think it enters the European Union next year. And it's clearly a country that—where the normal kinds of issues that countries have are predominant over the lingering post-conflict issues. And we had worked very hard to make that possible. The other big transition it went through was a transition from the United States being the primary influential actor to the European Union being the primary influential actor, which is not really a bad thing. After all, we don't want to be the primary influential actor everywhere—

*Q: No.*

ROSSIN: —or have the primary influential responsibilities.

*Q: Well, how did you find the European Union at that time start stepping up to the plate and—*

ROSSIN: At that time, this was the beginning of the last decade, and at that time it was pretty good. The situation in all of Eastern Europe and Southeastern Europe was that the primary sort of motivator for reform, whether it was post-conflict reform or just regular sort of post-communist reforms, was the beacon of EU membership and being part of Europe. NATO membership is important, but NATO membership is more of a political decision and even more so now. But it's really the EU thing. And the European Union stepped up to it in Croatia. They stepped up to it on the economic front, with the kinds of adjustment assistance that they gave to candidate countries. And they also stepped up to it working with us and with the OSCE and there was an international team, in leveraging

and prodding the Croatians to make this sort of post-conflict changes that they needed to do in order to be a realistic candidate for Europe or Euro-Atlantic membership, things like refugee returns, doing the right thing with indicted war criminals from the ICTY. Those kinds of things really were the main issues.

*Q: At the time you—by the time you're getting ready to leave, was there concern there about the departure of an awful lot of young people elsewhere in Europe? I mean—*

ROSSIN: Absolutely, yeah. There was a poll taken by some magazine, one of the news magazines, while we were living in Croatia. And they asked young people, seventeen to twenty-five, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" so to speak. And the answer of 70 percent of them was they wanted to be out of Croatia. Which is to say—they like Croatia, you know, they're very patriotic people and they love their country, but they just saw no future there. And this is something you see all through the Balkans. I worked in Kosovo, I've seen Serbia, and the other—they all have the same situation. And there really is a lack of opportunity for young people, because there's a lack of new economic growth in these countries. You don't get foreign green field investments very much. There's still really not—especially in the former Yugoslavia, their attitude always was that, unlike the Czech Republic or Poland, their attitude was this is our socialism. And it didn't work out right, but that didn't mean it was inherently bad. And so that actually slowed down reform a lot and you already had this problem coming to its head with the euro crisis, but there's so many built in protections for people who are already employed in the system that it's a great suppressor of job growth for young people. You see the same thing in Spain where you have very high youth unemployment and other countries in Europe. So, this is a big situation. I had a friend in Kosovo recently who was saying that if this continued it'd cause a social explosion. I said maybe, but it's been a long time in Spain, it's been a long time in Croatia, it's not dissimilar really. It may be a little worse in Kosovo. And we don't see that social explosion for whatever reason. Now, maybe with the falling off of remittances and with the euro crisis it might hurt.

*Q: Yeah, we're going through a very difficult time, which is known as euro crisis. And as we speak, we can't say how this thing is going to turn out. But did you see any developments in Croatia as far as building things and other economic growth anywhere?*

ROSSIN: A little bit, but not a lot. I can't really say there was very much. I mean we tried to encourage American investment. There was some investment by the neighboring European countries, I mean countries like Austria and Switzerland tend to be little regional powers in that part of the world; Italy, obviously. But in terms of productive investment it was very difficult. I think at that time, Croatia and these countries were probably more from the economic point of view still going through the downward part of the curve, rather than hitting the upward part of the curve. Again, you could see the difference, actually. I went, I drove up one time. My daughter had a school trip from her boarding school in Switzerland to a place in Hungary right near the border where they did a Habitat for Humanity project. So, when we—later when she came for the summer and a friend of hers came from the States, we all drove up there to see the Habitat for Humanity

house and then we drove on to the city of Pécs in Hungary. And what struck me was that the infrastructure of Hungary was inferior to that in Croatia. Clearly, Yugoslavia had been—at least Northern Yugoslavia had been more prosperous than Hungary had been during the communist period. But what you saw was inferior infrastructure in Hungary. What you also saw was a country that was further along the recovery curve. The new stuff was much more apparent in Pécs than anywhere in Croatia, in Zagreb or other major Croatian cities in terms of big stores—you could just see there was more money going around and that there was more economic activity taking place. I don't know whether Croatia has made much progress since then. They were hit hard by the euro crisis and they were hit hard by corruption that emerged in the government after I left. But no, there wasn't a huge amount of—there wasn't—I mean I could see why 70 percent of young people would say what they said. There just wasn't a lot of prospect going on.

*Q: What was your impression of—I assume there was a political class there, and what were they like?*

ROSSIN: Sort of post-communist, a lot of them. Their habits were still communist essentially. They were very introverted, navel-gazing to some extent. One of the problems that I would see—I spent a lot of time traveling out to rural towns because we did a lot of projects with refugee returns. And we did a lot of road shows out to towns and I would speak at groups and places like that. And so often, I was the only government official that the people had ever seen. They'd never seen any of the ministers. They'd never seen their own representative in the parliament, which was of course because they used—the parliamentary list system was a little bit attenuated. And it was like they were really happy to see me, whether they thought of United States policy, and I'm sure why was because I was a big official coming out to listen to them, as well as to interact with them. Of course, I was the wrong government. You know, it should have been their government, not mine. But here I was, and you really saw it when a couple of times there was a thing called the Article II Commission in Croatia, which was other embassies, the OSCE, the UNHCR, which worked on refugee return issues. And a couple of times we set up this big road-show kind of trip and we got one or another minister to come out with us to the countryside—and people were amazed and pleased to see these ministers. And the ministers actually enjoyed themselves when they went out there, but they never went again. They also were in cabinet meetings five days a week. The TV news was nothing but cabinet meetings. They're all looking at the monitors. I mean it's a very ivory-tower kind of a government, and they were divorced from their people.

That's how Mesić had become president of Croatia. He realized this; he was a nobody when he started running. And he said, "It's a small country. There's four and a half million people living here. I can reasonably expect to actually shake hands with most of these people if I give myself enough lead time," which he did, and he probably met half the people in Croatia while he was campaigning for president. And it was wild—he won by a big margin, because he actually came to the people. It's a big disappointment about them, and I think it still persists actually. There's not an elitist approach, it's just an ivory-tower kind of approach.



*Q: It reminds me, I was talking to—I can't think of his name right now—but was our consul general in Kiev.*

ROSSIN: Uh-huh.

*Q: While Ukraine was going through, would they become independent or not, and ex-President Richard Nixon came out, and he was with him. And took him to meet some of the people who were talking about this and all. And they were talking about Thomas Jefferson and Locke and all this. And at one point, the supreme politician, Richard Nixon, turns to him and says, "Oh, these fucking intellectuals."*

ROSSIN: (laughs)

*Q: You know. (laughs)*

ROSSIN: Well, Europeans have a lot more regard for intellectuals than we do. I mean it's, you know, we don't as a nation. When I worked at the NSC I realized at a certain point that we didn't see the president all that time, because he was always meeting groups, that's his job actually.

*Q: Yeah.*

ROSSIN: His job is to keep connecting with the American people. He got, certainly President Clinton more so than President Bush, but they engaged on the issues we were working on. But their job was not to be there doing all that stuff. That's where Jimmy Carter fell afoul.

*Q: Yeah. Well, then when did you leave Croatia and what did you do?*

ROSSIN: I left Croatia in June of 2003. I left under what I thought was about a bit of a cloud, I don't know if it was, which is not an American cloud but a Croatian cloud, which is that I had pressed them very hard to be supportive on Iraq. And they seemed—they were not accustomed to having us ask them for something that didn't have to do with their own benefit. This was something where we actually wanted something and they didn't understand it and they didn't react properly, and I was critical of them in the press. So, it was a little bit of a cloud, but in the end the president did give me whatever medal they give when you leave, the Order of Duke Branimir Award instead of giving me his plane to get the hell out of there. And I came back to Washington and I became the deputy assistant secretary for Europe covering the Balkans, which had been long arranged.

*Q: You did this for how long?*

ROSSIN: For two and a half months. I came back. I started, I believe, in the middle of August or something like that, in 2003. And I did it up until the middle of October.

*Q: What was the situation? The Balkans—*

ROSSIN: It was, well, it was the same thing I left from Croatia. I mean it was only two months ago. The situation in Kosovo, which—Kosovo and Bosnia were the two main issues, of course. The situation in Kosovo was mid-UN administration. It was making progress, it was a situation that was ongoing. There were no crises or anything in that particular period. The situation in Bosnia was as it is now also, kind of ossified in the Dayton framework without real progress being made on, for example, the central institutions, strengthening, building a Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina state, as opposed to the entities doing their own thing. The big challenges were flipping to a more affirmatively positive relationship with Serbia post Milosevic, dealing with the transition, if there was to be such a transition from the U.S. perspective, from NATO lead to you lead on the security structure, the force in Bosnia. Those were really the two main things, I guess. Kosovo, there wasn't anything specific at that point.

*Q: Was there much work on trying to get rid of this prejudice or hatred between Serbs and Croats and Muslims? I mean, you know, both your times in Croatia and—I've had the feeling that one of—the churches were not very helpful in this.*

ROSSIN: No, none of the religions—well, the Muslim, the Muslim Church—it's not organized the way Christian religions are—was neither helpful nor unhelpful, because the Muslim Yugoslavs, whether they were Bosniaks or Albanians, are not very religious people. So, it was not really a factor. In the case of the Catholic Church in Croatia and Bosnia, and the case of the Serbian Orthodox Church, they're both extremely nationalistic and there were regressive factors.

I don't know if in the last taping that we were doing, I mentioned having gone to the funeral of the retired cardinal of Zagreb while I was ambassador there. And all of the priests of—bishops of all of Croatia and Bosnia attended that funeral. And you saw them all coming out on their benches and you thought to yourself, These guys are not out there in their villages arguing for tolerance and the return of refugees. I mean they were all rural—these were people who hadn't evolved much from the Catholic support for the Ustaša [a fascist group that ran Croatia with the help of the Germans during World War II] during World War II. And it's the same thing with the Serbian Orthodox Church. The Serbian Orthodox Church has gone through a little bit of a positive evolution in the last three or four years, but not at that time. So, the religious issues were not the main issues in the war, but the religions reflect the national—and exacerbate the nationalism. That's really what was going on.

No, there was an evolution taking place at that time, which has only accentuated itself since, in terms of relationships between all of the nationalities of the former Yugoslavia, with the exception of Serbs and Albanians. That is to say, the old ties, the old

relationships, I mean these are all Slavs after all, they speak the same language, they write the—they don't write the same script, but that doesn't seem to matter. They're not the same religion, but that doesn't really matter either, once they decide it doesn't matter, affirmative decisions and that. And you were beginning to see in my time, we encouraged them anyway we could, which was limited. And now you've really seen a reassertion of old business ties across boundaries. Croatia manufactured certain kinds of foods and people wanted that brand in Serbia or in Macedonia. That was what they really liked. And these trade ties have reaffirmed themselves, and you see it a lot.

Now, you see it also with the evolution of politics in Croatia, where you now have a president who's a very forward-looking individual. You have President Boris Tadić in Serbia until last week who was, you know, a reasonably forward-looking individual on everything except Kosovo. And they worked hard to—they even worked affirmatively to go to Vukovar, you know, Tadić came to Vukovar—reached out to Serbia. You haven't seen it so much in Bosnia because the Dayton framework has frozen this conflict in a way that doesn't really allow the emergence of new actors, and you still have the same people there. But even in Bosnia it's calmed down. Where you really haven't seen the progress is in relationships between Serbs and Albanians over Kosovo. The Serbs really are prejudiced against Albanians. I mean they really do consider them subhuman, in point of fact. And the Albanians are sensitive. I don't think they're prejudiced against Serbs in the same way, but they're very nationalistic, and managed to extricate themselves from Serbia and are now willing to have an excellent relationship with Serbs in Serbia, which Serbia's not willing to do because Serbia has not yet found a way to get over its belief that Kosovo is the essence of Serbian identity and so forth.

*Q: Well, did you find in Croatia that politicians knew they had a nationalistic card to play and would do it from time to time?*

ROSSIN: They would, and they did. But even during the time I was there you could see that it had less and less resonance with most people who were focused on the economy and looking towards the European model, which they knew didn't favor that sort of thing. They didn't really have bad feelings about Serbians because at the end of the day they had been with these people a long time. They even knew to some extent that they had been jacked up by people like Tudjman, and manipulated. I wouldn't overestimate what I'm saying, but the nationalistic card really does resonate. And then you had—and you could see it when just as I left, they were preparing for new elections. One of the things I did, partially because it was the right thing to do inherently, because you could see the evolution taking place in Tudjman's old party, the HDZ [Hrvatska demokratska zajednica, Croatian Democratic Union], but also partially it was my maneuvering against the government that had been so unhelpful on Iraq, I started reaching out a little bit to the HDZ leadership, which had changed during the period, again, but as a shot across the bow of government, which they didn't like at all. I mean, the prime minister was all over me. But I said, "That's tough, I'm the American ambassador here. I'm not your buddy." And he—and the HDZ came in with a new leadership that was better. They turned out to

be corrupt rather than nationalistic, that was a different thing. (laughs) But progress was made on the issues that mattered to us.

*Q: Well, were you seeing an influence of a younger generation coming in? Maybe with less—*

ROSSIN: A bit.

*Q: —baggage than—*

ROSSIN: A bit. To some—I mean it was a transitional period, I would say, when this was taking place when I was leaving. The new prime minister who came in, Ivo Sanader, was definitely a next generation guy from Tudjman, but he had been Tudjman's executive secretary or something like that, one of his close staff people. So, he had a foot in both camps. This guy ended up being so corrupt. Now you see the new election which took place where the opposition parties, the old, the parties that were the government while I was in Croatia, the Social Democrats have come back into power and the guy who was the prime minister is definitely a next-generation person. He was the NATO director in the Foreign Ministry when I was the ambassador. He then made his political move and ended up through some lost elections; now he's become Prime Minister Zoran Milanović. And he's definitely a modern, you know, a forward-looking—nothing to do with wartime issues. He is a prime minister for a Croatia that is in NATO and going into the European Union.

*Q: Did you see any change in the Catholic authority in Croatia towards making peace with the neighbors and—*

ROSSIN: I can't say while I was there. I mean the Bishop that—the cardinal of Zagreb, while I was there, whose name I don't remember now, was again, a transitional type of a figure. He would—he sometimes would say good things, but he didn't really control the mass, the clergy, and their shady attitude. I don't know whether they've evolved further in that direction. I just haven't followed Croatia enough. My guess is they probably have, but I don't know. I think those priests must have died by now.

*Q: Yeah. Well, I mean it's one of those places where one sort of looks forward to the transition, i.e. the death—*

ROSSIN: It really is that.

*Q: —of a generation.*

ROSSIN: No, no, it really is that. I went to Rijeka [third largest city in Croatia] at one point on a trip. I went, met the Bishop who was fairly new, and I met the retired Bishop, who was still around. And the retired Bishop—there was an issue going on in Rijeka, going on from their perspective anyway, of there's an Albanian ethnic community in

Rijeka, and there's a Bosniak ethnic community living in Rijeka. It's a port city. And they were wanting to build a mosque and they were looking for a place to build a mosque. Well, Croatia's not the only place where you get controversy about this. We get it here in America. But you should have heard—I mean the old bishop, I could easily picture this guy throwing Serbs down wells, you know, during the Ustaša period. He was so reprehensible. He was such a shit. (laughs) There's no other way to say it. I mean I'm sure he's passed away by now, that was ten years ago, he was not going to—he was old then. But how much the new bishop was divorced from that sort of thing was difficult to tell. That was often the case. You just couldn't really tell.

*Q: No.*

ROSSIN: I was in Haiti when Duvalier was overthrown. Everybody thought the Catholic bishops were going to be—they were not progressive, they were not—most of them were Duvalier appointees of one sort or another. I'm a Catholic, I live in America. I don't look to American bishops to be progressive.

*Q: Yeah.*

ROSSIN: Shitty attitude now, you know.

*Q: Yeah.*

ROSSIN: So, I mean I don't look to those kinds of people. That's not— when I was ambassador that wasn't where I went for help.

*Q: Yeah.*

ROSSIN: You know, I'd sometimes go, hoping I could get help. If I did, that was a good thing. But that wasn't where you expected to find it.

*Q: Yeah. Okay. Well, then you did this for a couple months—*

ROSSIN: Yeah.

*Q: And then what?*

ROSSIN: No, I was it, I was the new deputy assistant secretary. And the main thing that I did—Marc Grossman was the under secretary of Political Affairs. And there were these issues. There were these pending issues: Should we support the shift from NATO to the EU as the leader of the security force in Bosnia? Should we develop an affirmative sort of defense, military-to-military kind of relationship with Serbia? And there was a third issue, which I guess had to do with Kosovo, but I don't remember what it was. But these were issues that had been pending and had not moved forward. So, my job was to try and move those issues forward, and I thought, yes, we should support the move to EU

leadership in Bosnia. The time had come, even though you wouldn't expect great results from it. And yes, we should shift to a more positive relationship with Serbia, because again, the time had come post Milosevic. And the new government had shown itself to be constructive. And Tadić was the defense minister at the time, and he was a person you could work with, I thought. So, my job became to try and crystallize this proposal in the interagency process. The DOD had been opposed to both of those positions, but my counterpart at DOD, a woman named Mira Ricardel, who was a Croatian American, was someone with whom I had developed an *extremely* good relationship while I was ambassador in Croatia. And so, we were able to work together in no time at all to come up with a common position. I took that over with Marc [Grossman] to a deputy's committee meeting at the NSC.

Yeah, the under secretary. He and I went to a Deputies Committee meeting I guess sometime in late September, and I presented this proposal. And you know, miracle of miracles, these people not only made a decision, which was rare as I found when I went to work at the NSC afterward, but they made the right decision, which was even rarer, and they supported this. And indeed, there was this policy shift in these areas and Marc was quite pleased. Because a) something had actually got decided at a Deputies Meeting and his fate was to attend lots of them and he was really tired of it. And secondly, they were the right decisions again. They cleared brush so we could move forward. So that was a success.

But what happened was then I went out on a trip to Serbia and to Bosnia for a Peace Implementation Council Meeting in Bosnia and to visit Serbia. And when I came back, I found that I had been maneuvered essentially into taking a job at the National Security Council. Marc had been asked for somebody to recommend to do Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan, and Marc had said, "Well, there was this guy who came over that y'all liked at this Deputies Meeting." And they said, "Oh yeah, that was great."

And so, the next thing I knew I was over at the West Wing interviewing for a job I actually didn't really particularly want, with Steve Hadley and Condi Rice and Bob Blackwill. And ended up within a week and a half as the senior director for Southwest Asia and Strategic Planning at the NSC. And that was the end of my short tour as deputy assistant secretary, which I regretted.

*Q: How did this stand in relation to the 9/11 incident?*

ROSSIN: There was no relationship at all.

*Q: I mean it hadn't happened.*

ROSSIN: Oh no, it had happened.

*Q: It had happened.*



ROSSIN: This was two years—this was—we’re talking about two years later.

*Q: Oh so, so we’re fully into Iraq at that—*

ROSSIN: Oh yes! At this time, we were in Afghanistan with about eleven thousand troops. This was the earlier stage of Afghanistan. And we were in Iraq big time with however many hundred thousand troops there were. And it was the period when Jerry Bremer was heading the Coalition Provisional Authority [CPA] in Iraq where he was out in front. It was starting to go bad, just starting to go bad. Rumsfeld was just washing his hands of it because he had been the big boss and he was washing his hands because he saw it wasn’t going very well.

*Q: Mm.*

ROSSIN: So, sort of falling into our lap. Bremer was doing things that—without checking—which were causing problems like the de-Baathification decree and the dissolution of the Iraqi Army, which you know, Condi Rice would look at—her fax machine would have a message telling her so in the morning; this sort of thing, and not the way it should be. And in Afghanistan things were going well for the most part, but kind of low key. It was not getting all the attention it needed. And you were just starting to have, *just starting to have*, Taliban coming back across. It was early days in Afghanistan and it was in a way the early days of the insurgency also in Iraq.

*Q: Mm-hmm.*

ROSSIN: But it happened while I was there on that job for almost a year.

*Q: But your job was what?*

ROSSIN: In the NSC?

*Q: Yeah.*

ROSSIN: I was senior director of one of the directorates. I was senior director for Southwest Asia and Strategic Planning. That’s what it was called. Strategic planning never entered into the job, either. I don’t know what that was all about, but it never did. So essentially, it was Iraq, more the political side of Iraq. There was a political side of Iraq and then there was the security side of Iraq, the military campaign. And there was another director named Frank Miller who was the director for Defense Policy, and that was more of his bailiwick. So, we were the two senior directors for Afghanistan, pretty much everything about Afghanistan, and for Iran, but not the pure Iranian nuclear issue, which was Robert Joseph.

*Q: Well, let’s talk about Iraq. I’ve interviewed Jerry Bremer.*

ROSSIN: Uh-huh.

*Q: Some time ago. But I mean I would imagine—how were your relations with the situation in Iraq at that time?*

ROSSIN: Well, it was a bit of a peculiar set up, first of all, in the NSC. Because although I was a senior director for this area, there was a deputy assistant to the president. I'd been in the NSC once before and in the previous Clinton administration in NSC you had the national security advisor, the deputy national security advisor, you had one other deputy who was like the executive secretary, which was Nancy Soderberg.

*Q: Yeah.*

ROSSIN: Nancy Soderberg. And then you had the senior directors. You had the standard hierarchy. When the next administration came in you had Bob Blackwill, who was an old associate of Condi Rice from the first Bush administration NSC. He had just come back in somewhat of a bad odor from being ambassador in India where he had been essentially kicked out by Colin Powell because the inspectors had said he was abusing the staff. And there he was at the NSC. And so, he was sort of the senior-senior director for Iraq. So, I mean I was—it was a bit of an anomalous position I was in. And I worked with him, for him, he was the one who dealt with Jerry and I didn't.

I never went to Iraq, but we dealt with the nuts and bolts, if you will, back in Washington. And the main job that I really had—I mean there were a lot of issues, the normal management of the policy, and there were deputies' meetings and principal's meetings all the time about, you know, aid to the Iraqi Police and all the different things, and weapons shipments, military levels, and all the rest of this stuff. But—also the progress of the political arrangement with the CPA. There was some consultative structure most of the time and then it evolved.

And then eventually the move to—which is what the culminating thing of my time there was the move to hand over authority early to the Iraqis, earlier than had originally been planned by Bremer. The real job, though, turned out to be catching up to, getting alongside, and then getting ahead of Bremer in the policymaking process because he did so many things when I first got there that were done without prior consultation with Washington, were controversial, and were not fruitful in some cases, and Rumsfeld had washed his hands of him. And the president was increasingly—and Condi and the others at the NSC were increasingly unhappy with his performance because it was not fruitful and you had the insurgency worsening, all these different things that were going on.

And so our job was to get from a paradigm where Condi Rice would come to the office or her secretary would come in the office in the morning, find a de-Baathification decree all said and done and issued, that they hadn't heard a word about, on the fax machine, to a position which we achieved at the time of the drafting of the Transitional Administrative Law that handed over power to the Iraqis in June of 2004—where they were clearing it

with us like they were supposed to do. They were making sure that Washington and that the U.S. government supported what they were doing out there. And that was the real job. And that was, of course, consummate bureaucracy, and it was Washington power. I mean it's how you do—what you have to call it.

*Q: Well, how'd you get on with Blackwill? I mean because I, you know, I attended the Foreign Service, but I've certainly heard enough stories about him—*

ROSSIN: You haven't interviewed him?

*Q: I haven't interviewed him.*

ROSSIN: I don't know if I would. He's a very interesting guy as a story to tell, for sure. He's a very difficult personality. He's extremely difficult—he had a reputation for—I had heard of him, but not really. I went over and he was the first one I met when I was sucked over to the NSC and he was on his best behavior, because he was trying to recruit me for a job—

*Q: Yeah.*

ROSSIN: —and the previous person had to leave suddenly with a heart problem, which is no wonder working with Bob at the NSC. Especially *that* NSC. He was a very difficult person to work with. He's really mercurial; he's really erratic; he's very egotistical. He's abusive to people. I mean, I was the senior director with the directorate, so I had the staff working for me, not for—of course they were working for him too. And you get that feeling where you can't buffer your staff from that. I mean a good manager, you buffer your staff. You know, that's what you do.

*Q: Yeah, you're—*

ROSSIN: Well, you couldn't do it. And they, you know, they felt strained. I had people crying, who were really competent people. It was not a pleasant experience. I didn't cry because I don't, but I have to say it was very stressful working with Bob. To the point where when I finally did decide to leave, and I did leave a bit early—well, you don't have a set tour of duty at the NSC you always decide when to leave.

*Q: Yeah.*

ROSSIN: Or they fire you. In my case, I decided to leave. And Condi asked me, "Are you leaving because of Bob?" And I said no, and it certainly wasn't the main reason I was leaving, but I've got to say it was a contributing factor. It was very stressful working with that guy. You added a lot of value, though, at the same time. It took maybe a personality like that to deal with somebody like Bremer out there who was, the big king of the hill out there and, had been given, when he went out, had been given these really vice regal powers. So, this idea of reeling him back in was not really part of the basis on

which he had gone out to Iraq, from his perspective the rules of the game were being changed, too. They needed to be changed. But it wasn't something that he would say, "Oh yes, I've been exceeding my bounds." He hadn't been exceeding his bounds. That's what he was sent out there to do.

*Q: Well, you know, obviously for all of us who've gone through this period, if nothing else reading the papers, this Iraq business was a difficult time, to say the least.*

ROSSIN: You could say.

*Q: And part of it was personalities. But Rumsfeld, he had all the troops, he could have had Bremer taken out and shot, practically. I mean what—how did he—*

ROSSIN: Well, I don't think Rumsfeld himself selected Bremer. I mean why would he have selected Bremer? How did he know him? But Bremer was selected. He was a high-profile personality himself. Of course, he had—from the post-Foreign Service he had become extremely successful in the private sector. But he was a very, very consummate operator during this time in the Foreign Service. I don't know if you've interviewed him or not.

*Q: I have.*

ROSSIN: Yeah. And he was Henry Kissinger's personal assistant. I ran into his memory or his traces when I was political counselor in the Netherlands where he had been the ambassador preceding the ambassador who was there—who was just leaving when I got there—so like three, four, five years ago. And he was revered. He walked on water. No other ambassador who was political or would get political was ever going to get to fill that man's shoes. And he's a very charming individual and he's a smart guy. And he was sent there after Jay Garner, some general who was sent there at first, who hadn't really gotten a grasp of this situation. And so, they sent him out a guy who I know really had a capability to get a grasp of it, and in his own way did. And he was assisted by a friend of mine, Clay McManaway, for whom I have a huge amount of respect.

*Q: Who I've interviewed too.*

ROSSIN: Yeah, and Clay's a great guy. And—although Clay was old and he couldn't stay out there, I mean his health wouldn't permit it in the end. But he just said, "You know, Rumsfeld, I'm going." As long as it was going great Rumsfeld didn't have any reason to control the guy [Bremer]. And when it went bad, instead of exerting that control, Rumsfeld just sort of washed his hands of it because he wasn't going to go with a loser.

So, it fell to, almost by default really, after a period of nobody controlling Jerry and Jerry doing these things, the de-Baathification decree and stuff, it reluctantly fell to Condi and Steve [Hadley]—I mean, to the White House, to the NSC, to get a handle on this guy. And Bob was the guy. Bob Blackwill was the guy who was brought in to do it and he did

it. I mean at the end of the day, Bob did it, but it wasn't easy. It was messy. We did it too. Bob did it with his showmanship and we did it with the substance of saying, "Okay, now, if Jerry is going to be told, like on the Transitional Administrative level that he's got to refer back to Washington in a very dynamic process, well, you can't count on the Deputies Committee at the NSC to give you dynamic turnaround when decisions are needed." I mean that they [the members of the Deputies Committee] are not specialists in making decisions. And we worked, the Directorate, we worked day and night to turn around that—in other words, we provided the actual guidance—if you're going to sell them on the fact that they have to be responsive to Washington guidance, you'd better produce Washington guidance when it's needed, and we did that. That was our job.

*Q: How did you find Condi Rice?*

ROSSIN: She's an extremely impressive, extremely intelligent, elegant, disciplined, charming person to work with. I really had a very high regard for her. Who couldn't have a high regard when you meet her? I mean she's just an extremely remarkable person. But she was also—I felt like she was kind of weak. I saw it a couple of times. She—I'm prejudiced a little bit because I just got done reading the book called *The Bush Tragedy* that was written maybe in 2008 and it delineated in a way that rang true to me the relationships in the Bush family and the Bush administration, including Condi, who was a member of the family for all practical purposes. I mean she really was. And she didn't use that adequately, in my mind, to put forward her own vision. I sometimes did not know what her own vision was. She always seemed to be on the right wavelength, but she wasn't the one who got rid of Rumsfeld at the end of the day. It was Laura Bush who finally told George Bush to get rid of this crazy man. I saw—I was sitting in a Principal's Meeting one time when Rumsfeld was there. Colin Powell was there; it was a Principal's Meeting. Condi Rice was chairing it. And Rumsfeld acted very contemptuously all the time toward other people in the administration. I mean it was blatant. It was really unpleasant to watch. It was just not good human behavior as far as I was concerned. And at one point he just stood up and said, "Oh, the hell with this shit, I'm going up and I'm going to visit the president."

I worked at the NSC when Tony Lake was the national security advisor—and Tony Lake would have said, "You sit your butt right down in that chair. I'll tell you when this meeting is over." He would not have put up with that shit. Rumsfeld walked out on Condi Rice. It was just, you know, that weakens your authority.

*Q: Yeah.*

ROSSIN: I mean there's just no way. And when you're dealing with somebody who is kind of slippery, in the other chair, like Colin Powell, who presented himself as the big moderate to the outside world but very, very effective in his interagency process and not a particular moderate either, it's just not a winning formula. I mean, at the end of the day I think what happened was she had all the capability, but somehow, she just didn't deliver independent advice and authority.

*Q: I had a long set of interviews with Beth Jones—*

ROSSIN: Uh-huh.

*Q: —who used to talk about Condi Rice and not really—I mean she'd sort of sit there and let everybody argue and then act more as a secretary—*

ROSSIN: Well, there was some of that too.

*Q: —rather than as a—say, okay, we'll do it this way.*

ROSSIN: Well, it was partially—that's right. And that was her vision of the National Security Council.

One of the things that struck me, having been in the NSC in the Clinton administration, was how different this NSC was and what the vision of it was that she and Steve Hadley had. In the Clinton administration I thought they had the balance about right. That is to say, you don't want an Ollie North sort of government; government within government kind of thing that you had going on in the Reagan administration. In the Clinton administration, at least when—I'm sure it continued once Sandy Berger was national security advisor too, because Lake and Berger, although they are very different people, they really worked as a team. They had this ambition. And we were not executive actors in the NSC running programs or something like that, that was not our job. That's not the NSC's job. But the NSC's job is to make sure that the interagency as a whole, but really, the agencies of the president and the executive branch, are working in some kind of harmony and that the policy they're carrying out is the president's policy. And in making that policy, all the agencies will come to the interagency process, to the deputies, to the principals, with their own pet rocks and their own way of doing things and their own schemes.

And the NSC's—in my viewpoint, the NSC staff's function and the national security advisor's function is you work for the president. And so you're the one who goes and says, I'm a State Department officer and many times in the Clinton administration on Haiti I said, "Well, that crap that they're bringing in here's no good," "The DOD people have the right viewpoint," or "The agency [Central Intelligence Agency] people are telling you what." I mean, we work for the president and this is a necessary function. And the vision that Condi and Steve had was we were process managers. You know, "Let a hundred flowers bloom." Well, Chairman Mao said let a hundred flowers bloom too, but he had the sort of brutal wisdom to actually chop most of them off at the end of the day. His decisions were not good ones. I'm not advocating that model.

But there was not that last function of—really there were not the two—there were not either of those functions. There was not the function of filtering the stuff and being an independent voice and the last voice listened to by the president and by the national



security advisor, the NSC staff. And on the other hand, we weren't really empowered that much to go to, to make sure that the agencies then delivered and did what had been decided. Very frequently, nothing was decided. It was remarkably indecisive. I thought the Republicans would be much better than the Democrats, and it was not so.

And so, the NSC was weak, and that I guess included—in the process terms—the national security advisor. My own personal viewpoint on Steve Hadley, who I also liked in perspective a lot, but who was very associated with Rumsfeld and the whole DOD, Wolfowitz, those people from the previous administration, was that he played the wrong role. Instead of being this independent arbiter as the deputy national security advisor—I didn't work with him when he moved up—he was really kind of a DOD guy. I mean he was always steering everything towards the DOD perspective, which was of course the nest of neo-cons [neo conservatives] as well, which I don't think Steve really was. But in a way he associated himself with them. And so, there was not a level playing field. And I think that the NSC function also is to guarantee a level playing field for the different agencies and viewpoints so that the president—well, maybe George Bush didn't make those kinds of decisions—but the president has a bigger role than most people think. He actually has to do stuff; you know, it's not just meeting the Boy Scout troops and things. And it was not a very good model of the NSC in my viewpoint. It was an unempowering—it was like you were unempowering who you wanted to be able to count on. So, it was unfortunate, I think.

*Q: What about the vice president?*

ROSSIN: Who knows?

*Q: I mean was he—*

ROSSIN: He was rarely seen.

*Q: He wasn't—*

ROSSIN: I think I saw him four times.

*Q: —off on his own—*

ROSSIN: I saw him—the only times I ever saw the Vice President [Dick Cheney]—I don't think I ever saw him—maybe I saw him once or twice in a Principal's Meeting, but I don't really remember. I mean, to be fair, I didn't see Al Gore that much in Principal's Meetings either. But there were weekly video conferences between the president and Tony Blair that were at like seven in the morning and then of course it was midday in London. And I saw Cheney—I went to those most of the time I was working at the NSC—I saw Cheney at those four or five times. Didn't say anything much. And I think that's maybe the only times I ever saw him.

*Q: Mm-hmm.*

ROSSIN: He was definitely, no doubt about it, he was a mysterious and, and from my perspective, you know, a malign actor. But I can't say too much about it because I didn't see him. I'd see Scooter Libby, who was his national security advisor. He was in the Principal's Meetings and played a traditional role. And Toria Nuland was his deputy national security advisor. Toria and I were good friends. So, I'd see Toria quite often. But in terms—I mean if you compare, again, with when I worked in the Clinton White House where Al Gore was the vice president and he had his national security advisors, they were an integral, visible, overt part of the process. Again, that was the difference.

*Q: Yeah. Well, in our government we do get these peculiarities of—you mentioned before, the—oh—Ollie North and all.*

ROSSIN: Well, every president can and should organize the White House the way it works best for him. I mean that it's not structured like the government department it's designed to be. But I would criticize the Bush administration model of the NSC and the interagency process.

*Q: Well, what—*

ROSSIN: And I would certainly criticize the weird Cheney role. I have said nothing new that hasn't been said by many people who know much more about it. But I agree with them.

*Q: Well, what sort of things were you involved in?*

ROSSIN: Well, during the time that I was there the major, really dynamic issue was this getting ahead of Bremer. And we did that. The substantive issues for most of the time related to the processing of the eighteen billion dollars and where that all was going for reconstruction assistance, the aid to the Iraqi police and army. And the politics of Iraq, working with people such as Chalabi and Ayad Allawi and all these different political actors. And it was a process. It was a process that was dominated by lots and lots and lots of deputies' needs to go over these issues that were indecisive. And let's have somebody come back and give another briefing with more PowerPoint slides. It was frustrating. It was *really* frustrating. It was a process that I felt like was killing me physically.

*Q: Well, how did you bring yourself up to speed with an extremely complex political situation?*

ROSSIN: That I knew absolutely nothing about.

*Q: That's been going on for five thousand years.*

ROSSIN: Yeah, that I knew absolutely nothing about when I came in. I mean when I—

*Q: But you've been in the Balkans, so—*

ROSSIN: Right, been in the Balkans, but it really didn't offer a lot. I mean except—the only thing that it offered was a certain sort of historical parallel because this was the other end of the Ottoman Empire. And there were some parallels in a sense between the Balkans and the Euphrates Valley, Ottoman legacy. But I really didn't know anything about Iraq.

I mean I remember very shortly after about the first week that I was in the job, I chaired a meeting or brought together a meeting of people at the DAS level and comparable from the different agencies, people whom I got to know well over the succeeding month. But not a single one of them I knew when I came in. I mean I really was coming from a different part of the world, and they were talking about a “Shia strategy” and a “Sunni strategy”; all of these things that were important at that time, trying to get the Sunnis to be less uncooperative, trying to figure out the relationship between Iran and the Shias, trying to get Ayatollah Sistani, who was the Shia leading figure, to be more cooperative proactively, which he never was. He never met Teri, wouldn't meet with Americans but there were second- and third-hand ways that they wound up getting to and from him, but it was not easy. And there was Muqtada al-Sadr, what to do about him? And I didn't know who any of these people were. I didn't. They were talking about Shia and Sunni strategies and I only had a vague understanding of the difference between Shias and Sunnis. And so, it was a very, very steep learning curve.

I was fortunate that I had a woman—I had three people working in the office on Iraq, and they were all very good. One of the guys had been in CPA [Coalition Provisional Authority] as a director in one of the departments there. He was an outside person, an academic. One of the people was an INR analyst who's back in INR now I think, who knew a lot about the region. And the third person was an Indian-American—she was probably my biggest educator. She'd been the Pakistani military analyst over in Langley when she was working on the Iraq issue, and she was extremely smart too. So, they introduced me to people. People like Philo Dibble—and Bill Burns at State who were the assistant secretary and the deputy assistant secretary. They were very kind and guided me along and, and liked me because I was able to insert some order into how the NSC process functioned. So, I was good for them and they were good for me. But I was good for them on process and they were good for me on substance. There's a difference. And we had a good relationship. And others, people out of the agency, the analysts themselves, but I wouldn't say, a year later, that I was an expert. I was never going to be Phebe Marr [a prominent American historian of modern Iraq with the Middle East Institute] or somebody like this who'd been working on Iraq their whole life. And I never pretended to be. You can't, some people do that and that's a mistake, but I knew where to go for the expertise. I knew who the experts were. I knew enough to be able to judge what was crap and what was maybe good. And, of course, what was sometimes too good. I mean people like Phebe, these academics, sometimes produce something that's too good for government work, you know, you're not trying to reinvent five thousand years of

history, you're trying to get from today to tomorrow with some kind of a reasonable approach. And in that sense, I think I did okay. But I was honest about it upfront.

When I interviewed with Steve [Hadley] and Condi [Rice], I said, "Look, you know, the only thing I know about Afghanistan and Iraq is I've had a couple of taxi drivers around here." And they said, That's great! They said, There's a guy, John Wolf, a very distinguished Foreign Service officer who had just been appointed as a special Israel envoy or something like that. And they said, Well, he didn't know anything about Israel, but he's doing a good job. So, we need some new thinking. And I said, "Well shit, you're certainly going to get new thinking from me because I haven't thought about this stuff much at all."

*Q: Mm-hmm.*

ROSSIN: And Condi and—they were very satisfied with the work that I did. They were sorry when I decided to leave and asked me to stay on longer than I did and then backed me for my next job. And I've seen Condi since and, you know, she's always very friendly. But I don't—I'm not sure that there weren't better people for the job than me. I think there probably were.

*Q: Well, why did you want to leave?*

ROSSIN: Because it was just such a grind—it was grinding. And because we had reached a certain stage where I could leave. We had reached a stage of accomplishing the handover. The original idea was to hand over power to the Iraqis from CPA at the end of 2005. That was Jerry's [Bremer] timeline, a further eighteen months from when we did. And that was clearly not tenable. It was just not—well, you see how Iraq is now. I mean what then was becoming apparent is now more than apparent. We don't even have a relationship with Iraq, I don't think. But it was clear we needed to hand over power to the Iraqis and we needed also, because with the insurgency emerging, we needed much more of an Iraqi hand in dealing with that. I mean it's their country. And so, then it became a process of designing that. And it was funny that the big question, which I found to be nonsense, the real big question was could—remember, people asked the question, was it possible to give partial sovereignty to the Iraqis, restored? Of course, they never lost their sovereignty in the first place. This was not Kosovo. And in the second place, the answer was no, legally speaking. I mean John Bellinger, who was the legal advisor, and others, all looked at it and said it's not really possible. I mean either a place is sovereign or it's not, so we had to make it fully sovereign.

And then the people at DOD in particular were worried that the Iraqis, the first thing they'd do when they got sovereignty in June of 2004 is that they would ask the American troops to leave. My argument was I don't think they'll do that because they'll be hanging from a lamppost on the day afterward. You know, eventually they did ask us to leave in point of fact, but it was several years later under completely different circumstances. So, this is what we did. And then we facilitated, we designed the process to include the

Transitional Administrative Law, to include other provisions that I don't remember now. And also, of course there was comparable—or a companion process of getting a resolution through the UN Security Council that legitimized and enshrined this whole transfer of authority and the terms under which we wanted it done. And I led that process with the British; my British counterparts and I led that transitional administrative process. So those were the two main things, finally.

*Q: Where'd you go?*

ROSSIN: After that year?

*Q: Yeah.*

ROSSIN: Sorry, less than a year. I retired. What happened was, when I had been deputy assistant secretary in those couple of months, the year had come of the American guy who was the deputy special representative of the secretary general in Kosovo. He's an American Foreign Service officer. The job was reserved for Americans—European. And the United States government wasn't really satisfied with the job that that guy was doing, and it fell to me as deputy assistant secretary to search around for somebody to replace him. I called lots and lots of people and nobody was interested. And finally, the secretary general just reappointed him because we weren't coming up with anybody. And it was fair enough. Well, the guy didn't do any better a job in the succeeding year, so again, I got a call from—

*Q: What seemed to be the problem?*

ROSSIN: He was just not very dynamic. It just wasn't going well in Kosovo. He just wasn't very communicative with the U.S. government, but really not only with the U.S. government, but with the Contact Group countries. He just wasn't a very dynamic guy. There just was a sense that he wasn't doing much work, to put it simply. And he wasn't bringing any dynamism or creativity to the job and things were not going well in Kosovo. There were big riots in March 2004 that nearly brought down the international presence as well as causing other problems in Kosovo. And they only solved themselves sometimes. They just stopped. Not because UNMIK [United Nations Mission in Kosovo] did anything and not because KFOR did anything either. So, there was a lot of unhappiness.

And so just after those March riots I was over at the NSC doing the Iraq thing, but I got a call from the person in EUR who was the desk officer. And he said, "Well, can we send you over the list of people that we've got as candidates so you can have a look at it and see what you think of them?" And I said, "Sure," and looked at it and I went back to him and said, "Well, I know most of these people and they're not the right profile for the job in my view. Here's the profile that you need from what I've seen of it, from when I was there. And these people don't match the profile of the ones that I know. So, you go back

to the drawing board and I wish you luck because I tried it last year and it didn't work out."

And then they came back to me about a month later and they asked me if I would be interested in doing it and I thought it over for a while. And I was really suffering. I mean I was physically dying, my wife said I was white at this NSC job. And I didn't feel like I was the, you know, I don't know what. So, then I talked to Marc [Grossman] and I talked to Beth Jones and they said, "Well, you know, if you want to do it that'd be great. We'd back you in New York," and all that. So, I finally decided to do it, and I decided to do it by retiring and being direct hire in the UN rather than being seconded by the U.S. government. Because I was ready to retire, a), and b) it was a lot more lucrative, frankly, to work for them, and c) I didn't want to have torn loyalties. So, if I was going to work for the UN, I didn't want to have obligations to the U.S. government. And all those reasons. And it was the right decision on every count.

In a way I regretted retiring. But you know, I worked twice at the NSC and I figured probably—what would be my next job? They might offer me to go as ambassador to Poland or Romania or something like that or I might even, someday, end up as an assistant secretary. I think I reasonably could have expected that. But those people didn't even get into the meetings that I was attending at the NSC. You know, at the end of the day it was good but it didn't matter that much. Do I regret it? Sometimes I do, sometimes I don't. Most of the time I think I don't; in fact, I know I don't.

*Q: Well—*

ROSSIN: So, I retired at the end of June, 2004 and indeed, you know, Marc [Grossman] went up to New York and told them obviously I was the only candidate the United States was going to put forward for the job. And I went up to New York and I interviewed with the secretary general and with most of the hierarchy. And that was fine, they didn't like being jammed with one person, but I was a good person and so they hired me for the job.

*Q: How long did the appointment last?*

ROSSIN: It was initially a one-year appointment. I worked in the end in Kosovo for a year and a half. And that was at the assistant secretary general level. And then I went—they sent me to Haiti and I was the deputy SRSG [special representative of the secretary general] for most of 2006. And then I left and I came back to Washington. And then I got hired by them again later. So.

*Q: How did you find the UN? I mean was this a strange country?*

ROSSIN: It's not a country at all, and that was one of the things I learned quickly. When I got out to Pristina I found that they did a daily report, they did a weekly report, and they didn't do—there was a requirement that nobody actually met, to do a monthly report. But they did do the daily report and a weekly report—and they were SITREP [situation



reports] kind of reports. And we would send in occasional code cables, as they call them, to New York for guidance on particular issues. We were at the government of Kosovo and there were a lot of legal issues that we needed guidance on. And so, I knew the political head of UNMIK [United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo]. He was a guy I'd known since I'd been there as the head of the U.S. Office. He'd been there the whole time. He was Russian and a very good guy. And I said to him, "Peter, well, why don't we send in more cables to New York, you know?" I mean thinking that, well, it was like an embassy and the State Department and we could do much more reporting; there was obviously potential. He said, "What good could *possibly* come from that?" And he turned out to be right.

New York gave you a very long leash. Missions were much more like AID missions where they were completely decentralized and New York had this attitude of except for legal guidance and daily reports, we'll let you know if we want something from you, but otherwise get out and do your job. And it worked out fine. They gave us most of the power. They decentralized hiring. We had a big budget. It was very decentralized.

*Q: Well, I would think an international staff would be very difficult to work with.*

ROSSIN: It's very difficult; it's a challenge—I won't say it's difficult, but it's very challenging. You have to be really adaptable. But it's also extremely rewarding. And I have to say, I think working for the UN was the highpoint of my professional career. You get all these people from all over the world, they all have their bureaucratic cultures, they all have their national cultures. They bring very different ways of doing things and ways of perceiving things and ideas for how you approach a problem that are completely different. You know, Indians or Russians or Americans or French or Japanese. And if you can find a way, as we were successful at doing in my time in UNMIK, if you can find a way to draw the best out of these people, if you try to synergize that kind of a phenomenon, you can really get a lot done. And it's just a joy to do.

Sometimes it doesn't work so well. I mean the Indians, for example—a lot of the Indian staff that we had as regional administrators and so forth in Kosovo, these were people who had worked in the Indian Administrative Service, which is the highest of their multiple civil services. It's like three thousand of them in the whole country of India of nine hundred million people. These are people who administer states from the central government, besides the minister of Interior representative. I had a guy who had been a district officer. He was fighting six counterinsurgencies at one time in a state of fifty million people, not to mention dealing with normal issues. And then he's there as a UN representative in the town of Pristina, which has four hundred thousand people, and he was very acerbic because he had been running a place that was bigger than most foreign countries, and six wars at one time, so it was challenging but it was worthwhile. You could get so much done with these people, they were so valuable.

*Q: Well, what was the situation in Kosovo?*

ROSSIN: When I went back there in 2004?

*Q: Yeah.*

ROSSIN: It was after these riots had taken place so there was—I got out there in September, they had been in March. Their legacy was all around you. The whole international presence had failed and collapsed, almost. And there was a lot of—it's funny, but they kind of blew through it like a thunderstorm. You know, an hour later the sun is out again but again, they left their legacy in terms of all these branches on the ground and so forth. And there was a lot of clean-up to do. There was a lot of clean-up to do in the mission. I went out with the new SRSG at the same time. The special representative that I went out with was a Danish guy named Soren Jessen-Petersen, who was a good leader. But his predecessor had quit. He had never gotten a grasp on Kosovo at all. He was a former president of Finland. And I had taken the place of this American guy who, again, I found out spent a lot of time sleeping on the sofa. And so there was a lot of work to do within the mission to synergize the mission, to de-stovepipe the mission, to get it working efficiently, and to make it work in the service of Kosovo, in the service of the mandate that we had been sent out there to do, which really was not the case when we got there.

It was a period where we were supposed to be building institutions of Kosovo governance and handing over power to them and then assisting them from a period where, initially, the UN mission had actually done the executive work and still had the executive powers. And there were a lot of people who didn't want to give it up. And our job was to make them give it up, and we had to make them work with the Kosovars and respect them as people, and we were more or less successful in doing that. And the Kosovars came around. I mean their attitude changed towards UNMIK and they became more forward-looking. And we set in process—we set in trained dynamics that led into the eventual, well, independence of Kosovo. That was not our mission, wasn't our goal to decide what that outcome would be. But it led to that—I mean a self-standing basis, the place functions. So, it was a lot of hard work; it was a lot of fun.

*Q: Well, how did you find the Kosovars?*

ROSSIN: Well, I knew them. I'd been out there before as the head of the U.S. Office. I found them to be willing to work with us, found them to be proud, found them to be proud in that kind of way that they know that they really don't have the ability to do what they really want to do, and they know that they're reliant on these foreigners, and they like having it, and they resent it at the same time. You run into those situations.

And also, in a particular situation where we were actually the government of Kosovo, we were governing this country or this province or whatever it was, and they wanted more all the time. It was—in a sense like kids evolving into teenagers and straining at the apron strings. And that's normal, that happens everywhere. Basically, we found them to be good partners to work with. They were incapable in a lot of ways and they're still

incapable in a lot of ways, but if you worked with them positively, they were willing to work positively with you.

And there were several dynamics that took place during the time that I was there that both taught us that and showed us how to do it. One of the things: when I first arrived, there were three laws that came across my desk, and I was the acting special representative when this happened, they were the law on cattle, the law on construction, and the law on cinematography. And I signed all these laws after talking a little bit to people and understanding what they were about. And then I went out to dinner with a woman who had been one of our interpreters in the U.S. Office, and in the meantime, she had gotten her architecture degree and she was an architect in Pristina there. And I went out to dinner with her and she was *so* happy and so grateful to me for having signed the law on construction because, as an architect, she said, “We needed a regime and this is a decent regime,”—it had been drafted by the Kosovo Assembly and we had made a few amendments to it— “to govern this area, which is a part of a country.” A society needs this sort of legal regime. And what I realized from having dinner with her was that the previous UNMIK administrations had set the bar too high about what concerned them. They just didn’t deal—they saw the law on cattle and they just didn’t care. It didn’t have to do with the final status of Kosovo, it didn’t have to do with Serbs, it didn’t—but it was important to Kosovo.

We—as much as we govern— Yeah, American diplomats going around all the time preaching to all these countries about how they have to have good governance. Well, now it was our time. We had to give, as internationals, we owed good governance to the people of Kosovo. And the mission had not been giving good governance because it set the bar too high when deciding what merited their attention. So, I lowered that bar, I lowered it a lot, and we started worrying about a lot more stuff, and it was a lot more work as a result. You can imagine as you go down the chain, the work increases exponentially. But we did it and we set up ways of doing it. I imported actual State Department ways of interagency clearances and all the rest of that stuff, which had not existed in the mission; broke down the stove-piping that existed, and it allowed us to handle a lot more stuff. We gave better governance to the Kosovars, they saw it and they liked it, and it increased our authority with them in a positive way.

We also facilitated their relationship with the European Union, which had a very active shadow stabilization and association program going on in ways that worked out well. And at the same time—and this was more not my work, I was the internal guy for Kosovo, so I did the administration of Kosovo—the special representative did the diplomacy about status and so forth. But what we were doing laid the basis for a positive recommendation in 2000—end of 2005 that there should be progress, that we should begin the process of final status determination, which had been hitherto some distant vague process. The Kosovars wanted to move forward on this, and they understood it couldn’t happen from one day to the next. But we were able in a legitimate way, by a recommendation to the secretary general, to make the recommendation and have it accepted, that final status process should begin, that it was legitimate to do so, and that

there was a foundation for it in terms of the progress of Kosovo itself. And that was accepted, and you had the Ahtisaari process [Ahtisaari was the UN special envoy for Kosovo] that started at the end of 2005 and early 2006, which eventually led to a lot of tribulations to the final status of the independence declaration of Kosovo. So, we were successful in that regard. We were regarded by Kosovars, and I think we were regarded by internationals certainly, as having turned a corner and being a turnaround team, if you will, and having set things on the right track.

*Q: Let's talk about the neighbors, Serbia first.*

ROSSIN: Completely uncooperative. Now Serbia loves UNMIK. If you see things now after independence, they worship UNMIK. It's their 1244 [United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244, adopted on June 10, 1999, authorized an international civil and military presence in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and established the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo]. Resolution 1244 is their great anchor and it's also their little hook-in still, even though it's really overtaken by a—

*Q: Resolution 1244—*

ROSSIN: Resolution 1244 was the UN resolution that structured the international presence in Kosovo, set the basis for the political process that would decide the juridical status of Kosovo, but—unlike most UN solutions—was not written with an automatic expiration clause that needed renewal by the security council, but was rather written by an “It will go on until the Security Council decides to stop it” clause. That was initially our idea because we were afraid that the Russians would kill it too quickly, its first renewal. Eventually, the Russians became the ones to prevent the expiration of 1244 because they did not like the fact that the 1244 process led to the independence of Kosovo, which they didn't accept. And so, they keep 1244 on the books in order to keep it, if you will, technically speaking in limbo. But Serbia still continues to be completely uncooperative on Kosovo. Serbia's come a long way since Milosevic, but I would say that with the inception of using armed force in Kosovo, they haven't changed their viewpoint on Kosovo at all. They're exactly the same thing. They're completely uncooperative. They were completely uncooperative with us, and now in different ways they're completely uncooperative with the international community as it is now structured dealing with Kosovo. They blockaded everything.

*Q: How about Sremska Mitrovica?*

ROSSIN: Well, Mitrovica and the northern part—

*Q: It's called Mitrovica now.*

ROSSIN: It's called—in its day it was called Kosovska Mitrovica. That's what it was called in the old days.

*Q: Well, back in—*

ROSSIN: The Serbs called it *Serbska Mitrovica* at times because they were trying to emphasize that it was part of Serbia. That was part of Milosevic's thing in even the preceding period. Now it's just *Mitrovica* in any case. Well, it's still—I mean there's also a *Sremska Mitrovica* in *Vojvodina*. *Mitrovica*, it has some meaning, I don't know what it is. But in any case, we all call it *Mitrovica*, and it's the boundary; it straddles the boundary between Northern Kosovo and the rest. Northern Kosovo is mostly Serbs, but not entirely, I found out. It has turned into a little bit of a *Transnistria* [*Transnistria* or *Transdnistria*, officially the *Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic*, is a breakaway state in the narrow strip of land between the river *Dniester* and the Ukrainian border that is internationally recognized as part of *Moldova*] kind of a phenomenon, it's this little rump criminal, mostly criminal elements controlling it.

With Boris Tadić's government in Serbia, Belgrade I think had limited control over what went on there because the Northern Serbs were not progressive, and the DS [the Democratic Party of Serbia] party was progressive. We'll see what happens with the new elections that are taking place. They were—if you know, if this government tries to make progress on Kosovo, they won't get any cooperation either from the north. If they don't make progress on Kosovo, they'll find themselves more welcome in the north. But it's a frozen conflict situation and nobody's ever really known what to do about it. I think it should have been dealt with the way Eastern Slavonia was dealt with, with some kind of a UN mission of its own that had a mission to either integrate it into Kosovo, but that wouldn't be politically possible, reintegrate it into Serbia, but that wouldn't be politic—it's hard. There are no easy answers to it. But it's not a threat to the future of Kosovo, it's not a threat to the region. It's just akin to a pimple that won't heal, basically, and that's all it is. People over dramatize it a lot. It's not worth as much attention as it gets. So Serbia's completely uncooperative.

Macedonia was our gateway to the world for the most part, because the transport lanes, for most of the time, to Albania were really difficult. Macedonians can be okay to deal with, basically they're okay to deal with on Kosovo. They worked on a border disagreement after Kosovo became independent, and day-to-day things functioned fine. They don't really like Kosovo but they don't really like themselves either. And they have difficulty with state identity that the Greeks, with this name issue, have exacerbated. But Macedonia goes along. And in terms of Kosovo dealing with it goes along okay.

The biggest difficulty is that Macedonia has its own Albanian community that has a very small, very violent element in it. And every time those people do something in Macedonia they run across the border into Kosovo, and then you have to track them down and that becomes a periodic irritant. And there's something going on with that right now. We dealt with it a couple of times when I was in Kosovo, but we managed it, it was hard to do but we dealt with it. So, the Macedonians are okay.

The Albanians are of course the big friends of Kosovo and indeed see themselves as Kosovo's boosters and advocates in a world where Kosovo as a country is a controversial proposition and Albania of course is not. And so, they advance Kosovo's interests everywhere they can. And they're the ones to—the Kosovars are not in a position to say, "Screw you," or, "We're not going to cooperate," or something like that on some issue because they're too dependent. But the Albanians can do it for them and they do periodically. And you have to enjoy it when they do it. It's a little weird, though, because the political parties in Albania think they have allies among political parties in Kosovo and vice versa, when really there's not a lot in common between Albanian politics and Kosovo politics, or interests or issues. And so, it can get a little bit mixed up sometimes. But Albania is basically a big booster for Kosovo and they've been building their own transport routes that allow it to become more of an export route for Kosovo, which is important.

*Q: Were the Greeks cutting off Macedonia?*

ROSSIN: The Greeks were the biggest investors in Macedonia. It's such a phony—it's such a phony. We see Greece in a pretty unattractive light now on a lot of fronts.

*Q: Yeah.*

ROSSIN: But you know, I mean I saw something on the Greek president's website the other day as they were preparing for the NATO Chicago Summit with all this, *all this* stuff going on, Greece is in a meeting between the political party leaders, including this—whatever this guy, the left, far left guy who doesn't want to stick with the euro—wants to stick with the euro, but for free. But they could all agree on one thing. When they were in Chicago, if Macedonia came up they would veto it. You know, that kind of thing. It's totally unworthy—what kind of a country is this that thinks that something like Macedonia is a threat to it? It's a real disgrace and it's really soured Macedonia. I mean Macedonia itself, being put into this unpleasant kind of limbo that it's in about NATO membership, about EU membership, all of the progress that the country was making against all odds, has been soured. And you see this manifesting itself with the Macedonian political authorities, first of all becoming more extremist about the issue. They're putting up statues of Alexander the Great everywhere, which is doing nothing but sticking a stick in Greece's eye. But it's the Greeks' fault. I mean, when you have an adult and you have a child and they're fighting, it's the adult's fault.

*Q: Yeah.*

ROSSIN: And that's it. I mean there's just no two ways about it. And it's a disgrace—well, maybe Greece is not an adult. I mean Greece is just a Balkan country.

*Q: Yeah. I've served four years in Greece and five years in Serbia.*

ROSSIN: Mm-hmm.



*Q: So, I've had a founding in—*

ROSSIN: Yeah. Greeks, you know, in day-to-day stuff in Kosovo—they don't recognize Kosovo's independence. But they play a very constructive role in—or they have played—I wouldn't know how it is with what's going on lately in Greece, but they were playing a very constructive role in Kosovo. Even so, I mean for a non-recognizer they were making much more of a contribution than most of the recognizing countries.

*Q: Well, were the Russians stirring up the pot when you were there?*

ROSSIN: Not especially, no. They were stirring up—they were keeping the pot from settling down by not recognizing Kosovo, by backing Serbia, no matter what. I think that they're—most of the remaining UNMIK team in the north of Kosovo were Russians. And I came to the conclusion that they're probably like a stay-behind net or something like that, you know. But they didn't really do much harm either. There just wasn't really much scope for them to do a lot of harm. But they block everything because they back Serbia no matter what. They're more Serb than the Serbs are.

*Q: Yeah.*

ROSSIN: And the Russian ambassador in Serbia over the last several years, I think still the current Russian ambassador, is completely blatant about his involvement in Serbian politics on the Kosovo issue. He was attending rallies of the opposition candidates, he was making public statements about Serbia can't do this. So, I think that if you were an American diplomat in Washington, it would be a race for Washington or the local country to throw you out first. Because even if we interfere, we do it—

*Q: Yeah.*

ROSSIN: —in a more sophisticated way. But this was blatant kind of stuff and it was an outrage. But I mean it was all, I mean we've seen it in other places too. We had one of these guys up in Brussels when I was there. The days of Russia being our new friend are long since gone, as we know. So, the reset's over.

*Q: Montenegro.*

ROSSIN: Montenegro. Montenegro's attitude towards Kosovo was purely pragmatic. When I was there all that time back—I mean when I was going there in the 1990s with Secretary Albright and Bob Gelbard and with Djukanovic [Milo] being the president of Montenegro, which was becoming more and more separate from Serbia the whole time, long before it became finally independent, and whether it was before or after independence, they were totally pragmatic about Kosovo. It was all related in the lead-up to Montenegrin independence, how would it affect their status. One of the things, for example, was one of the formulae that would be put forward by internationals who didn't

want to see Kosovo become independent, some kind of a new stipulation for the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia where Kosovo would be given its due representation in Belgrade institutions. Well, the problem for Montenegro is that Kosovo has three times as many people in it as Montenegro does. And so, if Kosovo got all those seats in whatever imaginary FRY [Federal Republic of Yugoslavia] there was going to be, it would disadvantage Montenegro, which had more than its share of seats because Kosovo was not represented at all.

*Q: Yeah.*

ROSSIN: So, they weren't keen on that. Everything was pragmatic for them. After they became independent and when Kosovo became independent, and after a certain delay to let things settle down, Montenegro recognized Kosovo. But it's kept a little bit of a distance. Technically what they argue for is that Kosovo has to recognize Kosovo's Montenegrin ethnic minority as a community within Kosovo, because there are these ethnic communities within Kosovo. I don't know whether Kosovo's done that yet, but I don't think Montenegro really cares about those people, and those people don't identify themselves as Montenegrins, particularly. But it's a way for them to keep a little distance so they could manage the Belgrade-Pristina-U.S.-EU thing, they can modulate that. So, they're totally practical. They work well with the Kosovars. Kosovars visit them, official visits. They come to Pristina. They do cooperative things. They delineated their border area in a non-confrontational way and things of that nature. All these borders needed delineations.

*Q: Were the Iranians messing around there?*

ROSSIN: The Romanians?

*Q: The Iranians.*

ROSSIN: The Iranians? No.

*Q: I mean they didn't—*

ROSSIN: Initially—

*Q: I know it was playing the Islamic—*

ROSSIN: Yeah, and in 1999 when I was the head of the U.S. Office there, at a certain point we saw Iranians come down from Bosnia to poke around and see if they could do something, but the Kosovars were completely unreceptive. There was no scope for them to do anything in Kosovo, and so they didn't. There's no presence at all. One time when I was in UNMIK in maybe late 2005 the Iranian ambassador came down from Belgrade and stopped by my office. I gave him a briefing at the UN; he's a member of the UN too.

And it was fine and he was just like any other foreign ambassador visiting. There was no other—nothing else went on.

So, you know, a lot of them would come down and get briefed and write a cable, I suppose back home. Initially, the Iranians, when I was working in Kosovo during the war in 1998, one of the things that we watched was a lot of Iranian 747's [aircraft] landing in Tirana, and it seemed like they might be bringing arms or something like that. That's what it looked like. But we talked with the KLA and they said they didn't want to have anything to do, and it was clear that they weren't having anything to do with that, for the simple reason that they loved the United States and they knew that messing around with Iran was not a way to the heart of the United States. They had their priorities straight.

The other thing that we saw in 1998 and 1999, as Kosovo so to speak opened up, was a movement of some al Qaeda figures who had been operating in Albania into Kosovo. And that lasted for the first few months that I was in Kosovo as the head of the U.S. Office. We had some issues with that, but then they all left. First of all, the Kosovars were not receptive to anti-Americans of any sort, and second, other opportunities for al Qaeda types opened up in Chechnya and elsewhere. They just left. So that solved itself in a way. So no, we didn't have those kinds of—nowadays, there's a little bit of reporting and some signs of a very small kind of radical Islamic influence, but mostly self-created, not from external actors in Kosovo.

You know, there's always going to be a certain number of people who want to be radical Islam. They're Muslim and then they want to be radical. That's normal. And those people are generally, an eye is kept on them. And it's affected a couple of things. There was an attack that took place, I think in Frankfurt, where some Kosovar-Albanian shot some American soldiers going through the airport. And he was a guy who might have picked this stuff up in Kosovo, but this is individuals and no more. And it doesn't have any resonance in this society.

*Q: Were there any problems with protecting the monasteries? Because they've got some beautiful monasteries.*

ROSSIN: They do. There were some issues with it. Well, in the immediate postwar period there were a lot of Serb Orthodox Churches. There were a lot of churches and a lot of them were not historic places. They were ugly in fact, they were recent—that got destroyed. And Bishop Artemije, who was the head of the orthodox church in Kosovo at the time, was going on about this. I personally had the impression that some of those churches may have been destroyed by the Serb forces in order to create an issue, because they certainly didn't care about the Serb Orthodox Churches in Kosovo or Serbs in Kosovo, but that was just my guess because the way they were destroying them just was a little bit too sophisticated.

Later on, there were a number of Serbian churches that again were burnt in the 2004 riots. And that was when it became an ongoing issue. And we in UNMIK, and also the U.S.

embassy, office and embassy in Pristina, spent a lot of time managing this process. It became a vehicle for constructive cooperation in one way, but because there were these churches to be reconstructed after the destruction of the 2004 riots and there was a reconstruction implementation commission that was set up that included both official Kosovars and official Serbs as well as church officials to manage these projects for reconstruction that took place. And that was one of the few official places where they all sat down at the table. Over time there was a change in the Orthodox Church leadership in Kosovo. Artemije, who is a hardliner and tied up with hardline elements in Belgrade, eventually became discredited and discredited himself. A) he just became unbalanced; and, b) those who were around him were found to be engaged in—what do you call it—corrupt use of reconstruction funds that they were receiving. Artemije's brother was a construction contractor in Belgrade and they were steering funds, and this eventually came to light in a church investigation. And Artemije was removed from office by the Senate. The more progressive bishop Teodosije was made the bishop of Kosovo. The old patriarch at Belgrade died. The new one who came in was, I wouldn't say more progressive, but he was more modern in a way. And the net effect of this was that you could work with the Orthodox Church. They knew they needed you and they were willing to work with you and therefore you could work with them because you really shared the same goals. And so, working with Artemije or with Bishop Teodosije and with the church became a more fruitful experience, although it was never easy. And therefore, the internationals and Kosovo itself was able to become more effective in protecting the monasteries.

The trouble with the monasteries and with the Serbians and the Serbian Orthodox Church is still that they considered that Kosovar—that Albanians are a minority within the province of Serbia called Kosovo. And Kosovars consider that they're the majority within Kosovo and that the Serbs are the minority. So, if you start off with the Serbs not even acknowledging the fact that they're the minority, and taking this attitude that the vast majority of the people living in Kosovo plus most of the internationals don't buy, you're starting with a very difficult basis to work.

*Q: Yeah.*

ROSSIN: And you know, fundamental basis. But practical ways of doing this have evolved. We put a lot of work into that when I was in Kosovo, three times that I was in Kosovo. And the United States has taken up—when UNMIK stopped functioning in its institutional way at the time. At the time when Kosovo declared independence and our job was finished, the U.S. embassy pretty much took up the role of managing all those processes, and did a good job of it. And it's been managed. And it's been a balancing act. I mean you like people such as Bishop Teodosije because they're religious people. At the end of the day they would rather be praying, they're not politicians. They're monks. I mean they really are. But, a) the Serb Orthodox Church is the national church of Serbia and so inherently is a political character; and, b) they're in an isolated situation down there and they're under a lot of pressure from a lot of different actors. And they do a reasonable job of maneuvering through it.

*Q: Do you ever go over the Cakor Pass?*

ROSSIN: No. Is that the one to Montenegro?

*Q: Yeah.*

ROSSIN: No, I never did drive on that road. I heard that it was a hair-raiser.

*Q: I went there on a consular trip all by myself, traveling in this big car. And the gas pedal stuck.*

ROSSIN: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. Stuck down or stuck up?

*Q: Stuck down!*

ROSSIN: That's not good.

*Q: I know. And I sort of stopped, you know, and so I kept—I was able to get to the bottom. And what happened was that the braces for the engine had broken or something.*

ROSSIN: Ah yeah.

*Q: And I got a guy in a field who brought out his welding kit and welded—*

ROSSIN: Oh yeah. Well, you were probably lucky you didn't drive over some cliff or something.

*Q: Yeah.*

ROSSIN: I drove—when I was working for NATO I went to Montenegro, in 2009 I guess it was on a speaking trip, because Montenegro as a country was moving towards membership in NATO. But Montenegrins as people, particularly in the north where they're more Serbian, they identify themselves as Serbians and they're members of Serbian political parties. They don't really like NATO. And it was not a friendly audience up there. But you drive up this enormous—I don't know if you drove around Montenegro, but there's this big kind of Grand Canyon that goes up the middle of the country and it goes way—

*Q: I never got to it.*

ROSSIN: It was remarkable. And of course, we're driving back to Podgorica and to the airport because I was flying out, with the police escort and the blue light going on at ninety miles an hour on a road that, you know, you should have been driving thirty on. I mean it was seriously over, over the limit.

*Q: Yeah.*

ROSSIN: It was a white-knuckle ride.

*Q: Okay, well then you had left there when?*

ROSSIN: So, I went to Kosovo in September 2004 for this UN assignment. I left there in February 2006. And I went home for a little while and then I went to my new assignment with the UN, which was as—the same job—the deputy special representative in MINUSTAH [United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti], which is the UN mission in Haiti, and this was a completely different kind of mission, completely different set of challenges.

Obviously, Kosovo and Haiti are not the same thing. But also, it wasn't a situation—I mean Haiti is a country, it's a sovereign country even if its government doesn't function very well. And the mission had a different mandate. It was mostly security, getting rid of the criminal gangs, and also institution building in Haiti: police and police force building, local administration, and so forth. And I was the deputy special representative there for six months, and it was also a bit of a turnaround period in that mission. There was a change of special representatives while I was there. There was a Chilean former foreign minister who left, and a Guatemalan former foreign minister who arrived who was much better, the Guatemalan was much better than the Chilean, in my view.

The mission—I was the deputy so I was the chief operating officer, if you will, in this big mission: five-hundred-million-dollar budget, ten thousand troops, a thousand police, it was a big mission. UN missions are big. The Chilean, who was the special representative, rarely worked in the office, he worked at his house. And he had two or three things that he did and the rest of the mission was just adrift. So, my job, my assignment if I chose to accept it, which I did, as I defined it, was basically to try and create a functioning mission where everybody was getting attention, guidance, and what they needed. And that was something I was largely able to accomplish, first on my own, and then when the new SRSG [special representative of the secretary general] showed up he also took a more expansive mission interest in his job and not just one or two things. And so, by the time we left, the justice element, for example, which was assistance to try and build a Haitian justice system that functioned, the police element, the emergency services element which became important during the earthquake and so forth, were functioning much better than I—

*Q: Were you there during the earthquake?*

ROSSIN: No, no, this was during 2006. The earthquake was in the beginning of 2010. So, I was long gone.

*Q: What was the situation in Haiti when you arrived?*



ROSSIN: It was very tenuous. You couldn't move around freely in large parts of Port-au-Prince and the country because of the activities of criminal gangs. There's a lot of slums in Port-au-Prince, lots of Port-au-Prince slums. And they all had these violent gangs in them that were into kidnapping foreigners—well, Haitians and foreigners, but foreigners too. And for one thing, from the airport you had to go through these places just to get to the rest of the city. So, there were a lot of kidnappings that had been taking place. They had started to die off after the election that took place right before I got there when René Préval had been elected as president in a situation that was a little bit dodgy, but it was accepted, and the amount of gang kidnappings had kind of started to die off, but not very much. Préval was not yet in office.

I arrived there in the interregnum between this contested council that there was, and then him. He had succeeded the famous President Aristide, who had in his second term gotten himself thrown out of Haiti. As it happened, I was there in his first term in the 1990s. And Aristide supporters were there making trouble. There were a lot of issues. It was all very, very unstable.

And of course, underneath it was the complete rot of Haitian society, of Haitian governance, of the country's physical infrastructure, which included the only way you could move around the country. I worked there in the 1980s; I worked there in the 1990s, I had driven around in the 2000s. In 2006 really the only way you could get anywhere was to fly by helicopter out of Port-au-Prince. Either you risked being robbed by highwaymen in the places where the roads did function, or the roads had simply disappeared and you couldn't get anywhere without flying. So, we flew around in helicopters all the time. We had a lot of helicopters in the mission and we needed them, and we had a fixed-wing aircraft because we had to move people around the country. It was extremely difficult to operate in that country. We had ten field offices, and sustaining them was—just physically sustaining life in those places was a real challenge. We had to ship in food, there was no electricity whatsoever in those places, things of that nature. So, it had really deteriorated. The ministries mostly didn't function. The country—the prisoners were, there were these human rights atrocities. I mean human rights is an issue in Haiti every day in every way. It's not a discrete set of issues like it is in a lot of countries. Haiti itself is just like a human rights violation every day, but it's not something that we can go in there and solve very easily or anybody else can, and large amounts of resources over the years have gone into it to very little effect.

When I was there the UN Headquarters, the one which collapsed in the earthquake, was this hotel on a ridge, and off my balcony which was—my office had a balcony—you could look out over pretty much all of Port-au-Prince. And I remember at one point somebody was in my office telling me about how they had given, the international community was giving like a billion dollars a day to Haiti and it was really effective. And I took them out on the balcony and I said, "Give me a break. Where are the freeways? Where's the golden dome of Kubla Khan down here with a billion dollars?" But there really were donations of a billion dollars. It just somehow soaked into the ground like one

of those waterfalls in the desert where the water just goes into the sand. I mean it was—it's a great sum of money. I mean everybody goes there with their good ideas that aren't, and they all waste their money.

We were able to make some progress during the time I was there. Préval came in. He was extreme. He was a person of surprising goodwill given the fact that he had been Aristide's prime minister but he actually had changed. I think Aristide had taken out after him because he had already become a rival. And that had changed his perspective into a more constructive one. But getting him to do anything—he's a very opaque person—and understanding what he was thinking, figuring out how to influence him to actually do something, and then of course get his government to do it, there was no part of the Haitian government that functioned, was extremely difficult. But we were able to make some progress on that. And more progress I think was being made after I left, from all that I saw, up until the time of the earthquake, which set everything back in terms of, first of all, getting rid of the gangs. I mean we—during the time I was there we conceptualized and began to run a series of sweeps through slums, you know, making—

*Q:*—

ROSSIN: The Brazil—our military and police. Mostly Brazilian military and Chinese police. We had Chinese riot police there and the—had our foreign police units. And they were mainly the ones who—I mean basically they create, certain—in the different slums go from one side to the other, either drive out in most cases or occasionally kill off the gang members that were there and then establish a continuing presence, and then move on and do it again and again. And that process, which only began in the period I was there [I left in September 2006] was pursued by the next deputy special representative, by the Brazilians and by the mission, and eventually succeeded in pretty much cleaning out all the slums in Port-au-Prince of these gangs. So it was a successful effort.

We never really succeeded in getting Préval to reach out. He was a little like the Croatian politicians that I mentioned. Although he was extremely popular, getting him to go into the area, into Port-au-Prince and do a walkaround and exploit this popularity and maintain it was extremely difficult. But we did finally get him to do a walkaround in an area of the—, which we thought was safe enough for him. In some of these areas there were shootings, we wouldn't encourage him to go there and get shot. We wouldn't go there ourselves and get shot. But there were some that were marginal and you could do it and we did it and it was a complete success. I walked around with him and it was a complete success. But he never did it again. (laughs) So, go figure. He was a very mysterious individual. But he's the first president in Haiti's history who is alive after leaving office and still in Haiti. So, he's neither exiled nor dead at the end of his term, and that's in fact a historic achievement. And in fact, he's done it twice now. Every other one—every other president of Haiti has been dead or in exile at the end of their term in office. And there have been many of them. So, he's—in the end he burnt out, I understand. Now the president of Haiti, this popular singer named Michel Martelly, has

not done a very good job from what I'm told by people who go down there now. But I don't follow it that closely now. I did my duty.

*Q: What was happening to the money?*

ROSSIN: Don't know. I mean in a sense what's always been the case in Haiti and I think was the case then too, because I went to the World Bank. I visited the World Bank here, I went to different donor agencies, there were conferences. But it's really a classic—since you don't have a government that can really administer the money, money is not—It's the same situation in the way it pertains in Afghanistan, but it's done in Afghanistan, like 80 percent of the international money does not flow through the Afghan budget and through the Afghan government. It's done in direct aid projects, so different donor sorts. It's not a good thing. I mean you have to accept that you're going to lose some money if you're going to give assistance in these places. But building up the capability of the government, the local government to handle this kind of stuff is integral to building the nation that is going to be self-sustaining after you're gone. You can't have—there's a business, by the way, there's a lot of people who make money by *not* doing that. All these aid agencies are populated by people who make money by doing it themselves rather than empowering and teaching the locals to do it, and that's a big problem. In Afghanistan, it's one kind of a problem. It's a bad problem. It's something that years ago shouldn't have been taking place. But that's Afghanistan; we're not talking about it.

In the case of Haiti, there really isn't much scope for using the local—we still in my time there, there really wasn't much scope for—it was corruption and those kinds of things. But mostly it was just not. The ministry was inane, there was nobody there. I really felt sorry for Préval. We would sit in a room with ten of his officials and that was more than the number of competent people he had to count on. Some of those people were not competent. It was really a small group. You really had to—your heart went out to the guy. If you're going to try and do the right thing it was just too small. And so, you had all these agencies. You had church groups and everybody. They're so close to the United States. Oh, what a blessing that is! And I think that just gets sunk into projects, you know, that are the pet projects, the Flavor of the Month projects, for international aid, whether they're building local administrative capability or building the electrical infrastructure. The international community shifts between big projects and small projects. All I know is that lots and lots of money went into Haiti and you don't see a heck a lot of it there to show for it.

Electricity was always an issue when I was in Kosovo. There was one big electric power plant, but it was old and very low in imports—sometimes they could export, sometimes they could import. They were in the larger Balkans net and all the rest of that stuff. And I learned a lot about electricity when I was in Kosovo. Then when I went to Haiti I was interested in electricity because the power was constantly going off. So, I inquired around to find out how it ran. There's no national net in Haiti. There are only some municipalities that happen to have local nets. There's a hydroelectric dam that was built during Francois Duvalier's period, but it only functions for part of the year when there's

water in it. The whole country was at generating capacity in 2006 and I'm sure it's not more now. It was thirty megawatts. Thirty megawatts was the small generator at the Kosovo power plant that was mostly run to ignite the other turbines. It was not a turbine you actually ran, it was the auxiliary turbine. That was the whole generator—and that was split up in Haiti among the different municipal areas. It was really primitive. I mean they ran these assembly industries there, which fluctuated even during—the—people are quite resilient about those kinds of things. But there's a limit when there's only thirty megawatts of electricity and it's sporadically available. So, a lot of money's gone into it and I don't know where it's all gone. And lots of good people have tried to do work there too, but nothing to show for it.

*Q: Did you get involved in trying to keep people from migrating in ships to—*

ROSSIN: No, that was not a function of the United Nations. When I worked there for the United States in the 1980s I was involved in that, but I'm sure I discussed it at the time I was talking about that.

*Q: Yeah.*

ROSSIN: But no, that was not a function of the United Nations. In that period in 2006 I had the impression it was not quite such a large phenomenon as it had been at other points in time. The high point was when I was working in the NSC in the 1990s and we had a big outflow from Haiti. When I was there in the 1980s it was a constant low-level outflow. I think in the 2000s it was actually lower, but from what I heard from the U.S. embassy—from what you could see from your window down to the dock, because the coast guard cutters would come in with the people, there didn't seem to be coast guard cutters coming in as often. So, it's a constant phenomenon, it's always going to be the case. But it's a very sad and dangerous phenomenon and a lot of people lose their lives doing it. It's a big business for those who do it. But I think also—maybe it's also become less common because so much more drug monitoring by the United States is shifted over to the Eastern Caribbean, that area gets much more attention now.

*Q: Was there any contact with the Dominican Republic?*

ROSSIN: Yeah, we had a lot of contact with the Dominican Republic. It's the neighboring country, although they're two different worlds on the same island. The Dominicans tried to play a constructive role, I would say, in Haiti. Although they're dominated by dislike of Haiti, fear of Haiti in a way, fear of the demographic imbalance, fear of just a primitive place overrunning their western frontier. But they try to, as political actors they tried to play a positive role with a group of friends of Haiti and advocating for international support for Haiti. That was about it. I mean they didn't have a huge amount to offer, concrete. They have their own issues in the Dominican Republic. It's not a rich country. And they had to deal with themselves. But on the diplomatic front they were helpful.

*Q: Well, tell me. What was the attitude of dealing with this access, or whatever you want to call in it, in America? It's been a poor—*

ROSSIN: Well, it's not like any other country in the western hemisphere either. I mean it's not a Latin American country, it's not a Caribbean—I mean the Eastern Caribbean countries are different from Haiti. It really is unique. It's like an African country, but I saw recently where apparently Haiti was going to apply for observer status or something in the African Union, which made sense in some ways because it's like an African country, but it's not really that, either. It's just Haiti. I mean it's just what it is, it's unique. And it's uniquely poor, and it's uniquely miserable, and it's uniquely mal-fusion, and it's uniquely troubled. And it's always gotten a lot of attention, but there's very little to show for it. And exhaustion sets in.

I remember when I worked on Haiti in the NSC in the 1990s, I spent a lot of time working on it with President Clinton directly. He was personally engaged on it a lot. And I saw him again when he came out to visit Kosovo with—Sandy Berger was with him in 1999 when I was there in the U.S. Office there. So, I met the president at the airplane and Sandy there. We're walking over to this room where—it's like a holding room or wherever for the president for a few minutes before he would have meetings with local officials there at the airport. And Sandy was recalling to President Clinton, who remembered that, "We had worked with Larry on Haiti," you know, "back then." His comment was, "We gave those people their chance," which we did. And it got a lot of attention from the president of the United States, a disproportionate amount of attention, given all the different things that the president has to worry about. And nothing really came of it.

But there's donor fatigue and all those phenomena again when it comes to Haiti. But at the same time, it's such a—it is insistent upon our attention because of the nature of our country and the fact that it's been beset by every plague—all the horsemen of the apocalypse have set foot in Haiti at one time or another. They've had earthquakes, they've had floods, they've had diseases, they've had wars and turmoil. It's all internal turmoil. And, and it's overpopulated and it's a disgrace and it's all these things. And everybody goes down there with their own attitude.

We were down there as the United States pursuing the U.S. foreign policy. It was always nonpartisan about Haiti. The only partisan issue was should we be engaging there or not, and different actors had different viewpoints about whether this was a priority. But there's no U.S. national interest to be pursued in Haiti. There's no non-altruistic interest to be pursued in Haiti. There's nothing there to get from Haiti. When I was working for the UN there I remember at one point the Brazilian army engineers went out and graded this road that went off from just south of Port-au-Prince to the only sugar mill left in Haiti that was functioning, it was a couple of miles off the highway. And so, the Brazilians had gone out there, their engineers had gone out and graded the road out to the sugar mill, which was receiving its assistance from Cuba. There were Cuban engineers and Cuban sugar experts there at the sugar mill making it work for all practical purposes. And they knew how to

make it work. They were—I suppose they're used to dealing with old equipment and keeping it functioning. So, I went out there. I was acting head of the mission at the time, I went out there with the Brazilian general, with the prime minister, President Préval, and with the Cuban ambassador. And we all went out there and we toured the plant and then we had a little press encounter. President Préval spoke and the ambassador spoke and the general spoke and I spoke. And I said, I've been talking—as I was going around, I was talking to some of the experts and they were complaining. I mean they said, You know, these Haitians, they don't process the crop properly. It comes into the mill with too much fiber, and all these sorts of things that sugar people do. And they were clearly working hard in a pretty unpleasant setting for them. And I was full of praise for them. And Cuba had no—I mean maybe they hoped to get a vote in the UN on something, but there's no real Cuban interest in Haiti either. Haiti's "all hands to the pumps." That's it. And not all hands come to the pumps, but it is all hands to the pumps. And that's just to keep it afloat. Nobody's ever made more progress—I think that in the UN mission and in Haiti under Préval when I was there, it was beginning and after I was there it continued.

They were actually starting to turn a corner. I don't know how far it would have taken them, but they were actually getting a little bit of traction in terms of governance and institutions. But it was all destroyed in the earthquake. Every single ministry was flattened in the earthquake. The legislature was flattened. The presidential palace that had been built in 1912 was flattened in the earthquake. It was a major disaster, and it really threw them back. Everything that had been achieved had been thrown out and it was just survival again; five hundred thousand people in tents. My secretary was killed. People that I worked with in the mission were killed. People that I knew. It was a big tragedy for the UN, but it was a big tragedy for Haiti as well. It was just a tragedy.

*Q: Well, you left there when?*

ROSSIN: I left in September 2006. And the earthquake was January 2010.

*Q: Mm-hmm. So, then what did you do?*

ROSSIN: I came back here to Washington. I intended to retire, but I ended up being referred by Madeleine Albright's group, which was doing *pro bono* work for something called the Save Darfur Coalition. This was a lobbying group about Darfur and in Sudan. And so, they hired me to set up an international program essentially for the Save Darfur Coalition. The Save Darfur Coalition was run—it had a board that comprised a lot of religious groups. It was very apolitical. It had Baptists and Muslims and Republicans and Democrats and it was really apolitical—very active, very big on college campuses in a lot of communities. It was bringing in a lot of money and small donations. There were a lot of demonstrations. It was a very effective advocacy group that—it was calling a lot of attention to something that was really pretty remote. And they had some contacts with international NGOs, but not much. And they wanted to use some of these resources and some of this clout to try and build up not just American interest in Darfur, but global interest in Darfur. And so, they had hired a Sudanese guy who had just come to the States



as a refugee, and then they hired me, and he and I together set up this international program.

We did a lot of outreach and some awarded grants to NGOs in the Middle East and Africa that were interested in Darfur advocacy. We built up relationships with the Europeans who were doing this kind of advocacy work. And we ran a network of international NGOs. Plus, I did a lot of government outreach. I met with people in Europe, I met with the Chinese, I met with the Egyptians at government levels, using the ambassador title, if you will, as a door opener. And you know, we were effective—I traveled around the United States as well and spoke to student organizations and to local Darfur groups. There were Darfur groups in a lot of different cities in the United States. I did this for about a year. And we built up this international program. It was quite effective. I wouldn't say that any of this advocacy group—I went to Darfur once with Governor Bill Richardson who was just becoming a candidate in 2008 for the Democratic nomination. He did a third party track two diplomacy thing there that was clearly ineffective. But it was interesting. I met President Bashir, traveled out to Darfur and saw the place. And it was interesting. The Sudanese impressed me a lot. They were much more sophisticated than people in the Balkans in terms of dealing with internationals because they were willing to be ruthless, just because they had more experience, I think. They're very sophisticated people. And we built up this international thing that functioned quite effectively. And then I left towards the end of 2007. I joined the board of the Save Darfur Coalition for a while. But I only did that for a short while because then I was contacted by the United Nations to go back out to Kosovo once again as the deputy special representative there. So I was sad to terminate that.

*Q: But for somebody reading this you'd better explain what was happening in Darfur.*

ROSSIN: Darfur, yeah.

ROSSIN: Yeah, well, it started out, which I had to learn a little bit about myself, but I'll certainly say, Darfur is the western area of Sudan. Borders on the Central African Republic and Chad, Libya in the north. And it's populated by various tribes, the Fur, there's different tribes there. And it's an Arab land of course. Part of the underlying social issues that were there were global warming, decreasing the desertification. This is in the Sahara. And then there's—although you could never tell by looking at it—there are actually people doing sedentary agriculture in that part of Sudan. And then there're people who are moving cattle herds north and south in a usual sort of migratory arrangement.

So there were tribal conflicts that preexisted. But there were—as in all of the peripheral areas to Sudan, south, north, east, and west, there were movements that were not necessarily separatist movements, but they were tribal movements and ethnic movements. They were all protesting against the fact that the central part of Sudan, to which power had been handed by the British when it became fully independent in 1956, was

completely exploiting the whole country and reserving all the assets of the country to itself and oppressing the other parts of the country.

So South Sudan is famous, but Darfur had more recently flared up. There had been genocidal activities—there's no other way to characterize them—carried out by the Sudanese military forces and by a militia that they set up of certain tribes called the Janjaweed that had been burning villages and massacring people, and there were hundreds of thousands of people in Darfur living in refugee camps, and it was one of these terrible situations. The African Union had a military mission that was completely ineffective out there when I was working on this issue. Now there's a hybrid UN AU [African Union] mission, which is also pretty ineffective. The genocide part of it, by the time I started working on it, I think it largely died down and the situation got stabilized. But we were campaigning about that nonetheless, and campaigning for American and international pressure to be brought on the government of Sudan to clean up this behavior.

Sudan is extremely impervious to this kind of pressure because I think it's ideally located geographically. It's far from everywhere. It's a big country; it's the size of Western Europe. It's got friends like the Chinese who—as in all of Africa—will support anybody as long as they can get resources. But not only the Chinese, you know. Sudan straddles the African and Arab world and is very good at using both of them as things are required—and they've been dealing with the international community for a long time. They know all of our tricks and all of the ways to put sand in the axles, in the gears. So that was the thing. It was a worthwhile movement, but one that was ultimately, by the way, not very effective.

*Q: When we go back to the UN with what job?*

ROSSIN: Deputy special representative in Kosovo the second time.

*Q: Okay. Today is the fourth of June 2012 with Larry Rossin. Larry, I was playing over that last bit and you said that the African troops in Darfur were quite ineffective. Was it Darfur or the troops were basically an ineffective force no matter who used—*

ROSSIN: Well, it was a combination of things. I mean a lot—most of it was Darfur. Darfur is extremely large and there were six thousand troops in the African Union Force, so it was just hopeless that they could cover this territory. They had very little in the way of helicopters, and vehicles are hardly worth it in a place like that. So, they were dealing with this massive territory with completely inadequate resources. But what I observed, but even more what a friend of mine who had been actually sent out there as an advisor to the EU force who is a reserve officer and so he really knew that when you're in peacekeeping—well, when you see a NATO force, first of all, they're all interoperable. That's what NATO is all about. They have the same standards of communications and everything. When you see a United Nations force it's a little bit more difficult, but still, the United Nations has the resources and over the years, the history to have created

certain interoperability standards for peacekeeping forces. The AU has none of that. And so, you have forces from Rwanda, forces from South Africa, forces from Gambia, forces from Nigeria, and I think forces from Senegal were there. And none of them had any interoperable ability. They didn't have any of the same procedures, any of the same chain of command, any anything. And so, they really had great difficulty just operating day-to-day. So, it was ineffective for a variety of reasons. And then, of course, the Sudanese government was busy making sure that they were ineffective. If they ever found their footing, they would get them right back off it again. And they controlled the territory, so—

*Q: Did you see at the time any solution to Darfur?*

ROSSIN: It was very difficult. I did see a potential way forward for a solution, but I didn't really see that that was going to happen. And it was indeed what we argued for in the Save Darfur Coalition in our advocacy and our interaction with governments, and so forth, which was that it needed to be moved several notches up the priority scale. It needed to get high-level attention. When you're dealing with—as I was describing previously, Sudan is so well placed to resist international pressure and fob it off, that it requires a correspondingly high degree of engagement if you're going to make progress. Then of course having worked on Haiti, having worked on the former Yugoslavia, I know what that kind of high-level engagement looks like when you do it, because you have top-level officials involved, you have the use of military force threat, and you have a lot of resources brought to the table, active diplomacy and all the rest of it. And what you had with Darfur is you had this plethora of envoys and everybody going out there from everywhere, representing everybody, with no fixed agenda or coordinating agenda. So of course, the Sudanese were playing everybody off against everybody else and every envoy ended up futile. It would have been difficult under the best of circumstances, and it didn't have the best of circumstances because it had such low-level international engagement, including the United States.

The other thing that made it difficult was because South Sudan was so high profile and also in the United States it did have high-level engagement from the U.S. administration, partially also because there were so many Evangelical Christian groups who were involved in the South Sudan issue. It's after all Christian versus Muslims and all that. South Sudan, the whole process for South Sudan, which was more organized, took all the oxygen out of the room. There was nothing left for Darfur at the end of the day.

*Q: All right. Well, leaving that unhappy place—and moving on with your career, you went where?*

ROSSIN: I was rehired by the United Nations. They were exploring sending me to Afghanistan as the deputy special representative, but then there was an opening very suddenly due to a personnel issue. And so, they asked me if I would quickly go back and once again be the principal deputy special representative of the secretary general, the same job that I had there the previous time in very different circumstances, though.

*Q: You did this from when to when?*

ROSSIN: This was—I was asked to go out there at the end of December 2007 and I went out there at the beginning of January 2008. And I was there until the middle of June 2008 when my position was essentially abolished after Kosovo declared independence and the UN downsized the mission.

*Q: You said things had changed. What was the situation?*

ROSSIN: In the period since I had last been in Kosovo, former President of Finland Martti Ahtisaari had been designated by the secretary general to do the process foreseen in UN Resolution 1244 to determine Kosovo's final political status. Would it be independent? Would it be part of Serbia? What would happen? That had all happened. It had reached a—Ahtisaari had drafted a comprehensive settlement plan, but Serbia refused to accept it and the Russians refused to accept it, and it ended up stalemated in the UN Security Council. And so, when I arrived that stalemate developed. When I arrived in the beginning of 2008, Kosovo was on the brink of its own declaration of independence coordinated with the Quint Countries and other countries that intended to recognize Kosovo's independence as soon as it declared its independence. The timing was not yet decided at that moment, but it was decided shortly thereafter.

*Q: Why were countries divided into recognizing and not recognizing?*

ROSSIN: Well, the countries that were going to—and did recognize Kosovo when it declared independence were mostly the EU, mostly Western countries, most of the EU countries; other countries such as Japan and other countries that you normally find in that group. And the countries that were not going to recognize Kosovo were first of all Russia, non-aligned type of countries if you will, countries like Brazil that are very big on the new international order of this and that, China; basically, the countries that thought that maintaining territorial integrity of Serbia trumped any issue of human rights, or the history of how Kosovo had arrived at the situation it was in or the evolution that Kosovo had been through. The countries that were recognizing Kosovo recognized the inevitability of Kosovo's independence after the process that had gone on, as well as the historical justification for Kosovo's independence, based on its own characteristics as well as the abuses that Serbia had committed during the—particularly during the war in the 1990s, but even going back further.

*Q: Well, did these countries, the Chinese, the Russians, and others, were they looking to their own territory as having potential for breaking away?*

ROSSIN: In many cases that was the national rationale for not recognizing Kosovo's independence. Obviously, Russia had issues with South Ossetia, Abkhazia, these places. China is always very concerned about its peripheral areas. It's like Chongqing Province. But even countries like Romania, which do not recognize Kosovo, have a Hungarian

ethnic minority. The same thing with Slovakia. Spain wouldn't recognize Kosovo, although they were going to and it was domestic—

*Q: Oh, with—*

ROSSIN: —because of the Catalans and the Basques. Although actually, the Spanish elections were to take place in March, 2008 and the Spanish told everybody else that they would be willing to recognize Kosovo if they would just hold off the declaration of independence until after their elections in March. I don't know whether people didn't believe them or whether the ball was just rolling too much and it was not possible to hold off past February. Now the Spanish make a big issue of principle about it, but at the time, Zapatero, all he wanted was a couple of weeks to solve a domestic political campaign issue. But generally, if a country was worrying about minority groups wanting to break away in its own country, it would be very unlikely to recognize Kosovo. We saw that in the EU countries that did not recognize it. Cyprus.

*Q: Did Brasilia, say, have a different—*

ROSSIN: A lot of countries that didn't really have a dog in the Kosovo fight. It was far away from them. It became apparent when countries later made filings in the International Court of Justice case that Serbia brought about Kosovo's independence; a lot of countries opposed it in their briefs just on the general principle that the international community should not support breakaway movements. And they set a very high legal bar, which was in fact not really supported by the International Court of Justice in its opinion. There were—you could make a lot of arguments, and countries did.

*Q: What were you up to?*

ROSSIN: Our main thing was to manage the transition from the United Nations being the supreme actor in Kosovo, the UN mission, to the post-independence situation where we would no longer be an executive actor in Kosovo. In the circumstance where the Security Council was frozen, Resolution 1244 remained in force; theoretically, we should continue to carry out our functions, but practically we could not do so. And it was a very, very tricky, really a minefield, trying to get through that.

The other issue that we had to deal with was in the north of Kosovo, which of course is trouble with the Serb minority up there being quasi-separatist, I guess you could say that Serbia and the Serbian government from day one of independence were actively encroaching and grabbing assets of infrastructure in control of the north of Kosovo in violation of Resolution 1244, but also in physically violent ways. They burnt customs houses, they took over the court building, they took over the railways that we were supposed to control. So, we had to deal with that.

*Q: Was there any feeling that—I always think of it as the Mitrovica area—of what the hell, let the Serbs have it? I mean in a way it was really—*

ROSSIN: That's partition. That's the term. I mean that's essentially what you're talking about. And partition is a possibility. In many ways it makes sense, because after all you have nearly 100 percent Serb population in the north, although it's not totally. And it's neat geographically, but it's not as neat as all that. First of all, it really is one city on two sides of the river. This is not like west and east Berlin or something like that. And secondly, the Contact Group in 2005 had set out three principles for any final political settlement of Kosovo, one of which was, no partition of Kosovo. Because they were concerned that if you partition Kosovo that would encourage Republika Serbska [part of Bosnia Herzegovina] to say well, we can have that too. And everything is about precedent in the Balkans. And so, my personal viewpoint was that that principle should not have been set out, that principles like that should not have been set out because when you're going to enter into a very difficult negotiation, you shouldn't take potential tools off of the table too quickly. You should let the negotiator deal with those kinds of things. But the other concern was that if you partition Kosovo, in the sense of allowing the north of Kosovo to go to Serbia, then in south Serbia, where you have a majority Albanian population—this is outside Kosovo and Southern Kosovo and where there had been an uprising in 2001 and 2002—you might well have people down there say well, that's great, you know. If the north of Kosovo goes to Serbia then so-called eastern Kosovo should be joined with Kosovo. So everything had its linkages and it became very difficult to manage. Again, I wouldn't have set out principles like that because you just restrict the negotiator.

*Q: How did things work out?*

ROSSIN: Initially, it was very difficult in the north. Really, every day we were dealing with this encroachment of Belgrade and northern Serbs taking over things that were ours, essentially, as the UN's: our court, our railways, our customs post and border posts on the boundary with Serbia. This culminated in early March 2008 when we received intelligence, we and KFOR, actually KFOR received the intelligence that the Serbian—that the northern Serbs backed by Belgrade, who had just a couple of days beforehand occupied our courthouse in the north, also intended to take over the police station in northern Mitrovica, which is across the street from the courthouse. We and KFOR decided to mount an operation to remove the Serb occupiers of the courthouse and secure the police station as well, and the operation was not entirely as well planned as it could have been. We lost one police officer. There's a hair-trigger warning system in the north, so whenever anything happens—but we were able to retake the courthouse, and it threw a stick into the cogs of that Serbian type of encroachment. And actually, from then until now they've never done that stuff again. There's been a lot of issues in the north of Kosovo, but we did actually stop that momentum of theirs in their tracks. It was controversial, obviously. We had a Ukrainian police officer killed. It was controversial. And there were a couple of people killed on the other side as well, but I think on the whole the operation was a success, although we received very limited backing from our headquarters.



*Q: The UN seems to have the proclivity to avoid—*

ROSSIN: Conflict.

*Q: Conflict.*

ROSSIN: It's risk averse. It's an organization of members, it's not sovereign. And they don't like problems and they especially don't like problems when they piss off the Russians, because the Russians are so aggressive in UN headquarters whenever they're unhappy about anything. Ambassador Churkin was there then and he's there now, and he's a royal pain—he's really a very, very—well, he's a Russian—he's a Soviet diplomat. They're still Soviets for all practical purposes. But having said that, it wasn't only the United Nations. I had Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer of NATO call me up at one point during the day when all this was going on. And he said, "Well, why are you doing this? Why are you doing this?"

And I said, "Well, you'd be calling up if they had taken over the police station if we didn't do anything. So, get out of my, I've got business to do. We'll talk later," which we never did until I moved to NATO and then he never talked to me anyway because he was so isolated. But there was—it is risk aversion. I mean, the easiest course is not to do anything. The easiest course.

One of the things I learned working in the United Nations is that a great goal is to avoid criticism, in quotes, "avoid criticism." Criticism is a bad thing and criticism in many ways is worse than bad results and bad outcomes, which is not the case with national diplomacy, at least not with American national diplomacy in my Foreign Service career. And of course, it created a lot of criticism, and not only from the Russians. Carl Bildt, the Swedish foreign minister, was very critical. He's an egotistical individual, I would say, and so he was critical and the Spanish were critical, and that was fine.

*Q: When you say they were critical—*

ROSSIN: Well, they phoned the secretary general or they phoned the under secretary general for peacekeeping, and they said, What the hell are they doing out there? We don't agree with it. And New York does not like to get those kinds of calls— But what was done was done. It stopped the Serbs in their tracks. It stabilized the situation. Everybody was clear. And I think it actually to some extent influenced the subsequent Serbian election in a way that was helpful. Because I think that the cabinet minister responsible for what was going on in the north was from—party, was very nationalist. And even in Serbia, once they got over the initial thing, there started to be an internal debate about whether this encroachment policy they had been following had actually been very wise or not. And I think that it was harmful to them electorally, so it served our interest and it stabilized the situation.

*Q: Well, you're encroaching, you've got your foot in an enemy camp—*

ROSSIN: Who has a—who has a foot in the enemy camp?

*Q: Well, I mean the Serbs have their foot in the enemy—*

ROSSIN: Well, we're not their enemy, but if they want to treat us—

*Q: No, no, but I'm saying, I mean in this case—*

ROSSIN: Yeah.

*Q: —then it means that there are all sorts of logistic and political things that go along with it. It's great to say that we've got this thing, but then you have to accept the sort of responsibilities and build up a structure around these alien entities, don't you?*

ROSSIN: You mean Serbia did?

*Q: Yeah.*

ROSSIN: Serbia would have to?

*Q: Yeah.*

ROSSIN: Serbia could do that in northern Kosovo without any particular difficulty at all. If—they, for all practical purposes had given up on southern Kosovo, it's only this northern part. And there they've maintained shadow structures and parallel structures the whole time, and all of the political parties, and particularly the nationalist political parties, have. For them, northern Kosovo is part of Serbia and they've operated that way for the whole time. So taking over, if you will, was just a matter of becoming overt and basically taking over. And this is where we have our difficulty with them. It also meant violently and physically taking over certain assets, like custom posts again, and courthouses and police stations. But in terms of running the place, it was just coming up from the underground.

*Q: Was the Kosovo Liberation Army a factor, a tool which had been used?*

ROSSIN: No, no. The Kosovo Liberation Army was dissolved in 1999 and was nonexistent.

*Q: Did—*

ROSSIN: I mean anyway, not—

*Q: Was there a residue or—*

ROSSIN: When the KLA was dissolved in 1999, a number of vehicles were used to dissolve it and to make sure that it'd actually dissolve. Many of the former KLA members were given a veteran's preference in applying for the Kosovo Police Service. Not all of them were accepted. Not all of them applied, but some did and were accepted there. The International Organization for Migration was funded by the United States to do a DDR [disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of former combatants] program for a lot of them, which they did. And a lot of them were accepted into a thing that was set up as a holding pool for ex-KLA guys, which was called the Kosovo Protection Corps [KPC], which was like a national guard for Kosovo, but not the military part of the national guard, but rather the disaster relief part of our national guard model. And the KPC did that. They had about twenty-five hundred people and all of them were ex-KLA. So, it had actually been dissolved.

There was a residue of individuals and groups that would portray themselves as KLA war veterans or the Liberation Army of Albania or stuff like that—but mostly they would issue statements. And then there would very occasionally be some incident or something, but—or arms would be found. But it was not a continuing organization.

*Q: Well, how did you retake the customs place and all?*

ROSSIN: We never really did during my time in 2008. It was the first or second day that Kosovo declared independence that these fomented mobs of people went up and burnt these customs posts at the boundary, then they left. We went back there with KFOR and established them again, but what we were not able to do was to establish them in the sense of again collecting customs duties and doing the things that they had done before.

And of course, they were very vulnerable and if you tried to do things that the northern Serbs didn't want, or that Belgrade didn't want, they would just do—you knew that they would do again what they had done before. We spent a lot of time—in fact, in that period, we were getting pressed by the United States and a lot of others to reestablish these posts. And the logistics, the supply lines if you will, to do so was impossible to sustain from a security point of view. In other words, you could set them up again, but when you had to rotate the customs officers the first time, and then the next day and the day after that, it was very hard for us to do that and very easy for the northern Serbs to block it if they wanted to.

And one of the famous things about the road that goes up from Mitrovica to the northern boundary crossing at what's called Gate One is that there are all these wrecked cars and hulks of cars along this side of the road, and logs and stuff like that, all of which are ready to be moved out into the middle of the road at a moment's notice. That's not what they're there for, but they're certainly usable for that. And they have all these networks set up, the northern Serbs, to do these things. So, as has been demonstrated in the intervening four years, you cannot really operate those things without devoting considerable resources to the process, which we didn't have, or else without cutting some

kind of deal with those northerners, which they will cut for a little while, but they don't really want to. Their objection is that if you're collecting customs duties, as far as they're concerned, since independence you're collecting it for the Republic of Kosovo, and they don't want that going on up there. And I can see their argument. I also think that they ought to be jammed, but I have a lot of resources and a lot of barbed wire.

*Q: Did Kosovo have any real ties anymore? I'm not talking about political, but I'm talking about economic ties and all.*

ROSSIN: With?

*Q: With Serbia.*

ROSSIN: There's a lot of ties at two levels. The first one is organized crime. (laughs) Criminals always get along, and that was that even in 1999 after the end of the war when Serbs in Albania didn't have much contact except the organized crime types, were just fine. And that's an issue with northern Kosovo. Northern Kosovo was a problem actually for Serbia because it's become a bit like Transnistria. It's a little bit of a mafia place. And they lose money on customs and things like that as well there. Not enough to trump their political perspective on the thing, but it is an issue for them.

The other thing is that there are a lot of Serbian exports into Kosovo. Kosovo was part of the former Yugoslavia and Serbia and there's a lot of Serbs in Kosovo. So, stuff from Serbia is—it's the obvious supplier for a lot of things. It's right there. It's been complicated, and there's a little bit of Kosovo potential exports into Serbia. Not very much, but a little. But Serbia complicates this because Serbia won't recognize Kosovo documentation. And it wouldn't recognize—now it loves to—the United Nations, once Kosovo became independent because the UN is its foothold into Kosovo. But pre-independence they were completely uncooperative with us. So, they wouldn't recognize our documentation, either. So, the trade was difficult, but still there was a lot of it, a lot. You'd see a lot of Serbian trucks coming into Kosovo. But it's not the only supplier. The biggest supplier now is actually Macedonia because of course there's no political complication associated with Macedonia, and Skopje's an hour away from Pristina by road. So, it's actually closer than Serbia, because the towns that are near or by Kosovo and Serbia are not big.

*Q: How were those monasteries, which are so dear to the hearts of Serbs, beautiful ones—*

ROSSIN: Mm-hmm—

*Q: Yeah.*

ROSSIN: There's others, yeah.

*Q: How were they being treated when you were there?*

ROSSIN: Basically okay. There were actually a lot of Serbian Orthodox sites, and right at the end of the war in 1999, and then again when there were these riots in Kosovo in 2004, some of them were damaged. And as we talked the last time, there was a process that was set up to deal with that. Both in the first time I was there and the second time I was there we devoted a lot of attention to this after UNMIK shut down its executive function and the U.S. embassy took over a lot of what UNMIK did in terms of looking after these monasteries and facilitating relations between them and their host communities, and things of that nature. They were basically treated okay. I mean they were not—it depended from place-to-place.

Everyone had a very specific relationship with its community, and the communities of monks in each one had a specific relationship with the community. Some of them were very above-board and helpful; protected Albanians during the war, for example, gave shelter. Others were completely involved in the atrocities committed by Serbian forces in their neighborhood. It just varied from place to place. And we, as the UN mission, spent a lot of time trying to protect those places and trying to—how can I say—manage the relationships between the monasteries and the communities and the Kosovo authorities and so forth. And with the positive evolution and the leadership of the Serbian Orthodox Church that took place, particularly in 2007–2008 with a new bishop and so forth, it became reasonably easy to do. And there were a lot of property-land ownership issues that were very difficult to resolve and in fact that lay at the root of a lot of the tensions that existed. But those predated the war in Kosovo. They went all the way back to communism in 1945 and the expropriation of lands and things of that nature. Land ownership in the former Yugoslavia is the most complicated issue and it doesn't have anything to do with Albanians or Serbs.

*Q: We would have places on the islands off Montenegro. And it was one little—*

ROSSIN: Sveti Stefan.

*Q: Sveti Stefan. There were houses around there that had 1/64th American ownership.*

ROSSIN: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

*Q: And then we had to figure out, there had been some shelling of it—was it the Italians or the Germans who shelled the island?*

ROSSIN: Ah, that I don't know.

*Q: I mean I know, but I mean what is it? I mean a ship had to be steaming up and down. I mean it's so complicated.*

ROSSIN: Well, we had a funny example of it when I was the head of U.S. Office, when we opened up our office in 1999 in Pristina. The way that the—there was a street on the edge of Pristina where already the U.S. government had a couple of rented houses. There were some—USAID had a house for its people who were working with office transition initiatives. The guy who was the Public Affairs officer—there was a Branch Public Affairs Office in Pristina before the war—lived up there. There was a couple of these houses, and basically, the way that the State Department got the property initially was an admin officer went out there from EURES [European Employment Services], right at the end of the conflict, and walked down the street with a bag of cash, and walked up to everybody on the street and said, “How much do you want to rent your house? Here it is.” So even by the time I got out there a couple of weeks later, all those houses were our houses on this little street.

What was interesting was that the initial concept was that we would use them temporarily, then there would be a temporary building built on this piece of property across the road from that little street that would be the temporary embassy until a permanent office or embassy was built somewhere else in town later on. Well, that piece of property across the street? We just put the word out with the owner of that property, “Please come to see us so that we can talk about purchasing, or whatever, that property.” Well, ten owners showed up, and they all had documentation from some period of Kosovo’s history showing that they owned that piece of land. Who can sort this out? We finally just gave up on it and parked cars, and the U.S. Office just parked cars on that piece of property in the end. Because it was not strong—you didn’t want to build something on it because of the ownership issues. But that was typical. I mean it’s—everywhere it’s the same. It was the same thing when I was in Croatia, too. They’ve had so many different political and legal regimes.

*Q: You’d been away for a while, you came back. Did you find the UN staff different in contact and in effectiveness or not?*

ROSSIN: After I came back the second time?

*Q: Yeah.*

ROSSIN: Well, many of them were the same people, but it had also shrunk a lot. A lot. I mean the mission had been put on a downward trajectory with the end in sight even when I was there before they’d started doing that. But the key people were the same. I was working—the special representative I was working with when I went back had been the deputy special representative for the EU Economic Pillar when I left. So, I mean there’d been changes, but fundamentally it was the same group of people. I was sitting in the same office, my special assistant from before came and met me at the airport the day that I arrived and brought a pile of papers to me and, I signed papers and just picked up where I left off.



But it was different because in the meantime the mission's function in Kosovo—its place in Kosovo, had completely changed, and people knew it was on the way out, and it was supposed to be on the way out, but that its primary objective was to manage this coherently. And it was a challenge to adapt to that. My predecessor, who had been my successor, told me, he said—I had breakfast with him in New York before I went out there, and he said, “You’ve got to be really careful. You can’t go out there and just think that you’re going back and picking up where you left off,” which superficially I did, of course, in terms of how the process went.

But substantially, the whole role of the UN expectations in Kosovo, expectation of the nations, expectations of the EU, everybody's expectations had changed completely in the intervening period, and the focus really had narrowed to managing the political process of the transition to this contesting independence, this controversial independence: how we would extricate ourselves in a way; how would this play out with the big politics in New York, and, you know, all that. It was a very, very different environment.

And it was also a challenge for people in the mission. We had seen this coming when I was there the first time, but it was there when I got back. A lot of the people in the mission had been there for years, and that—I was talking with the staff counselor, similar to the employee services person in the State Department. You know, the psychologist, the counselor type of—and this person went up to Belgrade. We had an office in Belgrade. And he went up there to deal with an issue and came back and we were talking about that. And then we started talking about other things, and he pointed out to me that numbers of the employees—not a huge number, but there were employees in the mission who had their families, who had gotten married in Kosovo, who had settled in over these years. People from third countries, they actually had families back home. And now they had a big problem on their hands because they were going to have to leave Kosovo, and they had this family in Kosovo and they also had a family back in India or South Africa or wherever the hell they came from. This was a big issue for these staff members.

*Q: Oh God.*

ROSSIN: (laughs) Not something we got because in principle, UNMIK was always an unaccompanied post. So even though you had a huge number of people that brought family members—not a huge, but lots of people had brought family members, officially they didn't exist from the mission's point of view. We had no responsibility or liability for them. This was their problem. But it was a problem. (laughs)

*Q: Well, how did you—*

ROSSIN: It is a problem.

*Q: How did you find the Kosovars? Because okay now, for the first time in ever they're going to take over a government. And how—*

ROSSIN: Surprisingly reticent. When the time came, that's how we found them. One thing I should mention though—I'll just interject here. There had been a team that had been sent out by New York when I was there in late 2005 and they were sent out—they were from a consultancy—and their mission was to study what would be the economic impact on Kosovo's small economy of shutting down the UN mission with all the rentals and all of the money that we pumped into their economy, with our several thousand staff members all of a sudden being pulled out. What would happen to the economy of Kosovo? Something that is not only an issue in Kosovo, but it's an issue anywhere you have an international peacekeeping presence. And there were various dire predictions and a lot of steps were taken to try and mitigate this, but they were really only at the margin, because the fundamental fact was, we weren't going to be there spending that money anymore and it's hard to work around that basic fact. The reality of it seemed to be different in that it really didn't seem to have much impact on the local economy at all when the time came. I'm not sure why that was. I think maybe it was partially because the EU sent a successor mission. And in one way or another a lot of people actually stayed from the UN mission, not for the UN anymore. A lot of them went to work for the EU mission or the OSCE mission. But that was just as a sideline.

It was interesting to see that in the Kosovo case something that is a standard concern about international peacekeeping missions nowadays didn't play out that way in the Kosovo case. What surprised us about the Kosovars after they declared independence and became independent, was how slow they were after all these years of striving for this national goal, to actually do the things that they now could do.

Just to take one example, we issued, as UNMIK, the equivalent of passports for a number of years in Kosovo. They were called UNMIK travel documents, but they were accepted internationally as the same thing as passports. And tens of hundreds of thousands of Kosovars carried these UNMIK travel documents. Well, we stopped issuing those. Then Kosovo became independent and one of the things that ended was our ability and willingness to issue travel documents to Kosovars. It was independent now. So, Kosovo had to pick up that function, and that's not a simple thing to do. That requires a lot of advanced planning. You have to design the document, you have to let the contracts, you have to make sure they're secure and biometric and all these things. Kosovo was issuing international passports and we had to press them very, very hard to do this, to take the steps that were needed. And yet, there was a gap of about two months where they stopped and they couldn't start. It wasn't fatal because people could always go get Serbian or Yugoslavian passports, or a lot of people already had Yugoslav passports. But it was just a—it was exemplary of the fact that contrary to everything that you would expect, that the things that were the most trappings of independence: the flag, the international recognition, traveling the world as representatives of the Republic of Kosovo that was recognized by dozens of countries even if not universally recognized, turned out to be the things where they were the most torpid. And it was a great frustration. Not for the UN. We had no stake in that. That was not our mandate, we were not supposed to engage in those things, although in fact the special representative and I were constantly going to the Kosovo authorities and saying, "Why aren't you being more active seeking recognitions?"

Why won't you send the Mufti of Kosovo to Saudi Arabia? They love Muslims down in Saudi Arabia. If Saudi Arabia will recognize you, that would be a big boost for you, you know?" Never did anything. They never did anything. They counted on the United States, France, Britain to go out and get these recognitions for them. And in a few cases that worked, obviously.

Kosovo's now recognized by, I think, ninety-one countries. It's taken a long time to get to that ninety-one. But in an awful lot of places—we were told this by the French, we were told this by the Americans—you know, they would go into some African—their ambassador would go into some African capital or South American or something and say, "We want you to recognize Kosovo." They'd make a demarche. And the people in the capital might be open to the idea, but they'd kind of like to see a Kosovar. They've never seen one before. They'd like to see one, see what they're like, you know? "It's Kosovo. Let's have a Kosovar ask us to—," and the Kosovars could not get organized and would not. It wasn't so much that they couldn't, as they wouldn't get organized to go out and do it.

Meanwhile, the Serbian foreign minister must have filled up twenty passports going around the world. The guy was just, you know, the Energizer Bunny out there in every Goddamn country in the world, arguing for them not to recognize Kosovo. And since it's easier to not do something than it is to do something, a lot of countries didn't recognize Kosovo. The Serbians showed up and said, "Don't do it." The Kosovars didn't show up and say, "Do it." There really wasn't much at stake for them one way or another, so they did what people normally do, which is nothing. It was really quite remarkable how the Kosovars were so slow on so many things. Really remarkable. And it wasn't just that they were unsophisticated. They got—I mean they were unsophisticated. They were unprepared in some ways, but this had been a long time coming.

*Q: And I'm sure they were—organization 43:25.*

ROSSIN: Well, especially the U.S. government, the French government, the British government. I mean they were so eager. First of all, from a policy perspective they wanted Kosovo to get recognized. But also, they just wanted Kosovo—they wanted to help Kosovo. But you know, it's hard to help people who won't help themselves.

*Q: Yeah.*

ROSSIN: It was really basic human nature that came into play. Very, very frustrating—it's incredibly frustrating for the recognizing countries, really frustrating.

*Q: Did Kosovo have any particular friends in Congress?*

ROSSIN: It had a few. There's one Congressman, Eliot Engel from New York, who has always been a big booster of Kosovo and of things Albanian. I mean going way back. I don't know why, because I don't think he has a particular constituency in his district, but

there he is. He's always been very active on it. There were a few others, but not prominent enough that their names even stick with me. There was—I mean Joe Biden was interested in Kosovo. There were a lot who were interested, but I think Engel was the only one who was really a big booster. And he was—I mean he's a congressman of modest influence.

*Q: Yeah. Well, then is there anything more that you had to do or were doing that we should talk about there?*

ROSSIN: No, I think this business that I described dealing with the Serbian encroachments in the north was certainly the most dramatic part of it. I mean it was, it was difficult. Basically, both the special representative and I had a complete falling out with the UN secretary general. We both got so little backing from New York that we both submitted our resignations, actually, which they wouldn't send. And we didn't pursue it because we wanted to finish what we needed to finish. But neither would they have extended us, I think, if circumstances had called for that. So, in the end, my job was abolished because the mission was shrinking. They didn't need a deputy special rep. The special rep, who was a German, was—he moved on basically and they appointed a new guy who was a very good Italian. And that was very ugly. I must say, it was very ugly. But—and we got a lot of good backing from our capitals. I mean, I from Washington, him from Berlin. But at the end of the day, the United Nations, you know, doesn't like trouble.

*Q: Well, this is based on trouble rather. It could be—*

ROSSIN: He didn't like it. He didn't like it that we caused problems. (laughs) And you know, it was a really problematic situation out in Kosovo and you couldn't just do nothing. And doing nothing—I mean everything was going to cause a problem. No matter how you—that's what I said to them. I said, "Look, if we didn't do it, you've got the Albanians doing all kinds of shit, and that could be *really* deadly if they decided to go out after the Serbs. I mean this cut both ways." And one thing I found in New York was that they did not believe the Albanians—they just didn't really care about the Albanians. They thought they were under control, you know, it's all about Serbia. Because of course, Kosovo was not a member state of the United Nations and Serbia was. So obviously, Serbia, being one of their employers, had a voice and Kosovo didn't and—but we had to deal with both sides as a reality. So anyway, that was not—that's about the extent of it I would say for Kosovo.

*Q: So then when and what did you do?*

ROSSIN: I had—during this whole process I had applied and was the U.S. candidate, because I knew I would be leaving, for a deputy assistant secretary general position on the NATO international staff in Brussels. And I didn't even—at some point I had gone up to Brussels and interviewed for the job, and I ended up getting it just about the time that I was leaving Kosovo. So, I came back to the States for a couple of months and then in

September 2008 I moved to Brussels as the deputy assistant secretary general for operations of NATO.

*Q: Could you explain what the job was?*

ROSSIN: Yeah, the job—NATO's Operations Division handles all of NATO's "operations," in quotes, and this means its military operations out of area. So, the Operations Division is responsible for ISAF [International Security Assistance Force], for the NATO force in Afghanistan, and was responsible for KFOR [NATO force in Kosovo]. There was a small NATO training mission in Iraq, and then NATO's maritime operations, to include something that grew during the time I was there, which was the counter-piracy operations off of the coast of Somalia. It was also responsible, but my part of the division was not responsible, for things such as crisis management exercises and for emergency response. When it was, when NATO was asked to provide assistance when there was big flooding in Pakistan, for example, our division covered that, but not my area.

*Q: This was really a new NATO from the NATO we all were familiar with. I mean no more plugging the Fulda Gap and all that.*

ROSSIN: No, the Fulda Gap was long gone. (laughs)

*Q: But by this time would you say NATO had adjusted to the new world, or were you part of the adjustment process?*

ROSSIN: It was a permanent adjustment process. I actually thought that NATO had adjusted reasonably well to the new world, but was not necessarily extremely effective in what it did, but still it had adjusted. But I have to say, I was really struck and I was really put off, too, by a very strong tendency, in fact a universal tendency on the part of the leadership of the organization, to assess every activity that was carried out in terms of demonstrating NATO's continuing relevance. In other words, doing something in Afghanistan or Kosovo, it wasn't the first criterion or counter-piracy. The first criterion would not be, are we making a difference out there helping to solve a problem? The first criterion would be are we demonstrating—

*Q: Yeah.*

ROSSIN: —NATO's continuing relevance? And I forbade people on my staff from using that phrase. I just refused. Because that's not a legitimate criterion.

*Q: No, it's really not. But when you think about it, I mean did you sense or was it pretty obvious there was a strong element within Europe and all saying, what the hell's this all about?*

ROSSIN: NATO? You mean what is NATO for after all this time?

*Q: Yeah. In other words, NATO was designed for one thing and that—*

ROSSIN: Was gone.

*Q: —was gone.*

ROSSIN: There was—I mean there was still of course a lot of that. And that expressed itself not so much—I mean we always had officials or you had pundits or think tankers or experts, who tend to be more prominent as you know in European society than they were in American.

*Q: Yeah, intellectuals.*

ROSSIN: Intellectuals count for more over there. And they would be asking those questions. But where it really would express itself is in resourcing, of course; whether it was providing troops for operations or providing defense spending for one's share of the common defense and participation and operations. And I think that questioning in its own way was prominent both on this side of the Atlantic and on that side of the Atlantic. On that side of the Atlantic, as Secretary Gates would point out frequently in speeches, there was a demilitarization taking place. And so, European countries—there were a lot of questions of the appropriateness or the need for a small country, "our small country," to make a contribution to a NATO operation in Afghanistan or the Balkans. Plus, the Balkans, because it was a part of Europe. But the farther afield, the more questioning. But there was also a question of the capability of a lot of the NATO countries to make any kind of a contribution because their defense spending had either gone down so much or it had never been much in the first place, in the case of some of the newer members of NATO, and of course this was a constant American gripe. I think on the other side of the coin, Europeans also had grounds for griping about the American approach, because at the end of the day, my experience was that most American actors tended to view NATO as a foreign country, one of the member states of NATO rather than—an organization—that was them. And so, they would constantly—

We had this when we did basing negotiations. We were trying to base NATO aircraft at a certain point in the Gulf to support—it was AWACS [Airborne Warning and Control System]—to support ISAF operations in Afghanistan. And the United States in Bahrain, and to some extent in the United Arab Emirates of course, had the ear of the local rulers and had first dibs on things like ramp space and so forth. And when we would go and negotiate, the United States was looking at us like competitors for this scarce air space, ramp space. And we're saying, "But you're us. We're you," and you know, I mean if somebody happened to have worked at NATO at one point, they might get it, but otherwise they didn't. And in a lot of ways, the United States viewed NATO as being a competitor; one of those European countries, and also something of a nuisance. You know, if you can get troops out of 'em, great, but actually doing consultation and coming up with a common policy with all these Europeans, who's got time for that? You know? So in a sense, the unilateralism that had been overt when Don Rumsfeld, for example,



was secretary of defense, and was supposedly gone after Rumsfeld, but it's actually an ingrained attitude on the part of a lot of American actors, and I think that in its own way that's as corrosive to NATO's effectiveness as the European failure to resource defense and do—

*Q: Well, did—*

ROSSIN: America conveys a certain contempt for these people. Europe conveys a certain lack of commitment to it. Once—

*Q: Did the European Union encroach—I mean you've got the United States, you've got NATO, and you've got the European Union. I mean did you feel there was—*

ROSSIN: At the margin there was a little bit of competitiveness. It showed up, for example, in managing who did what in the anti-piracy stuff off of Somalia, where actually the EU is more effective because it has a broader range of tools to bring to bear than NATO does. The Somali piracy thing, there were a lot of different ways you could adjust—you could address the issues that arose from it, and NATO couldn't do many of those things.

*Q: Could you talk about that? You might explain what the problem was.*

ROSSIN: Yeah. The problem, of course, was that in Somalia, being chaotic, there was and there still is as of now in 2012 when we did this interview, Somali pirates ranging through the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean hijacking vessels of all sorts, big and small, for ransom, taking them up to the Somali Coast and then ransoming them to the owners. And it has become a serious problem for international shipping through this major part of the shipping lanes. Numbers of countries and both the EU and NATO have sent forces to combat this piracy, which is difficult to combat because in many ways it's like a cannon trying to shoot a fly. It's a huge area, but it's been effective over time.

And there was competition between the European Union and NATO. NATO, seeking to demonstrate its continuing relevance, had to labor around to make sure that its car got a space for itself. But some of the issues that arose as we dealt with capturing pirates were: Where do you try them? In what legal system? How do you help countries of the region where you would like to see them tried, to build up legal infrastructure and prison infrastructure to be able to handle these? You're talking about the Seychelles or Kenya, that have no resources for this sort of thing. Here NATO has no capability. NATO is not going to give judicial assistance or prisons assistance. And the European Union does have the capability to do these things. It has a lot of capacity to do those things. The European Union has the capacity to train Somali security forces, which it's doing in Uganda. It has the capability to build prisons. It has the capability to do all sorts of things. NATO has naval forces that can capture pirates on the open seas and escort ships, and frankly, that's about the extent of it. So you had a certain kind of tension that existed there.

Another way the tension existed is that NATO is a mature organization, and apart from claiming its continuing relevance—already people have heard of NATO—they think it's more than it actually is, if anything. The European Union's whole security function is a growth industry and it's always eager to plant the flag, run up the flag. It has to—in a way it has to blow its own horn and take credit because it's new. It has to show that it can do these things. And in fact, it hasn't been very good at doing those—the Somali mission is the most successful European security defense mission that there's been. The ones in Bosnia and Kosovo have not been very successful. The police mission in Afghanistan was a joke. And they're still learning how to do this stuff. So, there was a lot of tension. And then of course you have the tensions within NATO and the European Union with their overlapping memberships where, as always, France is represented at EU headquarters, it's represented at NATO headquarters, it's represented in New York, and it's a national diplomatic actor. And like any country, including the United States, where you stand is where you sit. So, the representatives of France at EU headquarters have a different perspective than the representatives of France at NATO headquarters or in New York. And the United States is the same way and everybody's the same way. So, you have a lot of jostling for the public spotlight and credit, basically.

*Q: Well—*

ROSSIN: And in terms of resources it wasn't much competition for scarce resources.

*Q: Well, NATO is—the naval side is, I won't say been neglected, but they didn't really have as much exercise, did they?*

ROSSIN: There were some exercises. NATO has what are called Standing Maritime Forces, which are basically: periodically naval countries will send ships to these things and they'll do controls and do exercises. There was one from the north and one for the Mediterranean. There was also an activity going on the whole time I was there, but it was very—it was a remnant of the post-9/11 NATO mission, which was to do maritime patrolling in the Mediterranean to suppress terrorism at sea, such as weapons shipments or something like that. That had really pretty much faded into insignificance by the time I got there. NATO countries have a lot of ships actually, and they especially in the Gulf of Aden, this area is not terribly far away from the Mediterranean and Europe. So, a lot of NATO European countries did send ships to these NATO forces, but it was always *ad hoc*. Everything is *ad hoc* in NATO except the AWACS fleet, which NATO owns.

*Q: Well, Afghanistan. You were there from when to when?*

ROSSIN: I was at NATO from September of 2008 until the end of October of 2011, although the last year that I was there I was on sick leave most of the time. I got ill. So, I was really there until February of 2011.

*Q: How did NATO fit into Afghanistan?*

ROSSIN: Well, big. It fitted big. When I was working on Afghanistan at the National Security Council in 2003 and 2004, the United States had eleven thousand troops in Afghanistan. We had a hundred and whatever it was in Iraq. And there was a thing called the International Security Assistance Force [ISAF], which was set up in a UN resolution, and which had about five thousand troops that were responsible for the security of Kabul. The insurgency was just beginning to reassert itself in 2004. What happened was as the Taliban insurgency did reassert itself, big time, this little ISAF thing was—which NATO was running, just in Kabul. The United States prevailed on NATO to assume responsibility for all of ISAF and to expand ISAF to cover all of Afghanistan, and the United States of course contributed most of the troops, but—

*Q: What's ISAF?*

ROSSIN: International Security Assistance Force.

*Q: Mm-hmm.*

ROSSIN: And so when I arrived at NATO in September 2008, ISAF was covering all of Afghanistan in carrying out operations throughout all of Afghanistan. It had a hundred thousand troops perhaps and it grew while I was there because there was the surge, and it was carrying out combat operations obviously, and particularly in the east and south of Afghanistan, and a little bit also in other areas. It was multinational. It had all NATO countries contributing to it, and numbers of non-NATO countries were contributing to ISAF, some of them quite large. Australia, for example, just to take one. Singapore. There were all kinds of—and one of our, one of my jobs was to try and recruit other countries to come into ISAF. Although funny enough, the NATO member states didn't seem to care very much. We thought it was important to broaden the membership and bring in people who could contribute, and we brought in about ten countries, I would guess, during the time that I was working in the Operations Division, like Mongolia and Congo. I mean, the strangest countries.

*Q: How about Brazil?*

ROSSIN: Brazil was never interested. Brazil was never interested. Colombia showed interest. El Salvador showed interest. Oh gosh, who else? Malaysia. Singapore, as I say, came in. Mongolia came in. I can't remember who all—Montenegro came in. It was a variety of countries that participated. Brazil never showed interest. Brazil was becoming bigger in UN peacekeeping, but I think that their ideological bent would be that they would only participate in UN peacekeeping, from my experience with Brazil. So, it was a big operation. And of course, had all the challenges that we're all familiar with Afghanistan. The difficulty of dealing with the Afghan—in a sense, if you're trying to build a transition, as any peacekeeping, or peace international military engagement should, to local leadership and eventually local ownership, and eventually you leave. That's like building a bridge and you have to have a pier on the other side. And one of the challenges that we've always faced is that President Karzai and the Afghans have a very

weak foundation on the other side, and it's hard to build a bridge without a pier on the other side. That was very difficult. It was difficult to develop a counterinsurgency strategy as General Petraeus and General McChrystal tried to do in Afghanistan, drawing from the lessons of a much more organized country like Iraq that would be effective in Afghanistan. And that was difficult, but not very successful I don't think. There were a lot of challenges.

*Q: Did you find that some NATO contingents were aggressive, and others more or less didn't get involved?*

ROSSIN: Yeah, there was some of that. I mean—if a country was willing to have its forces assigned to the south of Afghanistan or the east of Afghanistan, then they were the countries that were willing to have their forces go out there and really engage. So, the United States, Canada when they were there, the United Kingdom, Georgia, Denmark, Australia, the Netherlands when they were there. These countries were really engaging out there in the field.

There were other countries that were more reticent about having their forces engaged. Germany is always such a case. Spain was like that, although they ended up in an area that was difficult in the west. Italy was in an area that just wasn't very difficult. I think they would have engaged if they had to. France was somewhere in the middle. They sent their forces out to an area that shouldn't have been difficult and then it turned out to be quite difficult, and their forces, after initially having a very difficult time actually did quite credibly in the Surobi area. It's to the north, northeast I think from Kabul, not too far from Kabul. Turks were reticent because they felt like they had a special rapport with the Afghans and didn't need to engage militarily. And where they were around Kabul most of the time, they didn't. So different nations had different attitudes about this. But the thing that was surprising to me with my experience of international engagements in other places, was the staying power of the international community. The thing that's always surprised me about Afghanistan, and I think a lot of people don't recognize, is that this is, as far as I can tell, the longest serious engagement, international engagement in a military combat operation, that has taken place in any of our lifetimes.

*Q: Yeah.*

ROSSIN: It's huge. I mean it's been going on for eleven years now, Afghanistan has. We didn't stick nearly that long in Iraq, we didn't stick that long in Kosovo or Bosnia. We still have troops there, but we don't do anything. They've long since stopped doing anything. We didn't stick in certain places like Panama or Grenada or Haiti. We didn't even really carry out operations—we carried out bigger operations, obviously much bigger operations, in Vietnam, but at this level actually not for as long a period of time, I don't think. And this operation continues at a fairly high pace. People—they talk now about the French leaving or about the Canadians leaving, but—or the Australians recently announcing that they were going to move up their departure of combat forces a little bit. But what's remarkable is not how many have left, which is very few, but how many have

stayed and are continuing to engage in serious operations. Eleven years after Afghanistan began and in *very* inhospitable and unpromising circumstances where progress is difficult to identify, now the die is cast for the departure, but if that departure takes place at the end of 2014 or the transition takes place in 2014, you're talking about thirteen years after the beginning of the Afghanistan operation. I don't think any of us can think of an operation that sustained international engagement by forty countries for that long. So, it's a remarkable thing in many ways.

*Q: What was the real goal?*

ROSSIN: (laughs) I don't know. You ask me, I can tell you what—others will tell you differently. Those who claim to know for sure, I think, are talking through their hat. And I think it's been a fluid thing obviously. Initially the CIA and the Special Forces went into Afghanistan to overthrow the Taliban. Why? Not because of oppression of women and all that kind of thing. It was because they were harboring al Qaeda and we wanted to get Osama bin Laden and eradicate these people. And the Taliban were allied with them, so overthrowing the Taliban made sense. Over time, of course, it expanded to—not a nation—well, kind of a nation-building exercise. Under the logic of: if we're ever going to leave, we can't make the mistake that the Soviet's made, and abandon it so that once again it falls into anarchy and it becomes a haven for terrorism. We need to leave it standing and functioning to some extent. That's very difficult to limit. It's very difficult to circumscribe that, because it's very difficult to know what it takes to make a place like Afghanistan be functioning like that. And then you get things like women's rights and education and health and all these other issues in one of the poorest countries in the world. It's especially challenging when you realize that in Afghanistan the way that they normally treat women, and so forth, isn't really that much better than what the Taliban were doing. I mean, even if you take the Taliban out, they treat women badly in that country. Then you start having the moral questions, you know, well, what can we do? I mean what are we trying to change? We can't change their society.

*Q: Right.*

ROSSIN: And then you have, as we've seen more recently, the effort to try and refocus on the pure counterterrorism aspect of the operation, and to trim off the excess, so to speak, so that you can reduce your engagement to the essential and what you can achieve in Afghanistan. That makes sense too, except that if you want to fight terror, even after we end our operations, we still must have access to bases in Afghanistan to carry out counterterrorism operations, also including Pakistan. Very difficult to define the goals in Afghanistan. And especially when Pakistan became part of the issue and in a sense, Afghanistan becomes our base, just like Pakistan uses Afghanistan as a rear base, so to speak. Well, we want to use Afghanistan as our forward base for Pakistan, for drones and things like that. It's very difficult to define the objectives. But I was among those certainly who would always argue that we should narrow it down to the essentials. Afghanistan—when you went to Kosovo, when you went to Grenada, when you went to Haiti, when you went to Bosnia, these people all wanted to be the fifty-first state of the

United States when we showed up. They were really happy when we showed up. They were not really happy when we showed up in Afghanistan, beyond the very superficial. Or in Iraq. So it makes a difference.

*Q: How did you feel about the growing importance of drone responses? These are unmanned airplanes launching missiles.*

ROSSIN: As a NATO official and from a NATO perspective, I had no view on this. And the reason is because the drone activity was always a U.S. national activity. NATO simply had no role in the drone operations. These were the covert activities of the United States. And we didn't really have a role in them, so we had no view on them. We didn't comment on them. We didn't have anything to say, anyway. I mean the United States constantly took the position, and does now, that these are essential and we were in no position to argue with the fact that they were essential, and the evidence seems to be that they are essential to destroy the leadership of the Taliban and the—network and all the rest of it. And they seem to be very effective in doing it. Whether they're long-term sustainable, I'm not so sure. We see the difficulties now also in Yemen because they do have collateral casualties. So, that was a U.S. national issue. I was working at NATO. It was not something I had a role or a voice in.

*Q: How did you find NATO worked with the Karzai government?*

ROSSIN: I don't think Karzai ever exactly figured out what NATO was. I remember when I went to negotiate once for basing AWACS aircraft in the United Arab Emirates [UAE], which was not a successful negotiation in the end. I realized that the UAE people couldn't figure out what NATO was, either. They thought it was like a nongovernmental organization or something. And they just didn't understand—they were used to dealing with other countries and they just couldn't figure out something like NATO. Who are you? I mean where's your capital, you know? That kind of a thing. And I think Karzai may have had something of the same problem.

I went to visit Afghanistan once with the secretary general of NATO and we went to visit Karzai, and I don't think Karzai really knew who the secretary general of NATO was, and I certainly don't think he held him in the same kind of regard, liking or disliking, the same kind of respect or awe or whatever as he would the president of the United States or somebody, a national leader. In fact, I think he treated Rasmussen with some contempt. I think that they viewed—NATO military leadership was largely American, and the Afghans viewed them as American generals, not as NATO generals. And if there was a British general or a French general or a Turkish general, they viewed them as British, French, or Turkish generals. The NATO part I just don't think they really understood. They heard about it. NATO was ISAF, you've got to be nice to it, that's great, you know. But what the added value was from an Afghan perspective, I don't think they saw much of it. It just was incomprehensible.

*Q: Well—*



ROSSIN: NATO at a certain point beefed up its civilian representation in Afghanistan. A British diplomat was sent out who was very energetic and I think quite effective in trying to bring some coherence and some political content and aspect to the NATO presence, which the generals tried to do but didn't have much time for, frankly. They were carrying out a big military operation. And in that sense, I think that Karzai found himself with another international interlocutor whom he respected personally. But I still don't think he probably understood quite what he represented. He was a guy who he represented to deliver things for him, and so that was great, but he could have easily been working for the International Committee of the Red Cross or something else as for NATO. I just don't think they really understood.

*Q: What were you doing? Did you go there much?*

ROSSIN: I only went there twice. I went there once with—and once with the secretary general. I didn't have anything to do on the ground and I didn't think it was appropriate to go out to these places and be a burden on those who have a job to do, and take up resources. So, my work was in Brussels, primarily, and it was making sure that whatever political level decisions the ISAF or KFOR or the counter-piracy operators needed from the North Atlantic Council was done. So, there would be periodic updates of the operational plan, there would be the development of this whole transition strategy that now is the centerpiece of our Afghan policy, all that stuff we did. We shepherded, I should say, at NATO headquarters. The international staff at NATO headquarters exists really as a support and a service element to the national delegations. Everything in NATO is done by committees of the whole. And so, the international staff moves those processes forward, chairs the meetings, keeps progress going, drafts the papers, brokers consensus, everything is by consensus, and somebody has to broker it and that's what we did. But it's not an operational headquarters. The operational headquarters is at SHAPE [Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe]—or, at ISAF headquarters. It's a political headquarters.

*Q: You were at the center of NATO. Was there an outlook there of, "Gee, it's great, we've got something to do, a real mission?" Or, "What the hell are we doing here? Our mission is Europe."*

ROSSIN: No, it wasn't that our mission is Europe. That was not the case. That may have been the case initially when the cold war ended, but by now you've had enough out of area operations that that *per se* was gone. However, I think that a lot of the people at NATO, that is to say the member states, the member states are NATO, and also, some of the international staff, trying to make this thing work had a sense that, given the degree of commitment that there is by nations to NATO and the way in which NATO does its funding; in the UN there are assessed contributions, so if the UN secretariat has resources to devote to its peacekeeping—that it controls to its peacekeeping missions. In the case of NATO there's the principle of "costs fall where they lay," I think is the term. So, if Georgia decides to send us, and has done, fifteen hundred troops to Afghanistan and very

good troops, too, Georgia has to pay for them. Now, of course, Georgia can't pay for them and the United States subsidizes them, but we don't subsidize every country that's there. In principle, everybody pays their own costs. And that has a lot of effect on willingness to contribute, ability to carry out the commitments that are made, and so forth. There's a lot of aspects of how NATO functions that date from the cold war period, where the "costs fall where they lay" thing in the Germany context made a lot of sense. But in an expeditionary force maybe they don't.

And I think a lot of us questioned whether NATO was appropriate to handle a military operation of 120,000 troops on the other side of the world with its decision-making processes, with its resourcing processes, with its still fundamentally different nations, militaries, rather than a coherent force like a UN peacekeeping operation would try to create. And I think that, my guess is that probably you won't see NATO engage in anything as far away, as big as ISAF for quite a long time to come. I don't think the United States will be willing to commit to that model necessarily and I don't think—each for their own reasons, I don't think other member states will be very eager to commit. You saw the newest operation was the Libya air operation. That was something that was right on NATO's frontier, right across the Mediterranean. It was mostly an air operation. It was time limited and likely to be time limited. It was selective. Not every country contributed to it. And that model, I think—that and the counter-piracy operation model was probably more likely what you're going to see from NATO in the future. I think the ISAF thing has been a very large operation that really, I think most NATO people, if you talk to them, would think has succeeded.

*Q: Well, I think, too, it seems that getting out of NATO has become sort of the political flavor of the month.*

ROSSIN: Is there somebody calling to get out of NATO?

*Q: Well, not getting out of NATO.*

ROSSIN: Well, maybe some Republicans—oh, getting our troops out of Afghanistan clearly is the case. I mean my general conclusion from my other experience has been that these kinds of international peacekeeping or military interventions have a shelf life of about five to seven years. After that, the string has just run out. Something else has come up, first of all, to take the resources and attention in the meantime, you know. Fatigue sets in, you've worn out your welcome no matter how good it was when you first came in the host country itself or—and Afghanistan has defied all of those things. But it can't defy them forever and we've reached a stage where it's not now. So yeah, I mean getting out is the thing. But NATO doesn't only exist—for things like Afghanistan. And in fact, I came to the personal conclusion that what NATO really needs to focus back on is what I consider to be its two fundamental things that it gives to us. The first is it's the only organic transatlantic linkage that exists, and I think that transatlantic interest is in our great interest. And Europeans I think recognize, again, their interest to maintain. Because when we don't have it, then when there's trouble in Europe we still have to get engaged.

This is a big history. And the second reason is because of NATO you have—European countries don't have national defense policies anymore for the most part. A couple do obviously, Greece and Turkey, Britain and France to some extent, but mainly not. And of course, we know what the history of Europe is when you do have a nationalization of defense policy. It's not a good thing.

*Q: They start looking over their shoulder and saying—*

ROSSIN: Yeah.

*Q: "Gee, country X has got—"*

ROSSIN: Yeah, that's right. I mean what continent in the world has had more wars and conflict than any other? It's not Asia, it's Europe. And so, this denationalization of defense policy and this organic transatlantic link are extremely valuable things.

*Q: Absolu—*

ROSSIN: But NATO operations are not necessary for that. I think what is necessary is to make everybody believe that it's really worthwhile. And in a sense, I think NATO would do best to complete its big headquarters building and always show it off, to have a lot of public relations activities, to have the NATO parliamentarians, but not necessarily to engage in huge numbers of international operations, because if it fails or if it performs poorly, that actually undercuts the operation and doesn't necessarily achieve something. It might be better to let the UN do more—focus on them as a better peacekeeping tool. But NATO—you don't want to lose the transatlantic organic link and you don't want to lose the denationalization of defense policy and your—

*Q: Well, while you were there how stood the European military organization? You know, I mean there've been talks of well, let's not have NATO, but let's have a European military of some sort.*

ROSSIN: Well, this is the European Union, the European security and defense policy. I mean that's how—where it's expressed, that kind of thing.

*Q: But there's been talk about sort of bypassing the United States on this.*

ROSSIN: There is not a lot of real—I mean there are some people who would like to do that. You get some of that in France, you get some of that in some other European countries as well, but not a lot of it because—well, for two reasons. I think one is because most people realize that they don't really have the capability to do those things in Europe, even individually or even aggregated. And they're—the things that Europe has done so far through the European Union to try and do, European defense or European military initiatives, have not been very successful. And they've been very difficult to do and they cost money. And as individual European countries cut back on their defense investments

and defense spending and the size of their military establishments, well obviously the sum of the parts becomes smaller, and not only in numbers but especially in specialized capabilities and force projection and things like that. So, there's a little bit of a fantasy element that most people in Europe realize. And the other reason is, I think most Europeans don't think that the divorce of European security interests from the United States is in their interest in any way. It's not sustainable, it's not sensible. And it's expensive. I mean the United States—

*Q: Yeah.*

ROSSIN: —carries a lot of costs for the, we subsidized to some extent the European welfare state, which of course is unsustainable now as we see in the euro crisis. But no, there's—you hear a lot about it and it tends to get a lot of attention, but my impression of it was it was not very—the people who really advocate that kind of thing I think at heart really don't care whether there's any defense and security policy at all in Europe. And so, it's a pure political expression.

*Q: What about Russia? How stood the view of Russia from NATO when you were there?*

ROSSIN: There were different views about Russia among the NATO nations. There were also different views among the NATO international staff, although I think most of the people in the international staff were pretty skeptical about Russia and about the potential for building NATO-Russia cooperation with the kind of Russian leadership that you've got with Putin and his people these days. It was pretty much what you see. The Germans and some other countries were very eager to build cooperation between NATO and Russia without a whole lot of preconditions or expectations that—from reciprocal behavior from Russia and things of that nature. Other countries were much more—especially after the Georgia conflict in 2008 with the Russian invasion of Georgia—were much more skeptical and wanted to see the Russians walk-walk as well as talk-talk right from the beginning. The Canadians were particularly hardline. But also, the Scandinavians tended to be very hard line. And of course, obviously the Baltics and most of the Eastern European members of NATO were very skeptical about Russia. The United States was actually surprisingly more towards the German tendency. We—in the time that I was working at NATO, I've been gone from NATO, if you include the time when I was sick, I've been gone from NATO for some sixteen or seventeen months. And I think in that sixteen- to seventeen-month period since February 2011, the dealings with Russia have only become more difficult for the United States and everybody. So, my guess is that the lines have hardened.

But the way, for example on missile defense, there really was a genuine effort by NATO to reach out to the Russians during my time to do collaborative work on missile defense. Missile defense is not aimed at Russia. Missile defense is aimed at Iran and other groups like that, and the Russians have just persisted, you know, “Don't bother me with facts,” in characterizing it as a threat. And NATO and the United States obviously, which is a prime mover on missile defense, really bared their chest: let us, you know, tell us how we can

show you; please come in and be part of the project; cooperate with us. And the Russians just wouldn't do it.

On Afghanistan, the Russians were offered time and time again ways in which they could be helpful on Afghanistan. And the ways in which they were concretely helpful on Afghanistan were very, very limited. They actually did do things. I mean of course the main thing is the northern line of communications for logistics by rail, which goes through Russia as well as the 'stans [the countries in Central Asia that were formerly part of the USSR]. But they're ornery people, they've gone back to their Soviet behavior patterns. All they want to talk about is how ISAF is failing to control drug production in Afghanistan, and they create this mythical ISAF responsibility for any drug addict in the former Soviet Union. It's kind of crap. Very difficult to deal with.

When Rasmussen became [NATO] secretary general in 2009, he came in with this idea that he somehow knew how to deal with Russia and he was going to get them to turn, and together, we're going to walk into this bright future of NATO-Russia cooperation. And he was willing to do just about any damn thing with the Russians and for the Russians, and without seeking reciprocal Russian *bona fides* or earnestness of goodwill, if you will. And they just stiffed him, basically. And I think he finally, he really—of all of his priority areas it was the one that I thought he really did a bad job on. But at the end of the day it didn't make much difference because the Russians never—it wasn't like they cooperated and we got ourselves out on a limb and then they cut the limb off. They never got us out on the limb in the first place, because their behavior was so uncooperative. Very little was achieved with the Russians. They're just shits. (laughs) I mean even all this is very—you know, I went to several of these NATO-Russia council meetings when I was there, and every time, the Russian foreign minister would take up more than half the time talking. I mean completely ignoring the agreed ground rules, if you will, just to do these diatribes and bitching sessions and complaining and it was just disgusting. I have to say it was really disgusting. And then in New York we had one, and I remember Rasmussen went and gave a press conference and he described an event that had not happened, which was all upbeat and showing promise and all this kind of stuff. He doesn't do that anymore. I think he's realized that it's just not going to happen and he's going to look like a jerk. He's a jerk, but he's going to look like a jerk too.

*Q: So, what are you up to now?*

ROSSIN: I'm retired. I came back. As I said, I got sick when I was at NATO and hospitalized for a long time with a chronic illness that I still have to get medical treatment for and will continue to do. And when I came back here in November, I started working briefly for the U.S. Institute of Peace as a consultant or special advisor, but that didn't really jell. They didn't really need my special advice. And so, I did that for three months and then I left that and now I'm just retired.

*Q: Okay, well I think this is probably a good place to stop.*

ROSSIN: Yeah. Thank you.

*Q: That's great, Larry. I really—*

ROSSIN: Well, end of a long road.

*Q: Yeah!*

*End of interview*