Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Program

AMBASSADOR JOHN SHATTUCK

Interviewed by: Peter Eicher
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INTERVIEW

Chapter One: Early Years, Family, ACLU, Harvard

Q: Today is February 6, 2025, and this is Peter Eicher, beginning with the first oral history session of John Shattuck, oral history. Good afternoon, John.

SHATTUCK: Good to be here.

Q: Well, let's start at the very beginning. Can you tell me when and where you were born?

SHATTUCK: I was born in Pasadena, California in September 1943. Freedom and democracy were at risk, as they are again today. The war shadowed my family. My father joined the Marines after college, having earlier tried to enlist in the Canadian Air Force before Pearl Harbor because he felt strongly about what was at stake. He and my mother were married while he was in training as a combat platoon leader. He fought in some of the bloodiest battles in the Pacific, particularly Saipan, which became a turning point in the war against Japan. He was wounded twice and received the Purple Heart, lost close friends killed in battle, including his college roommate, and was finally brought home, despite wanting to return to his platoon, because he'd been wounded twice and had a young family. He was a courageous and patriotic man. I admired him enormously, and learned a great deal from him over the years.

My father and mother were Republicans. They were 23 when I was born, a young married couple deeply in love and separated by the war. Soon after I was born, my mother brought me back east on a "family troop train" to her parents' house in New Jersey while my father was in the Pacific. My mother was on tenterhooks, fearing and not knowing every day whether an ominous telegram might arrive, as it did for some of her friends who were also war wives. So the war was a huge part of my earliest life. I learned about it later from my parents and in school, and know it played a crucial role in my upbringing.

Q: Was your mom a stay at home mom?

SHATTUCK: She stayed home with me, but she was never a “stay at home mom.” She was a very successful student at college, and she was recruited in her last year at college by a team of Navy intelligence people to come to Washington to work in a major war effort with other young women from around the country who were similarly talented, in trying to break the enemy codes. They were code breakers, crypt analysts, and that's when she met my father. Like him but in a different way she was deeply involved in the war effort and the defense of democracy. Her work as a code breaker is another reason why the war was central to my early life. My mother's unit was involved in breaking the Japanese code, and of course that was crucial to bringing my father back home in one piece, because it assisted in the intelligence effort to understand Japanese war plans.

Q: *Well, that's, that's fascinating. What did your dad do after he left the Marines?*

SHATTUCK: He was still recovering from his war wounds, so it was a time of some physical pain and challenge for him. He entered Harvard Law School and spent part of the first year lying on his back while he did his homework. I knew from when I went to law school that law books are heavy and when you try to read one on your back you’re likely to be surprised by the book falling on your head. So it took lots of effort, but he was disciplined and hard-working and did well. The war had a big impact on him. He worked with other veterans to found an organization at the Law School called the Organization of World Peace Through Law. This was at a crucial time from 1945 to 1948, when plans for the United Nations were being drawn up, and he was actively engaged in all the talk about that. While he wasn’t involved in the founding of the UN, his strong interest came out of his war experience. He wanted to do whatever possible to prevent what he'd been through from happening again.

Q: That's human rights. It is in your blood, I can see.

SHATTUCK: Well, we'll get to that.

Q: So you grew up in New Jersey and in a normal kind of 1950’s neighborhood.

SHATTUCK: Well, actually, we ended up living in New York, not the city, but a small town north of New York City called Hastings on Hudson. My father was in a law firm in the city, so he commuted on the train. In a sense, I had an idyllic all-American childhood. I was a Boy Scout, I was in the Little League. I marched in all the Memorial Day parades. I was very into all of that. Flag waving was a big part of my life. Again, my parents were Republicans. I remember when I was about nine years old, I think I had a campaign button that said, "Ike and Dick, Sure to Click.” Ike, of course, was the war-hero general running for president. And Dick was Richard Nixon, who would later become a villain in the early part of my career. But in 1952 I was a young Eisenhower-Nixon fan.

Then something happened that made a big impression on me. I was in school one day, and a couple of schoolmates asked me, "Is your father a communist?" And I said, "No, he's not a communist. What are you talking about?” They said, "Well, you know, they're

talking about him. He's a communist," and I said, "Who is they?" and they said, "Well, there are some articles in the town paper." I had no idea what this was about. So I went home and asked my father. It turned out that somebody that he knew slightly, named Esther Decker, was running for the school board of our town. This woman had friends from Hollywood and she was a Democrat. My father, of course, was a Republican. This is 1952, in the middle of the McCarthy scare. She was being viciously smeared based on having friends, but not having any personal involvement with communism.

My father had gone down to the school board meeting where they were debating whether she should be allowed to run. And he told me when I asked him about this, "I stood up and said, 'I think this is unfair treatment of Miss Decker. I don't agree with her political positions, but she has a right to defend herself. She denies that she has any communist connections, and I'm a lawyer and will defend her."

He became the voluntary defense lawyer for this woman, and he explained to me why that was important. He said "We fought very hard in the war. As you know, I was wounded, and we fought for certain basic constitutional rights, for freedom, and also for something that is a little more difficult to explain. It's called due process of law, which is that you have to be allowed to defend yourself from accusations and be able to put evidence forward. You have a right to be considered innocent until proven guilty, and that was certainly not what was happening to her."

As it turned out, the charges were completely spurious, and my father was able to prove that. This had a big impact on me. I was, again, about nine years old, I think, at the time, and it got me thinking about what it meant to be an American. So that was a formative experience for me.

Q: That was one experience. Did you find that when your family was around the dinner table, you would have conversations sometimes about these things, and of the many other things that must have been going on through the 50s and 60s? Was this something that the family cared about and was involved in?

SHATTUCK: Our family wasn't a particularly activist family. But my parents volunteered to do things in their community. My mother was one of the volunteer leaders of the Boy Scout troop that I was in and she also organized community events, and my father was involved in supporting the Little League and he taught Sunday school at our church. They were community-spirited people. We had conversations around the dinner table about how you have to help people in your community. These weren't particularly political conversations, although soon after the Esther Decker episode, we rented a television since we didn't have one. We rented it for two reasons. One, the Republican Convention was coming up. We wanted to watch that, and Eisenhower was nominated. And two, the famous Army-McCarthy hearings were taking place, and the infamous Senator Joe McCarthy was at the center. That was something that my father wanted me to watch. And I did, and was exposed to the battle for civil liberties against McCarthyism.

Q: Did you have brothers and sisters?

SHATTUCK: Yes, I have a younger sister with whom I'm in close touch, and I also had a younger brother, who died tragically when he was nineteen trying to rescue his dog from a flash flood in a river in Vermont.

Q: You were a good student, I take it.

SHATTUCK: Yes, I was a good student. I got good grades, and then in eighth grade my parents felt that the public high school in town wasn't challenging enough for me, so they sent me away to a private school. I didn't want to go because I was enjoying life as a public school kid with lots of friends both boys and girls, in a great community. I ended up going away to an all-boys school in New Hampshire, where it was a lot colder. The school was St Paul's School in Concord, New Hampshire.

Q: That was your typical East Coast boarding prep school?

SHATTUCK: Yes, exactly. Unlike me, a lot of kids there had never gone to public school. I'd spent my whole life in public school, and had grown up playing with kids in the neighborhood and the community. Many of the kids at St. Paul's were over privileged. There were aspects of private boarding school that I didn't like at all, including the behavior of some very arrogant people that I encountered. On the other hand, during my four years I did well in class and sports and made good friends at St. Paul's and nearby boarding schools, several of whom became friends for life, above all Mark Munger, who remains my oldest and closest friend today.

Q: Did you have any particular favorite subjects?

SHATTUCK: History was always my favorite subject in school and in college.

Q: I can sympathize with that - mine too. Stepping back for a moment, where did the Shattucks come from? What nationality were they?

SHATTUCK: Well, it's a combination. My mother was Irish and my father was English. So we used to say we were oil and water, which supposedly don't mix, but we're the exception. The Shattucks go all the way back to the very beginning. They came over from England in about 1640 to Massachusetts. There were a few from Scotland, too. My mother's family, the Murphys, came to the US just before the potato famine, in the mid-19th century. We once tried to find our relatives in Cork where the Murphys originated, but gave up when we found almost everyone there was a Murphy or related to one.

Q: Did you always consider yourself to be college bound?

SHATTUCK: Yes, I was expected to be and wanted to be. I was interested in studying.

Q: And did you know what you wanted to study?

SHATTUCK: Well, I wanted to study a lot of things. I guess when you first go to college, it's like drinking out of a fire hose. If you're interested in studying, there are a lot of opportunities. In addition to history and literature, a unique opportunity I had at Yale was studying Russian. This was at the time of Sputnik, the missile gap, and then the Cuban Missile Crisis. I wanted to know more about Russia. So I took Russian language and learned Russian in the first couple of years.

I was very interested in literature and history, so I took a lot of courses in those areas, including from famous writers and critics, and renowned historians. I wasn't oriented toward or especially interested in the sciences, and I regret that. I took all the basic science requirements, but never pursued the sciences in any depth, and I wish I had. So, I've ended up dabbling more in science than most people, probably because I didn't do this enough when I was in college.

Q: To step back; you graduated from high school in what year, 1961?

SHATTUCK: One more high school anecdote. My first experience outside of the United States was when I was selected at St. Paul's to be an American Field Service summer exchange student. I was sixteen and was sent to Damascus, Syria. So in the summer of 1960 I spent the summer with a Syrian family speaking French. Syria had been a French colony after World War I and French was the country's second language, after Arabic. That was a fascinating and eye-opening experience. Syria in 1960 was a beautiful and peaceful country, part of the United Arab Republic with Egypt under the strongman ruler Gamal Abdul Nassar. Damascus was an ancient city, bursting with exotic energy and reflecting three thousand years of history. With my Syrian family "brother", who was two years older, I visited Aleppo, Homs, Hama, and then down the coast through the old biblical towns of Latakia and Tyre and Sidon, and finally Beirut, then known as "the Paris of the East", and finally coming back up over the mountains from Beirut to Damascus. I had no idea that these places would all be ravaged by war and terrorism in the coming decades.

It was idyllic, and everything seemed peaceful. I met a lot of people I enjoyed being with, and have stayed in touch with one of them. That was truly a different century and a very different country from today.

Q: Well, that's extremely interesting. So you must have already been interested in foreign places and things all the way back in high school to have volunteered for that.

SHATTUCK: I was, although I'd never had a chance to travel or study abroad. So out of curiosity, I applied, I was selected, and remarkably, was sent to Damascus.

Q: That seems like an unusual place to be sending people. I guess it certainly would be these days, but even then you would have expected Europe, I guess. So good for you on that. So you'd already had that experience before you went to college and you went to the college of your choice.

SHATTUCK: I did. I went to Yale and entered in 1961. That was, of course, the beginning of the Kennedy years. Kennedy was a big feature in my life. When I was in Damascus in the summer of 1960 I devoured all the news in TIME Magazine about Kennedy's presidential campaign and talked about what was happening in the US to my Syrian family and friends. I hadn't really decided whether I was a Republican or a Democrat, but I felt like a Kennedy person, and Kennedy had a broad international perspective, which I picked up on.

My other foreign experience developed when I was in college, because, as I told you, I learned Russian. I was a singer and joined the Yale Russian Chorus. We were sent----it seems remarkable in retrospect, like going to Syria earlier----to Moscow in the summer of 1963, which was the summer just between the Cuban Missile Crisis of October '62 and the Kennedy assassination of November '63. The summer of 1963 was a small thaw in US-Soviet relations, a sort of mini-Glasnost with Khrushchev and Kennedy pulling back after their brinkmanship in the Missile Crisis.

There was an exchange agreement between the US and the Soviets, the Lacy-Zarubin agreement, and it called for student groups to travel in each direction. The Yale Russian Chorus was selected to go to Moscow, and we sang concerts there, and got into discussions with Soviets, including no doubt KGB agents. We debated about civil rights and communism. It was quite an extraordinary experience. I was 19 at the time, my second big international trip.

Q: Well, what's your recollection of being behind the Iron Curtain at that period of time? That was about the time Khrushchev was banging his shoe at the UN and things like that as well, I suppose.

SHATTUCK: Well, no, he'd done that a little earlier. This is after the Cuban Missile Crisis. So he and Kennedy were searching for some common ground and there was a missile agreement that was signed at the time. My impression of the Soviet Union was of a very poor country, even the urban environment in Moscow. The food was terrible. We ate a lot of horse meat, including probably some from horses that had expired in the streets. But the whole experience made me think of the Soviets as normal but impoverished people, rather than just as fearsome opponents across the ocean.

Q: Did you have other stops in Europe, or was it just straight to Moscow?

SHATTUCK: We did. We sang all across Europe, in Berlin, Madrid, London and Paris. It was a great tour. Coincidentally, my family had moved temporarily to London in 1960 because my father's work as an international lawyer required him to be there. So I started spending occasional school vacations in London while I was in college.

Q: Okay, so you had sort of the 20th century Grand Tour.

SHATTUCK: In a way, that's what it was, but not the kind of grand tour described in novels. This was also the time of the civil rights movement, and that was beginning to attract my attention more than traveling abroad.

Q: Did you find yourself involved in that at all?

SHATTUCK: I did, in college. Although I graduated in '65, we were beginning to pay attention in the early 60s. Martin Luther King made several stops at Yale when I was there, and I got to meet him as a student. He gave a sermon at the university church, and the chaplain at Yale was William Sloane Coffin.

Q: I heard him preach once.

SHATTUCK: Well, Coffin was a member of the Yale Russian Chorus. He, obviously, was a major figure by then in American life. He talked frequently with us about the Civil Rights Movement.

The Freedom Rides took place around that time and in 1964, the Selma crisis. There were only six black students in my class of 800 at Yale. I was friends with three of them. I had my own personal connection through them to what was going on and I was beginning to grasp the depth of the civil rights crisis in America. When I was still in high school in 1959 I made a trip to Athens, Georgia by train, to visit a friend whose grandmother lived there. That was my first exposure to the total segregation of the South. I was shocked by what I saw. Everywhere we went, it was racially segregated, and very enforced separation. That was the dawning of my awareness of racism.

Q: You were a history major.

SHATTUCK: I was. I majored in History, the Arts and Letters. It was a special major available to honors students who applied and were selected for it. We studied the history and culture of Western Europe, which of course did not include global and multicultural history. Although I got a deep knowledge of Western civilization, history and culture, my college education was limited about the rest of the world.

Q: Did you have to do a thesis as an undergraduate?

SHATTUCK: I did. I wrote my thesis on Matthew Arnold, whom I found to be an interesting transitional figure. He was a 19th century reformer torn between two worlds, the old world of the English aristocracy and the new world that was emerging during the Industrial Revolution. It won the prize for the best thesis in History at Yale during that year.

Q: Well, congratulations. So you must have been thinking already, what happens after college? Did you make any decisions early on?

SHATTUCK: I applied for a fellowship to study in England at Clare College, Cambridge. It was a Mellon Fellowship, available to Yale students to study at Clare, and Clare students to study at Yale. I was selected for that. I spent two years studying law and economics. After that, I came back and went to Yale Law School and was given credit for my law studies at Cambridge, which, as it turned out, was extremely important, because it meant that I became a second year graduate student at a time when the Selective Service system was drafting first year graduate students. So I jumped the queue. I was very fortunate.

Q: Let's just get the chronology straight here. You graduated from college in what year?

SHATTUCK: From college in '65 and then Cambridge, master's degree in '67.

Q: Then, ultimately, what did you do in the Fall of '67 or for two years, if you started as a second year?

SHATTUCK: I was required to do the first year curriculum at Yale Law School, and then graduated at the end of my second year. I'll give you a sketch of what was happening to me politically at that point.

Q: Well, before we get to that, we haven't really talked about Cambridge, if we're going to go chronologically. How did you find going to Cambridge? It sounds like a wonderful experience.

SHATTUCK: It was terrific. I found it less rigorous than Yale, so there was a lot of time to do reading and meet new friends and travel.

Q: Less rigorous than Yale. That would not have been my impression. That's very interesting.

SHATTUCK: Well, actually, you know, I'm something of an expert on higher education, having worked at universities for much of my career. American universities tend to be more rigorous than European universities, and by rigorous, I mean there are many requirements to meet, research papers to write, and you're expected to participate in class. You do a lot of writing, whereas at Cambridge, it was all big lectures, and there was no real written product until you did your final exams. I was frankly surprised by that. I thought of Cambridge as this very high-brow high-powered University. There were a lot of smart people there, but I didn't feel that they were being particularly tested by the university.

Q: Interesting. Was the law that you were taking there applicable to the United States as well?

SHATTUCK: The most important aspect of it was international law. I studied with a very distinguished professor and scholar of international law, Kurt Lipstein, and did very well. That's what gave me my credential when I came back to Yale, and at Cambridge I also

took other courses in economics and some courses in basic English law, English common law.

I also rowed on the college crew, but not the university crew, since that would have required much more of my time, leaving less time for travel.

I spent one summer while I was there traveling in West Africa as an intern writer for a periodical that was published in England called Africa Report.

Q: I remember it well.

SHATTUCK: I was one of their very junior correspondents, and I went to Nigeria. I was there in the summer of 1966 during the beginning of what turned into the Nigerian Civil War. The day I arrived, the Prime Minister was assassinated, and regional factions began to contest with each other.

I traveled through the Muslim north with a couple of archeologists who were doing research. The most powerful and wrenching experience I had was coming on a train from the Hausa north to the Igbo south, to Enugu, the capital of what was called Biafra during the civil war.

Q: That was one of my assignments.

SHATTUCK: On my train trip across Nigeria I witnessed the ethnic cleansing that was going on in the markets of the North. Igbo traders dominated the markets, and were being targeted by Muslim fundamentalists and politicians who wanted to restore Northern dominance by wiping out or forcing out the commercially successful Igbos.

I saw Igbos pulled off the train. I didn't see them attacked, but I could see what was going to happen. And of course, by then, I had studied the Holocaust, and knew what had happened in Germany. This was very much a wakeup call about what could happen in modern ethnic and racial conflict, in this case in Nigeria, but also later what I would encounter in Bosnia and in Rwanda. That was a very powerful experience for a student, and I wrote about it.

Q: How did you happen to become a reporter for Africa Report, to which, by the way, I used to be a subscriber? I don't know if you know that one of my degrees is in African Studies, so I spent a lot of time with African stuff. Did you just apply for a job on a whim?

SHATTUCK: No. One of my good friends at Cambridge, Charles Mbanefo, was the son of the chief justice of Nigeria. I had conversations with him about what I might do that summer. Charles said, "Why don't you come and visit us in Nigeria? I think there are ways you could justify doing that. You're a good writer. Why don't you think about doing some reports?"

Charles alerted me to the fact that there were unpaid intern positions at Africa Report. So I applied, and a position came through. This gave me a credential to interview some of the early leaders of post-colonial Nigeria, which had gained its independence in 1960. Among the people I interviewed was Nnamdi Azikiwe, a leader of the anti-colonial movement and the former first President of Nigeria.

Q: That's really interesting. Were you able to get to other countries as well?

SHATTUCK: Yes, briefly to Ghana, but Nigeria was so huge that I decided there wasn't any reason to go much beyond Nigeria.

Q: *Also, kind of a cultural shock, West Africa compared to Western Europe, I imagine.*

SHATTUCK : Absolutely yes, in every conceivable way. I learned the Yoruba word for white person, *oyibo*, which translates as honey colored person whose skin has come off. That spoke volumes about racial and cultural differences.

Q: And cultural divide, yes, and the searing poverty, as well.

SHATTUCK: Yes, Nigeria introduced me to the third world, and the cavernous divide between the world I knew and the world I now saw every day in front of me. I had seen the world, in a sense, by going to Syria and to Moscow and by traveling in Europe. But Nigeria was a very different economically underdeveloped world and poverty was everywhere.

Q: So when you graduated from Cambridge, was that an MA?

SHATTUCK: An MA, yes.

Q: An MA in '67, and then back to law school in Yale. Now, were you, at this point, just going to get a law degree, or did you know where you wanted to head? Was it too soon for that?

SHATTUCK: Well, I thought I might be heading into an international career at that point. I had a summer internship at the UN in my final year in college at Yale, and then studying international law at Cambridge also pointed me in that direction. But I found myself increasingly drawn into the debate about Vietnam in the U.S. and in the world. In Nigeria, I had had conversations on the train with Nigerian students who challenged me by asking, "What is the U.S. doing by putting down the liberation movement in Vietnam?" When I returned to Cambridge I was invited by a local UN support organization to give talks to community groups about my time in Nigeria, and there again I found Vietnam was the central issue that I as an American was asked to address.

Back home, the debate was intensifying because people were being drafted. Many of my friends were drafted. I thought I might be drafted, and then on top of that----I've told you about the close relationship I had with my father----this was really the first time I began

to have debates, and even a break, to some extent, with my father, because he was disturbed that there were Americans of my age who might not serve their country. Although he wasn't particularly pleased with the U.S. policy on Vietnam, he felt the need to resist communist armed aggression. He never pushed me to serve, and my mother didn't want me to serve.

I was not technically eligible to be called up for the draft because I was a second year graduate student. The only issue would have been if I had volunteered, but I certainly didn't want to do that. At Yale Law School, the Vietnam debate was intense leading up to the 1968 presidential election, and the spring of 1968 was a terrible time because it was marked first, by the assassination of Martin Luther King, and then two months later by the assassination of Bobby. Kennedy. Before Kennedy entered the presidential race I had volunteered to campaign for Senator Eugene McCarthy, the first antiwar candidate, and McCarthy did remarkably well because public opinion was turning against the war.

I was drawn increasingly into McCarthy's antiwar campaign, and as I got further into it, I became aware----because the antiwar demonstrations were growing, and the civil rights movement was at its height----I was aware that the government, through the FBI and other federal agencies, was conducting surveillance and even intervention into the antiwar and civil rights movements, to try to influence and control them.

In March of 1968. I was coordinating volunteers in the McCarthy campaign in Wisconsin when President Johnson suddenly announced that he would not run for a second term. Johnson's surprise announcement was seen as a major victory for the anti-war movement. But beware of what you wish for; you may get your wish but not what you want. Johnson's withdrawal led to a debate within the movement about the candidacy of Hubert Humphrey, Johnson's vice president and successor who made clear that he would continue to support the war.

I've read a lot about this period, and my reading has led me to the conclusion that Johnson was a victim of the war as much as a leader of the buildup. He inherited policies initiated during the Kennedy period, and was a victim of the misrepresentation of facts on the ground by his own military leaders, General Westmoreland and others, regarding how well the US was doing in Vietnam. It was a complicated period.

This is a long answer to your question about where I was thinking of going. I began considering a domestic civil rights career. During my second year in law school I was selected to be a law clerk to a distinguished and renowned federal judge in New York, Judge Edward Weinfeld. I spent the next year learning aspects of the law that I hadn't studied in law school, sitting in the courtroom with a great judge, observing many trials and then working with the judge to make decisions that involved careful judgment and the practical details about how the justice system worked. That really fascinated me and drew me in, so I moved in a different direction from international law.

Q: The clerks of federal judges are usually snapped up by high powered law firms, especially in New York. Did you look in that direction at all?

SHATTUCK: I was recruited by several firms, Paul Weiss and Cleary Gottlieb, and spent a summer at Cleary. I didn't like Wall Street work, and was determined when I finished my year as a law clerk to find a job where I could do hands-on civil rights work. A position opened up at the American Civil Liberties Union, and I applied for it and was selected.

Q: That's great, Had you had any dealings with the ACLU before?

SHATTUCK: I certainly knew about it, and admired its work, particularly what it was doing to represent civil rights and antiwar activists who were targeted by government surveillance. As it turned out, the position I was hired for involved challenging that surveillance.

This was the fall of 1971, and Nixon was president. The political and legal atmosphere around the war and the civil rights movement and the Nixon administration was very tense. My focus was to be on issues of privacy and surveillance. The notorious Watergate break-in that would define and destroy Nixon's presidency was eight months away, although of course we didn't know that at the time.

We found that there was a huge amount of surveillance, including wiretapping, being conducted by federal, state and municipal governments, most of it without court orders or warrants. So the ACLU challenged that. The first case I was assigned was on its way to the Supreme Court. The case involved massive surveillance by the U.S. Army of antiwar activists, particularly the organizing of demonstrations. The case was known as Tatum versus Laird. Arlo Tatum, a Quaker activist from Philadelphia, was the lead plaintiff. and Melvin Laird, the Secretary of Defense, was the lead defendant. Leaked documents had shown that the Army was collecting political information about Tatum and other activists and disseminating it throughout the government so agencies could keep tabs on and influence the antiwar movement. As the case developed it became a harbinger of Watergate.

The government had moved at the trial court level to dismiss the case for lack of evidence of any specific harm. The fact of massive surveillance was admitted. The ACLU challenged the government's motion to dismiss the case and argued that the plaintiffs had the right to take discovery to determine the full scope and nature of the surveillance and the Army's dissemination of personal information about the plaintiffs in order to demonstrate the harm to them caused by the surveillance.

The district court rejected the ACLU's argument and dismissed the case. The ACLU then appealed and the Court of Appeals reversed and sent the case back to the district court for trial. The Nixon Justice Department wanted to prevent the case from going to trial, so it appealed to the Supreme Court.

That's when I came in. I was of course very junior. I'd spent many months in court when I was clerking for Judge Weinfeld, but I'd never argued a case, certainly not in the

Supreme Court, so my assignment was to draft the plaintiffs' briefs for Supreme Court argument by a more experienced lawyer.

I learned about a special aspect of the case that was to prove fateful to its outcome. The case had been filed by the ACLU when Justice William Rehnquist, later the Chief Justice, had been an assistant attorney general in the Justice Department. Rehnquist's name was listed on the briefs at the trial court level, and as the government's supervising lawyer, he had possession and jurisdiction over the very evidence that we had not been permitted to obtain through discovery to prove our case. We naively believed that Rehnquist would recuse himself in the Supreme Court because of his prior involvement as the government's lawyer.

The ACLU's Legal Director, Mel Wulf, had recruited a prominent lawyer to argue the case for us and sway an increasingly conservative Court. Senator Sam Ervin of North Carolina was conservative on civil rights issues, but strong on civil liberties issues. He chaired the Senate's Constitutional Rights subcommittee, and had held a widely publicized hearing about the Army's surveillance program. I remember sitting next to Senator Ervin in the Supreme Court when all the justices filed in for the oral argument, including Justice Rehnquist. I said, "Senator, don't you think we should, before the oral argument, make a motion to recuse Justice Rehnquist?" Ervin replied, "No, no, don't worry. He's just here to hear the arguments; he won't vote on the case."

The Senator made our argument and it seemed to go quite well. But when the decision came down, it was five to four against us. The decisive vote was cast by Justice Rehnquist. We were shocked, and Senator Ervin now agreed we should challenge this. He said, "We're going to file a special motion. I bet it's never been done before in the Supreme Court. We're going to file a motion, *nunc pro tunc*, meaning 'now as then'. In other words, we admit we should have filed the motion to recuse Rehnquist earlier, but we're doing it now."

Rehnquist reviewed our motion and then announced a shocking decision. He said, essentially, "it's more important to decide a case than to avoid the appearance of bias." Rehnquist's decision was a stunning disregard for judicial impartiality. Our case was decided in 1972, before Watergate. Had it been permitted to go to trial, it might have brought to light the Nixon administration's major abuses of the intelligence agencies and violations of civil liberties. It could have revealed far earlier the surveillance activities that were later found to be illegal and unconstitutional in other ACLU cases in which I was involved, and ultimately by the House Judiciary Committee which cited our evidence during the Nixon impeachment process.

It was an exciting time and I was in the middle of it. The most famous case in which I was involved during my time as an ACLU trial lawyer involved a wiretap that the Nixon White House had ordered placed on the home telephone of Morton Halperin, an aide to Henry Kissinger. Halperin was wiretapped without a court order and without any evidence of wrongdoing for 21 months in 1969 and 1970. The Halperin case was cited in the Nixon impeachment proceedings, along with the cases of other government staff and

reporters who were wiretapped by Nixon without court orders, several of which I also handled.

I was the lead lawyer in the Halperin case. I'll recount one aspect of it to give you a sense of its importance. Before the case was ready for trial, we obtained a court order from the trial judge to take the deposition of Richard Nixon, who by then was in retirement in San Clemente, California, after a vote of impeachment against him by the House Judiciary Committee. I flew across the country to San Clemente with several other lawyers and with Halperin and we interviewed Nixon under oath for about eight hours. His testimony made our case and led to a court decision that the wiretap violated Halperin's constitutional rights.

Nixon wanted to talk and explain his view of presidential power. His lawyers kept objecting to my questions, but Nixon waived them off and kept answering. He believed that the President had unlimited authority to protect national security, regardless of the requirements of the Constitution, like the Fourth Amendment protection against unreasonable search and seizure. He ordered his subordinates to wiretap and do whatever needed to be done to find people who might be leaking information. So we had a real debate. The deposition took place in 1976, and it involved some of the issues that have bedeviled the country ever since. The courts refused to uphold Nixon's extreme view of presidential power to override the Constitution in the name of national security. In the Nixon era the courts and the Congress held firm as checks and balances against a president who was abusing his power and violating constitutional rights. Today, these checks and balances have been far weaker against far greater abuses of presidential power.

Q: Well, it certainly was a very well-known and high profile case. What did you think? What did you think of Richard Nixon in person?

SHATTUCK: Very smart, clearly, a man with an enormous vision and view of the world. I think he was trying to impress us, which he did, by his view of the global role of the U.S. But he was also very awkward with people. He seemed to lack the ability or interest to interact with people in the room. Obviously, we were there in a somewhat hostile capacity, since we're taking his deposition, but his behavior seemed odd.

I'll give you an example. At one point, the air conditioning in the room broke down----it was a window console unit----and after a slightly awkward silence when everybody was wondering what do we do now, Nixon suggested that somebody might get up and try to fix it. So Halperin stood up since he was closest to the machine, and he started fiddling with the console. After a minute or so, he wasn't able to get anywhere. Nixon then said, "Well, Mr. Halperin----oh, no, I should call you Dr. Halperin. I know Dr. Kissinger feels very strongly about always being called Dr. Kissinger, so I should call you Dr. Halperin----I know you have a doctorate." He said, "Well, I have a brother. My brother's not really very smart, you know, but he is extremely good with things like fixing machines, and I'm sure if he were here, he could fix the air conditioning." In these few

comments Nixon managed to create rather than break the ice in the room by insulting Halperin, Kissinger and his brother. It was really quite stunning.

Q: So you apparently moved way up in the ranks of the ACLU, then, over the years. How many years were you there?

SHATTUCK: I was at the ACLU for thirteen years as a trial lawyer and then as Director of the Washington office during the Carter and Reagan administrations. In Washington, I was in charge of all ACLU political and lobbying activities on civil rights and civil liberties issues in the Congress, the White House and executive agencies like the Justice Department and the FBI.

The work in Washington was fascinating and challenging. During the Carter administration I worked with colleagues to build support for civil rights reforms on issues like voting rights, fair housing, and immigration, and post-Watergate civil liberties reforms on surveillance, government secrecy and freedom of information. We coordinated with other public interest organizations like the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, the NAACP, Common Cause, Public Citizen and the American Bar Association to create a network of citizen activists to meet with Members of Congress in their districts and lobby agency officials in Washington. During the first Reagan administration much of our work was defensive, protecting abortion rights, voting rights, access to federal courts and working with congressional Republicans who were willing to confront the administration and stand up against the rollback of civil rights and civil liberties.

Q: And meanwhile, just to shift for a moment into your personal life, had you gotten married? Had you bought a house and settled down?

SHATTUCK: I got married in 1970, when I was finishing law school, to Petra Tolle, who had grown up in Germany and came to the United States in 1961 after graduating from high school as an "au pair" to take care of the children of an American family. She became an American citizen in 1968.

Petra had been raised on her family's farm in Westphalia, and her father had been in the war as a German soldier on the Eastern front. She was frustrated that she wasn't able to learn much from her parents about what had happened in Germany and what they had done when Hitler was rising. She knew they had run a "youth camp" sponsored by Hitler's regime in the mid-1930s. She was smart and inquisitive, and wanted to learn more, but was frustrated by the silence of most older Germans when she was growing up, and by how little she was taught at school about what had happened. On her own, she learned about the Holocaust, and read and learned more. Her frustration motivated her to come to the US after high school to work for an American family. She came with the idea of going to college, and after much effort she found one of the few American colleges in the early 1960s that offered scholarships to foreign students. She went to Pomona College, and then was chosen for a Ford scholarship at Columbia to do her PhD, and that's where we met.

Petra was beautiful, wonderful and brilliant, and we fell in love in New Haven and New York. We worked together in the intense period of the antiwar movement in 1969, especially the huge demonstration in Washington, and we made lifelong friends among our fellow organizers. After we were married Petra took up a faculty position at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York, and I started my job as Judge Weinfeld's law clerk. At John Jay, Petra's students included New York City police officers and diverse "open enrollment" students from across the city. She taught comparative politics, constitutional law and civil rights. She pursued these topics with an intensity and passion rooted in her search for answers about what had happened in Germany and how history might have turned out differently if Germans had stopped Hitler from overturning the rule of law and the principles of human rights. Petra's interest in law and human rights reinforced my own commitment, and her search for the truth about Germany led her to explore discrimination and racism in the United States. She was fascinated by Native American history, and later published articles and a book about the systemic injustice imposed on Native Americans by the dominant American culture.

We moved to New York where in 1972 Petra gave birth to our first daughter, Jessica, and then to Washington, where our daughter Rebecca was born in 1978, and our son Peter in 1981. We were a close family, but with two working parents, family life involved complex schedule coordination, especially when we moved to Washington and Petra commuted to New York to continue her teaching at John Jay. Our friends had children around the same time, and we enjoyed many family adventures together. The children played with each other and got to know each others' apartments and houses as well as their own. We were young, happy and deeply engaged in the world.

But our world ended suddenly and tragically in 1988, when Petra died of a cerebral hemorrhage. We had moved four years earlier to Cambridge, where I had become Harvard's Vice President for Government, Community and Public Affairs, and was teaching a civil liberties course at the Harvard Law School. Petra had earned a law degree with honors from Boston University, and was working at a Boston law firm, specializing in intellectual property, while also teaching constitutional law at the Harvard Extension. On March 2, 1988 she was struck by a catastrophic arterial venous malformation and died a week later. I was devastated, a young father with three devastated children, raising them myself and all of us missing her enormously. It was a very hard time, and there was a huge void in my life. I dreamed that I was waving good-bye to a ship that was sailing; Petra was on it and so was I. Our three children kept me going as I rallied to set up play dates, meet with their teachers, go to dance classes and Little League games, and do all the things a single parent must struggle to accomplish.

Then a miracle happened three years later that gave me new life. I fell in love with Ellen Hume. Ellen was a courageous and deeply principled journalist who had been White House correspondent for the Wall Street Journal and was then teaching at the Harvard Kennedy School. We were married on Valentine's Day in 1991, and our marriage and family became the places where miraculously life could begin to grow again, as it did

when our daughter Susannah was born. Ellen and I shared a commitment to human rights, to family, and to adventure. Ellen's passion for justice and the joy with which she greeted each day were special gifts to me and to everyone around her. Ellen was beautiful and deeply loving and took on a large new family, and she became a source of joy for me. Over the years as our family has grown and our children have married their own wonderful partners, and seven extraordinary grandchildren have arrived, Ellen has been at the heart of my life. She's been an inspirational and practical partner in all the adventures we've had together, and she's brightened my days. I'm extremely fortunate to have fallen in love twice to two remarkable life partners.

Q: This is all deeply relevant to who you are and what you do later on. What caused you to leave the ACLU for Harvard?

SHATTUCK: I had been at the ACLU for 13 years in two different high-profile positions. I worked my way through those jobs and had some extraordinary experiences, both in Washington as a political director, and in New York, and traveling around the country as a trial lawyer.

I was told by a friend who was the deputy general counsel at Harvard that Derek Bok, the Harvard president, wanted to recruit someone with a background in civil liberties, civil rights, and constitutional law to work directly with him as a university vice president on major public issues at Harvard.

One of the issues was freedom of speech. There were growing debates at Harvard about the protection and limits of free speech on campus, and the role of the university in taking a stand on public issues. A major example was the growing debate about South Africa, and the divestment and anti-apartheid movement among students, faculty, staff and alumni.

This was interesting to me. I had great respect for Derek Bok, who at that stage, had been Harvard's president for about 15 years, and was regarded as one of the nation's preeminent leaders in higher education. I'd also been teaching, part time, at Princeton, where I'd had a visiting lectureship at the Woodrow Wilson School, and was interested in thinking about transitioning to a university. Putting all that together, I was recruited to Harvard. Derek Bok came to meet me in Washington, we had a good discussion, and he decided, and I was very fortunate, that he wanted to work with me.

Q: That was 1984, and what was your title position at Harvard?

SHATTUCK: It was Vice President for Government, Community and Public Affairs.

Q: Which would have made you presumably one of several vice presidents at Harvard.

SHATTUCK: Yes, there were five.

Q: What did you do? You mentioned a couple of issues. Let's take South Africa first, one that I'm very familiar with. I was working on South Africa in Washington at the time, in the State Department. There was a big divestment movement. It was the Reagan Administration. It was separate development, on the one hand, and the U.S. effort to broker some kind of agreement. Were there campus demonstrations and things going on? And were you the main point man to deal with those?

SHATTUCK: Harvard was very active on South Africa. When I arrived in 1984, the anti-apartheid divestment movement was in its early stages. There were many student initiatives, and there were also alumni initiatives. The divestment strategy that had been pursued----developed partly at Harvard and partly at other universities----implicated the fiduciary responsibility of the university for managing its financial assets in a way that would benefit the university and its students directly, and provide resources for scholarships and the like.

Derek Bok was in a bind. He had been personally involved early on, before the divestment issue emerged, in supporting educational initiatives in South Africa, to bring black South African students to Harvard and support black universities in South Africa. He felt conflicted between his strong interest in South Africa reform and his fiduciary responsibility as the president of the university.

I began to help him think this through. My own experience with civil rights, and specifically in Washington, prompted me to think about how a prominent university president who had been involved in the effort to change the educational situation in South Africa, could play a leadership role in the global anti-apartheid movement without compromising the university and its endowment.

I began to consider a strategy that involved two aspects. One would be identifying and divesting Harvard assets in companies directly supporting the South African government, for example by supplying weapons to the government that were used in the putting down the domestic anti-apartheid movement. We identified these companies and divested their stock. This was a start, but the divestment movement was demanding a much larger commitment.

The second aspect of the project responded to that demand by having the Harvard President endorse international sanctions against South Africa. I told Derek, "You can go to Washington with other university presidents and lead an effort to persuade the Reagan Administration to enact sanctions against South Africa for its suppression and segregation of non-white South African people." After long discussions within the governing councils, Harvard accepted that, and I helped Derek organize it. Based on my own contacts with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, we persuaded the committee to conduct hearings. Derek testified, along with half a dozen other university presidents.

The hearings were about developing a tougher U.S. policy towards South Africa based on increased sanctions. I don't want to make it sound simple, it wasn't simple, and there were many opponents. But the two elements were balanced and principled. One, divestment

from companies directly supplying the apartheid regime, while protecting the university's fiduciary responsibility regarding its assets, and two, support for US sanctions policy in opposition to apartheid. The US sanctions movement was very strong, and it was supported in a principled way by many universities, and the sanctions were imposed by the US government.

What made the South Africa sanctions work was the very large number of countries that participated. This was a broad international effort. It was a significant human rights achievement, and Harvard played a small but important role.

Q: So this must have been in the very early days of discussions of ethical investment and corporate social responsibility and things like that. Were there previous examples, or was this leading a new wave of what was to become a big element of international relations?

SHATTUCK: It was an early example. The South Africa movement launched the modern divestment strategy of pressuring a university to take a position on a political or societal issue. My views on the strategy are complex. I favor protecting the role of the university as a fiduciary. If a university allows itself to be pressured by whatever group is able to mount a campaign on an issue, and it does this in a way that diminishes the university's assets that are otherwise dedicated to scholarships and research, that would be a mistake. That approach could ultimately undermine the independence and integrity of the university. On the other hand, I also feel that the university stands for principles of freedom, fairness and equal opportunity, and it has an obligation to advocate these principles in ways that do not impinge on its fiduciary responsibility.

Q: I guess you had some experience that we'll talk about later, when you were a university president as well. Okay, we've talked about South Africa a little bit. Were there, were there other big issues you dealt with, and was it just these popular controversies, or was there a regular day to day thing you were involved in?

SHATTUCK: I was also responsible for the whole public affairs and media aspect of the university. I managed a news office and a weekly newspaper that we published, and also a press office to assist deans and others as they dealt with announcements and controversies, and there were certainly plenty of both. Harvard is one of the best known American universities and is constantly in the public eye, so public affairs management was a major part of my job. Fortunately, I had a large professional staff to do the work, which I shaped and supervised.

I also was responsible for the university's relationship with Cambridge and Boston and Massachusetts, as well as the federal government, so I had a lot of things on my plate. The community took a great interest in Harvard's construction projects and in its contributions to the cities and local neighborhoods. I managed all of that, meeting with city officials and community leaders to negotiate the dimensions of building projects as well as community access to university buildings and educational assets. My strategy was to be accessible and responsive and provide university benefits to the community. One of my major initiatives was to work with the Cambridge City Council and City

Manager to establish regular annual university payments to Cambridge in lieu of taxes from which Harvard had an educational exemption.

On the national level, I was involved in two big issues. One was the development of a federal policy structure for student financial aid, and the protection of student aid against congressional budget cuts. The other national issue was the revision of the federal tax laws.

You may wonder why tax reform was on my agenda. The charitable deduction, which is the engine of philanthropy in America, was under pressure. There were some politicians who wanted to do away with it, who regarded philanthropy as an elite enterprise for transferring federal funds. Let's get that money into the federal treasury, they would say. We don't want it to go to elite universities and liberal foundations.

Q: And this would have been during the Reagan-Bush One Administration's. How did you find their views and cooperation on education? I remember Bush One wanting to be the education president at one point.

SHATTUCK: The Reagan and Bush One education policies involved mostly elementary and secondary education and public support for public schools. I certainly had strong views about that. I worked with the Harvard Graduate School of Education on education policy, and I helped the Education School obtain funding from the President's Office for scholarships for Cambridge and Boston public school teachers to do graduate work at the Ed School.

But the education issues that I've mentioned in Washington were student aid and tax reform. There was also some targeting of universities for their indirect cost recovery. You probably have no idea what that's all about, but this is also a tax issue.

If a grant is made to a university, the University can take a portion of the grant for administration and that is an indirect cost. Some of the congressional tax hawks, like Representative John Dingell, the powerful chairman of a House investigating committee, felt that universities were overcharging on their indirect costs. They put Stanford under a microscope. It didn't come out well, and the university president was forced to resign.

I raised this issue with Derek Bok, and told him there's a storm brewing on the west coast, and it could very well come to us, so we need to prepare. At his direction I worked with the deans, particularly at the medical school, which received the bulk of Harvard's federal research grants, to make sure that whatever indirect costs were being taken by the university were legitimate. Harvard got ahead of the issue and made sure its indirect costs were justifiable, so Dingell didn't come after Harvard.

Q: Did you also do any lecturing while you were there?

SHATTUCK: I did. I taught part time at the Harvard Law School. I taught legislative process and privacy law, two areas I had experience with at the ACLU. That was

stimulating and rewarding, both because it connected me with my ACLU roots and because it engaged me with law students at the beginning of their careers. I was pleased to be able to do that while holding down my day job as vice president.

Q: That's quite a load. Isn't the vice presidency a full time job?

SHATTUCK: Well, it is, but I had an excellent team to handle the details of issues we were addressing, which allowed me to work on strategic planning and implementation with the president and the deans and governing boards. So I was more a manager than the person doing all the details.

Q: *Did you get involved in politics during this time?*

SHATTUCK: I was involved in politics on behalf of the university. I worked closely with the Cambridge City Council and the Boston City Council, as well as the state legislature, and of course the Congress. Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis was running for president, and I knew him and people on his campaign staff. But generally I stayed away from national politics during my time at Harvard.

Q: Did you get involved in the Clinton campaign?

SHATTUCK: Bill Clinton had been at Yale Law School when I was in my last year, and earlier he'd been a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford after I was at Cambridge. He was talented and ambitious and somebody we were all watching. We knew he was going into politics, and later he began to rise as Governor of Arkansas.

I was a close friend of one of Clinton's presidential campaign managers in 1991, Eli Siegel, with whom I'd worked earlier on the McCarthy campaign in 1968. Eli recruited me to do policy work for Clinton. I helped formulate some of the early policy for an initiative on public service, which later was implemented as AmeriCorps, and was directed by Eli after Clinton was elected.

Q: So Harvard was from 1984 to '92?

SHATTUCK: Yes. I came to Washington in the spring of '93 .

Q: And how did that happen?

SHATTUCK: Eli Segal was running the process after the election of placing people in the administration. He asked me whether I might be interested, and I said yes. My background, of course, was primarily in civil rights and constitutional law, and I told him I might be interested in a position in the Justice Department or the State Department.

The wheels on appointments like this grind slowly, and it's important to line up people you know on the inside who might be helpful. I contacted people I thought might be helpful, like John Kerry, whom I'd known for years since we'd been at Yale together as

partners on the Yale Debate Team. I got in touch with Kerry and others. The new administration eventually chose me for the position of Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs. Several former members of Congress had wanted the position, but the Clinton people decided to choose somebody from outside the Democratic establishment who would not come with his own political constituency.

The second thing they were looking for was a clear break from the Reagan-Bush years. They felt that the human rights position had been subordinated to ideological Cold War politics, and after the fall of the Berlin Wall a new start could be made in the promotion of human rights. So the position for which I was selected was something of a political hot potato.

I was told that what made me a good candidate was that I was an outsider. I hadn't been involved deeply in the campaign, and was not in elective politics, and I had a strong background in civil rights. I had good relations with the human rights community. I was then the vice chairman of Amnesty International. I had been elected to that volunteer leadership position in 1986, and knew many people in the human rights world.

Q: That's interesting. I would have expected a job at Justice when they first approached you.

SHATTUCK: Yes, I might have expected the Civil Rights Division. That ended up going to Deval Patrick, whom I knew very well and was perfect for the position, and later was elected Governor of Massachusetts. I would have accepted that position if offered, but having somebody with my background would not have worked as well as it did with Duval, whereas I brought more international experience.

My deficit was that I'd never been directly involved, either at State or elsewhere in the government, or even on the outside, except as Vice Chair of Amnesty, in international human rights work. My career had been in domestic civil rights and civil liberties. Later, after I was confirmed for the State Department position, Secretary of State Warren Christopher asked me in our introductory meeting in his office whether I'd been there before. I told him that I had, during the Nixon administration when I was at the ACLU and had come to take the deposition of his predecessor Henry Kissinger, who was a defendant in the famous Halperin wiretap case. Christopher seemed surprised but pleased with my answer. "That sounds like good training for a future assistant secretary for human rights," he said.

Q: At Amnesty as Vice Chairman, was your job just on the board, or were you actually involved in operations?

SHATTUCK: Members of the board were sometimes involved in operations. Amnesty is a global organization with a very active board. I'd gone on several missions, and one that I talk about often, was an Amnesty mission in 1988 to Czechoslovakia to find out how the dissident movement was doing. Many of them were in prison, including Vaclav Havel. I met in Prague with one of the Czech dissidents and interviewed her about the

dissident movement. Then in 1989 the Berlin Wall came down, and the Velvet Revolution swept the old regime out of Czechoslovakia. One day in 1990 I was riding the train between New York and Washington, and I opened up the New York Times, and there was a picture of the person that I'd met with secretly in Prague who'd just been named the first Czech ambassador to the U.S. by President Vaclav Havel. It was a dramatic example of the changes that were happening in the early post-Cold War world.

Q: It was quite a period. But of course, there were human rights issues all over the world at that time. I guess on the board, you would have been touching on almost all of them at one point. How big was Amnesty's staff in the United States?

SHATTUCK: It had a large remit, but it was not a big or especially well funded organization. It had a staff of about 40, and a board of about 15. The US office worked very closely with the London office, which is where the bigger staff was.

Q: How did you end up on that board?

SHATTUCK: When I was at the ACLU in the early 1980s, I became interested in international human rights, and was disappointed that the ACLU didn't seem willing to move in that direction. I was particularly focused on issues in Central America, and I felt that the ACLU could have taken some of them on. I got to know people at Amnesty, and became good friends with the Northeast Regional Director, Joshua Rubenstein. I was asked to join the board and to run for election in a national vote by the members.

Q: Who votes? Are there actual members?

SHATTUCK: Yes, that's right. It's a democratic process.

Q: Okay, moving back again to your appointment as Assistant Secretary. Would that have been at the end of '92 during the lame duck period? Or was it after the Clinton administration took office in '93?

SHATTUCK: Yes, it was in '93. The new administration moved slowly in making appointments. There were many personnel decisions and changes to make after twelve years of Republican rule. A few of the political appointees from the Bush Administration were kept, but a lot of new recruitment had to be done. It was a whole new world.

My nomination went forward toward the end of January. I knew that it was going to be happening at the time of the inauguration, but didn't know when it would be finalized. Then, of course, when you get nominated, you have to wait, sometimes for a long time, to be confirmed by the Senate. In my case it took about three months.

Q: You were actually at State during that waiting time?

SHATTUCK: Yes, but I couldn’t interact with anyone but other nominees. I used the time to read and learn more about the Department.

Q: Were you on the transition team?

SHATTUCK: Yes, I was on the part of the transition team dealing with the public service issue that I mentioned earlier, but I wasn't on the State Department transition team.

Q: Reading into the State Department, and how it operates, and the issues you'd be dealing with, that kind of thing?

SHATTUCK: My time was well spent, I think, talking to others who'd been nominated. We weren't allowed to talk to any staff. You knew that we'd been nominated, but if we hadn't been confirmed, you couldn't talk to us.

Q: Well, I was overseas, so it didn't really apply to me on a day to day basis, I was in Geneva at the time. You may recall that's where we later met. And the hearings - then you went before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee?

SHATTUCK : Yes.

Q: How was that experience?

SHATTUCK: It was not easy. Jesse Helms was a big presence there, and he posed about 150 written questions to me, mostly having to do with my record and background at the ACLU, of which of course he didn't approve. He certainly didn't like the policy positions that I'd taken publicly, on the death penalty, for example, or on abortion, or on surveillance, or on suing Nixon.

So what happened, and this is an interesting story in itself, that really cleared the way for me. I didn't have to wait very long before getting my hearing. John Kerry, who I told you before, was a friend, offered to take me in to have a private session with Helms. Helms didn't really want to meet with me; he just wanted to shoot at me. So Kerry said, "You leave it to me. Come in with me and we'll deal with Jesse."

I didn't know this, but it turns out that Kerry had impressed Helms by his service in Vietnam. Helms, who'd never served and probably felt somewhat chagrined about that, was impressed by Kerry. So Kerry had a good relationship with him, and he was pretty good at massaging that relationship. So he took me into Helms's office, and Kerry and Helms were chatting, and Kerry steered the conversation toward Vietnam. He wanted to tell a couple of war stories. He told one story about his experience landing in a Navy plane on an aircraft carrier. He wasn't the pilot, but he landed on a carrier in the Gulf of Tonkin. Helms was sitting on the edge of his chair saying, "Wow, you did that. What's it like to land on a carrier?"

Helms almost forgot that I was there, and as time ticked by and the meeting was going to end, Kerry said, "Well, look, let me tell you about this old friend of mine here. This guy is going to do a great job as Assistant Secretary for Human Rights. I know you're

interested in China, and especially Tibet and the whole issue of religious freedom in Tibet. Well, I'm sure John would make a commitment to you publicly if you asked him that, among the first things he will do when he becomes Assistant Secretary of State, is to go to Tibet." Helms said, "Yeah, that sounds like a good idea." So that's how the meeting ended, and when I had my hearing, I made the commitment to go to Tibet, and Helms lifted his hold, and I was off to the races. I owe it to John Kerry.

Q: That's great. Helms had 150 questions. Those were not all posed at the hearing.

SHATTUCK: No. They were written questions. A lot of homework.

Q: Was anybody else much interested?

SHATTUCK: No, I don't remember getting a particularly difficult time from anybody else. In today's environment I would have been a much more problematic nominee, because of my prominence at the ACLU.

Q: So unanimous confirmation.

SHATTUCK: There were no negative votes.

Q: You started at the State Department in the spring of '93?

SHATTUCK: I was sworn in in June. It was the day before the opening of the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, and I was eager to get over there, because I was going to head the US delegation.

Q: Okay, well this takes us to about two hours and covers your career, briefly at least, before the State Department. So maybe it's a good place for us to stop for the day.

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Chapter 2: Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor

Q: Today is February 28, 2025, and this is Peter Eicher beginning another session of the oral history interview with John Shattuck. Good morning, John. Last time we left off, you had just been confirmed as Assistant Secretary. It was June of 1993, and you're about to head off to the World Conference on Human Rights. But before we move to that, I would like to talk a little bit more about the general framework of the State Department, where you fit into it and how it all works from your perspective. In terms of the pre-swearing in activities, you said that you couldn't speak to staff, but I assume they had prepared briefing books for you, so you wouldn't just be coming in cold on your first day of work.

SHATTUCK: Yes, I did have briefing books, and they were very helpful. They gave me a general orientation about the work of the then-Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs (HA). I was sworn in on June 10, 1993 as Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, the title of my position since it first was created in the Carter administration. It became Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) about six or eight months later. Several office directors in HA had prepared the briefing books. They were very general -- not much on policy issues, but generally on how the Bureau worked. The Bureau was quite small. I think the total number of staff when I started was not more than 20. I also had a briefing book prepared by the transition office, which contained general information about the incoming administration.

I would say that the expectations about human rights in the Clinton administration, at least in general terms, were high, and it looked as if the Bureau was understaffed in comparison with expectations. I began to feel that almost right away.

My international background was substantial. I had studied international law at Cambridge, I had traveled in Europe, Syria, Nigeria, and the Soviet Union, and I had been the vice chairman of Amnesty International.

Q: Just out of curiosity, as you were preparing to become Assistant Secretary, would you have spoken to your predecessor in that role, a Republican appointee? Who was it?

SHATTUCK: Richard Shifter. I did speak to him, and he was quite helpful. We spent several hours together when I was waiting for confirmation. He had gone to the NSC after his time as assistant secretary, and he'd particularly focused on China. So we spoke quite a bit about China.

Q: And then right about the time you were coming in, there was a significant reorganization of the State Department under the Clinton administration, with the creation of the Bureau of Global Affairs and the transformation of a lot of the different functional bureaus, including, as you just mentioned, Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs becoming Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. Were you involved in any of that?

SHATTUCK: I wasn't involved in the reorganization. My confirmation was in June, and by then, I think the reorganization was pretty complete. I had known about some of the things that were underway, particularly the reorganization of USAID and USIA, because those agencies were taken directly into the State Department. The Director of AID became an undersecretary at State, and that was seen to be strengthening AID.

The creation of a "Global Affairs" group of non-geographic "functional bureaus", under a new undersecretary, was not very helpful, because it moved them outside of the central framework of the State Department and isolated them bureaucratically. The Human Rights Bureau had been relatively marginalized during much of the Reagan and Bush Administrations. Its leaders ended up going over to the NSC, so I don't think HA had

much power. And certainly, the fact that it was such a small bureau when I took it over, made it bureaucratically weak.

But the main point I'm making here is that the reorganization under an Undersecretary for Global Affairs, while it may have looked as if it was pulling the functional bureaus together and giving them more direct access to policymaking, actually had the opposite effect. It would have been better if they had continued to report to the Undersecretary for Political Affairs and been more directly related to the geographic bureaus, who inevitably, would clash with functional bureaus like Human Rights on various issues. It would have been better to have them all funneled up in the same direction to the Secretary of State and the White House. Anyway, that was my take after I'd been on the job for several months.

Q: That's very interesting, because, as you say, on paper, and certainly, as the way it was explained to us in the Foreign Service at the time, it was a way to elevate the functional bureaus and give them a defender at the top with the equivalent status of the Undersecretary for Political Affairs, who tended to most often side with geographic bureaus against functional bureaus in different fights that may have occurred within the bureaucracy. So what was the genesis of changing from HA to DRL? Was that mainly a name change, or did the functions of the Bureau also changed substantially?

SHATTUCK: No, I think it reflected a fairly big, almost ideological change from the old way of looking at human rights. I think it was clear that after the fall of the Berlin Wall, after the end of the Cold War and the democratic changes that occurred so dramatically in the early 90s, that the promotion of democracy had to be integrated into human rights policy. During the Reagan and Bush years there was a battle between the democracy promotion people and the human rights people in the administration. Why was there a battle?

During the Cold War, particularly in Central and South America, there were authoritarian regimes friendly to the US and hostile to communism that violated both democracy and human rights. But, and here's the crucial point, the fact that these regimes were anti-communist meant they were regarded by the Reagan and Bush administrations as allies of democracy even though they violated human rights. In US relations toward these regimes, therefore, human rights issues got pushed aside in favor of the broader effort to win the battle over communism. But by 1993 the Cold War was over and the Clinton administration wanted democracy and human rights to be seen as mutually dependent. You can't have a democracy without human rights, and you can't have human rights without a democracy. That became the mantra of DRL.

Now, what about "L"? This was the Labor Office, and certainly it had an important role to play. It had been previously reporting directly to the Secretary but was isolated and had no bureaucratic traction. Since labor issues involved human rights they were put under democracy and human rights, and became part of DRL. I probably didn't give as much attention to "L" as I might have, because there was such a huge agenda on other issues that we had to deal with. There were several officers in the labor office who

coordinated with the UN International Labor Office and Geneva and kept me informed about what they were doing, and that was fine.

Q: *That's probably right. And did you lose humanitarian affairs as part of this?*

SHATTUCK: Humanitarian issues were incorporated into the human rights mission of DRL, and also became part of the domain of the Refugee Bureau, particularly humanitarian relief for refugees. That was fine, because I found, as a practical matter, it was easy to work with the Refugee Bureau. They were right next door on the seventh floor. The assistant secretary and NSC staff who worked on refugee matters were very compatible with my view of how DRL should work.

Q: So the organization of the Bureau, as you remember, it would have been you at the top, and then you would have had a couple of deputy assistant secretaries. Or did you have more than that?

SHATTUCK: There was a principal deputy assistant secretary (PDAS), and then usually one deputy assistant (DAS) as well. In the beginning, given the small size of the Bureau, that seemed almost more than necessary. Jim Bishop, an experienced foreign service officer, was my first PDAS. He had been Acting Assistant Secretary during a short period before my arrival, and he'd earlier served as ambassador to several African countries. The DAS position was filled by a political appointee whom the White House had recommended, and generally that person worked out fine with me. My best DAS was Gare Smith, a human rights lawyer and activist who worked very well with me and the rest of the Bureau.

Q: The Bureau was divided into several offices, right? The bilateral and multilateral, of course, but you also had a couple of other little ones, it seems to me.

SHATTUCK: Well, in the beginning, it was only those two offices, bilateral and multilateral. Multilateral was preparing for the World Conference on Human Rights, which was a very big deal that we'll talk about in a minute. Over time, as DRL expanded and acquired more responsibilities, we added a program office responsible for funding human rights and democracy programs in coordination with AID. David Yang was an excellent director of the program office. As part of DRL's expansion we divided the bilateral office into an Asia section and a Europe section. The Asia section became heavily focused on China, and the Europe section on Bosnia and the former Yugoslavia.

Q: I can't recall when I was there whether there were actually formal offices or temporary offices, one that dealt with the Human Rights Reports and one that dealt with asylum requests.

SHATTUCK: The Human Rights Reports, which we'll also discuss, were managed out of the bilateral offices. There was a team of mostly retired foreign service officers elsewhere in the building who worked directly with us in compiling human rights information on

countries, following up and developing further materials to supplement what had already been prepared by embassies around the world. All in all, it was quite a large staff working on the Human Rights Reports. I became proud of the annual reports that we published during the 1990s, which were widely praised for their integrity and completeness, covering all countries of the world.

We successfully resisted an effort led by the regional bureaus to have the reports limited to authoritarian countries. I said, "No, we're going to do the world. That's what we're all about." Secretary Warren Christopher took a strong interest in these reports, which had been initiated when he was deputy secretary in the Carter administration, and he assisted us in designating human rights officers in embassies to work directly with us in preparing the reports. The reports gave us an opportunity to spotlight human rights abuses, and to highlight certain countries each year.

Q: It was a huge undertaking, and I think it gave a lot of credit to the Bureau. All around the world and with non-governmental organizations, and so forth. I suppose some of the questions you've probably gotten were, "Well, you've pointed out all these violations. What are you going to do about it?"

SHATTUCK: Right. As we know, making U.S. foreign policy is a very complicated process. It's not even a sausage factory, the way legislation is. Sometimes, there are human rights and democracy interests identified in the Human Rights Reports that never get put into the final product, and that's because they're excluded by competing economic or security or other US interests.

I think an important point to make at this stage is that, during my time as Assistant Secretary of State, the U.S. was clearly the hegemonic power in the world. It was at the height of its power, but there was domestic political pressure to withdraw from various commitments overseas after the end of the Cold War, and to get a peace dividend and start reducing the budget of the Pentagon and foreign policy. Even though we were the hegemonic power, U.S. politics became more isolationist than during the Cold War, and later, after 9/11.

This was reflected by the president, Bill Clinton, who, after all, was not elected as a foreign policy president. He was elected because he had campaigned, as James Carville famously said, on the theme "it's the economy, stupid." So this is where we were. And as I got into the policy battles I felt I was caught between US hegemony and US isolationism. I felt this when I was trying to carry out the President's policies in China. The US had enormous sway in the world. The Cold War was over. The bipolar world was gone. It was a unipolar world, and yet the US was a reluctant hegemon. That was the tension I felt throughout the time I was in government, and it was reflected in the huge challenges I encountered in getting the U.S. to respond to global human rights crises. Rwanda was an absolute horror and tragedy, with the US on the sidelines until far too late. Bosnia was very complicated. It took two and a half years to get the US to really engage, and when it did engage, it made a huge difference. That's what the Dayton process was all about. And the crisis in Haiti, which was another big issue we'll discuss. I

was constantly pushing for a greater use of diplomacy backed by force, which became my agenda with all of these countries, with the exception of China, obviously. But it was hard because we were the reluctant hegemon. That's just the background of what we can discuss in more detail.

Q: I want to come back just a moment to the program office in DRL, which you mentioned, because that's probably not going to come up very much when we start talking about countries, but this, in a way, was kind of a revolution. Wasn't it DRL that became what was termed a money bureau, instead of just a policy bureau? It was, for the first time, going to be doing programs. And I think perhaps this also gets back to your distinction between human rights and democracy to the extent there is a distinction that a lot of people see human rights as the finger pointing and democracy as the effort to build institutions and so forth. Did you see it that way and actually have an impact?

SHATTUCK: Our new program office was called the Office of Democracy Promotion. And indeed, that's where the budget was. You're quite right. It involved institution building and support in various ways. Sometimes it was used for purposes of both democracy and human rights promotion, for example, in the development of the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. Those were very important new institutions of international human rights. They needed funding because we had to put together all of the bureaucratic and institution-building aspects of the tribunals.

So, yes, the program office and DRL's role during my time as a center of funding, in addition to policy promotion and development was quite new. This had never happened before in the two decades since the human rights bureau was created. Under my leadership, DRL's responsibilities steadily grew and the program budget expanded to approximately twenty million, working directly with USAID. Now all of that has tragically been eliminated by the Trump administration.

Q: Do you recall if you were the one who started that? Was it your idea? Was it Congress that just pronounced it? Was it somebody else in the State Department?

SHATTUCK: I worked together on this with Congress and USAID. I worked closely with the head of USAID, Brian Atwood, who felt it was appropriate for DRL to take the lead on democracy promotion efforts. USAID had come into the State Department with Brian playing a role as Undersecretary of State. My involvement was important, but I didn't do this alone. It seemed like a natural thing to do, so DRL expanded and became responsible for democracy promotion. This is where new funding was going, because that's where the institution-building was occurring.

Q: You mentioned you had offices on the seventh floor, actually, as I recall, a very nice one overlooking the Washington Monument. Were you satisfied with the office space for yourself in DRL?

SHATTUCK: Yes. It worked out well. We had some office renovations that took place during that time, and then we grew and acquired some additional space.

Q: And how did you suddenly find working with this enormous bureaucracy that was pulling in all kinds of different directions?

SHATTUCK: Well, it certainly was complicated. Of course, I had come from working at a big, complicated bureaucracy. I had been a vice president at Harvard, and Harvard's a pretty complicated place. There are many different schools and centers and programs, and I was responsible for addressing issues as they came up with each of them. So I had experience in the management of a bureaucracy, but I have to say, nothing really quite prepared me for the really sharp-elbows competition that goes on inside of State and the bureaucratic hurdles that have to be crossed in order to get anything done.

I discovered it was difficult to get my memos to the Secretary, unless they were framed as "information" memos, as opposed to action memos. A memo advocating policy action would have to be cleared by virtually the entire building, and could often end up dying a not so peaceful death.

So I had to make creative use of information memos. Here's an example. Very early on, in the summer of 1993, I was working on developing the war crimes tribunal with Madeleine Albright's office and others, and I wanted to assemble all of the information that had been gathered by the Bureau in preparation for the human rights report about the increasing atrocities that were occurring in central Bosnia. I wanted to get that memo up to the Secretary with a package indicating that this was a rapidly growing human rights crisis and the lack of accountability was a crucial aspect of it. The tribunal needed to be boosted by the U.S. I knew that if I put all that into an action memo, it would get nowhere. So I basically wrote a big fat information memo with all this data, with a cover sheet indicating we wanted to bring this to the attention of the Secretary, and we also wanted him to know the increasing importance of the war crimes tribunal, and that went right up to him.

That was a big lesson for me, and we did manage to get the tribunal off the ground. The Secretary was willing to listen to this, and he was interested in it. He was a lawyer himself. He knew of me because I'd been involved in the earlier domestic accountability issues during the Nixon impeachment process in the 1970s and so for me this was a natural first issue to take up. So bureaucratic lesson number one, use an information memo whenever you have something really serious to say. Counterintuitive!

Q: That's a great lesson for your successors as well, which also leads into another question of how you found yourself. Were you an irritant to your counterparts in the other bureaus? Were you sort of the NGO within the State Department crying in the wilderness? How did you see yourself? Or did you get good cooperation from all your colleagues?

SHATTUCK: I'm sure I seemed to be an irritant in that way. I'm a reasonably easy person to get along with, but my messaging wasn't what the regional bureaus wanted to hear. It was all about Bosnia, and I was frustrated. As soon as I got in the building the European bureau basically just turned the whole thing over to the Europeans. It was like James Baker's comment about collapsing Yugoslavia during the Bush administration, "we have no dog in that fight." I was pushing and shoving to get the US to engage. I'd been doing that from afar when I was at the World Conference on Human Rights in June 1993, trying to get authority to have the U.S. delegation push for some kind of a statement on what was happening in Bosnia. We succeeded by working with Tony Lake, the National Security Advisor, Sandy Berger, his deputy, and also Madeleine Albright at the UN. Even though there was resistance in the White House to doing anything more on Bosnia, they were willing to have the situation highlighted by a statement that the US could support at the World Conference, calling on the Security Council to take notice of the increasing attacks on human rights that were developing.

This was the conclusion of the evidence that we'd gathered from the field about the ethnic cleansing that was going on. The European bureau was very hostile to my position on this. The assistant secretary Steve Oxman, whom I'd known when we were law students at Yale, wouldn't give me the time of day on any of this. Even worse, some of the people around the Secretary, Tom Donilon, in particular, were resistant to my efforts. Before I went to the World Conference on Human Rights, Donilon told me, "stay away from Bosnia at the Conference, and if you try to get into Bosnia, you're going to be in trouble." I think he felt he was protecting the President and the Secretary from, as he put it, having human rights go the direction of Jimmy Carter's finger wagging. So there was quite a bit of resistance.

I learned another bureaucratic lesson. The lesson is to travel. Travel and then get back in touch with Washington. When you're on the road, they're going to be more interested in listening to you than if you're sitting in the building, and particularly if you're in a hot spot. And Vienna, at that point, was seen as a hot spot, because all of these governments and human rights NGOs were gathered there. I found that Tony Lake, Sandy Berger and Madeleine Albright were all willing to engage me when I was over there. It would have been much more difficult if I'd called them up from my seventh floor office and said, "Tony, I'd like to trot over to the White House to see you."

Q: I remember that very much being your approach, and you were probably on the road, I would hate to estimate the amount of the time, but maybe a lot, third of the time, or something like that. In the bureaucratic fights, you mentioned Madeleine Albright and a couple of people at the NSC. Did you find that these were your reliable human rights allies? Were there others, or were they not even always your reliable human rights allies?

SHATTUCK: Well, I searched for allies and found them in the building. I was pleasantly surprised to find that Secretary Christopher was an ally, even though he was pretty well surrounded and shielded. I found that Winston Lord, the assistant secretary in the East Asian and Pacific bureau, was a tremendous ally, particularly since he had gone through

the ringer on China during the Bush administration. I had other people at the NSC who were allies. I mentioned Eric Schwartz earlier, and Don Steinberg.

I'll tell you who at the highest level, was a terrific ally, and for whom I grew to have great admiration, and that's Hillary Clinton. She always took an interest in what I was doing. I didn't really know her before, but she was committed to developing human rights and democracy policies that would work, and she was very good. I worked with her in preparing her for the World Conference on Human Rights, and for the Women's Conference in Beijing later on.

Q: She didn't have any formal role in the Administration or in human rights policy. Obviously, an influential person. How were your relationships with the Foreign Service?

SHATTUCK: Good. I had success in recruiting excellent Foreign Service officers, and you were at the top of that list. You did very well. Recruiting people like you and Judy Kaufman as my special assistants, and Josiah Rosenblatt, head of the multilateral office and Steve Coffey, head of bilateral, and others. They were excellent. There were some people who were assigned to the Bureau with whom I didn't have any particular engagement. But as the Bureau became more prominent, more people wanted to work with us, and that was helpful. I think an indication of how much I respected the Foreign Service officers I worked with is the person I took with me when I became Ambassador to the Czech Republic. I took Steve Coffey as my deputy, and he was terrific.

Q: You had a couple of special assistants who were from outside the Department as well. I remember a speech writer and a lawyer who were there when I was there. Was that something that you pushed and were able to succeed on? Were you pushed?

SHATTUCK: These are people who came over from the White House. Some of them were fine. Some of them were good. Some of them were annoying, but I found that my colleagues as assistant secretaries also had people who the White House Personnel Office wanted to take care of, and if they had a particular interest or background in human rights they might be assigned to DRL. There were some good ones. Yehuda Mirsky was very good. He was a good writer and very helpful. And Gare Smith was terrific. He was recommended by the White House, and eventually became PDAS.

Q: As I recall, Yehuda Mirsky was mainly a speech writer. Were you giving speeches throughout your time?

SHATTUCK: Yehudah helped me with some speeches, and I gave quite a few speeches. Madeleine Albright, when she became Secretary in the second Administration, wanted to have an America's Desk. By that she meant she wanted the Assistant Secretaries to get out into the country at least once a week to give a talk. It was a good idea, because Americans need to know what we're doing. So I did some of that.

Q: Then there was a question of special envoys and positions which were established, be it on religious freedom or trafficking in persons or one thing and another. What was your view of these and how did they come about?

SHATTUCK: Well, these were political developments. The religious freedom issue was important, and I played a fairly large role in that. You may remember that there was a lot of interest on the Hill on the promotion of religious freedom through DRL. When she became Secretary, Madeleine Albright created the Secretary's Special Committee on Religious Freedom Abroad, and she named me to chair it. That was before there was a special envoy. We convened eight or nine meetings, and it was a process whereby all the interest groups and religious organizations that were pushing the State Department, or engaging with the State Department, to do more on religious freedom were brought into the room. I helped provide them an official forum and channel their suggestions into the work of the bureau. We certainly improved the sections on religious freedom in the Human Rights Reports. I also worked with the Congress in developing the legislation on religious freedom abroad, reflecting the input of the Secretary's Committee, and the bill was enacted in 1997. The legislation established the position of special envoy on religious freedom abroad, and the position was put into DRL. I didn't have a role to play in the choice of the person who was selected, which came through the Personnel Office in the White House.

Q: And you don't recall ever having policy differences with the special envoy, or feeling that whatever he was doing was messing up something you were trying to do?

SHATTUCK: Well, it was very much toward the end of my tenure there. I'd been nominated and was awaiting Senate confirmation as Ambassador to the Czech Republic. It was just about then that this position was created and the envoy came into the office. So I don't remember having any real battles, but it was bureaucratically complicated and fell to my successor Harold Koh.

Q: You've mentioned relations with the White house a couple of times, generally, in a positive way. You found the White House was supportive, or was that not an accurate description?

SHATTUCK: It depended on what the issue was. The White House was occasionally supportive, but often resistant.

In 1994 Rwanda was our biggest crisis, and there the White House was a stone wall on policy. This was after the Somalia Black Hawk Down crisis of October, 1993, when a helicopter carrying U.S. Rangers was shot down in Mogadishu by guerilla forces who were hijacking and preventing the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Not only were 15 or 16 Rangers killed, but one of their bodies was paraded through the streets of Mogadishu by the guerillas behind a half track, literally dragged through the streets, and this was caught on CNN. It was a horrific event with big domestic political ramifications in the US, and it had the effect of casting a huge policy shadow over almost every human

rights war, certainly on Rwanda, and then also on Haiti and Bosnia. The White House became extremely reluctant to authorize the engagement of U.S. peacekeeping or the use of force in any way to back up human rights and humanitarian responses, so that was a real problem.

The White House and the Pentagon pushed back against entreaties that I and others were making from the State Department to respond to Rwanda. The mass killings happened very fast, making it difficult to get a handle on the crisis. On the other hand, there'd been warnings about the impending genocide.

Q: This was a big debate, a philosophical debate. I remember the time period of the whole issue of humanitarian intervention and whether it was justified or not. And of course, you were kind of a central character in all of that.

SHATTUCK: I was controversial on many fronts, because I was more of a hawk than the human rights groups were. I realized, once I was inside government, that you can't just go around wagging your finger and hoping that policies will change. When you're the hegemonic power the way the U.S. was, you have to be prepared to back up what you're doing.

I advocated US support for a new UN peacekeeping force to stop the killings. I was sent to Rwanda three weeks after the killings began, on a mission that I organized and pushed for, that Peter Tarnoff, the Undersecretary of State, supported me on. This, by the way, is an interesting bureaucratic point. It was Peter Tarnoff, the Undersecretary for Political Affairs, who unleashed me in the State Department, not the Undersecretary for Global Affairs. Peter and Sandy Berger helped me get a small official plane to travel to the countries around Rwanda, to sound them out on the possibilities of their joining a new peacekeeping force that would curtail the genocide by blocking the exits from Kigali. That was the theory. When we found that the neighboring countries would contribute to this force, we ran into a stone wall in the White House and in the Pentagon because of the Somalia crisis. We can get into this in depth later.

Q: You haven't mentioned G very much. Were you working day to day with G or was it just sort of a bureaucratic structure out there?

SHATTUCK: I think it became a kind of bureaucratic structure.

There were weekly G meetings of the assistant secretaries, but then there was a daily and more valuable staff meeting that Strobe Talbott, the Undersecretary, called for all of the Assistant Secretaries in the building, and that took place at eight o'clock every morning. That was an opportunity both to hear what was going on elsewhere, and also to get into the fray and to start pushing your point of view, which is certainly what I did on a variety of issues. So that was much more valuable than the G meetings, which tended to be more bureaucratic.

The “G” structure wasn't really necessary or helpful, and I felt badly for Tim Wirth as the undersecretary for global affairs because I think it, in a sense, sidelined him. He was a distinguished former US Senator, and had been a major political player for a long time, but this new bureaucratic role didn't seem to suit him.

Q: How about relations with Congress? Can you talk about that a little bit?

SHATTUCK: That was very important. Here, my experience was very helpful, because I'd done work with Congress in a variety of earlier jobs that I'd had. I was the Vice President at Harvard for Government Affairs, and then earlier, I was the director of the Washington office of the ACLU. So I'd worked with the Congress, and there were members of Congress I knew personally. I certainly knew the House Judiciary Committee members and the House Foreign Affairs Committee members. There were half a dozen of them who I could just pick up the phone and talk to them as needed. They were friendly, and they would sometimes push me.

Consultations on the Hill were important, especially for the Human Rights Bureau, which, after all, had been created by legislation. Several committees had a strong statutory interest in the work that we were doing, including House Foreign Affairs and Senate Foreign Relations, but also the Helsinki Bipartisan Committees that had been established to monitor implementation of the Helsinki Accords that were so important to the development of human rights movements in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

And so, yes, working with Congress was a big part of my job. Whenever I was in Washington, particularly if I’d come back from a mission that had gotten some publicity, I would go to the Hill and meet with my congressional contacts. I had a very close contact with Nancy Pelosi during my work on China, and she was a very hard driving proponent of human rights. She was constantly disappointed with what the Clinton administration was doing on human rights in China, but I think she felt that I was pushing to do more from within the State Department than the administration was doing, and that was good for her to know. So yes, it was important to stay connected, and I did.

Q: One of the things that struck me about Congress, and tell me if you found this as well, was that I found kind of a strange combination of the very progressive Democrats and the very conservative Republicans who tended to be the strongest human rights supporters.

SHATTUCK: That's a very good point. This one member who comes to mind immediately in that regard is Chris Smith of New Jersey, who was a very conservative Republican, a very strong anti-abortion activist. On the other hand, if I wasn't dealing with abortion issues, he was a very strong proponent of what we were doing. In some ways, I link him with Pelosi, even though they were at opposite ends of the spectrum, but they were each ardent human rights activists coming at it from different ends of the political spectrum.

Q :Yes, I remember Chris Smith, in particular, as somebody we dealt with, and Tom Lantos was another one.

SHATTUCK: Yes, Tom Lantos was probably the most consistent, regular supporter and I'd go and see him all the time. Tom was the only member of Congress who was a Holocaust survivor, and I was privileged to call him a friend, and he liked to consult. He wasn't a coalition builder, but he was the strongest and most consistent moral voice for human rights. Another strong supporter was Don Edwards, a former FBI agent who was deeply committed to civil rights and was the longtime chair of the House Judiciary subcommittee on civil and constitutional rights.

Q: In the Senate, do you recall anybody who was a particular supporter or problem?

SHATTUCK: Well, Ted Kennedy was generally very helpful during this period, and of course, he was my Senator because I'm from Massachusetts, and I'd known him and worked with him, and knew him back when I was at the ACLU. Joe Biden was also quite helpful back in that period.

Q: Were you frequently called up to give formal testimony?

SHATTUCK: Yes, I was. Almost every time I came back from a high-profile foreign mission I would be called to testify or to meet informally with members who knew me on the Hill.

An example of how valuable I found working with the Congress could be was when the War Crimes Tribunal, one of my major priorities, was in trouble during the failed peace negotiations that were going on before Dayton. The negotiators wanted to be free to basically deal away the Tribunal by giving amnesty to some of the worst war criminals, Karadzic, Mladic, Milosevic, etc., and I was deeply opposed to that. I believed, and continue to believe, that you cannot have peace after genocide unless you have accountability. And you can't deal away accountability and say, "Okay, now we're all going to move forward in peace", because that's not going to work. This will only lead to a perpetuation of the killing. So what I did was go to the Hill and mobilize support for the Tribunal. I asked Tom Lantos, Ted Kennedy, or other prominent human rights supporters to make a call to Secretary Christopher, who could then cite congressional opposition to sidelining the Tribunal. In my book *Freedom on Fire* I refer to several examples of the Congress intervening to push back regressive positions that were being taken at State.

Q: Sort of unorthodox from a bureaucratic standpoint, but apparently effective.

SHATTUCK: Yes, well, my bureau was sort of unorthodox in a bureaucratic way.

Q: And how about relationships with non-governmental organizations? You came from that milieu, and now finding you in power, I suppose they were not always happy with the positions you had to take.

SHATTUCK: I had an open door policy and would meet with any NGO that wanted to meet, and would frequently have briefing sessions with NGOs. This is one of the lessons I learned at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, where NGOs were the engine room of the human rights movement. I found that the best way for someone in my position to work with NGOs is to engage with them and learn from them, and not hold them at arm's length.

At the World Conference I had briefings every day to keep the NGOs informed about what was going on in the government meetings and they were grateful for that. I wasn't trying to earn points; I just found that it was important to engage.

On a more general level, I felt that since the State Department had always been a somewhat reluctant host of the human rights bureau, we needed outside allies. I've mentioned the allies that we cultivated in the Congress. We needed allies in the NGO world too. This didn't mean they were going to stand up and cheer everything we were doing. They didn't work inside the bureaucracy, and they were disappointed by and opposed some decisions. They knew I was also disappointed in the U.S. non-engagement in Rwanda and Bosnia, and they met frequently with me about that.

I remember Alison DesForges, a researcher for Human Rights Watch. Alison was a leading critic of US non-engagement in Rwanda. She would come in frequently and would beat us up. I would listen to her. It was important. I needed to know what she thought. Over the years since I left the State Department, people who worked in the NGO community have come up to me and thanked me for meeting often with them.

Q: *Yes, I remember that, and I think it was another important lesson that these are people who are basically allies from the human rights perspective, and they just need a little attention and a little appreciation for the good work that they do, even if you don't always agree with them, or even if you agree with them and can't do what they want you to do.*

SHATTUCK: Yes. And sometimes they agree with you but tell you they can't endorse what you're doing. I'll cite one example.

Again, it involves the War Crimes Tribunal. There was an issue we faced about how the people indicted by the Tribunal were going to be arrested and transported to the Hague, and for the first several years of the Tribunal, there were almost no arrests. The Dayton Accords didn't mandate explicitly that the international force implementing the agreement could arrest war criminals. I wanted to change that.

And so I tried to get the NGOs to side with me, but most of them took the position, as a matter of principle, that they couldn't support a military operation to carry out an arrest for a human rights crime because of the violations of human rights that have been committed by military forces. Only one NGO leader supported me, and that was Aryeh Neier of the Open Society Foundations, who had been the Director of Human Rights Watch and earlier Executive Director of the ACLU. Aryeh understood. He said, "You

know, you can't stand on principle only. You have to have a means to implement that principle." So here I was, the State Department official, trying to implement a human rights principle and not getting the NGOs on my side. It was frustrating.

Q: *On the other hand, I suppose there were issues like the creation of the International Criminal Court, where you found yourself having to defend the State Department position against the NGO preponderant view.*

SHATTUCK: Well, by then, I was no longer the DRL Assistant Secretary. All the controversy around the Criminal Court came up after I left in 1998 to become Ambassador to the Czech Republic. David Scheffer was dealing with all of that. I was very disappointed with the way that the U.S. ended up unable to find a way to support the Criminal Court.

Q: *Okay, well, is there anything else you want to say about the State Department, or the bureaucracy or operations before we move on to Vienna and the World Conference?*

SHATTUCK: Just one other bureaucratic lesson. I've given you several already. Another lesson involves how you advance a contested document that you really need to get through the system, and it's an action memo. For example, a memo calling for the US to call what's happening in Rwanda and later in Bosnia a genocide. The only way to get around the bureaucratic process of clearance was to find people who agree with you in bureaus that might otherwise cause a problem for you. Find people who agree with the positions that you're advocating.

It's not easy to do that, but by the time I had been there for more than a year, when the genocide issues came up, I was able to find people in the International Organizations Bureau, and in the European Bureau who would sign off on this document. Most memos for clearance don't go up to the Assistant Secretary, so you need to study the bureaucratic landscape and then work to try to find the right people. Often, the people who would help me on this were people like you and others who were my special assistants or office directors who would know better the lay of the land in other bureaus than I would. So that's another bureaucratic lesson.

Q: Well, that's a lot of organization, but this is partly a State Department history as well as a personal history, and I think that would be very useful for people who want to go back and understand the bureaucracy and how that fed into all the policy issues that you had to deal with. I think we still have time today to move on to Vienna, if you're still up for it.

John, you had said earlier that it was the day after your swearing in that you headed off to the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna. What were your reactions to that kind of global conference?

SHATTUCK: Well, it was quite an event. It was the first time a World Conference on Human Rights had occurred in 25 years.

SHATTUCK: Nobody knew quite what to expect. It was kind of a two tiered conference. There were the delegates, and we were all in a classic huge delegate conference room like the UN General Assembly. But then there was the basement. And the basement was actually rather large and had many rooms and meeting places. It was in the basement that all the NGOs met.

It was an extraordinary time. 1993 was only four years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and only four years after the horrors and tragedies of Tiananmen Square in China. In many ways it was a new world, but big parts of the old world remained. Nobody knew how it was going to go. And for that reason, the World Conference was very heavily attended by NGOs, who wanted to engage in the shaping of a new world order, some kind of a democratic order, marked by democracy and human rights. Democracy was on the march. Only two years before Nelson Mandela had been released from prison and was elected President of post-apartheid South Africa. Changes were occurring in almost every part of the world. So in a sense, it was a time of optimism.

But only 200 kilometers away, Yugoslavia was disintegrating, and ethnic cleansing was taking place. By then, June of 1993, approximately 100,000 people had been slaughtered in the crisis of ethnic and religious conflict that was going on in Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia. This was not a kumbaya world. On top of that, we found when we got to the conference that the authoritarian regimes, led by China, were going to resist any kind of effort to promote human rights or to come up with a conference statement about the universality of human rights. They argued that cultural relativity and the differences between countries should mean that there are no global or universal principles of human rights.

So the authoritarians formed a block. It was China, Iran, North Korea, Cuba and other authoritarian regimes that were determined to derail any concept of universality. At the same time, because of what was going on in Yugoslavia, there was a very active effort, by NGOs in particular, but also by some of the Islamic countries, to feature the crisis in Bosnia. In Bosnia, at that point, Sarajevo was under siege by the Serbs, ethnic cleansing was rife, and there was a huge crisis. So, at the conference there were two major pressure points. One was the authoritarians pushing against universality, and the other was the pressure to bring the Bosnia crisis right into the conference.

That was the dynamic for the whole time we were there. There was also an agenda that democratic countries had, which was to create new institutions of human rights, including a UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. The U.S., European countries, and other democracies wanted to have these endorsed by the conference and pushed forward so that the new institutions could go to the General Assembly for actual establishment.

Q: Yugoslavia was, of course, on everybody's mind, but I think it did have a lot of worldwide implications. I remember one of the things that got the most publicity was one day when the entire NGO group wore Aung San Suu Kyi masks to one of the meetings, as she was under house arrest or in prison, at the time.

SHATTUCK: Yes.

Q: So there must have been a lot of NGO people you knew there at the conference already, and this would have been your first time meeting with them as Assistant Secretary.

SHATTUCK: It's true, and the meetings went well. I had daily outdoor briefings. It was June, after all, and June in Vienna is pretty nice. So we'd meet outside of the conference, and not have to all cram into a meeting room, and I would describe what had gone on in the closed conference sessions. If there was a negotiation I was conducting with another delegation that needed to remain secret, I would keep it that way. But what I was able to share with them, particularly, were the conference maneuverings of the China caucus against universality. I also listened to NGO representatives who were pushing to get the conference to do something about Bosnia.

Q: I guess you were meeting, perhaps for the first time, a lot of your counterparts from other governments who were dealing with human rights issues.

SHATTUCK: Yes. I could not have asked for a better way to enter the fray, if you will. It was like a baptism of fire, because I had to do everything all at once. I did get to meet, certainly, counterparts from the G7 and the other European countries, as well as the NGOs.

Q:The Secretary of State was there briefly, as well.

SHATTUCK: He came later. There was a big, behind the scenes internal struggle over whether the Secretary should come. There was an opposing camp with Tom Donilon and several others, including some White House people, maybe even Tony Lake, who didn't want to expose the Secretary. He had just gone through the ringer on Bosnia in the meetings that he'd had in Europe in May, just a few weeks earlier, which had gone badly. In addition, they were determined to make sure that Bosnia didn't come up in any speech he might give, and we went through a lot of discussions about that.

I was on the phone from Vienna back to Washington urging the Secretary to come. The person who made the decision was the Secretary himself. I think it was one of his finest moments on human rights. He told the skeptics, "No, no, I'm going to go out there. This is an opportunity to speak about something I care a lot about." And he not only came to the conference but he spoke forcefully about Bosnia. He was very clear. He cut through all the bureaucratic back and forth, and I was proud to be working with him.

Q: Now that's important, and it would have been seen as an omission if he had been out there and only talked platitudes, right? So was it regarded by the US as a successful conference by the time it was finished?

SHATTUCK: I think it was, by anybody back at home who was paying attention. Of course, they certainly would have paid attention if it had blown up somehow. Yes, the conference was seen to be a success, especially the announcement when we got the conference to endorse the universality of human rights. We had to provide language that bridged the gap between political and social rights and economic and social rights. The conference agreed on a formulation that human rights are not only universal, but also indivisible, so that economic and social rights, which were championed by the authoritarians, and civil and political rights, championed by democracies, were depicted as mutually dependent. And then we also got the UN High Commissioner when the conference went on record supporting that.

Q:I think there really was a lot of strong language. I don't know if you've read the Vienna Declaration anytime recently, probably not. I happen to have and there's some quite remarkably good language in there, together with some things we would not have been quite as happy about. With the High Commissioner, the best the conference could do was to recommend that the General Assembly consider the issue as a matter of priority. So it was less than an endorsement, but it was a big step forward that everybody actually agreed to. Was that your first exposure to a major UN conference?

SHATTUCK: Yes. And by the time I finished five years later, I knew the inside of the UN pretty well. I certainly found that the UN is a bureaucracy, but I think we were able to boost the Geneva part of it through this conference. One of the bureaucratic battles that we lost was to enhance the New York or the UN headquarters' work on human rights. The UN experts insisted that that's something you do over in Geneva, and we're going to leave that to them. So the Secretary General's Office never really got connected to the Geneva operations of the High Commissioner and the Human Rights Commission. But overall the World Conference on Human Rights was seen by the US as a success.

Q: Well since, since we started talking a little bit about the High Commissioner, let's follow up on that in the few minutes that we have left. As we know, that went on to a New York negotiation where the General Assembly finally did establish this office. I suppose you were probably involved, from the Washington perspective, on instructions to New York and so forth.

SHATTUCK: I was working on that with Rick Inderfurth, who was the ambassador under Madeleine Albright, and at the NSC with Eric Schwartz. I saw the instructions, and I probably edited them and improved them.

Q: Do you recall if the US was involved to any extent, and trying to do some pre-planning about who the new High Commissioner might be, if this actually succeeded?

SHATTUCK: Yes. And you know, in retrospect, I wish I had taken more action myself. By then, I was so immersed in Rwanda and China and Haiti and Bosnia that I probably didn't pay attention to the personnel issue. Because, you know, my sense is that there was a lot of bush beating by the UN to try to find somebody who would do it. And finally they ended up with Jose Ayala Lasso, the former foreign minister of Ecuador.

Q: He didn't have much of a human rights background.

SHATTUCK: Exactly. By the time he came into my vision, I was very active on the Rwanda crisis. I remember that I succeeded in persuading him to commit that the first thing he would do would be to make a trip to Rwanda in the post genocide period, which he did, I think, in the fall of 1994.

Q: That would have been the very beginning of 1994. Maybe it was a couple of months after that. But I think he was selected very soon after the resolution was passed at the end of 1993, and it always struck me as a kind of a lapse that the U.S. had spent so much effort trying to get this office created, and then didn't seem to have an equal effort in making sure the best person possible was assigned.

SHATTUCK: You're absolutely right. In contrast to this, I was very actively involved in recruiting the first chief prosecutor for the International War Crimes Tribunal. We should have done more on the High Commissioner. I think it was something that fell between the cracks. Nobody really took charge of it, and if I had more time and people, I probably would have taken charge of it. No question.

Q: Well, as it turned out, I suppose if they had ended up in the first instance with somebody who was seen as the U.S. candidate, it might have undermined the office. Perhaps it wasn't bad to get a non-controversial choice to start it out. Well, look, I think we're reaching our time limit for today, so why don't we stop there and I will pause it and we can talk about next steps.

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Chapter 3: Haiti

Q: Good morning. Today is March 7, 2025, this is Peter Eicher beginning another session of the oral history of John Shattuck. Well, when we left off last time, we briefly discussed the many different foreign policy crises you were involved in all at the same time soon after you became assistant secretary in June 1993, and we decided to take them country by country rather than date by date, for clarity. We decided we would start with Haiti. Maybe you could tell us what this was about and how you got involved and where it stood in the lexicon of all the different issues you had to deal with.

SHATTUCK: The crisis in Haiti had major domestic political ramifications in the US. Haiti is not very far from the US southern coast, and when I became assistant secretary in June 1993 many thousands of Haitians were trying to escape political violence in their

country by fleeing on small boats to the US. Of all the human rights crises in the early post-Cold War period, Haiti was the closest to home, and in 1993 this made it the most urgent.

Haiti had a long history of repression and political violence. The Duvaliers had been dictators for decades, from the 1950s through the 1980s. Then there was a short period of chaotic democracy after “Baby Doc” Duvalier was exiled to France with the U.S. government's assistance. There was an indigenous democracy movement in the country, going all the way back to the early nineteenth century, when Haiti gained its independence from France after an anti-colonial slave revolt during the time of the Napoleonic Wars. This meant that Haiti had a long tradition of agitation by its people for freedom from their overlords.

In 1990, there was an election in Haiti which the U.S. supervised, along with the UN. The election was won by Jean Bertrand Aristide, a charismatic priest and popular figure within the Haitian movement for land reform and justice reform and an end to repression. Aristide campaigned on this platform and was elected. His presidency lasted for about a year and a half until he was overthrown by General Raoul Cedras, the former head of the Haitian Army during the Baby Doc Administration. After the coup, Cedras returned to and increased the old regime's repression, using paramilitary organizations and the military to break up political groups and kill or imprison and torture anyone engaged in these groups. It was a very brutal repression.

Aristide was given asylum in the U.S. from the Cedras coup. When I became assistant secretary in 1993 increasing numbers of refugees were coming by boat from Haiti to the United States. Of course, this got the attention of governors and politicians in the coastal states where the boats landed. The Bush administration had been stopping all refugee boats, returning them to Haiti and claiming that the people fleeing were economic rather than political refugees. It was a festering human rights crisis and it captured the attention of the human rights community in the United States when Haitians escaping the Cedras repression were stopped and forcibly returned to Haiti by the Coast Guard.

In the summer of 1992 Bill Clinton’s campaign for the presidency included rhetorical commitments to promote democracy and human rights in US foreign policy. Clinton made comments about Haiti and criticized his opponent for stopping the refugee boats and returning to Haiti. He said at a campaign event, "I would not return these people. They’re facing repression".

But when Clinton came into office, he changed his position. He was briefed by the CIA and the Pentagon, who asserted that the Haitian refugee issue was complicated, and that,

in fact, there were good reasons to turn these boats around. If you start allowing the refugee boats to come to the United States, they asserted, eventually you're going to have a huge flood of refugees similar to the Cuban refugee crisis of 1980. Clinton was familiar with that problem because he'd been Governor of Arkansas when Cuban "boat people" had come to Arkansas. And that became an issue during his reelection campaign, which he lost. In addition, there were Cold War connections that the U.S. had with various Haitian anti-communist organizations that were providing intelligence and engaging in other kinds of activities with the CIA, the FBI and other agencies.

So Clinton, after coming into office, re-endorsed the Bush policy of returning Haitian boat people to Haiti using the Coast Guard. This created a new uproar in the human rights community. My first connection with these issues was during the transition, before I was confirmed, when I was approached while I was still at Harvard by human rights groups who came to see me about what they regarded as a serious denial of asylum rights for Haitians who were fleeing the Cedras repression.

I met with the director of the Lawyers Committee for International Human Rights, Mike Posner, whom I knew, and who later became Assistant Secretary for Human Rights in the Obama Administration. Mike called me and said he and others were deeply concerned that Clinton's endorsement of the Bush policy would be taken as a green light by the Cedras regime to step up its repression. Also, Mike felt that returning the refugees to Haiti was allowing the State Department to downplay the political aspect of asylum and claim that these people were all simply economic refugees.

After I returned from the World Conference on Human Rights in June 1993, the Haiti crisis was in the forefront. There was a lot of news about Haitian refugees being forcibly returned with the new administration's approval.

As I came into the Bureau and learned more about the annual Country Reports on Human Rights, I decided to strengthen the reports and elaborate our assessment of what actually was going on inside Haiti.

The Haiti report had been watered down, and critics were accusing the State Department of obfuscating the facts. I was determined to fix this, and I had a key ally in the Secretary of State, who had been Deputy Secretary in the Carter administration, and oversaw the first Human Rights Reports in the late 1970s. Warren Christopher had a civil rights background from his time as a lawyer in Los Angeles when he'd been in charge of reviewing the Rodney King police brutality case. I met with Christopher, and he said he approved upgrading the Human Rights Reports.

At my direction our bureau drafted a comprehensive cable to be sent by the Secretary to all embassies worldwide. The cable required three things. First, an embassy official in every post would be designated by the ambassador as the embassy's human rights officer, whose responsibility it would be to assemble the material for the report. Second, the report would not be rewritten each year from scratch as it had been previously, but rather would build upon and revise the previous year's report, after it had been fact-checked carefully. If there were facts that needed correction, they would be changed and if there were new facts, they would be included. Third, the Human Rights Bureau would have final editorial responsibility for reviewing the content of all of the reports. The Bureau would be empowered to enter into dialogue and resolve any disputes with the ambassador or the designated human rights officer based on the facts.

The cable went out and set the stage for what I consider one of the best bureaucratic achievements of my time as Assistant Secretary – strengthening, objectifying and making factually accurate the Human Rights Reports. Concerning Haiti, a new ambassador had been appointed, Bill Swing, a strong supporter of human rights who had been Ambassador to South Africa and Nigeria, and he was immediately receptive to improving the Haiti Report.

At the same time, the UN and the Organization of American States (OAS) dispatched a special mission to Haiti to strengthen the human rights reporting by getting detailed accurate information about what was happening on the ground. This International Civilian Mission played a major role in human rights reporting. Within about six months UN and OAS employees on the ground had several hundred sources of information, and this was closely reviewed and funneled into the Human Rights Report.
My approach to Haiti was, "Let's get the facts, let's find out what's happening, and use that to inform our policy." The Clinton policy seemed to be simply, "Let's try to keep Haiti as stable as we can." The best way to do that, it was thought by regional specialists, was to send the boat people back and not cause a political controversy in the U.S.

But some of Clinton's appointees, led by Tony Lake, the National Security Advisor, and Strobe Talbott, the Deputy Secretary at State, felt we needed to go further, and began to talk about the importance of restoring democracy to stabilize the country. I agreed with this. There had been a democratic election in 1990, and Aristide had been elected. Then he'd been overthrown, and he was now in exile in Washington. If we could arrange to have him return to Haiti, that, at least in theory, would stabilize the situation and reduce the repression, since the military regime, as part of that, would have to leave the country. But that was easier said than done. This was a complicated process, and in a sense, it foreshadowed similar issues that we would face later in Bosnia. "We want to accomplish these important goals, but how do you do it? How do you enforce it?"

There was resistance from the Pentagon, particularly from Colin Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who felt strongly that Vietnam and the Gulf War had demonstrated the complexities and dangers of bringing the U.S. military into a situation not involving a direct and immediate attack on the United States. We knew the debates over the use of the military that Powell felt strongly about, and he was not alone. The Secretary of Defense, former congressman Les Aspen, agreed with Powell, and the White House didn't want to be accused of using the military to achieve political objectives.

So, the Talbott-Lake effort, with which I associated myself, didn't really go anywhere at that point because we didn't have a way of getting it accomplished.

During the fall of 1993 I was preoccupied by China, and by major new developments in Bosnia. I made several trips to China during that time. By December 1993 Haiti policy continued to be cloudy, and it wasn't clear how we could achieve our objective of trying to stabilize Haiti, return Aristide and remove the generals.

I volunteered to go to Haiti to look at the situation myself. It was also an important moment, because it was two months before the Human Rights Reports were scheduled to be released. I felt that the Haiti report was especially important this year, and I wanted to make sure I could see firsthand the facts, particularly the issues surrounding the return of the boat refugees, and what was happening to them after they were brought back by the US Coast Guard,
and what were the levels of violence that were taking place in the country.

Q: Okay, John, when you decided to take that kind of trip, did you have the independence to just do it, or did you have to struggle with the bureaucracy to get approval to launch this kind of diplomatic mission?

SHATTUCK: I was invited by Ambassador Swing, who very much wanted Washington to come and take a look at the situation. I don't think I had any difficulty getting up the line approval for the trip. Certainly, Christopher wanted the strongest human rights report. As I've mentioned before, Talbott was working on the question of how to return Aristide. I got a letter from Swing encouraging me to make a trip to Haiti. He may have invited me a month or so before I was able to actually go.

Q: Swing was kind of a master of that. I was his desk officer during his first ambassadorship in Liberia, and he knew very well how to work the U.S. bureaucracy from afar. He always welcomed high level visitors. Unlike some ambassadors who found

them burdensome, he always was looking at how they could move policy forward in U.S. interests.

SHATTUCK: He was one of the best people I worked with in the Foreign Service. Later, after I left the State Department and was heading a mission with the International Rescue Committee to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I was not surprised to find that Bill Swing was the head of the UN office in Central Africa. I think he was sent to every hot spot in the world.

Q: But back to the question. Then you got an invitation from Swing. You decided it'd be a good idea to go. You would just say, informally, to Strobe Talbott or Tim Wirth, or whoever it was, "I'm going next week." Or did you have to send a memo?

SHATTUCK: I did this one by the book. It was not so urgent that I had to leave that night, so I prepared a memo with an explanation of what I hoped to accomplish, that it was a fact-finding mission to test the facts that were being accumulated for the Human Rights Report and for whatever ultimate policy we were going to have. The only policy we had at that time was the automatic capturing and return of the refugee boats on the high seas.

Q: You mentioned the international civilian mission (ICM), a partially U.S.-sponsored effort with the OAS and the United Nations. Were you involved in that getting established?

SHATTUCK: It wasn't fully up and running until just about the time that I went down on the trip in December 1993. Colin Granderson, a senior UN human rights official, was named head of the Mission, and Ian Martin, whom I had known for many years, the former Secretary General of Amnesty International, was the deputy head. It was a distinguished group, and I was in touch with Granderson and Martin. There were ultimately about 200 people in the ICM, who were being recruited at that stage.

In Port au Prince I attended a particularly moving event on Human Rights Day, December 10, 1993. The event was sponsored by Bill Swing and the embassy, and honored advocates and organizers of human rights work in Haiti. Two were priests, one of whom had been murdered by the regime three months earlier, and the other with whom I had a long discussion, and who was murdered four months later. His name was Jean-Marie Vincent. The priests were profiles in courage who had put themselves on the line by running church-based human rights organizations in Haiti.

I also met with the International Civilian Mission about the spike in murders and violent attacks that had recently taken place. I wanted to arrange a systematic way of reporting this kind of information to the embassy. Bill Swing was eager to do that; it was a question of getting the information channel organized more effectively.

I felt that it was important for me to witness firsthand the Coast Guard process of returning the refugees. I went to the docks with an embassy political officer and we asked for permission to board a Coast Guard cutter that had just landed with a boatload of refugees. The captain agreed to let us board. His cutter had several hundred Haitians picked up from a small boat built to hold only about 25. When the cutter had reached the boat at sea, it was dangerously overloaded and could have sunk. The captain told us "it was a good thing we picked them up."

I spoke with the Haitians on board. They said that they or their relatives had been beaten up by paramilitary gangs in their neighborhoods, which was why they had taken the risk to flee by small boat. They were looking for political asylum. They said they had filed asylum claims with asylum officers designated by the embassy, or they were getting ready to do that. They firmly believed that their safety and their lives were at stake and they needed to flee.

I'd been told off the record by embassy staff that boat people returned by the Coast Guard would be met on the docks by paramilitary people or gangs or small groups that would take them away. I wanted to see whether that would happen. I watched the refugees as they left the boat and made their way down the docks. They were intercepted by gangs and taken away with no one to protect them. There was no security other than the regime police, who were friendly to the gangs.

I couldn't see where the returned refugees were being taken after they left the dock. I heard later from the embassy that the group was taken to a prison where they were locked up. What kind of treatment were they getting? Who knows?

The embassy---and I credit the Ambassador---made a request immediately to the Cedras government to release these people, saying they were refugees who had filed for asylum in the US and should be freed.

I was disturbed by what I'd seen. This was evidence of what was being reported, what the human rights groups had been saying to me. I asked Bill Swing, before we had our routine exit press briefing, "Bill, what do you think? It doesn't seem right to stop fleeing refugees and bring them back here and leave them to the wiles of the regime."

He agreed, "I think there ought to be a way to protect these individuals, other than just dumping them back into the midst of the repression." In the press briefing, I reported in detail what I'd seen, and I said, "I'm returning to Washington, and I believe we should consider altering the practice of automatically returning refugees to Haiti, because their lives are in danger when they are put back in this situation with no protection."

The New York Times published a story that night suggesting that the U.S. was beginning to think about a change of policy. I went to bed, and the next morning woke up to another story headed "U.S. official rebuked for calling for policy change in Haiti." An anonymous source was quoted as saying, "Shattuck is going to get a dressing down from Under Secretary Peter Tarnoff when he comes back to the State Department."

I went into the State Department after returning to Washington, and I met Peter Tarnoff as we were heading to meetings at the same time. P greeted me in a friendly manner and said, "I don't think we can really change the policy now, but the Secretary would like you to come to the working group on Haiti this afternoon."

There was an editorial in the *New York Times* the following day which I'm sure whoever was leaking the "rebuke" story was not happy with. The editorial opened with, "John Shattuck is the Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights. He's also an honest man." It described what I had done and what I said about what I had seen, and it concluded that my reporting didn't deserve a rebuke. Then Murray Kempton, a columnist for *The New York Post,* which at that point was more moderate than it is today, wrote an op ed in the *Long Island Newsday* which commented on what I had said. "This is the kind of public service that we need in this country, to have honest diplomats, particularly in the field of human rights."

Q: Were you, in fact, ever rebuked?

SHATTUCK: No. Nor did the anonymous source ever surface. I started meeting with the Haiti working group, chaired by Strobe Talbott, the Deputy Secretary. I give Strobe credit for the policy change that was announced five weeks later. The new policy was that Haitian refugees would no longer be returned by boat to Haiti, and instead, would be sent to holding centers in Guantanamo or elsewhere in the region where they would be safe, and couldn't be picked up by the Cedras regime. The policy change was the beginning of a process that led to the return of Aristide in the fall. So I consider my trip to have been a success.

Q: That's tremendous if it really was the launching pad for the change in policy. You've mentioned the White House a few times. Did you find that President Clinton or his top

advisors were substantially changing their views? They must have signed off on this policy change.

SHATTUCK: Yes, they changed their views. The political atmospherics that were occurring during this time stimulated the change.

Haiti was getting increasing attention in the U.S. press. The refugee crisis became a big issue for civil rights groups and for the Congressional Black Caucus and other civil rights supporters in Congress. They called for a two-part change of policy: first, not returning refugees forcibly to Haiti (that's illegal "*refoulement*" under international law), and second, restoring Aristide from his exile in Washington to Haiti. So there was a growing Haiti human rights lobby, and there was a hunger strike by a prominent civil rights activist, Randall Robinson, and the White House took note of all this.

There was also another source of pressure on the White House, and that was Southern governors. The governors had initially applauded that the Coast Guard was taking all these refugees away from their shores. But when they realized that this might be addressed by diverting the refugees and not sending them back, and by improving the situation in Haiti and facilitating Aristide's return, they began to press for the new policy.

Q: At that point, was this the beginning of a change in asylum policy generally from "a well-founded fear of persecution" to 'this is a dangerous country, and so I seek asylum on that more general basis.'

SHATTUCK: Yes, I think so. This had earlier, to some extent, been the case for the Cuban boat people. That was during the Cold War, so there was an ideological component to that, to be sure, and therefore demonstrating the traditional asylum basis of direct political persecution may have been easier with Castro in Cuba. But what happened in the Cuban case, and then also in the Haiti case is the development of a "temporary refugee status", pending political changes in the country from which refugees are fleeing. The best route, of course, was to improve the human rights situation, and that was at the heart of Clinton's evolving Haiti policy.

I was invited to an important meeting in the White House when our reporting about the human rights conditions in Haiti had become prominent. I got a call from Sandy Berger, the Deputy National Security Advisor, who told me "Tony Lake would like you to brief the President on what you're seeing in Haiti, and bring photos." That was in September 1994, as Clinton was considering sending the U.S. military in a peaceful and non-combatant intervention to support the return of Aristide.

I gathered the best evidence that I had of the increasing numbers and types of political killings. By that stage, some 700 or 800 political killings had taken place in Haiti during 1993 to '94, together with increasing torture and violent political attacks on regime opponents. Many of these crimes had been committed with machetes, with people killed or tortured by having parts of their body cut off.

This was brutal political repression, but it made good photographic evidence. I tried to get the embassy and the ICM to produce photographs, but they couldn't assemble them quickly enough. I had about 48 hours before briefing Clinton, so I turned to Amnesty International, where I had contacts from my time as vice chair. I told them I urgently needed authenticated photos of torture or political killing or attack victims for our human rights reporting. Within an hour or two Amnesty delivered a large packet of photos to my office.

Q: *Well, embassies don't usually collect photographs, you know.*

SHATTUCK: That's true, and of course, we didn't have photos in the Human Rights Report. But now I had them. I went into the Oval Office, spread out the photos on the coffee table and prepared to brief Clinton. When he came in he said, "I want to see your photos." He sat down and studied them for several minutes, and then swore quietly, "those bastards, this is inhumane."

The President was moved by what he saw. Two days later, he went on television and addressed the nation. He explained that regional security and human rights were gravely endangered by what was happening in Haiti. He gave an ultimatum to Cedras, "It's time to leave. We will escort you out with the military." The ultimatum was a result of our human rights reporting.

Q: Had Cedras been consulted? What if he had said, "I will not be escorted out."

SHATTUCK: In the winter of '93 to '94, after my trip to Haiti, Clinton's Special Envoy for Haiti, Larry Pezzulo, had a series of meetings with representatives of Cedras and his fellow coup leaders on Governor's Island in the New York Harbor. They reached what was known as the Governor's Island Accord, which was an agreement by Cedras that he would step down under the protection of the US by October 30, 1994.

But it wasn't clear how he was going to be made to step down until Clinton got the Defense Department to agree that this would be an appropriate use of the U.S. military. It led to a new doctrine being developed, the doctrine of diplomacy backed by force. It was a doctrine that became extremely important a year later in Bosnia when NATO was

brought in to clear the way for the Dayton peace process by using NATO air power to push back the Bosnian Serbs, who were committing massive human rights crimes in order to seize Bosnian territory.

Q: That wouldn't yet have been seen, or would it, as humanitarian intervention? Was this like a peaceful transition? The Haitians to it, the Defense Department agreed, because they knew, or hoped at least, that the whole thing was going to be peaceful?

SHATTUCK: Well, there were no shots fired. One of the reasons for that was that Clinton designated a three-person negotiating team to go in and meet with Cedras a week before the final deadline. The team consisted of Jimmy Carter, Sam Nunn and Colin Powell. Clinton chose this potentially unwieldy trio of negotiators in order to gain political support in Congress for a peaceful intervention. In doing so, he took a risk that the generals were going to think, well, there are two presidents here. There's Carter, we know about him, and then there's this new guy, Clinton. Not only that, but there are two Secretaries of Defense, and we know Colin Powell, but who knows Clinton's new guy?

The negotiations went back and forth, and at one point there was an unacceptable proposal by Cedras and his team that they be allowed to stay in Haiti until the parliament ratified their abdication. That was completely unacceptable to the US. Clinton then came back and emphatically said, "No, you've got to go. Your time is up. We will assist you in getting to your exile." The one thing that Cedras got, which, in retrospect, was a pretty high human rights price, was essentially an amnesty. There was no accountability for any of the criminal actions of the gangs that were reporting to Cedras. He got a pretty good deal in that sense, but most importantly not a shot was fired when the troops arrived.

The only show of force was a day or two after the US Mountain Division troops came in. They occupied the headquarters of the largest paramilitary group reporting to Cedras. The troops took it over by bristling with arms and demonstrating that they were in charge, which was essential.

After the military intervention, I was sent by the White House to meet with Aristide in Washington to pave the way for his return. He had met with other US officials, but he knew the important role the Human Rights Bureau had played in gathering evidence for Clinton of the Cedras regime's brutal repression. We had a special credibility with Aristide. He was skeptical about others in the administration because of the way in which the policy of refugee interdiction and return had been carried out. Aristide saw that as extremely detrimental to his people in Haiti, many of whom----including his closest advisors----were seeking asylum.

So I was sent to meet with Aristide to make sure that he would return to Haiti. One of the most dramatic moments of my time working on Haiti, was sitting in Aristide's living room in his modest apartment near Chinatown in Washington, watching CNN with him when Cedras was announcing that he was stepping down. It was an important moment for Aristide to witness, to actually see that it was happening, because he might not have believed it otherwise.

Q: So, he didn't have to worry about being arrested as soon as he stepped off the plane.

SHATTUCK: Right.

Q: Were you also asked to, or did you, in any way, on your own initiative, speak to him about the importance of upholding human rights when he got back to office?

SHATTUCK: It's an important question. I did, but I'm not sure he listened. I made several more trips to Haiti after Aristide's return to convey to him the importance of institution building and the rule of law, but my appeal may have fallen on deaf ears after the withdrawal of the US military. Aristide became a disappointment and, as time went on, he basically fell prey to the Haitian method of governing, which was to surround yourself with people you could count on, since there were no institutions and no rule of law, and you wanted your people to attack and make things difficult for your enemies, and that's what he did. There was also big corruption that went along with Aristide's rule, so the whole thing was tragic.

Once the U.S. made a commitment to Haiti, I wanted to see a longer term commitment. I couldn't imagine that within six months, which was the length of time that Congress insisted on, that we could assist Aristide and his new government in building the police, the military, and an independent judiciary. Congress wanted a six-month exit strategy for the U.S. military, but the military was critical. It was the only source of security in the country.

This meant that nation building by Haitians in partnership with the international community was impossible. We could stabilize the situation in the short term. We could make Haiti more livable and reduce the incentive for Haitians to flee in the short term, but the institutions couldn't be built. I and several others in the State Department were in favor of a much longer-term commitment. Wendy Sherman, who was the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, took the soundings on the Hill, and she said, "You can't get more than six months," and so the White House said, "We have to go with six months." But to make the policy a long-term success we should have stayed in. The

counter argument, of course, was, "Who knows, you could be in for a much longer period, and it would still not be a success."

Q: Yes. Was this called nation building at the time, or was that a later term of art?

SHATTUCK: No, it wasn't called nation building. This was a new concept not yet conceived as a policy. One of the reasons I wanted to start with Haiti in this oral history is that the first foreign policy human rights crisis during my tenure as assistant secretary in the early post-Cold War period seemed at the time to be a short-term problem, but in fact it was a bigger problem that required a longer term commitment, and that was not acceptable politically at the time.

Q: Do you recall if there was a broader policy of, "Oh, let's get AID in there." Or was that sort of an afterthought?

SHATTUCK: It was pretty systematically thought through. Brian Atwood and AID were involved. The priorities were rebuilding the military; rebuilding the police, and that meant police training and essentially establishing a police academy and finding suitable recruits. It also meant carrying out a disarmament program. How do you disarm people who are members of paramilitary gangs, who might become members of the police, or the military? Above all, the justice system had to be built from the ground up -- establishing the courts and a system of justice that could back up the work of the police. All of the elements of AID were there. For a short burst of energy, they were there, but when the US military left after six months, there was no way to continue to provide security and the security began to break down. Aristide had to rely on his own devices and he entered back into the environment of violence that has affected Haiti ever since. I don't regret what we did, but if there was a single clear lesson, it's that you cannot go into a country and provide security for six months and hope that you can fix everything during that time.

Q: Now, a side issue as to why this is all very interesting. Aristide's return is a previous oral history I did with the Diplomatic Security Officer from the State Department who led Aristide's personal protection detail as he was returned to Port au Prince, and who had to set up their version of a White House to make sure that the returned president was safe while he was there. So, after six months what happened? We just pulled out the military, and it was a slow deterioration?

SHATTUCK: Yes, the appropriation ended in June 1994. At that stage, the administration was in the middle of an intense period of other competing human rights

crises. Everything was falling apart in Bosnia as the violence increased, and Clinton's China MFN policy had run aground. And Rwanda was a catastrophe.

Ironically, in Rwanda, even though the U.S. was tragically unwilling to intervene to prevent or reduce genocide, in the post-genocide period the US became much more actively involved, in contrast to Haiti. In the Rwanda post-genocide period, the US led the effort to create the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and it provided major assistance to the rebuilding of the Rwandan justice system over a longer period of time.

Q: Yes, we will be getting to that, with Rwanda, but with Haiti, let me just follow up on a couple of things. Did the Haitians who had been admitted to the United States go back when Aristide did? Was there another crisis of refugees when order started breaking down again after six months, what happened with that whole aspect of the situation?

SHATTUCK: I don't know how many Haitians in exile in the US went back after Aristide's return. Certainly some did, those who were close to Aristide and would have helped him put together his government. I don't recall that there was a flood of refugees coming out of Haiti back to the United States as things broke down later on. I think there's been a constant Haiti refugee issue, but it's never reached the level that we saw in the Bush and early Clinton periods, when so many people were building rickety boats and taking to sea. Many Haitians who sought asylum or refugee status during Aristide's rule were from the upper class and had the personal resources to leave Haiti safely.

During the Aristide period, things didn't just collapse. Aristide was in office for two years. He became less popular and was voted out, and Rene Preval became the next president. I was there, along with Brian Atwood and others, as outside observers of the '96 election, which we assessed was relatively free and fair.

I'm being hard on the U.S. for pulling out after six months, but Haiti never got the institutions it needed. The question is, could it have gotten those institutions during a longer intervention unless they were literally transplanted from somewhere else, because Haiti had never had a history of democratic development. The best and the brightest often leave Haiti, and that's been the case for a long time, so I guess I'm something of a fatalist about this. I think we stopped a very bad wound, but we certainly didn't cure the patient.

Q: Yes. It sort of faded off the front burner of U.S. foreign policy issues, probably largely because the boat people were no longer arriving. I like a line in your book, which I will read back to you, which says, "Haiti was an imperfect victory for human rights, but a building block for a new American foreign policy."

SHATTUCK: Yes, I think that's right, because there were new post-Cold War human rights policies that were tried out in Haiti and later became important elements of humanitarian intervention, particularly the concept of diplomacy backed by force.

Q: We've got a terrible situation in Haiti again now, more than 20 years later. In light of your experience, would you have recommendations for your successors?

SHATTUCK: I hope there are successors who restore human rights to US foreign policy, now that Trump has demolished DRL. The bottom line on Haiti is that it's in the grip of criminal gangs, and there is literally no law enforcement. The gangs fight with each other and prey upon the entire populace. They consider themselves Haiti's stabilizing force, but they're hardly stabilizing, and what is needed, above all, is a political leader who empowers the creation of a police force. And here, I do think the international community could play a major role in doing what we set out to do in '94 and then were stopped after six months, which is to assist Haiti in building a police and military and an accountable government that can end this. It's now not just political violence. It's violence in general, and its criminal gangs preying on the entire populace and on each other. The only way to stop that is by effective police work governed by democratic leadership and the rule of law.

Q: This is March 7, 2025, just finishing the interview session with John Shattuck, we have concluded our discussion of Haiti and next time we'll start with Rwanda.

Chapter 4: Rwanda

Q: Today is March 14, 2025, this is Peter Eicher beginning a new interview session with John Shattuck. Good morning, John. Last time we met, we talked extensively about Haiti, and today, we were going to turn to one of the other many crises that you had to deal with within your first year at the State Department, Rwanda. So maybe you could tell us how you got involved in that one as well.

SHATTUCK: Rwanda is a tragic story. As time moves on, it becomes even more tragic, because of the total failure of the world to address what was happening. What was happening was genocide, the roots of which were deep. I'll talk about that, and why the world, why the U.S. and the State Department and the Defense Department and the White House were so unprepared or unwilling to intervene.

The genocide started in April 1994, early in the Clinton administration and the immediate post-Cold War period. The U.S. was still immersed in doctrinal thinking about national

security issues and international security from a Cold War standpoint. The US had not come to grips with the forces of disintegration that were affecting many parts of the post-Cold War world, nowhere more so than Rwanda, a failed state in which violence was surging over a struggle for power, made worse by ethnic divisions rooted in the country's colonial history.

The two leading ethnic groups, the Tutsis and the Hutus shared the same language but came out of somewhat different backgrounds. These tribal groups had been relatively peaceful until the 19th century colonial era. Then the Belgians, and earlier, the Germans and the French, started the colonial exploitation of Rwanda during a time of racial experimentation in the West, identifying what they perceived as racial superiority of various racial groups. The division of Hutus and Tutsis into separate racial groups stemmed from that. The Tutsis were somewhat taller and seemed more willing to work with the colonial powers. They were also a minority in the country. They became the elite of the Rwanda colonial era, and the Hutus, about 70% of the population, were pushed into a situation where they had less opportunity, less responsibility and less access to the powers that were running the country. As a result, the ethnic division became volatile, since the Tutsi minority were put into a position of social and political superiority over the Hutu majority. When the colonial period ended, the Hutus sought to reclaim their majority status and run the country.

That's the background of what was happening in 1994. The U.S. was still immersed in its Cold War national security doctrine, particularly the military doctrine that became known as the Powell Doctrine, where the U.S. would not use force after Vietnam unless it was directly threatened, and the force was overwhelming and certain to be successful.

Rwanda was very far away, and the US had no strategic interest there. It was a small country, in the hills of Central and East Africa. Rwanda was very different from what we talked about last week. Although Haiti was a failed state like Rwanda, it was very close to the United States, and many refugees were taking to small boats and trying to reach the US, and that had domestic political ramifications, especially in the southern states.

So the question of what to do about Haiti seemed more urgent in this early post-Cold War period than what to do about Rwanda. Rwanda was left to the Africa experts and the Europeans, who were not experienced in addressing post-Cold War failed-state issues. Few people thought the US or Europe could have an interest and direct involvement in stopping the disintegration of a country that was far away and had no traditional strategic importance. So the U.S. didn't pay much attention to what was happening in Rwanda.

But what was happening was a powder keg getting ready to explode. There were warning signs. There were widespread killings of Tutsis by Hutus in the spring of 1993. The UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Executions prepared a report on the killings in the summer of 1993, emphasizing the possibility that crimes against humanity and other mass crimes could break out again anytime. The report was filed in August and made its way through the UN system toward the UN Human Rights Commission, which wasn't scheduled to meet again until May 1994, which, of course, was too late, since the genocide began in April.

There was also an internationally supervised political negotiation called the Arusha Process, in Tanzania, sponsored by the U.S., France, Belgium and the UK, and a number of other European countries, to try to bring together the Rwandan ethnic factions and to try to work out some kind of power-sharing agreement. The Arusha negotiation proceeded, but didn't make very much progress. A warning came from a delegation to the UN from both sides that requested a peacekeeping force be assembled by the UN and sent to Rwanda. I think they requested 4000 troops. In fact, a much smaller force was assembled, 2500, and finally deployed, in November of 1993. That was another indicator.

The most specific warning came two months from the commander of the UN force, General Romeo Dallaire, a Canadian general. In January of 1994, he sent a message to the UN Peacekeeping Office in New York, saying that he had been approached by an informant within an extremist Hutu group that they had a plan to mount an attack on Tutsis and kill a very large number of Tutsi political elite, and wipe out any kind of real opposition to the Hutu extremists who wanted to run the country. The informant report that was passed on by Dallaire to the Peacekeeping Office. Dallaire requested the authority to conduct a raid on some of the storage houses of the extremist groups that were assembling and gathering weapons and preparing for these attacks. He was denied this authority by the Peacekeeping Office.

Beyond these warnings were the events in Somalia in October of 1993 that had a major impact on the way the Rwanda policy developed in the US.

What had happened in Somalia was an effort by the UN to provide famine relief to starving Somalis. Starvation was a big issue in Somalia, and the Bush Administration, in 1992, had authorized a UN operation to provide relief, including peacekeeping troops that would go in to protect the relief shipments from being hijacked by various warlords in a country that was also a failed state that had completely fallen apart after the end of the Cold War.

The peacekeeping force that went in ultimately turned into a force to hunt for the warlords. The U.S. joined that UN force with a group of U.S. soldiers, including a very highly trained group of Army Rangers. In October of 1993, in an effort to track down one of the warlords, a Black Hawk helicopter carrying 16 U.S. Rangers was shot down by a rocket fired from the ground by one of the warlords, and the Black Hawk crashed. Sixteen Rangers were killed, and one of their bodies was dragged through the streets of Mogadishu, and CNN which was there filming the famine crisis carried this on live television projected back to the U.S. This led to a huge outcry against any further U.S. involvement in UN peacekeeping, particularly in a failed state like Somalia, where U.S. servicemen were put at risk.

The Somalia crisis was the backdrop of all of the problems of trying to get through to the UN to warn about the likelihood of an oncoming genocide in Rwanda, particularly the warning by General Dallaire in January of 1994. So all of this was pushing back the possibility that any preparation would be made by the UN or any Western country to engage in an effort to prevent genocide from occurring in Rwanda. This is not to exaggerate that it would have been easy to stop the genocide. I'm not suggesting that, but what I am saying is that the crush of events, the confusion of the early post-Cold War period, the military doctrine of overwhelming force or no force at all -- all of this prevented early warnings from being acted upon, either by the UN peacekeeping office or directly by any western power, particularly the United States.

So where do I fit into this? That's the background that I wanted to give to get us started.

Q: Useful.

SHATTUCK: In the summer and fall of 1993, I was heavily occupied by the issues that we talked about or referred to last time, by Haiti, by China, where I'm making a number of trips during this period, and by the growing crisis in Yugoslavia and Bosnia. I'm paying almost no attention to Africa. It's just not on the radar. No warning is getting to me. None of these issues that I talked about a minute ago were particularly brought to my attention, or certainly, none of the warnings were.

My first experience with Rwanda was a few days before Human Rights Day in December of 1993, when I received a call from Holly Burkhalter, the head of the Human Rights Watch Washington office, and she told me that Human Rights Watch was going to be giving an award to a remarkable woman, a Rwandan human rights advocate, Monique Mujawamariya.

Q: Complicated names in Rwanda.

SHATTUCK: Yes, the Kenya-Rwandan language is even harder than Hungarian, which I learned later. Monique was in Washington, and Holly wanted her to meet me. She was going to get an award from Human Rights Watch. I'd been asked earlier by the White House to suggest a foreign human rights advocate who could meet with President Clinton at his first celebration of Human Rights Day. I suggested Monique, and I met her in my office. In our meeting she described the dangers to human rights in Rwanda, particularly ethnic conflict.

I took Monique to the White House for the small celebration of Human Rights Day organized by the White House staff, which included a number of other international human rights heroes. Monique got to shake the President's hand, and he gave a few words about the importance of Human Rights Day, and then left. It was not a long meeting.

We ran into John Podesta on the way out. John was the scheduling director for the President, and he later became the Chief of Staff. I'd known John for many years, and we greeted each other, he smiled, and I said, "You know, it's Human Rights Day. We're celebrating human rights worldwide." He grinned----he had a wry sense of humor----and I remember he said something that I never forgot afterwards. He said, "Okay, human rights, that's great. No more Somalias." He didn't say it in a hostile way. It was just, "oh, we don't want to go through that again." The Somalia catastrophe was two months earlier, and President Clinton had gone to Dover Air Force Base to meet the bodies of sixteen Rangers who were being brought back. Somalia was terrible, and obviously had a big impact on the White House.

There was a lot of negative fallout from the Congress after Somalia, and the pressure for the US not to engage in any kind of UN peacekeeping was clear. It was manifested in a presidential decision directive issued in early May 1994, PDD 25, which basically put a straight jacket on U.S. participation in UN peacekeeping. That was reflected in the three words of warning, "no more Somalias," that John Podesta said to me on my way out of the White House with Monique.

That was my first experience with Rwanda. My next experience came on April 7. I was in the deputy secretary's weekly meeting with assistant secretaries. My colleague Pru Bushnell of the Africa Bureau reported to the group that a plane carrying the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi had crashed at the Kigali airport after evidently being shot down by a rocket fired from the airport. There was no definitive word on whether the rocket had hit the plane, but the two presidents had been killed, and killings had broken out

immediately after that in Kigali. It was not yet clear whether this was ethnic killing or simply retributive, trying to get back at whoever was responsible for the plane crash.

It sounded terrible, but unclear, both in terms of the circumstances that caused the killings and in terms of the plane crash. The next day, it became clearer when George Moose, the Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, also a close colleague and somebody I was working with, elaborated on what had happened based on fresh intelligence. Apparently, it had been demonstrated that a rocket had, in fact, been used to shoot down the plane. The motive was not yet clear, and the killings had proceeded, and many more people were being killed. This was turning into a crisis. It was now two days after what effectively was the start of the genocide, which was being reported as mass killings.

Q: Let me stop you there before you get into the full-blown crisis, and go back just a little bit. You said there had been these various warnings from the Special Rapporteur and from General Dallaire and from various human rights activists. Had these actually gotten to you? Had your colleagues in the Africa Bureau been raising alarms? Or was this just one more of the problems around the world that were vying for attention?

SHATTUCK: The warnings didn't get to me, and, as far as I know, did not get to anyone at State, although I'm not sure of that, in terms of the Africa Bureau. We learned about these specific warnings after the fact. This was not something that came to us and we didn't act on. When I say we, I'm talking about myself and others with whom I was working. In this case, it was Pru Bushnell and George Moose and also, at the White House, Eric Schwartz and Don Steinberg on the National Security Council staff. I've talked with all of them since then, and they didn't receive information about the warnings.

The UN Special Rapporteur report was completed in August of 1993. I didn't receive it. I don't know how it got caught up in UN channels, but it came out too late for the 1993 UN Human Rights Commission.

Q: One of dozens of special rapporteur reports that comes out every year. You know, somebody's got to find it and flag it as different from all of the others, I suppose.

SHATTUCK: I wrote about this in my book because it illustrated the need to improve the channels of communication within the UN and the speed with which a report of that nature needed to be acted on. It was an account of the deteriorating conditions of human rights in Rwanda in the spring of 1993. It needed to be acted upon much more quickly than simply put into a channel until the next UN Human Rights Commission meeting in 1994.

In the case of the informant report that was sent by General Dallaire in January of 1994 and went to the UN Peacekeeping Office, that office was woefully understaffed. It was formally headed by Kofi Annan, who had many other responsibilities and later became Secretary General. I think there were half a dozen people in the office managing a mushrooming number of peacekeeping operations that the UN was conducting in this period, including one that had gotten underway in Bosnia at just about the same time.

The UN communications problem was exacerbated by the political fallout from the Somalia crisis. The United States had lost soldiers in Somalia, and its UN office had made clear that the US opposed expanding the mandate of any further UN peacekeeping operation, including of course in Rwanda.

Our UN Ambassador Madeleine Albright was in a very difficult spot. She was a very strong proponent of human rights. She became one of my best allies on human rights in the government. But in this post-Somalia period, she had to tighten up the peacekeeping activity and prevent it from expanding. She did her best to push back, but the pressure was coming from the White House, and, as I mentioned earlier, it was reflected in the message that I got from my old friend John Podesta and his wry comment, no more Somalias.

Q: And then there was the other policy strain that we talked about in our interview session when you were talking about the creation of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, where the whole idea of getting human rights protection into peacekeeping operations was rejected when we tried to insert human rights as a factor into peacekeeping.

SHATTUCK: No new UN peacekeeping operation was authorized in 1994 to respond through military action to massive violations of human rights. The peacekeepers' hands were tied in Bosnia, and in Rwanda there were far too few peacekeepers and their hands were tied. The Somalia experience and the very negative backlash that Clinton got from the Congress and the public, explains a lot.

Q: Okay, well, I've sidetracked here. Let's get back to the crisis again.

SHATTUCK: The crisis got much more serious with George Moose's report of mass killings. The issue before the State Department group, and for the United States was, what do we do about the UN peacekeeping force in Rwanda? Do we expand it as General Dallaire is requesting? He wants the operation increased to 5000 or more. Do we increase it, retain it, or pull it out? My colleagues and I have very clear memories of the kinds of conversations we had on this. My colleagues on Rwanda were George Moose, Pru

Bushnell, and Eric Schwartz and Don Steinberg, on the NSC staff, along with some staff at USUN, and, tacitly, Madeleine Albright. We all wanted to keep the peacekeeping operation in Rwanda and increase it if possible.

We felt that if ever there was a time when peacekeepers were needed, this was it. Dallaire was sending messages that with more troops he could actually try to prevent some of the violence by deploying, disarming, and making it clear that the UN would not allow this to go forward. It was not clear that he would succeed, but we were in favor of it.

Tragically, something happened which linked Somalia directly to Rwanda on day three of the mass killings, just as the debate over the peacekeeping operation was starting. Hutu extremists killed eight Belgian peacekeepers and then dismembered their bodies. This was the ultimate red flag for any foreign government contributing peacekeeping troops, and it eerily reflected something General Dallaire's informant had included in the warning of January 1994 that had gone to the UN Peacekeeping Office. The warning was that the extremists will kill peacekeepers as a way of getting the UN force to withdraw, and that was exactly what happened.

There were no U.S. troops in the Dallaire force. But the U.S. was already taking a position against the expansion of peacekeeping operations as a result of Somalia, and then even more so after the killing of the Belgian troops in Rwanda. So that put our US group who were trying to maintain and expand Dallaire's peacekeeping force at a terrible disadvantage, like whistling in the wind.

But we continued to argue that we ought to be doing whatever we could to try to stop or slow the killings and that, therefore, the peacekeepers should remain. But the UN Security Council passed a resolution on April 21, 14 days after the start of the genocide, to reduce the force to a tiny fraction, 270 troops. So we lost that debate. The question was, what could we do to try to stimulate support for a new peacekeeping operation?

Peacekeeping seems like a terrible misnomer, of course, of what we were talking about. It really was aggressive policing. What Dallaire was proposing was that he establish checkpoints on roads leading out of the city to prevent the arms from being carried out. The arms were often machetes, large packs of machetes that would be passed out. And of course, many of the farmers out in the countryside had their own machetes.

At this point, it became a textbook case of stirring up hate and violence when people already feel threatened. What was happening was that the *Interahamwe*, the Hutu extremists, were now in control of Kigali, and were broadcasting hate. They'd taken over

the major radio station, Radio Milles Collines, and were using it to broadcast very incendiary messages to the population. The messages were in essence, "if you Hutus don't take up arms against the Tutsis, you're all going to get killed, so you need to join the effort to wipe out the Tutsi cockroaches and destroy the vermin."

The background of the message and what made it both "credible" and terrifying was that a Tutsi force had been assembled a year earlier by General Kagame, later the liberator of Rwanda after the genocide. Kagame was a Tutsi, and he had assembled his troops in Uganda, where many Tutsis had fled in exile, and had come into Rwanda and started attacking Hutus, to try to take back some of the power the Tutsis had lost when the Hutu majority began asserting its claim to rule the country.

Kagame didn't instigate the genocide. He was trying to defend his fellow Tutsis who were under threatened attack by Hutus. But Kagame's earlier action was one of the reasons it was possible for Hutu extremists to broadcast their messages to Hutus that you've got to take up arms, because if you don't, you're going to get killed.

The speed with which the killings developed was incredible, and the fear that swept the country and gripped villages and families----Hutus who had lived and worked with their Tutsi neighbors----caused them, all of a sudden, to take up arms against neighbors, which meant participating in brutal machete slashing operations.

Let me pause here to see if you have questions about what I've described.

Q: Well, one has struck me right away, which I made a little note of here. What was the U.S. Embassy up to through all of this? Had they been sending warning signals beforehand, were they withdrawn about the time the peacekeepers were withdrawn, or did they continue to function? And were they providing a viewpoint?

SHATTUCK: Good question. The embassy was sending information to Washington during the weeks before April 7. I think there were general warnings. They didn't have access to the informant's report, that I'm aware of, and the detailed information about the killing plan that the informant had.

The embassy provided information that there was violence developing, and it was a dangerous situation. Meanwhile, the Africa Bureau was focused on managing the Arusha process to try to bring together the various factions to work out a power-sharing arrangement. Arusha was where the principal focus of U.S. policy was during the pre-genocide period.

After the Belgian peacekeepers were slaughtered, the U.S., European, Canadian, and Western ambassadors and embassy personnel and families were all evacuated. A military rescue force was sent to bring them out, to drive them to the borders, then fly them out from Uganda. By the time that I'm now talking about, mid to late April, the Embassy had been withdrawn.

Q: Okay, I'll just ask one more question on the internal bureaucratics. You have talked about how you and Eric Schwartz and a few others were involved in trying to make the case against the general direction the policy was taking. Do you recall how the Africa Bureau was positioning itself in this internal debate?

SHATTUCK: Pru Bushnell was the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Africa Bureau, charged with responsibility for Rwanda, and she was strongly arguing in favor of maintaining the peacekeeping force, supporting Dallaire and avoiding the rush to the exits after the killing of the Belgian peacekeepers.

Q: And in the broader State Department, I presume Warren Christopher and Strobe Talbott and the top leadership were in line with the administration policy of no more Somalias. Is that right, or am I wrong?

SHATTUCK: Yes. The State Department leadership was looking at Rwanda as not a strategic interest of the U.S., and a concern insofar as we don't want any more Somalias.

Q: Okay, well, you had started to mention your trip. Would that be the next launch?

SHATTUCK: Yes. The Rwandan human rights leader, Monique Mujawamariya, who was the inspiration for my engagement with Rwanda, had disappeared almost immediately after the killings broke out. We knew she had been in Rwanda with her family. I got a call from Holly Burkhalter at Human Rights Watch, who told me, "We're desperately trying to find Monique, and hope she's not a victim." I contacted the embassy staff who had been withdrawn to be on the lookout for Monique, the extremely heroic, well recognized human rights leader.

On April 19, I received another call from Human Rights Watch ----this was now 12 days after the start of the genocide---- telling me that Monique had escaped and that she was coming to the U.S. to plead the case for strengthening the UN peacekeeping operation. When she arrived in Washington she arranged a meeting almost right away at the White House, where she met with Richard Clark, the NSC Director for Security Affairs. He was the highest-level official she could see, and she had a very disappointing meeting with him. This was four days after the peacekeeping force had been withdrawn on April 17,

and Monique was arguing for reinstating it. She then met with me in the State Department, and poured out her concern and outrage that Rwanda was being abandoned by the U.S., by the UN and by the whole international community.

Q: Must have been a tough meeting for you.

SHATTUCK: Yes, it was. I told her I was making the same point inside the government that she was making, but that certainly didn't satisfy her since I wasn't getting anywhere.

After my meeting with Monique, and the withdrawal of the peacekeepers, I talked with Pru Bushnell and the others with whom I was working, and decided that I would try to travel to Rwanda. They agreed it was important to have firsthand engagement not only on Rwanda, but with the countries in the region who might contribute to a new peacekeeping force. I then met with Peter Tarnoff, the Under Secretary for Political Affairs, who chaired a Rwanda "crisis watch" group, and the group endorsed my plan.

The trip would have a complex three-part mission. The first part would be sounding out the countries in the immediate region about participating in a new peacekeeping force -- Tanzania, Uganda, and Burundi, as well as the Organization for African States (OAS), based in Ethiopia. This new regional force would be logistically supported, if possible by the U.S., and its role would be to save lives and reduce the level of violence. The question was whether there was political will in the neighborhood, as well as the UN Security Council, to take this on.

Q: Let me stop you there for a moment. You said, with logistics support from the U.S. Does this suggest that U.S. policy has moved in the direction of being willing to provide logistics or was it just a concept, still?

SHATTUCK: No, this was brainstorming with the group. Clearly any peacekeeping operation going in would need logistical support. Whether the US would provide it was the big question.

The second part of the mission would be to seek support for creating an international institution of accountability and justice. This was coming from the work that I was doing in Bosnia on the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. What kind of international justice institution could be established to investigate and hold accountable the leaders of what clearly at this point was a genocide? At this point we were all informally using the term genocide in our discussions, even though the word hadn't yet been officially approved, and I'll get to that issue in a minute.

The third part of the mission would be to assess the scope of what was becoming a vast humanitarian crisis, refugees streaming out of Rwanda and into Tanzania and Zaire (which later became the Democratic Republic of the Congo).

That was the three-part mission. With Peter Tarnoff's involvement and the approval of Strobe Talbot, the Deputy Secretary, I engaged with Sandy Berger, the Deputy National Security Advisor, to get White House approval as we planned the trip in the Tarnoff Working Group. Sandy convened a White House interagency meeting to discuss the mission, and provide me with a mandate.

Berger did this with Tony Lake's approval, and therefore with the President's. My trip was designated "a presidential mission to Rwanda and the neighboring countries by the Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights." It was a fact-finding not a policy mission, a mission to determine whether the countries in the region would support the three aspects of the plan.

The White House interagency meeting was convened on April 29. It was a difficult meeting in the Situation Room attended by top officials from across the government, and it took place a few hours after another tough White House meeting in which I was involved, which I'll talk about in another session, involving U.S. policy in China and human rights and MFN.

Many human rights crises were happening at the same time. The U.S. policy on Haiti was changing, and we were moving toward what became a humanitarian intervention in Haiti. Human rights policies on China and Bosnia were also coming to a head.

I came out of the interagency meeting with a mandate and a mission, and my plan was approved. The next day three colleagues and I flew from Dulles to Frankfurt, and then flew from Frankfurt Air Base on a tiny five-seater Air Force plane down over North Africa, to our first stop in Ethiopia, then over the next six days to Uganda and Tanzania and Burundi and low over Rwanda and the Tanzanian plain where refugee camps were being set up.

My colleagues on the trip included Ambassador to Rwanda David Rawson, who was going back to take stock of the situation; Judith Kaufman, my special assistant; and Brunson McKinley, a deputy assistant secretary in the Refugee Bureau, who was going to assess the humanitarian crisis.

Our mission was to meet with the presidents of each of the neighboring countries. We started with the OAS president, Salim Salim, an Ethiopian. The OAS was based in

Ethiopia. We then met with Ethiopian President Meles, Ugandan President Museveni, and then in Tanzania and Burundi with their presidents.

We came out of each of our meetings with a memorandum of understanding between me and the presidents about the importance of re-establishing a peacekeeping force in Rwanda contributed to by the neighboring countries, with the assumption that it would be provided with logistical support.

I phoned my results of the meetings to the State Department, reporting to Pru Bushnell about the positive atmosphere of the meetings and the value of the MOUs I had negotiated with the presidents. Pru reported back to me that there was not only resistance, but outright hostility in the Pentagon toward providing US logistical support of any kind to a new peacekeeping operation in a volatile situation like Rwanda. A week later, a presidential decision directive was issued by the White House with a flat prohibition on U.S. support for any peacekeeping operation that goes into a country where there are active and ongoing hostilities. That basically ruled out US support for a new peacekeeping operation in Rwanda.

Q: Could I just clarify your itinerary? Rwanda was not actually on the itinerary. You didn't actually go. That wasn't possible, I suppose.

SHATTUCK: No, it wasn't possible to land. However, we flew very low over Rwanda, and in particular, the Kagera River, which separates Rwanda from Tanzania. When we were probably at 400 or 500 feet, we could see many thousands of people, a huge stream of humanity flowing out of Rwanda into Tanzania, and then a ghastly sight in the river that I'll never forget, what looked like logs from several thousand feet, but then at a few hundred feet we could clearly see these were mutilated bodies floating down the river.

David Rawson said he had intelligence that bodies were being pushed into the river so that they would flow downstream, and when they reached Lake Victoria, if they got that far, the bodies would be fished out by Tanzanian boys who would be paid a few pennies a body to dispose of them. We had a horrific view of an enormous crime scene. Based on US estimates of the killings since April 7, we came up with a figure that indicated that during the four days we'd been on the trip, 7200 people had been killed in the genocide. It was a staggering piece of information. The evidence we witnessed was far more powerful than any statistic.

Q: Did you visit refugee camps at all?

SHATTUCK: No, they hadn't been set up yet. We talked with the presidents of each of the countries we visited about the two issues in my mission in addition to peacekeeping. One was to get their support for the creation of an international tribunal, and the second, particularly in the case of Tanzania, was to get the president's agreement to open up refugee camps across the border from Rwanda. After the genocide ended, I visited the refugee camps, and I'll get to that in a minute.

Q: Was Julius Nyerere still in Tanzania?

SHATTUCK: No, the Tanzanian president was Ali Hasan Mwinyi. My mission was deeply wrenching but narrowly successful in that I was able to do what I set out to do, which was to gather information about the willingness of countries next to Rwanda, especially Tanzania, to host refugees, endorse international justice and participate in a new peacekeeping operation.

In the case of Tanzania, I secured an agreement in principle with the president about opening the office of an international tribunal in Tanzania, since basing it in Rwanda would be difficult.

I returned to Washington exhausted by the trip and overwhelmed by what I had seen. On the way back, I stopped in Geneva, to meet with Ibrahima Fall, head of the UN Human Rights Commission, and several UN human rights officers. After the meetings I had a press conference, and described what I had seen as acts of genocide. I was careful in choosing my words, but felt strongly, after three weeks of the mass killing of Tutsis, and national broadcasting by Hutu extremists calling for their "extermination", that what I'd seen were acts of genocide. I described in detail what I'd seen in Rwanda and the eyewitness accounts that I'd heard from people in Uganda, who had fled from the killings.

Almost immediately I received blowback from the legal office at the State Department. I was told in a phone call, "We're concerned about using the term genocide because it is an 'operative term' and has 'policy implications.'" The Genocide Convention requires states that are aware of genocide to take all means reasonably available to prevent it.

Q: One of the few Human Rights Conventions that the U.S. had actually signed by that point.

SHATTUCK: Yes, you're right. During my tenure, I made sure we signed more human rights conventions, but that happened in 1995 and '96. To be called out again by Washington a few months after my "rebuke" for what I said on Haiti, left a bad taste in

my mouth. What I said on Haiti, in essence, was "Here's what I've seen, with respect to these boat people -- they're being taken back to Haiti and probably beaten so they shouldn't be returned." I did much the same thing after witnessing the genocide in Rwanda.

Q: Was this just the State Department legal advisor, your bureaucratic equivalent in another bureau? Or was it somebody in a more powerful position?

SHATTUCK: It was the legal advisor's office. There was no higher level pushback and I wasn't called on the carpet. I received a low-level warning. Two weeks later the Secretary approved referring to the Rwanda killings as "acts of genocide."

Q: Was this really just a careful lawyerly position, that he was trying to protect the U.S. from having to do anything it didn't want to do, or was it a serious policy debate with people thinking it wasn't actually genocide?

SHATTUCK: I can't imagine that it was the latter because there was no evidence that it was anything but genocide. The people being killed were Tutsis, and the way the killings were carried out was by Hutus. The evidence was clear. I think it was the Somalia overhang. The White House was skittish about becoming involved in Rwanda. The Genocide Convention did have policy implications, and if the US was not going to become involved as a matter of policy, the lawyers were going to keep us from backing into it from a legal standpoint.

When I returned to Washington after this trip, which was exhausting but achieved its purpose, I found the system was overloaded with many other crises. This was now the second week of May.

Even though I'd achieved a consensus in the region about the importance of a new peacekeeping force, I was getting push back by the Pentagon that it didn't want anything to do with Rwanda, and the White House was opposed. Richard Clark, the NSC director who'd been involved in the drafting of Presidential Decision Directive 25 restricting US support for peacekeeping, made it clear the White House was adamantly opposed to any additional peacekeeping operation.

Madeleine Albright, to whom I give a great deal of credit, pushed back and said in essence, "No, we've got to approve a new force. We cannot totally abandon Rwanda. Yes, we pulled the other force out when the peacekeepers were being killed at the time, but we've got to have UN witnesses in there." Albright and her staff worked heroically to square the circle of a UN Security Council resolution establishing a new force on the one

hand, and bringing it into compliance with the requirements of the presidential decision directive on the other. The US did not sponsor the resolution establishing a new force. It was sponsored by the Czech Republic. I was very proud of them, and told them that when I later became ambassador.

Finally, after much back and forth, a new force was approved by the Security Council on May 17. What I'd done in the region to get the support of neighboring countries became a reality. But it was a struggle to get any cooperation from the Pentagon logistically. A specific example was the effort it took for me to get 50 armored personnel carriers contributed by the U.S. to transport the peacekeepers. It took weeks. Because of the Pentagon's resistance, the troop carriers had to be rented by the UN rather than provided directly by the US. It was very debilitating.

Meanwhile, the genocide was proceeding. By then, several hundred thousand people had been killed. It's staggering to think of this. I knew, and so did others, that we needed to publicize the crisis and what the human rights advocates were trying to do. I got clearance to write an op-ed in the *Boston Globe* toward the end of May, describing my mission to the region, the effort to establish a new peacekeeping force, and the plans to develop an international justice institution. But I was disappointed that there was nobody at higher levels who was willing to do this.

In retrospect, I contrast what Clinton did on Haiti at the end of September 1994, going on national television to explain to the American people how important it was to defend human rights in Haiti from Cedras and his criminal gangs, with the situation in Rwanda where the administration was doing nothing comparable about the genocide. I seemed to be the only official who was saying anything publicly about it.

Meanwhile, we went through a final round of debate about how to use the term genocide. There were several bureaus, especially the African Bureau and DRL, that pushed the term "acts of genocide". But the time it took to get that through the clearance process was very destructive of the moral fiber of the U.S. position on human rights generally.

Q: Did you stop on your trip in places like Paris and London, the allies who were most involved in this?

SHATTUCK: I did, yes. I stopped first in Paris, which was complicated, because the French were getting ready to deploy their Operation Turquoise, their own peacekeeping operation, which seemed to be primarily aimed at protecting the old Rwandan government, dominated by the Hutus, and assisting the Hutus in escaping from Rwanda into the refugee camps.

Q: To what extent could we coordinate with our allies if we didn't have a firm position ourselves?

SHATTUCK: Well, that was part of the problem. I didn't have much of a message that I could deliver. The only message was the one that I'd given to the neighboring countries about reestablishing a peacekeeping operation, and whether they would contribute to it.

Finally, in July '94, the U.S. policy started to change toward more active involvement, particularly on the military side. I remember being on a human rights mission in southeastern Turkey when I got a call from my deputy, Nancy Ely Raphel in Washington, telling me that the U.S. policy on Rwanda was changing following the arrival in Kigali of General Kagame and his Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) "liberating force".

When General Kagame and the RPF took back Kigali, some degree of stability was brought to the situation. The U.S. policy changed because there no longer was an active conflict on the ground, and PDD25 didn't preclude engagement. By then, 800,000 people, by all estimates, had been slaughtered in the genocide. Hundreds of thousands of refugees streamed out of Rwanda into Zaire and Tanzania. Brian Atwood, the director of the USAID, articulated all the reasons for the U.S. to be actively involved in providing the humanitarian assistance that was desperately needed by the refugees.

The process was very complicated because many of the leaders of the genocide had fled to the refugee camps, or were directing the camps from afar. So the camps became either a safe haven for those who'd committed genocide, or places where the genocide continued as the "*genocidaires*" sought to control the camps. Atwood knew this was not going to be easy, and made that clear in his presentations. However, most of the press accounts about the refugees depicted them as victims, when in fact, many of them had been active participants in the genocide.

Following my earlier diplomatic work paving the way, the U.S. worked with the governments of Zaire and Tanzania to provide logistical support for setting up the camps. The one thing the US wasn't willing to do, however, was to identify and arrest the people who had led the genocide and had now fled to the camps.

I came back to Washington from my human rights trip to Turkey. I was designated by the State Department to be the first US diplomat to meet with General Kagame after the genocide. I was chosen for this role because my earlier advocacy of US intervention might make me acceptable to Kagame, just as my human rights advocacy in Haiti was later seen by Washington as a way for me to engage with Aristide.

My new Rwanda mission was to offer US assistance -- to help build a justice system, and to help on the humanitarian side. That was going to be difficult because Kagame was upset with the international community for basically standing by and letting the genocide happen without actively intervening and for withdrawing most of the UN peacekeeping troops.

Q: I was just going to ask again, had we reestablished the embassy at this point, or gone in before we had the ground? Or do you even recall?

SHATTUCK: Yes, the embassy was being reestablished, and David Rawson had returned.

Q: And you being the first high level U.S envoy to go there - was that because it was dealing with the issues that you had been pressing all along.

SHATTUCK: It was felt that since it was known that I had been pressing these issues and that I had favored a robust peacekeeping force and more active involvement, that I might have more credibility with Kagame. In addition, one of my agenda items with Kagame would be to offer assistance to establish a justice program, both by providing assistance to the new government, which he was heading, and by getting his approval for an International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. So, I was seen to be the logical person to meet with Kagame. My mission had the approval up and down the line, including of course the White House. I think, frankly, everybody was shell shocked from Rwanda. They hadn't done anything about it. They had no record on which to try to establish a relationship. They were rather desperate. So why not send the human rights guy?

Q: Did you sense regret, or anything, among the others, that nothing had been done? Was it that we had let a genocide happen, or were people still pretty hard that we had taken the right position by staying out of it?

SHATTUCK: Well, I think, among the various different parts of the State Department, there were certainly people in the latter category, who, no matter what, would say, "Well, we did the right thing staying out." But there was also plenty of regret, and I'll get to that in a minute, because over the course of the next six months I went back to Rwanda several times. My next trip, after the trip that I'm about to describe, was with Clinton, who went to make a formal apology.

Q: Continuing with the second part of today's interview with John Shattuck.

SHATTUCK: In July 1994 the question was, what involvement would the U.S. have in Rwanda, having done nothing to stop the genocide. I had worked with others in the African Bureau and at the NSC to change the policy, having rounded up support for a new peacekeeping operation that was finally deployed. I was now selected to be the person to go in and meet with General Kagame to offer U.S. assistance, humanitarian assistance, and assistance in establishing a justice system along with something bigger I hoped to accomplish -- approval by the Rwandan government of the establishment of an International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

I left for Rwanda and took with me Crystal Nix, a brilliant young African American lawyer who was working with me on the Yugoslav tribunal and who would draft the statute of the tribunal for Rwanda. My feeling at this point was, since the U.S. had basically done very little to slow or stop the genocide, in order to win the confidence of the new Rwandan government it needed to do much more to help establish institutions of justice and accountability.

My experience in Bosnia was leading me to the same conclusion that I reached in Rwanda, which is, you cannot have peace and stability in a country that's experienced genocide without justice. There has to be justice if genocide has been committed. We knew here that the leaders of the *Interahamwe*, the Hutu extremist movement that had planned the genocide, were still operating and we had evidence now that it was planned far ahead of time. You cannot have these people circulating freely in the social and political system. You have to bring them to justice. The same certainly was true in Bosnia, and it was very clear in Rwanda.

I was determined to establish the tribunal. You cannot have international justice in a European setting where a genocide has been committed, and not have it in an African setting. If you don't establish a Rwanda tribunal, that's clearly a racial distinction. So the tribunal was our top agenda item going in.

We arrived in Kigali, where the genocide had ended but was still desperately close. The atmospherics were devastating. We were met at the airport by a broken down old Volkswagen driven by a person who was barely able to get out of the ramshackle car. The driver introduced himself unceremoniously, "I'm the new Justice Minister, and I've only been here for a few days. I've been in exile in Belgium, and this is the only car that we were able to get. I know you need a ride wherever you're going, and I know eventually you're going to meet with General Kagame, but you have to meet with me first, so hop in." There was no door on the side that Crystal got in, but we hopped over shattered window glass and climbed in, and the car limped along. Half an hour later, and probably only a few miles down the road, we got to the minister's office in a shattered

building that had been bombed and was just a shell. We sat down at a rickety table and he said, "What are you doing here?" He was perfectly friendly, but very direct. I said, "Well, I'm representing the U.S. government, and we're here to offer assistance as you heroically bring the country back to its feet. And clearly one big challenge is how to bring to justice the people who are responsible for the genocide."

He said, "Yes, that's true. We probably will have to do a lot of this justice ourselves. We don't see anybody willing to help." I said, "Well, we actually have a proposal with your approval to establish an international tribunal to investigate and prosecute those who are responsible."

He looked skeptical and said, "Where are you going to do that?" I said, "Well, it's a UN tribunal," and his whole face collapsed in laughter and disbelief. From his point of view the UN was completely worthless. It had done nothing to protect Rwandans. I knew if this was the Justice Minister, I was going to have an even harder time with the President. But he was friendly. He wasn't opposed to what I was proposing, and said that Rwanda could use plenty of assistance in re-establishing its justice system and prosecutions, and all the things they wanted to do themselves.

I said, "we'd like to provide this kind of help. And I'd like to visit the refugee camps to get a sense of what kind of assistance is needed for those." He said, "If you want to establish this international court that you're talking about, you're going to have to talk to General Kagame about that."

That was the end, more or less, of our meeting. The Minister said he would tell General Kagame the purpose of the meeting I was seeking with him. We got the meeting the next day. Kagame didn't have a lot of other international visitors on his schedule, so it was not difficult to see him. I was taken by an embassy vehicle up to an old villa that was still pretty much intact and was now Kagame's headquarters. I reminded myself that he'd arrived in Kigali only two weeks earlier after basically fighting his way through Rwanda against the Hutu army.

As we approached the villa, I looked down below at the city, and remember seeing vultures circling what undoubtedly were corpses still lying there. It certainly gave me a sense that this was a city of death that had been overwhelmed by its own people.

When I met Kagame, he was a very ascetic looking figure - rail thin, very tall, and laconic, not a man of many words. I could imagine the discipline that he had needed to get here. He made my meeting with the justice minister seem easy. With just a few words, Kagame dismissed almost everything I had to offer by saying, "Look, this is all

fine, but basically, we're here. We've done it ourselves. We'll probably keep doing it ourselves. Yes, we need to establish order in our country, and we aim to do that. If you want to bring international justice to us, you have to bring it here. You have to bring it here to Kigali. You have to bring it where people can see it. And it also has to happen quickly, because we need our own justice system."

I remember having the sinking feeling, knowing the UN, how slow it was going to be, even if we got his approval to get the court off the ground, and how unlikely it would be and probably inappropriate to actually conduct international trials in Kigali, surrounded by the victims of the genocide, where the perpetrators were being put on trial.

It was a hard sell, but I worked my way through. We had enough of a meeting that I think he finally said reluctantly but dismissively, "Yes, I'll support that," indicating that he didn't expect it to go anywhere. "We're glad to get U.S. assistance for humanitarian relief. But beware, the people out there in these refugee camps are, many of them, the very people you need to bring to trial because they have committed the genocide, and beware of the kind of relief that you give to the people who are trying to continue the genocide." So I could see, especially on the refugee and humanitarian side, it was going to be a very difficult road.

Q: On the refugee camps, there were all kinds of different refugees in this scenario. First of all, it was all the Tutsis fleeing Rwanda into the neighboring countries, and now presumably they were coming back, and it was the Hutus who were fleeing. So when you're talking about aid to the refugees, were you talking about aid to these camps that are in other countries, or were there also lots of internally displaced as a result of the war and the genocide?

SHATTUCK: Good point. It was an easy case for him to accept assistance for refugees coming into the country, who were returning having fled the genocide, although that turned out to be a fairly small percentage of people. Most of the refugees leaving Rwanda were probably Hutus, families and others who were just following, but in some cases had participated. They saw Kagame coming, they saw the RPF soldiers coming, and they wanted to get out of the way.

So yes, many of the refugees in Zaire and Tanzania, were either participants or passive observers of the genocide and the people who were targeted by the genocide. But in the very beginning, in the period that I was there, I am sure that there was a mix of both victims and perpetrators in the camps. That was the problem. Kagame put his finger on it; don't take care of the people who've committed this genocide, because that's not going to help us at all. He said get the UN to go and arrest them, and then put them on trial.

So that established the agenda of the policy debates about Rwanda inside the US government for the next several years, certainly during this period right after the genocide. It underscored my point that you can't have peace without justice. Kagame agreed with that. You can't simply take care of people in a refugee camp who are the perpetrators of the genocide. They need to be brought back and put on trial. That was the key to everything.

The next day, I set out for Goma, to the huge refugee camps in Zaire, with General Shalikashvili, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Because of the change of policy and the U.S. now supporting assistance, Shalikashvili had come to see the refugee camps, just as I had, and I went on his plane with him. I had the occasion, during our trip, to ask whether he felt that his hands were tied by the peacekeeping directive, PDD 25, that kept the U.S. from participating in any peacekeeping operation where there was an active insurgency or active conflict underway, like Rwanda. His body language indicated that he felt uncomfortable about that. A month later, he became one of my principal allies, both in Haiti, where he helped establish the force that went into Haiti, and the following year he became a very strong supporter of the international force that was sent into Bosnia. I could tell that he understood that in the post-Cold War world we needed a different approach to peacekeeping, and we shouldn't allow our hands to be tied by the tragic situation that took place in Somalia. He didn't say that, but he implied it.

When we got to the camps, we separated, and I went with a group sent by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. It was a brutal situation, I must say. I could see all of the evidence that *"genocidaires"* were in fact in the camps. In one case, I witnessed a brutal beating. The victim could have been a snitch, or somebody who had committed genocide, or a Tutsi target they wanted to finish off.

I could see that it was going to be very, very difficult to separate the people committing the genocide from those who were who were genuine refugees because they were trying to flee for their own lives. Some of the people who were fleeing were fleeing because they'd committed genocide. I knew that this would be an ongoing debate about peacekeeping, and I strongly believed that an arrest force had to be created to go into the camps.

It was the UN itself that undertook this. I had met in Geneva with the UN Under Secretary, Sergio de Mello, who was later killed in Iraq, and he took up this cause, and actively lobbied governments to help establish a police force that would go in and arrest people in the camps. This never happened. Failing to make the arrests meant that Kagame and his people were going to take this into their own hands, and sure enough, a

year later, Kagame broke up the camps in Zaire and chased out a lot of the people who were the perpetrators, joining forces with an insurgent activist, Joseph Kabila, who later toppled Mobutu, who had supported the *genocidaires*.

There was ongoing violence involving Rwanda and Zaire for a year or so, and that was a result of the volatile situation in Goma and the refugee camps. I saw very clearly the high price of a genocide, when nothing is done to stop it and it there is no accountability. Until there's accountability, you're going to have a metastasizing of the original situation, and that's what did happen.

At the end of my trip, I made the first international overland journey across Rwanda, the first time any international visitors had seen the Rwandan countryside after the genocide. I wanted to literally witness what the circumstances were, what the countryside looked like. It was in some ways even worse than one might expect. What I remember is the absolute deafening silence. There were simply no people.

Josiah Rosenblatt, a Foreign Service officer in our Bureau who accompanied me, captured it very well. He said what we witnessed was the equivalent of a neutron bomb. All of the people were killed, but everything else went on. The crops continued to grow. They'd been planted by people who had themselves been chopped down. So we saw in the fields all these ripening crops in late August, ready for harvest, and no people. It was a chilling vision.

There is not much more that can be said about this. I made five more trips to Rwanda over the course of the fall and early part of the following year, assisting Rwandans as they began to develop their own justice system. We did get the International Criminal Tribunal off the ground. It was finally established in Arusha, with an office in Kigali. This responded partly to the request by Kagame to have international justice in Rwanda, and we did succeed, within two years, in arresting many of the high level people who had instigated the genocide in the plan that had been revealed by the informant of General Dallaire, back in in January. Many of them had been arrested by the time I became ambassador to the Czech Republic in 1998. Several hundred arrests were made and many trials, including several dozen high level trials in Arusha.

The justice system ground on slowly, and it became an important building block over time ----even though he probably wouldn't admit it----for Kagame's ability to bring stability and rebuild the country.

During these trips, I visited the Rwanda prisons. I felt that it was very important to see whether the prisons had the same phenomenon as the refugee camps, where you had a

mixture of perpetrators and victims imprisoned together. The conditions were ghastly, but I think almost everybody in the Rwandan prisons was probably a Hutu perpetrator of genocide. I don't think there were any Tutsis in the prisons. The prisoners had been tried locally by special Rwandan courts, which didn't have the due process protections of the international justice system, and some of them had been sentenced to death. A large number of death sentences were carried out in Rwanda.

And the final point that I want to make is about the Clinton trip in 1998. I accompanied him. This was four years after the genocide. The President was at his best in a certain perverse way, in expressing deep remorse about the tragedy that had occurred and the lessons that we needed to remember about the importance of early intervention to prevent such horror before it begins. He met with Rwandans who told their own stories about what had happened, and he was good at listening. It was a moving trip, but there was a sort of hollowness to it, in that at least we apologized, but it didn't bring anybody back to life.

So that was my last sense of the tragedy of Rwanda. Signals had been sent going all the way back to December '93 when I was told that the principal concern of the administration was no more Somalias, and that had been the message coming out of the White House during the genocide. Now the President was saying we were wrong. I think it was good that he did that, even if it rang hollow.

Q: However hollow it might have been, it's quite extraordinary for a President of the United States, who's still in office, to make that kind of trip and make that kind of statement. What was the genesis of that? Did you put it in his head? How did he suddenly decide to get involved in that?

SHATTUCK: By then, there were lessons that had been learned, especially in Bosnia. The Rwanda trip took place after the wrenching process that we'll talk about later, which actually ended up in success, the Dayton process, and the effort to stop a genocide in progress in Bosnia. I think the President by then understood that the concept of diplomacy backed by force was an important element in the arsenal of an American president in the post-Cold War period.

Who put the idea of the trip in his head? It was something he wanted to do. I worked closely with Sandy Berger on this, who was my principal ally in the White House. Tony Lake as well. Tony was less involved in Rwanda than Sandy was, at the outset anyway. By then, Madeleine Albright, of course, was the Secretary of State, and she was a very strong proponent of this apology. A number of us were involved. So, in a sense, the

connection between Rwanda and Bosnia is probably most vividly and poignantly expressed in Clinton's apology in Rwanda.

Q: Going back to the tribunal in your earlier trip, by the time you met with Kagame for the first time, apparently the U.S. had already approved the policy of trying to create an international tribunal for Rwanda. Was that after it had already been done for Bosnia? Or was that the first one?

SHATTUCK: No. It was after it had been done for Bosnia. The Yugoslav tribunal was actually adopted in June '93, just at the time that I became Assistant Secretary. It was late '94 when the Rwanda Tribunal was approved by the Security Council. The U.S. was the principal sponsor of both tribunals. If there's one major achievement that I feel we can take from what happened in Rwanda, it was the establishment of the tribunal.

Q: And we, presumably, then provided a lot of the funding for it, I would imagine.

SHATTUCK: Yes, we did. I became an expert on funding the tribunal. Even when U.S. funding was difficult to come by, I was often able to find a sponsor in Europe, in a European capital, most often in the Netherlands. I don't know whether you recall the Netherlands Minister for Development Assistance, Jan Pronk, a remarkable figure, whom I got to know well.

We had attended a number of meetings, and I remember one dramatic example where I was not able to get all the funding that we needed at a particular time for the maintenance of the Rwanda Tribunal. So I made a call and then flew over to the Netherlands and met with Pronk in The Hague, and he effectively gave me, on the spot, $1 million for the tribunal. This was in the spirit of the collegial alliance that I was seeking with European governments, especially the Dutch, on human rights issues. There were many European countries who wanted to work with us on human rights, particularly the Northern Europeans who had the funding, and Pronk and the Netherlands were at the top of this list. This was after the terrible tragedy of the Dutch peacekeepers in Srebrenica in 1995, which had a searing impact on the Dutch government, and, I think, led to their very robust view of human rights.

Q: Okay, so you've made five trips in the course of a year or so. That's also quite remarkable, given the number of other burning human rights emergencies on your plate.

SHATTUCK: Yes, there were a lot of things going on. It's true.

Q: Congratulations on that. You'd mentioned the rough internal justice system. I remember seeing, back at the time, the films of some of these prisons where people could hardly stand up, there were so many people crammed into the prisons. Did we, the United States, get involved in trying to boost the local justice system to help with dealing with that as well?

SHATTUCK: We certainly got involved with helping with the courts and with the funding of the infrastructure of the justice system. And I think we gave some assistance as well to the prison process. I don't recall whether any new prisons were actually constructed during the time that we were doing this. I do remember, in my one visit to a Rwandan prison, there were people literally sleeping in shifts because there was no space for them, having to stand up during much of the day. I could not imagine how they could function without violence breaking out, and indeed, violence did often break out, I was told. I didn't see it. I was even told that if they want to go after you, they will, so don't do anything to set them off. It was a very tense situation.

Q: You said that Crystal Nix had gone along with you, partly to help the drafting of the statute for a court, should it come about. Did the U.S. draft eventually become the actual draft? Or was this just modeled on the Bosnia one, which had already been successfully established? How did that work?

SHATTUCK: It was largely modeled on the Yugoslav tribunal and the basic decision had been made already to place the tribunal in Arusha, Tanzania, which is, by the way, where these conferences to try to have a power sharing agreement had taken place earlier.

The Rwandan government actually, in the end, almost withdrew its support for the tribunal resolution because they said it was too slow. But it wasn't that slow. It was three months or so after the meeting that I had with Kagame, so that was fast, actually.

Q: And so would have been a Security Council resolution that established it all, I guess,

SHATTUCK: Yes.

Q: That's quite something. Maybe we don't need to get into this today, but if you want to comment on it briefly. Was this kind of a turning point in your human rights wars? The recognition that we should have done more in Rwanda then made it easier to convince people in future?

SHATTUCK: No question about it. The lessons learned in Rwanda very much informed the change in policy and engagement of the U.S. in Haiti and then in Bosnia. The lessons

of diplomacy backed by force and the importance of international justice were really new building blocks for human rights in this very new world. We've got to remember that everyone was still feeling their way, and the Cold War was only a couple of years in the rear-view mirror.

Rwanda, tragically, became a kind of proving ground for a set of lessons learned, for how to defend human rights through humanitarian intervention in advance in failed states where ethnic and religious conflict is threatened and power jockeying is taking place.

Unfortunately, that was a short-lived set of lessons, because by the time we get to the 21st Century and 9-11, and the response to 9-11, and the unilateralism that the U.S. then engages in in Iraq, a very different setting that we get into in the 21st Century from the one where the U.S. is the sole hegemonic power and people and countries are not only willing, but eager, to have the U.S. lead the way on human rights issues. The Iraq unilateralism, I think, soured much of the international community against that kind of U.S. leadership, and it's never recovered. So the doctrine of humanitarian intervention, which was learned the hard way in Rwanda, and then applied in Haiti, and then applied again in Bosnia, and then further in Kosovo, and one might even say East Timor later, fell apart after 9-11 with the rise of US unilateralism.

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Chapter Five: Bosnia I

Q: Today is June 12, 2025, and this is Peter Eicher beginning a new interview session with John Shattuck. Good morning, John.

SHATTUCK: Good morning.

Q: Last time we spent the session going quite in depth on Rwanda, and I think we came to the end of that. Today, we are going to move on to another major human rights crisis, Bosnia, and I suspect that this probably took up more of your time than any other crisis you had to deal with during your years as Assistant Secretary.

SHATTUCK: The Bosnia crisis was certainly intractable. I worked hard to get traction, and in the end, I succeeded. But it was hard. The disintegration of Yugoslavia was a crisis that bedeviled two administrations, Bush and then Clinton. It was misinterpreted as a crisis of "ancient hatreds" in a region historically plagued by religious conflict. In fact, as I learned, it was a crisis brought on by power struggles among post-Cold War nationalist politicians cynically jockeying for power by stirring up religious and ethnic

division. There were many human rights crises during my time as Assistant Secretary, but Bosnia was at the top of the list.

Q: Yes, and this had been a crisis that, as you said, spanned administrations, and one that you inherited, if we want to put it that way, the former Yugoslavia had started to break up about the time of the fall of communism, and immediately, the different parties started jockeying with each other. Do you recall exactly where it stood and what the view in the new administration was as you took office?

SHATTUCK: I started commuting, before I was confirmed, from Cambridge to Washington. It was March of 1993, very early in the Clinton administration. Clinton had made a lot of comments in his campaign about human rights, particularly on the Bosnia crisis. And so the expectation was that he would have a robust human rights policy. That's what had attracted me to becoming the assistant secretary when I was asked to join the administration.

I could see that the U.S. didn't have much leverage on Bosnia. A UN peacekeeping force had been deployed by European governments, but no troops were contributed by the United States. That was a key point right at the outset: the U.S. was seen to have no stake in Bosnia because it had no boots on the ground.

I could see right away that our European allies had different favorites in the Balkans. As Yugoslavia disintegrated, the French and the British favored the Serbs. They'd worked with them during the Second World War and saw them as resistors to fascism. The Germans historically favored the Croatians because they'd worked with them. No one favored the Bosnian Muslims. The favoritism ran deep, and so the peacekeeping force was really just a kind of a patina, if you will. There was not much to it. The UN Security Council had given it no authority to take action in the event that it encountered violence and war crimes were committed in front of it. The bottom line was that there were French, British, and other European troops on the ground in Bosnia, but the U.S. was not there.

I saw that domestic politics in the US had handcuffed the Clinton administration in developing policies to implement the bold statements made by President Clinton during his campaign. Clinton's margin of victory had been relatively small. He won the election with only 43% of the vote. Vice President Bush got 38%, while a third-party candidate, Ross Perot, received 19%, so Clinton didn't have a broad mandate.

Beyond the election there were other factors cramping the new administration's approach to Bosnia. Clinton was not popular with the military establishment, and the Pentagon opposed any effort to engage U.S. troops in situations where there might be hostilities, particularly after the disaster in Somalia in October 1993. The State Department had a more robust approach----Secretary Christopher was supportive of human rights----but it had no enforcement power. And Congress was isolationist in this immediate post-Cold War period. It didn't want to make any major new US foreign policy commitments, especially in Europe.

I found that the Human Rights Bureau was relatively marginalized. It had not had much of a role in the Bush Administration, and was not listened to. The bureau was seen to be a small adjunct of our foreign policy without a strong bureaucratic position. So, I found that even though I knew Bosnia was an important issue, it was not clear how to overcome these impediments.

The one topic I had some personal traction on related to my earlier civil rights work---- accountability and justice and whether to create a tribunal to investigate and prosecute the war crimes increasingly being committed in Bosnia. I was pleased to find that Madeleine Albright, Clinton's Ambassador to the U.N., felt equally strongly and was leading the effort in that area. She had been very active in developing the framework of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. So I threw myself into that as I began to work on Bosnia.

Q: Okay, so the Administration had come in and was kind of foundering. It didn't have a clear policy on Bosnia; it was just starting out. A lot of new people were coming in, so it's understandable. You said there was sympathy from Christopher and from Albright. These are the top people, but the policy wasn't moving forward to actually do something. Had the policy already solidified by the time you got there, the policy of "this is somebody else's problem, Europe should be dealing with this?"

SHATTUCK: The disintegration of Yugoslavia was certainly seen to be a problem that Europe should deal with. That was the way the Bush administration had seen it. James Baker had famously said, "we have no dog in that fight." Some of that attitude carried over to the Clinton administration.

But there was an alternative policy that was beginning to develop. We could see that the Bosnian Muslims were at a huge disadvantage. They were being targeted by the Bosnian Serbs, and by the Croats, and they had no real allies.

I mentioned that France, the U.K. and Germany had historic connections to either Serbia or Croatia. So the U.S., in a way, had an interest in helping the isolated Bosnians defend themselves. There was a possibility that NATO air power might be used so long as U.S. troops were not on the ground, because that was the red line Clinton was unwilling to cross. This led to an evolving policy of what was called "lift and strike." The policy was essentially to lift the arms embargo that was otherwise affecting the Bosnian Muslims, and allow them to receive arms to defend themselves, and to have NATO conduct airstrikes where possible, to push back aggressive actions by the Bosnian Serbs or the Croatians.

But the lift and strike policy was really more a policy on paper than in reality. The Europeans were opposed to it because their troops were on the ground. They didn't want NATO to be conducting airstrikes that would endanger the troops, and they certainly didn't want to lift the arms embargo in a way that would similarly endanger the troops.

So we needed opportunities to break the policy stalemate. One fell in my lap at the very beginning, literally the day I was confirmed on June 10, 1993. I flew to Vienna that day to become the acting head of the US delegation to the World Conference on Human Rights. At the conference delegations from all over the world were assembled, and not surprisingly, the Bosnia crisis was on everyone's mind, because it was happening in real time 200 kilometers to the south. There was pressure from other countries to put Bosnia on the agenda. The question for our delegation was whether this pressure could give the U.S. an opportunity for leadership by spotlighting the Bosnia crisis at the conference.

Over the course of the two-week conference I found that working with other governments with strong human rights policies, particularly in Europe, but also in Asia, particularly Japan and South Korea, we were able to fashion a conference resolution that would be addressed to the UN Security Council. This would be an appeal by the World Conference on Human Rights to take note of the unfolding war crimes and human rights crisis underway in Yugoslavia, and especially Bosnia.

We drafted the resolution in consultation with Washington. I was in touch with Secretary Christopher and with Tony Lake. I had several conversations with them during the course of the conference, and they liked the approach. They didn't feel it put any new pressure on the U.S. On the other hand, it had the effect of the U.S. leading by having the conference spotlight the human rights atrocities and the war crimes that were occurring in Bosnia.

So we got many co-sponsors of the resolution, as well as the approval of Washington, and it was ultimately adopted as part of the final conference report.

There was one other opportunity to make policy progress on Bosnia while I was heading the US delegation, and that was to get Secretary Christopher to come and give the leading U.S. speech to the conference. There were people on Christopher's staff who were opposed to that, who felt that this was going to be a political morass, and that Christopher should not get mixed up in human rights issues early in his tenure. Their view was that this was the Jimmy Carter knee-jerk human rights world, and that's not what the Clinton administration was all about.

Tom Donilon, Christopher's Chief of Staff, was the leader of this group. I met with Donilon several times in Washington to try to change his mind. As it turned out, Christopher himself decided to go. After the decision, Donilon commented to me, "Well, he's going to go and speak there, but if this is screwed up, you're fired." This was bureaucratic hardball, but it didn't work.

Christopher came to Vienna and gave a strong speech. He made it clear that the issue of war crimes and accountability for the crimes that were being perpetrated in Bosnia were major concerns of the US. As the Secretary spoke, I felt that we had achieved a victory by having him articulate on the world stage the importance of justice as a remedy for the violation of human rights. The conference became a platform not only for nudging US policy, but also for advancing the human rights bureau.

Q: I remember, from Geneva, where we were managing the lead-up to the World Conference, how late in the process Christopher finally agreed to come. I believe the start of the conference that day was delayed by a couple of hours to meet Christopher's schedule and allow him to be the first high level dignitary to speak. His remarks did help set the tone for the whole conference. In our previous sessions, you talked about how you were able to get attention to human rights by being on the ground. Is this what you did in Vienna and then in Bosnia, and was it successful?

SHATTUCK: The Vienna Conference was a good example. I was the head of the delegation and had standing to get through to the highest levels of the administration at State, the NSC, and the UN. The fact that I was actually out there made a difference. However, when I came back to Washington, it was a pretty cool reception that I got. It wasn't that people were opposed to what we'd done in Vienna, but I could see that continuing to push on Bosnia was not going to get me very far, because the policy we were following was firmly set, even if vague and ineffective. That was the problem.

On July 15 I sent an information memo to Christopher, compiling evidence that the Human Rights Bureau had gathered of atrocities and war crimes, bringing to his attention everything that we had had learned from combing through the records of the State Department and NGOs. That was my substantive effort to push beyond the Vienna Conference. The conclusion of the memo stated that it was time for the Assistant Secretary to go to the region and gather ongoing evidence.

I was blocked immediately by the European Affairs Bureau, which was pursuing an unproductive negotiating strategy with the Bosnian adversaries. The negotiators didn't want the human rights Assistant Secretary to disrupt their proceedings by gathering fresh evidence of war crimes. The NSC was not enthusiastic either, because they didn't want a more activist U.S. policy at that point, at least until the President changed his mind.

And so, essentially, for the rest of 1993, all through the late summer and fall, I was blocked. I was not able to travel to implement my own strategy of reporting from the ground. At the beginning of 1994, I finally got an opportunity when Madeleine Albright invited me to accompany her on the first cabinet level visit to the former Yugoslavia by the Clinton administration. I traveled with her to Eastern Slavonia in Croatia and to the destroyed city of Vukovar. While we were there, we investigated a major war crime committed when scores of wounded Croatian soldiers were taken from a hospital and transported to a distant field, mass executed, and buried in a shallow mass grave. As far as one could tell, we were the first to reach the grave site.

I'll never forget this first of my many experiences with mass graves in Croatia and Bosnia. I went over the snow and mud in a half-track with Albright into a garbage dump area that no investigator had visited in the two years since the atrocity was committed. Bones were sticking out of the ground as human remains were pushed up by frost heaves. Albright commented to the press accompanying us that "no one deserves to end their life

in a garbage dump." We expressed our determination to pursue and strengthen the international criminal tribunal that had been established by the UN Security Council.

Later we met with people impacted directly by the crisis. I'll never forget a meeting with the Mothers of Vukovar----mothers of the wounded soldiers taken out of the hospital and shot by the Bosnian Serbs. Some of their sons were missing, and their bodies were never found. The depth of emotion and the high degree of organization that the civilian victims of this war were demonstrating really hit home to me.

I was then invited by Christopher to join him on a trip to Paris the following week to confer with the French about policy on Bosnia.

Christopher was a principled and courtly lawyer in his presentation, never going beyond what he felt were his marching orders from the White House. He spoke in our meetings about the urgency of developing a more active way of ending these atrocities. But the weakness of the US policy was pointed out by the French and other allied members of the Bosnia Contact Group, who essentially said, "You have no skin in the game. You're not on the ground. You don't have any troops on the ground, you're not seeing this. You're concerned about it, and we understand and we share your concern." This was another example of the weakness of the U.S. policy, even though the drama on the ground was becoming more evident to me.

When I returned from that trip, I remember going to a staff meeting with Tim Wirth and the other "Global Affairs" assistant secretaries. Tim said, "You've got to read this new book that everyone in Washington is reading. It really explains what's happening in Bosnia. The book is Balkan Ghosts by Robert Kaplan." I had heard of it, and so, of course, I read it and it was very interesting. It certainly captured the climate of violence, but the thesis of the book was that what was going on was largely the product of "ancient hatreds." These are people who have never gotten along, and have always been at each other's throats, and therefore, there's really nothing to be done about this, other than to bewail the fact that the country is falling into this trap.

At that point, I was six months into the job, and based on what I had witnessed Kaplan's thesis didn't ring true. I remember a conversation with Warren Zimmerman, a distinguished former U.S. Ambassador to Serbia, whom I had gotten to know quite well and respected greatly, who said there is nothing. What's going on in Bosnia is not a product of ancient hatreds. "This is a product of warlords jockeying for position and using ethnic difference and fear as an instrument for aggrandizing power. Certainly, that's the case with Milosevic," he said, "and it's also the case with Tudjman." I was disappointed to hear that Kaplan's ancient hatreds theory was influencing President Clinton and others, and it was in the air in parts of the State Department.

I rejected that and expressed my view wherever I could, particularly at staff meetings. I began to say, shortly after my trip with Christopher to Paris, that as far as I can see the war will go on until the Balkan leaders are made to pay a price for their aggressive actions that stimulate war crimes.

I continued to be blocked from traveling to Bosnia and Croatia through the rest of 1994. Meanwhile, my human rights bureau continued to gather the mounting evidence of war crimes, which we pushed forward to the Intelligence Bureau, the Secretary and the NSC to build the case for policy change.

I was preoccupied by simultaneous crises in Rwanda, Haiti and China. In Haiti, we were moving toward a new policy which would later have application in Bosnia, and I was playing a role in that. In May of '94 my trip to East Africa had a huge impact on my thinking about Rwanda but also about Bosnia, because it became clear to me that the only way to break out of the cycle of violence and recrimination is to hold accountable those who are instigating war crimes and genocide. That was why I was determined to bolster the war crimes tribunal.

I'll pause here and see if you have questions before we move on.

Q: Just a couple. The peace negotiations, such as they were, were really in a UN Framework up to that point. The European troops that were on the ground were UN peacekeepers, and there was the effort led by former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and his former British counterpart to try to get some traction towards peace. Were you involved in this at all?

SHATTUCK: I was involved indirectly as a fireman and rescuer. What do I mean by that? I heard in March of '94 that the war crimes tribunal was in trouble because the negotiators, led by Vance and former foreign secretary Owen, wanted to offer amnesty to jump start their negotiations. In other words, what they wanted to do was to say there are all these war crimes that have been committed. We have a war crimes tribunal that could prosecute them. But instead of prosecuting, what we really ought to do is to offer amnesty as a way to provide an incentive for a ceasefire that would lead to further negotiations and peace.

I thought that was a terrible idea, and so did Madeleine Albright. It would have involved dealing away the one area of leverage that that the international community had over the warring parties, by basically saying we're not going to use force to stop you and we're not going to hold you accountable for your crimes, but we hope that you won't seek retribution for the crimes of your opponents and that you'll stop fighting and live in peace. This approach would only demonstrate the weakness of the international position, and particularly U.S. policy, but also European policy.

So I stepped in and in March and April of '94, I was very active with the White House and the NSC. I met several times with Sandy Berger about the danger of dealing away the war crimes tribunal and in essence, not only whitewashing the crimes, but also dealing away whatever leverage the international community might have without using force to stop the war. I also had meetings on the Hill about this, because there were members of Congress who were strong supporters of the tribunal, who when they heard about the prospect of an effort to offer amnesty, were appalled and opposed. The leader on that was

Tom Lantos, a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and a Holocaust survivor. On the Senate side the leader was Joe Biden. I met with them, and talked with their staffs. They made it very clear that the war crimes tribunal was not to be negotiated away.

So we made good progress in defending the tribunal against efforts to deal it away in the peace negotiations. On the other hand, what was happening on the ground became increasingly dire. The Bosnian Serbs began to encircle the UN's so-called safe areas, the towns of Srebrenica and Gorazde, and Bihac. These areas had been designated by the UN as places that were off limits for the conflict, but there was no way to guarantee their protection without the use of force, and the Bosnian Serbs were threatening them.

In a senior State Department staff meeting chaired by Deputy Secretary Strobe Talbott on May 2, 1994 we had an important discussion about the use of force in a post-Cold War world. The question was whether US diplomacy could ever be backed up by force, consistent with the general view in the Pentagon, and the Powell Doctrine, that the only time the U.S. would use force is when it's directly threatened and it uses overwhelming force. But what about limited force? Could it be used as a way of leveraging diplomacy?

There was an intense discussion about that. Talbott commissioned the Policy Planning Bureau under Jim Steinberg, who had become an ally of the Human Rights Bureau in some ways during this period, to do a paper on the contemporary implications of the Powell Doctrine after the end of the Cold War. Steinberg's charge was to analyze whether diplomacy could be backed up by force or the threat of force, including in Bosnia. That was an important turning point in the State Department's thinking about Bosnia, and it was influenced in part by the work that we were doing in the Human Rights Bureau.

Meanwhile, there was another important development in terms of Bosnia policy, especially the war crimes tribunal, and that was the recruitment of the tribunal's first chief prosecutor, Richard Goldstone. Goldstone was a South African Supreme Court Justice, selected because he had excellent credentials and was from a neutral country. He was widely respected for his anti-apartheid views, and was not regarded as being in the pocket of Europe or the United States or Russia. I worked hard on his appointment and we needed to finalize it with the Russians. I met in Moscow with Sergey Lavrov, who was then my counterpart in the Russian Foreign Ministry and is now the Foreign Minister. We discussed the tribunal and the importance of finding an outstanding neutral candidate for the key position of prosecutor. We reviewed several candidates who didn't fit this requirement. When we came to Goldstone we immediately agreed that he was the ideal person for the job. This was a major positive development in an otherwise bleak situation in the Former Yugoslavia. It was also a remarkable example of US-Russia cooperation on human rights in the heady days after the end of the Cold War.

Q: Do you remember who suggested Goldstone for the role?

SHATTUCK: He had the strong backing of Nelson Mandela, and of course, Mandela was a global figure of enormous stature. I'm sure that, when the word was out, that meant that he was basically Mandela's candidate.

What was going on in the spring of 1995 on the ground in Bosnia was deeply disturbing. The violence was escalating, and the peacekeepers could do nothing to stop it. In May the Bosnian Serbs captured some 350 UN peacekeepers and took them hostage. The Serbs said they wouldn't be released until there was a promise by the UN that it would never approve an airstrike or the use of force in Bosnia. I learned about this when I was in Rwanda on one of my many post-genocide missions. It was particularly jarring to watch the captured hostages on a television screen in Kigali after the Rwanda genocide. The hostages were finally released a week later when UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali agreed to bar the UN force from requesting airstrikes to back them up. This meant that the possibility of using military leverage was eliminated from the failing international effort to stop the aggression of the combatant parties on the ground.

Very soon after that, the UN troop contributors began to prepare to withdraw because they saw no further work that their troops could do, and because of the ongoing possibility that peacekeepers might be taken hostage again. It was a volatile and dangerous situation. But there was a remarkable development that went with this bad news. I became aware through Madeleine Albright of a previously secret US commitment that was made when the peacekeepers were first deployed in February of '93. The commitment was to provide U.S. troops to assist the withdrawal of peacekeepers in the event that they needed to be extracted for security reasons. We saw this as a potential new lever for enhancing the US role in Bosnia.

I continued to work to strengthen our other lever, the war crimes tribunal, especially now that the tribunal had a prosecutor. Albright strongly agreed with my position of opposing any effort to trade the tribunal for a ceasefire or an amnesty. I was encouraged by this, and took my marching orders from her. At her suggestion I met with the negotiators, particularly Bob Frazier, a widely respected senior State Department official tragically killed three months later in an accident on Mount Igman near Sarajevo. Bob was a key member of the negotiating team with the Contact Group. I met with him in my office and reminded him that the tribunal was a key asset for breaking the cycle of violence that should not be dealt away in the negotiations. It should be used as a way of demonstrating that the parties can be held accountable for the war crimes they commit, especially any new crimes now that there is an active prosecutor. His response was disheartening, "Our negotiating tank is almost empty, and we can’t add the tribunal on to it."
But it was an important moment, because it moved the tribunal, with Albright's leadership, further into the center of the negotiations.

We're now in July and August of '95, the crucial months for the whole Bosnia crisis. I flew to the Hague on July 10, to meet with Richard Goldstone, the new prosecutor. He was preparing war crimes indictments of the Bosnian Serb political and military leaders, Karadzic and Mladic. I knew that their indictments could be a lever to use to stop the Bosnian Serb aggression. I told Goldstone that there was a lot of pressure in Washington

to negotiate away the tribunal. He said there's a lot of pressure out here in the field, too. He had been talking to the principal negotiator, Thorsten Stoltenberg from Norway, who essentially said he wanted to negotiate away the tribunal.

Right after my meeting with Goldstone, I flew privately to a place in Germany that I knew well, a rural village in Westphalia, the birthplace and childhood home of my late first wife, Petra, who had searched for the truth about how Germany fell prey to Hitler. This was a moment to contemplate how similar horrors were engulfing the people of Bosnia and Yugoslavia. Petra came from a family where the Holocaust and German war crimes were a very heavy burden. And there, in the fields of Westphalia, I began to think, "We've got to change the way we think about Bosnia, based on how far we've been able to come on the question of responsibility and accountability." I said to myself, "What we must do, above all, is to make a rule that there will be no negotiating with indicted war criminals." That was a critical issue, because without such a rule it would never be clear what the fighting was about, and the innocent would continue to be victims of war criminals.

I returned to Washington, and sent a memo to Christopher on July 12 telling him about the imminent indictments. At the same time shocking evidence of massive new war crimes was beginning to emerge from the so-called UN safe area of Srebrenica. Two days earlier, on July 10, Srebrenica, which was guarded by UN peacekeepers, had been overrun by Bosnian Serb troops, and early reports were beginning to come out that thousands of men had been rounded up and taken away. Nobody knew where they were being held, and there was great danger that they had been or would be killed. I realized that this was the moment U.S. policy needed to change.

Over the next ten days there were more informal reports about Srebrenica. I spent about a week in Washington, working with the International Red Cross and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, compiling information about what might have happened to the 7000 missing men. I got a call from Peter Galbraith, the U.S. Ambassador to Croatia (and my former neighbor in Cambridge), and he told me he had access to someone with sensitive evidence, and he wanted me to come out right away to hear the evidence and act on it.

I sought the approval of Christopher and others. I was beginning to work with Richard Holbrooke, who had succeeded Steve Oxman as the Assistant Secretary for European Affairs and was very active on Bosnia. Holbrooke strongly agreed that we should get to the bottom of what had happened in Srebrenica. He supported my mission, and I lined up my ducks and made sure that the White House and Defense also supported it. In addition to Christopher, I contacted Joe Nye, the Undersecretary of Defense, who I knew from my days at Harvard, and I was in touch with Sandy Berger and Tony Lake, and they all approved the mission.

I flew out on July 27 to Zagreb, where Peter Galbraith introduced me to a Norwegian woman who had been working with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. She told me, "We have evidence that there are refugees coming into Tuzla. A few claim to be

survivors of a mass execution near Srebrenica. We have the names of the survivors. You should go and interview them."

Armed with that information, I took off for Tuzla, flying by UN helicopter over the mountains and devastated villages and ruins of houses destroyed in the fighting. It was a very hot day when we landed. The circumstances on the ground were very difficult because refugees were huddled on the airport tarmac, while in the hills above, you could hear the artillery where there was fighting. UN refugee workers were scrambling to get the refugees off the tarmac for fear that a shell might hit. There was some confusion about where they would go, but the UN had found abandoned buildings away from the airport where they were escorted. I was accompanied by Josiah Rosenblatt, a senior State Department official and UN office director in the human rights bureau, who was also working with me on Rwanda. We were joined by Anthony Holbrooke, the son of Richard Holbrooke, who was working for the International Rescue Committee. The three of us went to the makeshift refugee quarters away from the airport armed with the handful of names that had been given to us in Zagreb.

We were able to find five survivors of mass executions in Srebrenica. Their stories were horrific -- stories of men being lined up, herded into warehouses and held there overnight and then pulled out one by one and taken blindfolded to a truck, then driven to a field, offloaded with their blindfolds on, and shot and pushed into a pit full of bodies. The men we interviewed had been pushed and shot at but not killed. The soldiers who were ordered to shoot may have missed or shot over the survivors' heads.

We were the first outsiders to find and interview the survivors. We acted quickly to get our word out and back to Washington and European capitals. We filed summary cables the next day through the embassy in Zagreb, and had a press conference to describe what we'd seen and heard. Our reports were not classified. They were certainly shocking when they were received in Washington.

I heard that two junior officers in the CIA working with the NSA on aerial surveillance had received the information we sent back, including the coordinates of where we had been and the Srebrenica killing field that was described to us, and they went through their surveillance records. They stayed up very late to do that. They found surveillance photos of the mass graves as they were being dug and when they were filled in. Two weeks later, Madeleine Albright presented these photos to a dramatic session of the UN Security Council, which then authorized NATO intervention to stop the Bosnian Serb mass killings and aggression and restart the process of negotiations to end the war.

We had finally succeeded in defining and implementing a policy of diplomacy backed by force, which is what we had discussed many months before in our State Department senior staff meeting chaired by Strobe Talbott. When I returned to Washington on August 2, I was asked to brief the senior staff about what I'd done and seen. There were skeptics in the room who had earlier not wanted me to use the word genocide. But we'd already had that battle about Rwanda. As I spoke the room became deathly silent, and when I

called what I'd witnessed a genocide, there were no objections. That was the day we began to move toward what became the Dayton Peace Process.

Q: I just have a couple of details I'd like to follow up on a little bit, if I could, going back to this use of force discussion a year earlier. Jim Steinberg produced a memo, you said, or was tasked to produce a memo. Did he come up with a policy proposal there that was accepted? Did that discussion go through separately as an issue of principle, not necessarily attached to Bosnia?

SHATTUCK: Jim Steinberg wasn't tasked to produce a policy proposal. Nor was the paper specifically focused on Bosnia. The crises that we're talking about in these interviews were taking place simultaneously in Rwanda, Haiti and in Bosnia. So the larger issue was, could force be used to back up diplomacy in a new post-Cold War world where we're no longer dealing with two superpowers breathing down each other's neck, but rather with the disintegration of societies in countries like Rwanda or Haiti or Bosnia. Steinberg's memo was a thought piece, not a policy memo. It analyzed what these changing global circumstances required, and some of us believed that might point toward diplomacy backed by force.

Q: On the separate issue of not negotiating with indicted war criminals and the impending indictments of Karadzic and Mladic, the Bosnian Serb leaders, you also had Milosevic and Tudjman, who certainly could have been indicted as well. What would that have done for negotiating policy, or was that even being considered at that point if you couldn't negotiate with them?

SHATTUCK: Yes, good question. Milosevic and Tudjman had not been indicted because there wasn't sufficient evidence yet to do so. Milosevic was indicted four years later for his role in instigating war crimes especially in Kosovo. The policy barring negotiators who had been indicted was adopted. It became a critical part, as we'll discuss later, of the negotiating strategy that Holbrooke used in the Dayton Peace Process, that indicted war criminals would not be at the negotiating table.

The tribunal was really just getting started, and I think the thought was----certainly, it was my thought, and I'm sure it was Holbrooke's because we talked about it----that this was an incentive for them to watch their behavior during the negotiations. That didn't mean they might not be indicted for things that they'd done in the past. But Goldstone wasn't yet able to assemble the highest-level indictments, higher than Karadzic and Mladic. The evidence against Mladic was strong because as the Bosnian Serb commander he was conducting marauding campaigns like the one in Srebrenica, in which there were many victims. Karadzic was similar. He was the political backup of Mladic.

So, you're right, there was a potential conflict between the concept of threatened war crimes prosecution as a lever for peacemaking on the one hand, and the tribunal as an instrument of accountability on the other hand. There was always the possibility, but it didn't happen, that the tribunal could be compromised by that.

Tudjman was never indicted, although some of his subordinates were. I think the evidence was not as strong about the Croatian crimes against the Bosnian Serbs and the Bosniaks, as it was about the massive Serb crimes against the Bosniaks and the Croatians. The Serbs were the principal aggressors. We publicly articulated that point when Nick Burns, the State Department spokesman, was given the authority to say that in his press briefings. Crimes were committed by all parties, but it was the Serbs who committed the most as part of their ethnic cleansing strategy. That was an important point, and I think it restrained Milosevic somewhat.

Q: On another issue, you mentioned the UN Secretary General had caved on the possibility of airstrikes. Do you recall that he was involved in this independently, or was he the captive of the five key members of the Security Council that made up the Contact Group?

SHATTUCK: I don't think the Secretary General was an independent player on this. If he had been, one would have expected him to be, at least in terms of his own Muslim background, more aggressively supportive of the Bosnians, who were, after all, the principal victims of the war. But he was not acting independently when he negotiated with the Bosnian Serbs to free the UN peacekeeper hostages by pulling the plug on NATO air strikes. He did that because he was responsive to the British and the French whose troops were among the hostages. Srebrenica, of course, had not yet happened, but the hostages had been taken. Srebrenica was the turning point, and I think the turning point of the turning point was our investigation of what actually happened in Srebrenica and the reports that we filed that influenced the ways in which the policy then changed, particularly when Security Council gave NATO the authority to intervene and stop the Bosnian Serb aggression and protect Bosnian Muslim civilians on the ground.

Q: I don't want to belabor the nomenclature thing, which we've talked about at great length. But you described the dramatic moment when you were at the State Department Senior Staff meeting and called it a genocide, and nobody objected. Did that translate into the U.S. calling it genocide?

SHATTUCK: Yes, it did. The war crimes investigation expanded following Srebrenica to the clear evidence of genocide that had been committed, based on very specific evidence that Bosnian Muslim men had been rounded up Bosnian Serb soldiers under the direction of General Mladic and then taken with blindfolds and pushed into the mass graves and shot. By the time of my meeting following the Srebrenica trip with senior staff in the State Department in early August of '95, the two genocides I had witnessed, in Rwanda and Bosnia, were clear. I don't think there was any further controversy about the use of the term.

Q: Let's return, just for a minute at least----for the sake of chronology----to the tribunal, which was established by the United Nations shortly before you came into office, and Goldstone was appointed a few months after that, and when you traveled to meet Goldstone, the meeting you described, was that your first meeting with him?

SHATTUCK: No, actually, I had met him earlier in Washington. David Scheffer on Madeleine Albright's staff and I hosted Goldstone when he was first appointed, and I met with him frequently after that. I was his principal US government contact, in his capacity as prosecutor. He was very interested in receiving evidence from the U.S. He had meetings about this at State and Defense, and also at the NSC in which he requested that the U.S. share all the classified information that it could regarding evidence of the war crimes that he was investigating. He had the legal and moral stature to do this, as a former Supreme Court justice of South Africa and a widely respected jurist.

Goldstone succeeded in establishing a direct line to Tony Lake and to Christopher's office, whereby he could make these requests without going through multiple bureaucratic hurdles. It was a kind of hotline. This is after Srebrenica, after the change in US policy and we're on the way to a peace process. Goldstone did a good job of building the credibility of the tribunal inside the U.S. government, at the highest levels and far beyond the Human Rights Bureau.

Q: Was the tribunal a UN creation and supported through the UN budget? Were you working to get more resources from the U.S. government to help out? Were we seconding prosecutors to help Goldstone? Were you involved in any of that?

SHATTUCK: Yes, I was very much involved in that. We had a working group that David Scheffer and I co-chaired, the War Crimes Working Group. One of its main tasks, and David took the lead on this, was to develop a recruitment channel for specialists to be seconded to the tribunal from the U.S. government, and also to make sure that the U.S. funding contribution was embedded in the U.S. portion of the UN budget. Madeleine Albright had direct responsibility for that as the U.S. Ambassador to the UN.

My role was an interesting one, because there were a number of instances in which the tribunal was not getting all the funding that it needed from governments, or at least from the U.S. government. I was working closely with the Dutch on Bosnia, about which they had a particular concern because it was the Dutch battalion that had been overrun in Srebrenica. The fact that Srebrenica had happened on their watch made them particularly eager to engage on all aspects of Bosnia. As I mentioned in our previous session, my funding contact in the Dutch government was the Development Minister, Jan Pronk, a blunt and forthright person. He had a large budget. The Dutch were very involved in development assistance, and Pronk was a strong believer in accountability for war crimes and a strong supporter of the tribunal. Once, when there was an urgent funding need related to the tribunal that wasn't being filled by the U.S., I turned to the Dutch as a close US ally, and to Pronk, who made a contribution on the spot.

I also participated, along with Goldstone, in several funding conferences for both the Yugoslav Tribunal and the Rwanda Tribunal. I remember a particularly important conference in the fall of '94 in Kigali, where a lot of governments were brought together, and the pitch was made for the establishment of the Rwanda Tribunal, and many funding commitments were made by governments like ours that had stood aside during the genocide.

Q: Well, I raised the issue because I recall visiting the Hague with you once. I can't remember exactly. It must have been the second half of '95 or later, when we visited the then headquarters of the tribunal, and my memory of it is mainly a big place with lots of empty offices still, and you getting energized about how we've got to fill some of these up.

SHATTUCK: That's true. That was it, yes. We tried to prompt them.

Q: Yes. I believe we did. The big turning point, then, had come around the time that the word of Srebrenica got out, which was several months after the actual massacre, or some months after the massacre. I was going to get into that, but I wanted to ask you something.

SHATTUCK: Less than a month. The massacre was July 10, and I made my trip to Tuzla at the end of July.

Q: I wanted to ask you, when you described having met with these victims of Srebrenica and some of the other victims in Bosnia that you met with, and the mothers of Vukovar and so forth. These must have been wrenching experiences. This is a really difficult thing to do. Did you find this was reaffirming your commitment or just draining you so that you wanted to get out of this whole thing?

SHATTUCK: Well, it's true, there was a great deal of human interaction with victims built into the job that we were doing on Bosnia, in particular, but also on other issues like the ones we discussed in Haiti and Rwanda. The meetings were very tough with the mothers of victims and family members of people who were missing, but the most wrenching meetings were with the refugees, the victims who were fleeing ethnic cleansing, and in the case of Srebrenica, the victims who had escaped their own executions. These were people whose whole lives were spilling out to me, and it was remarkable to think that a stranger from afar, working for a foreign government, could sit down with them and give them an opportunity to tell their story and then have those stories become the basis for policy and for saving lives.

There's a process that you have to go through in order to be able to hear those stories. Sometimes people want to tell them and sometimes they don't. You have to empathize. You have to become part of their world in order to hear their stories. You can't just be a journalist or a diplomat, somebody interviewing them. You've got to try to understand what they've been through. But if you totally absorb them, you're right, you could go crazy.

I guess there were aspects of this job over time, and my wife certainly thought she detected those, where you have some degree of PTSD. You've been in the heart of it, and then all of a sudden, you're back in Washington. In my case, there were so many trips to Bosnia in '95 and '96, I remember saying to Ellen at one point, "I think I'm home a lot." But then she gently suggested, "Well, let's look at your calendar." She looked at the calendar with me, and, it turned out, and this was only in the middle of the year, I'd

already been away 123 days. That's a lot of days to be away, and many of them were spent interviewing victims. This was my human rights job. We were witnesses above all, and we were witnesses who needed to use the power that we had as witnesses to affect policy. As it turns out, that was the way for the Human Rights Bureau to operate, because it would have no impact if it was just an advocate of policy in meetings or on paper. You've got to be effective at that too, but above all you've got to be the bridge between what human rights are all about, and the people who are making policy. That's a hard job and I think it takes a toll eventually, but in my case, I was fortunate. I had a very strong family, and it was possible to come home.

At one point, Ellen was trying to figure out what would be a good thing to do when he comes home, that isn't going to just keep him focused on all these horrible true stories that he's been told? She came up with a really interesting solution. She took me to the National Gallery, where there was an exhibition of the Dutch painter, Vermeer. I don't know whether you know Vermeer, but he's a remarkable painter, so immediate and realistic and yet deeply calm. His paintings were so calming that it was a very good thing to do. Going to the Vermeer exhibit and not talking about anything, just looking at these remarkable paintings, was therapeutic.

Q: That's a big insight, and I agree with you certainly that, casting light on some of these things that were going on is the first step towards developing a policy. People need to know it, and it's hard work to get it out there. You were one of the best champions ever of making sure that happened and using your position to ensure that happened. That takes us to a turning point. With Srebrenica, the attack on the Sarajevo market, and then the United Nations Use of Force Resolution, is that a good place for us to stop for the day? Or do you want to plunge ahead?

SHATTUCK: We could stop.

Q: Because this is a good turning point, I fear we will risk repeating ourselves if we don't have a clear demarcation line. Why don't we stop here? If that's all right with you and well, that's good.

Chapter 6: Bosnia II

Q: Today is June 19, 2025, this is Peter Eicher beginning a new oral history interview session with John Shattuck, good morning John.

SHATTUCK: Good morning.

Q: We left off last time in the spring summer of 1995, and we were talking about Bosnia. There had just been a series of important events that served as kind of a turning point. We talked about the massacre at Srebrenica, your interviews of survivors and report on the

genocide that was committed there, the mortar attack on the Sarajevo market, which all led finally to a UN use of force resolution, and diplomatic negotiations began to be linked for the first time to the use of force after several years of hesitancy on the part of the United States. So maybe we can take it from there, and you can talk a little bit about how things changed and what began to happen?

SHATTUCK: August of '95 was a crucial turning point toward ending the war in the former Yugoslavia. The Human Rights Bureau was deeply involved in investigating what had happened in Srebrenica. We were able to play a role in shining the spotlight on the war crimes and crimes against humanity and genocide that had been committed there, and that became the signal event that led to a change in policy, not only by the U.S, but by Europe as well. The whole Bosnia Contact Group began to look at NATO's potential intervention as a critical aspect of ending this war.

Since the spotlight on human rights crimes was crucial in getting to this point, it was important to have the Human Rights Bureau much more integrated into negotiating a peace process. I had been working with Richard Holbrooke during the summer. Holbrooke had supported my trip to Srebrenica. I'd also been working with UN Ambassador Madeleine Albright, and she and Holbrooke were the driving forces behind the change of U.S. policy.

President Clinton changed his view, influenced by what had happened at Srebrenica and the information we brought out there. The President was moved by the tragedy on Mount Igman, a month after Srebrenica, when three U.S. diplomats were killed in an accident resulting from the siege of Sarajevo and the great difficulty of access. One of the diplomats, Bob Frazier, was a State Department official with whom I'd been working.

In addition to Holbrooke and Albright, I would add Secretary of State Warren Christopher as a crucial player. Christopher was a loyal senior member of the Cabinet and took his marching orders from the President. When the President began to change, Christopher became a strong proponent of diplomacy backed by force, driven by human rights in terms of our investigation of what was happening on the ground.

In early September I had a series of meetings with Holbrooke. We agreed Holbrooke would be the diplomatic point person meeting with the leaders in a new shuttle diplomacy in the region -- meeting separately with Tudjman and Milosevic and Izetbegovic, and beginning to corral them into recognizing they each had interests in ending the war. At the same time, I would be on the ground in Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia, conducting a series of new human rights investigations similar to the one I did at Srebrenica, gathering evidence, in real time, of continuing human rights abuses. The war was still raging.

The Bosnian Serbs were the most aggressive parties on the ground, engaging in coercive and violent ethnic cleansing and expulsion of Bosnian Muslims from towns and villages that they attacked throughout Bosnia. At the same time, the Croatian army under Tudjman had expelled 150,000 Krajina Serbs – Serbs who had been living for generations in the Krajina section of Croatia. Many war crimes were committed in these expulsions. The Croatians under Tudjman were responsible for continuing human rights abuses, as were the Bosnian Serbs under Karadzic and Milosevic.

Milosevic was the mastermind of the whole war, and he began to realize that he would be tarred with the responsibility for the Bosnian Serb aggression, the brutality of which had been demonstrated in Srebrenica. So Milosevic had an interest in moving himself away from that and positioning himself in a more favorable light. He sensed that otherwise he would end up -- and ultimately did end up, after the Kosovo war four years later -- under indictment by the war crimes tribunal.

Holbrooke and I worked out our informal plan of coordination, where I would be on the ground, and he would meet with the leaders, confronting them with information that I would produce from my investigation of ongoing human rights crimes. It would be real time information, demonstrating that these aggressive actions were continuing; and if they didn't stop, NATO would bomb the military positions from which these attacks were being conducted, and the crimes would be prosecuted by the War Crimes Tribunal.

We finally had the tools to push forward to try to end the war, and we used them effectively over the course of the next two months. I was constantly on the ground, phoning back to Holbrooke on a satellite phone that had to be set up on the roof of my armored personnel carrier. The phone was secure, but complicated to hook up and connect with Holbrooke as he landed in Zagreb or Belgrade to confront Tudjman or Milosevic with fresh information about new war crimes I was seeing on the ground.

I made seven trips during this period leading up to the Dayton peace conference, coming back constantly to Washington for consultation, and then flying back to do these missions. The crucial element of all this was the NATO intervention, and the fact that diplomacy was now backed up by force. There were some early results that began to be shown.

For example, in mid-September the Bosnian Serbs were forced to end their siege of Sarajevo. After the Sarajevo market attack that the Serbs conducted on August 30, where 37 people were killed, the UN Security Council authorized NATO to intervene. NATO planes began to bomb Bosnian Serb military positions, particularly around Sarajevo, and

by September 14, Milosevic, on behalf of the Bosnian Serbs, pledged that they would withdraw their heavy weapons from around Sarajevo.

That was a huge initial victory in our strategy.

Soon after that, we began to implement the strategy against Tudjman and the Croatians in the same way we had done against Milosevic and the Bosnian Serbs after Srebrenica and Sarajevo market attack. We made clear we would be even-handed in our human rights investigations. I traveled to Western Bosnia and the Krajina region of Croatia and investigated the massive expulsion of Serbs from Croatia by the Croatian army in Tudjman's attempted ethnic cleansing of southern Croatia.

I also investigated fresh claims of Bosnian Serb war crimes, and new mass graves in western Bosnia. In early October I found, for the first time, a huge mass grave site in Western Bosnia where the Bosnian Serbs had killed large numbers of Bosnian Muslims. I conveyed this fresh evidence of Bosnian Serb and Croatian war crimes immediately to Holbrooke, who was preparing to meet with Milosevic in Belgrade and with Tudjman in Zagreb.

After connecting by satellite phone, Holbrooke and I decided that we would make public this new information to put more pressure on Tudjman and Milosevic. I had a press conference in Zagreb shortly after our call. I told the press about what I had seen and how that information was being conveyed immediately to both Tudjman and Milosevic, who were being warned that they needed to bring the war to an end.

Let me say a word here about Tudjman, because much more attention has been paid to Milosevic in this context. What were the levers we could use to influence Tudjman? Tudjman considered that Croatia was the "European" part, if you will, of the former Yugoslavia. He aspired to bring Croatia into the European Union, and he wanted support for that. That gave us leverage to demonstrate to him that he had to clean up his behavior and stop the ethnic cleansing in Krajina, in order to make his case that ultimately Croatia should be admitted into the European Union. And here we are, many years later, and Croatia has now in fact been admitted to the European Union. So Tudjman's dream was realized, but not until after major changes were made on the ground as a result of the investigations we were conducting to influence Tudjman and Milosevic to end the war.

Q: I should say or ask, I guess, that you were not merely reporting from what you saw on the ground, but you were also meeting with the leaders of Croatia and Serbia. You were kind of double teaming with Holbrooke, getting the message across on the human rights issue, were you not? You had your own meetings in addition to Holbrooke's?

SHATTUCK: Generally, I had meetings with the foreign ministers, because we wanted to make sure not to confuse the message. I had a series of meetings with the foreign minister of Croatia, Kostovic, a very difficult person, who was actually even more hard line in some ways than Tudjman; my meetings were another way to soften the Croatians up. I also met several times with the Foreign Minister of Serbia, Milutinovic, working immediately under Milosevic.
As we led up to Dayton, Holbrooke delivered the principal message to the leaders about pushing forward to end the war. But my human rights investigations were a crucial part of our message and were conveyed through my meetings and press conferences, as well as by Holbrooke.

Over the course of this 10-week period leading up to Dayton, Holbrooke and I were constantly in Bosnia and Croatia. It is important to emphasize here that our strategy not only involved diplomacy backed by force, but also even-handed application of a rule we set for ourselves of not negotiating with war criminals or political leaders who had been formally accused of war crimes. We pushed hard on Milosevic and Tudjman who knew they could be targets of the War Crimes Tribunal. There was also some evidence of war crimes that had been committed by the Bosnian Muslims, and Izetbegevic was their leader. I met with him on several occasions. He generally liked what we were doing, since the Bosnian Muslims were victims of many of the war crimes committed by the Bosnian Serbs and by the Croatians. But I also used these meetings to emphasize that the Bosnian Muslims should avoid committing war crimes.

So even-handedness was a critical element of our strategy leading up to Dayton. I think the leaders began to see what we were doing. When we met with Milosevic, for example, we made a point of indicating that the Serbs in Krajina were victims, even as the Bosnian Serbs in Bosnia were aggressors. That was a very important piece of our credibility in setting the stage for peace negotiations.

In early October, Holbrooke, Albright and I decided that I would go to the OSCE in Warsaw to stimulate support for the peace process. The OSCE is the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. It was made up of representatives from virtually all of the states of the former Soviet Union and Europe, and the United States and Canada. We saw the OSCE as a very important element of the peacekeeping mission that we were going to need if the peace negotiations were successful. So I went to Warsaw to brief the OSCE assembly on what we were doing. I spent several days there and found that key countries, including Russia, were generally supportive, but not particularly interested in engaging in the peacekeeping operations that were going to be needed.

It became obvious that NATO would have to be the primary driver of the peacekeeping, and indeed, it ultimately became the primary element in the international force that was sent in after Dayton. However, the OSCE ended up playing an important role in the civilian implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement, and I think we set the stage for that in the meetings that I had in Warsaw in early October.

Q: I think that's right, and I think it's worth mentioning here that the OSCE had never undertaken any ground operations even close to the magnitude that Bosnia would be. So I think that's an important spin-off of what was done, both for the OSCE role in Bosnia and for the decades that followed.

SHATTUCK: Yes, and it's not surprising that I did all the briefing, and that there was very little formal agreement on the part of the OSCE to do anything in response. But I think the seeds had been planted.

The collapse of Yugoslavia was seen to be a major crisis for Europe at the time. And indeed, not only for Europe, but in many respects, for Russia and for countries in the east, since the possibility of similar collapses could occur. So there was a strong interest. It was the first time that the OSCE ended up being organized to actually take action, rather than just be a debating society.

In any event, the pressures that we were putting on the Yugoslav leaders appeared to be working. On October 5, Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia agreed to a 60 day ceasefire. This was important, and demonstrated that Milosevic was playing a role reining in the Bosnian Serbs. But the ceasefire didn't last long, and soon there were reports of another major ethnic cleansing operation by the Bosnian Serbs in Banja Luka under a notorious paramilitary leader known as Arkan. Arkan had previously been associated with Milosevic, but now he seemed to be operating on his own, or under the independent direction of the Bosnian Serbs.

The reports indicated that Arkan and his paramilitary group of heavily armed masked men were coming into Banja Luka. They were reportedly forcing women and children out and rounding up men. It seemed that the Bosnian Serbs were taking advantage of the ceasefire to expel Muslims from Banja Luka, which would give Serbs total control over large areas that had previously been Bosnian territory.

This was obviously something I needed to deal with. Since I had been the point person on Srebrenica, now I was going to be the point person on Banja Luka. Holbrooke agreed that I should get there as quickly as possible and that we should mount an effort to find

out what had happened, and then he would once again confront Milosevic and try to turn off the Bosnian Serbs.

It turned out to be an extremely difficult task. The only way to get to Banja Luka was to cross over what was known as the confrontation zone, a no-man's land between the Bosnian Serbs and the Bosnian Federation. There had been a lot of fighting in the area. To make matters worse, the helicopter on which my team and I were to fly into Banja Luka was hijacked outside of Sarajevo and never reached us. In addition, there were storms that made travel inadvisable, so we were not able to get to Banja Luke on a first attempt.

Instead, I traveled to Zenica, a large town near Banja Luka to which a lot of the refugees had escaped. I was able to interview several of them, as I had done in Srebrenica two months earlier. There were no specific reports of mass killings, but much abusive action by Arkan and the Bosnian Serbs, including raping women, and separation and terrorizing men. Nobody knew where the men had been taken, and once again, as in Srebrenica, the fear was that they might be killed.

This was very disturbing information, and demonstrated the urgency of getting to Banja Luka. This was the agenda for a meeting that I had with Milosevic with you accompanying me, Peter, on October 24 in Belgrade. Milosevic, at this stage, was signaling that he was prepared to discuss the evidence of continuing human rights abuses that I was collecting and Holbrooke was pushing at him.

Very specifically, I wanted to discuss the Banja Luka ethnic cleansing and what had happened, and how to get access to Banja Luka and the whole Bosnian Serb territory. We also wanted to push for the release of prisoners that were being held. The meeting turned out to be a very important building block for moving any further toward a peace process, because otherwise it was going to get stuck on this possibility of there being yet another Srebrenica-like massacre or major war crime that had been committed.

We had to do all this on very short notice. I think we had only 24 hours to put this meeting together, to get out of Washington, and then, initially, to meet in Brussels with members of the Contact Group and the EU Troika to brief them on what we were going to do with Milosevic and then get to Belgrade. So somehow, miraculously, we were able to obtain, by working with the White House, an Air Force plane that got us there. I'll pause here and invite you to add anything about arranging our travel.
Q: Well, this is, this is your interview. But in reviewing my notes of the months of mid-1995 and the various trips that you took that I was involved in, either directly with you or from Washington as your special assistant, I am struck by the number of notebook

pages devoted to discussions with various entities about transportation arrangements, and, often in Bosnia, the number of these trips where, as you coordinated with Holbrooke and Diplomatic Security, people advised you not to go because of security conditions. You managed to make it work anyway, whether you were going to be able to go and buy a car from Sarajevo, or an armored vehicle from Croatia, or to hijack a helicopter from some place, you read about different meetings and events and it sounds simple enough, but the logistics of all of it, and your own bravery, pushing into some of these places are notable and don't really come through to the extent they might in your book.

SHATTUCK: Yes, it was very hard to get there and you did it. We were under a very tight deadline to get to Belgrade, and before that to have pre-meetings with EU representatives in Brussels. We succeeded.

The Milosevic meeting was extremely important, as much because of what we wanted to *avoid* as because of what we wanted to get done. We talked about this on the plane, and hammered out a strategy both for what we wanted to get done and what we wanted to make sure did not happen. maybe

We wanted to make sure that Milosevic did not draw us into direct negotiation over the human rights issues that we were raising. That is to say, if we do this, he'll do that. We did not want to give anything away. It was very important.

Not only did we not want to give anything away, but I was fighting another battle simultaneously in Washington to make sure the sanctions against Milosevic were not lifted until he complied with the human rights requirements that we were imposing as a result of the investigations that we were doing. There were some people in Washington who wanted to lift the sanctions to give him an incentive to go to Dayton, and I didn't want to do that. The last thing I wanted to do was to have a negotiation with Milosevic over sanctions relief. I also didn't want to have any joint press conference with him. I didn't want him to sandbag me by dragging me outside of his office and shining the press in my face and saying we're here together to announce the following, etc., etc. I didn't want to do that.

I wanted to confront Milosevic directly with the evidence of war crimes I had gathered in Zenica, the ethnic violence against Muslims that was being committed by Bosnian Serbs in Banja Luka. We had conducted many interviews. We knew the specific routes that the Muslims had taken, to where they'd been fleeing. We had the names of people who had been forcibly evacuated. I wanted to get all that right directly in front of him.

The second thing I wanted to do, as I said earlier, was to demonstrate even-handedness in our negotiation. I wanted to say to him, "I'm here to confront you with this evidence of war crimes that you've got to stop, or the bombing will start up again, and you and the Bosnian Serbs will most likely be indicted by the war crimes tribunal." But I also wanted to say, "You know, I have very detailed evidence of the expulsion of Serbs by the Croatians in the Krajina area of Croatia. And we have confronted Tudjman about this. We are arguing on behalf of your people in our confrontation with Tudjman," to show that we're not only being even handed, but that this is the kind of negotiation that could occur if we get to Dayton. That was what we wanted to accomplish, and I think we hammered that out pretty well in advance.

Milosevic's response was "I'm not in the chain of command of the Bosnian Serbs. I don't control them." That was what he was saying, which, of course, was not true. Then he said, "But I will do my best to let them know that they've got to change their behavior if this is, in fact, true." So he gave us an assurance that he would conduct his own diplomacy with the Bosnian Serbs, with Karadzic and Mladic, Karadzic in particular.

He agreed to push the Bosnian Serbs for immediate, international access, first of all by me and by other diplomats, to Banja Luka, but also for humanitarian organizations like the International Committee for the Red Cross, the ICRC, and for the press. There were several people from the *Washington Post* and *The New York Times,* and I had told them that I was going to try to get this area opened up for them, so that they could get in there themselves and see what was going on. Milosevic agreed to push the Bosnian Serbs for access.

And then third, I was pushing for access to Srebrenica, the place that had triggered all of this, in terms of the change of international policy toward the crisis. I pushed for access, not only for myself, but for investigators for the war crimes tribunal. Here, Milosevic was a little more vague about what he would do, but he said that he would “do my best” to try to see if we could get access there as well. As it turned out, we didn't know this at the time when we met with him, but reports since then have indicated that several days after our meeting, aerial surveillance by the NSA of the area near Srebrenica showed that the mass graves that we had been told about by survivors in August had actually been moved, that bodies had been dug up and taken somewhere else. The removal had not been completed, but obviously the Bosnian Serbs, perhaps with Milosevic's knowledge, were trying to move the bodies, move the evidence of the mass executions that had taken place in Bosnia, none of which had been proven yet.

There had been no trials, so they were scrambling to try to protect themselves. Again, we didn't know this at the time we met with Milosevic. We learned this later, and that may

explain his rather airy reference to, "Sure. I'll do my best to get you in there." In any event, that was another result of this meeting. We didn't have a press conference with him. We had no negotiation with him. And so, in a sense, the meeting achieved everything that I wanted it to achieve.

In fact, five days after our meeting----evidence that we were making progress----the Bosnian Serbs on October 29 released 324 Bosnian Muslims from Banja Luka who had been rounded up, the first of a series of prisoner releases. So we were beginning to crack open the Banja Luka crisis. But it was important to get there, just as it had been important earlier to open up Srebrenica.

I called Holbrooke to tell him about the Milosevic meeting, and above all, to make sure that the sanctions against Milosevic and the Bosnian Serbs would not be lifted until the things Milosevic had promised were actually happening. Holbrooke said he was under pressure from the White House and the State Department to lift the sanctions, but he told me he'd insisted on a middle ground. The sanctions would be suspended, but not lifted -- suspended pending the response that Milosevic would give to the requests that that we had made. That protected the war crimes tribunal, which I saw as a crucial element of our negotiating strategy, and also an issue of principle, since we had pushed to create the tribunal. So the sanctions were suspended but not lifted.

The Peace Conference opened in Dayton on November 2. We had produced momentum toward resolving the human rights issues, or at least beginning to, in the period before the conference, and I was asked to come to Dayton to help Holbrooke get the negotiations off the ground. I wasn't going to be part of the negotiating team directly, but Holbrooke wanted me to do two things. "First," he said, "I need you to come out here and brief the whole contact group about the strategy you've been pursuing with me, because that's going to be at the heart of the negotiation. Second, I want you to meet once again with Milosevic to reinforce the meeting that you had with him in Belgrade, and then go back to Bosnia and get into Banja Luka."

In the meantime, the State Department sent me to the Hill to brief key congressional leaders on what we were trying to accomplish. After our success on the ground, the Hill was something of a cold-water bath. I found there was only tepid support, with a few exceptions. Tom Lantos and Don Edwards were strong supporters. Otherwise, a typical reaction was from the Republican co-chair of the Helsinki group, a bipartisan group of members of Congress who are generally human rights-oriented. I had a good relationship with the Co-Chair, John Porter, a Republican from Ohio, but he told me, "this is all very interesting, but watch out. I don't want you to drag us into another war. We look at Bosnia as Clinton's Vietnam". That was literally the way he put it. I said, "You know, look, we're

in the process of making peace in a war that's killed about 250,000 people before US involvement as peacemakers. This is not Vietnam." I debated with Porter about this, but I didn't like what I was hearing. In the end, he and the Helsinki group supported the process, but we were not welcomed with open arms.

After my meetings on the Hill, I flew out to the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio, where the peace conference was convening.

Much has been written about the atmospherics at Dayton. It was quite a setting. The delegations were housed in three identical barracks. Since they all looked the same, there was some confusion in the beginning on the part of the delegations as to which barrack they were in. At one point, Tudjman was kind of wandering around on the first day, apparently unable to recall which was his barrack, and by mistake, he went into the Serb barrack, where Milosevic redirected him. That was an interesting way to start the negotiation.

Holbrooke was totally in charge and orchestrated everything, including what he wanted me to do. Meetings had been scheduled for me during the first three days of the conference. I met with the Contact Group. I met again with Milosevic. I also met with Tudjman. I pressed them on the issues that I'd raised earlier. Surprisingly, Milosevic assured my security in getting to Banja Luka. He said, somewhat airily, "You're going to get to Banja Luka, and we are going to assure you of your security." Well, that was interesting, since reports indicated that the situation remained tense, and I was told the UN peacekeepers were not willing to escort an international diplomat across the confrontation zone.

I flew back to Bosnia and prepared with my team to set off from Sarajevo to travel across the confrontation zone to Banja Luka. Holbrooke emphasized that the trip was very important, not only for investigating what had happened in the ethnic cleansing in Banja Luka, but also for establishing that international diplomats could travel in the contested area. If that proved to be impossible, it might not be possible to guarantee an end to the war.

So the Banja Luka trip became a key piece of the Dayton process. My team consisted of Crystal Nix, head of the war crimes office in DRL; Rob Malley from the NSC staff; Karen Decker and Phil Laidlaw, from the embassy in Sarajevo; and Dubravka Maric, our interpreter. We set out from Sarajevo in two armored Humvees and drove for several hours on icy roads through war ravaged villages where European peacekeeping troops were patrolling. When we came to the confrontation zone, the local British UN commander informed me, “we can't take you any further -- you have to go on your own.”

I got an unsettling call from Washington on my satellite phone that sporadic shootings had been detected several days before that in the confrontation zone. I was told to assess the situation and proceed if local intelligence indicated there was no further shooting. I consulted with the UN commander and his intelligence officer and they determined that the shooting had stopped. Since the trip was important for the Dayton conference but carried some risk, I wanted to involve the members of my team in the decision about whether to proceed. We discussed the issue, including the promise Milosevic had made to me and repeated at Dayton to guarantee our safety. The team unanimously voted to go ahead.

Snipers had earlier been spotted in the hills above the valley that we were going to travel through, along the Vrbena River in an area occupied by the Bosnian Serbs. There were landmines along the road, and our driver was wary that a sniper could take a shot at a landmine and blow the road up. He proceeded carefully as Serb guards manning the checkpoints lifted the landmines and moved them off the road.

Our Humvees continued for several miles. And then all of a sudden our Humvee sped up, and for several minutes we didn't know what was happening. When our driver slowed down he told us he had spotted what he thought could have been a sniper location on a hilltop and wanted to get away from the landmines.

We arrived in Banja Luka after a harrowing drive, and were met by a very tall muscular man with a red beret. I had heard about the Red Berets, an elite Serbian security unit controlled by Milosevic. So when Milosevic had assured our security, that's what he had meant. The head of the Red Berets shook my hand with a bone crushing grip that carried a clear message: we were totally in his control.

I met with several local officials and confirmed that substantial ethnic cleansing of Bosnian Muslims had been conducted over the previous several weeks. I confirmed that Arkan had forcibly expelled Muslim women and children and that perhaps in anticipation of my visit his forces had now released the men they had seized. I was able to confirm the reports that we had earlier given to Milosevic on this. The Banja Luka investigation became a key factor in the negotiations, similar to Srebrenica, with a much more positive outcome. War crimes had been committed, and there were subsequent prosecutions by the war crimes tribunal. So the process was working.

I returned to Dayton and was there for the end of the negotiations. Holbrooke did a brilliant job of bringing it to a conclusion. It was a complicated process, but we succeeded in ending the war and saving hundreds of thousands of lives.

However, there were some serious shortcomings that became problems in the years that followed.

The first problem was that the international force deployed as part of the peacekeeping operation after Dayton was not mandated to arrest war criminals. I felt that was a mistake and said so at the conference. As time went on, I was proven correct when hard line nationalists became postwar political leaders who followed in the footsteps of indicted war criminals like Karadzic and Mladic who remained free. The ethnic hostilities and jockeying for position by nationalists continued because nationalist war criminals were not arrested. Eventually, some were arrested, but immediately following Dayton, there were no arrests and the nationalist divisions persisted.

On balance, however, Dayton was a huge achievement. Richard Holbrooke deserves a great credit for negotiating an end to the war, as do Warren Christopher and Madeleine Albright and the many others who were involved.

I was proud to have played a role in this. My human rights colleagues and I had succeeded in bringing crucial information to the forefront of the peace process, and the State Department Human Rights Bureau became an important contributor to a major international priority of the United States.

Q: The Dayton agreement was so heavily focused on human rights, in one way or another. The Constitution, for example, I seem to recall, incorporated the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as part of the new state. There were plans for monitoring human rights in the post-treaty period. There were plans for elections. Certainly, the Human Rights Bureau was involved in a lot of this.

SHATTUCK: Yes, I haven't really told that story, because I've been focusing primarily on how we got to the end game and stopped the violence and saved lives. But no question about it, as a result of the work that we did to bring human rights into the center of the negotiating process and to demonstrate to the parties that they each had a huge stake in addressing a crisis of which they were both victims and perpetrators – as a result of that, we brought human rights standards into the agreement, especially the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Treaty on Civil and Political Rights. These standards reflected the interests of the parties in securing an agreement that would protect each of them.

We decided early on not to negotiate with indicted war criminals. This meant that the Bosnian Serbs, who were led by Karadzic and Mladic both of whom had been indicted,

were represented in Dayton by Milosevic who was the overall Serb leader. So in essence, the Bosnian Serbs, as the principal aggressors, forfeited their ability to negotiate on their own behalf. The one thing they got from Milosevic, over my strong objection, was that the final agreement contained no prohibition against indicted war criminals running for office. In that way Milosevic contributed to what I talked about earlier, which is that war criminals and hardline nationalists continued to be major players after the peace agreement was signed.

So in answer to your question, Peter, we were involved in developing the human rights standards in the final peace agreement. These standards were accepted because each of the parties had an interest in protecting themselves against future abuses of their human rights.

Q: What might have been a little bit more difficult was negotiating steps towards implementations of some of these human rights elements. And my notes show that you and the Bureau were heavily involved in talks with the United Nations, with the High Commissioner for Human Rights. It was still just a brand-new office at that point, with the OSCE, that you've mentioned, to create a whole new structure to both monitor human rights in the new Bosnia, as it was formed by Dayton, and to have steps towards elections. There was also, if I recall, a serious debate about whether and when to hold elections.

SHATTUCK: Yes, the debate about elections is an interesting story. I'll never forget the long talk that I had with Warren Christopher about this at Dayton. I was pushing to try to make sure that hardliners who had committed war crimes were not going to be part of the political process, and therefore, I didn't want to have elections take place when war criminals were free. I was concerned that early elections would result in a hardening of the political process. Even if the human right standards were clear, having elections too early would not be helpful.

Christopher invited me on a walk at Dayton to discuss this. He told me, “I admire the strong positions that you're taking on human rights, but I can tell you that we don't have a lot of support----you've probably seen this yourself----on the Hill for a long-term U.S. commitment to Dayton, a commitment to peacekeeping forces and operational activities on the ground.”

This goes back to how the Yugoslav crisis was regarded in Washington. It was seen in the White House and in Congress as a European problem. The general view was that Europeans should take charge of the postwar process. The US wanted early elections so it could hand off the process to the Europeans. Christopher told me, "You're going to have

to give in on that. We're going to have to take the risk that that may mean some of the hardliners end up going into the government."

Thirty years later the Bosnian Serb enclave that emerged from Dayton is still dominated by hardliners, holding Bosnia back and preventing it from becoming a full participant in the European integration process. I think that was partly a result of the early elections, and the slow pace of war criminal arrests after Dayton.

I don't fault Christopher. He was doing what he had to do in order to make sure that there was support on the Hill for U.S. participation in the international force and the deployment of U.S. troops. Since the U.S. needed an exit strategy, it was essential that Dayton implementation become a long-term European project.

Q: That's right. I remember you also took care to send a DRL team out to be part of the election observation process and the elections finally happened nine months later. I remember particularly because I was part of the team. We all went and watched polling stations and reported on problems. I was in a Serb area where the refugees were not able to return and vote, for example, and it highlighted exactly the kind of problem that you were pointing out that the conditions were not yet ripe for a free and fair election.

SHATTUCK: Yes, that was the problem. Of course, this was all ultimately unfinished business, because three years later in 1997 – '98, much of the same pattern of violence and ethnic expulsion broke out again in Kosovo. In this case, it was the Serb government paramilitaries, not the Bosnian Serbs. The Serb paramilitaries were operating directly under the orders of Milosevic in violently expelling forcing Kosovar Albanians from their homes.

The Serbs were determined to control Kosovo not only in political terms, but also in cultural and demographic terms. Milosevic had risen to power glorifying the Battle of Kosovo Polya in 1399 as a heroic example of Serb nationalism and the ability of the Serbs to push back the Muslims when they were coming into Europe, through Kosovo. Six hundred years later Milosevic triggered what became the Kosovo War.

Whether the Kosovo War could have been prevented earlier at Dayton is another question. I don't think it could have, unless Milosevic had been dealt with much more harshly in the final agreement. But that was not possible, because the goal in Dayton was to end the war in Bosnia. If the U.S. had pushed at Dayton for regime change in Serbia, that would have created many political difficulties, not only in Serbia, but also in Europe, given the fact that the French and the British had both been oriented toward the Serbs in

the breakup of Yugoslavia. The result of leaving Milosevic in place was another human rights war in Kosovo.

I have one final story to tell about Kosovo. I was sent to Kosovo in September 1998 by Madeleine Albright, who was then the Secretary of State, to investigate reports of increasing ethnic cleansing of Kosovar Albanians from towns in Kosovo by Serb paramilitaries directed by Milosevic. I was sent with Bob Dole, the senior Republican senator who had run for president against Clinton in 1996. To Senator Dole's enormous credit -- and I think it shows how bipartisanship has a deep history in the United States even though it seems completely dead at the moment -- he had accepted a request from Bill Clinton, who had defeated him in the presidential election, to become the chairman of a new Commission on Missing Persons in the Former Yugoslavia. It was in that capacity that Bob Dole joined me on the mission, and we traveled through Kosovo and interviewed victims of ethnic cleansing.

We did exactly what I had done earlier in Bosnia. We interviewed people who had been forced from their homes. We looked at physical evidence of some of the houses that had been burned. We then returned to Belgrade and by prior arrangement, we met with Milosevic to present him with the evidence that we had gathered.

Milosevic was not happy when he found that I was with Senator Dole. Milosevic no doubt thought that since Dole had been Clinton's presidential opponent, he would be open to Milosevic's argument that the Kosovar Albanians were terrorists who needed to be dealt with harshly. When Milosevic asked Dole to present him with evidence of what he had seen in Kosovo, Dole said, "Well, I'd prefer to have Mr. Shattuck do that, since he has a lot of experience from Bosnia."

At that point, Milosevic, who had invited us for lunch, realized that Dole was not likely to accept his argument. He asked his staff to close off the area that had been set aside for lunch, and he perfunctorily concluded our meeting. After he said good-bye and wished us luck, I had the last word: "Mr. President, we're glad to have been invited to come to see you again. I think you're familiar with the evidence of human rights abuses that we came to present to you. And we wish you luck in return."

That was a month before President Clinton initiated a new diplomatic effort backed by NATO forces to stop the ethnic expulsions in Kosovo. Two years later, Milosevic was voted out of office in Serbia. He was subsequently indicted by the war crimes tribunal and died while he was on trial in The Hague.

Q: Yes. Do you want to make any final comments and assessment of the war crimes tribunal we've talked about. How difficult it was to set up and get going, how much help were you providing, and how much were you an impetus for really getting it off the ground? Looking back now, or even at the end of your tenure as Assistant Secretary, did you feel like this had achieved what you hoped it would?

SHATTUCK: In a way, it went further than I had expected, but it didn't achieve everything that I'd hoped. When we started planning the tribunal we had no idea that it might become more than a fact-gathering Truth Commission. But over time, it became a real criminal court with a prosecutor and international judges and an important series of trials. More than a hundred cases were tried over the course of more than two decades.

My disappointment was that it was never given any enforcement authority. It had no police power, no independent ability to arrest the people who were indicted. But that was a bridge too far.

On the other hand, I was pleased that we were able to establish a separate tribunal for Rwanda. After the horrific failure by the international community to stop a genocide in progress, the US helped lead the effort to create a Rwanda tribunal. I arranged to get the Rwandan Government to agree to this, and we set up the tribunal in Arusha. It was related to the Bosnian tribunal, but institutionally separate. The Rwanda tribunal conducted a large number of trials, and issued sentences against some of the genocide leaders.

So these two international criminal tribunals, the first two since the Nuremberg trials, brought the international justice issue to the forefront. They became not only institutions of justice, but they were also instrumental in pushing the parties, particularly in Bosnia, toward ending their genocidal conflict. In Bosnia, the tribunal became an instrument of peacemaking, along with the NATO force which backed up the diplomacy.

So, yes, the war crimes tribunals achieved a lot. The sad fact is that the International Criminal Court, which was established subsequent to the war crimes tribunals, with a global jurisdiction, has not been able to perform as much of a role as the two ad hoc tribunals. Today international justice has more problems than those that faced the two tribunals. It has no enforcement power, and it has run into a lot of political controversy. Whether it can ever get beyond where it is now is a big question.

Q: Yes, I want to ask you that. But before I do, just go back to this enforcement issue with the Yugoslav tribunal. I was surprised to see, as I looked at my notes, that I had forgotten at this meeting we had with Goldstone, the prosecutor, in which he requested U.S. support

to set up his own police force to go into Bosnia and arrest people, we were not able to help him out with that.

SHATTUCK: You're right. I was involved, not just on the receiving end of this, but actually in the early stages of planning, because I was part of a group that was trying to put the arrest force together.

How did this come about? It was an initiative of the Dutch government, which had a special stake in the crisis in Yugoslavia because of their role at Srebrenica, which was such a tragedy, not that they were responsible for what happened, but it was their enclave that was overrun.

I think I mentioned earlier, in one of our interviews, that when it was necessary to raise money for the war crimes tribunal, it was possible to go to the Dutch government, and particularly to the Development Minister Jan Pronk, because the Dutch felt strongly about how important the tribunal was to the success of the peace process. As time went on, I began working with the Dutch Foreign Minister Hans von Mierlo, and we were at the stage where we were frustrated that there was no real enforcement authority in the tribunal, and we wanted to develop a plan for arresting the people who were indicted.

So von Mierlo called me into his office at one point when I was visiting the tribunal----he invited me come to the Dutch foreign ministry----and he outlined a plan for a Dutch-backed, U.S.-supported, police force that would be assigned to work with the tribunal, and would be given authority by the tribunal to conduct these arrests.

The Dutch were willing to do their part, and they knew it was important to get the U.S. on board. So I began exploring this with various elements in the U.S. government, particularly in the Defense Department. I guess you wouldn't be surprised to know that I didn't come up with any support. The U.S. did not want to be involved in creating any kind of police force adjunct to the tribunal. I think your notes probably indicate some of those meetings. I was communicating with Goldstone about this, and was involved in the preliminary efforts to have this take place. I was working without any direct authority from the State Department, although I felt that I was fact-gathering, and it was important to do that.

Q: Now, you talked a little bit about the International Criminal Court, which was being conceived and starting to be put together at this time. I've forgotten exactly what the dates on that were. Were you involved at the inception of that, and what was the genesis of the debate in the U.S. government about that?

SHATTUCK: I was not directly involved. Madeleine Albright had become Secretary of State, and she had created a special office which David Scheffer, with whom I'd worked closely when he was on her staff, was put in charge. It was the Office of War Crimes in the State Department, and he became the ambassador-at-large for war crimes. That may not have been his formal title, but I think it was.

David was the primary person doing the work in developing the International Criminal Court, along with others. By the way, it was an initiative that came as much, or even more, from the Europeans, and the U.S. was asked to participate. The Clinton administration agreed to do so, but ran into a significant opposition within the administration itself, in the Pentagon in particular.

Among the lawyers, there was a concern that if the U.S. became involved----and particularly if it became a member of the International Criminal Court----the U.S. has many international commitments, particularly in international peacekeeping and peacemaking, as well as its global foreign policy interests, and the ICC might put at risk U.S. personnel who would end up being investigated and indicted by the new international entity.

I had been nominated to be Ambassador to the Czech Republic, and wasn't involved. David Scheffer ended up being one of the negotiators of the court. There was a Rome process that took place after my appointment as Ambassador. It took place at the end of 1998 and the process was to actually draft the final statute of the International Criminal Court and then to circulate it for signature and participation, and the U.S did sign it in the Clinton Administration in 1999.

Subsequently, in the new administration of George W. Bush, the U.S. withdrew its signature and became a strong opponent of the court because it felt that it might get in the way of U.S. security interests, particularly after 9/11. The Pentagon and State Department lawyers were looking at all of this.

I was glad that we had been able to establish the two ad hoc tribunals and that they'd been as successful as they were. They were continuing at that point, both of them indicting and trying war criminals, but the ICC was something that the U.S. felt it should not participate in. I was deeply disappointed in that. The US should have remained committed to the international justice arena, which it had helped build in the two war crimes tribunals, but for reasons having to do with sovereignty and U.S. interests and U.S. security after 9/11, the US backed away from the ICC. The horrific way in which the Afghan detainees were treated, and the torture memos that were circulated in the Bush Administration, demonstrated why the U.S. would have been in jeopardy if it had

remained in the International Court, because these were actionable war crimes. It was a tragedy that in less than a decade the US moved from championing international justice to undermining basic principles of human rights.

Q: Yes, I think that's clear. And who would have thought we'd get to the point that we'd be putting sanctions on the International Criminal Court. This is a good stopping point at the end of Bosnia, before we move on to the next big issue, which is going to be China.

Chapter 7: China

Q: *Today is July 10, 2025, and this is Peter Eicher beginning a new interview session with John Shattuck. Good morning, John.*

SHATTUCK: Good morning. Peter.

Q: Today we are going to move to another one of the big issues you dealt with, which is China, full of different problems, quite different from Rwanda and Bosnia, but equally serious in its own way. Would you like to start by explaining where the U.S-China human rights policy stood when you took over, and what faced you as you moved into your job?

SHATTUCK: In 1989 many dramatic changes were occurring in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union as the Cold War ended and democracy movements surged. But in China, these changes were not happening. Instead, the Chinese government cracked down brutally on a growing democracy movement inside China of students, intellectuals and workers. Americans were introduced to the Chinese movement through international press coverage of its huge month-long demonstrations in Tiananmen Square in Beijing, while other parts of the movement were active elsewhere on China.

China violently suppressed its own democracy movement. Liberals inside the government had favored a peaceful solution to what was becoming a security problem for China, but the dominant hardliners won out. On June 4 the police and military were ordered to attack tens of thousands of protesters in Beijing, with the Army shooting demonstrators randomly, causing huge numbers of casualties, and arresting many thousands of participants.

The world was shocked. Everything had seemed to be going in the opposite direction.

The public reaction in the US was strong. Immediately following China's violent crackdown, there were a series of intense debates between the Congress and the White House over US relations with China. Congressional majorities in the House and Senate wanted human rights to be at the center of US China policy. Many members believed that the crackdown was a watershed, and it was essential to make clear to China that for the US to establish normal relations, improvements in human rights would have to occur.

The Bush Administration, on the other hand, wanted to continue its China engagement policy, in which human rights was not central and only minimal objection was made to what had occurred at Tiananmen. The administration's priority was strengthening relations with China and continuing the opening process that had begun in the Kissinger-Nixon days.

Congress moved forward with its own legislative initiatives linking trade with China to human rights. Both houses passed legislation conditioning the extension of China's Most Favored Nation status on specific human rights improvements. The Bush Administration strongly disagreed with this approach, and in 1992 President Bush vetoed the legislation, and his veto was narrowly upheld. So there was an intense political standoff between Congress and the White House over how to deal with China.

Meanwhile, Bill Clinton in his presidential campaign was making promises about being a human rights president. Reflecting the global movements for democracy that had led to dramatic changes in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, South Africa and parts of South America, Clinton called for the US to promote human rights through foreign policy. He used strong rhetoric to condemn human rights abusers, referring to the Chinese government as the "butchers of Beijing".

But the reality of governing is never as clear as the rhetoric of getting elected. Clinton was elected largely on economic issues. His campaign adopted the famous slogan, "it's the economy stupid," which one of his campaign managers, James Carville, had coined. It was Clinton's focus on domestic economic issues that rang the bell of the electorate and won him the presidency. So Clinton came into office having used strong human rights rhetoric, while recognizing that he needed to have strong economic policies.

Clinton was determined to end the battle between the Congress and the White House over how to deal with China. The legislators leading the battle in Congress were Democrats. Senator George Mitchell, the Democratic Senate Majority Leader, began to talk to Clinton's team about how to avoid the clash. An Executive Order could be drafted in consultation with the Congress that would specify the areas of human rights improvement needed for the President to extend China's Most Favored Nation status in the coming year.

This took place in the early months of 1993 before I arrived in the State Department in June, so I wasn't involved in these discussions or the drafting of the Executive Order.

The specific requirements of the Executive Order were determined in the White House and the State Department. The drafting was led by a senior State Department official who later became a close colleague and friend, Winston Lord, the former ambassador to China before Tiananmen.

Lord was convinced that the new policy would connect the President with the Congress. Clinton and his political advisors liked this since it would avoid a clash between Congressional Democrats and the Administration. Anything that could be done to induce

the Democratic Congress to support the White House on China policy would be good. So the Executive Order was drafted and promulgated.

The Order contained seven specific conditions that had to be satisfied for the President to extend China's Most Favored Nation status. Two were mandatory: promoting freedom of emigration, the ability of people to emigrate out of China; and taking concrete steps to restrict export products produced by prison labor in Chinese prisons. The five others required "overall, significant progress." These were: 1) endorsing and following the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; 2) releasing or accounting for political prisoners; 3) providing access to prisons by humanitarian organizations such as the International Committee for the Red Cross; 4) protecting religious and cultural heritage and freedom, but particularly heritage in Tibet; and 5) allowing steps to permit international broadcasting by the Voice of America and other international broadcasting outlets that the U.S. was promoting into China.

These were the specific elements of the Executive Order that was a fait accompli when I came into office.

Q: Okay, a couple of things. First of all, there was actually, if I recall correctly, a Congressional China Human Rights Caucus. Is my memory correct?

SHATTUCK: Yes, that's right. I don't know to what extent its members were consulted about drafting the Executive Order, but yes, you're right.

Q: Clearly, for this to have been an issue that resulted in negotiation and an Executive Order even before you took office in June, which suggests that this was a pretty high priority for the Clinton administration. Would you think so?

SHATTUCK: Yes, it was urgent. The White House team said essentially: "Let's clear the decks. We have a big issue with China. We need to deal with this, and the last thing we want is to be fighting with our own Congress about it." So, from a political standpoint, it was a high priority. It related to the campaign promises Clinton had made and the continuing repression in China following the Tiananmen Square crackdown.

Q: Right. Is this something that you thought was well done? Would you have chosen different priorities or a different approach entirely?

SHATTUCK: I could see how important the issue was, so I raised it early with the human rights NGOs and advocates I would be dealing with. In some respects I was their voice inside the administration, and certainly I wanted to hear from them and know what they were thinking. Many of them were focused on the China issue. They'd been drawn into the debates with the Congress so they knew about that. It was not something that I woke up one morning and somebody said, "Hey, there's an Executive Order here on China." I was following this very closely.

A couple of comments were made to me by astute human rights advocates who were friends and colleagues. I'll never forget a comment by the Executive Director of the Northeast Regional Office of Amnesty International, Joshua Rubenstein, who was also a distinguished historian of the Soviet dissident movement and an author. Josh said to me, "Well, this is really quite a weapon you're being handed. It's a nuclear weapon. And do you know whether it works? And if so, what do you suppose the result would be of using it?"

I thought that was quite a trenchant way of describing this. I hadn't thought about it quite that way, and it was sobering to realize this was going to be the case. Like a nuclear weapon, the Executive Order had been developed in the hope that it would never have to be used. It was an incentive for China to comply and to improve its human rights record, so actual use of the weapon would not be necessary.

I was willing to be the point person, and I felt qualified to do that because of my connection with the China human rights world through my work with Amnesty International. I felt I would be able to represent the complex position of the U.S. government, which involved promoting both human rights and trade.

Q: A nuclear weapon in the sense that, if it were used, would pretty much blow up much of the U.S.-China relationship.

SHATTUCK: Well, that's a big question, and some people said that would be the case. Others said, no, it would not; it would only be a one-year shock. If it was believed that it might be used, China would be induced to comply. But the China scholars that I consulted, and China experts, did not believe that China would alter its behavior in any fundamental way as a result of pressure from the United States. It might work in a transactional way, and, after all, that's what this was all about. It was really about a transaction. It was not about transformation.

The thinking was that, in a transactional way, by negotiating over specific points in the Executive Order, sufficient progress could be made in order to extend MFN. That would be a transactional success story for human rights. I'm not sure the human rights community understood that. They may not have thought much about the fact that it was unrealistic to believe there might be some kind of transformation as a result of this policy. In any event, I did not believe there could be a transformation.

Q: Yes. Well, it's the job of human rights NGOs to always be asking for more and to try to get as close to full compliance as they can, so you always get a little bit of unhappiness no matter how good a job you do. This was a very specific set of issues, as you looked at it, as you received it. Were there things that were missing? Were there things that were there that were not really top priorities? Some of them are so broad, such as adherence to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that includes practically everything. But were you essentially satisfied that this was a reasonable approach?

SHATTUCK: Well, I think by taking the approach of looking for evidence, specific evidence, in each of these areas, the Chinese would be willing to conduct a transaction to comply -- for example, specific evidence of adherence to some aspect of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, such as taking a position in the UN Human Rights Commission that did not attack the Universal Declaration, but was supportive of some aspect of it.

These were the arguments in favor of the approach the administration was taking. But there were problems as well. I'll note three specific problems that showed how difficult it was going to be to implement this approach, and indeed, perhaps how it may have been doomed from the outset.

The first problem was the ambition of the American business community, which was increasingly interested in investing in China. China was actively pursuing foreign investment. Deng Xiaoping, the Chinese leader, had made a big pitch to international companies to invest in China in the post-Tiananmen period, trying to stimulate investment to overcome the stigma attached to what China had done at Tiananmen. The business community had a strong interest in moving past Tiananmen and regularizing economic relations with China.

The second problem was a more conceptual problem with the Executive Order. It was based on an assumption that China would see the Order as an incentive to comply. But the hardliners in China were not likely to see it this way. They were going to see it as a confrontation with the U.S. It's true there were liberal elements in the Chinese regime who might see the Executive Order as an incentive to begin to make a few changes. But it wasn't clear that these liberal elements could be influential.

The third, and, in many ways, the most difficult, aspect of the Executive Order was that it had no enforcement provision. The only way to enforce it would be to deny Most Favored Nation Status, and that's of course where the nuclear weapon aspect of it came in. If the Order had specified more limited enforcement possibilities -- for example, sanctions short of full revocation -- that might have made the weapon more manageable.

These were the problems that I saw. But I was pragmatic and practical. I could see that my task and that of the State Department and Secretary Christopher was to develop specific evidence, within the framework of the Executive Order, that China was making some changes sufficient to warrant an endorsement that they had complied with the requirement of "overall significant progress". So that was what we began to look for - specific elements of progress.

Q: Okay, so how did you go about this? It's a big task. You're handed this and it's "Go see the Chinese and see what you can get?"

SHATTUCK: We got an early taste of working with China at the World Conference on Human Rights right after I was sworn in, in June'93. China was aggressively attacking the concept of universality of human rights, and in that sense, was almost directly

attacking the Universal Declaration. So here we are with this Executive Order, and China is working with other authoritarian regimes to try to prevent any kind of declaration coming out of the World Conference in favor of the universality of human rights.

When I came back to Washington, I met with Tony Lake, Sandy Berger, Secretary Christopher, Winston Lord and others. We discussed what we called a strategy of coordinated human rights engagement. In other words, in every diplomatic meeting with China, whether political, economic, military, environmental or any other diplomatic field, the issue of human rights would be on the agenda, including compliance with the Executive Order, to demonstrate to the Chinese how unified the government was on this. That was the theory.

Unfortunately, many voices don't easily become a unified message. My role was to be the person who would explain to the Chinese the details of the Executive Order, indicating the Order was a major achievement of President Clinton in developing a unified policy. The President had been able to persuade the Congress to work with him, and there was no longer a Congressional-Presidential division that would impede US-China relations.

My first set of meetings took place in New York, in September of '93, where I conducted the opening human rights dialogue with my counterpart in the Chinese foreign ministry, Assistant Minister Qin Huasun. Minister Qin was a hardline interlocutor in the meeting. He was willing to talk, but no matter what I said, he was not prepared to agree to anything.

Q: You said your counterpart; I can't imagine that the Chinese actually had an Assistant Secretary for Human Rights. Was this somebody with a broader portfolio?

SHATTUCK: He was the assistant minister designated by China's Foreign Ministry to meet with me. His portfolio was partly human rights, and he represented China in the UN Human Rights Commission. China was beginning to produce its own interpretations of international human rights, and was issuing its own human rights reports. I don't know how much of that Qin was involved with, but he was formally designated as my counterpart.

Q: Okay, yes.

SHATTUCK: Our so-called dialogue was really more of a monologue. It was not fruitful, but at least it took place, it was cordial and it went on for about four hours. The following day we met again, when Christopher conducted his own meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen that the Assistant Minister and I joined. This meeting became a little more productive when the Foreign Minister broached the possibility of further human rights meetings in China.

Christopher emphasized Clinton's achievement in getting the Congress to work with him in implementing the Executive Order. He asserted that this would improve U.S.-China

relations, since there would no longer be battles inside the US over human rights. The Executive Order was about preventing these internal battles.

In responding, the Chinese became more receptive. I was invited by the Foreign Minister not only to come to China for further meetings, but also to visit Tibet, which of course was the subject of one of our Executive Order issues. The Foreign Minister also accepted our prisoner list. We gave him a list of prisoners who had participated in Tiananmen and were still in prison. We were feeling each other out. Inside the Chinese government there seemed to be a debate between hardliners and more accommodating elements, similar to the debate that had taken place before the Tiananmen crackdown when the hardliners had prevailed. The Foreign Minister, for the moment, represented the accommodating point of view.

When I traveled to China the following month, in late October, there were several more developments that seemed promising. I said I wanted to investigate issues of religious freedom, so I was permitted to attend a protestant church in Beijing with Stapleton Roy, the U.S. Ambassador. We went to a church from the Ambassador's residence by what was probably the best way to get anywhere in Beijing at that time -- by bicycle. We biked to a church several miles away, and that gave me an opportunity to bike through downtown Beijing. There were only a few cars in the streets, but tens of thousands of bikes. I attended the church service, and later in my visit, I went to an "underground" or unofficial church in the southern city of Guangzhou.

I then met with various government ministries. At the Ministry of Religion I discussed what I had found, and was told that it's permissible for citizens to exercise their own religion, as long as it's not "foreign dominated." The papal-sanctioned Catholic Church was regarded by the ministry as foreign dominated, so it was barred. I had meetings at the Justice Ministry, and they accepted my prisoner list. They told me I could visit a prison in Tibet, which I later did. These visits were carefully managed and staged. But in terms of the transactional approach we were taking toward the Executive Order, things seemed to be falling in place.

I could see that the biggest problem was that our policy of coordinated engagement was not working. There were many loud and influential voices on the economic side who were not carrying the message of the Executive Order. Trade delegations were coming in. There were former officials, many from the previous administration, including a delegation headed by former President Bush. These voices were publicly calling for expanded US trade with China.

These voices were undermining the urgency of complying with the Executive Order, taking away whatever incentive the Chinese might have had to comply. After all, the Chinese could see that American companies were desperate to come in and invest in China. Businesses from other countries were beginning to do so as well, including a big German trade delegation that was in Beijing during my meetings. While our Executive Order seemed to be working in the narrow context of my meetings, in the broader context

of trade pressures from the American business community, members of Congress and other countries competing for contracts, our message was getting drowned out.

The conflict that was shaping up was not only between the U.S. and China over human rights, but between the U.S. economic agencies and the State Department over trade policy and the linkage of trade with human rights.

Here, I want to pay special tribute to Secretary Christopher, a stalwart, honorable and honest representative of the President on this complicated trade policy. Christopher could feel the pressures mounting from the economic side, but he remained steadfast in seeking to carry out the Executive Order, firmly believing that it represented the rule of law. Christopher was committed to human rights. So was Winston Lord, who had drafted the order and became my regular colleague as the Assistant Secretary for the East Asia and Pacific Bureau.

In November, President Clinton was scheduled to have a summit meeting with Chinese President Jiang Zemin in Seattle. The meeting was Clinton's opportunity to convey the importance of human rights progress to US relations with China, and the specific evidence of progress that he required in order to renew China's MFN status.

The summit was a critical moment for Clinton's China policy. I helped draft and edit the talking points that Clinton would use with Jiang, and I briefed him immediately before the meeting. The tone and substance of the President's points were meant to leave the Chinese leader with no doubt about the President's commitment to the Executive Order. I was able to brief the President after my latest meeting with Qin Huasun, and gave him the full flavor and results of our human rights dialogue, including my trip to China.

The day of the meeting, I was invited by the President to come jogging with him. We went early in the morning, along with a retinue of Secret Service and other supporters and friends and hangers on. Clinton had known me since our time as students at Yale Law School, and he wanted to have a conversation while we jogged. The President asked me for my reaction to an op ed that had appeared the day before in the *New York Times*, written by the famous Chinese dissident, Wei Jingsheng, whom the Chinese had released from prison in order to improve their human rights record before the Olympics in Beijing in 1996. I replied that I thought Wei's op ed was evidence that human rights progress could be made in China, and Clinton, I'll never forget, said "Yes, and it would be a very good sign of progress if Wei Jingsheng was allowed to lead a normal life." It dawned on me that this was something we could pursue.

The Clinton-Jiang meeting went well. Clinton held his ground and made our position very clear. He told Jiang that 270 members of Congress had written to him the day before and said that if they were to vote on MFN extension today, they would find it difficult to support it without further evidence of human rights progress. That was very helpful, and, in a sense, the high point of our China human rights policy.

For most of December and early January, I was preoccupied by other crises that were breaking out. I went to Haiti to investigate the human rights abuses there. I went to the Middle East and to Egypt and to Israel, and later to the Balkans with Madeleine Albright to investigate evidence of war crimes. So in December and January, I was out of the picture on China.

When I got back, I could sense that the ground was shifting on China policy. An example of this was that both Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen and Senior Economic Advisor Bob Rubin were publicly calling for the separation of trade and human rights, effectively putting themselves and their agencies, and the economic interests they represented, at odds with the President's Executive Order. They didn't specifically call for its repeal, but this was a shocking shift that the Chinese must certainly have detected.

Meanwhile, the President was silent. He didn't say anything further about his MFN policy after the summit. Christopher was holding firm. I went with him on a trip to Paris to meet with Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen. Our meeting was less positive than previous meetings, and Qian was clearly recognizing that there was growing pressure on Washington from American businesses to invest in China.

On the plane home, the Secretary made clear that he wanted me to continue to be the point person to make sure that the Chinese understood the details of the Executive Order. They needed to understand that they had to show progress in the areas specified in the Order. The sense that we were getting was that the Chinese were probing to see how little, not how much, they could do to satisfy the Order. They were receiving mixed messages from the administration, and now understood that only the State Department, not any of the other agencies, was engaged in pursuing the Order.

At the end of January something dramatic happened in Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou. Dissidents were rounded up and detained for no other apparent reason than to send a signal to all dissidents in China that the approach of the U.S. MFN deadline in May should not be seen as a rallying cry. The government hardliners were winning. I met in early-February with a well known U.S. businessman, John Kamm, who had high level contacts in Beijing, and was also active in the human rights community. Kamm told me, "The Chinese think they have MFN in the bag so they don't really need to do anything further."

In mid-February the State Department sent me to Beijing to reemphasize the terms of the Executive Order and the need for progress. My meetings would prepare the way for a trip by the Secretary of State in early March, following which a decision would be made in May about whether to extend MFN for China.

In Beijing, I worked with Ambassador Roy to develop a strategy for demonstrating the kind of specific progress we were looking for. I would repeat the major political point that we had been making to the Chinese for six months – the President is working with the Democratic Congress to solve the MFN problem. He's taken two big steps to do that, first by persuading the Congress to back off legislation and allow him to implement his

executive order, and second, by hosting the summit with Jiang Jemin in Seattle. In response, the Chinese should produce progress on human rights. In addition to conveying the President's success in taking charge from the Congress through the Executive Order, I would make another detailed presentation of the Executive Order, paving the way for the final round of meetings with Christopher in March.

One aspect of our strategy to demonstrate progress was for me to have a private unpublicized meeting with Wei Jingsheng. The meeting would show that Wei could lead a normal life, as the President himself had suggested in his comment to me in Seattle. He was no longer in prison. He had been allowed to publish an op ed in the *New York Times*, and by having a private unpublicized meeting, we could show progress. The idea of the meeting was mentioned in a cable sent by the embassy to the White House and the State Department.

I met with Wei in the lobby of the China World Hotel, so the government would have known about the meeting when it took place. Wei spoke about the democracy movement and observed how repression had been easing in the 1980s before the crackdown in Tiananmen. On the issue of foreign investment Wei said he was torn -- "too much investment would bolster the status quo, but pulling out would harm the economy and the average Chinese." After the meeting, I had further meetings with my counterpart, Qin Huasun, and then with Liu Huaqui, his boss in the foreign ministry. Both gave the impression that the Chinese felt that MFN was in the bag. Neither one raised anything about my meeting with Wei.

What then happened was a surprise leading to a disaster. Wei Jingsheng went to the *New York Times* without notice or authority, and gave an interview about his meeting with me. That resulted in a major story. Whatever Wei was trying to do, it didn't work to his benefit. It created a new storm.

As they had done before my trip, the Chinese once again rounded up dissidents in Shanghai and Beijing and Guangzhou. In light of the arrests----particularly the roundups that were carried out *before* my meeting with Wei Jingsheng----there was a question whether Christopher should make his trip to China. I opposed the trip. I wrote a memo from the field after the arrests advocating that the U.S. show displeasure over the worsening human rights situation by canceling or postponing the Christopher trip until the situation was less hostile.

It was eventually decided that the trip should go forward. Winston Lord advised Christopher to continue, and he ended up coming to China in this highly charged atmosphere----charged as a result of Wei having publicized a private meeting that otherwise could have been an example of specific human rights progress.

There were a whole series of stormy meetings during the course of Christopher's visit. The purpose seemed to be to create opportunities for the Chinese to thumb their nose at the human rights requirements of the Executive Order. The economic interests had won the day. This was most dramatically illustrated by one of the worst State Department

high-level meetings I've ever attended. The Secretary of State met with the U.S. China Business Council in Beijing. The American representatives lectured Christopher on the importance of trade and investment and how the Executive Order was getting in their way, and how it ought to be withdrawn as a terrible impediment to the foreign investment that they wanted to bring to China. Here was a group of American citizens lecturing the Secretary of State in a public place in Beijing in open opposition to the Secretary's effort to implement the foreign policy of the United States toward a country with which the US had major differences.

It was a terrible moment, and I must say, I was concerned for Secretary Christopher, but he held his ground. He was very good. He simply said, "we disagree. This is the policy of the United States that you're undermining. We need to show progress on human rights in order to advance trade and investment."

On the final day of the talks, there was some progress, following two extremely cool farewell meetings, one with Premier Li Peng, the leading hardliner and head of government, and the other with Foreign Minister Qian Qichen. At the end of the day, after my final meeting with my counterpart, we were able to show some limited progress on prison labor, on the emigration aspect of the Executive Order, on a limited accounting of prisoners, and on a commitment by the Chinese to have talks on what they characterized as "technical problems" in VOA broadcasting into China.

This progress was overshadowed by the crackdown on dissidents that had occurred, both before and during our visits to China as a signal by the hardliners that there was not going to be any liberalization of human rights in China.

The press in the U.S. and the foreign policy establishment condemned Christopher's trip and the MFN linkage. They regarded the human rights linkage as a failure, and several commentators suggested that the only way to liberalize human rights in China was to work through the economic channels and not through human rights and diplomatic channels.

This led to the end game of the MFN project, from mid-March to May of '94 when the Executive Order was due to be reviewed and a determination was to be made as to whether China had made sufficient progress on human rights.

Two specific debates took place inside the State Department at this point, debates about our own recommendations to the White House. The first debate was over the standard to be used to assess whether sufficient progress had been made. Should it be an objective standard based on facts and truth? Or should it be a standard to fit a predetermined outcome with facts to justify the result? This was a crucial issue of principle from my point of view, and also from Christopher's and Winston Lord's. Honesty was nonnegotiable: if we started shading the truth and pretending that there'd been progress in certain areas where there hadn't been, then the integrity of the State Department would be destroyed.

What we concluded was that China had met some, but not enough conditions. Lord and I prepared a report on March 15 that stated the two mandatory conditions of the Executive Order (prison labor and emigration) had been met, but there was not "overall significant progress" in the other five areas (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, accounting of prisoners, release of prisoners, humane treatment of prisoners, Tibet, and international broadcasting).

The second debate was, what should be the consequences if the conditions of the Executive Order have not been met? As I said earlier, there were no real teeth in the Order. There was nothing that indicated what could be done short of complete revocation if some but not all of the conditions were met. Complete revocation was out of the question, nor did we advise that, because there had been some progress. But the question was, what kind of alternative sanctions or consequences could there be?

We discussed whether a partial revocation would be possible, for example, revocation of MFN status for state-dominated industries. That was pretty quickly dismissed, because obviously, virtually every industry in China is dominated by the state. Two other potential sanctions were discussed. First, since Chinese weapons were being imported into the United States, could we ban weapons imports under a separate law? And second, since limited sanctions had been imposed on China immediately after Tiananmen, could these be extended? The answer to both of these questions was yes. The Chinese weapons import ban could be imposed, and the extension of the Tiananmen sanctions could be continued. That was what was done when President Clinton announced his final determination.

I'll make a broader point before commenting on the final MFN determination that the President made. The world was falling apart in the spring of 1994. It was a terrible time----at the critical moment when it was becoming clear that Clinton's China MFN human rights policy was doomed, Rwanda was a genocidal catastrophe, and Haiti and Bosnia were increasing human rights disasters. As the China human rights debate was intensifying, I was simultaneously pushing the White House to support efforts to save lives in Rwanda by deploying additional UN peacekeepers. At the end of April I made an urgent trip to East Africa to meet with the countries bordering Rwanda, to see if they would contribute to a new peacekeeping force. Late April and early May was taken up by this exhausting and wrenching trip just as the China policy was going up in smoke. It was a difficult time.

On May 26, President Clinton announced that he was renewing MFN and permanently de-linking trade and human rights. This is what the economic agencies and former officials and some members of Congress were all calling for, and above all, what the U.S. business community was determined to get. In announcing his policy reversal, the President asserted that trade and economic development would do more than human rights diplomacy to improve human rights. Three decades later, there's no evidence of this when you look at China today.

The situation was summed up in an op ed published in *The Washington Post* by a reporter that I knew quite well, E.J. Dionne, under the headline, "The Death of Human Rights?" This was a question that could be asked at this stage, not only with respect to China, but with respect to Rwanda. This was the low point of my time in the State Department, and I began to consider resigning.

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Q: John, when we left off, you were about to talk about a very serious issue, whether you were disappointed, devastated enough by this chain of events that you considered resigning.

SHATTUCK: Yes, many events piled up here. But above all, it was the determination by the President that human rights issues in China should be completely separated from US trade policy, essentially dismissing the very policy that he had promulgated with much fanfare only a year earlier. Pressures had built up over a number of months from the economic agencies and from the US business community for human rights diplomacy to get out of the way so they could more actively engage in China. There was a new phrase coined about what was going on in China policy. It was called The Great Sucking Sound In The East, American businesses getting sucked into China, and becoming major collaborators with China in the globalization that Clinton was championing.

I was concerned about what this did to the reputation of the Human Rights Bureau, by effectively casting aside all the diplomatic work that had been done to promote human rights. This work included the meeting that I had with Wei Jingsheng that had been intended to show that Wei could lead a normal life. I had discussed this with President Clinton, who had suggested that if the Chinese would allow this it would be evidence of progress. We did what we could to show that, but the Chinese went backward by rounding up dissidents, and then Wei caused a diplomatic storm by publicizing the meeting. Meanwhile, the pressures from the economic side for the President to abandon his human rights policy were enormous.

EJ Dionne's question, "Is this the death of human rights?" was the question I was asking myself. I began to wrestle with this. I talked with my wife, and had private conversations with friends and close colleagues.

We reached several conclusions. First, on the policy question, there was no fundamental reason why this should be the end of human rights. An authoritarian world power like China is an enormous challenge for human rights policy. How to address that challenge and develop an effective approach are complex and debatable issues.

We had shown some limited progress even in the one year that we'd been implementing the executive order. So there was no reason to think that the work that was being done was a failure.
That was less important than the larger question of what we were dealing with. We were in an early post-cold war world that was rapidly changing, and the U.S. was only slowly waking up to the forces of disintegration that were causing catastrophic events like the Rwanda genocide, the disintegration and ethno-nationalist wars in the former Yugoslavia, and the breakdown of the rule of law in Haiti and other failed states.

Instead, U.S. policy makers were focused on shiny new global opportunities for US trade and investment. But I felt then, as I do even more so now, that global forces of disintegration were causing new kinds of human rights crises, and that we needed to keep pushing the U.S. government to address them.

One of the hardest ones to address was the situation in China. But failure in China, or at least a temporary setback in China, should not be seen as a reason to abandon everything else. Also, there was the question, if I did resign, what kind of a person would be put in the position to succeed me? Certainly, this was a fear expressed by a number of people that I conferred with, that someone, perhaps a little more compliant, who was unwilling to take the kind of risks that I was taking on these issues would come in, and it would be superficially easier for the administration and the White House to work with that person. Human rights is a contentious field, and it didn't seem that having such a person succeed me would end up being a success for human rights.

Finally, I was in the early stages of developing strategies to address human rights crises in Bosnia and Haiti and Rwanda, for example in international justice and the establishment of the International Criminal Tribunals. To abandon all of that, or turn it over to someone else who might not see it the same way did not seem to justify resigning. So I chose, after consideration, to stay.

I also felt that I had a strong and increasingly excellent staff, and that the Bureau and the State Department were gathering strength and credibility on some of the other things we were working on. Later that year, I helped change the policies relating to the treatment of refugees who were escaping by boat from Haiti, and ultimately to address the human rights crisis in Haiti with a UN-approved intervention to restore the democratically elected president of Haiti. That all took place in the fall of ’94 and early ‘95, as well the effort in Bosnia that I and Madeleine Albright and Richard Holbrooke and many others were putting into establishing a negotiated end to the war, diplomacy backed by force, and the development of accountability through the international tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda.

There was plenty of unfinished business. In human rights work, of course, nothing is ever finished, even when some goals can be achieved, improvements made and human rights strengthened.

In the case of China, there were two positive developments in the following year that I contributed to. The U.S. delegation to the UN Human Rights Commission led an effort to block China, for the first time, from tabling a resolution challenging China's human rights record. We were able to achieve a victory in the UN on China's human rights policy in 1995, a year after Clinton's delinkage of MFN and human rights.

And then later that year, under the leadership of the First Lady—later, Secretary of State--Hillary Clinton, the U.S. played a central role in the landmark World Conference on Women in Beijing.

These successes, of course, would likely have happened even if I'd resigned in 1994, but they proved that if you stay with it, you can contribute to achievement. Resigning is a one-shot deal. You can make noise on the outside, but that may not have an impact on the inside.

Q: *So just to be clear on this, when Clinton delinked trade and human rights in 1994, was this permanent? Or did there have to be a certification each subsequent year?*

SHATTUCK: It was permanent. The linkage occurred only that one year in the Executive Order. The Congress had tried to link it previously but the legislation was overturned by the Bush veto.

Q: Just five months earlier, 270 members had sent Clinton the letter saying, China hasn't met the conditions and they would vote against extension. So they apparently changed their view as well in those five months.

SHATTUCK: By his Executive Order, the President took over from Congress control of the trade-human rights linkage, so in 1994 there was no congressional vote. Clinton told Jiang Zemin that he'd received a letter from 270 members of Congress saying if they had a vote, they would vote against extending MFN, and that was in November of '93. We don't know how they would have voted five months later, because they didn't get to vote because of the Executive Order.

Q: They didn't have a vote, but they didn't raise a particular ruckus that you recall?

SHATTUCK: Yes, sure they did. There was quite a lot of opposition in the Congress. Certainly, Nancy Pelosi was very vocal about this, as well as other members of the Human Rights Caucus, but they didn't have a vote.

Q:. Thanks. One issue I want to explore a bit more, because it's something we've heard more about in recent years, is religious freedom, and different aspects of this, especially the Buddhists, the Uyghurs and the Christians. You had mentioned going to the church services in Beijing, both the official church and the so-called underground church. Were you receiving a lot of complaints, interest, urging from American evangelical groups to do this, to get more involved in this issue, to make it a bigger part of what we're doing? It was not specifically one of the Executive Order conditions, although I guess it's part of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

SHATTUCK: I was in touch with the evangelical groups. They were among the NGOs with which I was meeting. I met with NGOs across the political spectrum. In Tibet I was able not only to go to a Tibetan prison that the Justice Ministry had authorized me to do, but I also visited a monastery. (By the way, I think I'm still the highest-level, highest-ranking U.S. official, at least on the State Department side, ever to visit Tibet.)

Something interesting happened in the monastery in Lhasa. The US Consul General, Don Camp, who accompanied me, was secretly given a handwritten note passed by one of the monks. The note said, there are 30 monks from this monastery who are now in prison. That was a powerful incentive for me to push the Tibetan and religious freedom issues harder, and I did that in each of my meetings.

Later in my tenure as Assistant Secretary, when Madeleine Albright was Secretary of State in the second Clinton term, I was put in charge of the Secretary's International Commission on Religious Freedom Abroad. That appointment reflected the interaction I was having with the evangelical groups.

Q: Did you meet with the Dalai Lama?

SHATTUCK: Many times.

Q: And how about the Vatican with the Catholic churches? Were you in touch with them, coordinating with them at all on that issue?

SHATTUCK: Yes, not specifically with the Vatican, but the US Conference of Catholic Bishops was in touch with me about the certification of bishops designated to serve in China. That issue was not resolved, nor the issue of the succession of the Dalai Lama.

The Chinese continue to assert that they will not accept any Dalai Lama unless they've been involved in his appointment, even if the Dalai Lama and China and the Tibetan Buddhists refused to accept him.

Q: This harks back to medieval British history and the struggles over whether the king or the pope was going to appoint the bishops.

SHATTUCK: Yes. Exactly.

Q: And in recent years, the big religious freedom issue is centered around the Uyghurs. Was that something you can recall also being involved in way back then?

SHATTUCK: Later on, when I was Ambassador to the Czech Republic, I was aware that the Xinjiang region of China had religious and ethnic minorities who were being severely repressed, but the specific issue involving the Uyghurs, which has become very prominent, of course, in the years since then, was not something I knew much about. Early in my human rights tenure, I brought a China and Asia expert into our Bureau, Susan O'Sullivan, who was terrific, one of the best officers we had. More than any other American official, Susan has taken a deep interest in the Uyghur cause, and now that she's no longer in the State Department, she serves on the board of the Uyghur Human Rights Defense Committee.

Q: And as I recall, the Human Rights dialogue with China continued even after this. I remember you sent me on one of the missions to try to get them to sign the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which I don't think they have done, another not very successful mission to Beijing. But did you recall being involved in a continuing dialogue in your subsequent years?

SHATTUCK: Yes. I had continuing dialogue, certainly through the UN Human Rights Commission. The bilateral human rights dialogue that we had during the time that we were linking trade and human rights was connected to the executive order. That ended when Clinton delinked the two.

There were efforts to reestablish the bilateral dialogue, but until the Obama era, when Mike Posner was assistant secretary, I don't think there was any formal high level human rights dialogue on a regular basis.

In our case, the formal dialogue produced a few very specific things. If you're willing to take a transactional approach toward human rights, which generally NGOs are not, you

can achieve some small human rights progress through the dialogue. If it's simply open-ended, with no particular incentive to continue, I'm not sure it can be valuable.

Q: And you've talked about in earlier sessions; one of your deputy assistant secretaries, Gare Smith, dealt a lot with business and social responsibility of businesses. Did this aspect of policy inject itself into the China trade?

SHATTUCK: Yes, very much so, after the delinkage. There were active efforts. Certainly, that was what the White House was saying, that we can do more to try to get businesses to develop their own codes of conduct, and that has happened. Again, Mike Posner was at the center of that during his time, and Gare Smith, during my time. In the years immediately following the delinkage, there was dialogue between U.S. businesses and the State Department over the development of human rights codes of conduct.

Q: Well, that's quite a history. You've talked about a lot of lessons that came out of that. Do you have any final lessons learned that you want to comment on?

SHATTUCK: One lesson is that human rights work is a constant struggle, and one has to keep at it. Another is that advocating human rights is a complicated role for a government official. You are representing the values and work of the global human rights community. But you are within the government, and, as a government official, you have the capacity to do things that NGOs can't do, but you're also hobbled by constraints from all the other interests the government has.

That's certainly true in the U.S. government. The competing interests that edged out human rights in US China policy, and then completely overran them, were US economic interests that had not had an opportunity to develop in China, partly as a result of what had happened at Tiananmen, and generally because China was not open to foreign investment until Deng Xiaoping opened it up.

That’s an example of the difficulty of a U.S. government official promoting human rights in a huge authoritarian country, especially at a time when corporate economic interests were increasing their pressure to get access to China.

One can understand why that might seem to be a way to liberalize an authoritarian society. But the evidence over many years is very weak. China has remained under authoritarian rule, and in some ways, even more so today than it was back in 1994. Opening China up to foreign trade and investment has been good for Chinese economic development. But when it comes to political and civil rights, economic development has had very limited impact.

Q: Yes, I think that's certainly right. But we shouldn't downplay the internal role of the human rights people in the U.S. government. We could always be, at least, the voice of conscience within the State Department and always have the high ground. It's one thing that I loved about being in DRL. We always had moral high ground, even if we lost.

SHATTUCK: Yes. But when we look at the Trump administration's recent abolition of the Human Rights Bureau and the drastic cutbacks of the State Department, we see only chaos and destruction of the moral high ground that you're talking about. We see how fragile human rights principles and advocacy are inside the government when we see what's been happening today.

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Chapter 8: Other Human Rights Missions

Q: Good morning. Today is July 23, 2025. This is Peter Eicher beginning a new oral history interview session with John Shattuck. Good morning, John.

SHATTUCK: Good morning.

Q: John, the last few sessions, we've talked about specific countries, Haiti, Rwanda, Yugoslavia, and China, and those were key issues, which obviously you spent a lot of time on, but there was a lot going on in the world. You were Assistant Secretary from June '93 until November, 1998, and all over the world, there were human rights issues and countries and turmoil and one thing and another going on. And I know you couldn't possibly have been involved in all of these, but I wanted to see if anything jogs your memory about other things you were personally involved in in other countries.

We are, of course, focusing on your oral history, so it's not so much to get what was going on in other countries, but rather any involvement you may have had. So feel free, of course, to say, "My staff handled that," or, "I was working on China when that was going on," or whatever it may have been, but I'd like to take you, if I could, for a little world tour of different places which may have come to your attention, or may have involved you, or may jog your memory on some other things we haven't talked about already.

I thought maybe we could start with one of the perennial problems, the Middle East and Israel. Israel, of course, has been criticized for many years for human rights issues. There were some great steps forward during the time when you were there. The Oslo Accords, I think, were right after you took over, but there was establishment of U.S. relations with the Palestinians and a lot other steps. I wonder if you were involved at all in the Israeli and Palestinian human rights issues.

SHATTUCK: Yes, Israel. And there are two other countries in the Middle East that I'd like to talk about briefly as well, Egypt and Turkey.

The Oslo Accords were signed in September 1993, reflecting a general climate of cautious peacemaking. Yitzak Rabin was the Israeli Prime Minister, and Israel was in a very different place from where it is today in relation to its neighbors.

I made my first trip to Israel early in my time as Assistant Secretary, in the late fall of 1993, to have discussions with Foreign Ministry and Justice officials about human rights issues involving the detention of Palestinians. Many Palestinians were working in Israel, and access to Israeli areas through routes from the West Bank and other parts of the Occupied Territories was essential to them, but some Palestinians were being subjected to temporary and sometimes longer term detention. I found that Israeli officials were open to dialogue on this issue.

The Foreign Ministry authorized me to visit the West Bank. In 1993 the West Bank was not the armed camp that it is today. There were limited barriers, but no omnipresent military patrols and intensive surveillance. The West Bank was more like a frontier area that was starting to be occupied by settlers. The government was ambivalent about this, willing to allow Israelis to settle there, but trying to keep the settlements from displacing Palestinians who had long lived there.

There were relatively few settlements in 1993. I visited several, and found that the attitudes of the settlers were mixed. Some simply wanted the opportunity to live and raise their families there. Others were more aggressive, and wanted to take over the area. After interviewing settlers and talking with Israeli officials, I returned to Tel Aviv and had more meetings in the Foreign Ministry. I reported what I'd seen and heard, including my experience with aggressive settlers, and was pleased that the ministry seemed interested in hearing my human rights viewpoint.

I was told by the ministry that the Rabin government was committed to ensuring that settlements would not impinge upon Palestinian communities, since that would disrupt the peace process. What was striking to me, in contrast to everything that's going on now, was the receptivity of the government to the human rights positions we were articulating. I was doing what a human rights official should do, and the Israeli government was responding quite differently from the way the Israeli government responds today to arguments about human rights violations against Palestinians on the West Bank, and in Gaza.

When I returned to Washington after this trip, and having conducted a human rights investigative mission on the West Bank, I found that I was gently, and sometimes not so gently, urged by Middle East specialists not to return to Israel out of concern that human rights issues might get in the way of negotiations in the next phase of the Oslo Accords and the peace process. I also faced similar opposition from European specialists to my investigations in Bosnia. It was frustrating.

I had other issues on my plate and did not see any immediate need to return to Israel. The Foreign Ministry had listened to my message and seemed concerned about the settlement issue. But the State Department's antipathy illustrated how human rights advocacy and investigative work are often erroneously characterized as disruptive to diplomacy. Events would soon demonstrate the opposite: it became clear in Bosnia, and later in the Middle East, that peace negotiations cannot be productive unless human rights violations are addressed. That was the lesson of Dayton, as well as the breakdown of the Oslo Accords.

Q: As the Palestinian Authority was established and took control of the West Bank, and at that time Gaza as well, that would have been slightly after your trip. So I imagine, did you have any personal contact with the Palestinian Authority on human rights?

SHATTUCK: Yes. I met with the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah during my trip to Israel. The meeting was straightforward. There was certainly tension and overall hostility to the Israeli occupation. But there was no burning issue at that moment.

Q: Of course, Israel is always such a big domestic issue as well. Did you ever find yourself under pressure, either from Palestinian groups or from AIPAC or the Congress to do one thing or another on Israel?

SHATTUCK: AIPAC was certainly in touch with me, pushing me to make sure that I understood that Israel represented the most promising aspect of human rights in the Middle East, and I agreed with that. I was not lobbied by Palestinian organizations at that time. And of course, what today is a burning issue, the Gaza catastrophe, was a non-issue in 1993-94 because Gaza was then occupied by the Israelis.

Q: Okay, well, let's move on to a neighbor, Egypt, which was, at the time, I think, the second biggest recipient of American aid, after Israel, and a major bastion of U.S. policy in the Middle East, yet one which had all kinds of human rights issues under President Mubarak at the time. It probably presents one of the starkest views of the competition between human rights policy and policies on other issues of great importance to the United States. I wonder if you were involved in that much or not.

SHATTUCK: Yes, I flew directly from Israel to Cairo. Egypt after all was a partner in the peace process. It was also the second largest recipient of US foreign aid, even though it was hostile to democracy and human rights. Advocates in Egyptian civil society were pushing for reform, but these efforts were being systematically put down by the government.

I could tell the government was nervous about my visit. When I landed in Cairo I was met by a representative of the foreign ministry, and I expected that, but he immediately whisked me into a caravan of five cars, four of which were clearly security vehicles, all of which blared their sirens for the entire trip into the city. That was certainly not

necessary for a visitor at the level of the Assistant Secretary of State, but the ministry rep claimed that this was the best way to protect my security. I was then escorted by two security officials into the hotel, where outside my door a young man with a Kalashnikov weapon was posted to guard me, again supposedly for my security. I felt that if anybody had wanted to attack me they certainly would know where I was, and I wasn't sure whether an attack might come from outside or inside the government. That was my sobering introduction to the human rights situation in Egypt.

I had tense pro-forma meetings with the government at which I presented a list of political prisoners and human rights issues. The list included people we had written about in our human rights reports, and I wanted to secure their release, or better treatment, and bring the spotlight onto them in the context of the developing peace process that Egypt was involved in.

The most dramatic part of my visit was my meeting with Egyptian human rights activists in the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights. We met over dinner. At the dinner was a man introduced as a former Foreign Minister of Libya, Mansour Kikhia, and he was seated opposite me. We had a long conversation about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the importance of making it applicable to Egypt. I didn't ask him to talk to me in any depth about his work, because I didn't think that was a good idea in this setting, which undoubtedly was subject to surveillance.

Mansour Kikhia's attendance at the dinner had been organized by the U.S. Embassy, which was apparently not aware of the threat he was facing. Whenever I had meetings in countries I was visiting, the embassy would put together a list of activists who were organizing human rights reforms.

Sometime later, after I left Egypt, I learned that Mansour Kikhia had disappeared, and was suspected to have been abducted by agents of Libya's dictator Muammar Qaddafi. The Libyans and the Egyptians were no doubt in close contact, and indications were that the Egyptian Secret Service had delivered Kikhia into the hands of the Libyan Secret Service.

That was a jarring introduction to the crisis of human rights in Egypt.

Q: When you made visits, would you normally make a public statement to the media?

SHATTUCK: Yes, and I did that in Cairo before I left. Of course, I had no idea that Mansour Kikhia would disappear. Later, the State Department spokesman raised his case, and we featured the case prominently in the Human Rights Report on Egypt.

Q: And a press conference would usually be a typical part of your visit to any country?

SHATTUCK: Yes, almost always at the end of a visit I would have a press conference, although, bear in mind, many of the countries that I went to had very limited press

presence, with no international press. There might have been some in Egypt, but in many African countries that I went to, and in Asia, there were often few independent media.

Q: At least picked up by Voice of America, if nothing else.

SHATTUCK: Yes, I'd always do a VOA transmission.

Q: Okay, Saudi Arabia, same question.

SHATTUCK: I never went to Saudi Arabia. Certainly, the human rights issues were greater there than in many other parts of the Middle East, but the Saudi regime tightly controlled access and I was not offered access. Human rights were covered by the embassy, and our staff compiled the Saudi information sent by the embassy for the Human Rights Report. The Saudis during the early Clinton administration were not important players in the diplomatic events that were going on.

The other country nearby that I visited several times was Turkey. It's not technically part of the State Department's formal delineation of the Middle East, since it bridged between Europe and Asia. My first visit to Turkey in 1994 was before the election of Erdogan. Turkey seemed to be emerging from an authoritarian period, although the military remained at the center of Turkish governance.

The human rights issues I was sent to investigate involved the government's repressive treatment of the Kurdish minority, particularly in the southeast. Protecting the Kurds had long been a bipartisan priority of the U.S. My mission was to advocate on behalf of Kurdish linguistic and cultural autonomy, but to oppose what the Kurdish nationalist-separatist PKK represented, which was an effort to break away from Turkey. Kurdish human rights activists were promoting the Kurdish language and culture, and many of them were being arrested for nonviolent human rights advocacy.

My job was to communicate to the government that Kurdish nonviolent cultural activists were exercising internationally recognized human rights, freedom of speech, and especially freedom of religion. I traveled widely in the southeast to meet with the Kurds and observe their cultural and linguistic environment.

Turkey is a big country and very diverse. I was impressed by the geographic and social complexity of the area. I had meetings with the government when I returned to Ankara to convey what I had seen and heard. The government was willing to listen, but was not pleased with my report, which concluded that Turkey was failing to comply with human rights standards.

A major policy result of my visits was the conditioning of the sale of F-16 fighter jets to Turkey on improvement in the human rights situation of the Kurds. This condition was required by a provision inserted by Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt) in the DoD appropriations bill. In 1995, a decision was made by reviewers at State that no improvements had occurred, and the sale of the two fighter jets was held up. So there

was a linkage between my investigative work in Turkey and the human rights conditioning of the F-16s sale.

Turkey is a NATO member and an ally of the US. In Bosnia, I worked closely with Turkish representatives. I was housed by a battalion of Turkish peacekeeping troops who were helpful in identifying Mujahedeen fighters sent to Bosnia by radical terrorist groups from other parts of the Middle East. As a result I was able to avoid coming into contact with the Mujahedeen, and ultimately the Turks' support of the Dayton peace negotiations helped assure that these fighters would be withdrawn. The Turkish case showed how human rights issues can be raised with an ally while at the same time pursuing a separate diplomatic goal with them. We were critical of Turkey over the Kurdish issue, but worked with Turkey to develop the peace process in Bosnia.

Q: *Yes. Now, there are so many countries; when you made a trip to a country like Turkey, was that usually part of a grand tour where you would visit other countries as well, or were you going just to Turkey?*

SHATTUCK: No, I usually would go to other places as well. I flew from Turkey to Kazakhstan and spent a day there. I had been asked by Strobe Talbott to do a quick human rights "checkup" on Kazakhstan.

Q: Okay, good. I want to get to Kazakhstan later. But just going down my list, maybe we can move on from the Middle East to Africa. We talked a lot about Rwanda already, and Somalia and those African issues in which you were deeply involved, but it's a big continent, and there was a lot going on. South Africa to start with, was just going through its transition. I believe 1994 was the democratic transition, the election of Nelson Mandela, probably shortly after you took office. Did you find yourself involved in that at all?

SHATTUCK: Yes, in one aspect of it, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). I was the State Department specialist in accountability for human rights abuses. We were developing the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was another model of accountability.

The Truth Commission was organized and orchestrated by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who was close to Nelson Mandela. Tutu was a beloved religious leader and senior statesman in South Africa who had long been involved in the fight against apartheid. The U.S. not only endorsed the TRC, but agreed to help fund its startup. I was charged with arranging the initial funding, and assigned to meet with Tutu and the Commission in South Africa.

The Archbishop invited me to come to the early sessions of the Commission, which I found fascinating. His goal was to bring human rights victims of apartheid, including torture victims of the secret police, together with their abusers. Tutu assembled cases where victims would describe what had been done to them, and abusers would then describe from their point of view what they had done to the victims. Both sides would

talk about the ways their lives had been affected by the violence against them or by them. Over several hours of testimony, this proved to be a powerfully cathartic and emotional experience.

Here's a story to illustrate the brilliance of Tutu in organizing such an extremely difficult and complex program.

I went to a session in a school, in a town that had once been entirely white South African. The town was a stronghold of the apartheid regime, and a center of apartheid activity. In the schoolhouse with its rundown auditorium and rickety old seats, Tutu announced, "We're going to have the first session of the TRC right here. We're going to bring together all the people. I want to change the environment. I want to change the atmosphere." Tutu then arranged to have the auditorium stage decorated with flowers. And then in a brilliant stroke he installed a mini waterfall in the middle of the stage. The sound of falling water was calming and transformative.

Q: And the whole environment in this rickety old schoolhouse changed?

SHATTUCK: The victims came forward one by one and told their stories, confronting the very people who had victimized them. I could see what kind of profound impact this was having. The Truth Commission produced admissions of guilt by many people who'd done the basic work of the apartheid regime, and emotional and financial compensation for the people who were victimized. It was a privilege to witness all this and an honor to be able to support it.

Q: That's fascinating, and it really does draw an interesting parallel between the kind of reconciliation you were also working on in Bosnia and Rwanda, but a different model. It's well worth talking about. Further in Africa, the one country I've noted is Zaire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, which had a vicious Civil War during that time. I remember dealing with the periphery of it, when I was in DRL, and there were all kinds of things going on there. You were much involved from the Rwanda aspect, because this was all involved in the aftermath of Rwanda and the militias moving into Congo and becoming a cross-border war. But it was also a very serious internal civil war in Congo, which ultimately overthrew Mobutu. And I wonder whether you recall any involvement in that.

SHATTUCK: I was involved in getting the U.S. government more engaged in Rwanda, and delivering assistance and expertise for building a Rwandan justice system, in addition to getting the international criminal tribunal off the ground.

The civil war in the Congo was related to the Rwanda genocide. Many of those who had participated in the genocide had fled to Zaire/DRC and were seen by Kagame's Rwandan Tutsi government to be a continuing threat to Rwanda. This gave Kagame the excuse to send troops across the border to root out the Hutu genocidaires.

I investigated the situation with US Ambassador to the UN Bill Richardson. We met with some of the insurgents who were working to bring down the Zaire government. Their emerging leader was Joseph Kabila, an ally of Kagame. Much of the devastation that was occurring was a result of the genocide, and refugees were pouring out of Rwanda into Zaire/Congo. Our mission was to inspect the new refugee camps that were being set up and to trace the refugee routes coming out of Western Rwanda into eastern Zaire/DRC, and try to assess what the insurgents were up to.

Mobutu, the leader of Zaire, was overthrown by the insurgents, assisted by Kagame's Rwandan troops. I recall how utterly chaotic the situation was. I was then also deeply involved in Bosnia, and could see similar requirements of peacekeeping and management by the international community that were not being met.

There was no international appetite for peacekeeping, sending troops, or otherwise engaging in trying to bring the situation under control. And there were very few levers of power that could be used in the way that membership in the EU was being used as a lever of power to advance the peace process in the former Yugoslavia.

It was a depressing scene. I felt overwhelmed. The whole situation in Central Africa after the Rwanda genocide became overwhelming. The U.S. and European countries were not involved, with one exception, which is, there were great economic interests there, notably in mining. Mining had always been a big deal in the Katanga province of what was then Zaire and became the DRC. The mining of rare earths was in increasing demand, and economic exploitation seemed to overwhelm all other international interests in Central Africa.

Q: Do you recall other African countries you might have been involved in? Nigeria?

SHATTUCK: Yes, I visited Nigeria. Nigeria is, of course, the biggest country in Africa and by far the most populous. Nigeria was a case study of the challenge of putting together diverse elements of a big country out of the remnants of a colonial past. Nigeria has major resources, including above all oil, and a huge governance problem of bringing all its parts together, which meant it was susceptible to military regimes.

I was sent on a standard human rights fact-gathering mission to Nigeria. The government didn't like my message, needless to say. After all, in a post-colonial world, who wants to hear a U.S. human rights official telling you that you need to improve your human rights record? Along with Bob Gelbard, the Assistant Secretary of State for law enforcement, I was declared persona non grata by the regime. They didn't want to hear from Gelbard, because he had assessed the security at the airport in Lagos, and found that it was terrible. He concluded that the airport should be banned from international travel. Meanwhile, I was telling the Nigerian government that the human rights situation in the country was atrocious and needed to be improved. The military dictator who was heading the government, General Sane Abacha, decided he didn't want to hear any more of either of us. So when we left the country, we were told not to return,

Q: By the Nigerian government?

SHATTUCK: By Abacha regime, yes. There were many people in Nigeria who wanted us to return, but not the Nigerian military government.

Q: Okay, interesting. Well, unless you have more Africa you want to talk about, why don't we move on to the Western Hemisphere, and what's always a biggie on human rights, which is Cuba.

SHATTUCK: Well, maybe just very quickly on Africa, just a sentence or two, because I visited all of the East African countries, Burundi, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Kenya, in the context of the Rwanda genocide. I was directed by the National Security Council to determine whether these regional countries would be willing to commit troops to a new UN peacekeeping operation that would be sent into Rwanda, most likely after the genocide was over. My hope was to get a new peacekeeping operation up and running in order to reconstitute the UN mission that had been drastically scaled back when the genocide started.

Each of these countries, notwithstanding all of their internal problems, committed to work with the United States and others to reestablish the peacekeeping operation. So my trip was a technical success. However, when it became clear that they would not do this unless logistically supported by the U.S. and by European countries, the project became a non-starter because the Pentagon was unwilling to commit troops to anything that was going to be a U.S.-led operation, certainly after what had happened in Somalia the year before. In addition, the President's peacekeeping executive order, issued after Somalia, put a straight jacket on any U.S. involvement in a UN peacekeeping operation. So in the end my trip to the region was a disappointment: there was a collective will by a diverse group of African countries to try to stop the genocide, but no collective will by the U.S. and Europe to do so.

Q: I can recall being with you at a Madeleine Albright meeting with African foreign ministers at the United Nations General Assembly. We must have had issues we wanted to raise collectively with the African foreign ministers.

SHATTUCK: I remember that meeting. It illustrated that the U.S., notwithstanding its standoffishness on Rwanda, was engaged in Africa, trying to bring democratic and human rights reforms to Africa in a broad context, as well as development assistance through USAID.

There was another important multilateral human rights meeting that took place in Kenya. It was a pledging conference for the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, and I was involved in organizing that, along with Richard Goldstone, the chief prosecutor for the Tribunal. We managed to raise significant funding, four million dollars, not a huge amount, but what we wanted to raise at the time.

Q: Let's move to that perennial human rights bete noir for the United States, Cuba. Did you find yourself involved in that?

SHATTUCK: Yes, although I never got there. There was growing interest in whether there could be a softening of relations during the waning years of the Castro regime. To test that, I would travel to Cuba to meet the government about the release of human rights prisoners, in exchange for which discussions could be opened about improving relations. Peter Tarnoff, the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, was the point person on this. I was asked to stand by and be prepared to travel to Cuba.

But the initiative never got off the ground. It was effectively shot down by active anti-Castro regime operatives who had been involved in impeding flights by small aircraft from Cuba. One of the flights, a private plane with one or two people aboard was shot down by these operatives, and that basically ended any possibility that my mission could go forward.

Q: The Congress was much involved in Cuba. If I recall, and my memory is hazy on this, the Clinton Administration had hoped for a thawing of relations, at least in return for human rights in Cuba. But at the same time, I think it was the Helms Burton Act that was adopted that even tightened sanctions on Cuba.

SHATTUCK: So politically, it was going to be very difficult to do anything. In a sense, the fact that this external act torpedoed the further discussions is not a surprising development. One doesn't want to engage in any kind of speculation about how that came about. But in any event, the political climate on the Hill was certainly not favorable to any change of position. On the other hand, the climate on the Hill was the reason that, in a sense, the Human Rights Bureau was the appropriate vehicle to do this. By highlighting human rights violations by Cuba in the Human Rights Report, and by pursuing the release of political prisoners in Cuba, my bureau had friends across the political spectrum, including on the far right on the Hill. So, we might have gotten around the Helms Burton Act if we'd managed to get some prisoners out. I don't know. It never happened.

Q: Okay, Central America, Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador were all coming out of civil wars and having all kinds of elections or non-elections, and issues of one kind and another on the human rights front. Was that in front of your radar?

SHATTUCK: Yes, Guatemala certainly was, and Colombia was the other country that I personally visited. El Salvador was on our agenda, but I didn't go there. Guatemala and Colombia were classic human rights situations where people were disappearing. Colombia, of course, was fighting a narco-trafficking insurgent group that was a perennial problem for the government, and this resulted in a very harsh human rights environment for anybody who was challenging the government.

Guatemala was a little different. It was a more corrupt and military regime in the classic sense. In both cases, my mission was to go in and talk about what we had found in our

Human Rights Report and what progress was being made and how further progress might be made.

I was fairly well received in Colombia, which has a large liberal elite and strong human rights advocates, many of whom are in academia and have served in government. There were at least one or two human rights advocates in the government during my visit. So I had a good session there.

Guatemala was quite the opposite. It was all very military, very buttoned up, and I did not get to the bottom of any of the disappearance cases that I raised with the government. It was a short visit. I would have liked to spend more time addressing these questions, but I was diverted by all the other things that I was doing. Fortunately, the Human Rights Bureau, as it grew in size and in strength, was able to do much more intensive oversight of these developments than when I first came in.

Josiah Rosenblatt was the first director of the Americas Section of the Human Rights Bureau. He was one of the best officers I had. The Bureau strengthened its capacity to address Central American issues. This was important because during the twelve years of the Reagan and Bush administrations, human rights and democracy in Central America were not especially on the agenda.

There was a Cold War framework that Jeanne Kirkpatrick and other intellectual figures on the right were imposing on human rights. Allies who were engaged in human rights abuses, if they were strong allies against the Soviet Union and communist rule, were not going to be challenged by the US. We were the first post-Cold War administration, and we took a very different view. Many of these cases, particularly Guatemala and Colombia, but also El Salvador and other places, Nicaragua certainly, were, for the first time, being looked at by the Human Rights Bureau in a way that they hadn't been before.

Q: No, I think that's clear. And since you mentioned Colombia and the Human Rights Bureau making an impact there, I can remember, when I was head of DRL Bilateral Affairs, that one of the issues I got involved in was drafting the first instructions under one of the Leahy laws, that you could not provide military equipment to units of a foreign military that were involved in human rights violations, and we got into quite a tiff with the Political Military Bureau and the Latin American Bureau. We finally won and got out a very tough instruction to the Post on doing that. One other South American issue I wanted to raise, because it was one of the big human rights issues, was Peru and the Shining Path, Maoists and all the other parallel revolts which were going on in Peru at the time. Did that reach your inbox?

SHATTUCK: No, not really. I certainly was aware of it and I think we reported on it basically in the Human Rights Report. But I was never involved in a review of U.S. policy toward Peru in light of the Shining Path. But it was an important example of what could happen in a country that had been in the grip of an authoritarian regime and then was attacked by a terrorist organization from the left, and then that terrorist organization later softened its position and ultimately became part of the democratic process. I

regarded Peru as an example of the changes that can occur even within an authoritarian and terrorist context. Not to say that Peru has become a shining path of democracy, if you will, but nonetheless, it's a very different country from what it was back then.

Q: Okay, well, let's move on to Asia, and I've got three or four countries here I wanted to mention. But if you have your own list of Asia, why don't we start with that?

SHATTUCK: The most salient ones are Indonesia and Cambodia, as well as Myanmar/Burma.

Q: We obviously have the same list. Go ahead. Why don't you start with Myanmar?

SHATTUCK: Yes, well, I was primed and ready to visit Aung San Suu Kyi. She had expressed interest in meeting with me. This was at the beginning of her house arrest, and I thought this could be a peaceful and dramatic example of the kind of potential change and movement toward democracy and more human rights than had been the case under the old regime. If Aung San Suu Kyi had been allowed to meet with me, that would have been very good. I think it was on one of my trips to China that I was prepared to go to Myanmar.

Like my Cuba mission, this was shot down before it started. In this case it was the military regime itself, which made it very clear that it was not going to allow the Human Rights Assistant Secretary to come in and meet with Aung San Suu Kyi or anyone else. It was a very harsh rebuke, above all, of Aung San Suu Kyi, and I think it foreshadowed what lay ahead for her. She has obviously spent her life since then trying to thread the needle of engaging, on the one hand, with the military and, on the other hand, pushing them to change, with very limited success, I would say, at this point.

What we later found out about Aung San Suu Kyi, which I didn't know and maybe she herself had not manifested, was that her own human rights views toward minorities, particularly the Rohingya, were pretty harsh. She did not regard the Rohingya as Burmese citizens who deserve the kind of protection that citizens should get. But this was not evident at the time.

Eventually, she was visited by Madeleine Albright in her capacity as U.S. Ambassador to the UN. The regime was willing to allow a UN-based visit to take place, whereas a bilateral visit by the Assistant Secretary with a human rights-only agenda was not accepted. So that's my one and only story about Myanmar. I've had several meetings with Aung San Suu Kyi over the years, most recently in Budapest in about 2014. I have seen her and watched her, and she's something of a tragic figure, I think. She's a captive both of the military regime and of her own ideology, and hasn't quite figured out how to escape her captivity.

Q: Well, close by in Cambodia, we had Hun Sen solidifying his grip on power.

SHATTUCK: Hun Sen was a classic authoritarian, with a background in the Khmer Rouge regime. He seized power in his 30s after defecting to Vietnam and joining the Vietnamese campaign to overthrow the Khmer Rouge. He liked to think of himself as an authoritarian who was open to change, and that was the secret to his remaining in power for many years. I went to Cambodia to meet with him on two diplomatic missions, in 1995 and again in 1997. I raised human rights issues, including restrictions on speech and the press and political opposition.

Hun Sen told me he was promoting reform because he was allowing a Cambodian parliamentary system to develop, but Cambodia was far from a democracy. He asserted that meeting with me demonstrated his openness. I never knew what levels of corruption were hidden beneath this façade, but background briefs indicated there was quite a bit. I left the country without a general agreement, although we did have a joint press availability in which we stated that human rights and democracy were on the bilateral agenda of the U.S. and Cambodia.

Q: You didn't mention Vietnam, but I had that on my list.

SHATTUCK: I didn't get to Vietnam. I would have liked to. We followed developments in Vietnam during the time I was head of DRL. I was in close touch with John Kerry who was actively pursuing closer relations, but I never got there.

Q: Okay, Indonesia.

SHATTUCK: Indonesia was a very interesting situation, because it was the end of the Suharto regime. Suharto had been in power for almost 30 years as a strong dictatorial leader, and he had dragged Indonesia into a series of economic crises.

Indonesia was the hardest hit Asian country by the Asian financial crisis of 1994-'95. Many businesses went under, and the corruption of the Suharto regime seemed connected to the financial crisis. Indonesia was a country in crisis going through a leadership transition.
Suharto's behavior in the economic catastrophe that was unfolding led to his downfall.

At the same time, East Timor was increasingly in rebellion. A terrible event took place in Dili, the regional capital, in 1991, just before I became Assistant Secretary. The massacre of thousands of East Timorese by the Indonesian military occurred during the imposition of military rule, but this only increased the pressure for autonomy.

When I arrived on my first visit to Indonesia in 1996 I was in the middle of the ongoing Timor crisis. My mission was to investigate charges of genocide that followed the Dili massacre, and continuing human rights abuses by the military in attempting to suppress the autonomy movement. I traveled throughout East Timor and met with local leaders. My conclusions were that there was a systematic effort to destroy the autonomy movement by killing Timorese human rights and democracy activists.

My report and the recommendations of the State Department's East Asia and Pacific Bureau led to U.S. support for a referendum on independence. The referendum resulted in an overwhelming vote by the Timorese to separate from Indonesia. In 1999 the UN deployed a peacekeeping force in East Timor.

The US Timor policy built on what had been accomplished in Bosnia. I think Timor was a success story for the transition to democracy and human rights, with all the flaws that go along with that, in the context of an authoritarian regime that itself was in transition.

Q: I think that's a good one to talk about. Indonesia as well was one of these classic examples of a strategic partner, even a strategic military partner in the area, but one that had serious human rights concerns of its own. Just to inject one of my little stories from DRL at the time, I remember we had a tough question on an arms sale to Indonesia as well, that we got heavily involved in. The Asia Bureau and Political Military Bureau and others wanted to sell all kinds of military equipment, including destroyers, naval destroyers, to the Indonesians. And we finally hammered out a compromise where we would prohibit any kind of small arms sales or things which might be used to stifle domestic dissent, but we would let them go ahead with the naval destroyers, because they couldn't really use those to put down human rights.

SHATTUCK: That's interesting. I'd forgotten that. That's very good.

Q: I remember being involved, but you couldn't be involved in everything.

SHATTUCK: Well, I'm not sure I would have made the same judgment about destroyers, because you could bring a destroyer in and shell the population from the ocean. East Timor is an island, and shelling from the sea would have been possible..

Q: It certainly might have been possible. It was one of those hard-fought compromises that DRL often lost on, and at least on that one we got something.

SHATTUCK: You did well, small arms are more important.

Q: Okay, which segues into Europe and Russia. On the one hand, they were undergoing a transition to democracy. On the other hand, they had all kinds of problems and, in particular, the First Chechen War, in, I think, '94 to '96 or so. So, how did you deal with Russia?

SHATTUCK: Well, I had a number of dealings with Russia, particularly around external issues involving Bosnia, and especially the Dayton Peace Process and the International Criminal Tribunal.

I think I've recounted already, and I'll quickly mention again that my major diplomatic achievement in Russia during the early '90s, was to persuade the Russians to accept Richard Goldstone as the first chief prosecutor for the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. Goldstone, of course, was from South Africa. I had meetings

with Sergei Lavrov, who went on to become Foreign Minister, about this. Lavrov was then dealing with human rights issues, reflecting the fact that Russia was then a more hopeful place in terms of the possibility of democratic change and human rights development. So we met about that. I think, in the context of that meeting, I also talked about the situation in Chechnya, which was horrific and continuing. I think we worked on this in a number of contexts, including the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva. I think there was a resolution on Chechnya, reflecting the weak position of Russia at the time. I don't believe it passed, but in any event, it was offered.

Overall, Russia was seen to be a major country in transition, and there were US efforts to try to support the development of democratic and human rights change -- for example, the training of journalists. Russia was open to that. I remember when I had my meetings with Lavrov in Moscow, I also met with some journalists who were starting up new enterprises that were being allowed by the regime.

Yeltsin was then in power, so there was hope in the air. For me, the hope was symbolized by the fact that the first person who was put forward by the Russian government in 1993 to be my counterpart in a dialogue was somebody whose name, Ivanov, I had vaguely remembered. Then it occurred to me that he had been a political prisoner. In a private session in one of our meetings----I remember he came to Washington----he met with us in the Human Rights Bureau and I privately took him aside. I said, "Were you ever a political prisoner of the Soviet regime?" And he said, "Yes, I was. I was a prisoner in the 1980s in Siberia." And I said, "Well, I was then the vice chairman of Amnesty International, and I believe you were one of our prisoners of conscience, and we were writing letters on your behalf." That exchange now seems like eons ago. The idea that it ever could have taken place is remarkable. He was soon replaced. I think he probably came out of an NGO background and didn't want to continue in government.

Q: That may have been the same person who they put in charge of their delegation to the Human Rights Commission, with whom we dealt a little bit in Geneva, who was an ex-political prisoner He lasted a little while and said all the right things, but didn't seem to be very influential with the government, right? That's great. How about Central Asia? You had mentioned Kazakhstan at one point, but we had half a dozen new independent countries out of Soviet republics, most of them continuing to be ruled by the same Soviet leaders now becoming so-called Democratic presidents.

SHATTUCK: There were no immediate crises of the scale and urgency that I was dealing with in Haiti, Bosnia, Rwanda, China, and secondarily, in places like Indonesia. So I didn't travel beyond Kazakhstan to the other Central Asian Republics.

Embassies were being opened in the new Central Asia Republics in the 1990s, and they were the first US ambassadorial appointments beyond Russia and Ukraine in the former Soviet Union. The embassies were very cooperative with the Human Rights Reports that we were preparing, and we were able to get some of the first information about what was happening in some of these new countries, Uzbekistan in particular, and Turkmenistan. The Nagorno Karabakh crisis that kept breaking was difficult to follow. Strobe Talbott's

office in the State Department was negotiating on that, so I stayed away. In any event, the Central Asian story was unfolding, and didn't really come into focus until after my time as Assistant Secretary.

Q: I remember this was still a hopeful period where all these leaders wanted to be recognized as democracies, and we hoped they would take the requisite steps to be able to do it. And it was only as the years went by that it became clear they had other priorities.

SHATTUCK: It occurs to me that I shouldn't leave out Mongolia, which I did visit. It was a remarkable country, and it was developing into something of a democracy. Of course, it was a "steppe democracy" in the sense that it was a vast country, run by nomadic horse tribes for a long time and it had something of a tradition of democracy. I was surprised to find how receptive the Mongolians were when I visited Ulaanbaatar in 1996 or so.

I remember an exchange that I had with the Foreign Minister. We were discussing climate change. I was there during the winter, and it was bitterly cold. He seemed quite wry and sensible, with a good sense of humor, and when I said, "I hope you'll support us in the upcoming meetings in Cairo in addressing climate change issues." He replied, "Well, you know, actually out here in Mongolia," looking out the window as the snow was falling, "we're actually in favor of climate change." That was a wonderful, relaxed moment, unlike many of my human rights meetings that were pretty tense.

Q: That's great. That's great. Well, that brings me to the end of my list of countries. Were there others that you wanted to talk about?

SHATTUCK: Well, I was thinking, we should go to Europe, briefly anyway, because all of this is mostly multilateral work, if you will, working with the Europeans on a variety of the highlighted human rights crises that I've been most engaged in, Rwanda, Bosnia, Kosovo, Haiti, China, Indonesia.

The French and British were our principal European partners on these issues. I would often go to the Quai d'Orsay in Paris following trips in Africa related to Rwanda, and I was also working with them on Bosnia. It was not the easiest work, because the French and the British had longtime relationships with Rwanda and Bosnia. In Yugoslavia, the relationship with the Serbs went back to the Second World War, when the Serbian resistance to Hitler was very strong.

So that created an undercurrent of tension. From the European standpoint the U.S. policy on Bosnia and Rwanda was standoffish. The French view was essentially, "Why are you here talking to us about these issues if you're not going to do something about them?" Later, when the US was playing a leadership role on Bosnia and I was engaged with Holbrooke in the run up to the Dayton Peace process, the French wanted a greater role than they were being given. So meeting with the French was complicated, but in the end, we always supported each other.

The UK was somewhat similar. "Tell us why you're here. We understand you're engaged, but are you really engaged?" was often the unspoken question.

I worked with the Italians on Kosovo and Albania. I was the head of the US delegation to oversee the first Albanian democratic elections that took place in 1998 and the Italians were very interested in that, because obviously, Albania is right across the Adriatic.

The Netherlands is a particularly interesting story, because the international criminal justice institutions we were building were based in The Hague. The Dutch had a strong interest in Bosnia. It was a Dutch UN peacekeeping battalion that came under attack by the Bosnian Serbs in Srebrenica. The battalion ended up yielding Srebrenica, which then was overrun by General Mladic. So the Dutch felt, in a way, a national responsibility for the genocide in Srebrenica. That was one of the reasons the Dutch were receptive to working with the human rights Assistant Secretary on initiatives in Bosnia.

In particular, they were receptive to providing funding for the International Criminal Tribunal, and I had very good contact with the Dutch Development Minister Jan Pronk, and also with Foreign Minister Hans van Mierlo. Van Mierlo was interested in establishing a peacekeeping arrest force to arrest people indicted by the war crimes tribunal for genocide or war crimes in Bosnia when NATO was unwilling to do that.

There were many other ways I was coordinating with the Europeans, including communicating regularly with them about our human rights work on China. They didn't have official dialogues with China the way we did, but they had positions on human rights in China. We worked together in the UN Human Rights Commission in 1995 to co-sponsor the first resolution on human rights in China not to be defeated by China.

These issues all related to the multilateral work of the Human Rights Bureau. I always found it frustrating to deal with the EU in its Troika context, because whenever you met with them, you always were meeting with three EU representatives in a group -- the chairman in office, the previous chairman and the incoming chairman. In most meetings the Troika would just sit there and not say anything. I remember particularly Peter, when you and I met with them as we were getting ready to confront Milosevic in Belgrade in '95. The Troika just sat there, and I didn't get the impression that they were going to be cheering us on in the meeting. They offered no support because they were divided and didn’t want to risk being on the wrong side of our confrontation.

Q: Yes, well, the EU was formally put together in '93 but even before that, they had what they called a Common Foreign and Security Policy. So they were supposedly all on the same wavelength, but from what I heard from you, that was not entirely the case.

SHATTUCK: That's right, they were literally all over the map. But they were our allies, they had resources, and they were important and, looking at the U.S. from their point of view, the U.S. had washed its hands of the crisis in Yugoslavia during the Bush and, very early Clinton administration. They wondered, what are you going to do for us? So this was a classic give and take.

Q: Well, that's an excellent world tour. And I think, you know, I have to be impressed again with the number of things you were doing and that you were personally involved in, and the number of countries you visited. And did you ever make a list? How many did you make while you were Assistant Secretary?

SHATTUCK: Well, I just did a very sort of casual list here, which I'm not sure is complete, but I think there were 25 countries that I actually visited and had intensive diplomatic meetings of the kind that we've discussed. About two thirds of these countries were authoritarian. I got a view up close of the authoritarian alternative to democracy, which, of course, is very much in play in the world today. I also got a good view and an enormous respect for the courage of the civil society organizations that were trying to change their governments, authoritarian regimes, and what the price was that they had to pay. Probably the most dramatic example was the one I cited in Egypt, Mansour Kikhia, who for advocating democracy and human rights in his country and in Egypt, disappeared and has never been found. There are many other examples like that. So, I have a visceral feeling for the human rights movement, if you will, the democracy and human rights movement. I think it's irrepressible in a certain sense. And I think what I saw, and the people that I was working with over my five years as assistant secretary, led me to a great respect for them and an increasing understanding of the complexity of dealing with authoritarianism once it's established, and why it's important for courageous democracy advocates to resist.

Q: Well, a lot of brave people. And I'm sure we'll get into that a little bit more when we talk about your ambassadorship as well.

SHATTUCK: The one thing that we haven't touched on, Peter, is something we both know very well, which is the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The OSCE became an important element of my work, not only because it was the first regional organization to bring together all the countries of the former Soviet Union and the West, but also because of the political role that it played in the United States. In the US, it was at the center of what became a bipartisan support system for human rights in the Congress, the Helsinki Commission. In Europe, the OSCE did not have the enforcement powers that a national organization can have, but it was extremely important as a center for debate and even for multilateral action. The OSCE played a key role in Bosnia implementing the civilian elements of the Dayton Peace Agreement, and it's playing an important role now in Ukraine.

Q: As you know, when I left DRL, I went to work full time for the OSCE for several years, then continued to head election observation missions around Europe for many years after that, on their behalf. So yes, it was a good organization. We didn't mention the OAS and the OAU either, which is a very strong Inter-American human rights organization.

SHATTUCK: You're right. The OAS and the OAU. I was involved in the early stages of the OAU, the organization of the African Union, in the context of the Rwanda genocide,

when the OAU was willing to work with the U.S. and Europe, and African countries to develop a peacekeeping organization, but it never got off the ground.

I think these regional, multilateral organizations are extremely important, and the most unique of all of them, in a way, is the European Union, which is a work in progress, and really begins to open the door beyond the purely sovereign national, nation-based world. Right now, the EU is facing huge headwinds from the nationalism of the Trump-Putin-Xi era, if I can call it that. But the EU is in some ways an antidote to that. I got to know the EU well, even though I had some disagreements with it along the way.

Q: I think there's a lot to be said for multilateralism, and I think we made a lot of progress on a lot of issues through some of these organizations, and the UN as well, which we've talked a lot about.

Well, by coincidence, our world tour takes almost exactly the two hours we had scheduled. Maybe that's a good place to stop.

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Chapter 9: Ambassador to the Czech Republic

Q: Today is August 1, 2025 and this is Peter Eicher beginning a new oral interview session with John Shattuck. Good morning, John.

SHATTUCK: Good morning.

Q: Well, in the last six or seven sessions, we've talked about your assistant secretaryship at DRL, which has been full of fascinating issues and stories. I think we've pretty much come to the end of that, but I wanted to give you another opportunity, if you've thought of anything else that you would like to say, or any additional lessons learned beyond the many that you provided to us already.

SHATTUCK: I have two final observations about the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, which still remains very close to me, and I think of it frequently, especially as it's going through such stormy times. DRL technically has been abolished by the Trump administration, but the human rights issues it was created to address are greater and more urgent than ever, and US foreign policy must deal with them or it will abandon its core values.

Here are my two observations. First, the promotion of human rights and democracy in U.S. foreign policy has been a nonpartisan or bipartisan commitment for a long time. I saw that right away when I entered the State Department in 1993. I worked with many

excellent foreign service officers who'd served in different administrations, Republican and Democratic, and it was a privilege to work with them.

Human rights were not owned by any administration or any political party. They reflected the core values of Americans over two and a half centuries, the commitment to freedom and justice and democracy in the broadest sense of those words. That may sound idealistic, but it reflects reality, based on the record of DRL. Sure, human rights have been interpreted somewhat differently by different administrations. The Reagan administration looked at human rights in a somewhat different way from the Carter administration. But underneath it all, the core values were the same.

My second observation is that the way to get policymakers to pay attention to problems of democracy and human rights more than theoretically is to get into the details. That's what we did in DRL, working on very tough human rights problems that at first were not getting policy attention other than by people in the Bureau -- Haiti in ’93, Bosnia in '93-'94, Rwanda in '94 -- and sticking with them until we could have an impact, like the impact that we had on the Dayton Peace Process that ended the war in Bosnia, and the development of the International Criminal tribunals, which established, for the first time since the Nuremberg trials, a new system of justice and accountability for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

In the case of Haiti, we were pushed out in the beginning, and then through persistence and attention to detail we helped change U.S. policy to restore a democratically elected government.

China was probably the hardest. China of course was a huge country with an authoritarian regime. But by being persistent and staying in the game, it was possible to push human rights into the center of U.S. China policy. There was a huge disappointment along the way, when President Clinton delinked human rights and trade and pulled the rug out by abandoning his own China MFN policy. But the issue of human rights in China became more prominent as a result of what we did to implement the MFN policy. It was a difficult journey, but a journey that reflected great effort to bring human rights values into as much reality as possible in a complex and rapidly changing situation.

Q: Well said, good reflections on what was almost six years in the post.

SHATTUCK: Yes, it was about five and a half years.

Q: Yes. So that brings us, if my chronology is correct, to close to the end of 1998 when you left DRL, is that right?

SHATTUCK: Yes.

Q: Well, tell us about the genesis of that, had you had enough and we're looking to move on, or did the powers that be have better things in mind for you?

SHATTUCK: It was an interesting and unique set of circumstances. I'd served by then for more than four years and was prepared to return to Boston and resume my academic career. I'd been working closely with Madeleine Albright, especially after she became Secretary of State. We'd also worked together when she was the UN ambassador. And she mentioned in a conversation in 1997, "I think you'd be a good person to take care of the country where I was born."

Madeleine was born in Czechoslovakia, which later became the Czech Republic. What little I knew of the Czech Republic I had learned as a student of history, as a visitor to Prague, and from conversations with Madeleine. Several weeks later, when we were in a car going to the White House for a meeting on implementing the Dayton peace accords, Madeleine raised this again, and asked me, "Would you like to consider being the U.S. Ambassador to the Czech Republic?" And I said, "Well, I'd be honored. I know I'm not the profile of a typical ambassador – I'm not a major donor or a senior Foreign Service Officer, but I've proudly served in the State Department for nearly five years." And she said in her wonderful blunt way, "You'd be perfect. We want you over there." She had raised it with the President, and he had approved.

I began what was a long waiting period. I was originally slated to be confirmed early in '98 and to have the normal three-year ambassadorial appointment before the end of President Clinton's term in January 2001. But political battles between the White House and the Hill over White House files that Congress was seeking about the Monica Lewinsky scandal ended up holding hostage a number of nominations, including mine. I continued as Assistant Secretary for DRL during this waiting period, while also studying Czech at the Foreign Service Institute.

Eight months after being nominated I was confirmed and on my way to the Czech Republic. It was exciting. After all, one of my human rights heroes, Vaclav Havel, was the president. I considered Havel and Nelson Mandela to be the leaders and symbols of the transition to democracy in the late 20th century.

I knew I would have a front row seat in the changes that were underway in the Czech Republic. I was impressed by what had happened five years earlier, when Czechoslovakia had peacefully and democratically separated into the Czech Republic and Slovakia in what was known as the 'velvet divorce.' The Velvet Revolution, of course, is what produced the changes in 1989. The peaceful division of Czechoslovakia was a dramatic contrast from the violent divorce that was then tearing apart Yugoslavia.

There were many challenges and tensions in this velvet divorce, but none of the violence that I had witnessed on my many trips to Bosnia. The cynical politicians who stirred up war crimes and genocide in the former Yugoslavia, were not in charge in Czechoslovakia, where Havel was president. I was eager to see a society that managed to save itself when Yugoslavia was destroying itself.

There was a unique challenge in having Madeleine Albright as the Secretary of State when I was the Ambassador. Madeleine of course spoke fluent Czech and knew many

Czechs by their first names. I knew none and had only a year of Czech under my belt when I left for Prague. Early in my tenure the Secretary would occasionally get concerned about something that someone she knew had done, and she'd call from Washington to let them know what she thought. On one occasion it was the Prime Minister who was in her crosshairs for planning to send nuclear materials to Iran. I was working hard to stop that. Madeleine wanted to support me, so she picked up the phone and called the Prime Minister directly. Of course there was nobody in her office who spoke Czech, so there were no notes of the conversation. After she hung up, I received a frantic call from the Secretary's staff informing me what had just happened. What should I do?

I called the Prime Minister's office and asked my contact there to tell me in English what had happened on the call. It was a humorous but tense situation. Fortunately, the Prime Minister's office was understanding and responsive, and my capacity as Ambassador was enhanced by the Secretary's unconventional call.

Q: That's a great story, but before we get on the plane to Prague. Let's talk a little bit more about the transition process. Did they take you away from DRL and put you in training before you went? How to be an ambassador, or language training, or anything like that?

SHATTUCK: I had the full ambassadorial training at the Foreign Service Institute. I would spend roughly half a day at State, and the other half at FSI. My family also participated, including my school-aged daughter, who was instructed about how to avoid being kidnapped or abducted. My wife Ellen went through elaborate ambassadorial spouse training. It was very valuable, and we were impressed by the quality and professionalism of the Foreign Service Institute.

Q: How did the family feel about going overseas and leaving everything behind?

SHATTUCK: Well, it was exciting but not easy, although Ellen was especially pleased, since I had spent so much time as Assistant Secretary being away from the family and now we'd be together. We had a large family, not only our daughter Susannah at home, but also Peter who was in high school, Becca who was in college, and Jessica in graduate school. Ellen appreciated that we were doing this together, and that she and I would finally be in the same place at the same time.

Of course, there were challenges. One was financial. We had limited independent resources from our careers in public service and journalism. We sold our house in Washington, recognizing that we were probably going to be moving back to Boston after Prague, but didn't know where we would be when we returned. We had three children in school and college, and were covering those bills. So we didn't have large personal resources to contribute to our entertainment budget. I would have a State Department allowance for official entertainment, but the ambassadors I knew said they didn't find that sufficient for the job. I got plenty of creative entertainment tips from ambassadors. One in particular was to recycle the flowers. "You're going to need flowers for all

occasions, so keep them for as long as possible." Another tip was to use small plates. "Use the small plates and don't serve large portions at formal meals."

Q: The aspects of being an ambassador that you don't think very much about.

SHATTUCK: Until you're covering part of the costs, right.

Q: Exactly. How about the kids? It's tough for kids to move, especially high school kids. Were they okay with that? Was there a good American school in Prague?

SHATTUCK: Our older kids stayed at school and college in the US. Only our youngest went with us to Prague. Susannah was seven and pretty excited about the adventure. I'll tell a story or two about her as we go along here. The American International School in Prague was first rate, and she adjusted well to the change.

I remember how we actually grew a pumpkin on the embassy grounds which Susannah and I carved for a Halloween event with her friends. Susannah was pleased with that. The ambassador's residence had not had a school-aged child for many years, and the staff were thrilled to have kids playing in the gardens and the hallways.

Q: That's great. Did you have any pets you were taking over?

SHATTUCK: We had a cat who soon began roaming our multi-acre grounds. The cat would disappear, and the way to get it to come back would be for Ellen to play the piano in the music room to lure it to return.

Q: Back to the preparations again. I guess you probably start to spend a lot of time with EUR, the European Bureau. Was it still Holbrooke in charge? Was he going to be your new boss as you went out there?

SHATTUCK: I did spend a lot of time with EUR. I don't think Holbrooke was still there at that point. I think he had gone back into the private sector for the second Clinton administration. EUR was an important Bureau, and the embassy was a big, complicated embassy. A leading challenge was non-proliferation, since the Czechs had long been supplying arms and nuclear materials to countries in the east, particularly Iran, and that became a major issue.

We also had the issue of Czech accession to NATO which was underway. The Czechs were on the verge of being admitted to NATO, but there was more work to be done, and the embassy was overseeing that. I coordinated with DoD and the Pentagon on the NATO accession process and received good training before going over. There was also a large CIA station in Prague, so I also had some briefings at Langley.

Q: So your confirmation hearings - were those all smooth and easy?

SHATTUCK: They were. I think they were smoother and easier than the hearings that I had for the Assistant Secretary position. The only issue, as I said before, was the long delay that resulted from constant postponement of the confirmation hearings and then the actual vote because of efforts by Republicans in Congress to exercise leverage over the White House to get access to more documents. But the hearing went fine.

Q: Had you ever been to Prague, or spent time in Prague before?

SHATTUCK: Yes, I'd been to Prague, both as a tourist in 1988, and then when I went during the time that I was under consideration for the ambassadorial appointment. Ellen and I visited Prague in '97 on one of my missions to Europe in DRL.

Q: So you get on the plane for Prague, in what? About November, December of 1998, and get there just the gray, miserable winter?

SHATTUCK: Yes. It was just after Thanksgiving, and the atmosphere and air in Prague were bad at that time of year because Prague is in a sort of topographic bowl, an inversion, and the pollution gets trapped in the city. There had been a lot of heavy industry in Czechoslovakia before the end of the Cold War, and the pollution was still bad. This proved to be an unanticipated problem for our family, particularly for Ellen, who experienced respiratory issues from breathing the pollution.

Q: Yes, that part of Central Europe can be pretty grim in the winter. The embassy that you were going to, I think if we could start maybe by describing the structure of the embassy before we get into the specific issues, except in general terms, how big was the embassy? What were your different sections? How many different agencies did you have there?

SHATTUCK: For a U.S. Embassy, it was medium sized. It had about 250 to 300 personnel, the large majority of whom were Czech nationals. There were about six separate U.S. government agencies in addition to State that were formally based in the embassy, including a large DoD component, as well as Commerce, Treasury, Justice, USAID and CIA. As Chief of Mission, the Ambassador has the formal power to chair the interagency group in the country, and in theory at least each agency reports to the Chief of Mission.

Madeleine Albright was my boss as Secretary of State. She was also a friend, and she once remarked somewhat facetiously, "when you get to Prague, you're going to have more power than I do here in Washington. You're going to have your country team, and you are effectively the commander-in-chief of your country team. But when I go to a Cabinet meeting and look around the table, I have no power over other cabinet members, and we fight all the time."

Q: Yes, it was what we sometimes called the Imperial Ambassadorship,

SHATTUCK: Well, it was anything but that in practice, of course, when you have agencies pursuing their own agendas.

Q: Yes, and when you got there, presumably the embassy was already well staffed with people who had been there and knew what they were doing, and you had not been involved in selecting any of them.

SHATTUCK: Not any except my DCM. The Deputy Chief of Mission would be my alter ego, and in charge whenever I was out of the country. I wanted someone I knew and had worked with for this crucial position. I was fortunate that there was an excellent DCM in Prague when I arrived, Michael Guest, whom I had known and respected when he was at State in Washington when I was at DRL. Mike was scheduled to rotate out to a new assignment several months later, so I had recruited my former outstanding deputy at DRL, Steve Coffey, to replace him. Steve arrived after about six months, and he was the DCM from then on.

Q: So you had a good working relationship with him, as you did in DRL.

SHATTUCK: Yes. It worked very well. I wanted to have a Foreign Service officer with whom I'd worked. One of the advantages of my earlier DRL assistant secretary position was that I'd been in the State Department senior ranks for more than five years. I knew many people, and I'd worked with many Foreign Service officers, so people would sometimes assume----and I took that as a compliment---that I was a career officer myself, because I knew the personnel, and selecting Steve Coffey as my DCM was an indication of that.

Q: And how about the physical embassy? Was it one of those beautiful, old downtown properties that we used to have as embassies all over Europe?

SHATTUCK: Yes, and very vulnerable. The embassy is at the heart of Prague, up on the hill where the castle is, with a beautiful orchard and vineyard behind it, and all sorts of fruit trees and vines growing there, with the embassy rambling around in several old buildings. It was often difficult to get around inside the embassy, because there were places where you'd go to the end of a hallway, and then you'd have to turn around and go somewhere else to get to another hallway.

These were old buildings, and their vulnerability was great. They were right on the street. During my tenure as Ambassador we installed bollards in front of the embassy to prevent any major vehicle from crashing through.

I'll tell a story about the embassy that indicates how important President Havel was to me, and how closely I worked with him, because he knew that I had a human rights background.

Havel was interested in the work that I'd done in Bosnia to hold authoritarian leaders like Milosevic accountable for war crimes. When I went to present my credentials to Havel in the castle about a month after arriving, there was a band out front that played both the Czech and U.S. national anthems. After the formal ceremony Havel took me to a

window overlooking the U.S. Embassy and pointed to our flag. "For many years," he said, "that flag has been flying through all the difficult times that we went through in this country. It's still flying, but the people who were in this office have been chased out." I thought that was an elegant way for him to summarize the Velvet Revolution and the importance of the American presence in Prague.

Havel was a man of great stature and great eloquence, and deeply moral in the way he presented and projected himself. But he was politically rather naive (and I'll get to that in a minute), because he never really built a political party to mobilize a constituency, unlike other politicians who were arising in the Czech Republic at this time.

Q: Before we get to policy, I was going to ask you about your presentation of credentials. This is this old Europe. Was it top hat and tails and a carriage picking you up at the residence to take you over?

SHATTUCK: Not quite. A carriage would have had difficulty getting up the steep cobbled streets to the castle on the way to the president's office, so I was driven in the Ambassador's car. It was a very formal ceremony. Havel did this for all new ambassadors, but I was told, as the U.S. Ambassador with a human rights background, that the red carpet was particularly lustrous the day of my ceremony, which was conducted entirely in Czech.

Q: Your Czech was good enough by this time that you could converse in it?

SHATTUCK: It was good enough if I were well scripted. By the time I left two years later, I was able to give fairly lengthy speeches in Czech, and I gave several at several universities, always with the text in front of me. I don't profess to speak fluent Czech, but I basically understand it. I also spoke some Russian, and since both Czech and Russian are Slavic languages, that was helpful. But there are dangers, one of which is that occasionally in an informal context, I would unintentionally use a Russian word in talking with a Czech, which was not a good thing for the US Ambassador to do, since the Czech memory of the Russian occupation was still fresh at that point.

Q: Did most senior Czechs you were dealing with speak English, or did you have to have a translator along with you to meetings?

SHATTUCK: Well, I'd say about half of them did. This was only ten years after the 1989 changes. and the language transition was slow. Well-educated and well-trained officials would almost all speak English, but there were many lower-level officials who didn't. And of course, if you went out to the countryside, as we did frequently, which is where I got to use my Czech, nobody spoke English. The second language out there would almost always be Russian or German.

Q: Okay, just stepping back a second to the embassy plant, you mentioned a vineyard and orchards. Were those something you were looking out over, or were those actually part of the embassy property?

SHATTUCK: These were part of the embassy property. They were really quite remarkable. The grounds where the embassy is located were about five acres on a hill with some gorgeous orchards. In the summertime, you could pick plums and apples and all sorts of things there. It was very pruned and well taken care of, and also well policed. It was quite beautiful.

Q: Did the embassy produce its own wine?

SHATTUCK: No. Czech wine is not particularly renowned, largely for reasons of geography and climate. Several hundred kilometers south in Hungary, where I later lived as President of Central European University, the wine is superb. The Czech vineyards are too far north. Czech beer, on the other hand, is world class.

Q: The best in the world. Pilsen and such. How about the residence? Was that up to your expectations?

SHATTUCK: Well, the residence was quite something. It's a 65-room early 20th century palace, deteriorating in many ways. It was designed and built for a Czech coal magnate, Otto Petschek, in the early 1920s, whose family lived in it before it was stolen by the Nazis. The Petscheks, who were Jewish, managed to escape from the Nazis with most of their wealth in 1937, and their residence was turned into the Nazi headquarters during the German occupation, including the top Nazi leaders in Czechoslovakia who were based there.

It was an incredible place. There was a large swimming pool in the basement that was built by the Petscheks but almost never used by them, and then used extensively, I was told, by the Gestapo and various security agents. They swam in the pool. The enormous house had a badly deteriorating veranda that was later repaired. It had what we used to call a runaway elevator, a three-floor elevator that often would not stop at the second floor.

Another unique feature of the house was a bathroom, off one of the bedrooms, where a toilet occasionally but unpredictably exploded when there was a buildup in the pipes that would then gush out.

This remarkable house was the scene of historic events during the years before the Velvet Revolution. Vaclav Havel and other dissidents had meetings here with some of my predecessors, including my friend Bill Luers, in the late 70s and early 80s. One meeting took place just before Havel began his next stint in prison.

It's hard to even think of it as a residence. It was comfortable enough and well staffed. It had a full staff of about six people who took care of various aspects of it. It had large grounds, and a vast lawn. I was accustomed to more modest housing, so occasionally I would make a comment early in my Ambassador tenure apologizing for the splendor of the residence. Former dissidents called me on this. They said, "Don't apologize for this

house, nor should you ever feel guilty for occupying it because this is a sacred place for us. This is a place where we have gathered over the years, as the struggle for democracy has developed." I remember particularly Jiri Dienstbier, who became a friend and had been the first Foreign Minister of Czechoslovakia after 89, appointed by Havel, telling me, “this is sacred ground." Between that kind of a comment and the comment that Havel made to me from the Prague Castle looking out on the embassy, I got a sense of how much the Czech-American relationship had meant over a long period of time to the dissident forces who later, of course, became the country's leadership.

Q: Yes, it's wonderful to get a feeling like that from the local people. Not all ambassadors enjoy that privilege, right? But I suppose with this 65-room mansion, like most Ambassador residences, there's the huge reception public areas, and you have your own private residence.

SHATTUCK: Yes. There was the ground floor with many large rooms that were open to guests, including a very large library to which we moved a lot of our books. As I said earlier, we had sold our house in Washington, and we didn't want to just put our books in storage. We had heard there was a big library, so we moved them all to the library in Prague, where they lived happily for several years before we moved back to the U.S. There was also a beautiful music room.

Q: Yes, a lot of these American embassies and residences, particularly in Europe, are historic buildings. The State Department does have a whole system of curators and such. I know the Embassy in Paris had a full-time curator for all the historic artifacts and the residents in the embassy. Did you have something like that in Prague?

SHATTUCK: Yes, they were certainly watched over. There were several historic items, although the Nazis, having occupied the house, stole most of what was really valuable. What remained was not of great interest. One of the few remaining historic pieces of furniture in the embassy was a chair. It was called the Rabbi's Chair, and it was apparently a 14th century chair. As people were fairly small in the 14th century compared to today, nobody could ever really sit in and if they did they often found themselves stuck. We ended up putting "Do not sit on this 14th century chair." I was glad to have the chair there, because it seemed to tie all the history together.

Q: Did you participate in the Art in Embassies program? Were you allowed to choose some art to take out, to put on your walls.

SHATTUCK: We did. Since I had been at Harvard, I had an arrangement with the Fogg Museum to bring a number of American paintings to display in the residence. But when the Museum’s climate control experts came to investigate whether the dehumidifiers that had been installed in the residence would provide sufficient control, they determined that the system didn’t meet the Museum’s standards. So we weren't able to bring the paintings we had selected, which included several Winslow Homer works, and paintings by other famous American artists. However, we did get some artwork from the Art in Embassies program that could be displayed in a less climate-controlled situation.

Q: Just for the residence, or did you have that in the embassy as well, and were you involved in the embassy selections?

SHATTUCK: No, just the residence. I think this is true for other embassies too. The Embassy doesn't change its artwork with each Ambassador. There were a number of attractive items displayed in the embassy, and I hung several of my own items in my embassy office.

Q: Well, let's move on to what was going on in the Czech Republic. When you get there, ambassadors are like assistant secretaries; they have a huge variety of things. They have to at least dip their fingers in, if not charge in. We can go at this in different ways, but I leave it to you. What would you like? What's your biggest continuing issue?

SHATTUCK: Well, there were many issues. I made a short list of about eight, each of which I'll summarize very briefly and then discuss in more depth. As I mentioned, Havel and many Czech former dissidents saw me as a human rights person, and I was welcomed in that capacity, because the leadership of the country was still very much oriented toward the human rights struggles that had led to the birth of a democratic Czechoslovakia. That gave me some credibility. They also knew what I had done in the Balkans, nearby, so that also gave me some standing on which to begin to build the relationship.

The issues were varied, and only a few had to do directly with human rights.

First was crime and terrorism, which became the embassy's top issue in early 1999, when we had a very specific and credible threat that we had to deal with, which I'll describe in a moment.

The second issue was nuclear non-proliferation. Before 1989 the Czechs had a long relationship with countries to the east who were buying their nuclear materials. In 1998, they were still working with Iran, and it was a high priority for the U.S. to stop the ongoing Czech shipments to Iran as part of our policy to prevent the Iranians from developing a nuclear weapon. I spent a lot of time on that.

A third issue was preparing the Czechs for NATO accession. This was both important and urgent because the NATO accession was scheduled for the spring of 1999. So when I arrived in late November 1998, there were several months of final issues to be dealt with.

The fourth issue was external, a direct result of the Czechs' accession to NATO, and that was Kosovo. The Kosovo crisis, in which I'd been involved when I was at DRL, came to a head in early 1999. And this required the Czechs to participate in the NATO activities in Kosovo, pushing back the Serb aggression. And that was a big challenge, as I'll describe.

A fifth issue took me back to Yugoslavia. It was Bosnia, and the ongoing multilateral peacekeeping operation that was implementing the Dayton agreement. The Czechs were

active participants and troop contributors. I traveled back to Bosnia with General Jiri Sedivy, the Commander in Chief of the Czech armed forces, to help oversee Czech peacekeeping.

The sixth issue was trade relations. There were delegations of Czech businesses that I needed to assist by arranging visits for them in Chicago and Cleveland and making coordinated contacts with American businesses and also with the Commerce Department. Commerce worked closely with me on that.

The seventh issue was anti-corruption, especially important as the Czechs were preparing for NATO, and preparing for membership in the European Union. There were very specific reforms that had to be accomplished as an institutional matter, since a significant level of corruption continued to exist in Czechoslovakia.

The final issue was the security of the embassy, which relates back to the first issue, which is terrorism, which I will go into in more detail.

So that's an overview of the agenda. It was a big agenda.

Q: Before you begin, let me just ask you, were these eight issues that you discovered as you got to Prague and that flew at you over the time you were there, or were they things that Washington, in your preparations, had particularly told you that you needed to deal with. Or did you have a final meeting with Madeleine where she said something more than just take care of my country, but that I want you to keep a special eye on whatever. The general context for all eight before you get the details.

SHATTUCK: Sure. Terrorism was on the agenda of all US embassies. In 1997, there were two terrorist bombings against US embassies in Africa with many fatalities carried out by al Qaeda in Kenya and Tanzania.

Q: Both places, almost simultaneously.

SHATTUCK: That's right, both places. Pru Bushnell, with whom I had worked closely on Rwanda, was the ambassador in Kenya, and from Washington I observed her leadership and courage in managing the crisis. Many lives were lost. This was jarring for ambassadors in training because these attacks were targeted directly at embassies. We were all on sharp alert to be aware that terrorism was coming, and looking back, 9/11 was less than three years away. I was told during my time at FSI that I would receive specific anti-terrorism training when I got to Prague, but of course no one could predict precisely what the terrorism crisis at the embassy might be. So terrorism was at the top of my agenda – put there not by Washington or the embassy, but by al Qaeda.

Two issues on my agenda were high priorities in Washington, nuclear non-proliferation and NATO accession, and they occupied much of my time. The other issues that I've mentioned, including Bosnia and Kosovo, were the result of developments both in Washington and in Prague. Bosnia required an ongoing peacekeeping force, and the

Czechs were participants in that. Helping the Czechs fulfill their responsibility was an interesting outgrowth of my earlier work in Bosnia.

Q: Let's now return to the terrorism agenda.

SHATTUCK: Well, in January 1999, two months after arriving in Prague, I went to my counterterrorism training session In Darmstadt, Germany with the Special Forces elements that were working with US ambassadors in Europe. I spent a day with the trainers and made arrangements for several of them to work with us in Prague.

After I got back from Darmstadt to the residence in Prague, late that night I was awakened by a call from the CIA station chief at the embassy. "I have something urgent to pass on to you, and I have to do this in person." I asked him to come to residence. When he arrived he told me, "We have had a credible report of a planned imminent attack on U.S. personnel in Prague -- official personnel in the embassy and elsewhere. This could be a result of the presence in Prague of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty," the U.S.-sponsored radios that were broadcasting to the east, and were under the general jurisdiction and protection of the embassy.

This was a sobering message for an early-stage ambassador to receive. A few hours later, I convened a country team meeting and announced a heightened security alert for the embassy. We gave non-essential employees the option to take a leave during the security period. I checked in with Washington on a classified line. The security protections in the embassy were still rudimentary-- no secure communication cabinet, no way to have a classified communication from the residence or even from most of the embassy, classified communications over a line that was less than fully secure, and very little physical protection.

The embassy presented a classic case of a target unprepared for an attack. After consulting with Washington, I assembled a special security team to work with the Czech government to coordinate external security arrangements for the embassy. We told the Foreign Ministry what we were concerned about, and why, and engaged with them and other Czech agencies to ramp up security.

There was no armored vehicle in the embassy. The ambassador was provided a standard sedan, a perfectly nice car, but not secure. Word of this got to Havel, who quickly communicated with me. He instructed his staff to offer the embassy the loan of one of his armored vehicles for a short period. We gratefully accepted, and remarkably, within a day, a driver and a small armored red sedan arrived in which I and my family were driven to appointments over the next two weeks.

We moved the Marines out of the embassy and into the residence for their own safety, since the embassy was physically and geographically vulnerable. With the assistance of the Czechs with whom we were coordinating, we formed a counter surveillance operation, which meant that whenever the ambassador or the DCM or the military attaché were out of the embassy they would join a small plainclothes surveillance team who

would move near them, keeping watch and ready to whisk them away if suspicious individuals or vehicles tried to approach.

I informed Tom Dine, the head of Radio Free Europe, that he should be careful about the RFE staff. I think he sent the Czech staff home, but it was hard since most of the staff were foreign nationals who had nowhere else to go.

Two weeks into these intensified security measures, I received a call from Washington that the threat no longer was imminent, despite the original report. No explanation was given and it was a confusing situation, but it certainly served to get our attention about the urgency of hardening up the embassy's security.

Many basic security issues had to be addressed. For example, there was no secure fence around the perimeter of the residence grounds, which were easily accessible from the street. After some delay, construction of a fence finally began. At the embassy there were bollards in front, but the building was in a very vulnerable location. The street needed to be blocked off, and for a time during and after the threat it was blocked by the Czech police. Traffic was permanently rerouted so that the embassy was less exposed. The boost in security measures occurred as a result of the terrorist threat. It was anything but theoretical, and there were many practical ramifications.

At one point during our heightened security, I hosted a meeting in the residence with NATO ambassadors about the Czech accession to NATO. We were going through the list of requirements the Czechs still had to fulfill when one of the residence staff entered and whispered, "Your wife needs to speak to you." I left the meeting and spoke with Ellen. She said a Czech policeman had spotted what could be a sniper in an apartment building across the street from our private dining room and kitchen where our daughter Susannah and housekeeper Catherine were having lunch. Ellen told me she'd gone to the dining room, closed the curtains, and gotten Susannah and Catherine into another room, not telling them anything was wrong in order not to upset them. Meanwhile, the Czech police had gone to the place where the suspected sniper was sighted. He was unarmed and was peering out the window with binoculars. After questioning, they decided he was not a security threat.

Q: Where was your embassy security team? Certainly, you had an RSO, regional security officer. You mentioned you had Marines. I presume it was a small contingent of Marines. Besides that, was it locally employed guards and Czech police?

SHATTUCK: Yes, we had an RSO and locally employed guards. The RSO seemed solid, and coordinated well with the intelligence station chief. The embassy security side was connected to the intelligence side.

Q: I've served in embassies where the ambassador was always accompanied by machine gun toting guards every place he went. You never faced a situation like that in Prague, I hope.

SHATTUCK: Well, I not only had no armed guard, but I walked the streets frequently on my own. I used to walk home from work. I just walked out of the embassy and down the street and over the castle hill – about a mile and a half. That was before the security threat.

Q: Such a great city to walk in. You're suggesting that after the incident, you were told to not do that any longer.

SHATTUCK: When the threat assessment was lowered, the decision was made to end our lockdown while strengthening the embassy's security. In retrospect, in view of the 9/11 terrorist attacks two years later, we probably should have continued restrictions on walking in the city, but I'm glad we didn't because as you say Prague was a great walking city -- and after all, we weren't attacked.

Q: Digressing just a little bit. Since you mentioned Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty in Prague, were those under Chief of Mission authority? Were they part of your team that you had instructions to command? Or were they separate somehow?

SHATTUCK: They were separate. They weren't part of the country team, but I was a good friend of the head of RFE, Tom Dine, whom I'd known in Washington, and our relationship was such that I could give him informal instructions, for which he was grateful because of the security issues involved.

Q: Okay, we started with security. Have we covered that now?

SHATTUCK: One postscript. After 9/11 there were unverified reports that Muhamad Attah, the head of the Al Qaeda attack team, had met with contacts in Prague the year before the September 11 attacks. These reports were cited but not verified by the 9/11 Commission. When I read the Commission's Report after it came out in 2003, I understood more than I had in 1999 that the embassy in Prague had probably been in the crosshairs of the same terrorist movement that had attacked embassies in Africa the year before I became ambassador.

Q: Which of your other seven issues do you want to take up now?

SHATTUCK: Let's move to my second issue, which was to stop the Czechs from supplying the Iranians with nuclear materials.

The background on this was that long-time supply chains in the Communist world had involved the Czechs making and exporting complex machine products, some of which could be used in building nuclear reactors. Czechoslovakia was the engine room, in many respects, of the old Communist world. Export relationships had been established, and those relationships continued after the end of the Cold War. One of those old relationships was the Czech export relationship with Iran.

After the Czech Republic joined NATO in early 1999, the Czechs were obliged to participate with other NATO allies in preventing the Iranians from obtaining materials for developing a nuclear weapon. When I say materials, I'm not talking only about fissionary materials, but also the elements that go into developing the capacity for nuclear processing, which was what the Czechs were selling.

I had multiple discussions with Czech Prime Minister Milos Zeman about this. In many ways, Zeman was an old hand from the old regime. He had long been embedded in Czech politics, and he eventually went on to become the president of the Czech Republic, a very different kind of figure from Vaclav Havel. He had his own ties to the old suppliers, and he was not eager to cut off their long-time supply channel to Iran. I did a lot of diplomatic jawboning, and came to realize that the only way we were going to persuade Zeman's government to stop supplying Iran with nuclear processing materials was to take the Prime Minister to meet President Clinton in Washington. I campaigned with the State Department and the White House to arrange an Oval Office meeting, at which the President would make it crystal clear that, as an incoming NATO ally and close friend of the United States, the Czechs had to cease these nuclear material exports to Iran. I worked through Secretary Albright and National Security Advisor Tony Lake, and got the meeting.

I accompanied the Prime Minister to Washington, and we met with President Clinton. Clinton was very good. He was direct and emphatic, and made clear to Zeman that stopping the shipments was a top priority for the U.S. and for NATO, and that as an incoming member of NATO the Czech Republic had a fundamental obligation to make this their top priority because transatlantic security was at stake. The Prime Minister was deeply impressed to be meeting in the White House with the President, and he agreed on the spot to order the shipments to stop. It was a success story.

Q: Okay, good. It's always good to have a success story on your watch. Was the issue linked to NATO membership?

SHATTUCK: Yes, the issue was informally linked to NATO membership. The way that we explained it to the Prime Minister was that, "You are now about to enter the NATO world, and you're going to be relied upon for a whole variety of things. Here's a top priority, which is not to support proliferation of nuclear materials to Iran or other countries that are developing nuclear fission." Had we discovered after these meetings that shipments were still going forward, it would have been possible to suspend or even cancel NATO membership, but it never came to that.

Q: We had programs after the end of the Cold War with Russia and I think, Ukraine and maybe some others to purchase nuclear stockpiles so they wouldn't get into the wrong hands. So would we be doing that with the Czechs as well?

SHATTUCK: This was different. This was dual use material, not a nuclear stockpile. We knew the Iranians would use the material to build nuclear facilities, which could then

be used to develop nuclear weapons. It was the export of the materials to Iran that we were trying to stop, not the production of the dual use materials themselves.

Q: Okay, we've seeped into NATO accession, which is your next issue. I remember that I was in Poland about the same time you're talking about, and the NATO accession was just a huge thing, with a national holiday and all kinds of things attached to it. Was it of equal importance in the Czech Republic?

SHATTUCK: Very much so, yes. The Czechs were proud to become members of NATO. The final issues were dealt with during the three months before the actual accession took place, after I became ambassador. During these three months, I and other NATO ambassadors met frequently with the Czechs to finalize their fulfillment of all the military and civilian requirements for membership.

The accession ceremony was a big deal. We flew out to Independence, Missouri and went to the Truman Library, where high level representatives of all NATO member states gathered to celebrate the strengthening of NATO. The Truman Library was chosen as the venue because Truman was the president when NATO was established in 1950.

I traveled to the ceremony with the Czech and Hungarian Ambassadors. As it turned out, the Hungarian Ambassador would become an important contact a decade later, when I was the President of Central European University in Budapest and he was the Foreign Minister of Hungary. We established a good working relationship, which helped protect the university from the increasingly authoritarian regime of Viktor Orban.

Back in Prague after the accession ceremony, there was a festive celebration of the Czechs' new NATO membership. The celebration took place in Obetsnidum, the most beautiful performance site in Prague. The Czech Defense Minister, who had sometimes been difficult during the accession process, stood beside me as the Dvorak New World Symphony was performed. He looked proud, and became emotional as Dvorak's chords resonated through the elegant Czech revival space of Obetsnidum.

But the celebration proved to be short-lived. Two weeks later, I went to the Defense Minister and the Foreign Minister to remind them that joining NATO is more than a symbolic act. As new NATO members the Czechs would be assigned a role in the mobilization of the alliance to prevent aggression and ethnic cleansing by Serbia in Kosovo. Specifically, the Czech Republic would be a landing place for NATO planes as they refueled for deployment to Kosovo, to push back the Serbian forces that were rounding up and expelling Kosovars.

This was an unwelcome assignment for the Czechs, who historically had close ties to the Serbs. Many Czechs had vacationed in Yugoslavia during the 1980s, and the reality of Czech membership in NATO suddenly seemed challenging to them in light of the Kosovo operation. As NATO's role in Kosovo became clear, I was frequently invited to explain NATO to Czech audiences, including on Czech television. I had to do several Czech television programs about the Kosovo operation. Public opinion about NATO was

turning negative, particularly after the bombing in Belgrade. This was a sobering time, but my experience dealing with violent aggression and war crimes in Yugoslavia reinforced my message about the importance and responsibilities of Czech membership in NATO and the defense of human rights in Kosovo.

Q: That's interesting that you had to deliver that message. Wouldn't they have been hearing this from Brussels NATO headquarters?

SHATTUCK: Yes, of course. I was not the only messenger, but as the US ambassador and a veteran of Dayton, I had an important role to play. I was also in touch with General Wesley Clark, the commander in chief of NATO forces, with whom I had worked closely in Bosnia, and who was now at the center of NATO planning in Kosovo. My contact with Clark and my experience in Bosnia enhanced my engagement with the Czechs and my role in keeping them on board.

Q: Yes, and just on the operational front, when you went to this kind of meeting would you take your translator and your defense attaché or your political officer? How did you usually do this? Did you try to keep it to one on one? What was your approach?

SHATTUCK: I'd generally take a political officer or the defense attache. I didn't need a long official translation so there was rarely a Czech translator in attendance. With the Defense Minister, whose English was limited, I might have taken one.

Q: Were we also providing military assistance? A lot of embassies had two separate offices, the attache and the military assistance unit.

SHATTUCK: Not yet. Full scale military assistance started after my term as ambassador, particularly after 9/11. When I was there, it was basically the defense attache, and whatever technical or professional assistance was being provided would be coming through his office.

Let's turn to another aspect of US support for the Czechs' participation in NATO, a happier topic than the war in Kosovo, and that was helping them integrate into the international peacekeeping operations in Bosnia. The Czechs were particularly valuable participants in Bosnia peacekeeping. The Bosnians speak Serbo-Croatian, which is closely related as a Slavic language to Czech, so the Czechs and the Bosnians would be able to understand each other. Unlike other international peacekeepers in Bosnia, the Czechs were able to establish an informal linguistic relationship with the local people.

NATO realized how important the Czechs were in Bosnia, and I could see that myself when I went there. I accompanied the Czech Commander General Sedevy on a mission to oversee the peacekeeping operation. I came away recognizing the value of close informal interaction between the Czech peacekeepers and Bosnian civilians in the villages and farms on the ground in a situation which remained unpredictable. I told Washington what I saw, and I commended the Czechs. This helped soften their negative reaction to NATO's intervention in Kosovo.

Q: Just as an aside, did you find a lot of changes in Bosnia?

SHATTUCK: Yes and no. Politics remained extremely divisive. The fact that many war criminals had not been arrested led to old-line politicians reasserting themselves in the post-Dayton years, getting elected, and then continuing to stimulate division. The EU and the OSCE were doing a good job overseeing civilian development, but ethnic and religious tensions remained high, particularly in the Bosnian Serb entity, Republika Srpska, which was a hotbed of Serb nationalism. Despite these tensions, the situation was generally peaceful and the peacekeeping operations were working.

Q: Well, okay, did you want to say more about Bosnia or Kosovo?

SHATTUCK: No, I don't need to say anything more about that.

I'd now like to shift briefly to a couple of other issues.

The first is trade relations, a standard issue for a bilateral embassy the size of ours. The Commerce Department was well represented. New Czech businesses that were being established after the Cold War were actively looking for opportunities in the U.S., and U.S. investors were looking for opportunities in the Czech Republic. I worked with Commerce to arrange Czech trade delegations to cities in the U.S. where there were a lot of Czechs and other people with roots in Central Europe. Chicago and Cleveland were good cities for Czech businesses to establish networks of connections. No trade deals were signed on these exploratory missions but a commercial environment was cultivated that would facilitate future deals. Of course, several big companies were already in Central Europe, and were becoming more actively involved, particularly U.S. auto companies.

Q: Was there an American Chamber of Commerce in Prague that you had to deal with?

SHATTUCK: Yes, quite large and quite significant, and we coordinated closely with them. As the Czech Republic went into NATO and prepared for membership in the EU, there was growing American business interest in the Czech Republic, and much of it was developed through the Chamber.

Q: Were you getting some big American investments in the Czech Republic? For example, in Skoda, the Czech car company?

SHATTUCK: The car companies didn't need any help, and Skoda began working with GM. I think Ford also had a relationship. The Czechs' older and longer term relationships were with the German companies, particularly Volkswagen and Audi. But this was a very limited part of what I did, so I don't want to speculate on things that I don't know.

The final issue that I would like to mention is anti-corruption. This was particularly important for the Czechs' accession to the European Union. I focused on judicial

training, particularly helping to create the Central and East European Law Initiative (CEELI) of the American Bar Association. Working with USAID, CEELI trained judges in Western commercial and criminal adjudication in Central and Eastern Europe, and was particularly active in Prague, where I helped them establish their training headquarters. CEELI became a major source of technical and independent judicial training for the new judiciaries of Central and Eastern Europe.

The embassy also worked closely with the FBI and U.S. law enforcement to create ways for the Czechs to collaborate with them on anti-corruption issues. My job as ambassador was to keep the coordination channels open and make sure nothing stood in the way.

Q: All right, just making a note here. The Czechs were already looking forward to EU membership, and you mentioned this was part of that. Did that affect you in other ways? Were we supportive of Czech membership in the EU?

SHATTUCK: We were very supportive. There was some division among U.S. agencies – but not in the State Department -- about the value of the EU and the dangers that the EU might pose to the U.S. The State Department position was that the EU is an engine of democracy-building in Central and Eastern Europe, and we wanted to assist the Czechs in joining as soon as possible. The U.S. helped them meet the EU membership requirements (e.g. judicial training and anti-corruption), and they were admitted in 2003.

Q: Were you host to lots of official visitors from the United States?

SHATTUCK: Constantly. We had many CODELS - congressional delegations - on all the issues that I've mentioned.

My favorite official visitor was Madeleine Albright, who went on a remarkable trip with Vaclav Havel as her host and me as her ambassador all over the country in early 2000. She was then being actively courted by Havel to be his successor. It was partly tongue in cheek, but not entirely so. In fact, Havel would have been thrilled if Madeleine had been willing to return to her Czech roots and run for the presidency of the Czech Republic.

As we went around the country, I could certainly see why Havel felt that way, because Madeleine was enormously popular. Everybody seemed to know who she was, and she had to constantly wave Havel off when he introduced her as his potential successor. "No, no, I'm the Secretary of State of the United States," she said. "I'm not in any way engaged in Czech politics." She said all the right things, and I think she believed them. I don't think she ever actively allowed herself to be courted by Czech politicians. But it was fascinating to see this. Here's a remarkable person who had grown up in Prague in its darkest days, and then returned as a champion of freedom, and they wanted her to return.

Many congressional delegations came through. I remember one delegation that was looking at the possibility of selling the residence. My friend Tom Dine, the head of RFE RL, was with us on that occasion because he knew the delegation members from his time as a congressional lobbyist. After they went down and saw the swimming pool, Dine

said, "I don't think you really want to consider selling this place. One of you might be chosen to live here one day as ambassador." It was a brilliant comment, and it squelched any further talk about selling the residence.

Q: Before we wrap up, do you have any further thoughts you'd like to share about Vaclav Havel?

SHATTUCK: I have a few thoughts. Vaclav Havel was a world figure representing the great aspiration for democracy and the heroic struggle that this had required in order to realize it. But Havel never built a political party or a constituency to support his position and create the underpinnings of a movement that could carry the struggle forward. So his legacy is morally strong but politically weak.

Havel was constantly outplayed by the other Vaclav in politics, and that's Vaclav Klaus, who became the leader of a conservative opposition to Havel and opponent of the liberal forces in the Czech Republic. Klaus was a strong proponent, a champion of neoliberal economics and anti-regulation.

Unlike Havel, Klaus concentrated on building a political party and appealing to the fears and whims of average Czechs, who didn't spend as much time thinking along the lines of what Vaclav Havel was saying as they did along the lines of what Vaclav Klaus was saying.

During the time that I was ambassador, which was about 10 years into the post-cold war era, the ways of the old regime were still very prevalent, particularly in the countryside. In many ways the rural Czechs were the Klaus constituency, nationalist in orientation and fundamentalist in their economic views. I could see that as I traveled around; the Czech Republic is a glorious, beautiful place to travel through. It's full of fascinating history and cultural significance.

The Czechs today are struggling to stay on track as a full democracy. There are many Czech nationalist, populist-oriented politicians, just as there are throughout Europe and certainly in the United States. The institutions of democracy are fragile.

There were three events that took place before I completed my term as ambassador that I'll mention briefly in conclusion.

The first was the 10th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution in November 1999, a remarkable event, because it brought back, probably for the last time, the great figures of that earlier era, Mikhail Gorbachev, George H W, Bush, Helmut Kohl, Margaret Thatcher and Havel. There they all were. They participated in a retrospective conference in Prague Castle, and it was the last view of the fading elements of the post-Cold War world. All of them except Havel were no longer in power. So these were all former leaders assembled by a current leader, Vaclav Havel, who ironically, had always been politically weak at home even as he was celebrated as a world democratic leader, and now was the last

leader of that era remaining in office. It was very touching, and it signaled that fundamental changes were coming.

The second event was the celebration of the turn of the millennium from 1999 to 2000, December 31 to January one. We had a huge celebration in the embassy. We invited people from the U.S. and from all over to participate.

There was much concern about something that's now long in the rear-view mirror, about what we used to call Y2K, which was what was expected to happen in the year 2000 with computers. There was an expectation that computers were all going to fail, because they weren't programmed to turn the millennium. Planes were going to drop out of the sky, and all sorts of terrible things were going to happen. None of that happened, of course. It was a great celebration.
Finally, just before I left, there was the 2000 U.S. presidential election, and that took a lot of explaining to the Czechs. They couldn't understand all the focus on “hanging chads”, and they couldn’t believe how close a huge election like that could be----and many Americans couldn't either. As ambassador, it fell to me to explain to the Czech audience the intricacies of the Electoral College. Their general view was, "If this were going on in our country, we'd all be in the streets." It was clear that the U.S. election illustrated the fragility of American democracy, and its apparent resilience, at least at the time. I tried to convey this to the Czech people as one of my final messages before I left the embassy to return to the U.S.

Q: Okay, let's leave it there for today, since I need to move on. We've passed our couple of hours, but we can tie up some loose ends on that next time before we move on to the next issue. So let me pause the recording or end the recording.

Chapter 10: Kennedy Library, CEU, Hungary

Q: Good morning. Today is August, 26, 2025. This is Peter Eicher, beginning a new oral history interview with John Shattuck. Good morning, John.

SHATTUCK: Good morning, Peter.

Q: Last time we spent the session on your ambassadorship to the Czech Republic, which, of course, was a very interesting time, I think, almost exactly two years, from about December 1998 to December, 2000. Two years is a shorter time than ambassadors usually go out for, but of course, there was a change of administration coming up. Were you already thinking about what was coming next?

SHATTUCK: After nearly eight years in the Clinton administration, I left the government to accept the position of running the Kennedy Presidential Library Foundation in Boston starting in January 2001. My time as ambassador, and before that as assistant secretary of state, was incredibly full and productive. Much of what I learned

and did during those years, and the relationships I established, became especially valuable later when I became President of Central European University, which I'll turn to in a minute.

Q: And when you left State and got back to Washington, were there a lot of people who wanted to debrief you, or in the confusion of the change of administrations, did you feel like that was it?

SHATTUCK: There were rounds of debriefing in State, in EUR, and with the people who were following Central and East Europe and NATO expansion, and EU enlargement. I also had an extensive debriefing at the Pentagon, about my experience helping the Czechs become new members of NATO. It was a dynamic time in Eastern Europe, which a decade earlier had been on the opposite geopolitical side of everything the United States was working for. Former dissidents had risen to positions of power in Eastern Europe, including Vaclav Havel in the Czech Republic, Lech Walesa in Poland and Arpad Goncz in Hungary, all of whom became leaders in their own countries. The dramatic changes I had witnessed in the 90s were central concerns in Washington.

Q: Just out of curiosity, did your successor ever reach out to you for advice?

SHATTUCK: Yes. Craig Stapleton was nominated by the new President, George W. Bush, to be ambassador to the Czech Republic. Soon after his nomination Craig came to Boston for lunch, and we spent the afternoon together. He was a close friend of the new president, and like me, had no previous diplomatic experience. His wife accompanied him, and she and Ellen joined Craig and me in discussing the practical aspects of what it meant to be ambassador in Prague. We stayed in touch, and Ellen and I made several trips back to Prague in the early 2000s. I was invited to speak at Havel's Prague 2000 conference soon after 9/11. Leaving Prague as ambassador was not simply ending a chapter and going off to do something different. I stayed involved in transatlantic affairs, teaching US-EU relations at Tufts and Harvard, and speaking about Central Europe.

Q: Did you get involved with Czech organizations in the United States?

SHATTUCK: Yes, and I still am. I'm on the board of the Vaclav Havel Center, which I helped found, with Craig Stapleton and several other people in Prague and the U.S. The Havel Center was an outgrowth of the American Friends of the Czech Republic, and it became the sister organization in the U.S. of the Havel Library in Prague. It's a thriving enterprise today.

Q: That's great. Was Madeleine Albright involved as well?

SHATTUCK: She was definitely involved. She had many other responsibilities, but she was closely consulted.

Q: You indicated that you had already started planning by the end of your ambassadorship for your next position, so were you actively looking around, or were people approaching you? How did that work?

SHATTUCK: Ellen and I had made a decision that after Prague we would return to Boston. There were several positions I considered, including in addition to the Kennedy Presidential Library, returning to Harvard, and joining Tufts University as Dean of the Fletcher School. I was soon offered and accepted the position as CEO of the Kennedy Library Foundation, based on my international and public affairs background. The Foundation is a national public affairs center supporting and closely related to the presidential library.

Eight months after I became CEO, Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda terrorists carried out the deadly attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. Two of the planes the terrorists hijacked had taken off from Logan Airport, which was visible from my office at the Kennedy Library. As we now know too well, the attacks transformed American politics and society. For the next three years, the Kennedy Library Foundation hosted a series of widely publicized national conferences and policy debates on the theme of "Responding to Terrorism." These programs attracted intense public interest and became major platforms for addressing the impact of terrorism on democracy and its ramifications for American society. The Kennedy Library had a very large convening space, and it was often filled several times a week with televised audiences of hundreds of people who wanted to participate in a national discussion about how the terrorist threat was affecting their communities and their lives.

These public programs were organized and put on by the Foundation as part of a public-private partnership with the National Archives. Most of the presidential libraries have something like this, but the Kennedy Library at that point was the best developed, most fully staffed, and raised the largest amount of program funding. The Reagan Library Foundation was somewhat comparable, and in a bipartisan gesture, we sometimes partnered with them on programs.

Q: So that allowed you keep up your foreign contacts and involvement through conferences and programs that you created and sponsored and attended in other places.

SHATTUCK: Yes, I did a fair amount of speaking in the U.S. and in Europe, particularly in Prague, Berlin, Paris, and in London at Chatham House. The Kennedy Library was an effective international convener. In 2007, we convened a series of conferences of Israeli and Palestinian journalists who had no previous contact with each other, and were interested in developing better coverage of events that were inaccessible to one side or the other. We hosted two conferences for the Palestinians and Israelis to exchange information and contacts – first, at the Kennedy Library in Boston, and then at the US Consulate in Jerusalem. It was a very different time, and despite tensions, the journalists were able to expand their reporting by taking advantage of their new contacts and exchanges with each other. In organizing these conferences we drew on the power of the name of President Kennedy and his continuing international appeal.

Q: Were you able to do some human rights work at the same time?

SHATTUCK: I was affiliated with the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at Harvard's Kennedy School, and wrote a long chapter on human rights diplomacy in a book, *Realizing Human Rights*, edited and published at the Carr Center by Samantha Power and Graham Allison. I also had a larger human rights project, writing a memoir, *Freedom on Fire: Human Rights Wars and America's Response,* which was published by Harvard University Press in 2003, about my time as assistant secretary for democracy, human rights and labor, and the post-Cold War human rights crises in Rwanda, Haiti, Bosnia and China.

I spoke and wrote about the human rights crises of the post-9/11 period, above all the use of torture by the U.S. military rounding up suspected terrorists and torturing them at the Abu Ghraib prison. Having been involved in the U.S. ratification of the torture convention, and the implementation statute that was enacted by Congress, I felt a personal stake in the torture crisis that was unfolding. I had strong critical views about the policy positions of the Bush Administration, particularly policies based on what I saw as the increasingly dangerous doctrines of unilateralism, preemptive war, and the unitary presidency – policies that have since been amplified by the Trump administration, and have undermined U.S. leadership and credibility on human rights.

Q: And at the same you said you were also teaching.

SHATTUCK: I was giving lectures at the Carr Center, and teaching US foreign policy to undergraduates at Tufts. My course was an introduction to foreign policy after World War II from Yalta and the Marshall Plan through the post-Cold War period. Much of what I taught related to my work at the State Department, and this made it particularly interesting and reality-based for the students. The course also included 9/11 and the U.S. response to terrorism.

Q: But even with your extensive experience, it must have been a tremendous amount of work to prepare lectures for an introductory foreign policy course.

SHATTUCK: This was my first time teaching as opposed to *doing* U.S. foreign policy. I wanted to teach because I knew this would allow me to pull together all the various pieces and historical background of the work that I'd done at the State Department, and that it would engage me with a whole new generation of international leaders and activists.

Q: I'm smiling just because I experienced, in the State Department, how you could have fingers in so many different pots at the same time. That seemed to be repeated in this job.

SHATTUCK: I suppose you're right. I enjoy teaching because it keeps me connected with students who have all kinds of questions about things that I might have taken for granted. They challenge assumptions and see things differently. How is it that Yalta went

the way it went? It looked to some of them as if Roosevelt was endorsing a Stalinist world when he was working to get Stalin who was a key ally in the war against Germany to be our ally against Japan and to support the United Nations. Yalta may have launched the Cold War, but it also sealed the end of World War II and the beginning of the UN.

Q: So you ended up spending eight years in this position?

SHATTUCK: I was at the Kennedy Library from 2001 to mid-2009, so it was about eight and a half years.

Q: What happened at that point? Were you looking around for something new, or were people coming in your direction? How did the next transition come about?

SHATTUCK: I've had a series of seemingly unconnected chapters in my career over time, but in fact, they all fit together. Each chapter has involved a different aspect of advocating democratic values and helping build institutions to promote them. The next chapter came about as a result of my background in Central and Eastern Europe, and my work in Bosnia and the Czech Republic. Central European University is an experimental new international graduate university, then in Budapest. It was established in 1991 by regional leaders like Vaclav Havel, who had just become the president of Czechoslovakia. The founders included other former dissidents, Arpad Goncz, the president of Hungary, Lech Walesa in Poland, and other distinguished former dissidents who were leaders of new governments in transition to democracy.

The university was established with the foundational support of George Soros, who gave it an endowment. Soros was deeply committed from the outset. He was himself Central European, having been born in Hungary, then emigrating to the U.K. and later the U.S., and long supporting the dissident movements which were leading the struggle for democracy in the region.

The founding mission of CEU was to revive academic freedom and the other great intellectual traditions of Central and Eastern Europe, where so many world renowned scientists and intellectuals had fled from fascism and communism, and where the open academic tradition had been suppressed during much of the 20th century. The goal was to help revive this tradition and also to create a training ground for new democratic leadership to emerge.

That was very attractive to me, and CEU was looking for a new president. I was approached by a close friend and former colleague at Harvard, Pat Graham, who had been the dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and was chairing the CEU search committee. Pat said, “This has your name on it. Why don't you consider it? We'd like to talk with you about it. You have diplomatic experience, you have political experience, you have academic experience, you have central European experience, and we need all of that in a very complicated situation in a part of the world that is volatile and could well change even while you're there.”

I was intrigued. I'd been at the Kennedy Library Foundation for eight years, and was not yet thinking of leaving because we were having a very successful run expanding the programs and increasing the prominence of the Kennedy Library. But this was an exciting opportunity, and I wasn't getting younger. I was already 65, and certainly one gets interested if you get approached and recruited to do something new and exciting when you've already reached retirement age. So I decided to go forward. I met with George Soros and the chairman of the CEU board of trustees, Leon Botstein, who was the innovative president of Bard College, a public intellectual and a renowned orchestra conductor. To make a long story short, I was selected and moved to Budapest to become President of CEU in July 2009.

It was a tumultuous time. The transition to democracy for Hungary was particularly problematic because Hungary had no experience with democracy prior to 1989. There were Hungarian democracy advocates and dissidents during the old regime, but unlike Czechoslovakia, which had a long period of democratic government under Tomas Masaryk after the First World War before being taken over by Hitler, Hungary had been an authoritarian state throughout. Hungary came out of the Hapsburg Empire, and was run by a nationalist strong man, Miklos Horthy, for more than two decades following the First World War, and was increasingly allied with Germany.

The Hungarians were upset that they had lost so much of their territory in the Allied settlement of the First World War, and they wanted to get it back. So Horthy allied Hungary with fascist Germany, driven partially by nationalist hopes of restoring lost territory. This was not a background conducive to the rise of democracy.

Q: Let's get into nuts and bolts a little bit before we delve too far into politics. How did the family feel about another move overseas?

SHATTUCK: Ellen was both interested and uncertain. She was in a transition period herself, intrigued by the prospect of another international adventure. She had greatly enjoyed our time in Prague, and was interested in the human rights issues in Hungary, particularly the plight of the Roma people, the racial and cultural minority in Central and Eastern Europe. She was at MIT at the time after a distinguished career as a journalist. She'd been the White House correspondent for *The Wall Street Journal* and a regular panelist on the news program, "Washington Week in Review." After that she'd been executive director of the press and politics center at the Harvard Kennedy School, and had taught at the University of Massachusetts Boston. By 2009, Ellen was ready to leave MIT and start a new chapter abroad.

We knew it would be challenging because of the increasingly complex Hungarian political situation. We would be uprooted from our family and friends. Our children were grown and leading their own lives in the US. Our daughter, Susannah, who was seven when we went to Prague, was now entering college, and Jessica, Becca and Peter were married and raising their own families. So it would be just the two of us.

Ellen was heroic in her willingness to move to Budapest. We were both daunted by the prospect of mastering rudimentary Hungarian as our sixth foreign language. We both spoke French, I had learned basic Czech, I spoke some Russian and German, and Ellen spoke some Spanish. I had learned enough Czech to be able to speak it in public settings as ambassador, but Hungarian was another story. We studied Hungarian before setting out and continued for a while after getting to Budapest. But the challenge of speaking a new language unrelated to any other that we knew was a sign that this was not going to be easy in terms of day-to-day living. Fortunately, English was the lingua franca of CEU.

Q: Was it unusual that an American was chosen to head Central European University?

SHATTUCK: No. My immediate predecessor was an Israeli-American with dual citizenship in the U.S. and Israel. He was preceded by a Czech academic, and earlier by an American who had been a dean and professor at Columbia. CEU's first president in 1991 was a British academic from Oxford.

CEU was chartered and accredited in New York State as an American international university, and later in Hungary. Its international identity was symbolized by the dual accreditation.
Originally established to recruit students from across Central and Eastern Europe, CEU soon expanded recruitment beyond the region, and by the time I got there, students came from nearly 80 countries and almost all parts of the world.

I took steps to expand student recruitment in Hungary. I could see that CEU needed to strengthen its position as an international institution in a country with a government that was turning nationalist and authoritarian. It was important for Hungarians to feel they had a stake in and tangibly benefited from the university. Hungarians were very good graduate students, having received strong undergraduate and secondary education in an era when it had not yet been politicized.

CEU graduate education was based on the American model. Unlike European universities, CEU emphasized interactive faculty teaching styles and classroom participation by students. Faculty came from across Europe, and an increasing number from the US.

As a graduate university, CEU offered master's and doctoral programs. A key feature, which enabled it to recruit broadly and selectively, was that eighty percent of the students were awarded financial scholarships on a competitive basis, and all students had to pass rigorous admission requirements. During my seven year term as president, CEU climbed the rankings of graduate institutions and was ultimately rated among the top 50 universities internationally in social sciences and humanities, according to the Times Higher Education survey. CEU also received the highest amount of competitive European Union research funding among universities in Central and Eastern Europe, and that boosted its standing in the rankings. By the end of my time, the quality of the education was excellent, the international reach of the university was broad, and its ties and value to Hungarians were strong.

Q: Now, I know it was very highly regarded when I was in OSCE and Poland was running the human rights office there. A lot of the people who applied for jobs with us had come out of CEU, and we considered a CEU master's degree to be a very good credential. How many students did it have?

SHATTUCK: The student body was about 2200, relatively large for a graduate school, at least in Europe, and the faculty was roughly 300.

Q: Okay, that's pretty substantial faculty. You said a very large percentage of the students were on scholarship. Who funded all of this?

SHATTUCK: George Soros. The Soros vision was to support a new cadre of intellectuals and democratic leaders in Central and Eastern Europe. The way to do that was to attract the best and the brightest. Many CEU students were the first in their families to attend university. Some, but not many, were from distinguished families. All were young people who had excelled academically.

Q: Where is the university located in Budapest?

SHATTUCK: CEU is in the center of Budapest on the Pest side of the Danube, in elegant early 19th century buildings which the university had acquired in the 1990s but was beginning to outgrow by the time I became president. As we began planning expansion of the campus, I wanted CEU to remain an urban university in the center of Budapest. There was some talk about relocating to a suburb and spreading out in a typical American-style campus. I made it clear that I didn't want that because it would cause CEU to lose its identity as a Central European university.

Q: The classes were in English?

SHATTUCK: English was the common language, with more than a hundred nationalities among the students and faculty. All had to be fluent in English.

Q: You had dormitories and everything as well?

SHATTUCK: We did have dormitories, although some students rented their own apartments.

Q: And as the president, were you provided an official residence?

SHATTUCK: Nothing like the one in Prague. We had a fine apartment three blocks from the university and a block away from the U.S. Embassy. Ellen and I went apartment hunting before we arrived. The apartment had to be large enough for official lunches and dinners, and for hosting visiting guests and family members.

Q: I've got several questions here, which I have not written down, so let me try to formulate them. On the funding side, were the main funders George Soros and the Open Society Institute? Or was it a different funding mechanism?

SHATTUCK: An endowment was created by George Soros, dedicated to Central European University outside of the Open Society Institute (OSI). Additional funding for specific programs came through the OSI. CEU received no funding from the US or Hungarian governments. Beyond that, as CEU approached its twentieth anniversary, I felt that it was important for the university to begin transitioning to a new financial model, which involved more fundraising.

Q: Okay, that was going to be my next question, whether an inordinate amount of your job had to be raising funds, as so many university presidents have to do.

SHATTUCK: Yes, and it was hard because there was no tradition in Europe of university philanthropy. I was fortunate to have an entrepreneurial alumni director, a Ukrainian CEU alumnus, Serge Sikkh, and Serge established alumni chapters in cities all over Europe and beyond, including in the US and in the UK. I traveled to speak to many alumni groups to generate a sense of loyalty to their alma mater and a commitment to help support CEU as the university that had helped launch their careers. That began to pay off. I raised $25 million, the university's first non-Soros funding, during my time as president.

Q: *You talked about European Union grants as well.*

SHATTUCK: CEU received a large number of competitive research grants from the EU, but no operating funds. The EU did not provide operating support to private international institutions like CEU.

Q: Did you deal a lot with George Soros?

SHATTUCK: Of course. Several things were of special interest to George. One of these was a school of public policy patterned after the Kennedy School of Government. Soros was on the CEU board, but to his credit, I never felt that he was trying to micromanage what we were doing. He was interested in developing a new financial model that would sustain CEU after he was gone. We worked on that, and I scaled up CEU's capacity to fundraise. But we found it was especially challenging to raise money from donors who knew about George Soros. We'd say, "I'd like you to support this incredible international university in Central Europe that's bringing back democracy and intellectual freedom"; and they'd say, "Isn't George funding that? Let George do it." So, ironically, having George Soros as the founding donor was often an impediment for fundraising,

Q: Yes, I suppose it would be. But even billionaires have their limits, and he was involved in many other things.

Okay, so were you teaching as well as, or just giving occasional lectures?

SHATTUCK: I taught a course on U.S. foreign policy and human rights. I felt that it was important for me to learn what was on the students' minds and how they saw the world. My course was comparable to what I'd been teaching at Tufts, so it was not difficult to put it together, even though the students were quite different. There were almost no Americans; the students were primarily from Europe and Russia, and a few from Asia and Africa. That made it especially interesting for me, and gave me an opportunity to understand how international students and those from the region were finding their experience at CEU. I wouldn't have learned that from sitting in my office having meetings and making decisions.

Q: If I recall, there was a human rights program at CEU. I remember that some CEU graduates who had gotten their master's in human rights were coming to OSCE to work.

SHATTUCK: Yes, we had a very good human rights program. There was a human rights specialty in the Legal Studies Department, and human rights also in International Relations. I used the human rights crisis in Bosnia as a case study in my course, drawing on my diplomatic experience, and also China, Haiti and Rwanda. I taught the strategies, failures and successes of US policy.

Q: Were CEU's academic programs mainly humanities and social sciences?

SHATTUCK: The core was humanities and social sciences, but there were a variety of other programs. We had a business school, and as I mentioned before, a school of public policy, which was quite unique in Europe. I brought several visiting faculty from the Kennedy School to help us replicate the kind of approach they were taking.

We also developed new programs in the sciences. A cognitive science department was started while I was there, and a network science program, reflecting the early rise of artificial intelligence and algorithmic studies. We also had a world class joint program in mathematics with the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

Q: Well, it sounds like an ideal situation and a wonderful place. And how could anybody object? Right?

SHATTUCK: Right. It had all the elements that one might want, with one exception, an increasingly authoritarian government in the host country.

As I indicated earlier, Hungary had no history of democracy. After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Hungarians never went through much of a transition from communism to democracy, comparable, say, to what went on in Czechoslovakia or Poland, where there were clear breaks, and former dissidents were in charge of newly democratic governments.

What happened in Hungary was different, a sort of "goulash" transition that blended the new regime with the old. Most of the old regime survived into the new world. Politicians took their old garb off and changed into different political clothing as they became part of

the new regime, and for the next two decades, the Hungarian government was a peculiar and in some ways toxic mixture of old and new.

There were elements of constitutional democracy. For example, the Hungarian Supreme Court began to operate as an independent decision-making institution that tried to apply checks and balances to governing. But much of the old politics remained, and by the time I got there in 2009, there was a lot of corruption in the government.

On top of that, the financial crisis of 2007-08 hit Hungary harder than other countries in Eastern Europe, largely because Hungarians were heavily leveraged and financed by Swiss and German and Austrian banks. Many Hungarians saw their savings disappear in the crisis.

Another point to be made about what happened subsequently in Hungary was that it was primarily a rural country. Foreigners may not at first see it that way. One thinks of Budapest as a great cosmopolitan city in the middle of a small country. But Budapest is only 20% of the population; 80% is rural. Hungary is primarily a rural, agrarian country.

In Hungary, the only language most people know in the countryside is Hungarian. And the Hungarian language has no relationship to other European languages, so in a sense the vast majority of Hungarians are in a language prison. The rest of Eastern Europe speaks broadly related Slavic languages, and Western Europeans speak broadly related romance languages, while Hungarians speak neither.

Into this mix came a brilliant opportunistic politician, Viktor Orban. Orban played his fellow countrymen like a fiddle. He understood very well that the route to power was becoming a champion of rural Hungarians. He came from rural Hungary himself. His elite university experience in Budapest had made him feel like an outsider, so he had a political chip on his shoulder.

Orban was a brilliant speaker and had been a young leader of the mass demonstrations against the communist old regime in 1989, giving inspiring and fiery speeches. In 1990 George Soros was impressed by the progressive young student politician. Soros sponsored Orban on a scholarship to Oxford, which enabled Orban to perfect his English, burnish his academic credentials and launch his political career.

Orban founded Fidesz, a political party of young progressives, and rose rapidly in Hungarian politics. He was elected Prime Minister at age 35 in 1998, but was defeated for reelection by the social democrats in 2002. He was stung by defeat and vowed to build a movement that could not be defeated, steered by a new right-wing version of the Fidesz party.

By 2009, when I arrived, the campaign for the Hungarian elections of 2010 was well underway. Orban was a formidable force. He had transformed Fidesz and created a strong political cadre as his base, becoming the champion of Hungarians who were feeling disaffected, which was the majority. They were disaffected both by democracy, which

wasn't working for them the way they had expected, and by the financial crisis, which was bankrupting them. Even some moderates and liberals supported Orban. They felt it was time to clean house and for Hungary finally to have a clear transition.

When Orban got into office, it became clear right away what he would try to do. First, he established a super majority in the parliament by effectively doing ex-post-facto gerrymandering, manipulating the electoral process by forcing through new winner-take-all rules. He turned a bare majority into a full two-thirds super-majority, and that gave him the ability to start amending the Constitution, centralizing the authority of the prime minister, and pulling together the elements of an autocratic regime. At the same time he was able to revise the court system through new appointments, the creation of new judgeships, and amending the Constitution to change the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court so that it wouldn't have effective constitutional review over things that he was doing as the prime minister. In short, he took over the judiciary.

Orban's next target was the media. Some of his cronies and wealthy people he was courting were able to purchase the previously independent Hungarian newspaper, TV and radio media outlets, so the new regime was able to develop its own monopoly version of the Fox News empire. Orban established a media regulatory body that barred specific criticisms of the government on national security grounds, and within three or four years he had tamed Hungarian media.

Next, he began to go after civil society, particularly NGOs. Many Hungarian NGOs were supported by international organizations, such as the National Endowment for Democracy in the U.S. Orban's Fidesz party passed legislation banning foreign funding of NGOs on national security grounds, and NGOs were targeted as foreign agents if they were taking foreign money.

Finally, Orban went after universities. Hungarian universities, like universities throughout Europe, were funded by the government, but they had become academically independent after the fall of communism in 1989. The Hungarian government began to strip away this independence by appointing its own chancellors to oversee each university and creating foundations controlled by the government to direct decisions on academic programs and spending. All the assets of the state-run universities were controlled by the foundations whose boards were appointed by the government. As a result, Orban was able to exert political control over the entire state-supported higher education system.

As an independent university funded privately, CEU was outside this system. But CEU was accredited in Hungary and therefore subject to academic oversight. It was well respected in Hungary because of its academic excellence, and because it employed many Hungarians and gave scholarships to Hungarian students. On the other hand, CEU was no doubt seen by the Orban regime as a foreign institution whose founder, George Soros, was a promoter of democracy and an ideological opponent of Orban's vision of Hungary as an "illiberal democracy".

To give you a sense of what it was like to run an international university in Viktor Orban's Hungary during the early years of his regime, I'll tell a story about the intimidation and retribution tactics that he employed to try to bring us to heel.

Several years before Orban was elected, CEU had joined with several European governments to create an Institute of Advanced Study in Budapest. The Institute brought European post-doctoral social science students to Budapest to study the democratic transition process. The partners included CEU and the Hungarian, Swedish, Finnish, and Swiss governments, who each participated in funding the Institute.

When Orban came to power, he withdrew Hungary as a partner and requested that the Institute be shut down as an unwanted foreign entity. By then, the Institute had become a widely renowned academic program and was attracting outstanding post-doctoral students from all over Europe. The Institute board decided that the Institute should be continued and transferred to CEU and funded by the partners without Hungarian participation. As CEU's representative on the board, I agreed to oversee the Institute and respond to Orban's request.

About a month later, I was called into the Ministry of Education. The minister repeated Orban's demand that the Institute be shut down. I told him that our international partners had unanimously agreed to continue supporting it as part of CEU. The minister heatedly replied, "you must shut it down, and if you don't do that, we will prosecute you for stealing state assets."
I asked, "How is CEU stealing state assets? The assets and funding of the Institute are owned by the international partners." He replied, "We helped establish the Institute, and now we have decided that it no longer has a function in Hungary. It's inconsistent with our approach toward governing. And if you don't shut it down, you are effectively stealing an asset that we helped establish, and you will be persona non grata in Hungary if you resist this." He came on very strong.

I wasn't sure what to make of this. Fortunately, as a former ambassador and assistant secretary, I had an excellent relationship with the State Department, which CEU also had because of its accreditation in the U.S. I contacted the US Ambassador, Eleni Kounalakis, whom I knew well, and told her about my exchange with the Education Minister. She got in touch with Washington to formulate her message, and then met with the minister. She told the minister, "The United States is not happy with the way CEU as an American university is being treated. I understand that you are demanding that CEU shut down one of its departments and are threatening its president, a distinguished former US ambassador who is well respected. If you persist this will be very bad for the relationship between Hungary and the United States." That seemed to work, and the threats ended, at least for a time.

After this episode, it was clear that CEU had to take additional steps to protect its institutional autonomy and academic freedom in Hungary. Working with CEU's senior staff and trustees, we developed a three-pronged strategy.

The first element was to project to the broader Hungarian public the value of the university to Hungary. We began to publicize the economic and educational contributions CEU was making by providing scholarships to hundreds of Hungarian students, by employing several thousand Hungarian staff and over a hundred leading Hungarian academics on the faculty. CEU was paying Hungarian taxes, since there was no private university tax exemption in Hungary. We provided free public access to many university events, and we conducted joint academic programs with Hungarian universities. We were purchasing and consuming Hungarian goods and services with the purchasing power of the university and its students and faculty. During my second year as president, we began compiling all this information and publishing regular reports about how Hungary was benefiting from the presence of CEU as an international university chartered and accredited both in Hungary and the US.

The second thing we did was to establish an informal network of supporters inside the Hungarian government. I knew from my time in the State Department that governments are rarely monolithic, especially new governments. When Orban was elected in 2010 I had already been in Budapest for a year and had begun to make political contacts that would be useful to CEU.

I cultivated relations with a number of important Hungarian politicians. One of them, Janos Martonyi, became the Foreign Minister of the new Orban government. I met Martonyi in 1999 when I was Ambassador to the Czech Republic. The Czechs, the Hungarians and the Poles were all admitted to NATO at the same time that year. Martonyi was then Foreign Minister in the previous Orban government. By chance we met on a plane traveling to the Truman Library in Independence, Missouri, where the NATO accession ceremony took place. We struck up a conversation and soon discovered that we were the same age and were both interested in Central European music and literature. When the new Orban regime took office in 2010, I invited Martonyi, with whom I had reconnected through a CEU professor, to deliver the opening address to our students, sending a signal to Orban that CEU was willing to host members of his new government. We did the same thing with other new ministers and government officials, who began to regard CEU as accessible and an asset for Hungary.

The third part of our strategy was perhaps the most important – creating strong relations with the US government and with EU countries. The Obama administration had just taken office. I had worked with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and also knew the former 2004 Democratic presidential nominee John Kerry, who succeeded her as Secretary in 2013, so I had direct access to the highest levels of the State Department. I was also well connected to the White House, where Tony Blinken, whose father had been US Ambassador in Budapest when I was Ambassador in Prague, was Deputy National Security Advisor. I was introduced by mutual friends to Ambassador Eleni Kounalakis before she arrived in Budapest from California, and as a new ambassador she sought my advice and tips about working in the State Department.

Obama's foreign policy team supported the revival and growth of democracy in Central and Eastern Europe, and American institutions like CEU that promoted democracy. This

made it possible to influence Orban as he came into office. Hungary sought US support as a new member of NATO, as well as trade and economic relations in its role as a new member of the EU. On the other hand, the leverage this gave the US was offset by Orban's increasingly autocratic governance, especially after Obama's successor, Donald Trump, made clear that he admired Orban's brand of "illiberal democracy".

The university maintained its independence in Hungary throughout my term as CEU president, which ended in July 2016. Once Trump came into office in January 2017, Orban basically took off the gloves because he saw that CEU could no longer rely on the US. Orban started doing things that he hadn't done when I was there. He accused CEU of cheating the Hungarians by issuing "fake degrees" because, he falsely claimed, CEU didn't have an authentic Hungarian charter. In fact, CEU had been chartered in Hungary by an international agreement signed by Prime Minister Peter Megyessy in 2003.

In 2017 Orban directed the Hungarian Parliament to enact legislation informally known as "Lex CEU", creating obstacles and pretexts to cripple the university. It barred an international university from operating in Hungary unless it was based in its home country and entered a new agreement with the Hungarian government permitting it to operate in Hungary. CEU had a home base in the United States. Bard College in New York State was its partner, and the chairman of the CEU board was the president of Bard. But Orban effectively ostracized CEU by refusing to sign a new agreement authorizing CEU to operate in Hungary unless it shut down its department of gender studies.

That was too much for CEU. In 2019, three years after the end of my term as president, CEU relocated to Vienna to protect its academic freedom and autonomy from Orban's authoritarianism.

That's a short summary of the long saga of CEU and Victor Orban. The saga foreshadowed the attacks later aimed by the Trump administration at universities in the United States. CEU was the canary in the mineshaft.

Q: Stepping back a minute, this all started with an objection to a particular institute of the university, and had this institute done anything to annoy the Hungarian government?

SHATTUCK: The Institute was a thorn of independence in Orban's side, and this marked the first effort by the Orban regime to restrict CEU's educational and cultural influence in Hungary. The reason the new regime believed it could do this was that the previous Hungarian government had been a partner of CEU's Institute of Advanced Study, and this provided a flimsy pretext for shutting the Institute down. The Orban regime didn't want foreign postdoctoral students to be operating in Hungary. They were doing research in Central European medieval history, art history, and cultural history, and a few were researching political topics, although they were not trying to influence Hungarian political decisions. In short, Orban's early attack on CEU was an intimidation power play by a new government determined to restrict academic freedom.

Q: Was it motivated by anti-foreign sentiment?

SHATTUCK: There was certainly a xenophobic aspect of what the Orban regime was doing, playing to anti-foreign prejudices of rural Hungarians. What happened several years later illustrated this.

In 2015 there was a surge of refugees and migrants from the Middle East coming into Europe. They were traveling in small boats and by other dangerous means of transport, arriving in Greece and on southern coasts and then working their way north, many coming through Hungary. Orban used this migrant surge as a justification for vilifying what he called “foreign infidels," playing on the bloody history of Hungary’s relationship with the Turks who had conquered portions of the country. Orban was a jingoistic populist.

Q: You described the intervention by the United States. Did some of the other countries that were involved as partners----you mentioned Switzerland and Finland----also make approaches to the Hungarian government?

SHATTUCK: Yes, quietly. They stuck by their support of the Institute, and several continued their funding. CEU was the host of the institute, so the education minister met with me rather than with them.

The support of the Institute’s European partners illustrated the value of CEU’s outreach to European governments. In addition to the Institute’s supporters, I met regularly with the ambassadors of Germany, the UK, France, and Italy as the leading European powers. They were all consistently supportive of CEU, and eager to engage with us.

Q: You said that the university got a reprieve after the intervention by the American ambassador. In retrospect, do you think that escalated the confrontation in a way that was not useful in the long run?

SHATTUCK: No. The U.S. ambassador was firm but not confrontational. She made it clear that as an American institution also accredited in Hungary, CEU should not have its academic autonomy taken away and academic decisions imposed upon it by the Hungarian government.

Q: Was this during the Obama Administration, when the U.S. had already been criticizing the Hungarian government, and could that have had an effect on all of this?

SHATTUCK: There wasn’t yet much criticism, and we were not so happy at CEU that the US seemed to be fairly muted, at least in its public statements about things that were going on in the Hungarian government, including the anti-democratic developments, although these made it into State Department human rights reports. For example, the takeover of the media, the takeover of the judiciary, the gerrymandering and manipulation of the Hungarian Parliament.

Q: How about the European Union? Hungary was already a member at this point, and the EU must have had some objections to this, if not to the university, in particular, at least to the restrictions on freedoms and the move towards authoritarianism.

SHATTUCK: The EU moved slowly, but eventually it started what's known as Article Seven proceedings against Hungary for violations of the rule of law, norms that all member states of the European Union are supposed to follow. And later, in 2020, the European Court of Justice issued a ruling that the Orban regime was violating these norms.

The EU began cutting or conditioning the subsidy that Hungary was receiving from the European Union. Before these cuts were made, Hungary, and the Orban regime in particular, was a beneficiary of a huge amount of EU "transitional funding" as a new member state. It's now well documented that Orban funneled much of that funding to build his own economic oligarchy by using non-competitive contracts for infrastructure renovation and development, and giving the contracts to people who would become beholden to him as a result. That way, he was able to create massive cronyism and corruption at the top of the government.

Finally, in 2020, the European Court of Justice ruled that EU rules and norms applicable to member states were being violated, and the funds started to be cut off or restricted. Before then, some 30 billion euros had flowed into Orban's Hungarian coffers as a result of the transition funding.

Q: You must have felt like you were a diplomat again, trying to manage this relationship with the government.

SHATTUCK: Yes, totally. We did a lot of game planning of who, inside the government, do we think we can still approach as time went on. On the other hand, the political discipline within the government became stronger and stronger as Orban's grip tightened.

In the early days, it was possible, as I said before, to work with the Foreign Minister, who I knew well, and with the Education Minister until the breach occurred over the Institute of Advanced Study. Yes, it took strategic planning to develop networks. CEU had several alumni who were working with or for the government. So, we tried to coordinate with them, and this worked reasonably well during the time that I was there. CEU got the government's approval for the redevelopment of our campus. And we were able to get re-accredited in Hungary.

I drew a red line on academic freedom and autonomy early on. Let me give an example of why the red line was crucial. The History Department had a teaching and research program about the Hungarian Holocaust. The Holocaust in Hungary was closely analyzed by a wide variety of scholars in the U.S. and Europe, including at CEU, and there was overwhelming evidence that the holocaust had been carried out by Hungarians. Nevertheless, the official account by the Orban government was that it had been imposed and carried out by Hitler and the fascist regime in Germany and was entirely a product of

German pressure. The official account was reflected in a monument commissioned by the government in Budapest's central Szabadszag Square depicting a giant German eagle preying on Hungarian Jews and other civilians.

CEU scholars were requested by the government to align the published conclusions of their Holocaust research with the official account. The scholars consulted with me and we declined to do that. CEU not only declined the government's request, it hosted an international academic conference in 2015 on the Hungarian Holocaust. The conference reinforced the scholarship of European and American historians, including the leading history scholars at CEU.

That was an example of CEU's red line. At other times, we were asked to drop our gender studies and refugee studies programs because the government regarded them as inconsistent with Orban's anti-LGBTQ and anti-immigrant policies. Once again, we declined to do that because the government's request clearly impinged on CEU's academic freedom.

Q: And the government might have seen this as provocative?

SHATTUCK: Perhaps, but it was essential not to give ground on basic issues of academic freedom.

Q: Did you have any personal contact with Orban?

SHATTUCK: I met him once at an official event at the US embassy. I decided it was not in CEU's interest for me as president personally to negotiate with him. A university president can't effectively negotiate with an authoritarian leader because if you give something, he'll just want more. We had intermediaries talking with him,

Q: Did you ever become a personal focus of attack or a personal target? Were they saying that Shattuck's stories are wrong?

SHATTUCK: Only in the early period that I mentioned, with the Institute of Advanced Study. As long as CEU had the support of the U.S. and the leading European countries, Orban did not take the final confrontational step that he later took after Trump was elected.

CEU grew increasingly popular in Hungary as we expanded our outreach during my time as president. This became clear during the huge demonstrations in 2018 that occurred outside the Hungarian parliament on behalf of CEU after the government passed its notorious Lex CEU, when 20,000 people marched in the streets chanting solidarity with CEU .

Q: It seems almost counter-intuitive that you would have this institution that had become so prominent, was doing such good things, and had such a good international reputation,

and that you should want to squelch it. Is this just authoritarian?. Is this what we're seeing with the presidential attacks on the leading universities in the United States now.

SHATTUCK: The Trump-Orban relationship was mutually beneficial, stimulating each of them to assert their power. I think Orban became concerned that CEU was going to be a source of opposition to him. CEU's commitment to evidence-based truth and academic integrity stood in the way of Orban's effort to redefine Hungary – to "make Hungary great again" -- to suit his political interests. This was shown by CEU's refusal to alter its research and teaching about the Hungarian Holocaust, as well its refusal to shut down the Institute of Advanced Study.

I guarded CEU against becoming a visible center of political opposition. To do so I drew another red line to protect CEU's academic freedom and autonomy. CEU barred all political campaigning inside the university. If an opposition politician approached us and requested an opportunity to give a campaign speech on campus, we had a firm rule against campaign speeches.

Q: Did you have a lot of anti-government demonstrations?

SHATTUCK: Not inside the university, but there were demonstrations in the city. One widely publicized demonstration during the early years of the Orban government was organized in opposition to the government's plan to tax use of the Internet. The proposal sparked a massive demonstration on the Chain Bridge, the major crossing of the Danube in the center of Budapest. Tens of thousands of protesters put their cell phone lights on, and a media drone captured the parade of lights and relayed the photos to the press so that the demonstration could be seen across Europe and around the world. The government abandoned its internet tax plan.

Q: By the time you left, did you foresee that the end was at hand, or did you think they might still be able to manage?

SHATTUCK: Well, I left in July of 2016. Four months later, Trump was elected president. From July to November, the election odds favored Hillary Clinton, and the standard thinking was that the appeal of Trump was going to wither. But standard thinking was soon overcome by reality. In Hungary, the dangerous reality of rising authoritarianism came into focus long before it was seen in the US. I began to see it in the middle of my time at CEU, but was convinced that we could continue to protect CEU so long as the US government remained a reliable supporter of the university. I was right.

Let me quote from my report to the CEU Board of Trustees in March 2014:

"CEU's external challenge is the political environment in Hungary, where democracy and human rights are increasingly contested. Hungary's constitutional changes have weakened intergovernmental checks and balances and have increased government influence over the media. Racism is allowed to flourish. The current government is likely to be reelected next month, and the external climate in which CEU is operating is likely

to remain perilous. CEU is on the front lines of a contest over open democratic society, and that is where it belongs. We will not trim our sails to survive. To the contrary, as President, I have repeatedly made clear that CEU will protect and promote the academic freedom of its faculty and students to pursue the truth wherever it may lead. CEU has strengthened its profile as a center of teaching, learning and research about the values of democratic society."

Q: Strong words, did you feel you had the full support of the board?

SHATTUCK: Yes, the board didn't want us to trim our sails. After all, we were a university. George Soros certainly didn't want us to do that. But a growing number of board members wondered whether we were going to be able to continue to operate in Hungary. That was the question. It seemed to me that if you're going to set up a university to support an open democratic society, you had better be on the frontiers of democracy. Don't back down, and don't go somewhere else. So I wanted CEU to stay and the board knew that.

Q: Okay. Well, good. And who was the board? Was it mainly fundraisers, or did you get academics and Hungarians as well?

SHATTUCK: Yes, All of the above. There were leading academics. the Chancellor of the University of California at Berkeley. The former President of Stanford. The former Provost of Columbia. The former Dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Education. The former President of Bryn Mawr. There were also people from the Soros world, major potential donors, and some Hungarians, which was very important. I strongly advocated inviting prominent Hungarians to join the board, and we had several members who were defending the academic freedom of their institutions in Hungary. It was a strong board.

Q: Did you have a lot of contact with the other Hungarian universities?

SHATTUCK: Yes, increasingly, as part of our strategy of building a network in Hungary that would be helpful to CEU. We had some joint programs, as I mentioned earlier, most notably the Mathematics program with the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. As a graduate university, CEU was a valuable academic stepping stone for graduates from Hungarian universities. Some of them were on our faculty.

Q: So did you leave there with a lot of regrets? Or clearly you should have had a sense of accomplishment with all that you were able to achieve there, and to see this thriving thing moving forward. But already mixed feelings, or was it, as you said, too soon to tell that it was going to be forced out by Orban?

SHATTUCK: I felt good about what we had accomplished. We had carried the flag and done what we set out to do, expanding the university, deepening its connections in Hungary and holding off the government from forcing us to do anything that a university should not be required to do if it's going to have academic freedom.

George Soros gave a good talk, a tribute, as I was leaving. He told me, "You were the right man at the right time." It was a time when a different kind of leader might have said, I can't deal with this. Let's move out. Instead, I faced big diplomatic as well as academic challenges, and remained determined to continue building CEU into a great university on the frontiers of democracy.

I haven't mentioned the campus. We built a stunning new award-winning campus which CEU continues to use for conferences and academic programs. The only thing that it cannot do in Hungary, based on Lex CEU, is to issue degrees in Hungary. Orban was a soft authoritarian. Trump is much harsher. Orban, while he consolidated power and curtailed democracy, was not a storm trooper. CEU continued to be able to run programs on the campus that I built, and hopefully under a new government it can become a dual-campus university in Budapest as well as Vienna.

Q: Why don't we leave it there and schedule one more session to cover the subsequent years and final thoughts.

Chapter 11: Conclusion

Q: Today is September 9, 2025 and this is Peter Eicher beginning a new oral history session with John Shattuck. Good morning, John.

SHATTUCK: Good morning, Peter.

Q: We've had a great series of interviews over the past few months, which have cataloged a very interesting life and foreign affairs career. I think that we've covered most of the key points of your main foreign related and some other activities over your career.

Since this is primarily a State Department oral history, maybe I can start by asking you, was there anything that stood out about your State Department work that you found notably different from your other positions, operationally or in other ways?

SHATTUCK: I'd say almost everything was operationally different, but in a broad sense it was also the same, because much of my career has been about the promotion and protection of democracy and human rights -- as a civil rights lawyer, an advocate, a professor and university president, and as a State Department official. What was different about the State Department was representing the United States. This was a great privilege but also often challenging because during the time that I was serving from 1993 to '98 as assistant secretary, and then from '98 to 2000 when I was ambassador, we were at the height of our hegemonic power and our position in the world was unparalleled.

The US was founded on promises of democracy and human rights, but its record of fulfilling these promises over 250 years has been uneven at best, and failing at worst.

When you look at some of the recent history of Latin America, particularly Central America prior to my time in the State Department, and the war in Vietnam, the US had a failing record on human rights. As a US diplomat, I was seen to be carrying that baggage. Having spent much of my career before coming to the State Department in human rights roles outside government, I had to overcome the suspicion that I'd "sold out". I encountered skepticism that we were pursuing human rights policies in good faith -- in Haiti and in Bosnia, for example, and in the World Conference on Human Rights. The skeptics wondered what was the U.S. motive in advocating the creation of the position of the High Commissioner for Human Rights? Was it promoting this position primarily to advance US influence? Was it committed to the global movement for democracy and human rights that had broken out in many parts of the world after the Cold War? These questions hung over my early diplomatic encounters, and that made the job challenging. I had to work to overcome that, while representing the position of the United States.

As a lawyer trained in constitutional and international law, I believed in the principles of human rights and democracy embedded in the U.S. Constitution and international treaties. Although these principles had sometimes been violated by US governments, and had never been fully realized, they were at the heart of my job. In fact, I felt that this was the pinnacle of everything that I had done up until then, because now I was representing the whole US in the context of its values. That's how my State Department experience was different from my previous positions.

Q: Yes, and having worked on human rights in so many different capacities over the years as a State Department official, do you feel like you were accomplishing more by being able to wield the power of the United States? Or were you rather restrained because you were having to operate within the context of U.S. policy?

SHATTUCK: When you have the US government fully behind the policy you're following, you are able, at least in theory, to get more accomplished. The problem is that inside the government, there's a great deal of debate and turmoil over what the policy should be. DRL represented US interests in human rights, but we were coming up against other US interests: economic interests represented by the economic agencies, security interests represented by the Pentagon, political interests represented by the regional State Department bureaus, etc. DRL was rarely uncontested inside the government, and therefore it rarely had the full power of the government behind it.

Of course, we were obligated to carry out the policy of the government, above all the President, and we relied on statements made by the President. The problem was that sometimes these statements didn't match the realities of what was taking place and the policies that were being implemented. Bosnia is a good example of that, where it was clear during his presidential campaign that President Clinton wanted a human rights orientation in his foreign policy. But by the time I was confirmed and in office, the US human rights policy on Bosnia was anything but robust and certainly didn't reflect Clinton's earlier campaign positions. We were yielding to the Europeans, and the

Congress was showing little interest in having the US engaged in stopping human rights crimes.

But when the whole government was behind you, something remarkable could happen. This did happen in the Bosnia peace process leading up to the Dayton Agreement, and in the development of international institutions of human rights accountability, the war crimes tribunals, not only for Bosnia, but also for Rwanda. Also, when President Clinton made his commitment in Haiti to support the return of the democratically elected president, and was willing to send U.S. troops to assist in that process, that represented a significant development in which the State Department, and particularly my Bureau, was at the forefront of a policy backed by the whole government.

On the other hand, a contrary example was the President's termination of his policy on human rights in China in 1994, only a year after it was promulgated. The executive order linking human rights and trade was reversed by the President under pressure from the economic agencies. DRL and the State Department were left hanging out to dry after working for a year to implement the original policy. Having first received the full backing of the government, we were then faced with its withdrawal.

Q: When I was in DRL, I sometimes felt as if the Bureau was kind of an NGO within the State Department. We were advocating for a lot of important things that we thought were in line with U.S. policy. But as you've just described, many others had different viewpoints on what was more important and this could lead to gridlock. Did you get that kind of feeling coming out of the NGO community yourself?

SHATTUCK: Yes, no question about it. I described this in my book *Freedom on Fire* as a set of syndromes that prevented human rights policymaking from moving forward early on in the Clinton administration.

First, there was the interagency syndrome: changing a government-wide policy below the level of President, such as disengagement in Bosnia, required unanimity within the government. However, if you don't have unanimity the only way to change a policy was through a presidential decision. This often led to the second syndrome, on presidential decisionmaking. The President wanted evidence that the public supported the proposed policy change on Bosnia, particularly since he was elected by a very narrow majority. This then led to a third syndrome. The public was unlikely to provide a signal that they wanted to change the policy on Bosnia unless they heard first from the President.

These three syndromes ended up paralyzing human rights policymaking at the beginning of the Clinton administration – until the President actually took to the bully pulpit on Bosnia and Haiti and explained why it was important to take a position that the public may not have understood.

So there were impediments to changing policies, but that's the way the U.S. government is designed to work. One of the important things about constitutional democracy is that it has checks and balances and guardrails that are built in. If those are disregarded -- as

they are today by a president who is not abiding by the rules but doing whatever he wants to enhance his power -- that leads to a dangerous perversion of democracy. In the end, the complexities and internal challenges of constitutional government are far preferable to authoritarianism.

Q: Yes. Well, for sure, the syndromes and frustrations, I guess we've talked about that a lot over the weeks. I wonder, if looking back, you would have any recommendations on how the State Department could operate more effectively.

SHATTUCK: Many secretaries of state have tackled that and not gotten very far. The key relationship of course is between the Secretary of State and the National Security Advisor, and ultimately the President. If those relationships are working well, the Secretary can have quite a bit of influence.

What can be done to make things work better inside the State Department? A major stumbling block for bureaus on the periphery like DRL is the clearance process. The idea that a whole chain of people need to clear off on a DRL document that's going to the Secretary of State is a recipe for either watering it down or never getting it through.

I found a number of ways to advance my views without relying on the clearance process. The best one of course is to communicate outside formal paper channels, particularly if you have a good relationship with the Secretary and the Deputy Secretary, and the National Security Council. I was able to do that after I established a working relationship with Secretaries Christopher and Albright, and with Strobe Talbott, the Deputy Secretary, and in the White House with Sandy Berger, the Deputy National Security Advisor, and with Tony Lake. I would use this informal channel when I had something important and time-sensitive to communicate.

But that was difficult if I was calling from my office in the State Department. So I discovered early on that one of the best ways to communicate was to travel to the place where a front-burner issue was unfolding -- go to Sarajevo, or to Port au Prince, or to Kigali -- and then call back to Washington. My high-level calls got through when I was in a policy hot spot.

I did an enormous amount of travel, and most of the effective communications that I had outside of the State Department clearance process were direct contacts that I had from the field with the Secretary or Deputy of State or Deputy National Security Advisor who would take my call. “Shattuck is calling from Sarajevo. He says he has something important to convey.” You don't do this to shoot the breeze. You've got to have a serious question that you want to get answered, or you want to provide new information or make a new proposal. During the Bosnia campaign, for example, Holbrooke and I coordinated our calls. We would contact Berger or Lake or Christopher directly, with urgent new information relevant to the policies we were helping shape.

The formal clearance process during my time at the State Department was fundamentally broken. Today, in the digital world, the old process is no doubt obsolete, but I’m sure

bureaucratic turf habits persist, and impediments remain to getting policy recommendations up the line.

Q: Well, I can certainly share, through my many years in the State Department, your frustrations with the clearance process. However, I found in DRL that it could sometimes be to our benefit. Now, maybe you, as Assistant Secretary, having to get everybody's clearance on your things was frustrating. And even at the lower level in DRL, if we were trying to move something, it was frustrating. But DRL is one of those bureaus that would have been most likely to be ignored and cut out of the process completely if it hadn't been a requirement to include this.

SHATTUCK: That's a good point.

Q: You know, after having worked on geographic desks and other bureaus. I was frustrated with it. Once I moved into DRL, ironically I began to see the value.

SHATTUCK: It meant that stuff had to flow into our bureau that otherwise might not get there.

Q: Yes, in fact, a lot of our influence was, you've got to change this sentence, or you've got to add this issue or that kind of thing, which is what I spent a lot of my DRL doing to make sure the geographic bureaus didn't just run away with whatever they wanted. Looking back, are there things you would have done differently at the State Department?

SHATTUCK: Certainly there were things that I learned along the way that made me do things differently. It would have been helpful to know more about how to operate when I started. That, of course, was the disadvantage of coming in as a political appointee, not having worked in the State Department before.

I have an amusing story about my first meeting with Secretary Christopher after I was nominated that illustrates the difference between my own background and that of a foreign service officer. I was invited to meet the Secretary and went to his office on the seventh floor. He warmly welcomed me and spoke briefly about how we shared a civil rights background, and how we knew several people in common. He asked me whether I'd previously met a Secretary of State in his office. I responded, "As a matter of fact, Mr. Secretary, I have, and I've been to *this* office." And he said, "Oh, that's interesting. Which Secretary were you here to see?" And I said, "Well, I was here to take the deposition of Henry Kissinger in a Watergate-related case involving illegal wiretapping when I was at the ACLU." He seemed slightly taken aback, but then brightened and remarked, "Well, you're clearly well qualified for this job."

Q: A warning to him as well.

SHATTUCK: He was a good man who had strong human rights values, and it was a privilege to work with him.

Q: You've touched on current circumstances in our government a little bit. And in light of that, would you have any advice for current foreign service officers in the State Department who are trying to work on human rights?

SHATTUCK: I think it's helpful for a foreign service officer who has an interest in working on human rights to have engaged in several other activities in the State Department. That doesn't mean you need to be a senior person, but I think to have had some geographic experience, and maybe some experience in another functional bureau, so that you know the ropes, and are not simply a human rights advocate.

The foreign service officers that I worked with were generally excellent, but the ones that I relied on most had a wide variety of experience. They weren't just focused on human rights. Someone like yourself who became heavily engaged in human rights over many years can be especially valuable because the State Department needs a few foreign service professionals who specialize in human rights. I think it's been a failure on the part of the Department to recognize that. There are key professional positions that require expertise in human rights in the multilateral context and in the direct bilateral and regional context.

Q: How about working outside the State Department, in today's circumstances, if you want to promote human rights?

SHATTUCK: That's an important question. We are in the midst of the gravest crisis for human rights and democracy of my lifetime. So there's plenty to do.

Instead of cataloguing the things that need to be done, I'd like to step back and offer some observations on what's happened over the last century on human rights and democracy in the US, and how we arrived at today's crisis.

We've seen four major milestones, each of which represents a major achievement that is now under attack. First, there were groundbreaking domestic political changes in the 1930s in response to the massive economic collapse and social disruption that had resulted. These changes were encapsulated in the New Deal and its bipartisan continuity until the 1980s. For fifty years under a succession of presidents from both parties -- Roosevelt, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford and Carter -- an engine of basic social protections was developed and a new role for government was defined, including the protection of human rights in a constitutional democracy.

The second big achievement was the World War Two allied victory of democracy over fascism, and the liberal international order that was built. It was created starting in 1945 through extraordinary diplomatic efforts. It was Marshall and Acheson and other diplomatic leaders who built the liberal international order that has been battered but has survived until today. The legacy of this diplomacy has helped secure a relatively stable and peaceful world and has so far prevented another world war.

The third great achievement in the U.S. is the civil rights revolution, starting with the remarkable judicial and legislative milestones in the struggle against racial segregation in the '50s and '60s. Many of these were followed by violent reaction against the civil rights movement, particularly in the segregated south. But the movement has continued and expanded from race to gender to disability to LGBTQ to the wide range of equal rights and civil liberties that have been protected until recently. This is where I spent the first 13 years of my career, when I was at the ACLU.

The fourth area was the end of the Cold War and the democratic transformation of Eastern Europe that seemed to be progressing during the early stages of the post-Cold War period. This was taking place during the time I was serving in the U.S. government, at the height, as I said earlier, of the hegemonic power of the U.S. and the apex in many ways of the achievements of these four developments that I've just mentioned.

But this was also the beginning of what I call the forces of disintegration that began to tear all this apart. The turn of the new century was marked by social, economic, political and communication revolutions and increasing changes and disruptions in the U.S. and in Europe, and in the rest of the world as well.

The civil rights revolution was a tremendous achievement, but it also led to a backlash, particularly among white men, who felt that they were being left behind or pushed aside or disempowered. Justified or not, frustrations increased.

The economic revolution produced by deregulation and neoliberal market economics promoted capital growth and mobility. But it also promoted capital flight from the US and Europe as jobs and factories went to cheaper labor markets overseas.

Then there was the political revolution in Europe, which was of course transformational in terms of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the spread of democracy and market economies. But as new systems replaced old regimes, social welfare programs collapsed and state assets were plundered by former bureaucrats who became new oligarchs. Some people began to ask, particularly in Eastern Europe, "are we really better off now than we were during the Communist period?"

Finally the digital revolution democratized and enhanced public methods of communication, but also led to the dissolution of sources of trusted information and the proliferation of misinformation and disinformation. These developments facilitated government and corporate manipulation and surveillance of the public, and impacted directly on people’s privacy and their social and political life.

Out of these four developments came the rise of a new kind of authoritarian populism within Western democracies. Victor Orban in Hungary was an early practitioner who developed a new model for undermining a democratic system and turning it into an authoritarian oligarchic regime. Orban has influenced far-right authoritarian populists across Europe, and has had a major impact on Donald Trump in the United States.

I look back with great discontent and sadness at the dismantling of the achievements for democracy and human rights by the reactionary populist authoritarian regimes.

What gives me some hope today is that there is still energy in civil society directed toward realization of the struggle for democracy and human rights. We see this in polling data. I wrote a book in 2022, *Holding Together: The Hijacking of Rights in America and How to Reclaim Them for Everyone*, about the crisis of democracy. The nationwide polling information that we put together with the assistance of the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago showed that 65% of Americans continue to strongly believe in the values of democracy and human rights. A minority, 35%, is pushing in the opposite direction. The biggest single challenge is to protect the electoral machinery, because if that ends up being controlled and manipulated by the authoritarians, then the opportunity to defeat them in a democratic context will have been destroyed. So that's really where the battle is right now.

Q: Certainly under attack, yes. Well, it's unfortunate to end on a rather discouraging note, but that's where we are in the world today. I guess we've covered a lot of ground in the last few months since we started, and I think you can look back on your life and career with a lot of satisfaction about what you accomplished in so many ways. I've really enjoyed, for my part, reconnecting with you after years in which we were not in touch, and having a chance to get this story and let me thank you for agreeing to share it with the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and for being part of the Oral History Program.

SHATTUCK: Well, Peter, thank you. You've been an excellent interviewer. You were also an excellent colleague when we worked together in the State Department. I hope that we will continue to remain in contact.

Q: Okay, we will end it here, then, and thank you again.

End of interview