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

GEORGE F. SHERMAN, JR.

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INTERVIEW

[Note: This interview was not edited by Mr. Sherman]

Q: This is Dennis Kux interviewing George F. Sherman, Jr. for the Foreign Affairs Oral History Program. Today is January 18, 1995.

George, thank you very much for taking part in our program. Could you start by telling us a little bit about your background? How you became interested in foreign affairs, as well as an overview of your career.

SHERMAN: Yes. First of all, it is a pleasure, Dennis, to be part of the ADST program. I would like to begin with a general framework for my career in international affairs. That career spans the years between October, 1956 and August, 1994, and within those years there were actually two careers. The first in journalism, the second in the Foreign Service. The journalism part began with the Observer in London from October, 1956 to February, 1961. Then I joined the Washington Star where I was until May, 1974 at which time I ended my journalism career. In May of that year I joined the State Department in the NEA Bureau as a Reserve Foreign Service Officer.

Q: What got you into journalism?

SHERMAN: It was an accident, as a matter of fact. I saw myself as a budding academic. I was born in Massachusetts in July 1930 and was proceeding forward after graduating from Dartmouth in 1952. I was at Oxford doing a graduate degree at St. Anthony's College from 1954-56. I was doing work on Soviet policy in Germany, post-World War II. During that time I made my first visit to the Soviet Union in March, 1955, just two years after the death of Stalin. That trip grew out of a group effort that had begun when I was at the School of International Affairs in the Russian Institute at Columbia University doing a graduate degree from 1952-54. After Stalin died and the jockeying for power in the Soviet hierarchy began, we students of the Soviet system calculated that Khrushchev, as the head of the Party, would emerge victorious. You remember the original division of

labor was Malenkov as Prime Minister and Khrushchev as Party Secretary. During that period in 1954, Khrushchev began giving interviews and talking about the need for peaceful coexistence between the super powers, which was a recognizable tactic given the weakness in the Soviet Union following the death of Stalin. They were uncertain how to proceed so they needed to reduce the tension with the United States and the West. And, of course, the first practical outcome of this was the Austrian Peace Treaty where they agreed on the neutrality of Austria.

As part of this campaign, Khrushchev began giving interviews to the American press talking about peaceful coexistence -- if people got to know each other, there would be less tension in the world. One has to recall that at this period the Soviet Union was completely closed. It had been closed virtually since World War II, reflecting Stalin's paranoia and the totalitarian system that existed there.

So, when Khrushchev began talking this line, it was a complete break with what had previous existed in terms of the closed society there. We students, 8 of us at the Russian Institute, wrote a letter to Khrushchev saying that we had seen with great interest his words on peaceful coexistence, we were students of the Soviet Union and Russian speakers, and would very much like to get to know the Soviet Union firsthand. Could he help us get visas, which were virtually impossible to get at that time.

That summer, 1954, four of the group got visas and went to the Soviet Union. A friend of mine, Peter Juviler, and myself were not among the four. When they got back, we discussed with them their month-long journey. After this discussion, Peter Juviler and I decided to write another letter to Khrushchev saying that we were still interested in going and our friends had found the visit very interesting, etc. We didn't hear anything back immediately and we both graduated that June from Columbia. I went to Oxford, St. Anthony's College, to do this program, as I mentioned, on Soviet policy in Germany. That winter, the winter of 1954-55, I was on a ski trip from Oxford University at Christmas time to Zűrs in Austria. I came in from skiing one day and there was a call from Peter in New York saying that he had heard from the Soviet Embassy in Washington that we would be given visas. So, we agreed to go as soon as possible, which would be the following March. I was on a Ford Foundation Grant at Oxford University, as well as a Fellowship Grant from Dartmouth College, my undergraduate college. I wrote to the Ford Foundation and told them I had this opportunity to go to the Soviet Union and they gave me the money to pay for the trip.

So, Peter and I went to Moscow, Leningrad and Kiev, over a two week period, a very intensive trip in March, 1955. It was one of the most fascinating trips of my life. At that time, I was 25 years old and had been studying Russian and the Soviet Union for about three or four years. We behaved as tourists, going everywhere we could. Having the Russian language we could speak...to show the strangeness of the Soviets at that time, we would begin conversations on the streets with ordinary Russians, and just like this a crowd would gather as soon as they realized we were Americans. We might have been from outer space. People were intensely interested in everything American. Asking

whether it was true that American workers had automobiles and washing machines and houses, that sort of thing. We had a myriad of experiences ranging from spending practically a whole night in our hotel in Kiev with some art students quizzing us about the movement in art in the West; to a young military cadet we met in a hotel in a Leningrad dining room and who had been warned not to talk to us, so we met him out on the street afterward. We walked around the streets talking about his life. We went to a neighborhood bath, the traditional type of Finnish sauna bath where people sat around and gossiped about everything -- not politics.

Q: Did you have any contact with State Department people?

SHERMAN: Yes and no. We called at the Embassy, a courtesy call. One of my friends at the Russian Institute was seconded from the American Navy and was doing a graduate course. He was in Naval Intelligence and subsequently was in London where I would see him. He knew we were going to the Soviet Union. He asked me in strict confidence if when flying over Leningrad I could look at the disposition of ships in the harbor and to be alert in Moscow to the amount of military presence there. That was the extent of our contact with the American government. Of course, I gave him what little information we had picked up when I got back.

Before we left, we had talked to people at the Observer in London about possibly writing some articles on our visit. So, when we got back, we went to them and told them about these various experiences. They were very interested. They set us up in a cottage outside Oxford -- by now we are into April -- for a week. Peter and I spent each day describing our recollections of the experiences we had had. Very much a kind of stream of consciousness exercise. As students we wanted to start out drawing cosmic conclusions about what had happened -- this was my first brush with journalism -- but they said the important thing was to put down our experiences, the human angle was what people were interested in. What are the Russians like? What is the Soviet Union like?

Out of that grew a series of five articles that ran in late June and all through July in the Sunday Observer. It was called, "Talking with the Russians." We took various experiences each time and wrote them up in detail. They were a sensation because the Soviet Union at that time was an unknown entity, it was isolated. This was the first glimpse that people had had by ordinary, educated outsiders about what went on in the life of Russia. One episode was the baths. Another one was this long conversation with the art students. Another was about our constant experiences on the streets and the trouble I had. For instance, I took a picture of the inside of a courtyard which was dilapidated and just as I took the picture a woman and child emerged from one of the doorways and she was furious. She started chasing us and we were running down the street trying to escape her. She didn't want her picture taken. She called a policeman over and we were taken to a local police station which happened to be outside the main cathedral in Leningrad, the Kazan Cathedral, to which we were going in any case. The policeman was embarrassed and called someone from the local station and we went into the cathedral while waiting for him. We stayed there a couple of hours to let everything blow over. That was the sort

of experiences we wrote about.

Anyway, that is a long recitation of how I got interested in journalism. By that time, I had concluded that my original intention for going to Oxford, which was to go into teaching by way of research, wasn't something that I really wanted to do. I looked around and was more of an activist than the people who were doing research there. So, I was ready to consider another career. This was immediately an option. I still had to finish my degree, which I did during those remaining months. This happened in the summer of 1955 and I didn't finish at Oxford until the summer of 1956. I did my thesis and got my bachelor of letters which is the British equivalent of a master's degree. By that time I had determined to go into journalism, American journalism.

I returned to New York and began looking for a job, going to the wire agencies, the New York Times and the Herald Tribune. Everybody was very interested in my expertise but not at all impressed by my lack of experience in journalism. They said that I should go out into the "provinces" so to speak, to a smaller paper and get experience. I had about determined to do that and had written letters off to about 15 newspapers. It was now September, 1956, and I got a telephone call from David Aster, the editor of the Observer, asking me if I would like to be their East European correspondent.

Q: Did that just come out of the blue?

SHERMAN: Yes. It took me about one second to give him an answer.

Q: This came as a total surprise?

SHERMAN: Total surprise. He said that his reasoning was that Stalinist Europe was beginning to break up. The 20th Party Congress Khrushchev speech had leaked out and the unrest in Poland had begun. He said that they thought the time was right for them to have a correspondent in Eastern Europe because it was open enough now for people to get in there and report.

We arranged at that time for me to sail back to London and take a couple of months in their office learning the business, so-to-speak, and then go to Vienna. While I was arranging this a couple of weeks went by, and we get to early October, and the system breaks down in Poland and the Russians very nearly invaded and the rise of Gomulka, etc. Then, growing out of the Polish unrest, of course, came the Hungarian uprising. Against that backdrop they called me and said I had better fly over and go right out to Vienna. So, I did that. Over the Atlantic...I will never forget, I was on BOAC and they announced the English, French and Israelis had invaded Egypt. So, I arrived in London in the middle of that and the Hungarian crisis. I went from the airport to the editor's house where we had dinner and a general discussion of the assignment. The next morning I was on a plane for Vienna. So, I arrived in Vienna the end of October, a week after the Hungarian uprising had begun. There I was in Vienna without any training as a journalist covering what at that time was the story of the century.

The first thing I had to do was overcome the language barrier. There were Hungarians galore, as you can imagine, flooding into Vienna who were put into makeshift camps around Vienna. I began visiting these camps to find out what was going on in Hungary and got myself a young guy who spoke English. Working for a weekly newspaper meant I didn't have to do a daily story which was to my advantage. I decided the thing I could do in that interval was to find out what had actually happened in Budapest. The people writing the daily stories were keeping track of events as they unfolded. I felt with my background and having the time and access to these people who had come out of Budapest, that I could put together a retrospective of how the thing had developed. This I did and it was my first article called "The October Days." It happened to coincide with the timing of the Russian Revolution. One of Lenin's famous essays was "The October Days," because when the Bolsheviks took power it was October. I used that title for this thing ironically because October saw the collapse of the Communist system in Hungary. It was a sensation because no one had written how the workers got together and how spontaneous organizations grew up.

Q: How were you able to piece that together?

SHERMAN: I pieced it together through conversations with various people who had taken part in the activities.

Q: In a week?

SHERMAN: Yes. It wasn't as difficult as it sounds because these people were in camps all over Austria.

The other memorable experience from that period arose from my expectation when I was going to go into Budapest. This was all marking time because I wanted to go into Budapest. You remember the Russians withdrew from Budapest in early November, and everyone thought Moscow was going to try to work with Nagy. Instead the withdrawal was preparatory for their organizing their intervention in a big way. They came back with tanks and force on November 4. That was the day that I was planning to go into Budapest, in fact I was in Andau, a crossing point... James Michener wrote a book called, "The Bridge at Andau" about the Hungarian refugees flooding into Austria. I saw first hand this flood of people crossing the border day and night. It is an artificial border in the sense it is a big plain. All the watchtowers were down and people were just flooding across. So, instead of going into Hungary, a group of us went up and down the border collecting people and taking them back to the various collection points. It was the first time I had driven a Volkswagen and I didn't know how to put it into reverse and no one in the car knew how to put it into reverse. I remember going along dirt roads to the border and not being able to go into reverse so we had to make large arcs to turn around.

From there the career in journalism began. Without going into the ups and downs, my lack of training in journalism came out after that initial story and I had a hard time. I

didn't have any news sense at that time, I hadn't developed it. So, after the initial weeks there I went back to London and did the training that I was supposed to do in the first place.

I stayed on the Observer until April, 1960 and then went back to the States arriving during the period of the rise of John F. Kennedy. I was determined to get into American journalism, so the Observer sent me back to Washington in April, 1960. In between the Hungarian revolution, (November, 1956) and April, 1960, I did a variety of things covering Eastern Europe. I covered the famous kitchen debate between Khrushchev and Nixon. It isn't generally remembered that that kitchen debate went on in two stages. The world only remembers the second stage when Nixon put it to Khrushchev. But, in fact, what happened was that...this was the Eisenhower Administration's effort to have some basis of working with Khrushchev. Nixon started out that visit, that was to the American pavilion at the trade fair there, being very diplomatic. The first thing they visited, I seem to recall was a television studio that they had set up. Nixon said that this was our latest technology in very friendly and gentlemanly terms, but Khrushchev didn't let him get the words out of his mouth saying that they had far superior equipment here and had had so for years. Khrushchev had the "Who invented ice cream?" kind of approach and was insistent that everything new had been invented by the Russians. Anyway, lined around the studio where this exchange was taking place, was the world press and you could see Nixon getting more and more uncomfortable because Khrushchev was taking the initiative and getting the best of him. Nixon could see the headlines that would grow out of this. They moved down to the kitchen where Nixon took the offensive and that is the part the world remembers.

Q: What did they debate in the kitchen?

SHERMAN: Well, it started with the equipment, but covered the whole world. I mean, all the differences between the United States and the Soviet Union. In that sense it was far more newsworthy because it dealt with issues which brought out the real differences. The prelude was over the equipment and technology.

I also traveled widely in the Soviet Union during that period as well as in Eastern Europe. But, in a sense, in my mind, that career, that assignment, that time with the Observer was anticlimactic after the beginning with the Hungarian Revolution, because nothing matched that in terms of a news story.

Coming back to Washington my timing was perfect because it was the end of the Eisenhower era and the country was ready for a change. It was the beginning of the emergence of John F. Kennedy who was of my generation and I picked up the enthusiasm that we all had at that time for him and for what he stood for (or for what we thought he stood for). I often thought that with his emergence and his death our generation was cheated really because we came to the fore with him and the assassination and what followed, Johnson and Vietnam, etc., was down hill. Not that he, Kennedy, in retrospect, had a lot to do with that.

I worked with the Observer during that year, 1960, covering various foreign affairs things. I had my first contact with Latin America, beginning Christmas 1959 and then in 1960, Castro came to power in Cuba and during 1960 I made three different visits to Cuba for the Observer and the Reporter magazine.

So, I really covered the emergence of Communism in Cuba. You may recall that at that time there was a great deal of controversy over whether Castro was or was not a Communist. I saw firsthand things that were happening in Cuba and was involved in that debate writing various articles in the New Republic at that time documenting what he was doing in the countryside...collectivization of agriculture...and what he was doing to the middle class.

Q: How did it work that you could write for the Observer and also for other journals?

SHERMAN: I would get permission and they were perfectly amicable to it. In fact, it is an advantage to them to get their name known. The blurb covering the articles stated that I worked for the Observer.

Q: Did they see your articles before you submitted them?

SHERMAN: No, those articles had nothing to do with the Observer.

Q: But you collected material on their time.

SHERMAN: That is right.

Q: And they were paying your salary.

SHERMAN: Yes, you are right. In fact....

Q: The others were weeklies too.

SHERMAN: But, not in competition with the English, different markets.

Q: Did the American magazines pay you anything?

SHERMAN: Once the Reporter magazine asked me to go somewhere and they paid for the trip and the Observer piggybacked. In fact, I was in Havana when the oil embargo was imposed. I can't remember whether it was the last gesture of the Eisenhower Administration or the first gesture of the Kennedy Administration. It happened on a Friday so it was a perfect story for a Sunday newspaper. We had a big headline story, just because I happened to be there when the oil embargo was put on. I think it was one of the first things of the Kennedy Administration, setting the tone of things.

During this period I was also at the famous UN General Assembly when Khrushchev banged his shoe on the table. That was the general assembly when all of the leaders of the world were there, Tito, Sukarno, Nasser, etc., and I was assigned to cover Khrushchev.

Q: When did you leave the Observer?

SHERMAN: I went to work for the Washington Star in February, 1961.

Q: Why did you leave the Observer?

SHERMAN: Because my intention was to go into American journalism.

For a very brief time the Star put me on their national staff. I was covering regulatory agencies because one of the things about the Kennedy Administration when they came in they wanted to remake the whole regulatory system. But that lasted really only about a month because revolutions had begun breaking out all over Latin America and the Star had no one to cover the area and asked me to be their Latin America correspondent.

Q: What was it like shifting from the Observer to the Star?

SHERMAN: The big change was going from weekly journalism to daily journalism, which I rather welcomed because one of the frustrating things on the Observer was my feeling that my life was being measured in weeks. The high point would be writing the story on Friday, which would be an analytical, thoughtful weekly journalism thing. Anything that happened on Saturday would be regular news. Sunday and Monday were days off. Tuesday there was not much pressure although you began thinking about what you were going to do and things built up to a peak by Friday. That cycle didn't really appeal to me very much. On a daily paper you are always on call and always doing things.

The Star at that time was taking a different tack. They wanted more analytical stuff, as newspapers were dealing with the growing competition of television news. The move towards making the written press more thoughtful, giving the total picture, which couldn't be put on television, was beginning. So, I was fortunate coming into the Star at that time covering foreign affairs. They wanted the more in depth stuff rather than spot news reporting.

Q: How many people did the Star have covering foreign affairs?

SHERMAN: We had a diplomatic correspondent covering the State Department, and myself, covering Latin America, a European correspondent based in Paris, and an Asian correspondent -- four.

Beginning in February/March, 1961, I spent full time on Latin American affairs. I was based in Washington, but spent six months of the year intermittently traveling in Latin America. That was the period of the Alliance for Progress. I covered both Punta del Este

conferences. The first one established the Alliance for Progress and the second one was the political side when they wrote Castro and Cuba out of the hemisphere organization, the OAS.

Q: What do you remember about those meetings?

SHERMAN: Well, Che Guevara was the Cuban delegate to the first Punta del Este conference and he really was the focal point at this first meeting.

Q: Who headed up the US delegation?

SHERMAN: Dillon, Douglas Dillon.

Q: Secretary of the Treasury.

SHERMAN: Right. He had with him advisors who knew nothing about Latin America. Arthur Schlesinger was there and Richard Goodwin, a speech writer basically in Kennedy's entourage.

At this meeting, Guevara called the tune. Everything revolved around him in the sense that everything he wanted the United States automatically opposed. Our whole campaign was to isolate him, because all of the Latins at this conference were under tremendous pressure being exerted by the appeal of the Castro revolution.

Q: Was this before or after the Bay of Pigs?

SHERMAN: After the Bay of Pigs.

Q: Did you cover the Bay of Pigs?

SHERMAN: No. That was in April, 1961 and I had not shifted over to Latin American affairs but it was one of the contributing factors to my doing so afterwards. During that time and subsequently I became very close friends with Tad Szulc of the New York Times. He was the correspondent who knew all about this and whose story was suppressed by the New York Times at the behest of the Kennedy Administration. That incident had a fantastic impact how the press treated stories of national security issues. If that article had been publicized we possibly wouldn't have had the disaster of the incident of the Bay of Pigs. Subsequently, when administrations went to the press about suppressing this, that or the other story, particularly about Vietnam for instance...

I have been thinking about the Bay of Pigs. I did go to Miami, for instance, to try to piece together the story. So, I started reporting Latin American affairs just after the Bay of Pigs, around April.

Q: What was your impression of US policy at the time? Was it really all driven by

Castro? Was the Alliance for Progress an alliance in the Western Hemisphere against Communist promoting economic development in a different way?

SHERMAN: Right. The United States was in an extremely difficult position. Castro brought out the basic weakness of our position in the hemisphere as the Yankee Goliath which had dictated to these countries for years because of the power of our economy, but not really coming from Latin America. The power of the United States was in its economic position in the hemisphere and it was basically the imperialist. It had changed but the image was of a Goliath up North who paid absolutely no attention to Latin America except insofar as it could support the U.S. economically. It was the image of United Fruit in Guatemala, for instance, which by the time Castro had come along was beginning to change and had to change substantially, but the image was there. Castro, of course, played on this latent animosity in Latin America towards the United States.

At the same time the rise of popular democracy was taking place in Latin America with the decline of the traditional dictator. So, Castro was positioned to take advantage for his own purposes of this very fast moving situation in Latin America. We were up against it. We were saying that the past is over and we want to build a new relationship with you in Latin America, taking advantage of the rising middle class. The class was also up against it because they were prone to the emotionalism that goes with new nationalism. The tradition of military dictatorships in Latin America was still alive, and the military, itself, was changing. You had the younger military officers that were overthrowing civilian government and in traditional terms it looked like it was a standard kind of military takeover. In fact, the military at that time were falling prey to the new forces that were emerging in Latin America. Sons of the middle class were among these officers and were taking over not for the traditional reason of trying to milk the country. They were spurred on by wanting to cleanse the old system and set up a new Peru, or a new Argentina or new Chile.

So, the Kennedy Administration had to deal with this because there was a "no-no" of military takeovers as we were all for developing democracies. The rationale of the Alliance for Progress was that if you gave aid to the emerging middle class, which was supporting the forces of democracy, that would help stabilize the country. But this was a long-term effort.

Q: Whose idea was this?

SHERMAN: Arthur Schlesinger actually.

Q: Schlesinger was the author?

SHERMAN: Schlesinger had a large input into the ideology; it was right down his street. Progress was probably one of the most important words in his vocabulary, going back to the New Deal. It was very much of a kind of New Deal program, anyway.

But, while they were trying to develop the framework of cooperation, coup d'etats were going on all over the place in Latin America. That was one of the fascinating aspects of covering Latin America. Every time I turned around there was a government being overthrown. The administration, like the press, had a difficult time going beyond ideological preferences to dealing with reality. In other words, if a military group takes over a government, in the American lexicon, we should be anti-that government. In fact, often times it stood for the anti-Castro forces which we obviously agreed with in principle, and represented parts of the emerging middle class in wanting to get rid of the corrupt old generals, but not doing it in a democratic way but through a dictatorship. So, what do you do with that situation. They opted quite naturally to at least tolerating these governments because they had no alternative, but tolerating them in terms of trying to push them back to democracy.

One of the problems I had dealing with the administration was that a lot of people like the Goodwins and the Schlesingers had blinkers on when it came to the question of the Latin American militaries. Military taking power was just a "no-no." Brazil was our key problem. During this problem we more and more focused on the ABCs of Latin America -- Argentina, Brazil and Chile. Brazil, particularly, was very nationalistic and very resistant to condemning Castro, quite rightly seeing that Castro was a good lever for them to use in dealing with the United States. Brazil was going through a very difficult time. That was the period of Joao Goulart who succeeded to the presidency from the vice presidency. His predecessor, Quadros, was forced out by the military, and instead of taking over they put Goulart in. This happened just after the first Punta del Este conference. I was doing my orientation tour of Latin America and was in Peru or Bolivia when word came that Quadros had been forced out. I had to immediately go to Brazil. My instinctive reaction was that it would be easy enough to fly over the Andes from Lima into Rio de Janeiro. However, I soon discovered there were no direct connections and had to fly south to Buenos Aires and up the other side, which was an all night trip. By the time I got there everything was over and Goulart was installed. He was a very weak, indecisive leader and was put there by the military for that reason. This was the government the Kennedy Administration had to work with and was fighting against the Castro influence in Brazil. I think the tendency was to exaggerate the amount of influence Castro had. Brazilians are all absorbed with themselves and quite rightly they considered themselves the United States of Latin America. They are the largest country, the richest, the most dynamic...fascinating country, the contrast between Sao Paulo, say, and Recife in the northeast. Sao Paulo is a Chicago. I was absolutely amazed and couldn't believe when I went to Sao Paulo for the first time -- the skyscrapers, the dynamism of that city. It is a metropolis. And then you go to Recife in the north, a thousand miles or more. There you have a developing country in every sense of the word. It is rundown, peasants, dirt everywhere. And yet, people are friendly, and part of the same country, but in different stages of development. That was the period when Brazil was turning inward to try to develop the northeast. There was a big fight going on because the forces of the status quo, which ruled the country, were divided about putting money into the northeast.

And, then there was the problem of Mexico, which is a perennial problem. Anything the

United States wanted to do was automatically suspect. I don't mean there wasn't a certain genuineness in their attitudes towards Cuba. They obviously looked at Cuba in national revolutionary terms the way they looked at their own revolution. As the Cuba revolution, in their eyes, was opposed by the United States, just as we had opposed the Mexican revolution. So, there was kind of a natural affinity, I thought, between Mexico and Cuba as far as radical social change was concerned and the role that they saw the United States playing.

Q: What was your impression of the State Department at this time? Who did you deal with in the government during the Kennedy Administration?

SHERMAN: In the Kennedy Administration...Goodwin transferred to the State Department...I can't remember who was assistant secretary then. I will have to look back...

Q: Tom Mann came on the job...

SHERMAN: Yes, and I was briefly covering Latin America when he was there. When Johnson came in the first crisis he had was when the government was overthrown in Panama and they were threatening to takeover the Canal. He put in the forces.

Q: Going back to the Kennedy Administration, what was your impression of the State Department at that time?

SHERMAN: Woodward was the Assistant Secretary, but my impression generally was that the professionals in the State Department did not play so strong a role as the political side in the White House. Goodwin sticks in my mind as a key force, but he was only Deputy.

I had certain relations with the Agency, although I didn't know it at the time. It shows how naive I was. When they did move to get rid of Goulart in Rio it was an open secret that things were going on and I remember going to the agricultural attaché who was a good source. Obviously he was Agency, but I didn't know it, although I knew he knew what was going on in Rio circles. I went to see him and he as much as told me that Goulart was going to be out the next day. I didn't use the information.

Q: Was the Embassy helpful?

SHERMAN: Yes. There was the ambassador in Bolivia, an old labor leader, Ben Stephansky, who was very good. He was a classic liberal and in a sense was wasted in La Paz. Well, there was a revolutionary situation in La Paz like everywhere else. The government was an elected government hanging on by its fingernails. The ambassador in Rio was good too. I was impressed by the caliber of the ambassadors in Latin America. As I recall there were a lot of professionals there, but even the political ones had some knowledge of...

Q: What did you usually do when you hit a country?

SHERMAN: I would make contact with the press attaché and have him get me briefings with the political officers, etc. As you go along you make your own contacts. Some press attachés were lasting sources and others I figured weren't that useful so I would go directly to the political officer.

I haven't thought about this for years. The ambassador to Chile was good too. Who was he?

Q: It wasn't Nat Davis was it?

SHERMAN: Oh, Nat was a friend from before Latin America and he was put into a number of different posts. In fact, he also was Assistant Secretary for Africa and Director General of the Foreign Service. Nat was also in Guatemala where I saw him.

The other thing that I covered was the beginning of the Peace Corps under the Kennedy Administration and one of its initial operations was Latin America. Frank Mankiewicz was head of the Peace Corps in Lima, Peru. He was very good. With his help I went and looked at the operation in one of the northern industrial towns of Peru, which was a dreadful place...Chachapoyas comes to mind. The Peace Corps operation there was demoralized. It was the first one and they had just begun. During that period you got a lot of young, enthusiastic kids who didn't know what they were getting into. It was a learning experience for the Peace Corps and for the people in the Peace Corps. Of course, I, as a journalist went and spent a day with these people talking to them and looking over the situation. I wrote an article which really panned the Peace Corps. The next time I saw Mankiewicz he was distinctly cold because of that article. The Peace Corps had just begun and people didn't know whether it was going to work or not and that article was widely read in the administration and congress. Mankiewicz got a lot of flak on it and was quite upset with me. At this time I was beginning to understand as a journalist the amount of power that the Washington based press exerts. I saw it full force when I joined the government and had to deal with the press from the government side. But I began to understand that when I was a journalist. I saw the way people reacted to stories that I wrote. I saw the games that went on between congress and the administration and within the administration between various parts that would use the press, or they thought they were using the press.

During that period in Latin America I think I spent most of my time in Argentina because that was the period of Frondizi there and he was eventually thrown out and the military came back. This was the merger of the Castro and neo-Peronists threats. What people didn't understand in Washington when they talked about the influence of Castro in Latin America was that Washington exaggerated Castro's influence. You get to Latin America and you are in Buenos Aires, which is a huge city...Argentina is a thriving society, thousands of miles away from the United States and from Cuba...so the influence of

Castro, what did he have that he could exert thousands of miles away from this island? There wasn't a fifth column in the sense of the German Bund before the war, but it was the image. The idea that he was putting it to the Goliath and exerting his independence had played into Argentine and all the other nationalisms that were emerging in Latin America. We had a knee jerk reaction in Washington that everything that happened in Latin America was done by or for Fidel Castro, and it wasn't true. But, forces down there were perfectly willing to let the United States go on thinking that because it was their way of promoting their own importance. Insofar as we thought Castro was doing something that was going to hurt the United States, we would take more interest in that country. This was their chief lever in getting aid and everything else out of the United States.

Well, I covered Latin America from April, 1961 to May, 1964.

Q: That was the beginning of the Johnson Administration.

SHERMAN: Right.

Q: Was there any change?

SHERMAN: I wasn't around long enough to see it, but there was. Things had evolved in the Kennedy Administration, which took a much more realistic view of what was happening in Latin America, that a military regime didn't necessarily represent a setback for progress providing it was going to be temporary. That sort of conclusion had been reached in the latter months of the Kennedy Administration, and with the coming of Thomas Mann, who was an intensely practical and rather conservative type. There was great moaning among the liberals that he was going to be a setback for our policy in Latin America with reversion to earlier days, which didn't happen. He was really in the Johnson image. Johnson wasn't really ideological; it was what worked that he supported.

The only thing that I remember covering under Johnson was the Panama riots. There were real riots in Panama. It was the first time in Latin America that I was in the middle of a riot and it was scary. We were in a car and besieged by people with sticks, etc., but it turned out it wasn't as bad as it could have been. As I recall Johnson reinforced forces in the Canal Zone. I flew down with Tom Mann and a negotiator. It was the first demonstration of the Johnson techniques in foreign affairs. I think it was his first foreign crisis, as a matter of fact. It was in January, 1964.

Q: What was his technique?

SHERMAN: Oh, be reasonable and talk and talk and talk and talk. It was dealing with the Peruvian president who had to deal with the nationalists forces who were pushing for changes in the Canal Treaty. I think that was the beginning of the renegotiation of the Canal Zone. If not, the riots were certainly an indication that things needed changing in the Canal situation. In any case we had to reach some agreement with the president there, who was acting under pressure from nationalist forces.

In May, 1964 I took over the European assignment for the Star and was based in London. It was not the most felicitous time to go to Europe and not the most rewarding assignment that I have had in my life. In fact, overall, it was not a success. There were several reasons. We arrived at the beginning of June, 1964 and I was there until February, 1967, so I was there almost three years. It was the first time in my life that I experienced culture shock. Having lived and worked in London and gone to school in Oxford, I thought that I knew the country inside and out. I didn't realize there would be a difference going back as an American correspondent as opposed to working in London as an English correspondent. I went back and discovered I was an outsider.

Q: You were also on your own.

SHERMAN: Yes, I was on my own, which was a very important thing. There was no support system there. I was working for a newspaper that was not particularly well-known in London. And, I was charged with covering the whole of Europe, not to mention Africa.

Q: You must have been on the road a lot.

SHERMAN: I was on the road a lot. In the larger scheme of things it was a period when almost total American absorption was with the other side of the world, namely, Vietnam. So, during those worse days of the Vietnam period, I was sitting in Europe not able to get the attention of my editors or readers, because they just weren't interested in things European.

Q: How did you decide on what to follow or when to travel?

SHERMAN: You fasten on personalities and stories that were already going. De Gaulle was the big story so I spent a lot of time in France covering his press conferences. During this period he announced France's exit from NATO and I covered that. It was also the period when Labour came back to power under Wilson as prime minister, after being out for about ten years. I covered that. And then the major story I covered was in Africa with the Rhodesian break with Britain. I spent a couple of months in Rhodesia. This was my one and only visit to Africa, which was fascinating. Rhodesia was not a good example of the emergence of African nationalism because the white society in Rhodesia tended to be dominant. The black African society was divided and relatively passive. The tribes had been conquered by the Zulus and pushed out of South Africa, so they were quite passive with a divided leadership. Ian Smith, who was the leader of the white settlers, really had a fairly easy time dealing with the British, who were left as the voice for black Africans in the local government. The white society in Rhodesia was quite interesting. The rule of thumb in looking at former British colonies in Africa was that the elite white military and colonial service was centered in Kenya which had the better climate and more appeal; and the non-commissioned officers and the lower rankings in the colonial civil service went to Rhodesia. The attitudes showed in their dealings with black Africans. They were roughly equivalent to what we would refer to as lower middle class in the United States,

so it was much less sophisticated.

I was there for two months while the British were struggling to bring Ian Smith back into the British fold.

Q: Did we play much of a role in this?

SHERMAN: No, we did not. In fact, I don't even recall that the United States was represented in Salisbury or not. If we did, I had no contact that I recall with them.

Anyway, it was not representative of a nationalist independence struggle in Africa. It dragged on for years before it was finally resolved and did become more violent and in the process national black leadership emerged. But at that point in time it was not all that visible.

Q: Did you travel to French Africa at all?

SHERMAN: No, I did not. I went to Rhodesia and made one quick trip to Zambia, basically to visit the Victoria Falls. I visited a journalist friend in Nairobi on the way out. That was my southern Africa experience. Of course, later on I spent a good deal of my career in northern Africa...Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, etc.

Q: What was your impressions of our embassies in countries you dealt with in Europe?

SHERMAN: A good impression. I have to say, as a journalist, I did not consider, or cultivate, in the news-way, officials of the American government. Maybe it was a mistake, but I felt that I was more interested in what was going on in society rather than reporting on our government's views and relationships. The stories I had to cover did not deal all that much with diplomatic relations. Of course, when I had to cover a story that dealt with inter-government relations, I found the American embassies very helpful. Particularly in Paris where a real weakness of my coverage stories was the lack of language. As you know, French is really to be desired when dealing with the French.

Q: Did you have to use an interpreter?

SHERMAN: The press attaché at the American Embassy who became a very good friend, Nick King, was very helpful. After a press conference with De Gaulle, he would sit with me and go over it in detail, and without that I would not have been able to cover it. So, I was very appreciative. And, there were people in the Quai d'Orsay whom I dealt with, French officials, who were fluent in English. I was very grateful for that as well. And, of course, beginning even in that period, although the French would deny it probably or regret it, English was spreading and you did find a number of people who could and would speak English. I never really felt comfortable covering France because of the language.

Q: You wouldn't have had that problem with the Germans.

SHERMAN: No, and I had more German than French. I had studied German in college and graduate school for my work on the Soviet policy in Germany. And, I also knew more about Germany. During this period I spent a good deal of time in Berlin.

Q: Not a lot was happening. You had Adenauer leaving and Erhard coming in. I got to Germany in 1966. It was not a dynamite tour at that time.

SHERMAN: Particularly when you put it against what was happening in Vietnam.

Q: And then in 1967-68...if you had been in Europe in 1968- the riots?

SHERMAN: Right, against De Gaulle. It was very frustrating and I really felt a bust.

Q: Really?

SHERMAN: Yes, because I couldn't get my hands on anything that was rewarding, that could get the attention of people. I felt out of it. You know, a journalist who is not covering the main story just feels frustrated.

Q: Did the Star have the system where you filed a story idea?

SHERMAN: No, they left it to me.

Q: Then, they must have used everything you wrote.

SHERMAN: That was the other thing. Being a one man bureau, I didn't have detailed supervision from Washington. Most people don't want it, but I would have appreciated more feedback and more ideas from Washington, but they, like everyone else, were absorbed with the Vietnam story.

So, I went back to Washington to the home office in February, 1967 and the question then became what would I cover. They had someone covering the State Department.

Q: Who was that?

SHERMAN: Bernie Gwertzman, a very capable correspondent. So, I was given the job handling stories outside the main story, Vietnam and everything connected with it. That boiled down to the Middle East, the UN and one episode of the rise of French nationalism in Canada.

Q: Was that when De Gaulle went up there?

SHERMAN: Yes, I was in Montreal when he made his famous statement about Quebec is

French which set the Canadians off, as it was supposed to do. It was at EXPO '67. I must say without sounding too boastful, that I was the first journalist in Washington who wrote and publicized the emergence of Rene Levesque and the whole Quebecois independence movement. That was the reason I was with De Gaulle. He had already said some things before he went that indicated he was going to cater to Quebec nationalism.

But that basically was a sideshow. What did develop would set my future career, now that I look at it. I was covering the Middle East when the Six Day War came. I didn't go out to the area, but I was at the UN and covered it from the Washington angle. That started me on the Middle East. Beginning then I traveled to the Middle East and went around periodically. That was the beginning of my contact with the Israeli-Arab conflict, which, of course, became the main thread of my professional life thereafter.

Anyway, I was with the Star until 1974. Coming back from Europe in 1967 I began to understand that I had missed the whole evolution of public attitudes towards the Vietnam War and I was very much struck by how emotional the whole thing had become. Every segment of Washington society, indeed, national society, was taken up with this argument about what we should be doing in Vietnam, increasingly. I didn't leave the Star until May, 1974, so that is seven years. Johnson bows out of the 1968 elections and Nixon is elected. Around about the beginning of the Nixon Administration, Gwertzman left the Star and went to work for the New York Times, so I took over the State Department beat and became the State Department correspondent. That made me automatically responsible for the coverage of Vietnam.

As State Department correspondent I began dealing with Henry Kissinger, who was in the NSC running American foreign policy. I increasingly dealt with the White House, the NSC, Kissinger and Ron Ziegler, and people on the Kissinger staff dealing with Vietnam. On the issues dealing with the Middle East I was dealing with Joe Sisco, who was Assistant Secretary for NEA and later became Under Secretary for Political Affairs. Sisco was a dynamo and fiery, a terrific operator.

My first dealings with Sisco was when he was Assistant Secretary for International Organizations covering the UN. I went up to New York with him once and he was terrific with the press. He was a real wheeler-dealer.

Q: He was probably a good source for you.

SHERMAN: Yes, he was a terrific source, but also one who didn't hesitate to call immediately if he saw something about his area that was wrong or embarrassed him. I remember once some story about dealing with the Israeli-Arab situation was breaking one morning and one of the popular restaurants in Washington at that time, French, was on the corner of M St. and Wisconsin. I happened to have a luncheon engagement there and Sisco and the Israeli Ambassador were at the restaurant and I overheard them say something about the developing story. I had time to get into the last edition and I telephoned in the information.

I am the first to admit this was irresponsible because I tied Sisco and the Ambassador to the story and it became the lead. I hadn't been back in the office five minutes when the telephone rang and it was Sisco. He laid me out in lavender. His choice of language was very picturesque. He claimed he would never trust me again, etc. That lasted until the next story. I really liked him and subsequently became quite close to him. When he became Under Secretary for Political Affairs he had no dedicated press person like the various Assistant Secretaries have. Consequently, when I joined the State Department it was natural that I would gravitate to him as Under Secretary and I became his spokesman, which was perfect for me as a newcomer to the Department. I had absolute, easy access to the Under Secretary for Political Affairs. So we had a kind of special relationship.

At this time, when I was a journalist, as the Nixon Administration developed, 1969-72, I dealt with Kissinger and...

Q: Did you cover the Bangladesh crisis?

SHERMAN: Yes, including sending a Navy Task Force headed by the USS Enterprise into the Bay of Bengal.

Until the Jack Anderson column published a leaked document claiming that President Nixon wanted to tilt toward Pakistan in the Indo-Pak war that really wasn't a major story on our radar screen. But, when the Anderson column came up, which set off Kissinger, of course...that was when it was revealed that the chief of naval operations was spying on the White House...I think that was tied up...

Q: Yeah, it was the Navy yeoman, Charles Radford reporting to Admiral Moorer, the head of the JCS, and who also slipped materials to Jack Anderson. I think the yeoman got shipped off to somewhere.

SHERMAN: The Bangladesh incident was when?

Q: December, 1971. You are right, in South Asian terms it was a big story, but in the US it sort of got lost.

SHERMAN: But I did cover Mrs. Gandhi's visit to Washington. I remember I went to the reception at the Indian Embassy and was impressed, as everyone was, with her charm. If she wanted to she could be Miss Charm. But, she didn't get anywhere. She and Nixon didn't get along, in fact. But, everything was subsidiary to Vietnam. It all came to a head, I suppose, with the Pentagon Papers.

Q: That was earlier.

SHERMAN: Well, no, the Pentagon Papers came in the middle of the Nixon Administration, in 1971. Of course, we, as other newspapers were taken back by this

scoop that the Washington Post and the New York Times had. Every paper was scrambling around to get a hold of these things. In the Star it brought out all the fissures that had developed regarding the reporting on the Vietnam and the Nixon Administration.

Q: The Star was a Republican paper.

SHERMAN: Right. Editorially we were supporting the Nixon approach. I, in the State Department, covering Nixon's policy, was reporting his policy as were so many of the papers Kissinger cultivated. He was my chief contact.

Q: Did you deal with him directly?

SHERMAN: Yes. Nancy would laugh. I would be home having dinner and the telephone would ring and it would be, "Yes, Henry," and "No, Henry." The kids would all know that Henry Kissinger was on the phone. He had a terrific knack of making every journalist he dealt with feel like they were something special. I eventually saw it from both sides. Once I went to work for him I saw the other side of Henry Kissinger. But he dealt more with the press than with the people who worked under him and he was entirely different. He was Mr. Charm when dealing with the press, but when he was dealing with his "colleagues" the Mr. Hyde personality came out. Anyway, I saw both of them which is why I know, but at this time I was dealing with Dr. Jekyll. To be fair, Kissinger streaks above anyone else intellectually. He talked in terms that made sense, if you took the construct of his way of thinking, of his approach.

Q: I think that, whatever it was called, "the state of the world", was really quite a remarkable...

SHERMAN: Yes. He was quite remarkable. What he said about the way to keep the bureaucracy at bay was to give the State Department things to do and keep it busy following up on things while the real work was done over in his shop...and everyone took that to mean when he became Secretary of State he was going to emasculate the State Department. Quite the contrary. I think he was probably the best Secretary of State that I dealt with on either side because he knew how to use people for his own purpose, to get things done.

Anyway, that was to come. At this time he was in the White House and the Pentagon Paper episode hit. Of course, we were charged with getting a copy of the Papers, which we did, and also reporting on the whole thing. It was a news story in itself with the Papers going to the Supreme Court and reporting on various things that were in the Papers. The Pentagon Papers was a huge essay on the whole emergence of the Vietnam issue and our involvement in it and insights from various points of view, many of them negative in terms of what actually happened. So journalism's proper conduct we figured was to tell the other side of this story as well, which wasn't being told totally by the Washington Post and the New York Times. For instance, Crosby Noyes, the diplomatic editor, and I, did an interview...

Q: Was he a member of the owner's family?

SHERMAN: Yes, he was a member of the family. We did an interview with George Ball, for instance, who was the house dove initially on Vietnam. We got his side of some of the episodes that were reported in the Pentagon Papers. It was a good interview. What I am saying is that the Star coming from where it was, basically a supporter of Nixon's Vietnam policy, came across as taking pot shots at what was being revealed in the Pentagon Papers and I, of course, as diplomatic correspondent was writing a number of these stories. So, as the fissures deepened inside the Star about Vietnam, my position became more and more difficult.

Q: Who was in opposition?

SHERMAN: Well, the editors on the desk, my immediate superiors. John Cassidy was the national news editor. Charlie Seeb was the managing editor. Burt Hoffman was deputy managing editor. They recognized my talents as a journalist, but they became more and more suspicious of my objectivity. In September, 1973, they decided that I should become the defense correspondence and there was a general shakeup in the handling of national security reporting. The object of the exercise was partly to get me out of the State Department. I was moved to the Defense Department against my will. I felt if I was a journalist, I should be able to cover anything.

As happenstance would have it, in October, 1973, after I had been at the Defense Department for two weeks, the war in the Middle East broke out. I covered that from both the Defense Department and the State Department because they didn't have anyone in the State Department. I also had to make a decision because I was assigned to the Defense Department and that was it. I remember one story I wrote and flubbed because of my newness to the Defense Department. I had a contact in the office of the Secretary of Defense, a very good contact. During the crisis the Americans and Russians were choosing up sides and it was not clear what the Russians were going to do. The Defense Department's surveillance devices saw that the Russians had stopped flying into Cairo and I had that story first, but the guy who told me didn't give me the proper interpretation which was that they were preparing to do something. I reported just that they had stopped, but days later something happened. As it turned out they in fact made some moves to give the Egyptians military support. No one remembers, because that is the way it is in the newspaper business, but I remembered. It demonstrated to me that I didn't know anything about military stuff, nor was I particularly interested.

During this period I had to decide whether I was more interested in foreign affairs or journalism. If I was more interested in journalism than I should just persevere or find another job in journalism covering foreign affairs. I half heartedly looked into this. At one point I could go to Moscow for Newsweek maybe, but I had a family of four by now and the living conditions were not the greatest there. Reporter magazine was another possibility, but that went bankrupt. So, I decided that I was more interested in foreign

affairs. The next conclusion I came to was, since the paper was saying I was too close to Kissinger, who had become Secretary of State by now, why shouldn't I see if I could get a job with him. I didn't have the jaundiced view of Henry Kissinger that others had. Anyway, I went to talk with Bob McCloskey, who was the overlord in terms of public affairs in the State Department at that time. A terrific guy and very much a chief lieutenant of Henry Kissinger.

Q: Even though he had worked for Rogers?

SHERMAN: Yes. That was a remarkable thing about Kissinger. He saw talent. Although McCloskey had worked for Rogers and was therefore involved in the intramural warfare between NSC and the State Department, once Kissinger came over to the State Department he saw McCloskey's talent and increased his power rather than reduced it. McCloskey immediately said that they were looking for a public affairs advisor in the NEA [Bureau of Near East and South Asian Affairs] area and saw the possibility that I could do it. He said he would talk to Kissinger about it. I will never forget. Abba Eban was visiting Washington, March, 1974. I was at a reception. Rabin was the Ambassador and he gave a dinner to which I was invited, and Kissinger came in and was going around greeting people. He came up to the group that I was in and said, "You had better be nice to me, I have just given you a job." He didn't say it very loudly, fortunately. It turned out that I was the last direct hire in the State Department under the FSR (Foreign Service Reserve] program because they did away with that program soon after. I was taken in because of my specialty in information. So, in May, 1974 I went to work in NEA. Roy Atherton was Assistant Secretary and by this time Sisco had become the Under Secretary.

Q: We are now to the point where George has entered the State Department to become the public affairs advisor in the Bureau of Near East and South Asian Affairs. As George indicated earlier he came on board through Henry Kissinger, but specifically to deal with the Middle East negotiations.

SHERMAN: I came into the State Department on May 31, 1974, through the decision of Henry Kissinger. I went into the Bureau of Near East and South Asian Affairs as public affairs advisor. During the next seven years of my tenure in that position, I concentrated 90 percent of my time on Middle East crises and peace negotiations. When I arrived, a new peace process, embarked on through President Sadat's change in position after the Seven Day War, under Henry Kissinger's auspices, had been launched. I did not go on any of the shuttle missions with Kissinger, but I dealt with those negotiations from the Washington side and the press handling.

Increasingly, during 1974, the Watergate crisis came front and center and overshadowed everything we were doing, particularly as it impinged on Henry Kissinger's standing as being associated with the Nixon White House. The peace process continued under Ford with Kissinger in charge and the disengagement agreements were made in two stages, as I recall. There was the first disengagement and the second disengagement. These agreements in essence set the stage for the major move toward a full fledged peace treaty

between Egypt and Israel which came into being under the Carter Administration in March 1979.

But, going back to the initial period, the end of the Nixon Administration and the short Ford Administration, the press operation was, of course, overseen by Henry Kissinger as Secretary of State. Working under him really in charge of the day-to-day and the policy towards the press was Bob McCloskey, who became the Counselor in the Department. The focus of the work each day was preparing for the noon briefing.

Q: Explain the noon briefing.

SHERMAN: A news briefing is given each day at noon by the Department spokesman, who during that period was first Bob Anderson and then Bob Funseth. They would make themselves available in the press briefing room to try to answer any and all questions about a whole range of foreign policy issues. Kissinger never believed in these daily briefings as a way of making major news. He preferred to make news through his own choice of correspondents he would talk to individually. This was a key frustration of anyone working with the press because they had to contend with news stories coming out. People who should know didn't know where they were coming from or often times the facts, because they had been given to the press by Henry Kissinger.

One time I particularly remember was the firing of our ambassador to Saudi Arabia. He was the first one who analyzed the growing oil crisis.

Q: Oh, Jim Akins.

SHERMAN: Yes. He was an oil specialist. He was at odds with Henry Kissinger over how he should deal with the Arab world and the oil crisis which was left over from the 1973 war. It lasted several months, if not a year, beyond the end of that war and the Arab countries had joined together in support of Egypt and launched the embargo. Henry Kissinger's main aim was to remove the oil embargo and tie the Arabs to the support of the on-going peace process.

Q: What was the issue with Akins?

SHERMAN: I don't remember the particular issue, but Akins was outspoken and had said something that appeared in public that Kissinger was not in favor of; it was negative. In any case, Joe Kraft had a column stating that Akins was going to be relieved of his post and no one had heard anything about it. I remember being in Kissinger's outer office when Bob McCloskey was in talking to him about what we should say and the astonishment of everyone in the bureaucracy when the word came back that we were not to deny the story. An example of how Henry Kissinger worked with the press.

Q: Did he have a stable of newsmen he used to use?

SHERMAN: Yes. Joe Kraft was one. He would pick and choose diplomatic correspondents often according to their newspapers...the New York Times, the Washington Post, and the Star, my old newspaper. He was quite close to Jerry O'Leary who became the State Department correspondent for the Washington Star. Murray Marder was the correspondent for the Washington Post at the time.

Q: Would he just call them in off the record?

SHERMAN: Or, by the telephone. He used the telephone. Television correspondents also had special access to him. Marvin Kalb with CBS, Dick Valeriani of NBC, Ted Koppel with ABC. Those three had special access to him. Anyone who dealt with Henry Kissinger or knew Henry Kissinger's approach to the press saw the Dr. Jekyll - Mr. Hyde makeup of his personality. With the press he was invariably charming and very informative and highly appealing in terms of his intellect, analysis, the way he put together facts to defend or attack whatever the issue was which always came out imminently reasonable. He was very attractive to the press and people who were specializing in foreign affairs, because he obviously knew what he was talking about and he had this kind of benign academic approach. But, to people who worked under him or with him, he was not always, and in fact not often, so affable. He was respected for his ability and skill, but he was highly frustrating to work for, because he didn't really give to his subordinates the same sort of openness that he seemed to have with the press.

I remember several times when I saw this Dr. Jekyll - Mr. Hyde side of his personality. As a member of the press I had experienced the Kissinger openness and he was a valuable source. Ss a subordinate, if he didn't want you to say anything on a particular issue, he just wouldn't answer questions. He would just ignore you and say "No comment," or "I don't have anything on that," the standard spokesman's reaction when he doesn't really want to talk about something or have anything to say about it. There were such occasions during the Mideast peace negotiations. Once I was there dealing with the White House spokesman on a Middle Eastern issue. There had been a meeting in which Kissinger and Nixon were involved. I was asked to talk to Kissinger and find out what we could say about this meeting. I grabbed him walking down the hall and he just refused to say anything to me at all. He said just to say I had nothing on the meeting. I said, "Well what about this question and that question?" And he said, "No, just say you don't have anything on it," and that is it.

Q: Did he do this politely?

SHERMAN: No, not very politely, at all. It was, "I told you what to say. Say it." Basically it came down to "I will handle it myself."

But over and above it all it would be incorrect to say that Kissinger was not highly regarded in the State Department. Despite his inaccessibility to people who were working several layers in the bureaucracy under him, and the way he played things close to his vest, he did attract considerable support and admiration from professionals because of his

ability to get things done. After all, success is in the eating of the pudding.

I was privy, I guess, to some of the things that went on surrounding his first major defeat in the Congress. This involved the Turkish-Greek blow-up over the arms embargo that we had against Turkey and Greece and which Kissinger proceeded to ignore in approving arms to Turkey. This was over the Cyprus crisis and during the first year of the Ford Administration, I think. Kissinger in his usual way did not consult with Congress and decided that, to keep Turkey on the reservation, he should go forward with a scheduled arms shipment that was in direct violation of a Congressional injunction that he was to consult...

Q: The whistle was blown by a lawyer in L who went to Brian Atwood. The reason I know this is because I wrote a paper on it. They caught Kissinger ostensibly violating the law a year after Watergate. That was the whole issue...deception continues in government. Even if it is in our foreign policy interests to do this, we cannot violate the law, etc.

SHERMAN: I think it showed that Kissinger had been suspected by so many people of being involved in the whole Watergate syndrome. They took this violation of the law as a further example of his mentality, that he really considered himself above the law.

We had to deal with the fallout of that and McCloskey was the main one dealing with it. On other issues Larry Eagleburger would become involved in explaining to the press a Kissinger position that had created controversy. On several occasions when it came to Middle Eastern affairs, I was called into Larry's office and we would go through a half hour, 45 minute dress rehearsal of what the press briefing would be like. I would throw at him all the hard questions that would likely come up and indeed some of them would subsequently come up. I was always amazed at my former colleagues who I would expect to ask some of these hard questions and didn't. Obviously that was one of the reasons I was brought into the State Department was to think like a journalist and be able to brief my new colleagues on possible questions that would be asked. Then I became more involved in formulating the possible answers that they should give to these questions. I now realize, of course, that the main aim of this was to not make waves. No State Department member, either at home or abroad, wants to be the subject of headlines, so our whole approach is to try to put out information truthfully but without creating waves.

Q: Was that Kissinger's approach?

SHERMAN: It is Kissinger's approach, but it is also the approach of anyone in authority. In the American government we are tied to the public. We have a responsibility to give the public information so they can form judgments about policy. At the same time one is obviously conducting that policy and wants to promote it. So, you always have that ambivalence about the information. You try to put out the information to support the policy if you are conducting it. Now the difficulties come when you may not agree with the policy and then comes the question of how to deal with leaks.

Q: Did you have any particular problems in the Middle East with leaks?

SHERMAN: Yes. The central problem we had in dealing with Middle East diplomacy was how it played out in domestic politics. You get into the Israeli lobby. The Israelis were and are extremely astute in using the Jewish-American community as a pressure group on the American government to create policy favorable to Israel. We spent an inordinate amount of time trying to figure out how to explain a policy which might immediately appear not to be in the interests of Israel, but in the long run would be in the interest of Israel because it would be another step towards settling the Arab-Israeli conflict. A major part of the public affairs operation in the State Department was giving briefings on our foreign policy to private groups that come to the State Department. Jewish groups were the main component of those briefings. My job was not only to organize them but to get the people from Roy Atherton, who was Assistant Secretary of NEA, down to the country director level, to participate and talk over how we should explain the policy.

During the early Kissinger period, Joe Sisco was Under Secretary. My impression was that Sisco was the only professional in the State Department who was a match for Henry Kissinger.

Q: Joe Sisco was a career civil servant who started in the International Organization Bureau, the UN Bureau, rose to be assistant secretary and then I assume because of his involvement in Middle East affairs in the UN Bureau was shifted over to become assistant secretary for the Near East. He stayed there, I believe, until 1973 and then was promoted up to become Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs. He later left the State Department to become head of the American University.

SHERMAN: Yes. I knew Sisco very well, first during the time I covered the State Department as a journalist and he was Assistant Secretary for International Organizations, and then later when he became Assistant Secretary for NEA. Then, when I joined the State Department, Roy Atherton was the Assistant Secretary and Joe had become the Under Secretary. The fact of the matter was that the Under Secretary did not have a press officer working for him. It was an anomaly in some regards because that Under Secretary oversees the operations of the geographic Bureaus especially and is in charge of deciding the policies, particularly if you have an active Under Secretary, which Sisco definitely was. One of his needs is to be in touch with the press and to be deciding how the press is going to be handled by the State Department. Anyway, from my previous acquaintance with him and through my operations in NEA once I became public affairs advisor, I became effectively his public affairs advisor as well since so much of his time was also spent on the Middle East peace negotiations, which naturally brought me in contact with him.

The reason I say he was a match for Henry Kissinger can be illustrated by one case in particular. Sisco wanted to become Under Secretary and was a prime candidate for it and was putting maximum pressure on Kissinger to make up his mind. Kissinger held off and

didn't make the decision, and didn't make the decision. Sisco leaked the story to the press that he was going to become the president of Hamilton College, New York. He did that specifically in order to force Kissinger to make a decision. And, of course, Kissinger pushed to the wall made the decision and Sisco was promoted and became Under Secretary.

Sisco had a hard time too because he was a transition figure from the Rogers Secretaryship to the Kissinger Secretaryship. Under Rogers, of course, the State Department was in charge of the Middle East policy because the White House during that period wasn't interested in the Middle East. It definitely took a back seat. I am talking now pre-1973 war. During that period from the 1967 war to the 1973 war you had the so-called cold peace in the Middle East. You had the war of attrition that was launched by the Egyptians against the Israeli occupation of the Sinai and the Suez Canal. During that period when you had no war, but no peace and no real openings to change the situation, Kissinger and Nixon pretty much left it up to the State Department to handle. Under that division of responsibility Rogers, with Joe Sisco as major architect, tried to bring the Israelis and Egyptians into some kind of negotiations and to reach a settlement that would lead to an Israeli withdrawal and a genuine peace. So, this was the period when the State Department was trying to engage the Russians in bringing pressure on the Egyptians as we were expected to bring pressure on the Israelis, to come to some sort of agreement in the Middle East. Sisco was the main operative there.

This also was a period when the United Nations was a possible player and that was probably how Sisco came into it because every time there was an increase in tension in the Middle East, the United Nations would be called into play to try to keep an all-out war from breaking out there.

Sisco was a real operator. He was jealous of his position. He kept his fingers on all the levers of power within the State Department. Things didn't happen without his knowing it, and if they did he was furious that they were going on behind his back. The Sadat visit to the United States was a good example. He was very much in charge of orchestrating that. I was involved because Sadat's visit was very much a public relations operation. Sadat concluded very early on that his policy could not succeed unless he succeeded in changing the image of Egypt in the United States. In other words, getting around this anti-Arab attitude that existed and which the Israelis used to promote their positions and the Arabs always suffered from. So, he had to convince the knowledgeable part of the American public, particularly the pressure groups in the American body politic -- and that meant including the Jewish ones -- that Egypt was not an enemy of the United States nor necessarily an enemy of Israel. This was the beginning of the whole peace process. So, his visit to the United States, as I recall, took place in the fall of 1977, after he had made his trip to Jerusalem and made his various statements signaling a complete turn around from the Nasser policy dealing with the Middle East problems, Israel in particular. His visit was a major, major exercise in substantive diplomacy from that point of view because he had to change the view of the United States towards Egypt.

Sisco, with Roy Atherton's agreement, asked me to travel with Sadat outside of Washington and also deal in detail with the Sadat party in Washington to make sure everything went all right. In fact, the visit was a great success and went off very well. Everyone was tremendously pleased with it. But there was one episode in New York which was his first visit after Washington. Sadat gave an interview to a local radio station, as I recall. He made a statement there which was antagonistic to the Jewish-American support for Israel and when it was picked up it got considerable attention in the other press in Washington. Sisco was in New York because Sadat was visiting the UN. He called me in the middle of the night when he heard about this. He was furious, not just because Sadat had said that, because it was obviously something he could not control, but also because Sadat was allowed to get close to this local news organization so his views got out on that subject. I remember an exchange we had on the elevator coming up in the New York hotel and he gave me the final word on this. He said, "If you can't handle things better than that, Washington will be your next stop." In other words, I would be called back. It didn't happen again, at least nothing that I did. I made known to Sadat's press advisors that that statement didn't exactly help his cause in the United States. I presume that the word got to him. Anyway, he didn't repeat the remark.

What else?

Q: Was there a change in policy with the coming of Carter?

SHERMAN: Yes. Just the advent of Carter was an interesting experience in the State Department. An expected part of a transition to a new administration is that we were charged with writing position papers throughout the bureaucracy. Position papers explain our policy and make proposals for new policy, etc. They all went into a big book. How much of it was read no one knew, but it was for Cyrus Vance who was the new Secretary of State under Carter. There was a certain amount of trepidation about the coming of Carter because as a factor in world affairs he was unknown. What his views were on the Middle East was unknown in the NEA Bureau. So we had a major opportunity to influence his thinking and the thinking of the new administration on Middle East policy, to build on what had happened in the Kissinger/Nixon years.

Q: What was the hope?

SHERMAN: The hope was that we could spur the process further. The aim was to use the two disengagement agreements with Egypt as a springboard into a larger peace settlement not only with Egypt, but between Israeli and the other Arab countries. As it turned out there was a good combination of people dealing with the Middle East, all like minded. There was Bill Quant, who became the Middle East expert on the National Security Council. There was Zbig Brzezinski as the National Security Council Advisor, and then there was Cyrus Vance as Secretary of State. There were Atherton and Hal Saunders in the NEA area. Atherton became the traveling ambassador in the Middle East, the Middle East envoy. Hal Saunders, who had been his deputy, became the Assistant Secretary. Hal Saunders and Bill Quant were the real intellectual architects of the whole peace process

under the Carter Administration.

Hal Saunders and Bill Quant were intellectuals, but intellectuals who were activists at the same time who wanted to put their ideas to work. Saunders, particularly, had this ability to lay out a goal and the various steps that should be taken to reach that goal in great detail along the way. How A should behave, if A did this, what B should do, etc. He was almost mathematical.

Quant was able to read what was going on in the White House and alert or develop what turned out to be a residual interest on the part of Carter into doing something about the Middle East peace process. Atherton was superb in handling people...so it was perfect in the first instance for on-the-ground negotiations to move the Israelis and the Egyptians into a genuine negotiating mode.

So, you had Saunders laying out the framework and giving it real substantive content. Hal had worked with Henry Kissinger on the staff of the NSC and came over to the State Department with Kissinger to be deputy assistant secretary. So, Saunders was very much involved in the previous disengagement agreements. So you had the continuity between Saunders and Atherton. And then Bill Quant, of course, from the academic background at Brookings, with an in depth knowledge of the Middle East, and the Arab-Israeli conflict in particular, over in the White House.

It turned out that Carter very early on was also disposed to focus on the Middle East as an area ripe for conflict resolution, and it became apparent that he was going to shift American policy substantially in order to achieve some sort of movement in the conflict...

Q: How did he plan to do this?

SHERMAN: It first became apparent in March, 1977. One of the first foreign State visitors to the White House after Carter came in was Israeli Prime Minister Rabin. On the eve of his visit Carter gave an interview which ran in three parts, to, I think it was National Public Radio. It wasn't to one of the main networks and it wasn't on television, but on radio. For the first time he said that the United States had to have some balance in its relationship between Israel and the Palestinians. It was the first time that an American President had mentioned anything about doing business with the Palestinians, and particularly the PLO, which were the enemy as far as the Israelis were concerned. During the Kissinger period he had agreed with the Israelis, in order to get a step forward in the disengagement process, that the United States would have no contact with the PLO. In any case, Carter floated this message just at the time that Rabin was coming to Washington. During the visit Rabin was giving a speech over at the Shoreham Hotel at the same time that Carter was giving a press conference at the White House. They had finished their meetings and Rabin felt they had gone very well. Most people thought they had gone very well. Carter really hadn't said anything earth shattering about the Palestinian issue and had seemed to sooth Rabin's suspicions. At the press conference Carter proceeded to repeat what he had said on Public Radio about dealing with

Palestinians. I was deputed to go over to the Shoreham Hotel and tell Rabin what the President had said so that he would not be caught unawares by press questions about it. I had known Rabin from his times as Israeli Ambassador here in Washington, so it was easy for me to get to him and tell him this. I told him as he was walking out of the barroom of the Shoreham having given this speech. His first words to me were, "How did it go? Do you think I did all right?" I said, "Fine, but you should know Mr. Prime Minister the President has just said A,B,C about the Palestinians." He listened and didn't have any immediate response but I could tell that he was not pleased at all. He just stomped out.

So, that was the beginning of the change in our policy. Sadat for his part was promoting the peace process saying that he was willing to deal directly with the Israelis, that he wanted to bring the other Arabs along, he wanted a genuine peace, etc. The whole of 1977 and much of 1978 was spent with our trying to get the two sides together in some sort of meaningful way. They were agreeing to talk and were talking together, but they were talking past each other. The Israelis wanted the peace agreement with Egypt and were less interested in dealing with the other Arabs. They certainly were not at all interested in dealing with the PLO, had refused, in fact, to do so. The Egyptians were saying that they would have a peace treaty with Israel but only as a part of a general agreement with the Arabs. They were not going to go out on a limb and do it on their own. That was the initial Egyptian position.

Of course, in retrospect, the Egyptian position was helped tremendously by Sadat's going to Jerusalem and talking to them directly, which happened in the early phases of the Carter Administration. His doing that made it easier for Carter to change American policy towards the Palestinians. In other words, for the first time in years, the Middle East became a real target of opportunity. Opportunities were opening up for us to be genuinely a peace maker in the Middle East. Sadat's visit to Jerusalem came as a real shock here in Washington, too. My impression was we didn't know he was going to do it. There was no advanced consultation. That is my recollection and I was dealing with the issue at a fairly high level. The Deputy Secretary of State was Warren Christopher. He was going to make a speech at the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco and I was asked to go along with him. Here, again, the Deputy Secretary did not have a spokesman of his own and I was asked to go along with him because they were sure that the question of Sadat's visit to Jerusalem and our response was going to come up, as indeed it did. So, at that time, Warren Christopher made the first official American response which was to say that it was a good thing and we hoped it would lead to negotiations and that we would do everything possible to promote that. This seemed an obvious answer but was the subject of much toing and froing inside the government.

Q: What was the press operation like under Vance?

SHERMAN: The press operation under Vance was in the hands of Hodding Carter and here Vance lucked out. Hodding was, of course, a political appointee and was not a personal choice of Cyrus Vance. He didn't oppose him, he just didn't...I may be wrong on

that but Hodding was close to the liberal Democratic wing of the White House and, of course, coming from the South was known to Carter and Jody Powell. Jody Powell was Carter's spokesman and I had the impression that Jody Powell was the main mover in Hodding becoming spokesman of the State Department. They were very close and worked well together. Hodding was a superb spokesman. He had a knack with words. The most successful spokesmen are those who can coin a phrase and sum up a policy in a few words, something that is going to fit into a headline or into a lead of a story. Hodding Carter had that knack.

For instance, he was the one who after the hostage crisis erupted, to explain our policy used the term "a full court press" in terms of what we were doing to try to get the release of the prisoners. Well, it was absolutely descriptive of what the policy was and it was a phrase that had meaning to every American. Hodding also relied on the State Department professionalism and the expertise in the State Department. So he was much admired by the professionals who were conducting policy, as well as by people like myself, public affairs advisors, who drew up guidance for his noon briefings. He not only would use the guidance but he would talk about it in depth with you beforehand. We often had an hour with him before the briefings to go over questions that were likely to come up.

I suppose I should tell you how the guidances were done. As public affairs advisors we were charged with going over the questions that were likely to come up in the press briefing in our area. The ones on the Middle East peace negotiations, for instance, were usually put by me. You would lay out the question in a hard way and then go around to get answers. I used to write the answers myself...public affairs advisors who didn't feel comfortable with the substance would have someone else do the answers...I usually tried to write down the answers and get them cleared with various people dealing with the subject in the Bureau, right up to the assistant secretary. So, before I went to see Hodding Carter, I would have had a session with the assistant secretary, Atherton, or Hal Saunders. Everyday I had set aside time on Atherton's or Saunders' calendar, 15 minutes, to go over things that we were going to give to the spokesman. Then I would take those cleared answers...Qs and As...to Hodding Carter, and if he had a question I would try to answer it, or if he wanted to change something in terms of what he thought would be a better answer I would negotiate it with him or have him talk to the assistant secretary. That would lead into a meeting that he would have with Secretary Vance before the briefing. So, he would take these things and the main questions of the moment, go over them with Vance and get his final marching orders.

Q: Was that pretty much the way it was done with Kissinger?

SHERMAN: With Kissinger I was much less close to the operation. My contact was mainly with McCloskey. But he and Anderson or Funseth would go to see Kissinger at times, but mainly McCloskey would be the one who would say... Much less came out in the noon briefing under Kissinger because his main...

Q: Did Vance use journalists the same way Kissinger did?

SHERMAN: No. Vance was much more according to Hoyle, if you like, according to the system. He used his spokesman, in whom he had a great deal of confidence and in whom the press had a great deal of confidence. So, the system worked. Vance was honest in the sense that he worried much less about letting the press know something that might be uncomfortable than Kissinger. Vance had a much more straight forward legal mind. He gained people's confidence because they could trust what he was saying as being what he was ultimately thinking and willing to do.

In any case, I became very close to Hodding Carter and to Vance. I started traveling with Atherton in the shuttle diplomacy of all of 1977 and most of 1978 leading up to Camp David. But, I also traveled with Vance several times to the Middle East, once becoming his spokesman when Hodding was called away on personal matters somewhere else. So, I saw the movement toward Camp David close up.

Camp David developed because, after months of trying to get Egypt and Israel to genuine negotiations within the framework of Arab-Israeli peace agreement, the negotiations bogged down. There was the basic issue of Israel wanting Egypt to sign first and separately, and Egypt insisting that its concurrence be part of a larger settlement including Palestinian and other Arabs with Israel. We went through months of drawing up ways of approaching this. I must have gone to the Middle East five or six times with Atherton. There was a meeting in June, 1978 in England at a castle made available to us, and some progress was made. But ultimately, when we went out afterwards to talk to Sadat about it, Sadat said categorically that he was not willing to do any more talking with Israel until the Israelis come forward with some kind of way of dealing with the Palestinian issue. He was not going to make a separate peace with Israel.

We received the bad news from Sadat. I was with Atherton when he received that.

Q: What was Atherton's team?

SHERMAN: Atherton's team was Mike Sterner, and David Korn from time to time.

Q: Both Middle East specialists.

SHERMAN: Yes. Helen Kamer, who was his secretary and basically his assistant, and myself.

Q: Was Brzezinski a problem on the Middle East? Was there a rivalry? You were speaking about Vance being Mr. Straight and Brzezinski was always leaking things.

SHERMAN: Yes. Vance is such a gentleman. He was always having to turn the other cheek when Brzezinski would leak things about the Middle East negotiations. The thing is, I have a hard time with Brzezinski because I really don't understand his mental framework. He is very Polish. That means when he is speaking everything sounds quite

logical in terms of covering the whole, but then when you come back to it and try to put it into context with the overall situation or even in the context of what he thinks overall about something, it doesn't quite add up, there is no consistency there.

Q: I get the impression from what you said, he really wasn't, I mean, the White House, through Quant, was not working in sync. Was he sort of a loose cannon in a way?

SHERMAN: Yes, Brzezinski was a loose cannon in the sense that he wasn't clear in his thinking and in his pronouncements. He often times would say or leak things that would not contribute to getting one side or the other to a compromise.

Q: Was he more pro Israeli?

SHERMAN: No, he was just a loose cannon and more often than not it was the Israelis that were objecting to his position. That is not to say that Vance didn't have firm positions that were, of course, often times not agreeable to the Israelis, but Vance didn't excite the controversy or animosity that Brzezinski did. The bottom line with Vance was always that when he said something you could take it as really what he believed and he was willing to act on it. And he also came across as always trying to find a compromise, even though you knew from the beginning there was a line beyond which he would not go. You always knew what the basic American position was, but at the same time within those bounds he was always there trying to find some basis for agreement.

Q: How did we get to Camp David?

SHERMAN: The decision to invite them to Camp David...I was out in the Middle East when this happened, came from Atherton. As I say, the deciding point came with Sadat saying no after the Leeds castle meeting.

Q: Were the Israelis and Egyptians there for that meeting?

SHERMAN: Yes. That was a major meeting with the foreign ministers. Vance was there.

Q: A secret meeting or a public one?

SHERMAN: A public meeting. It went on for four or five days. Dayan was there. On balance it was a good meeting, they made progress for the first time talking about things that had been out of bounds previously. I have forgotten the details and must go back and look at them.

We went to Cairo to try to build on what we thought had been achieved at this meeting outside of London. Sadat took a very hard line saying he had reached the end of his tether in trying to get anywhere with the Israelis. We had a meeting with the foreign minister after the meeting with Sadat and I was charged with writing up the report on the meeting. It was very, very hard. The Egyptians gave virtually no room for maneuver in terms of

continuing with the meetings with the Israelis.

I think the report of those conversations in Cairo led directly to the decision to invite both Began and Sadat to Camp David because the next step was that Vance came out to both Israel and Egypt and met with both leaders and the invitations were extended and accepted. But, I didn't discover that until the Vance trip. Hodding Carter told me when he came out with Vance that there was an invitation for a meeting at Camp David in September. So, we are now in September, 1978.

The next months were consumed with feverous preparation. Every conceivable aspect or possible approach to Camp David was worked out in advance on the American side...what the President could say and A,B,C,D,E,F,G; how the meeting should take place; the informality; the protocol, etc. We worked out a press scenario. From the beginning our side thought that these negotiations had to be absolutely private. In other words, there should not be daily press briefings, daily press statements, neither side should have separate contact with their press and should not be putting out statements. So, our first need was to get agreement from the Israelis and Egyptians to that approach.

Q: The White House agreed with that?

SHERMAN: Yes, the White House agreed and may have taken the lead in that. The argument was that the minute a leak started it would play back into the negotiations and we would be spending as much time explaining leaks to one another as we would be trying to reach an agreement.

So, that modality was put to the other sides and they agreed. It was also agreed that Jody Powell would be the single spokesman and there would be no organized press briefings or daily statements except as the three sides agreed.

Q: Were people optimistic that they could reach agreement?

SHERMAN: It was considered a big gamble. I wasn't privy to the conversations before the invitations were sent, but I think one of the questions that was addressed was whether the President should make that gamble and whether if they didn't reach agreement things would be worse rather than better. Anyway, the President decided it was worth the gamble; he took it and it turned out successfully.

The principals stayed at Camp David and did not leave except, as I recall, once they visited the Gettysburg battlefield on the first Sunday there. It was all work and done inside of Camp David, which was the whole purpose, to work in isolation.

Q: When you say the principals, who did that mean?

SHERMAN: That meant Began, Sadat and Carter with their close entourages. There weren't more than seven or eight officials there.

Q: What was the US makeup?

SHERMAN: The US contingent was, of course, Carter, Brzezinski, Vance, Jody Powell, Roy Atherton, Hal Saunders, Mike Sterner, Bill Quant and Jerry Schecter, who was Brzezinski's press guy. I am not sure David Korn was there, I think he was. I stayed down in Thurmont, a town just below Camp David, where the press headquarters was. I was head of the press operation there, getting messages from Jody and Jerry Schecter and relaying back to them any leaks. There were, of course, several leaks. Obviously the Egyptians and the Israelis were talking privately to a few...although there were no egregious violations, I must say. They adhered to the agreement about minimum press activity fairly well. We didn't have any major leaks that we had to deny or take real issue with. It is amazing when you think back on it, 13 days.

Q: It was 13 days?

SHERMAN: Yep.

Q: Wow!

SHERMAN: It was 13 days... the Secretary of Defense was there as well. The Secretaries of Defense and State, the NSC Advisor, and the President of the United States were there. This, of course, was the time when the upheaval in Iran was reaching revolutionary proportions. In fact, the Sunday massacre took place in Teheran during that period and colleagues of mine in the State Department were besides themselves. I remember subsequently Henry Precht saying it was impossible to get anyone to focus on what was going on in Teheran because the whole top of the American executive branch was concerned with the negotiations in progress at Camp David.

Q: Was Phil Habib still Under Secretary, or had he had his heart attack?

SHERMAN: David Newsom was Under Secretary. I remember one brief conversation I had with Vance in his office just after Phil had had his heart attack. Vance said how much he depended upon Habib and how much he wanted him to stay, but he couldn't keep him the way his health was. I think Habib had already left, because after Camp David we had the whole Blair House episode for which I was the spokesman. I effectively took over Jody Powell's job although...I am getting ahead of the story.

Just to wrap up Camp David. The handling of the press was not all that difficult at Camp David because the three sides did basically adhere to the ground rules on press contacts. Except we did have to put out a little something each day and there were occasional leaks but they were mainly to Israeli and Egyptian reporters, by their respective sides, and didn't cause many problems in the United States. They were dealing with quite esoteric subjects and unless you had the full details it was hard to make a big story out of them.

I was told subsequently, right afterwards, that the easiest part of Camp David was reaching the agreement on the framework of the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt. Quant and Saunders told me that ten percent of the time at Camp David was spent on this. Ninety percent of the time was spent on trying to reach some sort of formula for dealing with the Palestinian issue. What came out of that was, of course, the modified version of the approach that the United States went into Camp David with and was prepared to push, which was a step by step approach to the Palestinian issue. Autonomy first, and then at the end of a set period you decide on a final status of the occupied territories. The Israelis were hard put. Began was coming from the position that the occupied territories were part of traditional Israel. Agreeing to any sort of formula which would potentially give them a different status was difficult for him. If he hadn't been so much in control of his party and his government it would have been impossible for him to have any give on that.

Q: Today is May 23 and we are having our third session for the Oral History Program.

SHERMAN: This part is going to cover my ten years overseas which is roughly the decade of the 80s -- June, 1981 to August, 1991. I would like to divide it roughly into two parts -- Egypt, where I was political counselor in the Embassy, which fell in the middle of the decade. But I would like to do that alone and then put the two times in India together. To begin, I will lay the time out in chronological order. I went to Calcutta in July, 1981 and was there as consul general until July, 1984. Then, I arrived in Cairo, September, 1984 and stayed until June, 1987. Then, I went back directly to Delhi, in the Embassy as political counselor, from June, 1987 until August, 1991 at which time I returned to the United States for my State-side assignment at the Foreign Service Institute.

So first, the 1984-87 period in Cairo where I was political counselor. The ambassador when I arrived was Nick Veliotes and he retired, I think, in 1986, and was succeeded by Frank Wisner, who was still the ambassador there when I departed in June, 1987.

In my job as political counselor I paid attention mainly to the domestic situation and was chief backstop in bilateral foreign policy matters as well as one multilateral issue. The multilateral issue was related to Egypt and Israel, and was a hangover from the peace agreement. That was the dispute over the possession of Taba, this tiny beach resort area on the inland of the Red Sea where Israel, Jordan and Egypt come together. Israel had occupied it and it was in the Sinai, of course, and obviously part of Egyptian territory. But the Israelis claimed it. The boundary there had never been settled and they had occupied the area, and wanted to stay there mainly because they had built a luxury hotel resort which was a multi-million dollar investment and were not about to give it up. So it was disputed territory and under the treaty was to be submitted to compulsory arbitration. But drawing up the terms of that arbitration was the question and was a matter of lengthy negotiations between Israel and Egypt with ourselves as the middle man taking substantive positions at times when the two needed to be brought together. I was the main representative from our embassy in Cairo dealing with the Egyptian and Israeli teams. The negotiations were protracted and extremely technical and driven from Washington and on the American side...

Q: What were the issues?

SHERMAN: The issues were drawing the line, putting the quadrants down on the map as a frame of reference for the arbitration and where the international boundary coming down to the sea was supposed to go. A millimeter in either direction on the map would decide where the position of the land would go.

Q: Was the land worth anything?

SHERMAN: The land, itself, is worth nothing, except that it is an ideal beach resort. It is right on the water and subsequently to the negotiations I visited Taba and was amazed to see in reality just how small it is. It is literally less than a mile in length and between the two borders. The hotel is the only thing that dominates the whole area.

Anyway, the negotiations were difficult because Egypt and Israel were uncomfortable in their new relationship. So dealing with Taba became part of the overall process of adjustment, adjusting to diplomatic relations.

Q: My understanding is that the Egyptians had built the hotel and the Israelis had occupied it and were now running it.

SHERMAN: No. The Israelis built the hotel during the long period of occupation.

Q: Oh, I see, they were going to lose it in the negotiations.

SHERMAN: Yes, and we tried all sorts of ideas for having joint ownership, Israeli ownership with Egyptian management, or vice versa, but the level of distrust was such that the Egyptians were insisting on the settlement of the sovereignty issue which would take with it ownership of all the property and then afterwards, they said, they would decide what to do with the hotel.

As it worked out, of course, they prevailed. The argument was that if there were trust between the two countries, the border would not make that much difference; and the Israeli and foreign tourists would continue to cross into Taba and partake in the hotel, which the Egyptians did not categorically insist become Egyptian property. They were willing to consider loaning it out or leasing it out to an international firm which could include Israeli money. That issue was the real issue but was not in the forefront of the negotiations. It was in the background always, and we, of course, did not have any direct role in how they worked out ownership of the hotel and disposition of the property. This was a nagging issue in Egyptian-Israeli relations and periodically during my time there I joined teams that traveled to Israel to negotiate the questions of where the quadrants for drawing the line were and the attendant issues of normalization. The Israeli position was that if they were going to essentially give this territory to Egypt, Egypt should also concede other parts of the peace treaty which include so-called normalization of relations,

tourism, trade...

Q: They used this for leverage?

SHERMAN: That's right, that was their whole tactic, which made a lot of sense from their point of view, and from our point of view, too. It was a way of trying to get the Egyptians to allow Israelis into the country, have more trade with Israel, create the kind of normalization relationship which Israel had foreseen in the peace treaty.

Q: Did it work?

SHERMAN: No. Formally there was some give on the Egyptian side, but the Egyptian government was always hampered by their own isolation in the Arab world. Every gesture they made towards Israel made it more difficult for them to break out of the isolation that they had been put in by making the separate peace treaty with Israel. So, while they were quite willing in private to say they would like to do more in terms of normalizing relations with Israel, they had to be very careful lest it make it more difficult for them to reassert their role in the Arab world. And the argument to us was that it was very much in our interests for Egypt to reassert its moderate role in the Arab world, which, of course, was an argument that had great resonance in Washington.

So, they would make little gestures. Then there would be tiffs over other things like the annual book fair which was always a point of conflict with Israel and ourselves. The Egyptians finally got to the point of allowing an Israeli book exhibition at the book fair after considerable arm twisting on our part, but afterwards they so circumscribed the exhibit that the Israelis were up in arms about it. They felt treated like a pariah.

This was the beginning of terrorism on the part of the Islamic extremists, but this was not yet in the forefront of our negotiations or our worries in Cairo. But, there were several attacks on Israeli diplomats. There was an awful incident in the Sinai where an Egyptian soldier went berserk and machine gunned down 7 or 8 Israeli tourists. These incidents were constant reminders during this negotiations and during our efforts to improve Israeli-Egyptian relations of the difficulties and the reservoir of hostility that existed at a popular level.

Q: Did you finally reach an agreement?

SHERMAN: Agreement was finally reached on Taba and the arbitration went forward. After I left Cairo I saw that the arbitration panel had decided, as was foreordained, that the Taba territory was indeed Egyptian and was turned over to Egypt. In the negotiations, for instance, we were instrumental in naming the actual arbitration to the judges and choosing them. There were lists passed endlessly back and forth. It was a highly technical negotiation. But very important in the overall scheme of developments in the Middle East because: (1) It certified that the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty was going to survive and was alive and well. In other words, the arbitration was laid out in the treaty and adhered

to. (2) In political terms it underlined the key American role in the Arab-Israeli negotiations because once again we took the lead. We were the main instrument in bringing the two together and ironing out the basically technical details with a lot of political/emotional overload. (3) It also was a small beginning of the Egyptians learning to live with Israel and small openings in their getting together and talking. (4) The Taba negotiations were also an instrument in deepening and broadening our relations with Egypt which were very much part and parcel of our whole policy towards Egypt at that time.

We were, of course, building on the opening that Sadat had brought about and Mubarak was building on. Essentially the United States was replacing the Soviet Union as the superpower influence in Cairo. This was the main theme during the whole of my tour in Cairo concerning our relationship with Egypt -- looking for ways to strengthen the ties, put meat on the bones. The economic side was our main effort. We launched a huge AID [Agency for International Development] program which grew out of the peace treaty. An unspoken and spoken agreement growing out of the signing of the peace treaty for both Egypt and Israel was that they would get annual aid appropriations: in the Israeli case to continue balancing their budget and on the Egyptian side it was a huge developmental aid program. During this period we wanted to go beyond aid to trade and there were efforts to bring American industry into Egypt. This was not all together successful because of the entrenched Egyptian bureaucracy and built-in inefficiency in Egypt.

But, what I had to deal with from the political side was reading the stability factor in the Egyptian political scene; in other words, whether Mubarak would continue to have a stable regime. This was a period when we were hoping they would expand the basis of public support and go towards greater democratic forms. They succeeded to a degree and they had an election which was carefully controlled but less controlled than under Nasser and Sadat. There were genuine opposition parties allowed, but it was a foregone conclusion that the outcome would go in favor of Mubarak's party because of the controls that were laid down. Our feeling was that Mubarak's party would genuinely win a free election, but we were never able to prove that because they never had a free election. They were so insecure that they made it clear that the opposition parties were there as a corrective to any excesses that the government might fall into. But, our reading was that if we could bring constant pressure on the government to expand democratic ways in small steps, eventually they would go to a full blown democratic system. Of course that didn't work out during the three years I was in Cairo and the one and a half decades since.

Q: How hard did we push the Egyptians? Did we push them about specific things?

SHERMAN: No, it was never the make or break center of our policy.

Q: This was during the Reagan Administration.

SHERMAN: Yes, and also during a period when we were working closely with Egypt against the growing extremism in the Middle East. There were definite limits on how far

out we could and would push Egypt domestically. Of course, Iran was still a factor in our thinking and on top of Iran there was the beginning of an Islamic extremism movement in the Arab world. We wanted very much to help Egypt reassert its role in the Arab world, which step-by-step succeeded. Therefore, we had a very careful balancing act in terms of not pushing Mubarak too far towards the direction of economic and political liberalization which would, they argued, destabilize the regime.

The nub of the problem often came down to dealing with the Egyptian military because the military was and is the backbone of the Mubarak regime. The head of the Egyptian military was Abu Ghazala. He was always a big question mark in terms of potential rivalry with Mubarak and also in terms of his highly questionable use of military funds for his own purpose or for military projects in which he benefited. So, that is a good example where out of our desire to maintain and expand our position in Cairo and to also underpin Egyptian stability and their movement to break out of isolation, we had to deal with questionable conduct and leadership on the military side in Egypt.

The one international crisis during my time there was the *Achille Lauro* when Palestinian terrorists captured this Italian cruise ship off the coast of Egypt and assassinated and threw overboard a crippled American. That crisis consumed our time day and night for well over a week. I was the chief lieutenant under Veliotes dealing with the Egyptian government. Our position was constantly to push the Egyptians to first end the hijacking and secondly, when the hijacking had ended, to hold on to the Palestinian terrorists, and press our position without damaging deeply our relations with Cairo. The Egyptian government was torn between its adherence to anti-terrorist positions and desire to side with the United States and its relations with the Arab world who were fully in support of the Palestinian movement, which included the PLO and Arafat. One wing of the PLO was responsible for the terrorists who had taken the *Achille Lauro* and killed this American. So, the Egyptians were caught between a desire to show their support for the Palestinian movement and their desire to side with the United States and the international community in apprehending terrorists.

The crisis developed in two phases. First was when the ship was taken over by the terrorists off the Egyptian coast. The Egyptian government was immediately consumed in trying to end the hijacking in a way that would cause it least trouble, which would mean getting the hijackers off the boat and out of Egypt.

Q: That is what happened.

SHERMAN: Yes, but it went through several stages. On the Egyptian side we dealt hourly both by telephone and physically at the foreign ministry with foreign minister Abu Maguib, who was the main actor on the Egyptian side. Nick and I were with him constantly, in the first instance trying to work out a formula for getting the Palestinians to give themselves up to the Egyptians and getting them out of the country with a minimum of damage to Egypt or international norms. That succeeded. They did give themselves up to the Egyptians and were taken into Egyptian custody. Then the second phase of the

crisis began with Ambassador Veliotes' helicopter flight, with the Italian Ambassador, to the *Achille Lauro* which had put into, I believe, Alexandria. Nick got to the ship and talked to the captain and saw the situation and discovered indeed that they had killed the American tourist. There was a radio message back from Veliotes to the Embassy. Bill Clark was the DCM at that time, and Nick's voice came over the radio -- the famous remark that was picked up because it was open radio -- "to get the bastards."

Q: I heard that listening to the news.

SHERMAN: It was on a wireless radio and was picked up and given to the networks. I was then asked by Clark to call immediately to the foreign minister to tell him what we had discovered and to underline our demand that these Palestinian terrorists not be released, in fact, be given over for trial. If they weren't tried in Egypt then they should be extradited, in this case I guess to Italy since it was an Italian ship.

I got the foreign minister's aide-de-camp on the phone as he was at a formal dinner. Up to this point the Egyptians had been claiming that there had been no violence and no damage done and no one hurt. It was a very emotional moment, very heated. I had an heated exchange with the aide-de-camp. I said that the press will say the foreign minister was lying, and the aide gave this message to Abu Maguib and something was lost in the translation, because it came across that I said that the foreign minister *had* been lying. The next day Abu Maguib went into a meeting with Mubarak and I was charged with presenting him an official request from the American government that these Palestinian terrorists be kept in Egyptian custody and not be sent out of the country. I, in general, had a very good relationship with Abu Maguib, he was generally very friendly. This time he walked into the room and he signaled me to go to a chair on the extreme other end of the room and just sit and wait, which I proceeded to do for 45 minutes while he conducted the meeting. He then came over and took the piece of paper from me and didn't say anything except, "thank you," so I was duly dismissed as the messenger. Subsequently, he complained bitterly to the ambassador that I had insulted him and said he didn't want to see me in the foreign ministry again, which was tantamount to saying that my usefulness in Cairo had ended.

My personal problems were subordinate to what was going on during the next 24 hours which was a major struggle to get the Egyptians to hold on to these people. Well, the rest is history of course. We discovered through our surveillance means that the terrorists had in fact been put on an Egyptian military aircraft and were being flown to, I think, Libya. They were intercepted over the Mediterranean and the Egyptian plane was forced by American aircraft to fly and land at an American airbase first in southern Italy and then further north. When we discovered this, of course, the main aim of the ambassador was to prevent this incident from becoming a rupture in Egyptian-American relations. Nick was on the telephone -- graphic demonstration of the importance of the telephone in modern diplomacy because there was no time to be sending cables back and forth. It was a minute by minute development of what Veliotes was to tell Mubarak and what did we want and how could we salvage the situation.

Q: This was by telephone over open line?

SHERMAN: Part of it was classified but the main things were over open lines, because at that time our classified telephone was in another office and it was not instantaneous, it had to be organized.

Q: So, the Egyptians were presumably listening and knew everything.

SHERMAN: Yes, that was a fact, but in certain respects we wanted them to know.

Q: There was no harm in their knowing.

SHERMAN: That's right. In terms of the embassy's relations with the Egyptian government it was good because Veliotes was arguing basically with the Under Secretary, Mike Armacost. We knew he was having a hard time because first of all Nick wanted to talk to the Secretary and they put him off saying he should talk to the Under Secretary. Then he talked to the Under Secretary. As the arguments became more and more difficult he ended up talking to Chris Ross who was the chief aide to the Under Secretary. Ross was relaying the message to Armacost and then to the Secretary. Because Veliotes was making an argument that Washington didn't want to hear, which was that we should allow the Egyptian aircraft and pilot to leave Italy and fly back to Cairo... we had already pushed the Italians to hold on to the terrorists...that we should let the Egyptians off the hook by giving them back their aircraft and crew unscathed. There was a great reluctance in Washington. They were very angry with Mubarak, quite rightly. He had been telling us that they would not be released and, of course, he was releasing them.

The relationship survived that crisis but there is no doubt there was a scar, a lack of trust which Mubarak never really got over during the whole Reagan Administration. We needed each other, so there was no question that we wouldn't work together; but there was always the memory of when push came to shove that he would adhere to his perceived interests as being at one with the Palestinians and the Arabs, rather than in terms of prosecuting and combating acts of terrorism. Veliotes retired shortly thereafter, I seem to recall. Anyway that was the last big thing in his stay there.

Then there was the coming of Wisner. Under Wisner the position of the United States in Cairo reached its zenith, I think.

Q: Why was that?

SHERMAN: Well, Frank Wisner is a whirlwind. He is always moving, always working and phenomenally productive. He had the ability to keep a number of balls in the air at the same time and keep his eye on them. He sized up the Egyptian situation, never having had anything to do with Egypt beforehand, and forged a close relationship with the Egyptian military, for instance, Abu Ghazala, for better or worse, but it was a major...

Before I leave Veliotes, I must say after the *Achille Lauro* crisis had died down somewhat, Nick did me a tremendous favor and saved my stay in Cairo. I think he talked to the foreign minister and emphasized that what I had said was that others would claim that he was lying, I had not asserted that I thought he had lied. The foreign minister agreed that I could accompany Veliotes to a meeting in his office in the foreign ministry. They talked alone on whatever business was at hand for 15 or 20 minutes and I waited in the outer lobby while my fate was decided. Then Nick came out and asked me to go back into the office with the foreign minister. I went in and told Abu Maguib that I was terribly sorry and had been misinterpreted and, of course, did not believe that he had lied, that he had been misled like the rest of us and that I hoped there would be no lasting damage to our very good relationship. He accepted my explanation and thereafter we had the same cordial relationship as before. So, I stayed in Cairo the full length of my tour and, indeed, nothing really did change in my very good relations with Abu Maguib and the rest of the foreign policy establishment on the Egyptian side.

The difference in style between Ambassador Veliotes and Ambassador Wisner was quite pronounced. Veliotes had come to Cairo as his last assignment in a very distinguished career but one in which before Cairo he had been Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs under Shultz. He, himself, said this had been a very trying time and that he was tired and needed reviving. He had gone through the whole Lebanon tragedy with Shultz and the Reagan Administration, arguing against our supporting Israel in this Lebanon venture. It was a one-man battle in which he was on the losing end, at least initially. In Cairo, Nick kept a relatively low profile and was not the active ambassador who had preceded him.

Q: Was it Roy Atherton?

SHERMAN: Yes. I just saw Atherton during my numerous shuttle visits and Roy is not so nearly as active as Herman Eilts, for instance, but relatively more active than Veliotes. That is not to say that Veliotes did not fulfill all the duties and responsibilities of the American Ambassador in dealing with the Egyptian government, and dealing very well with the Egyptian government's officials. It was outside contacts across the whole range of Egyptian society. He was not so active in public affairs and making trips throughout the country. In other words, he was tired.

I had an excellent relationship with Veliotes and we were and are good friends. In fact, he is probably my closest friend in the American foreign policy establishment.

Now, Wisner. He took a much more active approach to the whole range of interests that we had in Egypt. He was constantly in the forefront of American activity in Egypt, whether it be governmental or non-governmental...talks, visits. There was the famous trip into the Western desert where he went by jeep much to the horror of his security people because driving across the desert in jeeps can be rather hazardous. Frank is an adventurer and likes to do new and novel things, many of which one would associate with Lawrence

of Arabia.

Q: Was he a romantic?

SHERMAN: He is a bit of a romantic when it comes to projecting his own image and that of the United States. There was some worry and he had difficulties with his public affairs people on the profile that he should have. They were worried that...

Q: Who was the PAO?

SHERMAN: It was Dick Undeland, whom Wisner finally arranged to have replaced because they just didn't have the same views on what his image should be and what he should be doing in public affairs.

I was ambivalent on this because I thought Wisner was so effective and friends that I had in the Egyptian establishment didn't worry about the high profile. Undeland and others thought the image of an American proconsul would work against the United States eventually in Cairo. That did not happen, but the Egyptians were very sensitive since the time of the British of the image of outside powers behind the scene pulling strings.

Q: How is somebody able to pull off, to achieve, a higher profile of good will, etc. without overstepping the line and projecting the proconsular image?

SHERMAN: Wisner was able to achieve it because he was in no doubt what the first priority was, which was to have a solid, very close relationship with President Mubarak and his chief lieutenants. He never neglected that and would take their informal advice on how to handle things. Once sensing how far he could go, he then proceeded to pick the key places in Egyptian society which the United States would benefit from having him appear to be close to. In other words, in aid terms, in economic projects. He took a very personal interest in the economic investments that we had. In cultural terms he would talk with the key groups and work with USIS on promoting cultural exchange. With the press it was very important which journalists he spoke to and what he said to the press. Everything he said to the press would come across as the devotion of the United States to the closest possible relationship with the government of Egypt.

Q: They felt comfortable with his doing this. When he sensed they were uncomfortable from his private soundings, he didn't do it.

SHERMAN: That's right.

Q: So he was in sync with them.

SHERMAN: Yes. At the same time he moved around the country and made himself not just a Cairo ambassador. That was very important.

Okay, I guess that is everything on Egypt. Let's move to India.

Calcutta was my first foreign posting in the Foreign Service. I arrived there, on my birthday, July 25, 1981. It was the middle of the monsoons. I had heard so much about Calcutta, but I really was not prepared for what I found. There is a dichotomy between the physical entity called Calcutta and the people who inhabit it. In a visual sense it is quite true what everyone says. That Calcutta is a decaying city, overcrowded with poverty which is probably the first and lasting impact on the senses. More than a million people live on the sidewalks. Progress in handling them is measured in such small acts as the government making available water hydrants so that they can wash. I subsequently came to agree with the saying that visitors to Calcutta invariably go away after a day feeling they have seen the worst that the human race can provide in terms of living conditions. However, people who live there and discover what really makes Calcutta tick and why it is called the cultural capital of India, discover the vibrancy of the people, their sophistication in many regards, charm, intelligence, etc. Also being unique as the odd-man out. Bengalis are noted for taking the opposite view. They can be quarrelsome and their tempers erupt without warning. This explains the steel wire netting around the windows of the tram drivers because in the past when there is an accident, a tram has run over one of the thousands of the pedestrians on the street, mob violence has erupted and tram drivers were torn limb by limb. So, to protect them they put wire netting around the drivers' windows.

Anyway, from a political point of view, of course, Calcutta has been run by and still is run by the CPM, the Communist Party Marxist of India, which is the most successful Communist party in India. The original Communist party split and the CPM is traditionally the more extremist party. They control Calcutta and the State of West Bengal, which is something like 67 million people.

I arrived in India in July, 1981, at the beginning of the new American approach to India overall. It really began with President Reagan's largely social meeting with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in Cancun in October, 1981, when they first got to know each other and realized they could do business. At this time the United States and India relations were probably at the lowest point since Indian independence. This was in the aftermath of the war between Pakistan and India and the creation of Bangladesh out of East Pakistan when the United States, for reasons which had only partly to do with India, sided with Pakistan. The result was that during the 70s relations between the United States and India were virtually in cold storage. Indira Gandhi, who was probably at the height of her power and popularity after the founding of Bangladesh, took several steps against the United States in retaliation for what had happened. Throughout the seventies we had a very formal relation with India and not much more. By 1981, the realization had struck home in both capitals, New Delhi and Washington, that this shouldn't go on. The US realized that after all India was the major power in Southeast Asia whether we said so or not. India saw that they could object against any number of policies the US pursued as a global power, but it wouldn't have the least impact on the United States. Therefore they were hurting themselves in closing themselves off from a lot of things they needed from

the United States, mainly in economic trade terms. So, from this mutual recognition for a need to repair relations somewhat came Gandhi's meeting in Washington at the end of July, 1982.

That was the beginning of the American building blocks policy which was mainly the brainchild of the American Ambassador in New Delhi then, Harry Barnes. We, in the American establishment in India were committed to pursuing this policy. Barnes brought us all in on it and we were responsible for developing it. In essence it was to recognize that India and the United States had basic differences in global terms and that we would agree to disagree on these, but that this disagreement should not hamper the development of our bilateral relationship. We should concentrate on areas where we could cooperate and that these areas, often times totally out of the headlines, could be broadened and become the building blocks for a closer and deeper relationship.

This meant focusing on areas where we both saw similar interests. That would be first and foremost in trade and economic investment. Cultural exchanges for purposes of building on ties of language and democracy that we have in common. And, also, blood ties for, by this time, there were thousands of Indians who had been educated in the United States and had immigrated to the United States and this was a resource that we, the United States, could use in developing closer relations with India. To a limited extent the military establishments could cooperate in technology. Technology that would be needed by the Indians in modernizing their military but would not be in weapons whose technology could be stolen by the Soviet Union. The Indians had, of course, their main military supply relationship with the Soviets.

Q: Do you think this succeeded?

SHERMAN: Yes, while I was there during this period in Calcutta, 1981-84, it did move gradually. I had a difficult time carrying it out in West Bengal, in Eastern India, because the political situation was controlled to a large degree by the Communists. So I had to look for ways to increase our position in the Eastern part of India without the active support, indeed over the opposition of, the powers that be.

Q: What were your relations with the government of West Bengal?

SHERMAN: This is where the personality of the Bengali is so important. Regardless of what you say about ideology and what they say and write in the abstract against the United States, when it came down to it the Bengalis, Communist or no, made judgments in terms of their personal relations with the representative of the United States at hand. That gave some scope for using personal diplomatic skills to establish better relations with the government. Jyoti Basu, who was and still is the chief minister of West Bengal, is an atypical Communist. He comes from an East Bengali family of landowners, a Hindu family that was raised in Calcutta, but their power was formerly based in Bangladesh in terms of land. Jyoti Basu, although promoting the typical Communist goals and playing with organized power against the so-called capitalist -- usually the trade union movement

or the peasantry cooperatives in the countryside -- nevertheless was extremely pragmatic and realized the need for private investment in West Bengal. He also realized the power of the traditional establishment and did not move to eradicate it. He could move just so far, and if he had tried to eradicate the Bengali establishment, his government would have been dismissed by the center, which was a Congress government. But, I have to stress that he had no inclinations, he is not a revolutionary. He is really a centrist and a good part of his power is being able to be seen as a moderate by the forces of the traditional establishment while at the same time running this machine, the Communist party, which bases its support on the masses.

Q: Was this mainly an urban party?

SHERMAN: It started out as an urban party but the basis of its power came in its organizing ability in the countryside. What they did was make a major land reform in West Bengal so that what had been a Congress stronghold in the countryside has now become a Communist stronghold. So, the CPM rules West Bengal but Calcutta is generally in the opposition and the countryside supports CPM.

Jyoti Basu and I hit it off and we established a working relationship which came into its own when I moved to New Delhi subsequently as political counselor and had to deal with certain things regarding West Bengal. My relationship with Jyoti Basu helped very much in our being able to work out arrangements to stop harassment by the Communist rank-and-file of our USIS out posting in Calcutta.

During this 1981-84 period I was feeling my way. I was new to Calcutta and I set out to develop, as much as I could, a relationship with Basu and people around him as well as with people in the traditional establishment who had a high regard for Jyoti Basu, based on his being a certain upper-class Bengali.

Q: What was Barnes' style as ambassador?

SHERMAN: Harry kept his finger on everything, but people in Delhi complained that his chief weakness was his inability to really delegate responsibility. He knew good management style was to delegate responsibility but people who worked around him said he was psychologically incapable of letting things go.

That having been said, he was a workaholic who did keep a finger in every pie and kept things going and was very effective.

Q: Wasn't he a traveler?

SHERMAN: Yes. Keeping a high profile by traveling was part of his unique style in India. He traveled a great deal in a calculated way. He came to Calcutta four times while I was there over three years and they weren't just flying visits. He stayed over several nights and then would travel into the consular area to view economic enterprises or

cultural centers, etc. So, he was very active in showing the flag. It was an area under Communist control, an area of India where he was challenged too in terms of popular action. In fact, he was subject to demonstrations organized by the ruling party to the extent that we nearly canceled one of his appearances because of the threat of violence. We went forward with the visit which was at the American Center at Calcutta University in the old part of Calcutta. When we got out of that meeting there were angry demonstrators who surrounded the car. It was not pleasant but nothing happened.

I like to compare the 1981-84 period with the subsequent period in New Delhi which was 1987-91 in terms of the evolution of the building blocks policy. The basic things were put in place during the 1981-84 period. There was an advance in our economic ties and technology transfer went on apace. The first agreement was reached in terms governing the transfer of technology. And the first move towards military cooperation came with the development of the next generation fighter and the India Air Force. The Indians agreed that the US Air Force should develop the motor for that. This was a real breakthrough. It was the one sensitive military project we had because the Soviets supplied the vast bulk of Indian military hardware.

In Calcutta, the only mini crisis didn't pertain to the United States; it was the beginnings of the student and then national protest in Assam which was in my consular district. I had to follow that issue in depth. The low point occurred during the attempt to have state elections in Assam in 1983, when there was a great deal of violence and a large number of people were killed. I was responsible for covering that, but I couldn't do it on the ground, of course, so I did it from reports from people coming out of Assam. The common problem in India, when it comes to law enforcement, is the poorly trained and poorly paid quasi-military forces that were called in to keep law and order to bolster the police. In several places they went overboard and there was a great deal of injury and death. The Calcutta period really became the base for judging the progress in our relationship.

When I went to Delhi from Cairo in the summer of 1987 John Gunther Dean, another activist, was the ambassador. He was a major contrast to that of Harry Barnes, the previous ambassador I had worked under. He was something of a Machiavellian, very egocentric, very conscious of what he could do. His style was more emotional than Harry Barnes who was soft spoken. Dean was not soft spoken and very emphatic and harsh in private meetings when he wanted something. He was extremely insightful, imaginative in terms of seeing how any event could be worked into an improvement in Indo-American relations. He was constantly thinking about this and nothing seemed to escape his notice.

Q: I must say I had that same impression of both of them. In their own way they were both quite successful. I had the impression also that Dean worked his contacts in Washington very successfully. He would get people to come out to India and was quite adept at that.

SHERMAN: Yes. Dean made no secret of his disdain for the hierarchy of the State

Department. He virtually refused to talk in any more than formal terms to the Assistant Secretary and Deputy Assistant Secretary of NEA and Southeast Asia. He turned most of that over to his DCM. When Robert Peck, who was deputy in charge of Southeast Asia, came out during one visit, Dean didn't even consent to schedule a meeting until he had arrived. The issue was up in the air as to whether he would see him at all. He had nothing in common with Peck, he felt, and Peck reciprocated that. But in terms of his working the India issue across the board, his efforts were most noticeable. During my first year there the move suddenly came up in the Senate to include India in the Pressler Amendment, and have sanctions against India for going nuclear, akin to what was ultimately applied to Pakistan. John Gunther Dean mobilized the whole embassy behind an effect to bombard the Department with cables underlining that the Administration must fight this in every way possible because of the impact it would have on Indo-American relations. And, in fact, the move was defeated, for better or worse. I was responsible for writing the cables and overseeing the effort in the embassy under his direction, so I know that he took a very aggressive stand on that.

Q: When Dean left, you had this somewhat bizarre episode of John Hubbard who I think was appointed but never confirmed by the Senate. He was a friend of Reagan or an academic who had served in India in the AID program years before. How did that work?

SHERMAN: Jack Hubbard was a very good person. He was very low keyed, self effacing. Very intelligent in an essentially American way, down to earth. As he said he did more business on the golf course than he did anywhere else. He assiduously courted key members of the government to play golf with. He was not assertive with his own staff in terms of...

Jack Hubbard's style was, he would say to his staff, "Tell me what you want me to do and I will do it," and he was very good about doing that. He took advice and we felt that we were in control of the Embassy.

Q: What was his situation vis-a-vis the Indians since he hadn't been confirmed?

SHERMAN: He was very low keyed in that regard too. He didn't make a major push with the Indian hierarchy. I was quite close to Jack Hubbard, and for some reason he refused to push to see where he stood with the new Bush Administration. At one point he received word from someone in the White House who called and said his appointment was going forward. The next thing he knew it wasn't going forward and he was out. I had the impression, maybe I was wrong, that he was literally in limbo during the first months of the Bush Administration and couldn't move to clarify where he stood. So, in that regard, we were definitely in a holding pattern in Delhi.

Let's discuss the high points during my four years in New Delhi as political counselor. Throughout this period the main preoccupation of the embassy, not necessarily Washington, was domestic stability in India. There was constant upheaval. In fact, it was the beginning of the real breakdown of the Congress Party's monopoly of power. When I

arrived, Rajiv Gandhi was in charge of the government following the assassination of his mother. Throughout 1987 the domestic situation was dominated by the Bofors guns scandal. A Swedish firm, Bofors, had sold howitzers to the Indian government. It developed, without to this day being clarified, that many of millions of dollars exchanged hands privately to the upper reaches of the Congress Party and government.

Q: Do you think Rajiv was involved or his wife?

SHERMAN: It has never been established. If he wasn't involved, if his wife wasn't involved, they certainly made enormous miscalculations in failing to bring it out into the open and establish who was guilty. The way they kept the cover-up going, the presumption spread in New Delhi and the country that in fact Rajiv Gandhi and/or his wife, or the other way around, Sonia Gandhi and/or Rajiv, did in fact profit in kickbacks from the Bofors deal.

In any case, this percolated along and new elections were called in November 1989 and Rajiv Gandhi and the Congress Party lost. They didn't lose totally; they were still the largest party, but they lost the majority. The opposition was able to put together a coalition under a former Congress leader and leading critic of Rajiv, V.P. Singh, who became prime minister in December, 1989. His power was dependent upon the support, not only of his own party, the Janata Dal, but the Hindu nationalist party, the BJP, which agreed to support the government without joining it. In other words, V.P. Singh governed with the BJP on the outside.

I am trying to think whether up until 1989 there were any foreign policy events that would require major notice and I would have particularly been involved in. I guess not. Throughout the period the building blocks policy remained in place. We were pushing for expanding cooperation on the military side leading to increased visits by top ranking military people, up to and including Frank Carlucci, who was the Secretary of Defense at the end of the Reagan Administration. The military relationship was good and constantly expanding. It always came up against the political imperative on the Indian side to keep certain distance from the United States and because of their dealings with the Russians. And, of course, their dealing with the Russians put a limit on the amount of technology we could safely give the Indians without the danger of it going directly to the Russians. And, of course, there was the Afghanistan situation. This was still a major issue in the area and fed into our close relations with Pakistan and therefore limited what we could do with India without upsetting Pakistan.

Anyway, December, 1989, saw the creation of the Singh government, and almost from the day that they took power there was crisis. On the foreign front, it was with Pakistan over tensions and crisis in Kashmir. It began with the kidnapping of the new minister of interior's daughter, a leading Muslim. She was kidnapped by Kashmiri dissents protesting the way Kashmir had been treated perennially in the Indian union. Paradoxically, the seed of revolt in Kashmir had been sown by a succession of Congress governments in the way they treated Kashmir as their own province. It was run from the center, from New Delhi,

in defiance of all Kashmir feelings originally by giving Kashmir a separate place in the Union. And there was corruption galore in the Congress Party establishment in Kashmir. Anyway, by the time V.P. Singh took power, a revolt had begun, starting with the kidnapping, and afterwards a succession of riots and more and more police brutality leading to military intervention on the part of the Indian forces. This led to the usual tit-for-tat violence and a full scale revolt. By mid 90, Kashmir was in revolt.

Q: How did this become a war threat?

SHERMAN: Okay. During then Bangladesh situation, Kashmir had been put on the back burner in Indo-Pakistani relations. So the revolt this time came from within Kashmir -- previous Kashmiri crises really had been between India and Pakistan over who was to control Kashmir. This time around it was the eruption on the part of the Kashmirian people and the Pakistanis were presented with an opportunity in some terms. But the question mark, a dilemma, on the other hand was how far they should support this independence revolt. So, they naturally took more and more of a role in supporting both by word of mouth and also in actions on the ground such as support in arms. Afghanistan to a certain degree played into this. Mujahideen had been trained in Afghanistan and began filtering into Kashmir. This, of course, set the Indians off. It gave a convenient excuse for downplaying the nature of the revolt in Kashmir and transferring it to the perennial Pakistani antagonist, claiming Islamabad was behind it. And, of course, this came on the heels of a continuing, but somewhat diminished, revolt in Punjab by dissident Sikhs which also had some support from Pakistan. So, the Indians, naturally being paranoiac anyway when it comes to things Pakistani and the question of Indian unity, were much disposed to blame the whole Kashmiri thing on Pakistani involvement and interference in their affairs.

Thus, this was the situation and setting for the crisis between India and Pakistan which came to a climax in May/June, 1990. Several things became evident to us as this crisis developed, and not so apparent - we had a feeling - in Washington, although this was not due to our lack of trying to convince Washington of what was going on: One, is that the V.P. Singh government was dealing from weakness. It was a weak government dependent on BJP support. The internationalists, of course, were leading the attack regarding what was going on in Kashmir. They were opposed to giving Kashmir any special treatment, particularly since that special treatment would be based on their minority Muslim position in India which the BJP greatly opposed, i.e., giving them special rights. The ultra nationalist wing of the BJP was also determined that Pakistan should not have any role in Kashmir. The economic situation in India was not good and the V.P. Singh government was trying to introduce reforms to help the declining economic situation inherited from the Congress. So, the V.P. Singh government was not in war mood, nor was the Indian public. The constant effort in the newspapers and in the government was to play down the crisis. There was no war party, is what I am saying. Even the BJP, antagonists as they were to the Pakistanis and to the Muslim Kharmiri independence movement, were not on the rampage in terms of demanding an attack on Pakistan for its interference.

Two, in the Indian public mind the Kashmiri crisis never reached the proportions of an epic crisis. It didn't compare with what had happened over East Pakistan and Bangladesh. Partially, I suppose, because no one in India really saw that any purpose would be served by having a war with Pakistan. In fact, the argument in the cabinet was that India could not afford a war with Pakistan. They were quite frank about it. So, there was real inhibition about mobilizing.

Third, the nuclear aspect. Subsequently, publicly, and at the time inside the American government, there was a school, basically a minority I think, in the CIA that India and Pakistan were moving towards a nuclear confrontation, which I want to stress we never saw any indication on the ground that there were any preparations...

Q: Did you all say the same in the cables?

SHERMAN: Right, and this was the question. We never, and this includes the Ambassador and everyone in the Embassy including the CIA, saw any evidence that Pakistan was making preparations...You know subsequently there was a story that they were preparing to load F-16s with nuclear bombs. There was never any evidence, visual surveillance, that reached us that that was happening. In fact, we commissioned members of our DAO [Defense Attaché Office] staff to make two, perhaps three, separate trips along the border areas which have always been the center when there is military action. On the Indian side when they mobilize they have to use these areas in Rajasthan, basically. Our staff people went up there, and with knowledge of the Indians went to the bases, the areas, and saw no evidence of mobilization. We had frank talks with the Indian military high command who told us what they were doing. So, there was no evidence.

Q: Why did Gates come out?

SHERMAN: Okay, let's talk about the Gates Commission and then I will get to the fourth point. When you start dealing with the possibility of nuclear exchange, no matter that there is no evidence whatsoever, if you are in a policy position you have to at least contemplate the possibility that you are all wrong and that there is something there. That is one thing. Secondly, it was obvious that the rhetoric was being escalated and that despite the fact of reading on both sides that neither wanted a confrontation, the fact of the matter is that step by step they were escalating the rhetoric. There were maneuvers launched on the Pakistani side and then the Indians reciprocated, etc. So, there was a worry that they would escalate and put themselves into a military conflict, which we had no interest in, obviously. Once a military conflict was underway, of course, then no one could predict whether that would lead to a nuclear thing.

So, we thought that the United States was in a position with both sides to actively serve as an honest third party that could give them ways to get out of an escalation that was going on. Not that we had any plans for negotiations over Kashmir; that was put aside. What we concentrated on was giving them ways to avoid the escalation that was going on so that they could perhaps then get to some negotiations over the basic issue involved. Here the

Soviet Union was looked at as a potential partner in this escapade because it was clear... I was the point man in the American Embassy for contact with the Russians on possibly controlling this escalation. Those contacts, which were lengthy and quite productive in terms of a meeting of the minds...I mean, it became apparent that the Russians and the Americans were of the same mind, not wanting it to escalate into a military confrontation. The Soviet Embassy in Delhi, I know, sent messages to Moscow suggesting that the Soviet Union join with the United States in trying to get both sides to back off. The Soviet diplomats in Delhi privately complained to me of their government's inaction. They could never get any answers out of Moscow. That was another demonstration, of course, of what was going on in Moscow. The Soviet government was paralyzed by the crisis there. So, in Helsinki, before Gates came out, there was a summit. Surrounding that summit it had been floated with the Russians that they join with the United States in this mission and they refused. But, they did let the Gates mission know that they could say that the Russians knew about this mission and were fully informed and implicitly were not opposed to it.

So Gates arrives in Delhi. It is true that the event was instrumental. The fact that it happened was important in the beginning of the defusing of the crisis. But, I make a distinction between that fact and what Gates actually did. In other words, my distinct impression, and I was in on the Gates meetings in Delhi...the Indians listened very carefully to the proposals we made. I think Gates had four points and all of them...in terms of early warning and what they could do, confidence building measures, but immediate terms which would stop...commanders, for instance, talking to one another as well as the civilians. An open skies proposal. He had those carefully listed and he read them off. There was no individual negotiating in Delhi. First of all, Gates didn't know a thing about the subject; nor, I am frank to say, in his meetings with the Ambassador and his staff before his meetings with the Indians did he make any effort to get on top of the situation. He was there for a single purpose which was to read talking points. So, as far as an individual triumph for Mr. Gates, I would say the triumph was the fact that he was the messenger, but as to any individual contribution he made towards working out some solution...

Q: It is the first time that the United States became actively involved in an Indian-Pakistan crisis for almost 20 years. What was the Indian attitude towards this?

SHERMAN: This is the fourth point I wanted to make and that is the emergence of the United States as the single superpower influence in South Asia. It was demonstrated to the Indians and everyone else that the Soviet Union had ceased to play a major power role because they couldn't make a decision. In any case it was doubtful the Indians would have listened to them whatever they said because of their fading power in the area and at home. Of course, Afghanistan had already happened, the withdrawal, and the Indians had already moved to separate themselves from the Soviet position in Afghanistan. They were having trouble on their rupee exchange rates for military supplies. In other words, the Indian-Soviet relationship was very frayed by the time of the Kashmir crisis. With the working out of the crisis and the de-escalation and the aftermath it was clear to everyone

that the Soviet Union had ceased to be the predominant fixture in Indian global foreign policy.

There is just one other event that I think we should cover and that is the Indian reaction to the Gulf War. The Indian reaction must be looked at against the backdrop of the chaotic political situation inside of India. The V.P. Singh government had fallen apart when it lost the support of the BJP over the Ajodhya incident, the Hindu-Muslim dispute over the mosque in that city. The leader of the BJP launched a major cavalcade across India threatening to mobilize Hindus. The government stopped him and arrested him temporarily and that led directly to the BJP's withdrawing support to the V.P. Singh government. None of the politicians in Delhi wanted new elections. So they put together a makeshift coalition headed by Chandra Shekhar. He broke with V.P. Singh and shattered the Janata Dal party, but nevertheless had enough support across the spectrum to form a government. The BJP agreed to abstain. The Congress was, of course, in opposition, but had enough support to maintain itself in power until 1991, about a year.

During this year the Gulf War erupted and the Indian position was formally neutral. Popularly they took the side of Iraq, David versus Goliath. In religious terms the Indians were afraid of igniting more Muslim-Hindu violence by taking a strong stance in what had religious overtones simply because of Iraq/Kuwait and Arab things. The Indians are very reluctant to get involved in things Arab because it raised the Hindu sentiment against major Islamic countries, even though the dispute was not religious at all. Religion plays a part in everything the Indian government does in the Middle East. They have to look at the Hindus being regarded as the outside force by the Muslims.

Anyway, the thing came to a head over our request to India to let our planes going from the Far East to the Mideast area refuel in Bombay. The Chandra Shekhar government said yes. But the foreign secretary of the government made clear that this was to be quietly done, no publicity given. I was in on the meeting with him. I remember him saying afterwards to the Ambassador, they surely must have some backup position of what they were going to say when this thing becomes public, he assured us they could handle it. Of course, as it turned out when it became public...the planes were refueling right at Bombay airport which is right on the parameters of this huge city. We were amazed it went on as long as it did without reaching the press...there were front page pictures of American C-5s being refueled and holy hell broke loose. The Congress Party, which was in opposition, saw this as a national issue that they could make points against the government with, about giving in to the Americans, etc. The uproar was so great that Chandra Shekhar backed off and stopped the refueling. Rajiv Gandhi who was still head of the Congress Party launched a campaign, he thought, to try to come up with a solution to the end of the Gulf War. He made an aborted visit to Moscow, which was in no position to do anything, and then to the area. No one listened to him; it was really a disaster. It was an attempt to be evenhanded in a situation where no one in the world, other than the Indians, wanted to be even handed. The Iraqis had lost the war, had invaded a fellow Arab country and right was on the world's side. Even rational Indians acknowledged that, but the other side was the fear that we were in an age of Pax Americana. That was the big headline in the Times

of India, that India should resist this power play by the United States. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States was asserting its power everywhere in the world and Iraq was the little guy taking it in the neck.

Against this background, you had elections called in 1991 and held in two stages. During the first stage the Congress Party was not doing well enough to create a majority in the new Lok Sabha, but everything depended on what happened during the second stage. There was an interval of a couple of days between stages. Rajiv Gandhi was making a campaign trip down to Tamil Nadu State, because the south of India was having the second stage of the elections, the South and Maharashtra, key states where Congress had to win a majority. He was campaigning down there and assassinated on May 21, 1991 by Tamil terrorists. The aftermath of that was to consolidate a sympathy support for the Congress. The Congress Party came out winning the states in the south creating a razor-majority and putting them in a position to form a government which was headed by the old stalwart Narasimha Rao.

I left India in August, 1991. The last thing that happened before I left was the institution of the new economic policy, which were liberal reforms which we had been working for and the end result of our building blocks policy.

End of interview