

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

AMBASSADOR PETER TOMSEN

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INTERVIEW PART II

Q: It's Wednesday October 12th and we're continuing with Ambassador Tomsen, now going to his assignment in China.

TOMSEN: Kim and I and our two daughters, Kim Anh aged nine and Mai Lan aged five, arrived in Beijing in August 1981. Two and a half years later in 1983, we departed China for Washington where I was assigned to the Senior Seminar. In April 1996, I returned to Beijing for a second China tour as DCM. Counting Chinese language training I would altogether spend nearly 7 years in China-related assignments.

During my 1st China posting in Embassy Beijing, I was finally able to develop management experience in an embassy political section. POL/EXT (Political Section/Chinese External Relations) was, of course, a very small pond -a three-officer unit including myself. Charlie Martin's POL/INT unit was down the hall.

I had supervised a military team in Vietnam, but this was different. It is sometimes said that the Foreign Service management environment is like a law firm. Management in law offices is more collegial than management inside a military hierarchy! I already knew well my two teammates in POL/EXT -Bob Pearson and Dave Pozorski. We had spent two years together studying Chinese in Washington and Taiwan. They were outstanding officers.

Our external wing of the political section was responsible for reporting on Chinese relations with other countries and international organizations. Bob specialized in Chinese relations with Indochina, Southeast Asia, generally Africa and Latin America. David covered Chinese relations with Eastern and Western Europe, the Middle East, Oceania, and Beijing's military relations with other countries including the United States. I took responsibility for Sino-Soviet and Sino-Indian relations. Also, South Asia generally. I assisted Political Counsellor, the late John "Jay" Taylor, in reporting on Sino-American relations.

Jay was an experienced China Hand and a brilliant writer. After retirement, he wrote 3 books on China. He was on his third China assignment. Jay won the prestigious annual

Foreign Service political reporting award. He dictated many of his reporting messages, keeping our two secretaries in the political section busy.

Chas Freeman was the DCM. He was the most accomplished Chinese linguist in the Foreign Service. His knowledge of China, Chinese history and Sino-American relations was vast. Before Beijing, he led the China Directorate in the Department. His China Office prepared the documentation that lay the foundation for the 1979 normalization of relations with China —also, implementation of the switch to U.S. “unofficial” relations with Taiwan —the creation of “informal” AIT (American Institute-Taiwan) on Taiwan and in Washington.

Ambassador Arthur Hummel was one of the Department’s most experienced China Hands. Like Stape Roy and John Service (who was accused by McCarthy of “losing” China), Ambassador Hummel grew up in China as a son of American missionaries. He spoke fluent Chinese. He held two ambassadorships before his Foreign Service capstone appointment as Ambassador to China. Ambassador Hummel was a man of few words. He preferred to listen, not to speak. To give one example, he attended the embassy Country Team meetings but deferred to Chas, his DCM, to chair them.

Like Moscow, Beijing was rated a hardship post. Living conditions were difficult. Establishing effective working contacts with Chinese officialdom was easier than in Moscow but also challenging at times. The Chinese have historically been wary of foreigners. The CCP (Chinese Communist Party) dominated China. The CCP hierarchy was rigidly centralized. Chinese officials we met followed the party line in a disciplined way. The media was controlled by the state.

Q: Was the pollution also already a major issue?

TOMSEN: Yes. Today it’s worse. But, it was bad back then, too. Every year, huge clouds of dark dust would come out of the Gobi Desert northwest of Beijing. It was hard to breathe. During our first tour in China, the early 1980s, the periodic storms would last a day or two. During our second China tour, they would last weeks. The dust irritated your eyes. It seeped through windows into living areas. The wind currents moved the dark clouds further east, over the Koreas and Japan. Nowadays, the dust storms sometimes cross the Pacific to our West Coast.

During the 10 year-long Cultural Revolution, 1966-1976, the Chinese Communist regime regimented the rural workforce to push back against desertification expansion outside the Gobi Desert. The rural population lived in communes, basically dormitory settlements in the countryside. The government mobilized millions of rural peasants in labor units to collectively plant trees, clear rivers and lakes, stop soil erosion and reclaim land from the desert.

Deng Xiaoping’s agricultural reforms dismantled the commune system. The massive Cultural Revolution desertification projects ended. The government leased land to

individual farmers and provided incentives to increase agricultural production. Farmers made money! Rural incomes and spending ability rose.

The downside was pollution. CCP control of the rural population relaxed. Families cut down trees for food and fuel. They constructed new homes in the countryside. The desert resumed marching. The annual desert dust storms increased in size and intensity. There's an interesting parallel here with India. Every year, the felling of trees creates larger and larger dust storms rolling out of the Rajasthan desert towards north-central India and New Delhi.

During our 1st China assignment, Kim and I liked to compare notes on our experiences in communist-ruled China and the Soviet Union. Our conclusion was that life was easier in China, but with 2 major exceptions: housing and health.

Both countries were of primary interest to U.S. national interests, albeit Moscow more so. At the time, the Soviet Union posed a greater existential threat, given its nuclear arsenal. By the turn of the century, the Chinese would develop ICBMs capable of reaching the continental U.S. But that wasn't the case when we served in China.

The pressures on embassy personnel applied by intelligence agencies were much more present in the Soviet Union than in China: KGB intimidation; the rough KGB "militia" guarding the embassy; the women downstairs that ran the eavesdropping equipment in the rooms of our apartments; being tracked everywhere you went, even driving to work every day. There was no such detailed harassment in our every-day life in Beijing. The travel restrictions were also much more severe in the Soviet Union.

In contrast to our sigh of relief on leaving Moscow, we enjoyed our China assignment. By way of example, China was culturally fascinating. You could get far more into Chinese culture than we could get into Russian culture, which is also very rich. The Chinese place a high value on food. At receptions in China, the Westerners would head for the bar to pick up a drink. The Chinese would go directly to the food table.

It was not easy to dine at a restaurant in Moscow. Our Moscow embassy's KGB-staffed Miscellaneous Services Office controlled restaurant reservations. Even if it gave you a restaurant reservation chit, and you drove to the restaurant and showed your chit at the door, you might or might not be allowed to enter! Once inside, you'd often notice that the restaurant was half empty! The waiter, pencil in hand, would curtly tell you that the dishes on the menu you requested were not available.

In China, we had unimpeded access to all restaurants. Very few required prior reservations. All dishes were available. You could walk into a restaurant -or a street kiosk- and enjoy a pleasant lunch or dinner.

Embassy accessibility to Chinese officials was much more open in China compared to the Soviet Union. In Beijing, embassy personnel invited their government contacts to lunches and dinners. It was not as difficult to schedule appointments with senior Chinese

government officials in the ministries. In Moscow, I only saw top Soviet leaders on TV. In China, I was in meetings with Deng Xiaoping twice. I periodically accompanied U.S. VIP delegations or Ambassador Hummel to meetings with ministerial-level Chinese officials.

In Moscow, the Soviets prohibited spouses of diplomats to work outside the embassy. That was not then a problem in Beijing. Kim had taken the Department's consular course in Washington --then worked as a visa office in AIT/Taipei. The consul at the embassy in Beijing chose not to hire her. Kim landed a job working for Pan American Airlines. She later continued with Pan Am after we returned to Washington.

It helped that Sino-American relations were improving when we arrived in Beijing in 1981. The United States shared China's views (expounded frequently by Deng) opposing Soviet expansionism. Deng publicly cited three obstacles to improvement in Sino-Soviet relations. One was Afghanistan: the Soviets had to withdraw before Sino-Soviet relations could improve. Secondly: the Soviet Union had to cease squeezing China from the south in collusion with Vietnam. In the north, the Soviet Union had to end its military pressure along China's border. In contrast, Deng saw the U.S. as important to his grand vision of modernizing the Chinese economy as well as opposing Soviet hegemony.

Kim and I considered that medical care and housing were the 2 important areas where embassy families fared better in Moscow than in Beijing. Our doctor in Moscow was very good. In China, the embassy doctor was a true believer in Chinese medicine. That sometimes came at the expense of our health.

The lack of adequate housing in China contrasted with the adequate housing space embassy families received in Moscow. In Moscow the embassy assigned us a two-bedroom medium sized apartment with a satisfactory kitchen and living-dining room combination. The only elevator often didn't work, especially when we returned from a grocery shopping trip. But we were young.

Q: Let's go back one second to the doctor who wanted to use Chinese traditional medicine. How did he get away with that?

TOMSEN: He just did. For instance, during my second China assignment as DCM, an embassy counselor had a stone in his kidney. The doctor placed him in a Chinese hospital. Every day for 3 days, his wife phoned me after visiting him in the Chinese hospital. She reported that her husband's condition was steadily deteriorating. The pain became unbearable. The embassy doctor refused to medevac him to Hong Kong. He insisted that the Chinese hospital offered the best treatment for kidney stone removal.

I'm getting ahead of myself because we're now discussing my first China tour, not the second when I was DCM. So, suffice it to say, against the embassy doctor's objections, on the third day, I arranged for the counselor's medical evacuation to a modern hospital in Hong Kong.

From her Pan Am office that same day, Kim reserved a seat for the Counsellor on a British Airways flight. An officer from our Hong Kong consulate general and an ambulance met the flight at planeside after landing. The doctors at a Hong Kong hospital quickly removed the stone using laser technology.

Q: I have honestly never heard of that in any post I've ever been to. It's one thing to prescribe acupuncture or massage if you're having muscular pain or headaches, why not try something that isn't invasive. But if you're talking about a real medical condition like a kidney-stone, there is an American standard of practice and he (the embassy doctor) is not following it. That's what should be governing that situation. That's just astonishing.

TOMSEN: You're quite right. In most cases, he prescribed Western medicines. In cases like this, he prescribed traditional Chinese medicines. He was also stingy about allowing medevacs to Hong Kong, a one-stop flight away.

During our first China tour, our older daughter, Kim-Anh, had an eye problem. We were not sure what it was. She could not see well. Our embassy doctor prepared to send her to a Chinese doctor in a Chinese hospital. Kim intervened with the Front Office. We did not want to sacrifice our daughter's eyesight to prove that Chinese doctors were as good as Western doctors! The Front Office overruled the doctor and approved the medevac.

Housing was a much more deplorable problem in China than in the Soviet Union. As I mentioned, we had good standard housing in Russia. During our first China tour, there was a lot of pressure from Washington agencies and from the Front Office to build up the embassy, get personnel out to post and put them to work. Relations were expanding in every area -political, economic, military, agriculture, all of the areas that an embassy covers. But there wasn't nearly enough housing to handle the large inflow of families! Twenty or so other embassies, also international organizations, were competing for scarce apartments. The Chinese government agency distributing housing facilities was overwhelmed with demands.

So, scores of embassy families were stuck in hotels. The Chinese hotels were sub-standard. Western hotel corporations had not yet built large hotels in China. When it came time to do laundry, embassy officers and wives took their clothes to the embassy compound. We used the washers and dryers in one of the smaller administration buildings. While waiting for the clothes to be done, we sat on the grass under the shade of a tree. Then we carted our bags of clean clothes to a bus stop --or into our car if it had arrived at post-- and returned to our hotel. Our hotel was three miles away from the embassy.

Some embassy couples had to wait over a year for an apartment; some never were assigned an apartment. If you were single or a couple with no children, you had the lowest priority in the housing queue. One embassy couple in the Political Section spent their entire posting in one large living-bedroom with a bathroom in the Beijing Hotel.

We were a family of four. After 3 months in a hotel, we were given a small apartment, two bedrooms, one bathroom inside a diplomatic apartment complex. Our living conditions were compressed. Our older daughter sometimes locked herself into the bathroom for private time. Sometimes she woke up at 4am and wanted to go to school.

If the number of families stuck in hotels was going down that would be one thing. But the number continued to increase during our first Beijing assignment.

Sometimes in a career, one faces a choice: speak your mind to the embassy leadership on a troubling issue like the housing one, cable a dissent message to Washington, or stay silent. I wrote one protest letter on my own and was a co-signer of two housing protest memos. Four of us signed the first memo. We tried to make it constructive. We addressed it to the Admin Counselor and copied the ambassador and DCM. The memo led off with our belief that we reflected the views of a large number of persons in the embassy at the sub-counselor level. We suggested specific steps the embassy could take to improve housing conditions: the first was to improve relations with Chinese officials in the Diplomatic Service Bureau (DSB) in charge of diplomatic housing facilities for the entire diplomatic community in Beijing.

Q: Typically, it would be the Management counselor or staff that would do that particular entertaining because they -the Chinese counterpart office- are part of the Chinese management of embassies. So they would be the people the counselor would entertain.

TOMSEN: That's exactly right. They weren't doing that. It was clear to us that the admin counselor did not entertain Chinese officials at all.

Our memo's second recommendation was: "Consider placement of a freeze on the size of our mission until this housing situation improves." Number three was "Improve the tone of the embassy housing committee" which was run by the admin counselor. "For instance, in the recent past the housing board has had the image of authoritarianism. It is patently unjust and even intolerable for the embassy to force a family to move into an apartment if the employee believes it is inadequate and therefore wishes to remain in a hotel." We suggested that specific data on each apartment be aligned with the specific needs of families. The housing committee sometimes put smaller families in apartments that had many bedrooms.

The fourth recommendation called for a general revision of the ground rules on managing the housing crisis.

When I left post I sent another letter to the new Admin Counsellor suggesting: "While a modest increase in new positions is of course necessary, it is my opinion that it is time to place relatively more emphasis on the personnel side of the equation and significantly reduce the number of new (embassy) slots created at least to the point where we have a solid downward trend in people moving out of hotels."

Q: I would only note here that typically an OIG, the Office of the Inspector-General, would come and that kind of housing situation and that kind of housing board would be in for trouble, because it's seriously not being managed well, in my experience. OIGs will lambaste housing boards if they are not being fair; if they are not satisfying basic needs. Now Beijing being an extremely important strategic location, of course the ambassador wants to get lots of people there. But if the situation is going on for years, an OIG report is going to be a really painful thing for that post if they're not improving the basic housing for staff. That's been my experience.

TOMSEN: Agree. Three years later when I returned as DCM (I'm again getting ahead of my interviews), the first thing I did was to elicit Washington's approval to freeze Chinese embassy housing in Washington until we had everybody in Beijing out of hotels. That was done.

In answer to your comment, the Front Office and Admin Counselor's arguments against our recommendations were basically "This is a strategically important country, it's important to our national security that we have adequate staffing. We have to suffer through this period to meet U.S. national interests." That approach prevailed.

Q: But it's also really shocking that the management counselor was not doing the minimum. Obviously, it's difficult, but for a management counselor to at least do everything in his power that was within his budget...

TOMSEN: You're right. Also, we personally suffered when Kim could not continue her career as a consular officer in Beijing –she had already served one year in a visa officer role in the AIT/Taiwan consular section preceded by the one year consular officer training course at FSI. Years later, the Department ensured that spouses like Kim, in her case a trained and experienced consular officer, could continue their careers at posts abroad. Kim also had the advantage of speaking fluent Mandarin. She spoke Chinese on the visa line in Taipei. She could have used her Chinese on the visa line in Beijing.

The embassy's strategic goal during my first, 1981-1983, China tour was to build on the new momentum in Sino-American relations created by the 1979 Normalization Communique. Deng Xiaoping was China's paramount leader when I arrived in China in 1981. Mao Tse-tung had purged Deng twice for his support of market reforms and limited political liberalization. Zhou Enlai protected Deng.

Mao and Zhou were the leading members of the first generation of Chinese Communist leaders. After they died in 1976 and the Cultural Revolution ended, Deng, a second CCP generation leader, made another comeback. He consolidated power in 1978 by assuming the Chairmanship of the party's Central Military Commission (CMC) –the most powerful institution in China.

Deng was 66. He was the most prestigious and respected leader among the *Baga Lao Ren* –the Eight Old Men- all senior party leaders in the 1980s who had contributed to the communist victory during the civil war against Chiang Kai-shek's nationalist regime.

Like Deng, they represented the second generation of Chinese communist leaders. Five had participated in the Long March.

Deng took less than 2 years to become China's paramount leader. He spurned Mao's methods of wielding absolute power and forging a personality cult to reinforce it. He preferred collective leadership with the other party elders while remaining *primus inter pares*, first among equals. Li Xiannian, the titular President of China, and Chen Yun were the most influential conservatives among the *Baga Lao Ren*.

Deng Xiaoping's ambitious reform program dominated the famous Third Plenum (Assembly) of the 11th Party Congress held in December 1978. It approved Deng's four modernization priorities in agriculture, industry, science and technology, and military areas.

Agriculture was first off the mark. Farmers provided the government with a portion of their harvest and sold the remainder. Agricultural production skyrocketed. The government slowly began to privatize small and medium state enterprises.

Deng chose two liberal reformers in the third CCP (Communist Party of China) generation to implement his reform blueprint: communist party chief Hu Yaobang and government Premier Zhao Ziyang.

Q: At this point, as you are analyzing this, do you think it was specifically a part of the Chinese leaders' planning to create a middle class? Today you hear a great deal about the Chinese middle class (and wealthy people); a middle class has grown in a nation of over a billion people. But in a nation of over a billion people, that still leaves many -the majority- outside of that middle class. It was a very intentional thing to create a base within China of people with enough money to consume.

TOMSEN: That's exactly right. One of Deng's sayings was, "Let some people get rich first." That foretold the development of a middle class rising from the masses.

Mao's communist revolution had vowed to eliminate the upper, feudal classes, the landlords mainly, and enforce equalitarianism. His radical political programs did generally smash the old feudal elite classes that had dominated rural areas for centuries.

Mao's attempts to remodel social classes slightly raised the living standard of the lowest rungs of the rural poor. But they did not deliver economic progress to China's masses. His disastrous venture to lift China from feudalism past socialism to the "first phase of communism" in his 1958 "Great Leap Forward" resulted in upwards of 20 million deaths.

During the 1960s, Deng Xiaoping and the reform advocates in the leadership had occasionally gained traction. Mao launched political campaigns to suppress them -the last was the decade-long Cultural Revolution. Once in control after the 1978 CCP Plenum, Deng initiated ambitious economic reforms which paid off. The reforms began to generate an entrepreneurial middle class.

Deng's market and political reforms received pushback from the conservative elders in the leadership who advocated limited, cautious reform. They warned that going forward too quickly would create political unrest and undermine the CCP's control of the population.

Officers in Jay Taylor's Political Section enthusiastically followed and reported on Deng Xiaoping's Opening to the Outside World. Jay created the practice of sending long "China Essays" to Washington –thinkpiece cables analyzing Chinese internal and external trendlines. The feedback from Washington consumers was positive. During my first eight months in Beijing, I wrote seven essays. They included Chinese relations with the United States, the Soviet Union, India, China's approach to border disputes, and the CCP's adjustment of ideology to support Deng's reform movement.

I periodically called on Zhang Wenpu. Zhang was the number 2 in MFA's Americas and Oceania Department. His office was responsible for Sino-American relations. Sometime in August or September 1981, Zhang began to divert our conversations to the topic of Taiwan. He repeated the same set of talking points demanding that the U.S. cease selling arms to Taiwan. They charged that U.S. sale of arms to Taiwan had cast "a shadow" over the Sino-American relationship. Meanwhile, the Chinese media became increasingly bellicose with regards to U.S. arms sales to Taiwan.

The Chinese side had long insisted that the cessation of U.S. arms transfers to Taiwan was one of the conditions for full Sino-American normalization. As Sino-Soviet relations deteriorated in the late 1970s, the Chinese dropped that demand, paving the way for the January 1, 1979 Sino-American Normalization Communique.

In early 1981, Chinese Foreign Minister Huang Hua bluntly told Secretary of State Haig in Washington that China would suspend further development of Sino-American relations if U.S. arms transfers to Taiwan continued. Prime Minister Zhao Ziyang and Huang Hua delivered the same strong message on Taiwan arms sale to President Reagan in late October 1981 during an international conference in Cancun, Mexico.

The changed Chinese tone on Taiwan could, in part, be traced back to President Reagan's presidential campaign rhetoric the previous year, 1980. During Reagan's 1980 presidential campaign, he had criticized the Carter administration for "deserting" Taiwan, an old ally. He opposed the normalization communiqué's commitment to unofficial relations with the people on Taiwan. His campaign speeches called for reinstating official relations with Taiwan.

As you know, domestic political pressures heavily influence foreign policy-making in most countries –especially in democratic countries. In the U.S., conservative politicians and opinion resented Taiwan's downgrading to unofficial ties. Three months after the Sino-American normalization communique, Congress passed the April 10, 1979 Taiwan Relations Act (TRA). The law, signed by President Carter, mandated that the U.S. provide arms to Taiwan sufficient to maintain Taiwan's defensive capabilities.

In China, Deng Xiaoping's agreement to Sino-American normalization without restrictions on U.S. arms transfers to Taiwan agitated the conservative in China's leadership -particularly inside the CCP and the Peoples' Liberation Army (PLA). The TRA and President Reagan's public positions on Taiwan announced during his 1980 presidential election campaign had probably put Deng on the defensive within the Chinese leadership.

By the end of 1981, the Chinese had effectively frozen the Sino-American relationship. Their demand to remove the "shadow" and end U.S. arms sales to Taiwan by a date certain directly contravened U.S. law, the TRA.

The joint U.S. and Chinese opposition to Soviet expansionism encouraged both sides to find a negotiated way out of the Taiwan arms sales issues. At the time, the Soviet Union was occupying Afghanistan. Through 1980 and 1981, Moscow was also preparing for a probable invasion of Poland. Soviet ship convoys continued to transport large amounts of arms and military equipment to Vietnam, threatening China's southern flank.

It was in the interests of both countries to find a negotiated way to put the relationship back on track. To that end, the Chinese government initiated a campaign calling for peaceful reunification with Taiwan. The implication was that continued U.S. arms transfers to Taiwan would be unnecessary if China and Taiwan were bilaterally resolving their difference.

In September 1981, China announced a nine-point plan for peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue. China would grant Taiwan "autonomy." Zhao and Huang briefed President Reagan on the nine-point plan at Cancun. They claimed that American cessation of arms sales to Taiwan by a date certain would help convince Taiwan to support China's peaceful unification proposal. Taiwan would resist negotiations with China if it thought the U.S. intended to continue arms shipments to Taiwan. Reagan was non-committal. After the meeting, Huang Hua told Secretary of State Haig that U.S. arms to Taiwan should gradually diminish and end on a "date certain." Haig rejected the date certain demand.

After the Cancun meeting, Deng Xiaoping proclaimed China's new "One Country Two Systems" policy under which Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau would retain their political and economic systems after peaceful reunification with China.

After his election, President Reagan sent a formal letter to Deng Xiaoping that reversed his campaign pledge to restore official relations with Taiwan. He reiterated the U.S. commitment to One China and welcomed the nine-point proposal. His letter assured that the U.S. would not permit U.S. unofficial relations with Taiwan to harm Sino-American relations. But Reagan carefully gave no ground on the "date certain" Chinese demand for ending arms sales to Taiwan.

On their side, the Chinese gave no ground on their “freeze” of Sino-U.S. relations. They suspended high-level visits and negotiations on a range of areas until the Taiwan arms issue was resolved.

That set the stage for a bruising highly secret negotiation on a third Sino-American communique on Taiwan arms sales, from January 1982 to August 1982. I was included in the embassy’s four-man negotiating team. I was happy to be part of the team. The talks were close hold in the embassy and Washington.

Our diplomatic colleagues in Beijing constantly sought information from members of the team –Ambassador Hummel, DCM Chas Freeman, Jay Taylor and myself. The Belgian ambassador was one example. When we were at the same diplomatic events, he would question me on the status of the talks. Then he began to invite me to private lunches at his Residence. I found the cheese and meat combinations common in traditional Belgian cuisine delicious.

About the fourth lunch, the Belgium ambassador complained that during our many conversations I had not been forthcoming about the Taiwan negotiations. He said that he appreciated the reasons for that. With a smile, he added that the previous evening he had also enquired about the negotiations with Ambassador Hummel at a diplomatic reception –“Ambassador Hummel looked at me and said nothing.” After waiting for an answer, he stated he had informed Hummel, “You know, my government pays me to ask these questions.” Ambassador Hummel finally spoke: “My government pays me not to answer them.” (Laughter)

Q: Of course, the Belgian ambassador is doing what he should, which is trying every person in that embassy he can lay his hands on because maybe there’s a weak reed somewhere he can press and get an answer. If he can’t get it from the ambassador, he’ll work his way down the line. But you stood fast.

TOMSEN: Yes.

Ambassador Hummel presented our proposed draft of the agreement cleared by Washington at the first negotiating session in the foreign ministry.

A vice-foreign minister chaired the Chinese side. Each meeting at the MFA began at 10:00am. If we were 5 or 6 minutes early, Ambassador Hummel would instruct his Chinese driver to circle the ministry so that we could be dropped off at the stairs leading up to the ministry’s front door at precisely one minute before 10. That one minute was consumed by climbing the stairs and shaking hands with a MFA American and Oceania Department greeter at the door, exactly at 10:00am.

The formal negotiations took place in a large well-appointed room across a long, polished table. The 4 of us sat on one side of the table. The Chinese numbers fluctuated between about 9 to 12.

The two sides made no progress on resolving the Taiwan arms sales problem during the next 6 months. The head of their delegation read aloud many pages written in thousands of Chinese characters denouncing the U.S. for trying to separate Taiwan from the Motherland –“You are hurting the feelings of a billion Chinese,” for example, was one talking point. When the vice-foreign minister concluded his long written presentation, Ambassador Hummel would declare our readiness to make progress and futilely probe for possible Chinese flexibility. The 2-hour session would end; we would return to the embassy and inform Washington by cable that there had been no progress.

Q: What the Chinese were saying was “We have nothing new to say to you; what new thing can you bring to the table” –at least that’s how I would interpret it– in the way they were acting. Obviously, the specific language was not even important; it was the fact that they stuck to a very set piece Communist government tirade. Everybody knows what those sound like; people have sat through them in Eastern Europe and Russia, everybody knows what they sound like. The fact that they’re not budging, not speaking in a different way, not nuancing tells you everything you need to know. Until something happens to change the architecture, a breakthrough cannot be made. But what an agony to have to go through six months listening to nothing but those tired old Communist...

TOMSEN: That’s right. They were also projecting an uncompromising position to satisfy the Chinese political leadership and military factions monitoring the negotiations; also, to put us on the defensive while probing for flexibility on our side. As you say, only something at high levels could break the deadlock and set the stage for a breakthrough.

Q: It’s rare in diplomatic history anyway that some movement below the top is what brings about a major change. You do have exceptions; the Cuban missile crisis where there were quiet talks held at a low level informally, and every now and then in relations between East and West Germany. But generally, it’s only going to be Reagan-Gorbachev or Bush and Deng where a breakthrough is made, and they give it to the sub-levels to work out.

TOMSEN: Exactly. And that’s what happened. Vice President Bush, previously head of the U.S. Liaison Office in China, flew to Beijing and met Deng Xiaoping in May. Bush could not budge on a “date certain” but the intervention of an “old friend of China,” previously head of the Beijing U.S. Liaison Office, now Vice President, did indeed jump-start real progress in the talks leading to their successful conclusion in August 1982.

Q: I see. That’s something we’ll turn to at the next session.

Q: It’s October 20th and we’re resuming with Ambassador Tomsen in China and the negotiations on normalization.

TOMSEN: We discussed last time, positive developments in Sino-U.S. relations after Deng Xiaoping became China's paramount leader. The relationship was expanding in all areas, including geo-strategic cooperation against Soviet expansionism. The Soviet Union was bogged down in Afghanistan. U.S. trade and investment were growing. We became the largest foreign investor in China. Over 10,000 Chinese were studying in the United States. Thousands of American tourists were coming to China.

Military tensions in the Taiwan Straits were low. China had announced its nine-point program to peacefully unite with Taiwan, China's CCP controlled media declared a One Country-Two Systems approach to reunification with Taiwan. China had shifted most of its military forces in Fujian and other provinces opposite Taiwan to the Vietnamese and Sino-Soviet borders. Political Counselor Jay Taylor, our POL/EXT unit, and the embassy economic section reported extensively on the exciting developments flowing from Deng Xiaoping's Opening to the outside world.

As we discussed in our last session, towards the end of 1981, the Chinese abruptly froze further development of our relations pending resolution of the Taiwan arms sales issue.

Q: Before you go further, these early days of the Opening of China and the development of a more capitalized economic system, were there complaints from U.S. companies about any of their interactions with the Chinese?

TOMSEN: Yes. The complaints multiplied as our commercial ties to China increased. In the early stages, there was a "first in" rush by Boeing and other large U.S. corporations to sign sales deals. Hundreds of smaller American business owners sought out Chinese counterparts to sign contracts.

The Chinese government lacked a legal framework to resolve trade and investment disputes with foreign companies. American investors had no legal path to redress their grievances.

The Chinese had a ready-made advantage in selling textiles in the U.S. Immediately, they pressed export of textiles to the United States. This led to tortuous negotiations. U.S. trade negotiators established quotas. The Chinese had to agree to the quotas. But it wasn't too long before the textile industry, most notably in North Carolina, began to wither away. That happened with Pennsylvania mushroom production too.

Also, Chinese intelligence's secret directives to Chinese customs officials created hidden import controls to block foreign exports to China.

During contract negotiations, the Chinese demanded access to sensitive foreign technology in U.S. products sold to China. Kim told me of a conversation she had with an American businessman sitting next to her on a flight from Tokyo to Beijing. The businessman told her not to worry because by the time the Chinese absorbed our technology we (the United States) would have moved up to the next higher level. Unfortunately, this erroneous attitude would continue for decades until we got smarter!

Chinese espionage operations in the U.S. as well as in China, stole American technology and copyrighted products. We watched Disney's famous "Lion King" on Chinese TV eight months before it was released in the U.S. The Chinese also routinely manipulated the dollar-yuan exchange rate to their advantage.

Despite the frustrations and unfairness, many U.S. corporations and businesses made money. The beguiling oil for the lamps of China image remained tempting. It traced back to the 1790s when our first consular post was opened in Canton, China. Second was Liverpool!

Q: Interesting. I didn't know the urgent desire for goods from China, especially luxury products, I imagine porcelain and silk.

TOMSEN: Yes. After China's Opening, it was financial profits benefiting from extremely cheap labor costs that drove merchants to China. More than a billion consumers awaited them!

Back to the Chinese decision to freeze further development in our relations until we agreed to a date certain to end arms sales to Taiwan. By law, policy and domestic U.S. politics, this was something the U.S. could not do. But the Chinese freeze on our relations gave us no alternative but to return to the negotiating table to conclude the Taiwan arms communique with China. It became the 3rd and last of the Sino-American communiqués framing Sino-American relations up to today. The 1972 Shanghai Communique and the 1979 Normalization Communique were the first two.

It's important to remember that negotiations on the Shanghai and Normalization Communiqués had succeeded because they contained deliberate ambiguities approved by both sides. They papered over, one could say hid, fundamental contradictions, particularly on Taiwan's status. Foremost among them was continuing U.S. *de facto* diplomatic –albeit “unofficial”– relations with Taiwan that included U.S. arms transfers to Taiwan. Without success, the Chinese attempted to use the 3rd Taiwan arms sales communique negotiations to obtain a “date certain” for ending U.S. arms sales to Taiwan.

The collection of ambiguities on Taiwan's status in the 1972 Shanghai and 1979 Normalization Communiqués have correctly been termed “Strategic Ambiguity.” The Strategic Ambiguity concept continues to be an element of stability in Sino-American relations today. The Shanghai Communique artfully stated that “all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China.” The “One China” wording could be interpreted by both the PRC and ROC (Republic of China) on Taiwan.

The 1979 Sino-American Normalization Communique's first sentence recognized the PRC as the sole legal government of China. Next the U.S. “acknowledged” the Chinese position that Taiwan is a part of China. This ambiguous formulation --plus the following ambiguous line in the communique, “...the people of the United States would continue to

maintain cultural, commercial, and other unofficial relations with the people of Taiwan,” together, were interpreted by the U.S. as accommodating continued multi-sided U.S. “unofficial” relations with the Taiwan regime. In addition to continuing arms, the U.S. assumed that the wording accepted Taiwan’s status as a political entity exercising sovereignty over the territory of Taiwan.

The Strategic Ambiguity in the first 2 communiqués lessened the pressures from hardline constituencies in both China and the U.S. It allowed both sides to realize significant common advantages: resisting Soviet expansionism; realizing mutual economic progress; maintaining good bilateral political relations; and avoiding war over Taiwan.

So, the wording ambiguities that produced the Shanghai and Normalization Communiqués would of necessity be repeated in the 1982 communiqué on U.S. arms sales to Taiwan. Think of a mobile hanging three strings, each with weights at the end for each party, the U.S., China and Taiwan.

The mobile’s stability depended on Chinese pursuit of a peaceful rather than military solution to the Taiwan issue; the U.S. supporting China’s peaceful reunification policy, while supplying arms to Taiwan; and Taiwan restraining itself from declaring independence –or acquiring nuclear weapons.

Any one of the three parties -the U.S., China, or Taiwan- could cut their string hanging from the mobile and upset the mobile’s balance. Conversely, PRC-Taiwan peaceful negotiations strengthened the mobile’s stability. The U.S. carefully avoided involvement in the China-Taiwan dialogue. The China-Taiwan dialogue focused on economic cooperation and people-to-people contacts across the Taiwan Strait.

A key ambiguous element stabilizing the mobile was U.S. determination to come to Taiwan’s defense in the event China abandoned its peaceful reunification policy and prepared to invade Taiwan. Strategic Ambiguity was also a brake on Taiwan’s inclination to declare independence. Would the U.S. support for Taiwan continue if Taiwan unilaterally declared independence and destabilized the mobile?

Q: I can’t resist the comparison. While candidate Ronald Reagan ran on a platform that included restoring complete U.S. diplomatic relations to the Republic of China on Taiwan – in essence overturning the Shanghai communiqué or tearing it up and criticizing the Carter administration for doing this secretly.

Then as soon as it (the Reagan Administration) gets into office it does the very same thing – negotiating in secret a different communiqué that does not tear up the old one but resolves a discomfort in the relationship over the issue of Taiwan.

I can’t resist but to compare that to the current negotiation that took place on Iranian nuclear power conducted secretly for the most part and completely criticized by opponents of the administration and promised to be torn up should the opponents of the agreement become president after the election. I wonder if that should happen, whether

they really would tear it up or whether more secret negotiations would take place as we did with China to resolve whatever the base requiring more stringent requirements from Iran would be satisfied.

It's one of those comparisons in history that I think beg to be made because the nature of U.S. foreign policy it turns out even with all the arguments and opposition seems to remain relatively the same regardless of the administration –the necessity to resolve major problems and resolving them quietly out of the public eye.

TOMSEN: That's right. It was basic U.S. national interests that guided U.S. policy from Carter to Reagan. The anti-Soviet component was a national objective in both administrations. The Soviets were on the move internationally. As soon as presidents get into office, forgetting less significant campaign pledges is fair game. Reagan concluded he needed China's weight in the U.S., China, Japan, Western Europe grouping opposed to Soviet expansionism.

I was the fourth and lowest ranking member of our four-man negotiating team. I was the note-taker and research assistant assigned to track down documents useful to the negotiations, and assist preparing our side's presentations. I did not directly participate –that is speak- in either the formal or informal talks. Ambassador Hummel chaired the formal sessions, supported by Chas.

Jay Taylor and I, mostly Jay, offered ideas and suggestions on negotiation strategy, communiqué wording and Chinese negotiating tactics.

Q: It should be noted here as a personnel and professional matter that anybody on a team like that –relatively small, quiet but playing an important role– typically would get a Superior Honor award, the highest award a Foreign Service officer could receive, and a great deal of notice. So typically this kind of activity would put you in a very good place for promotion and a next assignment. Just to put it into context. It's a very rare and important opportunity not many Foreign Service officers get, because everybody knew this was a historic agreement and it would set the terms for the new Reagan Administration's policy and relations with China. You're being in on the ground floor of a new policy is a very important thing for a Foreign Service officer.

TOMSEN: Thank you. It really did help. I was fortunate to be on assignment in Beijing at the time. Anybody else would've done just as good or better a job and benefited that way. It was definitely a learning experience to witness Ambassador Hummel guiding the consequential negotiations to a successful conclusion. All four of us did receive a separate Superior Honor Award after completion of the negotiations.

The single biggest negotiating challenge was to balance Chinese demands on Taiwan arms sales limitations with U.S. demands that China not resort to force to resolve the Taiwan issue, but rather follow a peaceful resolution approach. We could not accept a specific termination date for arms sales to Taiwan. We could not depart from the ambiguity upholding Taiwan's status as an unofficial political entity. The Taiwan

Relations Act was U.S. law. Ambassador Hummel was occasionally compelled to remind the Chinese side that no president of either political party would, politically, be able to accept the Chinese demand for a U.S. date certain to terminate arms sales to Taiwan.

Our initial draft presented to the Chinese by Ambassador Hummel at the first round of talks made specific reference to the Chinese promulgated 1981 9-point plan for peaceful reunification with Taiwan. Highlighting China's public declaration to achieve a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan problem was important for two reasons. One, it implied China's intention to avert a war over Taiwan, an important U.S. objective. The second was that, in the communique's text, it was the Chinese themselves and not the U.S. unilaterally, calling for a peaceful resolution.

This gave opportunity to link limits on the level of future U.S. arms sales to Taiwan with China's continuation of its policy of peaceful reunification. That linkage implied that China's veering away from its commitment to peaceful reunification would precipitate more U.S. arms sales to Taiwan. It left ambiguous the U.S. option to defend Taiwan should China prepare to invade the island.

About 3 months into the 1982 negotiations, Jay Taylor and I located another authoritative Chinese declaration to reunify with Taiwan peacefully. That was "The Message to Compatriots in Taiwan" issued by China on January 1, 1979 -the day the Normalization Communique was promulgated. It, too, described China's "fundamental policy" to strive for peaceful reunification with Taiwan. The Chinese side accepted our proposal to include the Message's "peaceful" resolution wording in the communique, side by side with China's 9-point peaceful reunification plan.

Q: Is it correct that at this point, the U.S. agrees to continue to provide military supplies to Taiwan but always in a ratio and at a level of technology lower than what the Chinese have? Or am I not remembering that correctly?

TOMSEN: Excellent question. The limitations on arms transfers in the '82 communique would center on quantity and quality, not levels of technology or quotas. The communique's linkage of limiting future U.S. arms sales and China's peaceful approach to reunification was the fundamental objective.

There were other issues in the nine-paragraph communique that Ambassador Hummel and DCM Chas Freeman negotiated with the Chinese side over an 8-month period. I won't go into detail. The essential linkage of Chinese peaceful policy with U.S. limited arms sales appears in paragraphs 4, 5 and 6.

Q: Were the members of their negotiating team from different parts of their government, or were they all just straphangers from the foreign ministry?

TOMSEN: The core of their negotiating team was from the foreign ministry. I presume the others were un-uniformed representatives of the PLA, plus communist party and intelligence officials.

Q: The reason I ask is because of my experience of negotiation in the OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) –55 countries– on very low-level military transparency measures. I would sit in the chair and behind me were representatives literally from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Office of the Joint Chiefs, typically one representative from the State Department’s NATO office who was just there as a visitor; a member of the Congressional OSCE commission, and other agencies periodically. So the U.S. negotiating delegation would typically be composed of many people on a very low-level negotiation. Part of the reason was so they could report back to their agencies separately from the report that I would send back to the department. That’s why I wondered if those people were there so they could tell all the agencies of the Chinese bureaucracy, “Yes, our foreign ministry is holding the line.”

TOMSEN: Exactly. Especially back to the Chinese Communist Party, the Chinese military and other conservative parts of the foreign policy bureaucracy. Their representatives, presumably, would give their impression of the talks to their supervisors after each session. The leadership deliberations after those briefings may have contributed to the slow negotiating progress during the initial months of the negotiations.

To speed up negotiations, Ambassador Hummel and Chas proposed that parallel small group talks be initiated in an “informal channel.” The small group would search for language to bridge gaps and find common ground. The Chinese side agreed.

Chas managed the small group negotiating sessions, often over lunch at his DCM residence. Chas’ counterpart was MFA’s America’s Department Chief, Zhang Zai. Jay’s counterpart was Zhang Zai’s deputy, Zhang Wenpu. My counterpart was a third tier official in the America’s Department, Wang Li.

The small group meetings made gradual but genuine progress. The formal sessions grew fewer and fewer.

The common ground wording formulations agreed to in the small group meetings were sent upwards to higher levels in the U.S. and Chinese government. Often the response from Washington would be, “that part’s OK, this part isn’t, let’s keep trying.”

It was a miracle that the highly secret chain of command in Washington never leaked! In the EAP Bureau, Bill Rope, the China Director, and his boss, Assistant Secretary John Holdridge, supervised the negotiations. As far as I knew, those following the talks in Washington above Holdridge were limited to Secretary of State Shultz, NSC Advisor Judge Clark, President Reagan and Vice President Bush. Jay Taylor stated in his oral history that NEOCON Paul Wolfowitz, Director of State’s Policy Planning Office, was one of the leakage risks -he was kept out of the loop.

Chas and Bill Rope communicated through the O-I back-channel using romanized renditions of Chinese words in the pinyin alphabet. Bill was responsible for clearing agreed language with the select U.S. officials monitoring the negotiations in State and the

White House. Chas's interpreter-level Chinese was critical to narrowing differences with the Chinese side. Have you ever worked with Chas in the Department?

Q: No, I've only read –recently in the last year- he's done some public lectures and is still brilliant about all of the strategic interests of the U.S. right now, how we need to work on them both in the immediate and long terms. Clearly, a top thinker.

TOMSEN: Yes. By May (1982), the two sides had made enough progress in the negotiations for the embassy to propose a visit by Vice President Bush to clear the final obstacles in the communique draft. The Vice President brought three personal letters from President Reagan addressed to Deng Xiaoping, Communist Party Chief Hu Yaobang, and Premier Zhou Ziyang. The letters nicely stressed the importance President Reagan attached to the Sino-American relationship.

Deng's cordial reception of Vice President Bush indicated his willingness to generally accept the balance in the communique text, end the freeze in the relationship, and get back to the broad agenda of building U.S.-Chinese relations.

In retrospect, we can conclude that Deng probably had concluded that the Americans were never going to accept China's demand that we set a date certain for ending Taiwan arms sales. The intractability of this issue was holding back the potential U.S. contribution to his long-term vision of implementing China's 4 modernizations. Deng told visitors that Taiwan's reunification could be postponed. His "hide and bide" approach honored Sun Tzu's advice: "Let your plans be dark and as impenetrable as night, and when you move, fall like a thunderbolt."

Q: Looking back on this notion of China's typical long-term view –China is a country that when I was in college, our professors all said, "China always takes a long-term view." Whatever it does now has to be consistent with what it's going to accomplish in many years. So, this would include the eventual reversion of Hong Kong and Taiwan. Do you think as far back as when you were doing these negotiations, it was already thinking about increasing its control over the South China Sea and other expansions of China's influence in the world?

TOMSEN: Yes. And also well before my first 1981-83 period in Beijing. During this first assignment I bought a Chinese language map in a bookstore in Beijing –today it remains tucked away in a bookshelf in our basement. The large 1940s-type cloth map of Asia depicts the famous 9-stroke line encompassing the entire South China Sea and the large island of Taiwan. Then, as now, Chinese media articles repeat the refrain that, "the South China Sea has been China's since time immemorial."

During the 1980's Chinese leaders held back on raising the subject in international meetings. Throwing out this hot potato during China's Opening to the outside world would damage its outreach to important Asian trading partners and the U.S.

Better to wait, to hide and bide. Restrain the nationalistic temptation to reclaim the long list of “lost” territories until China has accumulated military power sufficient to re-assert its territorial claims. I would not be surprised to hear that there exists another 9-stroke map hidden somewhere in Chinese archives, one claiming territory from Siberia through Central and South Asia down to the Bay of Bengal!

Chinese authors recall that, off and on during China’s long history (mostly off, in fact) many of China’s current 14 neighbors had been vassals of the Middle Kingdom –sending annual tribute caravans to the suzerain emperor of China.

After a brief Sino-Russian War in 1689 that China won, Russia and China signed the Treaty of Nerchinsk. The Russians acknowledged Chinese control of the Amur River Valley up to the Stanovoy Mountain range in Central Siberia. When Chinese power receded in the 19th century, Russia ignored the treaty. It occupied the Amur basin north of the Amur, also today’s Russian Far Eastern region on the Pacific. China was compelled to sign 2 “Unequal” treaties, including the 1860 of Peking, surrendering those territories to Russia.

Contemporary Chinese official statements and articles chastised the 1860 “unequal” Treaty of Peking. Deng also described the 1950 Sino-Soviet Treaty, signed by Mao in Moscow, as unequal. Since the 1962 Sino-Indian War, China has claimed Indian-occupied territory in Ladakh. Smaller countries bordering Tibet had previously been suzerains of the Middle Kingdom –Nepal, Burma, Tajikistan, for example. In a meeting with a Japanese delegation, Deng once recalled that one of his schoolteachers in Sichuan province had pointed to Mongolia on a wall map, describing it as a missing clover leaf ripped from China’s clover plant.

Q: Would you include Vietnam as one of those?

TOMSEN: Yes. China ruled Vietnam for 1,000 years. China’s goal today is to compel Vietnam to accept Chinese regional paramountcy and especially not to challenge it. China taught Vietnam a “lesson” in the brief 1980 border war with Vietnam to drive that entitlement home. Of course, the Vietnamese emphatically reject China’s regional preeminence. China also sought to teach India a “lesson” when it launched the Sino-India border war in 1962.

Q: North Korea as well?

TOMSEN: Certainly, and South Korea too. North Korea today is a quasi-protectorate of China, countering U.S. and Japanese influence in Northeast Asia.

Going back to the communique, the final draft was ready for formal approval by the two governments in late July, 1982. That coincided with my long-delayed 2-week vacation. I flew back to Washington with my family.

The next working day, I went into the Department where Bill Rope commandeered me to work with him and EAP Assistant Secretary Holdridge to prepare the White House package containing the final version of the 1982 communique. Secretary Shultz signed off on the package. It was sent to NSC Director Judge Clark in the White House.

A mini-crisis occurred when the package landed on the President's desk. President Reagan used his customary black magic marker-type pen to cross out the carefully crafted U.S. compromises in the communique. He retained the Chinese compromises intact.

I never learned the reasons why the President later reversed his initial rejection of the communique's balance of compromises. Things took a turn for the better a week later when the President began his own late summer vacation at his ranch in California. Judge Clark -former Deputy Secretary of State, now NSC Advisor, an old California friend of Reagan's, and his long-time ally in California State politics- convinced the President to approve the communique with no changes.

Kim and our 2 daughters returned to Beijing when our U.S. vacation ended. I stayed on.

I was supervising a renovation project on a family home in Ohio when Bill Rope phoned from Washington. He asked that I immediately return. In his office the following afternoon, he informed that the President had approved the draft "as is." The CIA was now in the loop. It was miffed that it had not been in the loop beforehand. They wished to add some wording. Bill described it as "just cosmetic" -but it will satisfy their desire for "a piece of the action." Once received, the CIA fix would round out Washington's approval of the communique.

Bill told me to leave the next day on the late afternoon Pan Am flight from Dulles to New York and onward to China with the draft communique and his personal note to Chas. The embassy and the Chinese MFA were scheduling a meeting the following morning with Deng Xiaoping to put Deng's personal stamp of approval on the communique.

Bill said he would phone the CIA additional language to me for insertion in the communique text at New York's JFK airport before I flew to Tokyo.

I booked seats on the late afternoon Pan Am flight to JFK and JFK to Tokyo. The Pan Am Tokyo to Beijing flight was full. I phoned Kim at her Pan Am office in Beijing to clear that hurdle.

I packed my suitcase and left for the airport with the communique folder. While waiting at JFK for my Beijing flight, a message was read out over the airport's Intercom loudspeaker: "Would Peter Tomsen please go to the Blue Phone." I had never heard of the Blue Phone. Have you?

Q: No. Even at an airport, just to be able to hear your name over the ambient noise was something.

TOMSEN: Yes. I scouted out one of the airport's blue phones on the wall of a corridor near the Pan Am departure gate. Bill was on the line when I picked it up. He read to me the CIA's brief phrase which I inserted into the communique's text, then boarded the Pan Am flight to Tokyo. Kim had arranged a seat for me on the onward late-night Pan Am flight from Tokyo to Beijing.

The next morning, Ambassador Hummel, Chas, Jay and I called on Deng Xiaoping in the Great Hall of the People. Foreign Minister Huang Hua, Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Wenjin and 4 other members of the Chinese negotiating team were seated in easy chairs fanning out from Deng's right; the four of us occupied the easy chairs fanning out from Deng's left.

Chairman Deng was in a jocular mood. He complimented the communique. He joked that it was a good outcome because he had told Foreign Minister Huang Hua what to put in the communique. The Chinese and American negotiating teams present roared with laughter.

Deng then unexpectedly switched topics from the communique to a Chinese tennis player, Hu Na. Hu Na had recently participated in a tennis match in Florida and afterwards asked for political asylum in the U.S. Deng requested that the U.S. "return" Hu Na to China.

To his credit, Ambassador Hummel immediately realized that Hu Na's situation would become an irritant in U.S. relations with China. A frank answer to Deng's request was necessary. The ambassador described the division of powers in the U.S. Constitution. Hu Na probably already had a lawyer who would present her asylum case to a court.

The Executive Branch would present its opinion on her case to the judicial branch. The courts would have the final say in deciding whether she could stay in the U.S.

Deng periodically observed in meetings with American visitors that "you Americans don't have one government. You have three governments!" He repeated his request that the U.S. government return Hu Na to China.

The next morning official Chinese and English-language newspapers and radio broadcasts led with the headline: "Give us back Hu Na!"

Bill Rope worked furiously and successfully to obtain INS (Immigration and Nationality Services) support for granting Hu Na humanitarian refugee status –not political asylum. She was a pampered athlete and was not being persecuted in China.

William French Smith, the Attorney General and another close friend of the President, snatched away Bill's bureaucratic victory. Responding to a question at a press conference, he stated that the State and Justice Departments had recommended that he approve humanitarian refugee status for Hu Na. On the spot, he announced that he would personally change that to political asylum!

Later in the day, when asked for his opinion, President Reagan told reporters that if Attorney General Smith had not resolved the problem, “I would have adopted her as my own daughter!”

Q: Wow!

TOMSEN: For weeks, all Chinese invited to embassy diplomatic and social functions called to regret that they couldn’t make it.

Q: In fairness, the political asylum was the right decision legally because she was on U.S. soil and had good reason to believe she would be persecuted should she return.

TOMSEN: Political asylum or humanitarian parole, the U.S. government had approved her residing in the U.S. and not returning to China.

During these early years of China’s Opening to the outside world, the Hukuang Railways bonds issue became another example where the Chinese came smack up against our division of powers and the existence of an independent judiciary. There were 15 American investors, including some descendants of the original investors, that had bought Hukuang Railways bonds in the 1920s, to build a railroad from Canton to Beijing. It seemed a good investment. There was unrest in China but the economy was growing. Then the Japanese invasion in 1931 occurred, followed by 2 decades of civil war and internal instability. The Communists won the Mainland in 1949. The Nationalists fled to Taiwan.

After the Sino-American 1979 normalization of relations with China, the 15 investors went to a federal district court in Alabama and asked for principal and interest to be paid for the years since the payments on the bonds had been cut off.

As you know, international law mandates that the PRC, as the successor government, had to honor the bonds. When this was raised, Chinese government officials went ballistic. The PRC had repudiated all debts of the Nationalist regime in 1949 when it assumed control of the mainland. The investors could not sue the Republic of China regime on Taiwan since it no longer controlled the mainland.

For about 3 years, the Chinese government futilely demanded that the State Department intervene with U.S. courts to resolve the issue. The embassy advised the Chinese to hire legal counsel in the U.S. to dismiss the case in U.S. courts. Eventually they did. The case was dismissed.

When we left China, we took the Trans-Siberian Railroad. It took five days to cross the taiga and European Russia to Moscow. We continued on to the United States where my next assignment was the Senior Seminar.

Q: That would have been the end of ’82?

TOMSEN: 1983. The Senior Seminar convened in early September 1983. Secretary of State Shultz presided over our class graduation in June 1984.

Q: It's November 16th and we're resuming with Ambassador Tomsen in the Senior Seminar.

TOMSEN: The Senior Seminar. For a few years it was called the Executive Seminar. It then switched back to the Senior Seminar.

Q: Take a moment to say what the objective of the Senior Seminar is.

TOMSEN: The mission of the Senior Seminar was to prepare State Department and other National Security seminar members to carry out higher level management responsibilities in their agencies. Like most of the other 24 members, I had recently been promoted into the lowest rung of the 4-level Senior Foreign Service, the OC or Consular rank. State Department OCs comprised a plurality of the class.

Senior officers of equivalent to or higher than Consular rank from DOD, DIA, USIA, USAID, NSA and the FBI also attended. I guess the assumption was that seminar members had just entered the senior ranks and had a decade or more of executive management jobs before retiring. The interagency composition of the seminar assumed that interagency coordination at higher levels was important to U.S. foreign policy success.

One objective of the seminar was to re-expose us to our country, its history, culture and society –in short, to give us a ground level view of the America we were representing abroad.

Let me read from a Department statement on the Seminar's purpose: "At the end of the 10-month period, the officer is expected to be able to take up a position of high responsibility and to bring to it the broader views and skills derived from the seminar."

The curriculum stresses the inter-relationship between domestic, foreign, and national security policy. The program includes lectures, extensive reading, case studies, field trips, in-house discussions, and the preparation of individual research reports.

"Substantively, members are expected to acquire a comprehensive knowledge during the seminar of the three principal elements of the course: domestic affairs; international affairs; and national security policy, all of which will be integrated and will be important to their carrying out their future responsibilities."

The Senior Seminar was housed in the old FSI building in Rosslyn near the Potomac River and Key Bridge. We were on the top floor, seated in front of the speakers' rostrum. Outside speakers or seminar members individually would deliver lectures and answer questions during morning and afternoon sessions. I was assigned the topic of global

East-West relations for my turn at the rostrum. The majority of outside lecturers invited to speak to the seminar were from the private sector –for example, from the expanding hi-tech industry, education, energy, human rights and civil rights organizations.

Leaving the seminar at 4:00pm occasionally was a welcome departure from the weekends and after-hours (8pm or 9pm) demands that routinely kept us at our State Department desks. On Saturdays I jogged with our older daughter, Kim-Anh, on the colonial-era canal path from Key Bridge running parallel north parallel with the Potomac River into Maryland. Our habit was to wander Georgetown streets afterwards and have lunch at the Little Tavern restaurant on Wisconsin Avenue.

The extra afternoon hours allowed me to coach our younger daughter's, Mai-Lan, soccer team. Getting to know the girls on the soccer team and their parents was a joy. I had played soccer in junior high and knew something about the sport.

I ordered a number of training tapes at the local library to do a better job coaching. Our team did not rank high during the first season that I coached in the fall of '83. In the next Spring season, the team had developed quite well and we came in second, just enough to qualify for a nice trophy for each player.

After the final game, one of the wealthier families among Mai-Lan's team-mates provided their multi-acre property for a picnic and a parents-team soccer match. There was an informal ceremony where I handed out second place trophies to each player. Then the players played the parents. The team won.

Q: The whole work-life balance difficulty when you are in more senior positions.

TOMSEN: Yes! And the long hours at work never again permitted an opportunity like this one!

Individual members of the seminar were given responsibility for planning an excursion outside Washington. We took one-week trips every month to a different part of the country or to a military base. For example, during our Midwest visit, each seminar member spent a day and an overnight in rural Minnesota at the home of a farm family. We then separately accompanied nighttime patrols with a policeman in Detroit city. General Motors executives gave us informative lectures on the car industry on the top floor of their Detroit office building. Community organizers in Detroit described plans for revitalizing the city's economy.

Q: In that regard, when you did your one-week trips to various places, would they be to let's say groups that were already interested in international relations? For example, an international relations council of X city, or the international relations group of the chamber of commerce, those sorts of groups. Or were they more domestic groups that were going to hear from you, from Washington, for the first time on international relations?

TOMSEN: Both. There were foreign trade and investment events during each visit. Those topics were also highlighted in our meetings with governors, mayors, bank directors, corporate CEOs and farmers.

Let me give the example of our trip to the South. We went to Atlanta and then to Miami. We flew Delta, which is headquartered in Atlanta. In Atlanta, our schedule included events on foreign trade, investment, civil rights and domestic American politics. We visited CNN and Coca Cola headquarters. Andrew Young, Atlanta's mayor, Civil Rights leader and former UN ambassador devoted a day to familiarizing us with Atlanta, its history and plans for the future.

A tourist guide took us on a bus ride through the city –including the predominantly African American areas of Atlanta where Martin Luther King and other famous African Americans had grown up and played important roles in American history. We exchanged views with regional economic leaders at a reception hosted by the Southeast Regional Economic Forum. An afternoon session with the Atlanta Foreign Relations Council centered on U.S. relations with the Caribbean and Latin America. The chairman of the Federal Reserve southern region briefed us on the economy of the south.

One illuminating event was a two-hour discussion with Dean Rusk. Rusk's Foreign Service geographic focus was East Asia. He rose to be Secretary of State during the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations. He was born in a rural Georgia county –age 75 when we met. Age had not diminished his wisdom or his memory. His presentation on the buildup to the Korean War was fascinating. He acknowledged mistakes that he and others had made on Vietnam. His son, as I remember, had been one of the younger leaders of the 1960s Civil Rights organizations when Rusk was Secretary.

I wrote down Rusk's answers to questions:

- Vietnam: He warned against isolation in the wake of the Vietnam War.
- China: He cautioned against playing the China Card –and warned that the Chinese won't let us play it. They will do what they consider in their best interests –both points Kissinger would later stress.
- CIA internal organization: The CIA, he warned from his experience, should not be allowed to misuse its internal intelligence analysis research wing (then the Directorate of Intelligence, DI) to routinely justify the Agency's Covert Operations wings (DO) clandestine operations. Rusk advocated a wall separating the 2 CIA Directorates. DI independently and objectively, on its side, should evaluate the merits of DO operations and the DO claimed results of its operations-not just rubber stamp them.

Q: The cowboys.

TOMSEN: Yes. The cowboys. DO operating as it wished without oversight has too often damaged U.S. interests.

Later in Afghanistan I found Rusk's warning prophetic! The "covert" DO clandestine wing pressured the analysis DI wing to rationalize their counter-productive strategy that provided most U.S. covert weapons to the radical Mujahidin factions that Pakistan later molded into the anti-American Taliban. That opened the path leading to 9/11.

I was sorry to see that John Brennan, President Obama's choice to lead the CIA, was allowed to amalgamate the CIA's covert action and analytical research arms. That was a huge mistake!

On the Middle East and Third World generally: Rusk advised against forcing military solutions on governments and groups in violent conflict with one another –especially if it's a religious war. He said we cannot impose U.S. military solutions on local conflicts that are essentially political.

After the meeting with elder statesman Rusk, our Atlanta hosts took us to the cyclorama of the Battle of Atlanta. I don't know if you've been there.

Q: I have not been to that cyclorama but there are others about the Civil War that I have been to, so I know how it's laid out. They're impressive.

TOMSEN: My great-grandfather was wounded at the 1864 Civil War battle of Pickett's Mill north of Atlanta. Today, Pickett's Mill is a Georgia State battlefield park. Kim and I visited the park. A Union general ordered his 49th Volunteer Ohio Regiment and several other Ohio and Indiana regiments to charge up a ravine and attack a line of Texas and Arkansas militia firing down on them. They lost over half of their regiment.

From Atlanta we flew to Miami. Our first stop was the Miami Coast Guard base. An admiral and his staff briefed us on the Coast Guard's interdiction of drug smuggling into Florida. He also contrasted the Haitian and Cuban refugee issues. The Greater Miami Area IVP (International Visitor Program) Committee briefed us on IVP programs in the southeast. A roundtable discussion with the Florida State Department of Commerce focused on overseas trade and investment. We attended a lecture on Florida's relations with Latin American countries. Another roundtable with members of Miami's diverse Spanish-speaking communities was excellent.

Other week-long trips took us to the Southwest, to Canada and to major U.S. military bases around the country.

Mid-way through the Senior Seminar, the Department paneled me for my next assignment –Director of the India, Nepal, Sri Lanka Office inside the Near East South Asia Bureau- NEA/INS. India was the centerpiece of INS. Population 1.1 billion, second only to China. The largest democracy in the world. Army of 1.2 million. Geographically India occupies most of the South Asian subcontinent.

INS was one of the sleepy corners of the NEA Bureau. During the previous 12 years, U.S.-Indian relations during Mrs. Gandhi's leadership had remained in the doldrums.

There was only one India Desk Officer in INS –in contrast to the 8 officers managing U.S.-China relations in the East Asia Bureau.

I wrote my Senior Seminar research paper on the challenge of improving India’s poor image in Congress. That would be essential if Indo-U.S. relations were to improve. I chose the topic: “Congressional Perspectives of India.”

Whenever possible, I found time away from our senior seminar schedule to interview Members of Congress and congressional staffers in their offices on Capitol Hill. The length of the paper -26 pages- might be equivalent to a paper written by a State Department officer on a 2 semester academic assignment. Did you write a paper during your year of senior training?

Q: I went to NDU (National Defense University), which does have you write but not long pieces. More memo-oriented shorter works.

TOMSEN: Research....

Q: I should also add – NDU has a slightly different mission from the other service war colleges, because at them you do write a longer piece when you’re there for a year. They do want to get the officer a fair amount of background in doing research, writing, pulling it all together with policy and having the background of knowledge of the resourcing of whatever the policy is, which of course the military gets into in great detail with logistics and so on. NDU is much more Joint-Chiefs oriented with the notion of developing more of the leadership and interagency skills. So that’s why they don’t really have the students do the longer papers.

TOMSEN: In the case of the Senior Seminar, we had ample time off to call on members of Congress and their staffs, also on Executive Branch officials dealing with Indian issues. State and Commerce were supportive of improving ties with India. So were Harry Barnes, our ambassador in New Delhi, and Indian ambassador Shankar Bajpai in Washington.

At the time, the Indian media and foreign policy elite showed signs of worry that India was isolating itself from global economic and geo-political trends. U.S. relations with Pakistan were expanding in all areas to resist the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. U.S. military assistance to Pakistan, including F-16s, was massive. So was economic aid.

Mrs. Gandhi’s London School of Economics “Socialism” stifled Indian economic progress. The state must occupy the commanding heights of the economy! India’s technology sector was moribund –in contrast to impressive technology advances in many Asian countries, including China. Backward Soviet technology could neither fill the technology gap nor offer the trade, investment and market access for Indian products that the U.S. economy could.

Q: So the light was slowly coming on in India that if it's going to have a more robust economy, it's going to have to think outside of its narrow "dependencia" non-alignment box?

TOMSEN: Exactly. The U.S. was the leader among Western nations and Japan in technology. If we encouraged our allies not to provide hi-tech to India (because it would go to the Soviet Union), then India would also find technology doors closed there as well. India did buy French Mirages, but was otherwise stuck with Soviet weapons. India had to open the treasure chest of American technology. The U.S. consumer market also beckoned!

Washington's resistance to improving U.S. relations with India was strongest in Congress --among staffers as well as Members. Let me give you some examples. A House Appropriations Committee staffer told me that the only claim India has on U.S. assistance is 700,000,000 starving people. Another staffer thought that liberals on the Hill who in the past had been more sympathetic to India have found it less opportune to do so after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. India continued in the annual UN General Assembly to vote with Soviet Eastern European satellites and third world Soviet proxies to support the Soviet position on Afghanistan.

Senator Helms and his Agriculture Committee staff's 1983 hosting of exiled Sikh Khalistan leader, Jagjit Singh Chauhan, infuriated Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and the Indian government. Radical Sikhs like Chauhan were supporting a Sikh campaign to turn the northern Indian state of Punjab into an independent state of Khalistan.

The Indians considered Chauhan a terrorist. Helms invited him to testify before his Senate agriculture committee. The Indians protested. An FBI investigation uncovered no evidence that Chauhan had participated in terrorist acts. The State Department approved Chauhan's visa. He was well received in Congress and visited several Sikh communities around the United States.

A hearing on China and India conducted by Clarence Long, a southern committee chairman in charge of the important Foreign Ops Sub-Committee of the House Appropriations Committee showed just how far India's stock had fallen in Congress. Speaking to an administration Executive Branch official testifying before his committee, Long declared: "I think we can make a better case for helping even the economic development of Red China than we can for India."

My interviews with Members of Congress and Hill staffers did reveal scattered interest in improving relations with India. But the willingness demanded concurrent Indian outreach. My first call in the Senate was on Senator Patrick Moynihan whom I had worked under when Moynihan was U.S. ambassador in India. He invited me to lunch in his personal Senate office retreat. Our conversation gave him a rare opportunity to reminisce about his time in India.

The conversation was enlivened by Ambassador Moynihan's famous sense of humor and a number of mid-day martinis.

An aide wheeled in a square dining table for two into his office. It was covered by an attractive set of china and silverware and glasses over a white tablecloth, not to mention a tasty menu of chicken and greens. Desert followed.

Senator Moynihan recalled that there had been only 10 American businessmen in India when he departed in 1975. He advised me to concentrate on the few senators and their staffs who still showed some interest in India –Sarbanes, Hatch, Glenn, Mathias and Danforth. They shared his own view that India's perseverance as a Democracy contrasted with the post-independence demise of democracy underway in a series of low-income states slipping into authoritarianism. India's potential as an export market, trade and investment destination now looked bleak. That could change.

I followed up and interviewed senators, congressmen and key staffers who had demonstrated interest in India. In the House, New York Democrat Steve Solarz, in particular, championed improved ties with India. Also, Washington State Congressman Joe Prichard -who invented the game of Pickleball!

My seminar paper concluded that India's pockets of supporters on the Hill would need to expand if there was to be major improvement in Indo-U.S. relations. Mrs. Gandhi's image as an accomplice of the Soviet Union on the world stage remained a sore spot. So was her government's reluctance to open up India's economy to resident foreign business offices, foreign trade and investment. That would increase U.S. business and congressional interest in India. Given the obstacles, any improvement in the relationship would only come gradually, step by step, over years, not months.

I deduced that Prime Minister Gandhi was the main obstacle to improving relations with India. She thought and acted politically. Her pro-Soviet tilt abroad and Harold Laski-style economic centralism at home offered little prospect for real progress in the short run. The most promising initiatives to jump start positive momentum were in commercial, economic and technology areas. That required pragmatic economic adjustments on the Indian side – opening the Indian market for trade and investment, loosening government controls, for example.

I considered the Senior Seminar a well- designed and executed training interagency program to prepare mid-level executives for higher responsibilities. Personally, I was disappointed that Secretary of State Colin Powell abolished it during the George W. Bush administration. Unfortunately, he also integrated the Civil (non-diplomatic) Service and the Foreign Service -something he would not have done with the U.S. military officer corps if he had been Secretary of Defense.

I replaced Victor Tomseth as Director of NEA/INS in July 1984. Before the Foreign Service, we had served as Peace Corps Volunteers in Nepal. We stayed in touch during our Foreign Service careers.

At that time, July 1984, the Office of India, Nepal, Sri Lanka Affairs (INS) plus the only other South Asia office -Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangla Desh (PAB)- were part of the Near East/South Asia-- NEA-- Bureau. Later, under congressional pressure, the Near East and South Asia wings of the NEA Bureau were separated. They became 2 distinct bureaus after I departed.

Herb Haggerty was the Director of the Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh Office (PAB). The NEA Front Office was on the 6th floor. INS and PAB were located side by side on the 5th floor. Herb's personal office and my office were separated by a wall and a door that opened up to our respective desks.

The wall symbolized the unremitting hostility between India and Pakistan. We humorously dubbed it the Wagah border crossing point. Wagah is one of the few fortified passageways for people and goods allowed to transit between India and Pakistan. India and Pakistan military garrisons guard each side of the long Indo-Pakistani border stretching from the Himalayas down to the Arabian Sea.

One day, John Gunther Dean, the U.S. ambassador-designate for India walked from my office through the Wagah border door into PAB. He saw Dean Hinton, the U.S. ambassador in Pakistan, leaning over Herb Haggerty's desk. Ambassador Hinton was talking to Herb. Dean, with an imaginary knife in his hand, ran over to the desk behind Hinton. In a playful manner, he drove the imaginary knife into Hinton's back. Loud laughter erupted in both PAB and INS offices.

Q: Now, at the heart of this contention between Pakistan and India, you have Kashmir. Are there other dividing points other than Kashmir?

TOMSEN: Yes. There are a couple of other disputed areas along the border: Jammu, south of Kashmir; also Kutch, closer to the Arabian Sea. They're not large in terms of territory. Kashmir is. And it's the most dangerous flashpoint of the continuing Indo-Pakistani geostrategic competition today. All 3 Indo-Pakistani wars started in Kashmir. But, Indo-Pakistani hatred goes far beyond Kashmir and specific border disputes. Its roots are historic grievances on both sides energized by conflicting religious and psychological animosities.

I was blessed with a terrific deputy, Steve Blodgett. Truly my alter ego, Steve ably coordinated with other Department offices when I was away or was tied up. He was an excellent editor of the drafts written by the 3 younger INS officers. The Indian, Sri Lankan and Nepal desk officers had only 2 or 3 previous assignments under their belts. Scott Delisi, the Nepal Desk Officer, stood out. He later rose to senior levels of the Foreign Service.

I added the sensitive issue of (Indian) Sikh terrorism to Scott's Nepal Desk portfolio.

India was the most important country in INS's 3-country focus. That was by dint of its continental size, huge population and growing regional military and economic capabilities. India's intractable geo-strategic confrontation with Pakistan and widespread poverty did not erase its status as the pre-eminent nation in South Asia. And, India was, and remains today, the largest functioning democracy in the world.

Sri Lanka had already been engulfed in civil war when I became INS Director. The majority Sinhalese Buddhist dominated the government and military. The Tamil Hindu minority were centered in the northern part of the island. The Tamils were badly persecuted by the Sinhalese majority. A Tamil insurgency had developed in the north. The insurgents drew resources and sympathy from Tamil Nadu, the ethnic Tamil part of southern India.

As usual in these ethnic and religious stand-offs, we urged a democratic bridge-building political compromise to end the civil war. Sri Lanka President Jayewardene was old, wise but also a doctrinaire Sinhalese nationalist.

Ambassador Reed and DCM Tomseth in Colombo and I with the Sri Lankan Ambassador in Washington pressed Sri Lankan officials to discard military suppression in favor of political negotiations with the Tamil minority. We pointed out that the government's hardline approach only strengthened the Tamil extremist guerilla campaign for independence in Northern Sri Lanka. Tamil suicide bombers struck government buildings and military bases in the capital of Colombo and surrounding regions.

Four months prior to my arrival, President Reagan's summit-level White House meeting with President Jayewardene offered a unique opportunity to persuade Jayewardene to pursue a peaceful settlement with Sri Lanka's Tamils. Vic Tomseth's INS prepared the 5" by 7" cards that President Reagan used in his high-level meetings. The talking points included a hefty increase in U.S. economic aid if the government emphasized compromise with the Tamils instead of suppression.

After the meeting, a White House aide phoned INS. He quoted the president coming out of the one-on-one conversation as saying: "Boy, that guy did all the talking!" So, the conversation was one-way. Jayewardene talked through the brief time allowed, insisting that the Sri Lankan government needed to militarily defeat the Tamil insurgency. Negotiations for a political compromise could come later.

Q: A quick comment. It is the embassy's responsibility in a situation like that to go in and talk to the president and say: "You're going to be meeting with Ronald Reagan. He's an extremely popular leader of the free world. Am I communicating with you? When you go in for this one opportunity to speak with the president of the United States, here's what you do." Apparently, whatever the ambassador told Jayewardene, Jayewardene paid absolutely no attention because if Reagan comes out and says "this guy did all the talking," that's not a good thing.

TOMSEN: That's correct. I assume that Jayewardene knew beforehand what President Reagan would say. In substance, Reagan would repeat the same recommendations for a political settlement with the Tamils that U.S. officials had for years propounded in Colombo and Washington. Anticipating this, Jayewardene filibustered the brief one-on-one meeting. He had no interest in a political settlement.

Sri Lankan leaders stuck to the military track. In 2009, the Sri Lankan army cornered and massacred tens of thousands of Tamil men, women and children in the northeast corner of the island. Sadly, today the ethno-nationalist Sri Lankan government's authoritarian rule, corruption and violation of human rights continue to impede the country's development.

Nepal was the third country INS focused on. There was also the Maldives, but nothing much happened there until seven years later when a coup overthrew the government.

Nepal was a relatively stable monarchy during my two years in INS. U.S. policy encouraged Nepal's absolute monarch, King Birendra, to adopt democratic and economic reforms. Birendra had studied in non-degree programs at Eton and Harvard. He did ease some restrictions on political organizations. He privately assured us that he would shift to a Bhutan-style constitutional monarchy.

But his pace of reforms was too slow. After I left INS, violent political riots broke out. In 2001, the then-Crown Prince Dipendra killed King Birendra, his father, and other members of the Royal Family at a family dinner. Shortly after ascending the throne, he committed suicide. The monarchy was abolished and Nepal became a republic in 2008.

As a Peace Corps Volunteer teacher in western Nepal during 1964-66, I took a personal interest in making the U.S. assistance program to Nepal more effective. I shifted several development programs from the more prosperous southern border with India zone into the roadless, mountainous, poorer middle zone of the country.

The Nepali Ambassador in Washington once invited me to an embassy dinner with the Nepal's UNGA delegation on its way to New York to attend the annual UNGA session. I was happy to reunite with one member of the delegation. He had been a student of mine at the college where I had taught. He now was head of the college! It had only 80 students when I was a Peace Corps Volunteer. The college had grown to 6,000 students when we met in Washington 20 years later!

During my time in INS, the Reagan Administration's main policy goal in the South Asian region was close coordination with Pakistan's military dictator, Zia ul-Haq, and the Afghan Mujahidin to roll back the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. The policy was working. The Mujahidin were expanding their control in all regions of the country. The Soviets were locked into an unwinnable guerrilla war with the Mujahidin supported by billions in CIA arms, ammunition and cash transferred to Pakistan's military intelligence agency, the ISI. The Soviets were looking for a face-saving way out. Later, a new Soviet Leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, would publicly announce Moscow's intention to withdraw.

Soon after arriving in INS in June 1984, the cable traffic from Delhi began to indicate that Indian foreign policy makers were worried that Indian support for the weakening Soviet occupation of Afghanistan was harming Indian interests in the region and the West. That concern rose when the Reagan Administration announced in 1984 a multi-year \$4.2 billion military aid package for Pakistan to include modern F-16 fighters.

A U.S. intelligence report revealed an internal Indian government analysis that the inevitable Soviet withdrawal would create an Indian nightmare of a Pakistan-backed radical Islamist regime in Kabul. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's 1982 visit to the U.S. improved the tone of Indo-U.S. relations. Progress on U.S. approval for fuel to a nuclear reactor in Bombay and World Bank loans to India was made. There were no improvements on political and military issues, including her government's continued defense of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

My INS predecessor, Vic Tomseth, and I were Peace Corps Volunteers in Nepal when we first met Ambassador to India, Harry Barnes, in Kathmandu 2 decades earlier. Harry was DCM. He spoke fluent Nepali. He had even learned the royal dialect spoken in the Nepali royal household! We kept in contact with Harry after entering the Foreign Service. He was a brilliant diplomat and a creative thinker.

Harry and Vic kept the official-informal "back channel" busy exchanging information and planning initiatives to get Indo-American relations off the ground. I continued that backchannel dialogue with Harry after replacing Vic.

Harry from Delhi and I from INS floated proposals for an inter-agency review of stalled Indo-U.S. relations. India's Soviet-aligned failing course in Afghanistan gave Indian policymakers reason to improve Indian relations with the U.S. We were skeptical that Mrs. Gandhi would change her pro-Soviet tilt. But, even a modest uptick in Indo-U.S. relations would weaken the Soviet position in South Asia during those Cold War years.

The White House circulated a secret South Asia policy memorandum instructing the State Department to take the lead in crafting National Security Defense Directive (NSDD) 147. NSDD 147 would lay the foundation for U.S. South Asian policy towards India and Pakistan during the remainder of Reagan's 2 terms, 1984-1989. Declassified from "Secret," you can find it today on the internet by simply googling "NSDD-147." President Reagan signed NSDD-147 on October 11, 1984.

The 2 main NSDD-147 objectives were (1)to improve U.S. relations with India while (2)improving Indo-Pakistan relations. Achieving these 2 goals would weaken the Soviet position in South Asia and accelerate the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan.

By 1984, U.S.-Pakistani relations were already on a steady upward course. Pakistan was the Frontline State backing the Mujahidin campaign to defeat the Soviet army inside Afghanistan. Improved U.S. relations with India would lessen military tensions along the Indo-Pakistani border. It would also reduce Pakistan's concerns about a 2-front war.

Pakistan would be free to keep its focus on assisting the Mujahidin to drive the Soviets out of Afghanistan.

The NSDD goal of improving Indo-Pakistani relations was as important as its twin goal of improving Indo-U.S. relations.

By pure chance, the NEA's South Asian DAS departed for an overseas assignment during the summer of 1984. His replacement's arrival was delayed. That gave me freer rein to coordinate directly with the NEA Front Office led by Assistant Secretary (Richard) Dick Murphy and senior DAS, Arnie Raphael, on the sixth floor. Also with Susan Johnson, Special Assistant to Under Secretary for Political Affairs, Mike Armacost, on the seventh floor. I wrote the initial draft of NSDD-147. Dick, Arnie, Susan Johnson and Herb Hagerty edited and signed off on the draft. We circulated the draft in the Department for interagency input and clearances.

The NSDD-147 draft focused on an overall transactional tradeoff. In return for India's improving relations with Pakistan and adjusting to a more balanced relationship between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, the U.S. *quid pro quos* would involve giving India access to a higher level of U.S. weapons and dual use technology, increased U.S. economic aid, and U.S. support for India's share of World Bank IDA low-interest loans.

NSDD-147 interagency negotiations were moving forward towards an NSC chaired senior level SIG (Senior Interagency Group) meeting when 2 game-changing tragedies struck India, one after the other.

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was ruthlessly assassinated by 2 of her Sikh bodyguards on October 31, 1984. The Sikh bodyguards were seeking revenge for her order to the Indian Army on June 4, 1984 -four months earlier- to attack the Sikh Golden Temple in Amritsar. Radical Sikh priests had fortified the Golden Temple. They demanded a separate "Khalistan" Sikh state. Hundreds were killed during the Indian Army's assault, including the Sikh leaders of the independence campaign.

Not long after the Sikh bodyguards assassinated Gandhi, a massive explosion tore apart the giant Union Carbide plant in Bhopal, central India. Four thousand people died, 550,000 were injured and 120,000 were seriously injured. An upwards of 50,000 were permanently disabled.

The Gandhi assassination and the Bhopal disaster turned our INS office into one of the busiest in the Department. Bloody Hindu anti-Sikh riots destabilized New Delhi and spread to other Indian cities. To his credit, Warren Anderson, the CEO of Union Carbide, decisively flew to Bhopal to personally alleviate the mass suffering from chemical poisoning at the still smoldering giant Union Carbide complex.

Subsequent Indian investigations concluded that the plant's 8 Indian managers -not Americans- had utterly failed to enforce standard safety protocols, causing the explosion. Instead of capitalizing on Anderson's arrival, the state governor imprisoned him, then

fled to New Delhi for his own safety. Pressure on the Indian government from Ambassador Barnes in New Delhi and our office in Washington led to Anderson's release from custody. He flew back to the U.S. and mounted a massive relief operation from the U.S.

Our office of 5, myself, Deputy Director Blodgett and Desk Officers for India, Nepal and Sri Lanka worked frantically to keep up with the rapid pace of events that unfolded in the aftermath of the 2 tragedies.

The same day that Mrs. Gandhi was assassinated I was called to Secretary of State Shultz' seventh floor office to brief him and respond to his questions. Within hours of the assassination, in the best South Asian dynastic tradition, Mrs. Gandhi's 40-year old son, Rajiv Gandhi, was appointed caretaker Prime Minister until he could be formally elected. Indian officials declared martial law in Delhi and clamped down on the spiral of anti-Sikh violence and looting in India's capital.

Before running upstairs to brief the Secretary, I quickly jotted down a list of initiatives that the U.S. could take to assist the Indian government to deal with the crisis. Also, to encourage India's new Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, to create a more positive direction in U.S.-Indian relations than we could have hoped for during his mother's rule. In this, my Senior Seminar paper on India contained a valuable grab bag of recommendations to use in the briefing. The draft NSDD-147 offered a roadmap for the way ahead.

Over the next few days Ambassador Barnes in New Delhi and our INS office conducted a furious exchange of (back channel) O-I messages filling out NSDD-147's economic, technology, military, high-level visits and other proposals that could foster a turnaround in Indo-U.S. relations with the new Indian government. The memos and policy papers flowed upstairs to the NEA Front Office. And then upwards to Susan Johnson in Mike Armacost P (Political Undersecretary) Office, also to other Department bureaus dealing with India.

One of our policy proposals was to build on an already envisioned official visit for Mrs. Gandhi to visit the U.S. the following year in June, 1985. The upcoming 8 months would provide ample time for both governments to agree on a detailed agenda for India's new Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit.

Most official high-level visits nicely burnish relations with other countries -lots of speeches and ceremonies. This one could be a visit that creates a long-term lasting upward curve.

There was good reason to believe that Rajiv Gandhi's background and the new generation he represented could shift India back to a more neutral non-aligned posture between the superpowers. Although he was one of hundreds of Congress Party MPs in Parliament, Rajiv Gandhi was not a politician. He was an Indian Airlines pilot by profession. He had attended Cambridge University in the U.K. where he met his Italian wife, Sonia. They had 2 young children.

The brutal methods Mrs. Gandhi's two Sikh assassins had used to assassinate her while during early morning, she walked through her garden to her office added fuel –and communal hatred-- to the violent anti-Sikh backlash. The violence plunged India's capital into chaos.

She had greeted her 2 Sikh bodyguards at her garden gate with the traditional hand-clasped bow and "Namaste" greeting. They responded by methodically shooting her -one of the pair by a pistol fired directly into her head. The second riddled her body with his Sten gun semi-automatic fire. The firing continued while she lay on the ground -30 bullets according to the autopsy. Other bodyguards shot and killed one of the assassins. The second assassin was later tried and hung.

Hindu mobs bent on vengeance flooded into the streets killing Sikh men, women and children whenever they could be located, shopping in stores, in vehicles, in their homes. I asked Harry to check on the safety of 2 Sikh families Kim and I had befriended during our tour in India. Fortunately, both families survived. One was taken in and protected by a Hindu neighbor.

Sadly, to this day, communal riots -usually Hindu versus Muslim- are not uncommon in India. The government uses military and police brute force to subdue the violence. The suppression of the late 1984 anti-Sikh riots followed that same pattern.

Q: It's November 18th and we are resuming with Ambassador Tomsen in NEA.

TOMSEN: As mentioned in our last interview, I was India, Nepal, Sri Lanka (INS) Country Director of a 5-person office when 2 shocking tragedies struck India in late 1984: the assassination of Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and the deadliest industrial accident in history -the explosion at the Union Carbide complex in Bhopal, central India, killed thousands and injured many more.

The South Asia DAS slot supervising South Asia, one of 4 DAS positions in Dick Murphy's Near East South Asia Bureau was empty. That made Dick and Arnie Raphael, the Bureau's PDAS, my *de facto* bosses whom I reported to. As usually occurred in the NEA Bureau, Dick and his Principal DAS, Arnie, were often preoccupied with the latest Arab-Israeli crisis or some other Middle East, Persian Gulf challenge of the day. Dick's and Arnie's management style, in any case, was to delegate down. They also gave me flexibility to operate directly with other offices inside State, with the White House NSC, and with other departments, including DOD. Of course, provided I kept Dick and Arnie informed and avoided, as is said, unpleasant "surprises."

To give an example of delegating down the bureaucratic ladder. The Indian-American community in the U.S. selected the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception -the largest Catholic church in North America located in Northeast Washington- to conduct a memorial service honoring Indira Gandhi's life. Secretary of State Schultz was invited to speak on behalf of the U.S. government. His office passed

down the invitation to Assistant Secretary Murphy who passed it to PDAS Arnie Raphael. Arnie phoned me at home the night before the morning service was scheduled. He anointed me to represent the administration and deliver the eulogy. "You should name yourself the Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary," he added.

My former boss in Beijing and close friend, Jay Taylor, and his wife Betsy, Kim and I formed the official U.S. government representation on the stage in the giant hall of the Immaculate Conception church. When invited to come to the rostrum and deliver my eulogy, I included a lovely Indian Hindi poem in my remarks. I presented it first in Hindi, then in English. The English translation:

During the journey of life
Travelers meet only to part
And they give memories
Which we recall
During moments of loneliness

I concluded my 10-minute eulogy reading aloud another Indian poem, again in successive Hindi and English translations. It is said in India:

Those who live for others
They never die
They are immortal

Q: That must have been moving for them. How many people would have the wherewithal to pull Hindi poetry out and even be able to speak it?

TOMSEN: Warren Unna, the Washington-based journalist for the Indian newspaper, *The Statesman*, wrote a favorable article that was carried by his newspaper in India. Retired U.S. Ambassador, Jane Coon, was in the audience and gave Arnie a favorable rundown. Otherwise, not many appeared to notice the eulogy. Mine was just one among many that morning.

Positive articles on Indo-U.S. relations were a rarity in India and in the U.S. during Mrs. Gandhi's time. Rajiv Gandhi's advent was an opportunity to raise popular trust and reduce skepticism harbored in the media and among politicians in both countries. The tough U.S. position against international terrorism -including against Sikh terrorist networks in the U.S.- would resonate well in both countries.

Sikh terrorists began searching for Indian government targets inside the U.S. after the Indian military's June 1984 assault on the Amritsar Golden Temple. FBI operations against Sikh terrorism were already a priority in late 1984 as Rajiv Gandhi settled into office. That heightened Indian confidence about improving Indo-U.S. relations.

Several weeks after Rajiv Gandhi (hereafter referred to as Gandhi) became prime minister -can't remember the exact date- an FBI Agent, we will call him by his first name, "John," contacted INS to request a confidential meeting.

Thus began a months-long threesome highly classified collaboration among John, myself and INS Nepal Desk Officer, Scott Delisi, who was responsible for Sikh terrorism in INS. The FBI operation foiled an attempt by 3 Sikhs residing in rural western New Jersey to assassinate the Indian Chief Minister of the northern Indian state of Himachal Pradesh in New Orleans.

Under the Indian constitution, chief ministers are *de facto* prime ministers of their states. The state governors are largely ceremonial. Chief Ministers govern Indian states after being chosen by the majority party of the state legislature. They wield real power. Not the governor.

The Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh had recently arrived in New Orleans to undergo an eye operation in the city. He had checked into a local hotel. The New Jersey Sikh terrorist cell tracked him to his New Orleans hotel. They planned to assassinate him.

"John" requested that we limit our coordination on the FBI operation to the three of us. He agreed to my request to brief Assistant Secretary Murphy and Under Secretary Armacost. They presumably kept Secretary Shultz updated, maybe some others in the Department as well. I never knew.

John informed us that an FBI undercover informer who owned a firearms store in New Jersey was monitoring the activities of the 3-man Sikh terrorist cell. After purchasing weapons from the store, John alerted us that the Sikh terrorists had begun driving South. Two days later, John communicated to us that they had bought a silencer in Alabama. A local Sikh taxi driver teamed up with them after their arrival in New Orleans.

At this point, things got dicey. FBI Agents visited the middle-aged Chief Minister in his hotel room. The FBI appealed to him to remain in his room -not to leave until after the Sikhs attempting to assassinate him had been arrested. But the Chief Minister was stubborn. He was willing to take a risk to visit his relatives who lived in New Orleans.

FBI Agents monitoring the situation traced him walking out of his room, down the elevator and out of the hotel. Just minutes later, the FBI arrested the 3 armed, now shaven, Sikh terrorists in the hall corridor outside his room. The Sikh taxi driver driving the getaway car was arrested on the street outside. The FBI also arrested the 5th Sikh member of the cell back in New Jersey.

After the arrests, the State Department Regional Diplomatic Security Officer in New Orleans was briefed on the operation. We coordinated with him and the FBI to arrange for the hospital to expedite the Chief Minister's eye operation. The Chief Minister was then promptly driven to the airport and flown to New York where he boarded an Air India international flight to New Delhi.

Our concern about further attempts on the Chief Minister's life was well-founded. I can't remember the precise day the next event in the Sikh terrorist drama occurred. It may have been on the same day the Chief Minister departed New Orleans. It may have been on his way to the airport, or after his departure the next day. The nurses at the hospital told the FBI that several tough-looking characters (later found to be shaven Sikh terrorists) were knocking on doors and entering rooms in the hospital looking for the Chief Minister.

The FBI uncovered their exfiltrated route by vehicle back to Vancouver, British Columbia. Vancouver was a hotbed of anti-Indian Sikh terrorism inside a large community of Canadian Sikh emigrants. Canadian Sikh terrorists from that area were later convicted of planting a bomb on Air India Flight 182 in June 1985. The bomb exploded while the airplane flew over the Atlantic towards London. All 329 passengers and crew on board perished.

I participated in the final phase of the New Orleans Sikh terrorist case -the trial of the 5 Sikh terrorists. The trial was conducted in an ancient New Orleans courthouse. I was a witness for the prosecution. When my turn came, I climbed up some narrow winding stairs into a one person, very fancy, Rococo-like, beautiful banister-ribbed witness box situated above the judge. He looked up at me when he asked questions. On the other side, to my right, I looked down on the 5 Sikh defendants glaring up at me. Each had his own American lawyer.

My testimony was helpful to the prosecution. In arguments to the judge, the American defense lawyers mistakenly dismissed the political importance of Chief Ministers in India. The Governor, they said, not the Chief Minister, was the source of authority in Himachal Pradesh. I explained how, constitutionally in India, the opposite was the case.

At the end of the trial, all five of the Sikh terrorists were convicted. The Diplomatic Security Officer in New Orleans told me that they would serve their sentences at an antiquated New Orleans parish Prison built in the early 19th century.

The FBI's demonstration of firm U.S. support for India's battle against Sikh terrorism served the NSDD-147's objective to restore trust in Indo-American relations.

Other NSDD recommendations called for increases in cabinet level visits both ways; exchanges of visits by legislators from each country; reducing India's military supply dependence on the Soviet Union; increasing U.S. and UN economic assistance to India; and relaxation of Department of Defense and Department of Commerce export license conditions for India.

The World Bank's concessionary IDA loan window was the single largest line item in the Indian foreign assistance budget. IDA's lucrative loans offer up to 50 years pay back at 2-3% interest rates. The U.S. traditionally supplied one-third of IDA's loan funds. Congressional displeasure with India's Soviet tilt and criticism of the U.S. had reduced India's share of IDA loans from 40% to 32% with anticipations of a further slide down to

25%. China's share was meanwhile rising. Increasing India's share of IDA assistance would be high on Rajiv Gandhi's agenda during his June 1985 official visit to the U.S.

In the months leading up to Gandhi's arrival, the vibes from both U.S. and India sides grew more positive. To the point that the visit stood a chance to generate an opportunity for a general reset in the Indo-U.S. relationship that had been in the doldrums for 15 years. We in INS worked closely with Ambassador Shanker Bajpai's embassy to make it a success. In Delhi, Harry coordinated with Indian leaders.

Ambassador Barnes reported from New Delhi that one of Prime Minister Gandhi's main priorities during his visit would be technology transfer. Gandhi viewed science and technology as crucial to India's future. One of his earliest actions was to bring an Indian-American electrical engineer and a Vice President of Rockwell International into his personal office. He would oversee the upgrade of computer and telecommunications industries in India. Gandhi publicly announced:

“There is an immense scope for the application of modern technology to solve many of our crucial problems. We need technology in a big way. The U.S. is pre-eminently the lane of high technology.”

NSDD-147 recognized the importance India attached to U.S. readiness to transfer technology to India. It called for an Indo-U.S. memorandum of understanding on technology transfer to be negotiated with India by November 1984. The NSDD advocated for “more cooperative technology transfer and arms sales procedures” in ways that would protect against the diversion of U.S. technology to the Soviet Union.

Unfortunately, during interagency meetings, Richard Perl, the Pentagon's Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy (ISP) and his deputy, Steve Bryant, paid no heed to the NSDD change in policy. Perl told reporters that he liked his bureaucratic nickname, “The Prince of Darkness.” He lived up to it by stonewalling loosening controls on technology transfers to India.

Perl insisted that his ISP representative chair the U.S. MOU negotiating team going to India in November 1984. We resisted. The White House supported the State Department's proposal that Ambassador Barnes chair the delegation.

I was part of the U.S. interagency delegation to New Delhi. The two ISP delegation members used the negotiations in New Delhi to obstruct relaxation of technology controls. They often excused themselves during the talks to call Perl or Bryant in Washington using unclassified phone lines to receive guidance. The Indians, no doubt, were listening. After the last day of talks, the ISP representatives returned to their hotel rooms. They arrived back at the embassy rather late the next morning.

During the nighttime hours the rest of the U.S. interagency delegation, including Commerce's export control office, put the final text of the MOU together. It appropriately balanced technology safeguards and export permits. We asked for Washington's approval

before the signing ceremony at the Indian External Affairs Ministry the next morning at 10:00 a.m., New Delhi time. ISP was on the classified cable's Washington distribution line. "We would assume," our cable containing the MOU stated, "Washington concurrence if no response arrives before the scheduled signing ceremony."

We received no response to our cable from Washington the following morning. Ambassador Barnes and the Indian Foreign Secretary signed the MOU at the External Affairs Ministry.

The MOU set the stage for over 20 technology, science and military sales' agreements signed during the next 2 years.

Q: Was there any blowback about the silence procedure you put Washington under? That usually is backwards. Usually, it's Washington that puts the delegation under a silence....

TOMSEN: You've seen this the other way?

Q: In other words, did ISP ever come back after the silence procedure and say: "What? What? You put a silence procedure on and we didn't get back to you? We're getting back now and we still don't like it" but it was too late?

TOMSEN: It was. It was too late. When the two ISP representatives on the team arrived at the embassy, they were surprised and angry. But, it was too late to prevent the signing.

Q: And the action stood. No one came back to rescue ISP in the interagency? Once it's signed, too late?

TOMSEN: Right.

Q: That was very well done.

TOMSEN: You've probably also used this tactic before! (Laughter). A number of these technology agreements helped provide uplift to Prime Minister Gandhi's official visit to Washington. They included 2 major science and technology agreements.

The bureaucratic dust-up with ISP over technology transfer controls was an exception to the rule. All other interagency offices involved were ready, if not enthusiastic, to re-engage with the world's biggest democracy. I had never -and never again during my career- witnessed the interagency collegiality that coalesced behind making Gandhi's visit a success. The NEA Front Office's Dick Murphy and Arnie Raphael supported our small INS "action office" every step of the way. In practice, no one was in charge. We had a coalition of the willing working hard to make the visit a success.

The 7th Floor's Susan Johnson, Under Secretary Armacost's Special Assistant for NEA, was crucial to maintaining the forward momentum. Her strategic advice on strengthening

the NSDD's South Asia overall emphasis, her substantive edits, and her direct interventions persuading doubting offices to sign on were crucial. Susan's telephone calls to other agency offices accelerated interagency approvals. The NSC's South Asian specialist, Shirin Tahir-Kheli, State Policy Planning Leo Rose and Jerry Leach were also key players in expediting clearances.

Mike Pillsbury, Special Assistant to DOD's Under Secretary Ikle, and Ron Zwart in DOD's Joint Chiefs of Staff bureaucracy were valuable allies in preparing the military initiatives for the Gandhi visit, including in keeping DOD's ISP at bay. Jerry Leach made the same contribution at State.

Q: Their (ISP's) main concern was the fear that the Soviets would get advanced technology that their office was meant to prevent?

TOMSEN: Yes. That was our concern as well. The NSC tasked the CIA to prepare a paper on this issue. The Agency produced a balanced guideline. It advocated clearances on a case-by-case basis.

Q: As far as you know at that time, did it work? The Indians did not leak the technology?

TOMSEN: During my time in INS I never saw an example of that, including in intelligence documents. I can't speak for afterwards. Then, as now, careful scrutiny -Reagan's trust but verify- watchword for the Soviets was followed. The Indians, also the Pakistanis for that matter, were no different from the Soviets in terms of close monitoring.

We inserted 3 special events into the Rajiv Gandhi visit schedule tailored to India's new prime minister's personal interests: an unclassified STARWARS briefing appealing to his interest in aerospace; his address to a Joint Session of Congress; and a visit to Houston with Vice President Bush that would include touring the NASA Space Center there.

A fourth highlight was the Indian Embassy sponsored Festival of India on the Washington Mall that had been timed to coincide with Gandhi's June 1985 visit.

I phoned the head of the U.S. STARWARS (Strategic Defense Initiative program, Lt. General James Abrahamson, in Arizona. I invited him to give an unclassified STARWARS briefing to Gandhi during his visit. He agreed with alacrity.

General Abrahamson delivered his briefing at the Indian Embassy. The Prime Minister was delighted. After the Gandhi delegation departed Washington, one of Defense Secretary Weinberger's assistants, General Colin Powell, phoned me in my office. With a mildly sarcastic tone, he reminded me that I had ignored the DOD chain of command when I phoned to invite General Abrahamson without DOD clearance beforehand. I acknowledged my error. He agreed that the briefing had been a success.

Our coalition coordinated with White house and Congressional staffs to arrange for Prime Minister Gandhi to address the Joint Session of Congress. Congressional staffers prepared the letter to President Reagan from House Speaker O'Neill proposing Gandhi's speech. The White House agreed. Capitalizing on Gandhi's interest in technology, we also scheduled a lecture by American scientists for the Prime Minister at the National Academy of Sciences next to the State Department.

Two "shockers" erupted on the morning of Gandhi's June 11, 1985 arrival in Washington.

The first was a mid-morning phone call from "John" at the FBI to inform me that FBI Director Webster would momentarily hold a press conference to announce the successful roundup of the Sikh terrorists in New Orleans. I pleaded with John to postpone the press conference. The publicity would crowd out the Administration's public relations announcement welcoming Prime Minister Gandhi to the U.S. John was sincere in his apologies but said it was too late and now beyond his control.

I rushed upstairs and asked Assistant Secretary Murphy to contact the FBI Director to postpone the press conference. But John was right. It was too late. The live broadcast of the Director's opening comments was already streaming on TV and the radio airways before Dick could pick up the phone. A few days after Gandhi's departure for India, the ambassador heading the Department Anti-Terrorism unit invited me to his office. In front of his staff seated around his conference room table, he gave me a dressing down for keeping him out of the loop about the FBI operation. Embarrassed and resentful, I could only respond that it was not my choice as to who was qualified to be read in. He agreed with my statement that the operation had been a complete success.

The second event that same morning was a Washington Post front page article –actually a great scoop- publicizing a Pentagon-sourced leaked list of the new Indo-U.S. military initiatives that would be announced during Gandhi's visit. (I immediately guessed who the leaker was but kept that to myself.)

Very early in the morning, I met and escorted the Indian Charge d'Affaires, Peter Sinai, to Under Secretary Mike Armacost's office to deliver the Indian government's protest about the leak. Mike could only say that he, too, was "mortified" by the leak. Of course, both he and Sinai knew that leaks in Washington were not an uncommon phenomenon.

Neither the FBI announcement nor the leak to the Washington Post interrupted the pervasive optimism in the air surrounding Gandhi's arrival in Washington. According to one news outlet, his visit took on the color and character of a Bollywood spectacular from his arrival on an Air India Boeing 707 at Andrews Air Force Base outside of Washington. Heavy U.S. and Indian media coverage continued right up to his delegation's departure from Houston, where he personally simulated space flight inside the cockpit of the Space Shuttle at NASA's Houston Space Center.

Secretary of State Shultz greeted Gandhi on the Andrews Air Base tarmac. A presidential helicopter lifted Prime Minister Gandhi and Secretary Shultz, Sonia Gandhi and several

of his key advisors directly to the Washington Monument obelisk on the mall. The summer evening gave him a panoramic view of the iconic Reflecting pool, the Lincoln and Jefferson Memorials, the Capitol and the White House. At the end of his 5-day visit, “India Today,” India’s most prestigious magazine, described his visit as a “fresh beginning” in Indo-U.S. relations, “a major success” with “great implications for future Indo-American relations.”

The official summit meeting with President and Mrs. Reagan began the next morning, June 12 (our wedding anniversary), at the White House. Kim and I were in the greeting party on the South Lawn where President Reagan and the Prime Minister made brief presentations on the bright future for Indo-U.S. relations. An army artillery unit visible on the nearby slope of the Washington Monument fired a 19-gun military salute. A military band on the South lawn played the national anthems. An honor guard led by the Revolutionary era Fife and Drum Corps marched by. The two leaders met privately in the White House, then moved to the Cabinet room for further talks, flanked by ministers and advisors.

Later in the day, Secretary of State Shultz hosted a glittering reception and lunch for Gandhi and his delegation in the Department’s 8th floor, ornate Benjamin Franklin Dining Room. President Reagan and Mrs. Reagan hosted Gandhi and his wife, Sonia, at a White House presidential dinner the evening of June 12.

Prime Minister Gandhi spoke to the Joint Session of Congress the following morning. Standing ovations frequently interrupted his remarks. He eloquently recalled India’s first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru’s speech to a 1949 Joint Session by repeating his grandfather’s words welcoming the opportunity to stand before “the highest forum of the great democracy of the United States of America.” Later in the day, Mrs. Reagan and Mrs. Gandhi together attended the first day of the sprawling “Festival of India” on the mall behind the Smithsonian’s American Heritage and American History Museums. They mixed with hundreds of Americans and Indians viewing Indian craftsmen working at their tables while dancers and acrobats moved among the 1,500 Indian artifacts displayed, including statues of Hindu Gods and Buddhist figures. That evening, Ravi Shankar led a star-studded performance by Indian musicians and dancers at the Kennedy Center’s Concert Hall.

“All of Washington seems to have been taken over by the festival and the visit of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and his beautiful wife, Sonia,” the Baltimore Sun reported.

Gandhi’s departure from Andrews Air Base for Houston featured another 19-gun military salute, herald trumpets, an inter-service Color Guard march by, and a cabinet-level see-off committee. Vice President and Mrs. Bush boarded Air Force 2 with Rajiv. The Vice President was Gandhi’s official host during the 2 day Houston stopover marking the end of his U.S. visit. I was among the American officials on the plane.

At its core, a nation’s foreign policy is based on that nation’s interests. But enthusiasm and sincerity of a country’s leaders and populations do play a role. Candidly speaking,

President Reagan, his Administration, Congress and the American media would not have been as heartfelt in their hospitality if Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had been the visitor. The outreach accorded to young Rajiv and Sonia Gandhi was clearly reciprocated. It was accompanied by hope on both sides that a more positive direction in Indo-U.S. relations was now possible.

During and after his U.S. visit, Gandhi did respond positively to U.S. proposals regarding a more balanced Indian posture between the Superpowers and on the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan; also on improving India's bilateral relations with Pakistan -thus permitting Pakistan to focus more completely on forcing the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan.

In public remarks during his visit, Gandhi spoke out for "restoration of a non-aligned Afghanistan." He registered Indian opposition to "outside pressures" in South Asia. Privately, he informed that he was sending Indian Foreign Secretary Bhandari to Moscow to discuss Soviet long-term intentions in Afghanistan. We did not receive solid information on what transpired in Bhandari's talks; but we could assume that just his flight to Moscow on the heels of Gandhi's U.S. visit was a useful message to the Soviet government.

Urging Gandhi to reach out to Pakistani military dictator Zia ul-Haq came with the specific U.S. request to cease threatening Indian military exercises along the Indo-Pakistani border –thereby reducing Pakistani anxieties about a 2-front war.

On his return to New Delhi, Gandhi phoned Zia and resurrected the long-dormant Indo-Pakistani political dialogue. He hosted Zia for normalization talks in Delhi in 1986, then traveled to Islamabad to continue the India-Pakistan leadership dialogue.

In Houston, before Gandhi's departure, I obtained State and White House approval to attempt negotiating a formal U.S.-Indian Joint Press Release that would list the Gandhi visit's achievements. The statement would demonstrate that Indo-U.S. relations were now on the upswing.

The Indian delegation deputed Indian Embassy First Secretary Subrahmanyan Jaishankar (who later became India's long serving Foreign Minister) to work with me on drafting the joint press release.

After an hour or so to draft the document, we circulated it by hand to the principal officials dining at the Gandhi visit farewell banquet in a huge hotel ballroom in Houston. Listening to the lulling stanzas of "Summertime" crooned by a U.S. Navy female vocalist during the banquet, we quietly assembled the required signatures from seated U.S. and Indian government guests. Bob Pearson, my former Embassy Beijing colleague, now White House Operations Center Director, phoned and received White House approval from Washington.

The joint press release PR (Public Relations) capstone to Prime Minister Gandhi's maiden visit to America was distributed to the media shortly before Gandhi and his

delegation left the U.S. That same night, it was broadcast inside the U.S. and India and worldwide.

I spent most of my remaining few months in INS working with the interagency coalition of he willing to translate the results of the Gandhi visit into follow-on momentum in U.S.-Indo relations. Congress, the State and Treasury Departments cooperated to significantly elevate India's annual share of World Bank IDA loans to \$710 million by 1987. Easing clearances of U.S. military sales to lower Indian dependence on Soviet weapons began with DOD's approval of the F-404 engine, naval gas turbines, and night goggles. More than thirty years on, India has become the biggest buyer of U.S. military equipment. Trade and investment grew rapidly during ensuing decades.

An incident in October 1985 of Indian army artillery barrages into Pakistan along the Indo-Pakistani border cast a temporary shadow over the forward momentum in Indo-U.S. relations. At the time, Prime Minister Gandhi was out-of-the country at a British Commonwealth conference in Nassau, the Bahamas.

The White House phoned me to request that I immediately warn the Gandhi delegation that the sudden Indian artillery shelling was jeopardizing Gandhi's scheduled October 23 meeting in New York at the UN with President Reagan. The Indian shelling ended soon after my phone call to Ambassador Bajpai, who was with Gandhi before his upcoming UNGA stop in New York. President Reagan and Prime Minister Gandhi conducted a second friendly summit during the UNGA session.

The only casualty was me. I had rushed the call to Nassau without informing the NEA Front Office beforehand. NEA PDAS Arnie Raphael phoned to remind me that I reported to NEA, not the White House.

Fortunately, the setback was fleeting. A few weeks later I was in the State Department basement long after quitting time obtaining a signature on some document from Under Secretary Armacost. Mike was standing next to his car. He casually asked me if I would like to go to Beijing to be the Deputy Chief of Mission to the new Ambassador-designate to China, Winston Lord. I answered I would, but first I needed to consult with my wife, Kim, and our two daughters.

They loved the idea of returning to China.

Winston and I met in the Department. He and Bette hosted Kim and I for dinner at a Georgetown restaurant. It was the beginning of a life-long friendship.

End of Part Two