

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

**AMBASSADOR PETER TOMSEN**

*Interviewed by: Mark Tauber*  
*Initial interview date: April 20, 2016*  
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**INTERVIEW PART II**

*Q: It's Wednesday October 12<sup>th</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 11<sup>th</sup> 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.*

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*Q: It’s October 20<sup>th</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 16<sup>th</sup> 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 49<sup>th</sup> 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 6<sup>th</sup> floor. INS and PAB were located side by side on the 5<sup>th</sup> 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 18<sup>th</sup> 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 7<sup>th</sup> 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 8<sup>th</sup> 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.

North Carolina ultra-conservative Senator Jesse Helms (R) held Winston's ambassadorial confirmation for 7 months, beginning in April, 1985. Helm's ire targeted Winston's association with Nixon-Kissinger's opening of Sino-American relations and his promotion of human rights causes.

He was eventually voted out of the Foreign Relations Committee, 6-1. Helms was the 1. After 2 more months of Helm's hold on the Senate floor, the Senate GOP leader Bob Dole forced another overwhelming positive vote that gave Senate approval of his nomination.

Helm's delay of Ambassador Lord's confirmation enabled me to take 4 months of brush-up Chinese language training at FSI. I had time to consult with State Department offices and Washington agencies, also business corporations focused on China. I took FSI's excellent DCM course. The course offered valuable advice for dealing with the diverse challenges DCMs encounter. One speaker pointed to the *Foreign Affairs Manual* (FAM) as a "go to" authoritative source for DCMs to access in carrying out their responsibilities in accordance with Department regulations.

The FAM is actually a line of thick black books stacked side-by-side in Department offices and at embassies. They authorize steps to resolve countless bureaucratic conundrums. One that I mentioned earlier was the embassy doctor's rebuff of my attempt to Medevac an embassy counsellor to Hong Kong to remove an extremely painful kidney stone. The doctor did not agree. He insisted that Chinese medicine would work better. But it wasn't working.

Per the DCM course's advice, I consulted the FAM medical section's regulations on Medevacs. One line in the Medevacs section clearly stated that ambassadors could overrule the embassy doctor on medevacs. After obtaining Winston's approval, that same day we evacuated the counsellor from the Chinese hospital. He was taken in an embassy vehicle to the Beijing airport. There, he boarded a flight to Hong Kong. The U.S. Consulate General in Hong Kong met him at the airport with an ambulance. Within hours, thanks to modern laser technology, the stone was removed at a Hong Kong hospital.

*Q: That's the way to do it.*

TOMSEN: The FAM came in handy.

The shift from INS Director to the position of DCM in China, a Class I post, was a leap. It was eased somewhat by my previous tour in China from 1981 to 1983 as the head of the external unit of the political section. I was not going to an unfamiliar country or embassy. My main management responsibility was to supervise and coordinate the operations of the embassy sections –8 in all- and also between the embassy and our 4 consulates general: Shanghai, Guangzhou, Cheng Du and Shenyang (pre-WWII, Mukden).

The ambassador and I devoted considerable time and energy to improve embassy welfare. That especially meant getting all embassy families out of Chinese hotels and into apartments. We oversaw the building of a new embassy swimming pool and snack bar. We successfully persuaded the Chinese government to provide the leased land necessary to construct an international high school in Beijing. I spent considerable time on security



-pushing back on pressures to build an Embassy Bangkok-like embassy fortress. We instead concentrated on major embassy security upgrades to meet Washington approved standards for Beijing conditions.

During my pre-departure consultations in Washington, I lobbied State Department offices to pressure the Chinese bureaucracy to provide adequate housing facilities for embassy families. Over 50 families were still in hotels. During my first 1981-1983 China assignment, our 4-member family had been stuck in a sub-standard Chinese hotel about 4 miles from the embassy for months before moving into a small 2-bedroom apartment. Myself and other officers had protested the Front Office's policy of disregarding family morale in favor of importing more and more new embassy personnel that kept hotel dwellers in numbers that sometimes exceeded 60 families. Many couples without children passed their entire 2-year assignment in one hotel room!

During my 4 months in Washington before departing, I obtained approval from the EAP Bureau's leadership, also the Office of Foreign Missions (OFM) overseeing foreign embassies in Washington, to freeze all future Chinese embassy property acquisitions in Washington until all of our embassy families were in apartments. After arrival in China, I called on the Chinese government's Diplomatic Services Bureau (DSB) that distributed apartments to foreign missions in Beijing. I formally notified the DSB Director that the U.S. freeze would continue until DSB had allotted apartments sufficient to house all American embassy employees.

To further diminish family time in hotel living, we asked Washington to place a "hold" on creating new embassy positions, interagency, pending resolution of the long-standing embassy housing crisis. The hold allowed case-by-case exceptions in extraordinary circumstances. I can remember only 2 exceptions we allowed. By the middle of 1987, about 1 ½ years later, all embassy personnel were in apartments.

Obtaining Chinese government approval for sufficient land to be leased for long-delayed construction of an international high school in Beijing was a second time-consuming priority important to morale. During evenings and weekends, I worked with DCMs from the U.K., Canadian and Australian embassies to complete legal and regulatory paperwork that met Chinese requirements necessary to lease the land we chose. In the end, a high-level push by visiting President Carter to Chinese Foreign Minister Wu broke the Chinese bureaucratic logjam.

Foreign Minister Wu pulled the right bureaucratic levers to lease the land, and also to gain government agreement to build an international high school large enough to accommodate growing diplomatic and other expatriate educational needs in Beijing.

The ambassador occasionally assigned me to take responsibility for *ad hoc* substantive issues. Two examples: I chaired the embassy Technology Committee. Towards the end of 1998, I negotiated an agreement for the Peace Corps' entry to China.

Writing EERs was another important task demanding close focus and the necessary time. You may have experienced that!

*Q: No. But every DCM I knew would have to block two weeks at least in that period in April to do nothing but EERs and review statements.*

TOMSEN: Yes. I isolated myself in the DCM apartment and my office for 2 weeks, dictating about 15 EERs and some 2 EER reviews to 2 rotating secretaries.

*Q: It's agony because every single one of those people, that's their life's blood. That determines whether they're going to be promoted or not; it's a huge responsibility.*

TOMSEN: That's exactly what happened. You have to take the time and make sure that 100% credit is given. At my request, each officer gave me a list of accomplishments —many that I had personally witnessed and could expand further based on what I had personally witnessed.

Despite the heavy workload, my DCM China assignment was one of the most enjoyable and memorable ones I received during my career in 3 Department bureaus. The ambassador and my daily schedules looked like a dentist's calendar. To give you one example that I pulled out of my files. This was Friday, April 8, 1988.

7:15 AM: Breakfast and presentation on U.S.-China relations at the Great Wall Hotel to a governor and his delegation.

9:00 AM: Meeting and signing ceremony at the Ministry of Health with the Chinese Minister of Health and Health and Human Services Secretary Bowen and his delegation.

10:30 AM: Meeting at the Institute of Urology with Health and Human Services Secretary Bowen. (That would also be at the ministerial level.)

Luncheon at the embassy restaurant with Dr. E. Koop, Surgeon-General of the United States.

1:00 PM: Introduce Dr. Koop to Community meeting in the 1<sup>st</sup> floor conference room.

2:00 PM: Meeting with Mrs. Sampas, the admin counselor.

3:30 PM: Meeting with CODEL Stokes and Mr. Liaou, vice chairman of the National People's Congress, Great Hall of the People (GHOP) south gate entrance.

5:00 PM: Meeting with Mr. Edward Ross from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Lieutenant Colonel Eden Woon and U.S. Air Force Captain Morrison to discuss Sino-American military aircraft sales.

6:30 PM: Banquet hosted by the Minister of Health honoring Health and Human Services Secretary Bowen at the Great Hall of the People.

*Q: Each of those meetings would be a briefing paper I imagine.*

TOMSEN: Yes, some of the briefings were oral ones in my office from the Control Officer for the event. Others were in writing—usually points to make and meeting objectives.

*Q: Extraordinary because of the amount of detail and the extremely different topics...*

TOMSEN: For instance, recommended themes to use in introducing the surgeon-general, Dr. Koop, to the embassy audience. And for the presentation on China in the morning to the governor and his delegation.

*Q: How much time would you have to review your materials before you had to present this?*

TOMSEN: There were deadlines for when the appropriate section had to get the material to the Front Office—in most cases the day before the meeting.

The ambassador and I would often pause to coordinate daily, usually in his office. We would discuss points for him to raise and desired outcomes of meetings.

*Q: The variety and depth of the material really is astonishing.*

TOMSEN: Yes. Probably the same for other large, busy Class 1 embassy Front Offices.

In many ways, the broad range of issues we reported on from Embassy Beijing reminded me of Embassy Moscow operations. Both embassies surveyed and analyzed domestic developments, economic, political and so on. On foreign policy, Embassy Beijing was less globally, more Eurasia focused. That was still voluminous: Sino-Soviet, Sino-Indian, Sino-Japanese, Taiwan, Korea plus subjects falling under China's general historic Opening to the outside world. And, of course, Washington agencies always welcomed embassy analyses and recommendations on U.S. policy towards China.

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*Q: Today is December 19<sup>th</sup> and we're resuming with Ambassador Tomsen as DCM to China.*

TOMSEN: In the last session I described the lift-off to my second China assignment; it would be the third if we included the Director of the Chinese language school on Taiwan. Altogether, I spent about 10 years of my career in Chinese-related assignments.

Winston Lord tapped me to be his DCM during the second Reagan Administration stretched into the first 5 months of the George H.W. Bush Administration.

*Q: Take a second to remark on what it takes to have a good ambassador-DCM relationship. What makes it?*

TOMSEN: As Winston's DCM and later as an ambassador myself, I would say that mutual trust and confidence is essential. Quite simply, the ambassador has to believe he can rely on his DCM. And of course, the DCM needs to be effective in supporting and advising the ambassador.

In our case, we had a lot in common. We both had already been engaged in U.S.-China relations. We had monitored and reported on the Great Power U.S.-China-Soviet triangular relationship, Winston in Washington, myself from our Moscow and Beijing embassies. We had similar views on policy issues: a hard-headed approach to accomplishing U.S. interests. We both believed human rights and promotion of democratic values should be part of our China policy, and implemented in a balanced manner along with other important U.S. goals.

The ambassador-DCM relationship can, and very often does, develop into a friendship based on their many hours together, inside and outside the embassy. Depending on the ambassador, that personal closeness is not obligatory as long as trust and reliance prevails.

Over time, the partnership grows to the point where the DCM instinctively knows when he can make a decision himself—or when he needs to bring the decision to the ambassador to decide. The result is an image of unity and consistency coming out of the Front Office—there is no daylight between the ambassador and the DCM.

When I was Charge and the ambassador was away from post, I would sometimes ask myself, "How would Winston handle this?" before making a weighty decision. Once the Station Chief and I were discussing a prickly embassy space issue. I could see that he did not like my decision. I suggested that he get the ambassador's view. He replied with a smile that he could do that but would not because he knew the ambassador would give him the same answer.

Ambassador Lord used the classic outside-inside ambassador-DCM model to manage his embassy. He set the guidelines for management of the mission and delegated the details of implementation to me. I followed his guidelines, briefed him regularly on management issues and looked to him for advice when problems arose.

The ambassador's spouse, Bette Lord, played an important role, reaching out to Chinese scholars, actors, artists and youth organizations. She arranged some extremely successful exchanges. Internationally recognized American movie directors and actors, musicians and artists came to China to perform and collaborate with Chinese counterparts.

The ambassador viewed it important in regular Country Team and other staff meetings to emphasize the overall role—the mission—of the embassy in advancing U.S.-China policy. We used Country Team Meetings and consultations with section heads to establish and implement written goals and objectives for each section of the embassy and for the 4 consulates general.

Each high-level visitor from Washington was sent a classified “scene setter” —an essay describing the current context of Sino-American relations. It conveyed bio information about Chinese officials on his or her schedule, goals to accomplish, recommended points to make and how to field contentious issues.

In the embassy, after their arrival, we asked visitors to reiterate embassy talking points on specific issues, like human rights. Nearly all did. Some did it better than we could!

Winston Lord's name on Embassy messages from Beijing drew the attention of officials inside the Washington policy-making bureaucracy. He had been a prominent China specialist and influential advisor during the first Nixon-Kissinger wave of early China visits that skillfully re-established ties with China, capped by the 1972 Shanghai Communique. When Kissinger's Special Assistant and speech writer, later as head of State's Policy Planning Office during the Ford Administration, he played a prominent role in expanding the relationship.

Our return to China meant that, once again, Kim would need to make another career shift. On arrival for our first tour, the embassy Consul General informed there were no vacancies in his consular section. The same devastating news awaited our arrival in Beijing for our second embassy assignment. That would have been a nice career link back to Kim's 1980-1981 assignment as a qualified visa issuing officer in Taipei. The double whammy dashed our hopes for Kim to continue her consular officer career.

Her search for employment after we arrived in Beijing in early 1986 did end happily. She landed a terrific private sector position —Chief of Public Relations at the new Western-style Swiss-managed Lido Hotel in Beijing.

That job was abruptly taken away in 1988 when the Chinese government announced it would not allow spouses of diplomats to retain diplomatic immunity if they were employed outside of foreign embassies. The Swiss hotel manager arranged for Kim to commute from Hong Kong to continue to work at the hotel.

The commute to and from Hong Kong was not ideal but doable. She returned to Washington to consult with a lawyer in the Legal Department in the State Department.

During the consultation, the official asked her how he could be sure that Kim would not visit her husband at night in Beijing!

After the meeting, Kim knew she had no choice but to return to Washington on her own where her former employer had held her position for her return. She resumed her employment at the Pan Am Washington regional office in D.C. During major U.S. holidays or for important events at the embassy in Beijing such as President Bush's visit to China she returned to Beijing to be with our family and to help with embassy preparations for Bush's 1989 China visit.

Because there was no American high school in China, the State Department's generous policy was to finance the cost of boarding schools for children of FSOs in such situations. Our older daughter, Kim Anh, was going into her junior year of high school. Younger daughter, Mai-Lan, would be in her freshman year. We visited several boarding schools in New England and the Mid-Atlantic. Kim Anh chose Berkshire in Massachusetts in the beautiful Berkshire Mountains. Mai-Lan went to Kent in Connecticut for her first two years. She switched to Berkshire for her final two years.

The State Department allowed three vacation stays with Foreign Service parents overseas—summer, Christmas, and spring break. We very much missed our daughters between these breaks. We visited them whenever one of us, sometimes it was both of us, could break away to spend time with them at their boarding schools. They made friends and benefited from the excellent teaching staff and smaller classes you encounter in boarding schools.

*Q: A question. Some Foreign Service kids thrive in boarding schools, and others are miserable. Is there something that you saw over the years between the kids who are more likely to thrive on their own in a boarding school and those who really need to be with their parents?*

TOMSEN: I would say 80% of the answer for both positive and negative outcomes would be the same whether our 2 daughters attended public or private schools.

Our youngest daughter, Mai-Lan, just entering 9th grade, took a while to adjust to the change. I would quickly add that she may have appreciated the absence of nearby parental control! We eagerly welcomed the total of 4 months vacations altogether we as a family enjoyed in Beijing each year. They made new friends with other embassy kids back from boarding schools, hung out with friends inside and outside the embassy, held summer jobs in the embassy, travelled to Tibet and elsewhere.

Looking back, perhaps the biggest problem we experienced was the difficulty of communicating, beyond letters, between China and their boarding schools.

*Q: Yes—and very different today obviously with Skype and webcams; you have more of a sense of day-to-day life for them. You can spend 10 minutes and find out what they're doing and if there is a big problem they're having, they can give it to you in real time.*

TOMSEN: Agree. At the time, that was about impossible.

*Q: Just curious. Foreign Service parents always face these questions, especially when going to smaller countries. These days, many of the larger countries at least have American schools, but you were in China when it was still a relatively new opening to the world and just hadn't established all these schools yet.*

TOMSEN: That's right. There was only an elementary school during our first China tour. Later there was a middle school and finally a high school.

These boarding schools are very expensive and often exclusive. Most of the kids come from very wealthy parents. Our children, when they were in boarding schools, missed the broader diversity that you'd experience in public high schools that both of us went to. For parents' weekends, we'd rent a car and drive up to see them. On occasion, we parked next to stretch limousines with uniformed drivers! There were academic pluses, however, including learning how to study, which lots of kids in those days did not experience. That was an upside. When I went to college I had not yet learned how to study.

*Q: They did not teach that in public school when I went to public school. You learned that on your own or if you were lucky a parent or mentor of some kind would help you, but otherwise you were on your own.*

TOMSEN: Yes. I didn't spend that much time doing homework in high school. Now, our grandchildren are assigned homework, even in first grade!

*Q: At least in theory. They do understand that learning how to learn or note-taking and so on, they do have to teach. How well they teach is another story, but they recognize that imparting good learning habits is part of what they do in high school these days.*

TOMSEN: Our daughters benefitted from the smaller classes, too. Sometimes just 4 or 5 students. Kim Anh was accepted at Berkeley, and Mai-Lan at the University of California-San Diego.

Beijing had changed substantially by the time we returned to China in March 1986. Many more vehicles in various shapes and sizes competed for space with the multitude of Chinese bicyclists on city streets. Gone were the Mao-era ubiquitous black and grey unisex blouses and trousers worn by thousands of bicyclists daily filling up city boulevards. Women and girls could now be distinguished from more colorful attire and varied Western hair styles.

Giant construction cranes crowded the skyline. People shopped in busy road-side markets and conversed on the streets. Small restaurants were doing good business. Wealthier Chinese could purchase televisions and other consumer goods. Clearly Deng's reforms were going forward and China's entrepreneur population was taking advantage of them.

The new Reagan Administration and Americans generally were swept up by the agreeable waves generated by Deng Xiaoping's reforms and Opening to the outside world.

The ten-year period between the January 1979 normalization of U.S.-China relations and the June 1989 Tiananmen massacre witnessed a decade-long high water mark in China-U.S. relations that has not been repeated during the 7 decades since.

In 1984, President Reagan enthusiastically reciprocated Deng Xiaoping's 1979 U.S. visit after a Chinese MFA official was stunned when an embassy officer informed that the presidential delegation would number around 1000, including a huge American media contingent. The official recalled that Queen Elizabeth had recently visited with a delegation numbering 40!

President Reagan's 6-day trip to China stimulated a takeoff in visits both ways. Chinese Communist Party and government leaders, U.S. cabinet secretaries, businessmen, students, tourists, and just the curious crisscrossed the ocean to witness what had long been hidden behind closed borders. Simon Fireman, the Director of the U.S. government's Export-Import Bank (EXIM), wrote me on his return to Washington, "You have the advantage of a day-to-day presence in an area where the market potential for U.S. products is of a magnitude that staggers the imagination."

That was also true for Colonel Sanders. He opened perhaps his largest Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) restaurant right on the edge of Tiananmen Square. Tiananmen is virtually China's Mall at the center of China, somewhat like our national mall between Congress and the Lincoln Memorial is the center of America. Tiananmen Square abuts the enormous Great Hall of the People (GHOP) where Chinese senior and lower level official meetings and banquets occur every day.

By year's end, a million Chinese had patronized the KFC restaurant on Tiananmen Square. McDonald's started a farm in Manchuria to grow potatoes to satisfy its specifications for French fries. It postponed opening for many months until they had that taste just right. Afterwards McDonalds began to proliferate to other Chinese cities.

American-Chinese student exchanges also skyrocketed!

*Q: Working in public diplomacy, you would get every year the report on how many foreign students from all the different countries in the world were in the U.S. and China would always be at the top or one of the top two or three, and IP (Information Programs in USIS) always said "The Chinese could fill every open spot in every university across the U.S. if we let them." There was that much demand.*

TOMSEN: (Laughter) By the time we arrived for our second tour in 1986, 18,000 Chinese students had already returned to China. Meanwhile, more than 2,000 U.S. students and scholars had come to China. Over 1,000 American English teachers were teaching in colleges across China. China had surpassed all other countries in sending



annually over 100 IVP (International Voluntary Exchange Program) students to the U.S. for a year's study and an opportunity to reside in American homes. The IVP year abroad is typically capped by a bus trip around the United States with other international IVP students.

An officer from our Guangzhou consulate-general asked a returning IVP grantee what experience impressed him the most about the United States. He answered that he explored Washington D.C. streets by himself on a Sunday morning. His walk ended at the White House. He looked around and noticed that he was the only one on the long Pennsylvania Avenue between the White House and Lafayette square! In China that could not happen.

*Q: Sure, sure. Even today, especially in winter, you don't see huge crowds wandering in front of the White House.*

TOMSEN: Yes.

*Q: And it's cold and nobody wants to line up in the cold. In warmer weather—.*

TOMSEN: That strikes me about the Supreme Court building as well. When the court is not in session and not making decisions with cameras out in front waiting for announcements, you only see one or two policemen wandering around in the distance near the front entrance—and this is one of the three powerful branches of U.S. government!

*Q: It's absolutely empty. I took a walk there a few months ago before the beginning of the fall term on a Sunday. I could count on one hand the number of people in front, taking a few selfies.*

TOMSEN: Yes. The waves of other visitors in both directions after President Reagan's 1984 trip to China created an embassy work environment opposite to the tranquil environment outside the U.S. Supreme Court! President Li Xiannian, Chinese President, returned Reagan's visit in 1984. Important agreements in economic, scientific, education, agriculture and military areas were signed during the two presidential visits.

Ambassador Lord and myself participated in weekly, sometimes daily, new signing ceremonies. The numerous political, military, commercial and other agreements energized the uptick in bilateral relations. Most embassy section heads were veteran China hands and Chinese linguists --Political Counselor Darryl Johnson; Economic Counselor Kent Wiedemann; PAO McKinney Russell; Science and Technology Counselor Bill Thomas; and Brigadier General Jack Leide, the DATT. We all encouraged visiting delegations to mix the sour with the sweet pork in meetings with their Chinese hosts. In economic areas: press for more Chinese reforms in their legal and regulatory systems to comply with international norms; loosen Chinese controls over foreign exchange transfers and import licenses; allow profit repatriation by U.S. companies;

cease clandestine operations such as secret import barriers and theft of intellectual property.

The “high-name recognition” American visitors I met during my 3 years as DCM in China were unique during my career. One-on-one conversations with cabinet and sub-cabinet visitors in the embassy, over lunch or dinner at my DCM flat, driving or walking to appointments with Chinese officials, answering questions and providing advice –those personal interactions were delightful.

At the beginning of one small group classified briefing in the embassy SCIF (classified room), I noted to Secretary of Defense Weinberger that his son was renting our home in McLean. He seemed pleased with the coincidence until I added that I planned to return the following year. The room erupted with laughter when he quipped, “I wish you’d extend!”

I joined CIA teams coming to China on secret visits to purchase Chinese-produced weapons and ammunition -lots of it- destined for the Mujahideen fighting the Soviet army in Afghanistan. The PLA devoted whole factories to producing Soviet-style rockets and AK-47s.

Other notable American visitors included President and Mrs. Carter. They graciously took time out to meet with all of our embassy personnel plus dependents for a picture-taking bonanza at the ambassador’s residence. The Chinese warmly reciprocated the Carters’ hospitality during Deng Xiaoping’s 1979 visit to the U.S., arranging welcoming banquets in Beijing and calls on high level Chinese leaders. The Carters visited Tibet and took the famous Li River boat voyage among the pencil mountains (celebrated in Chinese paintings) near Guilin village in southern China. As mentioned, President Carter personally elicited Foreign Minister Wu’s assistance to gain government approval for purchase of land for a modern international high school in Beijing.

I assisted Los Angeles Dodger owner Peter O’Malley’s negotiations with the Chinese Sports Ministry. His objective was to plant American baseball seeds in Chinese cities and provinces in hopes they would grow, Japan-like, in China. That vision included his construction, already underway, of a LA Dodgers-size baseball stadium in Tianjin, east of Beijing.

The ambassador and I, of course, did not raise the painful story of the O’Malley’s spirited the Dodgers out of Brooklyn in the dead of night for greener pastures in southern California.

*Q: What gave them the idea that baseball might catch on? The Chinese had never really played baseball.*

TOMSEN: I think it was money. There were then 1.2 billion consumers in China! Again, it’s the 19<sup>th</sup> century myth –sell oil for the lamps in China and get rich.

*Q: Surely, we can find a million out there, out of that gigantic number who would play baseball.*

TOMSEN: And that remains logical today! As a token of thanks, Peter O'Malley presented me with a small LA Dodgers wooden bat. He also gifted each of his Chinese hosts with the bat memento. He and Tianjin dignitaries watched the Opening Day game at the still under-construction Tianjin baseball stadium.

From his LA Dodgers office back in Los Angeles he mailed me a hopeful thank you note: "Our commitment to help baseball in Tianjin is ongoing and does not end with the completion of the field."

But, the dream did not catch on in China. Two later attempts to form baseball leagues in China failed financially.

China's Opening unleashed a Panda-mania outbreak. Dozens of American zoos contacted the embassy in search of a path to acquiring pandas –either through negotiated purchase or through wildlife exchanges with Chinese zoos.

The Chinese took full money-making advantage of their monopoly on pandas. The government loans of pandas living in panda-rich Yunnan and Sichuan provinces came together with Big Dollar signs. Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, New York, Disneyland and San Diego competed with each other and zoos globally to negotiate their panda loans.

That's loans only. China continues today to own pandas that are loaned abroad. In those days, the Ministry of Forestry in Beijing permitted only short-term panda borrowing –usually 3 months. The cost was \$1 million. Borrowing zoos were also compelled to bypass local insurance companies and pay an additional \$25,000 to buy insurance from China's huge state-owned insurance company to complete the contract negotiations. Later, pandas were loaned to zoos for multiple years.

Twenty years plus later, there have been only a few panda cub leaks. Overall, China retains complete control. When a panda is born outside of China, it has to be returned to China after 4 years when it reaches breeding age.

To illustrate the competition for panda loans: Ohio Governor Dick Celeste and the Columbus mayor during their separate visits to China --reinforced by Vice President Bush writing to the Chinese ambassador in Washington-- pressed hard for a 3-month panda loan to be the centerpiece of Columbus' 1992 500<sup>th</sup> year celebration of Columbus discovery of America.

Jack Hannah, the national TV zoo personality and Columbus Zoo Director, grabbed an inside track when he signed a sister-zoo relationship with the Kunming (capital of panda rich Yunnan Province) zoo. But, Columbus lost out to Phoenix in the competition to

acquire sister-city relations with Cheng Du, capital of Sichuan Province –home to 100 pandas, 10% of their total number in China!

The full press Ohio strategy succeeded. The 2 pandas transported to Columbus were exhibited again at 3 other zoos. After the 1988 agreement's signing, I received a letter from a senior staffer in Governor Celeste's Ohio delegation. He suggested that I might want to "contemplate returning to your home state to run for office." (Laughter)

Traveling congressional delegations, CODELS, flowed to China during the long congressional recesses. Spouses and Hill staffers accompanied the members. All came eager to view the epochal economic and political changes underway, and to visit tourist attractions in China. We viewed the CODEL visits as important opportunities to increase mutual understanding and to improve U.S.-China relations with China.

The CODELs had a bipartisan mix of Democratic and Republican members. I thought the Leahy and Heinz CODELs were the most productive. In Beijing, Senator Leahy urged Chinese leaders to relax Chinese pressures on the Tibetan population and free dissidents. I accompanied Leahy to Tibet. A few of the imprisoned Tibetans on his list of dissidents including a Tibetan nun were released. Senator Heinz' delegation signed several joint ventures and established a long-term relationship with the Ministry of Building Supplies.

There was only one CODEL in 1986, led by the New York congressman and Democrat, James Scheuer, that proved a major embarrassment to the United States and to the embassy. It was a large unwieldy delegation that went awry. Wives and Congressional staff swelled its size to above 14. Congressman Scheuer was elderly and well-intentioned. He walked assisted by a cane. After meeting with Chinese officials in Beijing, the CODEL split. One group went to Nanjing in South China, the other to Sichuan province in Western China.

The Scheuer CODEL's idiosyncrasies cause me to digress here. The uncommon details of this CODEL can still be found on the internet today. The negatives outweighed the positives.

In a letter to the ambassador after its departure, a Democratic Party lobbyist and former White House advisor to President Carter accompanying the delegation humorously captured the distress left behind by the CODEL visit: "I want to express my admiration for the manner in which you and your staff continually handled these unfortunate situations. They exhibited several more virtues than are required by the Catholic Church for canonization."

After the CODEL left China, I gave the 2 embassy Control Officers assisting the CODEL a full week off to recover in Hong Kong. They and other exhausted embassy officers called it "The CODEL from Hell!"

One congressman had an affair going with another congressman's wife during the trip.

*Q: While they were in China?*

TOMSEN: Yes. The affair burst into the open one morning in the lobby of a Nanjing Hotel. The 2 congressmen shouted and threatened each other in the lobby with Chinese employees and other foreigners looking on.

The rambunctious behavior started in Beijing before the 2 groups divided up to visit different parts of China. The most disruptive congressman in the CODEL, let's say Congressman X, missed the CODEL's flight from Tokyo to Beijing. He was often in his cups throughout the visit. I imagine that was why he arrived late that same night on another flight from Tokyo. One of the Control Officers met him at the airport. Notwithstanding the embassy's cabled recommendation to the CODEL to bring winter coats for protection against the winter cold, he arrived with no coat. Not even a jacket.

The congressman also missed the delegation's bus-ride the next morning to the GHOP meeting with a Chinese principal, a member of the Politburo. He was the highest-ranking government representative assigned to meet the delegation during its China visit. The large number of the congressmen, several spouses and staffers required 3 rows of chairs extending out from the Politburo member's chair inside the high-ceiling GHOP room. Congressman Scheuer was seated next to the Principal. The majority of the CODEL delegation, including Scheuer, plus spouses, fanned out in the chairs in the first row of seats to the right of the Principal. A few staffers sat at the end of that row. The rest of the delegation's staffers sat behind in a second row.

I and the 2 embassy control officers were seated with the remaining CODEL members and their wives in another row of chairs extending out from the left of the Chinese host-Politburo member.

The Chinese host politely welcomed the CODEL to China. Congressman Scheuer responded in kind. At this point, the meeting was interrupted by loud pounding on doors from someone on the outside of the GHOP building and return shouting by Chinese guards on the inside. Unknown to all in the room, Congressman X had taken a taxi to the GHOP after missing the delegation's bus departure.

Congressman X arrived without a winter coat and must have been freezing. He was also inebriated. He knocked on several of the GHOP doors before a senior Chinese intelligence officer showed up, let him in, and guided him to the room where the meeting was underway. When he entered the room, none of the staffers seated at the end of the first row stood up to give the congressman their seat -which they should have.

Congressman X slid into a second row empty seat to the Chinese host's right. He leaned forward and began whispering into the ear of a congressman in the first row. The host politely resumed his presentation to the CODEL delegation.

Meanwhile Congressman X was informing his first row colleague, let's call him Congressman A, that he was going to walk back around the first row, approach the host,

sit on the floor in front of the Politburo member and protest the way he was being treated. Fortunately, Congressman A talked him out of it.

As this was unfolding, CODEL leader Scheuer got very upset with a Congressman from southern California (rumored to be on drugs) seated in the row on the opposite side of the host. The host enquired whether anyone in the delegation would like to refill their teacup. The Congressman from southern California stridently spoke out, "I would." He held out his cup, impolitely pointing it towards the host.

The room fell silent as CODEL leader Scheuer gripped his cane and very slowly stood up. With his cane in one hand and his cup of tea in the other, as in a play that had already been rehearsed and while the entire room remained silent, in slow motion, he slowly stepped across the large room towards the seated congressman from southern California.

Glaring at the requester, Scheuer angrily slammed his tea cup down on the small table in front of the startled congressman, and bellowed: "Here! Have mine!" The room still utterly silent, Scheuer slowly turned and retraced his steps back to his chair. (Laughter). The Chinese host patiently waited until Scheuer had reseated himself before continuing the meeting.

Later in the day, Congressman X was with the delegation ascending the steps of the Great Wall of China north of Beijing. There he encountered an American tourist from his district. He invited her back to his room in the well-guarded, official Diaoyutai Chinese government guest house facility—skipping the CODEL events scheduled for the remainder of the day. The Chinese security guards at the government guest house complex barred the woman from entering and escorted her back out to the street.

The following morning the delegation divided into 2 groups traveling to south and west China. Our 2 embassy control officers departed with them, one for each group. Congressman X and Congressman A remained at the Diaoyutai complex.

I was at my desk early that morning unaware that Congressmen X and A had not departed Beijing with one of the 2 CODEL groups. The first I heard about the new state of affairs came in an excited telephone call from the embassy GSO. The GSO was carrying out her responsibilities to clean up, as necessary, the Diaoyutai rooms that had been occupied by the CODEL members.

Weeping on the phone, she reported that Congressman X had barricaded himself in his room. Furniture was piled up preventing the door from opening. He was drunk. Congressman A was inside with him, attempting to calm him down. Chinese guards and cleaning crews were demanding access to the room to prepare for the next foreign delegation's arrival later in the day.

I immediately drove to the guest house. The GSO and myself from the outside of the room coordinating with congressman A from the inside of the room, removed the

furniture blocking the door entrance. Congressman X sat on his unmade bed. An empty bottle of whiskey lay on the floor.

I asked him what he wanted to do. We could arrange for him to catch up to one of the 2 CODEL groups. He instead insisted on flying directly to Hong Kong that day. And to be ticketed for the airplane's A-1 seat in First Class. Upon landing in Hong Kong, he demanded to be taken to a good tailor capable of outfitting him with 2 Italian suits. Once the suits were ready, he wanted to be flown to Seoul to meet with the well-known South Korean dissident, Kim Dae-jung.

I immediately agreed to Congressman A's request terms for obvious reasons. At lightning speed, the embassy travel office reserved a seat on a Chinese flight to Hong Kong via Shanghai. Per standard CODEL procedures, our Shanghai Consul General, Stan Brooks, would meet him during the Shanghai flight stopover. I phoned our DPO (Deputy Principal Officer) in Hong Kong to meet and greet Congressman X and to make the tailor appointment. All went well, except for the China Airlines stopover at Shanghai. That was due to my assumption that the Chinese flight offered first class. In fact, China Airlines on that flight did not have a first class section, much less an A1 seat.

Congressman X vented his anger on Consul General Brooks when Brooks greeted him at planeside in Shanghai. In Hong Kong, he ordered his Italian suits and flew to Seoul.

Several days later, the 2 CODEL groups concluded their tours inside China and departed for Washington.

The subject of the CODEL from Hell, quite unexpectedly, resurfaced 3 years later, in 1989, during a classified congressional hearing. I was on my next assignment as Special Envoy to the Afghan Resistance—the only one seated at the table for witnesses giving testimony on Afghanistan before the House Intelligence Committee. The committee was chaired by Democratic congressman from California, Tony Beilenson.

My State Department congressional liaison escort informed me before the hearing that a tell-all article on the mostly Democratic Scheuer CODEL had just appeared in a publication that focused on Congress—a forerunner of *"The Hill."*

Chairman Beilenson took his chair at the far end of the long committee table facing me just after I sat down at the smaller witness table at the opposite end. Security technicians were on ladders using eavesdropping detection devices to scan the walls of the classified hearing room searching for hidden listening bugs. They worked seemingly oblivious to the long record of leaks by congressmen or staffers to the media—by phone or otherwise—soon after classified Hill intelligence hearings concluded.

Charlie Wilson, whom I had come to know well during my assignment, Steve Solarz and a dozen or so other committee members were standing around the room chatting.

While sitting at the witness table studying my briefing material without looking up, I got the feeling that Chairman Beilenson was staring at me. The troubling thought occurred that he had read my bio before the hearing --and had also encountered my name in the article on the Scheuer CODEL that had become entertaining reading in Congress, especially for the Republicans!

I attempted to avert his gaze by continuing to look down, sifting through papers. At the witness table, after a minute or so, he directly addressed me from the other end of the committee table – “Weren’t you in China when....” Then he abruptly stopped in mid-sentence as I looked up at him to reply. At the same time, congressmen standing around the table turned to listen. I deduced that his “hesitation” to go further was because he quickly decided it would not be helpful if my reply spilled more beans about the CODEL from Hell, to the disadvantage of the Democrats who chaired and comprised most of the CODEL.

The last thing I or the State Department wanted was to be caught up in a Democratic-Republican crossfire. So, I merely looked up and simply answered “Yes” to his half-sentence question, then looked back down at my paperwork. Thereupon Beilenson abruptly gaveled the House Intelligence Committee order, and began his hearing on Afghanistan.

*Q: I’ve never heard of one this bad. You always have little issues with CODELS, but nothing like this. Wow.*

TOMSEN: Fully agree. The Scheuer CODEL was a rarity among CODELS, a one-off CODEL in my personal experience. The mainstream of CODELS during my career—the mainstream—overlapped with the helpful Leahy and Heinz CODELS. They reinforce U.S. policies in areas from political and military to human rights.

Our embassy was also at one with other U.S. allied embassies in Beijing encouraging China’s historic opening to the outside world. Along with 4 other DCMs from the British, French, German and Japanese embassies, I participated in a monthly luncheon group –we called ourselves the Gang of 5. We shared information on Chinese foreign and domestic policies. Also, coordinated messaging into the Chinese government.

The Japanese DCM passed on valuable information on developments inside North Korea. Other examples: British DCM Peter Thompson (yes, another one, but different spelling!) separately passed on British analyses of ongoing Chinese nibbling into Indian territory along the Indian-Chinese contested Line of Control in the Himalayas. I contributed to my DCM colleagues copies of a Chinese language Foreign Ministry map on Chinese-claimed territory along the tense Sino-Indian border that I had purchased at a Chinese book store.

I stayed in contact with the Yugoslav DCM. We jogged together on Sunday mornings. He and his ambassador conducted communist party-to-party discussions with the CCP officials that sometimes made interesting reporting. I developed friendly relations with



Soviet DCM Vladimir Fedotov. Our daughters were on Christmas vacation one year when the Fedotov family invited us to a memorable Christmas Eve dinner at the Fedotov's Residence inside the large Soviet embassy compound. We reciprocated family dinners and exchanged periodic office calls. Four years later we met again at a U.S.-Russian diplomatic conference on Asia in Moscow.

In 1988, the State Department cabled new North Korean contact guidelines that helped make life interesting. The ambassador was away. I was Charge. The new guidelines were to be implemented only in Beijing and at the USUN mission in New York.

I assumed that the changes in Department instructions on North Korean contacts was a response to periodic nudges from South Korea, China or Russia to feel out whether North Korea was becoming more flexible.

The previous instructions specified no interaction with North Korean representatives, social or professional. Zero! If approached, U.S. diplomats should turn away, avoiding North Korean attempts to converse. The new instructions mandated a brief face-to-face, light social interaction, listen, exchange pleasantries on social topics, then politely end the conversation.

A few weeks later I carried out the instructions at a diplomatic reception in Beijing. DCM Fedotov and I were standing and chatting, drinks in hand. With a faint smile, he gently pushed on my elbow signaling me to turn around. I did and found myself facing the North Korean ambassador.

He wore a dark Mao suit. A colorful Kim Il Sung button featuring the late North Korean Kim Il Sung tyrant's smiling face was pinned to his shirt at pocket level. He initiated the conversation in Korean. His interpreter, also in a Mao suit sporting a "Great Leader" button, translated. We commented about the weather and the pleasant reception for a few minutes. I courteously ended the exchange and moved away. I reported the brief social encounter with the North Korean ambassador to Washington.

North Korean policy towards other countries including the U.S. did not change. After a decent interval, the Department cabled a return to the old "no-contact" instruction.

In November 1986, Ambassador Lord, Bette, Kim and I were invited to a historic U.S. naval ship, the first to visit China since 1949. Two U.S. Navy combatants led by the navy cruiser *Reeves* docked at the Chinese Qing Dao naval base in Shandong Province. Admiral James Lyons, commander of the U.S. (Pacific) Seventh Fleet, hosted an elegant dinner for U.S. and Chinese navy officers aboard the *Reeves*. His Chinese admiral host, a fleet commander, reciprocated the next day.

General Vernon Walters, who served 4 American administrations during the Cold War, visited China about 2 times a year in 1986 and 1987. His visits were secret and brief—only an overnight to brief the Chinese about the state of the Top Secret U.S.-Soviet

INF (Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces) negotiations. The INF treaty was signed by Presidents Reagan and Gorbachev in December 1987.

His visits were not only interesting -they were fascinating and enjoyable for me as his escort!

I met General Walters at the Chinese military-controlled section of the Beijing airport at night. As secrecy required, he landed in a small Air Force jet. I greeted him at planeside and escorted him to a hotel where he used a pseudonym to register. We dined together in the hotel restaurant.

Walters' trips were important. They assured the Chinese that U.S. would insist that the Soviets eliminate all of their SS-20s in the East as well as in the West where they would threaten China. That condition became part of the formal 1987 INF Treaty.

The next morning the ambassador accompanied him to the Chinese Foreign Ministry where he delivered the latest update on the U.S.-Soviet INF negotiations. That night, I accompanied him back to his small aircraft at the airport for his departure from China.

In April 1986, General Walters reappeared --but not in person-- in the embassy's classified cable traffic communications section. The ambassador and I were joined there by the Commander of the U.S. Navy, Admiral John Watkins, U.S. Navy Chief of Naval Operations (CNO). We read top secret telegrams reporting Walters' travels to Paris and Berlin requesting European approval for U.S. Air Force F-111 overflights permission to attack Libya. The F-111s were stationed in the UK.

On April 5, Gaddafi's intelligence service had bombed a popular discotheque in Berlin that killed 2 Americans and wounded 79 along with scores of Europeans dead and wounded. The U.S. was retaliating.

Walters was the Reagan Administration's diplomatic point man on an impossible mission to convince the Europeans to provide overflight permission for American F-111 fighter bombers stationed in the UK to strike Libya. The Europeans assumed the F-111s had to fly over France to bomb Gaddafi's personal residence in Tripoli, Libya's capital.

Washington knew that France and Germany would reject Walters' request for overflight permission. Their rebuff of Walters' request was leaked with much fanfare to the media after each stop of Walters' extended European trip.

In fact, Walters' trip was a deception strategy to buy time for deployment of a U.S. navy carrier into the eastern Mediterranean. Careful preparations were underway for aircraft on the *Coral Sea* carrier to strike Libyan coastal military bases in Benghazi concurrently with the F-111 strikes on Qaddafi's residence in Tripoli.

Inside the embassy's communications room, between the April 5 discotheque bombing and the April 15 U.S. attacks, the ambassador and I could feel CEO Watkins' desperate

frustration that he was in China, on invitation from the Chinese Navy commander, when he should be in the Pentagon taking the hands-on-lead in the U.S. naval carrier's attack on Benghazi. The Pentagon ordered him to remain in China. His return could be noticed by the Soviets who would warn Gaddafi that an impending American attack was in the offing.

The Soviet Union, France and Germany were not the only ones monitoring a possible American military reaction to the Berlin disco bombing. Spain, Italy and Malta also opposed an American military response. They, too, were watching closely.

On the day of the surprise attack, April 15, in the Beijing embassy code room, thousands of miles away, Watkins, the ambassador and I followed the hour by hour unfolding of the successful attacks.

While European, Soviet and Libyan Qaddafi attention focused on Walter's European talks, surprise was largely achieved. The F-111s bypassed France and Spain by flying around them over the Atlantic. Minutes after the strikes on Tripoli and Benghazi ended, Admiral Watson was in an embassy car to the airport bound for Washington.

U.S. military visitors were the second most prolific U.S. government group visiting China. Secretaries of Defense Weinberger and Carlucci's meetings with Chinese military and political leaders reinforced U.S.-China political relations inside the U.S.-China-Soviet Great Power triangle.

Deng declared there could be no improvement in Sino-Soviet relations until the Soviets ended their occupation of Afghanistan and ceased threatening China by a Soviet military buildup in Siberia and from Soviet ally Vietnam in the south.

U.S.-Chinese high-level military to military visits both ways led to increasing cooperation between the respective armies, navies and air forces. DOD offices, particularly those dealing with Foreign Military Sales (FMS), enthusiastically -sometimes too enthusiastically- added substance to the forward momentum in bilateral military cooperation.

It is the role of the State Department and ambassadors abroad with Chief of Mission authority to make sure that the pace and content of military cooperation with other countries do not get out of hand. That's particularly true with non-allied, militarily powerful countries like China and India that might over time migrate from adversary to friend and back to adversary.

The embassy technology control committee I chaired focused on the control of U.S. military and civilian technology exports to China. We sent embassy recommendations to State, Commerce and DOD technology control offices in Washington. Chinese, most notably PLA (People's Liberation Army), theft of U.S. technology was increasing. In 1987, an FBI Assistant Director for Intelligence publicly described Chinese spying in the U.S. as a growing problem, one nearly as large as that posed by the Soviet Union.

In addition to military products, PLA factories produced a great variety of commercial products. I may have already noted that the popular “*Lion King*” movie produced in a PLA factory was shown in Chinese theatres many months before it appeared in American theatres!

*Q: Copyright infringement and the theft of intellectual property?*

TOMSEN: Yes. PLA generals and retired generals managed both private and public sector factories. They occupied important positions in the CCP (Communist Party of China) party leadership, notably on the CCP top Politburo Standing Committee of the Politburo, and the party’s Central Military Commission. Their commercial export factories generated lucrative profits for the PLA budget.

The embassy technology committee supported DOD’s FMS upgrades of Chinese F-8 fighters and howitzers, and counter-battery radar sales. Those projects met U.S. interests by strengthening Chinese ability to resist Soviet expansionism. Lt. General Richard Lawrence, President of the U.S. National Military University, with the embassy’s help, conducted important visits that established formal relations with NDU’s China counterpart, the Chinese NDU. The authoritative Central Military Committee chaired by Deng Xiaoping cleared the reciprocal NDU agreement. It served a key U.S. goal of improving mutual understanding and trust between the U.S. and China.

Justification for caution in the handling of sensitive military sales and intelligence sharing with the PLA became clear in 1987 when the Chinese leadership began a slow, limited strategic pivot away from Deng’s strident anti-Soviet global strategy towards a more independent, more neutral, Chinese foreign policy between the 2 Superpowers.

*Q: It’s Wednesday the 21<sup>st</sup> of December and we’re resuming with Ambassador Tomsen.*

TOMSEN: Our last interview ended with the embassy’s reporting signs that China in 1987 was beginning to slowly shift to a more equidistant position between the 2 Superpowers. That shift was accompanied by the politburo’s decision to fire radical reformer, CCP General Secretary Hu Yaobang, and to reduce the tempo of political reforms.

The shift did not end the overall deepening of the U.S.-China relationship. That gradual trend continued up to the Tiananmen massacre in June 1989.

The embassy remained very busy, scheduling, briefing and managing the continuing surge of visitors in all areas. Ed Meese, President Reagan’s friend and Attorney General, arrived at the head of a delegation of 1,000 lawyers! I’ve mentioned the visits of the U.S. Secretaries of State and Defense. In 1988, Chinese Foreign Minister Wu Xueqian and 2 Chinese Vice-Ministers visited the U.S.

The U.S. rolled out the welcome mat for Chinese President Yang Shangkun. Yang and his large delegation’s 12-day visit in 1987 began in Hawaii with briefings at CINCPAC and

leisure time at the Waikiki beach. Meetings in Washington included President Reagan, Vice President Bush, Secretaries Shultz and Weinberger, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Yang visited the Strategic Air Command in Omaha, also New York and Los Angeles.

The emergence of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in the late 1980s was a game changer in Soviet relations with both the U.S. and China. A Gorbachev-led politburo meeting in 1986 decided to withdraw from Afghanistan, lessening the Soviet military pressure on Chinese borders. The withdrawal began in 1988 and ended in February 1989. In 1987, China welcomed Soviet ally Vietnam's announcement that Vietnam would withdraw from Cambodia. Vietnam that year began Chinese-style economic reforms.

Gorbachev's parallel outreach to both the U.S. and China relaxed tensions in the U.S.-Soviet and Sino-Soviet sides of the Great Power Triangle. His domestic "glasnost" political reforms and "perestroika" economic reforms plus 5 summits with President Reagan during Reagan's second term strengthened U.S.-Soviet relations. The receding Soviet military threat against the U.S. and China lowered their mutual interest in cooperation to oppose Soviet expansionism.

The Chinese and Soviet governments agreed to a May 1989 summit in Beijing to restore full state to state and communist party to communist party normalization.

In Washington, improving U.S.-Soviet relations made close strategic cooperation with China relatively less important. Likewise, the declining value of China's importance to the U.S. ended the period of muted U.S. criticism of China's suppression of political freedoms and human rights. American politicians and the American media began to pressure the Reagan Administration to make political and human rights a key prong in U.S.-China policy.

Similarly, the CCP leadership assumed that improving Sino-Soviet relations made U.S.-China strategic collaboration against the Soviet Union less important. Just as the new state of affairs inspired the U.S. media and domestic human rights constituencies to criticize China's suppression of dissidents, in China it gave new leverage to the conservative elders in the top CCP leadership, the *Baga Lao Ren* (described in my first China assignment interview) to question the improving direction of U.S.-China relations.

The conservative elders advocated a slow down, in some areas reversal, of internal political reforms, and restoration of good relations with the (still communist) Soviet Union. The embassy reported stepped up conservative protests to Hu Yaobang's elections of local government councils and reform of CCP institutions down to the village level. Also, Hu's loosening of restrictions in Tibet.

The conservatives most virulent objections centered on clear manifestations that Hu's relaxation of controls on university campuses threatened the party's monopoly on power. Faculty and students were demanding more freedom of speech and assembly.

In December 1987, student protests in Shanghai universities and at the prestigious Beijing University criticized the CCP. Some student demands advocated replacing communist rule with Western democracy. During late 1996, embassy and Shanghai Consulate General officers covering student affairs reported that the demonstrations were spilling outside universities onto nearby streets. Big character pro-democracy posters appeared on walls. Small groups of student protesters grew more numerous every day.

The student demonstrations in Shanghai escalated to large-scale riots in December 1987. The riots, copy-cat like, spread to universities in Anhui and other provinces. Western, including U.S., media quickly focused on the unfolding story.

Deng Xiaoping agreed to remove Hu Yaobang as CPC leader. The party and the huge government propaganda apparatus unleashed a Mao era-like anti-bourgeois campaign in the media against Hu's reform policies. Police forces brutally crushed the demonstrations.

China's foreign policy shift to a more equidistant posture between the 2 superpowers met Chinese aspiration to reclaim an independent Great Power status. That would occur over time. The aftereffects of the CCP leadership's repression of Hu's political liberalization reforms would later erupt in the massive Tiananmen student uprising.

Deng fired Hu Yaobang in January 1987. The embassy reported Hu's replacement as one piece of a Deng engineered compromise. The conservatives agreed with his decision to transfer reformer Zhao Ziyang from prime minister to replace Hu as CCP leader — a clear signal that reforms would continue in some form.

As part of the compromise, the majority conservatives' flank was protected by Deng's agreement to promote known conservative, Li Peng, to replace Zhao as prime minister.

The embassy assessed the reshuffling of leaders to be an overall setback for Deng's reform policy. Deng retired from his ceremonial position of government Vice Prime Minister. That was possibly also another signal to Moscow that China was now receptive to normalization of relations with the Soviet Union. Deng's retention of the Chairmanship of the CCP Central Military Commission demonstrated, however, that he would remain China's paramount leader.

China's 1987 conservative shift created headwinds in the U.S.-China relationship. The embassy scrambled to deal with new as well as old problems. Chinese officials and the Chinese media reinstated the Taiwan issue as a contentious issue. U.S. criticism of Chinese violations of human rights, release of dissidents, and harsh treatment of Tibetans became lasting irritants in U.S.-China relations.

Areas of agreement in the relationship still outweighed differences. Ambassador Lord in policy messages to Washington advised a results-based approach to dealing with differences: throughout remain practical; cooperate where interests overlap; don't let single issues derail the overall improving trend in relations. Emphasize dialogue and

negotiations, fixing, narrowing, or if that doesn't work, elevating issues to the leadership level to manage.

The ambassador's formula was largely followed by both sides on many -certainly not all-issues. But it worked enough to keep the relationship moving in a positive direction benefitting both sides. Off-and-on, it has continued under different administrations up to the present.

George Shultz was the most effective Secretary of State I witnessed during my 33-year career dating back to Dean Rusk. During 7 years spanning 2 Reagan Administrations, he played a critical role in keeping Sino-American relations on an upward track. Shultz believed that China "must be a part" of any U.S. global strategy. Before and while Secretary of State, Shultz tapped Ambassador Lord's expertise on Sino-American relations.

Deng Xiaoping and other Chinese leaders respected Shultz. His self-effacing nature, politeness and diplomatic skills conformed to Chinese culture. The Chinese were impressed by his economics background --PhD in Industrial Economics from MIT, Secretary of the Treasury and Labor during Nixon's presidency. He requested that his economic papers be limited to one page. The page being loaded with data, economic growth rate, GDP and so on. He would spend a second or two absorbing it, then move on to the next briefing papers.

His pleasant demeanor existed side-by-side with the command presence of a leader who can be firm when necessary on contentious issues. Shultz worked long hours when on the road, methodically cultivating his diplomatic garden. Invariably calm, he also fielded a quick wit. Before one of his meetings with Deng, the parade of embassy officers and Shultz Washington staffers in his delegation filing by Deng to shake hands got pretty long. Shultz quipped to great laughter, "Is there anyone left back in Washington?"

In the State Department, Shultz cleared his calendar to meet with high-ranking Chinese visitors passing through Washington. He developed close personal and working ties with his Chinese counterparts, Wu Xueqian. Wu's period as Foreign Minister also spanned the 2 Reagan Administrations.

The two friends spent many hours together, privately and in official talks during Shultz' 4 visits to Beijing in 1983, 1984 (with Reagan), 1987 and 1988. During each of his personal visits to China, Deng Xiaoping received Shultz for a round of talks. President Reagan reciprocated during Foreign Minister Wu's 3 visits to the U.S. In 1988, Secretary Shultz played the dual role of host and chef for Wu during an evening private BBQ in his backyard.

The two foreign ministers ironed out numerous wrinkles in Sino-American relations. Their combined influence kept the lid on the explosive Taiwan issue. An important speech Shultz gave in Shanghai celebrating the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1972 Shanghai Communique reiterated American adherence to the 3 Sino-American communiques.

Shultz urged the Chinese government to increase bilateral economic cooperation with Taiwan to improve prospects for peace in the Taiwan Straits.

The Chinese rolled out the red carpet for Shultz on his fourth and last 1988 visit to China. His first stop was in Guilin in southern China. He and Mrs. Shultz were scheduled to take the leisurely three-hour cruise on the Li River among pine-studded pencil mountains and quiet fishing villages in Gui Zhou Province.

The day before his arrival, a Chinese foreign ministry official informed me that, due to the low water level in the river, the government was opening the gates of a nearby reservoir to raise the river by seven feet. On the cruise, Secretary and Mrs. Shultz and their delegation were treated to a 12-course luncheon, boasting such Chinese delicacies as cherry pulp, phoenix wings, tri-colored Li River fish soup and black carp rolled with green stuffing.

When Secretary Shultz arrived in Beijing, he exchanged views with Chinese leaders on a broad range of international issues. The Chinese agreed with Shultz' suggestion to support a Cambodian peace settlement, not including China's Cambodian proxy, the Khmer Rouge. That was a significant breakthrough leading up to the 1991 Paris Agreements ending the Cambodian war signed by 19 nations.

Neither Secretary Shultz nor other American and Western leaders were able to convince the Chinese to cease missile sales to the volatile Middle East region --Chinese ship-to-ship "Silkworm" missiles to Iran, and short range surface-to-surface M-9 missiles to Syria, plus in the Persian Gulf, medium-range CSS-2 missiles to Saudi Arabia, and in South Asia, medium-range M-11 missiles to Pakistan. China gradually augmented its missile diplomacy with economic incentives to carve out a separate zone of Chinese influence from China's western border to the Mediterranean Sea.

The Chinese missile sales have remained an unresolved issue in the U.S.-China dialogue. Five years after Shultz' last visit, I was PDAS in the EAP Bureau when we approved U.S. sanctions on China for transferring the M-11 missiles to Pakistan. U.S. implementation of the sanctions had no effect on Beijing's policy to arm Pakistan with potential nuclear tipped missiles.

The U.S. and China capitalized on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the December 15, 1979 U.S.-China Normalization of Relations to accentuate the positive in Sino-American relations. When Chargé d'Affaires in the days leading up to the festivities on December 16 and 17, I conveyed President Reagan's letter marking the occasion to Prime Minister Li Peng. The letter reconfirmed the American commitment to the 3 Sino-American (1972, 1979 and 1982) communiques. It looked forward to future bilateral cooperation and friendship.

On December 16, Chinese Foreign Minister Wu hosted a huge reception for 1,600 Chinese and 400 American guests at the GHOP felicitating normalization of relations. Chinese Central TV and state radio broadcast Ambassador Lord's comments recalling his



personal participation in the 1972 Shanghai Communique negotiations and his personal memories of meetings with Mao Zedong at the time.

The next day, the embassy went all-out to host its own equally giant reception to honor normalization. Over 1,500 Chinese guests and hundreds of Americans filled the grand ballroom of the American Great Wall Hotel. Deng Xiaoping's son and daughter, President Yang's son, 3 former Chinese ambassadors to the U.S. attended. The audience was treated to an 11 screen synchronized multimedia program on the establishment of U.S.-China relations, plus 36,000 dumplings (dumplings in Chinese tradition signal good times).

The celebrations helped set the stage for recently elected President G.H.W. Bush's first visit abroad to China 2 months later –a "Homecoming," one that traced back to his 1974-1975 time as Director of the U.S. Liaison Office in China.

As a former Peace Corps (Nepal) Volunteer, the opportunity to contribute to the entry of the Peace Corps into China was a high point during my second China assignment. Ambassador Lord, even before leaving Washington for China in November 1985, had made that one of his top priorities. He worked at high levels of the Chinese government to get that done in coordination with Loret Ruppe, the dynamic Peace Corps Director back in Washington.

At my lower level, over a 2½ year timespan, I coordinated with my MFA counterpart, Assistant Foreign Minister Liu Huaqiu, to gain Chinese support for the China Peace Corps program.

The final agreement was signed in the form of an Exchange of Letters by Ambassador Lord with the Chinese Secretary General for International Exchanges in April 1989 shortly before the ambassador departed China. The agreement envisioned the placement of 20 Peace Corps "China 1" English teaching PCVs in 6 Western China mostly teacher training colleges.

From the beginning, we assumed that the Chinese Politburo would make the final decision on whether China would become the first communist country to welcome Peace Corps Volunteers. The majority conservative Politburo elders together with the Chinese intelligence agencies would be the major obstacles to approval. During the Cultural Revolution, Chinese internal and external propaganda organs had vilified Peace Corps volunteers abroad as CIA agents. The charge was also levied by other communist and anti-U.S. Third World governments during the Cold War.

The pro-reform constituencies in the CCP and the government led by Deng Xiaoping, we thought, would see the positives of a Peace Corps presence in China. Deng's 4 modernizations –his Opening to the Outside World overall– would probably outweigh the cons. English was the mainstream international language in political, business, scientific, technological and military communications –in short, crucial to leaving China's isolation behind and interacting globally.

By the 1980s, the Peace Corps TOEFL (teaching English as a foreign language) programs were 2 decades old. Throughout China, the demand for native English speakers from high schools, colleges and universities was overwhelming. The native English speaking PCVs would mostly be assigned to teach English to future Chinese English teachers.

Ambassador Lord invited Director Ruppe to visit China in 1996 to begin the process of creating a Peace Corps program in China. Her visit did exactly that. The ambassador hosted a lunch for Ruppe to discuss with Chinese officials the Peace Corps and its potential benefits to China.

I hosted a follow-on Americans only lunch for Ruppe bringing her together with myself and 2 other embassy officers who were also former PCVs. Political Counselor Darryl Johnson (Thailand) and our Economic Counsellor, Kent Wiedemann (Fiji). I also invited two Americans who taught Chinese in Beijing universities to the lunch.

There was common agreement during our lively discussion with Ruppe that the approach to gain Chinese approval required a low key, “in good time,” don’t overload the circuits character. It would take time for the Peace Corps issue to wind its way up the Chinese bureaucratic ladder towards a final leadership decision. Our best guess timeframe for that decision turned out to be much shorter than the long 2 years plus period that ultimately ensued!

Our Americans-only lunch for Director Ruppe also concluded it important to ensure that the Chinese as well as American side viewed the Peace Corps entry into China as advantageous to both countries. The worst-case scenario was for the Chinese to smugly assume we were attempting to sell a Peace Corps program in China.

From 1986 to 1988, Ambassador Lord and I honored the “in good time” guideline spreading out our occasional discussions about the Peace Corps with Chinese officials. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was the most disposed to accepting a Peace Corps program – a vehicle to improve U.S.-China relations. In particular, the ministry’s America Division led by Vice Foreign Minister Zhu Qizhen and Assistant Minister Liu Huaqiu.

I described my Peace Corps experience in Nepal with my counterpart, Liu Huaqiu. The Foreign Ministry directed the Chinese embassy in Washington to call on Peace Corps headquarters, gather information and report back. At the Ambassador’s request, Secretary Schultz and a few selected visiting American officials raised the Peace Corps issue with Chinese leaders in a low-key manner.

Other than the MFA, the Chinese government institution most in favor of a Peace Corps program in China was the China Education Association for International Exchanges (CEAIE). CEAIE was responsible for recruiting foreign English language teachers to meet the flood of demands for foreign English teachers from the government and from all regions of China.

In late February 1988, nearly 2 years after Director Ruppe's visit to China, a MFA official passed the word to the embassy that there would soon be something "positive" about China's Peace Corps decision. Two weeks later, on March 9, 1988, Chinese Foreign Minister We Xueqian chose a Washington Press Club journalists' question to announce the Chinese government's decision on the Peace Corps. He answered that his government "has adopted a positive attitude on this matter" – "we have reached agreement in principle" – "All kinds of specific details will still need to be discussed."

Foreign Minister Wu's statement that "all kinds of specific details would need to be discussed" implied PCVs would not be arriving in China anytime soon. It would take 4 rounds of talks over a 10-month period to negotiate the agreement.

During my first meeting with Liu Huaqiu following Wu's return to Beijing, Liu suggested that the Peace Corps name be changed to "U.S.-China Friendship Volunteers." He conveyed that the Chinese government preferred that the first Peace Corps group be English language instructors teaching Chinese English language teachers in Teachers' Colleges in Sichuan Province, Western China. I suggested that these and other Chinese preferences be tabled during the Peace Corps negotiations that would include Peace Corps officials from Peace Corps headquarters in Washington. Liu requested that the negotiations be conducted in China.

Fortunately for the Peace Corps negotiations, Director Ruppe appointed her experienced Asian Regional Director, Jon Keaton, to represent the Peace Corps in the implementation negotiations in Beijing.

I led the U.S. delegation that included an able Chinese-speaking embassy economic officer, Diedre Chatham. Diedre was designated the every-day embassy operational liaison with the Chinese government regarding the Peace Corps China 1 program. Our Chengdu Consulate General in Western China also became involved in preparations to receive the China 1 PCVs in its consular district.

Socially and across the negotiating table, Jon connected well with the Chinese. His empathetic, self-effacing and friendly nature induced progress towards agreement. He was also on top of his Peace Corps brief. It helped that Jon had been a Volunteer, then a Peace Corps director in Korea. He would later open up Peace Corps programs in 5 countries in Central Asia.

The 3 rounds of negotiations in 1988 began at a Diaoyutai diplomatic conference facility. In the first round of talks, Jon explained the standard Peace Corps Host Country Agreement used as a basis for worldwide Peace Corps programs. He methodically reviewed the contents of a draft agreement tailored for China. It included a Volunteer's method of selection, housing terms (at the same level as Chinese teacher peers), security, pay (the Peace Corps usually pays the salaries).

Liu asked a few questions. The rest of the Chinese delegation looked confused and did not speak. I suspected that the many details in the agreement would be mulled over in the Chinese bureaucracy and debated, perhaps at the leadership level as well.

Whatever the reasons, the Chinese delayed for 5 months before Liu called to inform me that they were prepared for the second round.

Jon flew back to Beijing on August 31 (1988) with Vance Hyndam, the Peace Corps Director in Thailand. I invited Jon and Vance to an early breakfast at my residence to compare notes and to coordinate strategy for the next morning, September 1. Our delegation numbered 6 when the talks resumed the morning of September 1, including 3 embassy officers. The Chinese delegation numbered over 10, presumably to accommodate more representatives from the intelligence agencies.

The September 1 discussions were productive. General agreement was reached on most but not all issues. The Peace Corps name in China would be changed to “U.S.-China Friendship Volunteers.” Most Volunteers would teach in Sichuan Province teacher training colleges. The third round of talks would take place in December.

The next day, September 2, Jon, Vance Hyndman, and embassy ECON officer Chatham managing the embassy Peace Corps portfolio flew to Chengdu. Jon met our consul general and visited some of the sites.

Jon returned to China in mid-December 1988 to undertake a marathon bus tour of the China 1 Peace Corps training sites –to be followed by the third and final round of talks on December 20<sup>th</sup>. He visited and approved the 6 China 1 all sites in Sichuan Province 3 teacher-training colleges, 2 medical colleges, plus a small animal husbandry institution.

The final round of negotiations in Beijing on December 20 produced agreement on implementation of the China 1 project. Examples of some of the items agreed to:

- the volunteers must be American citizens “friendly to China;
- they should have received adequate degrees and training to qualify for teaching English as a foreign language.
- The Chinese side would provide free housing and teaching facilities.
- Teaching materials would be chosen by mutual consent.

Assistant Minister Liu hosted the Diaoyutai welcome banquet for the American delegation on the evening of December 19, the day before the third round.

The third and final round of talks were held in Beijing on December 20, 1988.

On the evening of December 20, after the wrap up of the negotiations earlier that day, I hosted the return banquet at my DCM Residence for 19 guests. From the Chinese delegation: Liu and 4 other MFA participants in the talks; 3 CEAIE participants; and other Chinese participants from the State Education Commission and the Public Security

Ministry. American guests: Jon, Vance, Peace Corps Washington China Desk Officer, Charles Howell, and 3 others from the embassy, including Diedre Chatham.

The atmosphere around the table was celebratory. I would even add joyful, in the finest Peace Corps spirit.

Jon returned to Washington looking forward to Peace Corps selection and training of the China 1 PCVs.

*Q: So this takes us to the end of this assignment?*

TOMSEN: Yes. My last 3 months included President Bush's visit from February 25 to February 27, and afterwards the Tiananmen uprising!

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

TOMSEN: From the late afternoon of February 25, 1989, to the early morning of February 27, a 1½ day span, newly-elected President George H.W. Bush visited China. His 41-hour stop in Beijing (including 2 overnights) was sandwiched between stops in Tokyo to attend Emperor Hiroshito's funeral and Seoul, South Korea.

For the Chinese, President Bush was an "old friend." During my first China tour when he was Vice President, he had returned to China to meet Deng Xiaoping and break the negotiating deadlock on the August 1982 Taiwan arms communique.

Embassies abroad, White House presidential staff and State Department offices that focus on presidential visits must coordinate closely with one another to make sure each presidential visit is problem free. For that reason, presidential visits to foreign countries very rarely do go wrong.

Perhaps somebody, someday, may wish to make President Bush's 1989 visit to China a "lessons learned" case study of one of those rare examples of a presidential visit that did go wrong—ending in the "empty dissident seat" at the banquet disaster. The seeds for that public media fiasco and subsequent public scapegoating (China vs U.S. - White House vs Embassy) were sowed during the weeks before Air Force One arrived in Beijing on February 25.

Probably both the U.S. and China sides deserved a share of the blame for this outcome that neither side wanted!

With that in mind, here is how I witnessed the drama.

The embassy from Ambassador Lord on down worked around the clock to make the president's 1989 visit to China a success. Ambassador Lord oversaw all facets of

preparations. He made me the embassy Control Officer. The embassy provided Washington with a stream of scene setters focused on each presidential meeting event. The cabled essays described the setting for each meeting. They provided biographic information on the participants and suggested U.S. themes to raise and points to make.

The ambassador cabled 2 personal one-to-one outstanding messages to the president: one a beautifully written overview of China on the eve of his visit. The second a unique bio sketch on Deng Xiaoping based on his many meetings with Deng beginning with the early 1970's U.S. opening to China.

We assigned Escort Officers to assist senior White House and State Department officials in the 79-member official delegation. Those included Secretary of State Baker, NSC Advisor Scowcroft, White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card, Department Spokesperson Margaret Tutwiler, and Assistant Secretary Gaston Sigur.

PAO counsellor McKinney Russell served as Escort Officer for White House Press Secretary Fitzwater. His PAO office established a press center at the 5-star Shangri-La Beijing Hotel to provide support for the 250 U.S. reporters covering the visit. Embassy 3 to 4 member teams led by senior embassy officers were assigned to coordinate with Chinese counterparts to prepare for each of the six high level presidential meetings that would take place during the visit.

A larger embassy team organized the president's "Return Banquet" to be held in the Grand Ballroom of the Sheraton Great Wall Hotel.

On February 1, I and several embassy counsellors met with Assistant Minister Liu Huaqiu and his MFA colleagues at the MFA to develop the basic schedule for the visit. The President's long-time personal relations with Chinese leaders made that an easy task for both sides.

During later meetings at MFA, ambassador-led discussions in the embassy, and coordination with Washington, 5 "firsts" for a foreign leader visiting China were finalized: the first live TV interview given by a foreign leader on Chinese State Television –the president would personally speak, uncensored, to the enormous national Chinese TV audience; the president's attendance at a Sunday morning Christian church service -the same church that he and Mrs. Bush had attended when he was head of the U.S. Liaison Office in Beijing; an unprecedented photo-op stop next to the iconic Gate of Heavenly Peace near Tiananmen Square on his way from the airport to his Diaoyutai guest villa. There he would meet and greet a group of Chinese citizens. The Chinese also approved the president's use of his own presidential limousine flown in from the U.S. and a United States Secret Service officer, instead of a Chinese security officer, to occupy the limousine's front passenger seat.

The White House Pre-Advance Team for the presidential visit arrived on January 31. We briefed them and showed them around. They departed on February 2.

The White House Advance Team -over 30 members strong- arrived on February 13, 15 days prior to the visit. It was led by Chicago lawyer Bob Athey. Advance Team and embassy personnel worked hand-in-glove resolving the numerous issues, large and small, that crop up preparing for a presidential visit. Bob and I were mid-Westerners. We thoroughly enjoyed each other's company. We formed a productive partnership up to and through the visit. We kept each other informed about our separate communications with Chinese officials.

Most of the time we were together in the scores of coordinating meetings morning, noon and night. Bob used his small cell phone—the first one I had ever seen—to call his contacts in the White House. I worked the embassy back-channel O-I link to the Department's China Desk. The embassy also sent classified and unclassified cables to State and the White House.

To give a birds' eye view of the president's schedule:

#### Day One, February 25

Arrive Beijing Airport at 4:30pm. The ambassador and the Chinese MFA Chief of Protocol, Wu Mianlian, go on board Air Force One and welcome the president and his delegation to China. The president's motorcade pauses for the photo-op at the Heavenly Gate adjacent to Tiananmen on the way to the president's guest villa at Diaoyutai.

Meanwhile Secretary of State Baker meets with the Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen at the GHOP. Afterwards the two foreign ministers participate in a meeting of President Bush and his titular host for the visit, Chinese President Yang Shengkun at another room in the GHOP. Yang's Welcome Banquet in honor of President Bush, also at the GHOP, wraps up the first day's events.

#### Day Two, February 26

Three meetings with Chinese leaders filled the second and final day schedule. Premier Li Peng in the morning. A late morning bilateral with Deng Xiaoping followed by a lunch hosted by Deng Xiaoping. A mid-afternoon meeting with CCP General Secretary Zhao Ziyang.

The President's "Farewell Banquet" was the last official event of his visit. Five hundred guests participated. It was held in the huge and beautiful ballroom of the stately 5-star Great Wall Sheraton Hotel in Beijing. The White House requested that the embassy compile a guest list that included a diverse list of Chinese guests –government officials, representatives of academia, economic, commercial, scientific and media organizations. Members of the president's delegation and China based American business, teachers and other expatriates were also invited.

The *Leitmotif* of the President's huge banquet was Texas Cowboy barbeque. The title befitted President Bush and Secretary Baker, proud natives of the Lone Star State. The White House banquet organizer transported all the necessary ingredients by air. The embassy picked up at the Beijing airport successive airplane shipments of barbeque grills, food and wine for the banquet, and an array of Texas origin items. Those included scores of red-white checkered table cloths, plus a massive consignment of fresh flowers. A few Secret Service agents, one dog handler, provided security for the ballroom.

The flowers were placed in an unheated room (it was winter) next to the Great Wall Hotel's magnificent ballroom. Kim and a half-dozen volunteered embassy wives, including an elderly foreign service spouse of a consul general, worked for days -at times squatting on the cold floor of a hotel room to chop off flower stems in order to keep the flowers fresh looking; laying out the hundreds of bright red and white flowers on the room's floor; methodically cutting their long stems to make them uniform; folding them into lovely bouquets; and finally placing them on the tables. The long Head Table looked down on about 35 smaller circular tables spread out in concentric rows inside the ballroom. Each table sported criss crossed American and Chinese flags.

Kim vetoed a Secret Service agent's attempt to remodel the bouquets with the flowers pointed vertically, straight up on all tables. Kim pointed out to him that was the style of Communist art: rigid and rough. Perhaps the Secret Service agent preferred that style? she asked. The Secret Service agent agreed that her arrangement style was better.

One morning, the wives kept an eye on Chinese security officers darting between the tables changing the protocolary placement of Chinese and American name cards in front of seats. After the Chinese shift ended, the wives returned the cards to their original location.

The specific agenda items President Bush and Secretary Baker planned to raise during their conversations with Chinese leaders were familiar ones to both sides. President Bush and President Yang had discussed them during Yang's 1987 visit to the U.S. That visit had included a personal 5-hour boat excursion on the Potomac. There was a positive overlap on many of the topics, including support for the UN-sponsored negotiations on the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and support for a Cambodian peace agreement now excluding the Khmer Rouge. Both countries would state their approval for the other's ongoing improvement of relations with the Soviet Union -thus enhancing global stability.

The president and Secretary Baker were armed with talking points aimed at narrowing differences on Taiwan, trade relations, North Korea, Chinese missiles exports to the Middle East and human rights. Taiwan and human



rights were the most sensitive issues. International and domestic constituencies in the U.S. and China would be closely monitoring public statements on these two topics.

On human rights, Bush and Baker's talking points covered political prisoners, political liberalization, and tolerance for dissidents seeking to express their views. They were available for the President and Secretary Baker to draw from during meetings and social conversations with their Chinese counterparts. U. S. responses on Taiwan would follow the standard references to the 3 communiqués on Sino-American relations.

A single embassy cable proposed 4 public human rights public initiatives to work into the president's visit's schedule. The president's participation in the second day Sunday morning Christian religious service at Chongwenmen Church highlighted American support for religious rights. A sentence in President Bush's toast during President Yang's Welcome Banquet on the first day of the visit highlighting the importance of individual rights. Secretary Baker would draw from the cabled talking points to raise human rights during his bilateral meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen scheduled right before Yang's first evening Welcome Banquet. The fourth suggested initiative was to invite 3 Chinese dissidents to President Bush's Return Banquet closing out the second day schedule. The dissidents, each controversial, would be Chinese citizens employed in government jobs. They would be mixed in with the more than 500 other guests seated in the banquet hall.

The invitation to the 3 dissidents at the president's Return Banquet followed up a precedent set by President Reagan 3 months previously. Reagan personally, face to face, met with a broad range of Soviet dissidents and their families (over 90 persons altogether) at the U.S. ambassador's Spaso House residence during a summit with Gorbachev in Moscow. President Gorbachev, Reagan's host and the Soviet media publicly criticized the meeting. The American media and human rights advocates in Congress and NGOs applauded the initiative.

American journalists and politicians would be on the lookout for a similar presidential gesture during the president's China visit.

On February 10, 14 days before Air Force One landed in Beijing, and one day before Bob Athey and his Advance Team arrived, the embassy transmitted an "immediate" precedence, classified cable to the White House and State Department. It requested White House consideration of the 500 Chinese and American names in the cable text for participation in the President's banquet.

Of course, only the White House, not the embassy and not the State Department, can approve guests invited to presidential banquets.

The February 10 cable proposed guestlist was distributed to scores of offices in the White House Office and State Department. The first page of the cable “slugged” for priority attention several officials in the National Security Council, the White House Office of Special Activities overseeing the visit –also the Director of the State Department’s China Desk and the State Department’s administrative office that handles all presidential visits.

The cable described political risks involved in including the 3 prominent Chinese dissidents among the 500 guests invited to the banquet: Fang Lizhi, Fang’s wife, Li Shuxian, and Su Shashi. Fang Lizhi’s name and his role as China’s leading dissident were well-known to China specialists working in Scowcroft’s NSC office, State and the CIA.

The embassy’s February 10 message notified that all three of the dissidents were Chinese citizens employed in Chinese government positions. Fang was a well-known astrophysicist. In 1987, he had been expelled from the Communist Party and fired from his position as president of a college in Anwei [Anhui] Province for his dissident activities. He currently worked in a government job as a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

Three embassy sections were in occasional touch with Fang: Political, Science and Technology, and Press and Cultural. So were American and Western reporters and diplomats from other Western embassies. Each of the 3 embassy sections separately recommended that Fang’s name be placed on the invitee list sent to Washington. The classified cable, Beijing 03662, alerted:

FANG LIZHI. ASTROPHYSICIST AND MEMBER OF THE CHINESE ACADEMY OF SCIENCES. WELL KNOWN FOR HIS RADICAL REFORM VIEWS; LI SHUXIAN, WIFE OF FANG LIZHI, HERSELF A PHYSICIST AT BEIJING UNIVERSITY AND SU SHAZHI, MEMBER OF THE CHINESE ACADEMY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND A PROMINENT ADVOCATE OF GREATER REFORM AND LIBERALIZATION. THESE DISSIDENTS, THOUGH THEY RETAIN THEIR OFFICIAL STATUS, ARE VOCAL REPRESENTATIVES OF THE INTELLECTUALS WHO STRONGLY ADVOCATE GREATER, MORE COMPREHENSIVE, AND QUICKER POLITICAL REFORM, FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, AND DEMOCRATIZATION THROUGHOUT CHINESE SOCIETY. EMBASSY OFFICERS MEET WITH THESE DISSIDENTS PERIODICALLY. IF THESE DISSIDENTS ATTEND, THERE WILL BE PRESS ATTENTION.

3. THE DISSIDENTS, ESPECIALLY FANG, COULD VERY WELL SPEAK TO THE MEDIA AT THE BANQUET AND CAUSE SOME ANNOYANCE ON THE PART OF THE CHINESE AUTHORITIES.

WE NEVERTHELESS RECOMMEND THAT THE THREE BE INVITED. (INDEED, THERE IS SOME CHANCE THAT THE PRESS MIGHT REPORT ON FANG LIZHI'S ABSENCE IN A BANQUET THIS SIZE, IF HE IS NOT INVITED.). LIMITED OFFICIAL USE.  
BEIJING 03662

Each day passed without a response to the February classified draft guest list sent "immediate" precedence to Washington. Presidential Advance Team head, Bob Athey, and myself, the embassy Control Office for the visit, were daily on the phone or sending back channel messages to Washington requesting a response to the February 10 cable's presidential banquet guest list.

We received no response. On February 18, we sent another classified "immediate" precedence cable to the Washington addressees. It pointed out that only 7 days remained before the presidential delegation arrived in Beijing. The lead time for distributing invitation cards (expected on February 20) had fallen to only 2 days.

The February 18 cable again flagged Fang Lizhi's controversial name on the list — "WE ARE STILL PLANNING TO INVITE NOTED DISSIDENTS FANG LIZHI AND HIS WIFE." It urgently requested: "Please advise any changes, additions, and subtractions to the list by Monday, February 20." It concluded that time was running out—the embassy's objective was to begin distributing the formal presidential invitation cards (to arrive on February 20) on February 21 (4 days before the presidential delegation would arrive).

Backs to the wall, the embassy officer heading the embassy protocol office instructed the 3 Chinese local employees in the protocol office to invite, by phone, 180 of the senior and middle level Chinese banquet guests. The cards would be distributed by embassy vehicle after they arrived on February 20. The rest of the Chinese guests could be invited later.

The caution was well-advised—the same had been true in embassy Moscow—we assumed that the 3 Chinese employees in the embassy protocol office were Chinese intelligence officers. They would pass on the names of the Chinese dissidents to the Chinese Ministries of Foreign Affairs (the lead ministry for the visit) and the (intelligence) Public Security Ministry. Pending White House approval, we therefore withheld from the protocol office the names of the 3 dissidents along with scores of other regular embassy contacts.

On February 21, 4 days before Air Force One would land, we cabled a final "Hail Mary" classified "NIACT Immediate" cable to the White House and State Department urgently requesting White House changes and approval to the embassy draft guest list for the president's banquet.

*Q: You don't get more urgent than a NIACT cable. Having worked in the Operations Center, when we saw a NIACT, that thing got distributed immediately to the Secretary's office and all the Secretary's staff; somebody is going to notify the Secretary of the*

*NIACT. Unless his staff made the decision not to show him that cable and he never saw it—that would be a decision of his inner staff; otherwise the Secretary's going to see it.*

TOMSEN: The White House communications center immediately received this message for night action by NSC and other White House offices.

*Q: Yes.*

TOMSEN: Many State Department officers working overnight in the Ops Center and EAP officers also were on the NIACT action offices addressee list.

The China Desk later in the day complained by the back channel that they were not able to get responses from the White House. Nor did we in Embassy Beijing.

*Q: Yes. You don't get flooded with NIACTs from the field. It has to get DCM clearance; and DCMs are not going to approve a NIACT for a stubbed toe in diplomatic terms.*

TOMSEN: So, there was no overnight response to our message. The next morning, February 22, Bob (Athey) and I resumed phone calls to his contacts in the White House and mine in State—now 3 days remained before the president's arrival! The morning of February 22 overlapped with—I can't remember—either an Air Force One stopover in Alaska or Hawaii or after the presidential delegation was on the ground in Tokyo.

Sometime in the early afternoon, Bob and I were standing next to each other outside the embassy. Bob used his small cell phone to finally connect with a White House member of the president's delegation. After about a 10-minute conversation, Bob turned to me and informed me that the White House approved the guest list and the embassy could distribute the banquet invitations.

*Q: We've upped the stakes quite a bit already.*

TOMSEN: Yes. After Bob received the guest list green light from the member of the presidential delegation, the embassy protocol officer and embassy vehicles went into high gear on the afternoon of February 22. The 3 Chinese protocol employees phoned banquet invitations to the remaining Chinese guests. The ones for Fang Lizhi and his wife were phoned to the Chinese Academy of Science for onward notification of the Fangs. Embassy drivers fanned out delivering the formal presidential invitation cards.

At this point on the afternoon of February 22, Ambassador Lord, myself, hard-working embassy officers and their spouses had every reason to assume that President Bush's Homecoming visit was poised for success.

It was not. The green light given to Bob from a member of the presidential delegation turned out to be a false dawn. Even in Tokyo, 2½ days away from arrival in Beijing, the White House had still not gotten its act together to give a considered response to the draft invitation list. One missed step begot another. The Bush's presidential team's furtive

attempt later to contain the damage by accommodating the Chinese demand to block Fang's physical access to the banquet generated a public fiasco that lasted for weeks after the visit.

During the embassy's 1982 negotiations with the Chinese on the 3rd Sino-American Taiwan arms communique, President Reagan firmly rejected Chinese threats to agree on a date certain for the U.S. to terminate arms sales to Taiwan. Reagan's polite but firm stance prevailed. The Chinese compromised. The final communique text did not include a date certain.

The Chinese practice of applying pressures in negotiations rising to intimidation began right after the banquet invitations were delivered to Fang Lizhi and his wife. One of the 3 Chinese local embassies distributing the banquet invitation cards told his embassy supervisor that he could not take responsibility for delivering Fang's formal invitation card. An embassy officer who knew Fang personally hand-delivered the invitation cards to the Fangs at their home.

The late February 22 delivery of the invitations to the Fangs guaranteed that Fang would shortly be in touch with foreign journalists to spread the news –as the embassy had foreseen in the February 10 classified cable alert. The embassy sent an “immediate” message to the presidential party in Tokyo containing recommended press guidance if either Fang or the Chinese government reacted publicly to the invitation.

That would not be a long wait. Fang contacted *Washington Post* Beijing-based correspondent, Dan Southerland –probably minutes after receiving his invitation. The next day (February 23) edition of the *Washington Post* carried Southerland's article: Fang “sometimes called the Andrei Sakharov of China, said Wednesday night that he was surprised by the invitation and considered it a ‘good sign’ – “the United States has often been accused of assuming a double standard in human rights, taking a tough position towards the Soviet Union while expecting and demanding little from China.”

Bob Athey was hosting a “Thank You” dinner for the Chinese MFA personnel who had been involved in the preparations for the presidential visit –a few hours after Fang received his invitation on February 22. The senior Chinese guest was MFA Chief of Protocol, Wu Mianlian. Wu was the leading Chinese government official responsible for the president's visit. He would be the first Chinese government official to greet the president inside Air Force One after it landed in Beijing.

After the dinner ended, Wu took Ambassador Lord and me aside for a private conversation. He asked us to confirm that the Fang invitation had been delivered. The ambassador confirmed it had. Wu strongly criticized the invitation to Fang. He singled out Fang and did not mention Fang's wife or Su.

The ambassador defended the invitation. Fang, like the other hundreds of Chinese guests, was a Chinese citizen. The Chinese banquet guests were from all walks of life. Fang was a respected Chinese astrophysicist working at the Chinese Academy of Sciences. The

ambassador suggested that the Chinese government not make a big issue of the invitation to one among 500 guests.

We immediately reported the conversation with Wu to the presidential delegation in Tokyo and to Washington.

Meanwhile, through the next day the president remained immersed in his Tokyo schedule. The positive buildup in the Chinese media on the visit continued. Southerland augmented his earlier article. He wrote that the invitation “sends a powerful signal to other intellectuals of U.S. interest in promoting human rights in China. The invitation is expected to bolster the morale of dissidents calling for the release of political prisoners” – “A U.S. embassy official” was cited as saying, “The invitation is evidence that we’re interested in human rights.” Another loose talking embassy official was quoted stating that “We’re listening to the many voices that are coming out of China.”

On February 24, the day before the president’s arrival, NSC Advisor Scowcroft called Ambassador Lord from Tokyo. The ambassador briefed him on the state of play. Afterwards, the presidential delegation cabled press guidance to the embassy. Drawing on the previous embassy-suggested press guidance, it projected that President Bush would stand firm and hold the line on the Fang invitation.

During the evening of February 24, at 9:00pm, 19 hours before the president arrived, Vice Foreign Minister Zhu Qizhen escalated the pressure. He summoned the ambassador to his MFA office to demand that the U.S. “revoke” Fang’s invitation. He warned that the Chinese leadership opposed the invitation. The ambassador defended the invitation, repeating the points that Fang was a Chinese citizen, an internationally respected astrophysicist employed at the government’s Academy of Social Sciences. Ambassador Lord recommended that the Chinese not exaggerate the issue and stated he would immediately relay Zhu’s demands to the President’s delegation in Tokyo.

Three hours later, at 12:15 a.m. in the early hours of the morning before the president’s February 25 arrival, MFA Protocol Chief Wu Mianlian phoned me. He asked me to meet with him in his MFA office. I asked Advance Team leader Bob Athey to accompany me. During my 3 years in China, I had come to know Wu well. Wu and his wife had been guests at our residence and he had been our host at his social functions as well. We had cooperated amicably with each other preparing and participating in many high-level U.S. and Chinese visits both ways.

Wu began our discussion by reiterating MFA Vice Minister Zhu’s demand on behalf of China’s leadership that Fang’s invitation be revoked. I reiterated Ambassador Lord’s response. Wu then requested a private meeting with me.

After Bob Athey departed, Wu asked me to join him in negotiating a way out of the Fang invitation impasse. I supposed his suggestion to be a good sign but did not show it –too many mines lurked underneath the surface. On the upside, it contrasted with Zhu’s harsh demands at the recent 9:00pm MFA meeting with the ambassador. Perhaps it indicated

that the Chinese, maybe Chinese moderates in both the MFA and the top CCP leadership, were looking for a compromise fallback to resolve the Fang invitation stalemate. The negotiations of the 1982 Taiwan arms sales communique fit that pattern.

I thanked Wu for his proposal. I told him I would get back to him later that morning with Ambassador Lord's decision. The ambassador liked the proposal. I phoned Wu and agreed to his proposal. I also conveyed the ambassador's condition that any arrangement worked out needed to include Fang's attendance at the banquet.

Before the presidential delegation arrived in mid-afternoon that same day, and through the morning of the second day of the visit, Wu and I found time to work out a 4-point compromise to address both American and Chinese concerns:

- Fang and his wife would be seated at a table with embassy officers far from the Head Table.
- 2 embassy "ushers" already assigned to monitor the banquet ballroom would enforce this condition.
- Fang would not approach the Head Table during the banquet.
- None of the high-level guests at the Head Table would leave the Head Table to mix with other guests during the banquet.
- The banquet would not last more than 1.5 hours.

*Q: Let me ask a question here. In your Foreign Service career, were there any other banquets or occasions like this where the negotiations went down to this level of detail and sensitivity?*

TOMSEN: No. My 1985 negotiations with an Indian diplomat concluding a joint press statement on Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit to the U.S. did not even come close. Then Vice President Bush was Rajiv Gandhi's host at the dinner in Houston. There wasn't much time. Gandhi would depart from Houston after the dinner for a Caribbean stop before returning to India. My Indian colleague and I barely had enough time to write the joint press statement and gather signatures from the U.S. and Indian dinner guests. The press statement celebrating Gandhi's visit was put on the wires as Gandhi's plane took off.

The compromise banquet agreement to resolve the Fang issue is outlined in the George Washington University National Archives "Tiananmen Papers" collection, published in 2001. Media reports looking back at the banquet also discuss the compromise agreement. But the agreement came to naught. We never were told why it was ignored.

Ambassador Lord, seated at the Head Table during the banquet, assumed the Fangs had arrived and been seated. I, too, at my table for senior Chinese guests near the Head Table, assumed the Fangs had arrived. Only towards the end of the banquet were we informed by an embassy officer that the Fangs never arrived.

Hours later that night, embassy officers reported why they did not show –scores of Chinese security officers on the streets outside had barred their entry and shoed them away from the Great Wall Hotel.

For an answer to the larger mega question “how” this happened, we need to go back to the night before Air Force One landed: Zhu’s tough evening presentation to Ambassador Lord at MFA followed by Wu’s proposal for a compromise negotiation. Wu’s proposal suggested the Chinese were preparing two paths to follow.

On to the next act in the drama: At 9:30 a.m., about 7 hours before Air Force One touched down at 4:30 p.m., February 25, the ambassador was summoned again by Vice Minister Zhu to MFA. They re-echoed their contrasting positions on the Fang invitation from the previous day. Three hours later, just 4 hours before the president’s arrival, the Chinese escalated from their previous threats up to the ultimatum level.

Zhu phoned Ambassador Lord to deliver the ultimatum. If the U.S. did not revoke Fang’s invitation, neither President Yang Shangkun nor any Chinese leader invited would attend the president’s banquet.

Ultimatums were not uncommon in negotiations with both the Soviet Union and China during the Cold War. In 1982, the Reagan Administration had received China’s “date certain” Taiwan arms sales ultimatum. Secretary of State Haig recalled in his memoirs: “This was an ultimatum. I couldn’t believe my ears.” The Chinese Fang invitation ultimatum fell into that category –a calculated Chinese gamble, in addition to being arrogant and demeaning to President Bush personally and to the United States. The Chinese proposed compromise negotiated with Protocol Chief Wu was an alternative solution should the ultimatum fail.

Ambassador Lord and Wu boarded Air Force One to greet the President at the Beijing Airport a few hours after the ultimatum. On the airplane and during private conversations with the ambassador, President Bush expressed indignation, to put it mildly, that Fang had been invited to the banquet without his knowledge. The President’s anger, no doubt, was influenced by the Chinese ultimatum. His assertion that he had not been informed about the Fang invitation caught the ambassador, myself and White House Advance Team leader Athey by surprise.

How could the Fang invitation issue have taken the President unawares? Secretary of State Baker and NSC Advisor Scowcroft claimed that they also had not been aware of the Fang invitation. A member of the president’s delegation in Tokyo had cleared the banquet guest list containing Fang’s name in a conversation with Athey. That was preceded by multiple immediate and NIACT cables and phone call alerts to White House NSC and presidential travel offices, plus State Department EAP and China offices, flagging the risks involved in inviting Fang and the other 2 dissidents' names to the banquet as gestures of U.S. support for human rights.

Was willful ignorance lurking somewhere here?



The February 22 phone conversation with NSC Advisor Scowcroft in Tokyo followed by the cabled press guidance to the embassy from Tokyo provided specific embassy responses to media questions that defended the presidential invitation to Fang. The media talking points clearly implied that the president and Scowcroft were aware of the invitation.

As directed, the embassy used the Tokyo press guidance to answer media questions during the 3 days prior to the President's arrival on February 25.

*Q: Has the President invited Chinese dissident Fang Lizhi to attend the banquet he is hosting in Beijing?*

The President has extended an invitation to Fang Lizhi to attend the President's dinner on Sunday evening. Fang Lizhi has accepted the invitation. The invitation reflects his international renown as an astrophysicist. The guest list includes distinguished people from all walks of life.

*Q: If Fang Lizhi attends the dinner, does the President plan to meet him there?*

The President will try to greet as many of the guests as possible. However, the dinner is a large one, and the President's role as host will preclude a separate meeting.

A muffled tension in the air created by the Chinese boycott ultimatum persisted while President Bush and his Chinese hosts smoothly implemented the events in the visit's schedule. The president's motorcade from the airport into Beijing passed waving crowds on both sides of the highway. The well-choreographed photo stop at the Heavenly Gate near Tiananmen was a success. President Bush stepped from his limousine, smiling, waved to a crowd, commenting to one admiring Chinese, "Haven't I met you before?"

The colorful Heaven Gate photo graced the cover of *Time* magazine that week.

President Yang Shengkun hosted the welcoming banquet. In their toasts, the two presidents pledged to continue to improve U.S.-China relations while narrowing differences. Yang joked he had informed Ambassador Lord that he would have voted for Bush in the November election if he had been able to vote. The president alluded to human rights in his toast, noting in the one liner that the Sino-American relationship "must be based on respect for the individual as well as the integrity of states." Secretary of State Baker made human rights an element in his private bilateral with Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen.

The second and last day of the visit, February 26, also went well. The president briefly spoke at the Sunday morning Chongwenmen Church service –the elderly pastor presiding had baptized one of the Bush's daughters when he was head of the U.S. Liaison Office over a decade earlier. The president's "first ever" direct and live TV broadcast to a huge Chinese audience was a great success. His two-hour bilateral with Premier Li Peng and

talks with Deng Xiaoping renewed bilateral and global issues. During the Li Peng meeting, the president expressed pleasure with the Peace Corps agreement. Li answered that China would respect the agreement. He added that the Peace Corps program might expand in the future.

The president exchanged gifts with his Chinese hosts –American cowboy boots for Chinese bicycles. The president’s bilateral with Deng Xiaoping was followed by Deng’s lunch for the president. Both sides characterized Sino-Soviet normalization as a stabilizing event in global affairs. Deng predicted that this normalization summit with Gorbachev in May would not by itself resolve China’s remaining differences with the Soviet Union.

Clearly, the Chinese leadership had designated CCP General Secretary Zhao Ziyang to play the “bad guy” role at the end of the string of Chinese leadership meetings with the President, prior to the President’s banquet a few hours away.

Zhao was a logical choice. During my first China assignment, Deng and the Chinese leadership had given Zhao a similar role when, then as Chinese premier, Zhao was the first senior Chinese leader to meet President Reagan early in the first Reagan Administration. Their meeting took place at an international conference in Cancun, Mexico, 8 months after Reagan’s inauguration. Zhao aggressively pressured Reagan on U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, initiating the year-long failed Chinese campaign to force the U.S. to accept a date certain to terminate arms sales to Taiwan.

During his leadership bilateral with President Bush, without naming Fang specifically, Zhao used the meeting to chastise the U.S. for attempting to export its way of life to China and for interfering in Chinese internal affairs. The President politely listened but did not give a substantive response to Zhao’s accusations.

Protocol Chief Wu Mianlian and I had kept our respective sides up to date on our 4-point compromise agreement to resolve the Fang invitation issue. Around noon, we reached agreement and conveyed it to our principals. I quietly informed Ambassador Lord seated next to Secretary Baker during the Zhao meeting. The Secretary was seated next to the President. The ambassador leaned over and briefed Baker.

By that time, however, the compromise option had been OBE’d. Unbeknownst to the ambassador, myself or anyone else in the embassy, President Bush had authorized secret parallel negotiations that essentially acquiesced to the Chinese ultimatum to revoke Fang’s banquet invitation. Presidential spokesman Fitzwater, perhaps other senior administration officials as well, were kept in the dark. I assumed that the President deputized NSC Advisor Scowcroft to conduct the parallel negotiations with the ambassador’s counterpart, Vice Foreign Minister Zhu Qizhen.

During the subsequent media furor ignited by Chinese police blocking Fang’s access to the banquet, Zhu defensively commented: “According to Chinese understanding, some senior leaders of the U.S. said they were not aware of the invitation to Fang Lizhi; if they

had known, they would not have invited him. Therefore, the senior leaders expressed apologies to the Chinese side.” On another occasion, a Chinese source quoted U.S. officials as stating that, “If Fang did not appear, the U.S. side would be pleased.”

*Q: It's interesting that in other words, the chain of events is the president's advance team gave the approval of the president's team –whoever that may have been. Then they got buyer's remorse and someone on the president's staff –may be the president himself—decided it's too expensive a diplomatic gambit to continue to persist on this, so we will allow the Chinese to prevent the dissident from getting into the hall, even after you already negotiated a means whereby he could enter the hall under certain conditions.*

TOMSEN: Yes. I believe that nicely sums up what happened. In effect, the Chinese ultimatum on the eve of the President's arrival and the pressure campaign ending in Zhao's rebuke worked. It broke the American united front demonstrated in the press guidance before the president arrived. So, there would be no repeat of the 1982 American united front that had forced the Chinese to compromise and retreat from their “date certain” ultimatum. The Chinese long-term image of American resolve on human rights and democracy generally was another casualty of bowing to the Chinese ultimatum.

Presidential spokesman Fitzwater had apparently not been in the loop regarding the parallel negotiations barring Fang from the banquet when he briefed the White House press corps shortly before the Zhao bilateral. The misconnect would add fuel to the media storm that erupted in the weeks after the banquet.

During Fitzwater's pre-Zhao meeting press conference, the White House correspondents devoted major attention to the lack of attention to human rights during the visit. They pressed Fitzwater on why the president had not raised human rights following his one sentence reference to the topic at the first day's Welcome Banquet. Fitzwater was forced to concede that the President had not raised human rights during subsequent meetings.

NBC's Tom Brokaw joined the chorus of complaints. Referring to the dissidents invited to the banquet, Brokaw argued: “When you get here, you invite people to the dinner, and then not meet with them and you don't raise it in direct meetings.” Fitzwater responded: “He still has the meeting with Zhao Ziyang. He has a dinner tonight in which he could raise the issue.” Brokaw concluded that the visit so far projects “a window dressing approach” to human rights.

Fitzwater's response to Brokaw drew on the outdated pre-visit White House press guidance that mistakenly assumed Fang's presence at the banquet: “Well, Mr. Fang was invited as an Astrophysicist, an outstanding person in his field, and also because of his human rights stand.... I'll try and ask him (the president) a little later this evening, if I get a chance, on how he's going to raise it. He may choose to do it privately.”

*Q: It's odd. It gives the impression somebody got buyer's remorse at the last minute and wanted to throw somebody under the bus.*

TOMSEN: Yes. In my opinion, the worst case outcome was permitting the Chinese to succeed in their standard ploy of applying pressure, intimidation, and in this case, another ultimatum to break their adversary's united front. The President and his advisors unfairly cast blame on the ambassador and his embassy for not flagging Fang's controversial human rights name to Washington before the visit. That charge was inaccurate. The White House would double down on the false accusation later, after the visit.

Of course, none of this takes away from the president's constitutional mandate to make foreign policy decisions, large and small. The president makes the final call based on his judgement. Our duty is to implement his decision. That applied to his decision to conduct secret negotiations parallel to the compromise negotiations the Chinese themselves had suggested and to blame the embassy for the Fang controversy.

The Chinese security's aggressive interception and physical blocking of Fang and his wife's entrance to the Great Wall Hotel fed media accusations that Fitzwater had misled them during his press conference. The Fangs and an American friend, professor Perry Link, along with Link's wife, walked through dark Beijing streets, eventually arriving at the Shangri La five-star hotel. As mentioned, PAO McKinney Russell had made the Shangri La the base for the 250-member White House press contingent covering the president's visit. About 100 or so press and TV journalists were in or near the large media room when the Fangs arrived, an hour or so after the Return Banquet had ended.

Up to this time, the great bulk of Chinese and foreign media treatment of the visit had been positive. Those milling around the hotel's media room and lobbies were hungry for something controversial to report. Fang triumphally strode into the media room. He waived his presidential banquet invitational card aloft and began his own makeshift news conference. Well-known American TV anchors and correspondents asked a barrage of questions. TV cameras filmed Fang's tirade against the Chinese government for physically blocking his attendance at the banquet.

From that moment on, the U.S. and international media commentary on the president's China visit flip flopped from uniformly positive to uniformly negative. The next morning, after the president's departure for Seoul, PAO McKinney Russel rushed a media update to the ambassador in the Front Office. It reported "a torrent of press enquiries" and "unrelenting public affairs fallout" due to the Chinese authorities' thwarting of Fangs' banquet attendance. The American media reportage dwelled on a "double standard" sub-theme unfavorably comparing President Bush's lack of attention to human rights in China with President Reagan's defense of human rights during his 1988 Moscow visit.

By cable and by phone, the ambassador and I urged the presidential party in Seoul and on Air Force One *en route* back to Washington to limit the media fallout damage of the Fang incident. Downplay the story. Don't prolong its life. Don't apologize. Let it die. Emphasize the many positive events during the President's visit.

Our media advice was not evident in Marlin Fitzwater's first White House press conference on February 28 after returning to Washington. Quite the opposite. Fitzwater

used the press conference to overstate and overrate the President's defense of human rights during his China visit. That claim directly contradicted his statements during his press conference on the last day of the visit acknowledging that the President had not raised human rights in any of his meetings with Chinese leaders.

Fitzwater also sparked a strident Chinese counterattack by accusing the Chinese and not the United States—"I suppose the proof is in the pudding"—for being the party to blame for the Fang incident. Frenzied Chinese MFA and media rebukes joined a wave of objections to Fitzwater's claim from American newspapers, pro human rights NGOs that kept the Fang invitation dispute in the headlines, it dominated the headlines.

To cite two American media examples:

- A *Chicago Tribune* editorial entitled "Courtesies Wasted on the Chinese" accused Bush of remaining "politely silent" on human rights; "Fang was carrying a personal presidential invitation"!
- A *New York Times* Editorial: "Left in the Lurch in China," complained that the President looked "all too receptive to Chinese bullying, avoiding human rights in his own remarks, then letting the Fang incident pass with only mild protest." – "Washington keeps winking at blatant behavior that it would vigorously protest if it occurred in the Soviet Union."

Refuting Fitzwater's blame of China, an authoritative Chinese MFA statement carried by party and state TV and newspapers stated "surprise" at the remarks made by the United States and declared "our deep regret." The statement repeated Zhao's accusation that the U.S. was "imposing one's will on others."

The Chinese counterattack ignited another war of words between the Chinese and American media over the Fang episode. The *Washington Post* criticized the Chinese for scuttling a "seeming compromise" agreement to allow Fang's attendance and prevented Fang's entry into the hotel. The article assessed "The flap over Fang has turned into a public embarrassment for Bush, touched off new frictions in relations between the U.S. and China, and spawned a new wave of recriminations in the Bush Administration."

On March 3, NSC Scowcroft gave a Backgrounder to White House reporters blaming the American embassy led by Ambassador Lord for the Fang debacle. A March 4-5 *New York Times* article, "U.S. Blames Own Envoy for Incident in Beijing," reported Scowcroft's false claim that "Neither the embassy nor the State Department had flagged Mr. Fang's name to suggest that a dinner invitation might stir controversy."

Scowcroft commented that, because of the Fang controversy, the president's visit to China was seriously marred by the incident and its aftermath.

The flawed Scowcroft Backgrounder's criticism of Ambassador Lord and his embassy sparked public kickbacks from newspapers, politicians and NGOs, breathing fresh life into the Fang crossfire.

Scowcroft's diversion of blame to the embassy and the ambassador motivated EAP's Ambassador Stapleton Roy, the State Department's senior China specialist, to rebut Scowcroft in his own backgrounder to the *Los Angeles Times*. He pointed out that the embassy's cables flagging Fang's name had been read in the government.

Inside the embassy, the Scowcroft Backgrounder created anger and lowered morale. Ambassador Lord moved quickly to soothe temper and suppress potential leaks from embassy personnel. There were no leaks.

After consulting Mrs. Lord and myself, the ambassador wrote a highly classified back channel response that he sent through secure channels to Scowcroft, copying Secretary Baker. As I recall, the message was sober, formal and candid in style. It gave a fact-based rundown on the background of the Fang invitation incident from start to finish –beginning with the February 10 IMMEDIATE and February 18 NIACT embassy cables.

The ambassador's message pinpointed that it was the Chinese, not the Americans, who behaved outrageously, precipitating the Fang invitation crisis. In the face of Chinese provocation, the president and his advisors looked weak. They passively accommodated the Chinese full court press that discarded the compromise option (that the Chinese side had proposed) and switched to the standard Chinese scare-tactics ultimatum, thus driving a wedge between the president and the U.S. embassy in Beijing.

The Chinese government's intelligence agency's physical blockage of Fang's entrance to the hotel where other banquet guests were gathering touched off the negative media chain reaction that lasted for weeks, spoiling prospects for a positive visit outcome, creating conflicts between the Chinese and American media and between pro-Fang elements in the American media, congress and human rights NGOs on one side and the White House press office and NSC advisor Scowcroft on the other side.

Scowcroft did not respond to Ambassador Lord's message, nor did he acknowledge it.

After the Tiananmen crackdown, Fang fled to the American embassy. He later was given political asylum in the United States.

My final weeks in China as DCM coincided with 3 momentous events in China's modern history –the Tiananmen student uprising; Soviet leader Gorbachev's summit with Deng Xiaoping consummating Sino-Soviet Normalization of Relations, ending 30 years of estrangement; and the CCP's imposition of martial law on May 20 leading up to the June 3 -4 tragic Tiananmen massacre.

Ambassador Lord departed China on April 22 following a series of high-level Chinese farewells honoring his contributions to Sino-American relations. He was the most prominent American diplomat that had spanned the Mao era and Deng Xiaoping's Opening of China to the outside world. No foreign diplomat had met Deng more times, nor had helped guide our relations with China through 2 decades of positive development.

Chinese Foreign Minister Qian presided over a farewell banquet in his honor. President Yang, Premier Li Peng and CCP General Secretary Zhao Ziyang received him to personally bid farewell during his last week in China.

On April 5, he signed the formal Exchange of Letters establishing the Peace Corps Program in China. “No fruit has tasted better,” he wrote.

Shortly before the ambassador’s departure, Deputy Secretary of State Larry Eagleburger phoned to give me my next assignment: Special Envoy to the Afghan Resistance with the personal title of ambassador. Larry stated that the Soviets had just completed their military withdrawal from Afghanistan. The Department anticipated that the weak Afghan communist regime left behind would fall in the near term. At that point, I would be the Department’s lead candidate to be the next ambassador to Afghanistan. I suppose, given my “Sino-Soviet relations” watcher background at embassies Moscow and Beijing, the Department directed me to stay on in Beijing to report on the Gorbachev-Deng May 15-19 summit.

Kim and I postponed our return to the U.S. to May 20, the day after Gorbachev departed China. I was Chargé d’Affaires for 11 days between Winston’s April 22 departure and new Ambassador James Lilley’s arrival on May 2. Jim waited for 6 days before presenting his credentials. That period was action-packed leading up to our departure for Washington on May 20, the day martial law was declared to suppress the uprising.

The Tiananmen student uprising broke out on April 22, 1989 —the day of the government-organized funeral of the purged radical reformer and former CCP General Secretary, Hu Yaobang, occurred at the GHOP. He had passed away on April 15. Pent up student anger over his 1987 purge had made him a martyr fighting for democratic and academic reforms.

Student uprisings demanding liberal reforms in communist-ruled China had been rare during communist rule, but not unprecedented. They popped up, Jack-in-the-Box like, during times of reform ferment, only to be forcibly pressed back into the box. The majority hardliners in the elderly CCP leadership viewed student uprisings as a mortal threat to the communist party’s dictatorship.

Hu Yaobang’s April 22 funeral became the spark for the 1989 student demonstrations.

In the weeks before his funeral, big character posters and banners on university campuses in Beijing proliferated. They called for revival of Hu’s ambitious democratic reforms, improvement of university living conditions and, not least, ending government favoritism to the sons and daughters of high level CCP cadres and state officials for job assignments in China and study abroad.

The students petitioned the government to allow their participation in Hu’s funeral ceremony. The government agreed. It approved a list of student mourners to join the formal funeral event honoring Hu inside the GHOP on April 22. Per the standard practice

for high level funerals, the arrangements called for a funeral procession from the GHOP through Tiananmen Square to a crematory in Beijing. The government publicly announced that Tiananmen Square would be blocked off (by security forces) at 8:00 a.m. on April 22 to allow for passage of the funeral procession.

A committee of student leaders from Beijing universities decided to defy the blockage of Tiananmen Square on the morning of the funeral. They created a plan for a huge –tens of thousands strong—march. The marchers would sally forth from the Normal University and advance downhill to Tiananmen Square during the evening and nighttime hours of April 21 continuing into the early morning of April 22.

The students were told to bring enough food and water to sustain themselves on Tiananmen Square during the funeral ceremony on April 22. The funeral was scheduled to begin in the GHOP at 10:00 a.m. that day.

By courtesy of an urgent “come quickly” phone call to my office from the embassy’s PAO, McKinney Russell, I was able to gain a bird's-eye—an absolutely stunning-view of the massive student march down to Tiananmen Square from the Normal University. McKinney invited me to join him on his apartment balcony. It was dusk on April 21. We overlooked a wide boulevard, perhaps 120 feet in width, stretching upwards to the cities’ outer periphery where the Normal University was located and downwards towards Tiananmen Square.

I quickly left the embassy and hurried to his upper floor apartment. I’ll never forget looking out in awe at the line after line of young students, men and women, marching with military discipline, in silent horizontal lines across the length of the huge boulevard. They advanced downhill, holding banners aloft identifying their separate colleges. The boulevard was flanked on each side by vertical lines of student wardens, presumably to prevent pedestrians or vehicles from disrupting their march to Tiananmen.

The student wardens at the boulevard’s perimeters were not necessary. As far as the eye could see, the boulevard in front of the long marching formations was completely empty, then slowly filled up by the dark advancing multitude of marchers. Out of respect, or maybe fear, not a single person was visible within the neighborhoods on both sides of the boulevard. The astonishing panorama below reminded McKinney and me of an unstoppable avalanche steadily descending, stretching backwards and forward for many miles, beneath the darkening sky above.

McKinney and I wondered how, in China’s police state, this enormous student declaration of disobedience, if not insolence, the endless student horizontal ranks behind and ahead some 100,000 marchers, could be tolerated by the state’s pervasive security apparatus.

The aura of disobedience surrounding the march continued when the students brushed aside the thin ring of uniformed police and military guards inside around Tiananmen square. By the time the GHOP funeral ceremony for Hu began at 10:00 a.m., over



100,000 student demonstrators occupied the square. The outnumbered Tiananmen guards cooperated with more numerous student wardens to maintain order on the square.

The students stood at attention on the vast square while loud speakers blared out the eulogies for Hu Yaobang delivered by Chinese leaders inside the GHOP. An early sign of the lack of unity among the top student leaders surfaced when word spread through the crowd that the planned funeral procession through Tiananmen had been cancelled. The hearse had already been taken to the crematory some miles away.

The more radical student leaders angrily called for an assault on the GHOP. The more pragmatic leaders succeeded in preventing the assault. Together the leaders agreed to settle down on Tiananmen Square and continue their protests until their demands were met.

The student presence on Tiananmen Square steadily grew. Trains from other cities around China brought thousands more student demonstrators to Beijing free of charge.

The embassy maintained an around-the-clock schedule of reporting officer teams to be present on or near the Square gathering information. The embassy's daily reporting tracked the demonstration's buildup and the CCP leadership's tolerance of the student protesters.

Art students created an amazing 33-foot high Goddess of Democracy statute made mostly of white Styrofoam. The goddess proudly held a torch high using both hands. The comparison with New York's Statue of Liberty was obvious. The statue was placed on Tiananmen Square and made to face the giant Mao Tsetung painting in front of a nearby Forbidden City wall.

Student placards and banners calling for democracy and freedom mushroomed in, above, and around the square. Student speakers stood at the foot of the Goddess of Democracy demanding political reforms and the end to nepotism favoring the children of senior party cadres.

Noting the government's restraint, thousands of Beijing residents, men, women and children, mingled inside the gigantic crowd during daylight hours. Embassy shoppers at a vegetable market a short distance from the embassy saw merchants passing out free fruits and vegetables to students. Foreign tourists, teachers, journalists, diplomats and their family members strolled through the crowds. The festive spirit in the air reminded me of the cheerful and hopeful atmosphere that pervaded Martin Luther King's 1963 March on Washington.

Late one afternoon, Kim passed through crowded Tiananmen on her way to Beijing's nearby old hutong neighborhoods to buy last-minute souvenirs when she saw a remarkable example of bicyclemanship. Two students on separate bikes, about 10 feet apart, each carried a pole connecting to one side of a giant pro-democracy banner flowing in the air above them. One of their hands held on to the bottom of one of the poles

holding the banner. The other hand gripped the bike's handlebar. They were one bicycle act in perfect motion, flawlessly weaving their way among the throngs of demonstrators, banner high, without the slightest pause.

Further on in a hutong, Kim witnessed merchants giving cash as well as food to students (Chinese merchants donating money and food to passersby was very uncommon!) to support their cause.

Embassy officers monitored the demonstrations on foot and in the daily Chinese media. Also, the Chinese government's treatment of the demonstration. We saw no indications of security force buildups to suppress the protestors. That was a break from the past. The 1976 student uprising had lasted a day. The 1979 Democracy Wall movement a little more than a day before security forces clamped down. The 1987 Shanghai student protests continued a week or so before they were suppressed.

Sheer size alone, and obvious popular support for the students, must have given pause to CCP party elders opposing a conciliatory approach to the demonstrators. An unknown number in the top leadership may have had young members of their families who were sympathetic to or actually participating in the demonstrations. Deng Xiaoping's tolerance was limited—he was known to be at one with party conservatives in preserving the CCP hold on China's population at all costs. But it was also notable that he had been personally purged in 1976 for standing up for political liberalization supported by student protesters then.

Our reporting sketched the appearance and disappearance of splits in the CCP leadership, also in the Chinese military, as well as within the top student leadership. CCP General Secretary Zhao Ziyang led the conciliatory wing of the politburo. He was supported by Deng and party elder Wan Li. Premier Li Peng represented the majority conservative wing. President Yang Shangkun, deputy chair under Deng Xiaoping of the important CCP Central Military Commission (CMC), followed Deng's preference for patience for the time being. Yang, like Deng, had been a PLA general during the Chinese civil war. He usually aligned with the conservatives.

Our sources revealed evidence of splits forming among senior PLA generals on whether or not to use military force against the demonstrations. One general commanding an army group near Beijing would later refuse to deploy his forces to Tiananmen Square. His daughter was among the demonstrators. He was court marshalled and jailed for 5 years. Seven retired generals signed a letter opposing the use of force against the demonstrators.

The *People's Daily* supreme propaganda mouthpiece of the CCP mirrored the factional infighting within the Chinese leadership. Its editorial coverage seesawed back and forth. An April 26 editorial reflected the hardliners position. The editorial denounced the demonstrators and charged that their goal was to overthrow the CCP. It ominously warned the students to leave the square.

The students fought back with powerful megaphones and posters. They demanded that the *People's Daily* reverse its position. In leadership meetings, CCP General Secretary Zhao Ziyang argued for compromise with the student demands –including reversing the party's position expounded in the April 26 editorial.

On May 17, over half of the *People's Daily* staff and scores of government and party journalists from other party and government newspapers unexpectedly walked onto the square to join the student demonstrators. They carried posters disassociating themselves from the April 26 editorial. *People's Daily* gradually shifted towards a positive position on the demonstrations.

During late April and early May, Kim and I were attending embassy, Chinese government and diplomatic farewells marking the end of our second China assignment. Vice Foreign Minister Zhi Qizhen and Assistant Foreign Minister Liu Huaqiu gave us warm sendoffs. In his dinner toast, Zhu joked that if my life was threatened during my next Afghan appointment, I needed only to cross the border where I would be welcomed in China. Following Liu's May 7 farewell dinner at a Diaoyutai guest house, Kim and I stopped by Tiananmen Square and walked around among the many thousands of students camping on the Square.

We returned to Tiananmen Square for another walk around the following afternoon. Trucks were arriving from other provinces unloading factory workers. They carried posters identifying their locations and work units. More small groups from other government offices now marched around with their signs –government banks, the Social Sciences Academy where Fang Lizhi worked, and other government offices. I was relieved to see no sign representing Chinese employees of the American embassy!

In embassy meetings, we debated how long the CCP's majority conservative wing would tolerate the student demonstrations' defiance. The historic Gorbachev state visit, May 15-19, to normalize relations with China would be a watershed in global affairs. The world was watching. We assumed for this reason that there was little likelihood the government would resort to lethal force to clear the Square in the weeks before and during the visit. But all bets were off after Gorbachev returned to Moscow.

The welcome ceremony for Gorbachev was to take place on May 15 on Tiananmen Square. We learned that Zhao had assured the CCP leadership that the students had agreed to facilitate Gorbachev's arrival ceremony on the Square. The student leaders did not fulfill Zhao's request. The deadlock between the hardline and pragmatic organizers of the demonstrations persisted.

On the morning of May 15, 1 million demonstrators flooded across the entire Square and the concrete periphery beyond. The government was forced to cancel the welcoming ceremony for Gorbachev and make it a less elaborate welcome at the Beijing airport. That government retreat lowered Zhao's influence in the CCP leadership. The scaled down welcome ceremony for Gorbachev and his large delegation was a minor embarrassment compared to the loss of face yet to come.

Hundreds of student placards praising Gorbachev's political and democratic reforms bobbed above the one million Tiananmen crowds every day during the Sino-Soviet summit meetings inside the GHOP. Soviet limousines carrying Gorbachev and members of his delegation, flying the Soviet flag, discovered it near-impossible to find a path through the crowds to the summit meetings and banquets inside the GHOP. One signal intercept recorded a conversation between a Soviet in one of the blocked limousines and his colleague inside the GHOP, "Which door should we use?" he asked. "Any door you can reach!" his colleague loudly yelled above the din.

MFA Assistant Minister Liu Huaqiu, the head of the MFA's America's Department, had been my closest problem-solving partner and a friend during my three years as DCM. We had spent hundreds of hours collaborating on numerous issues to move Sino-American relations forward.

Assistant Minister Liu invited Kim and I to a second farewell dinner at the Diaoyutai complex on May 16, the second day of Gorbachev's visit. In his opening stand-up welcoming toast, amid much laughter, Liu jovially proclaimed that Texas steaks were on the menu for our farewell dinner. Just as merrily, he added that the same Texas steaks were then also being served to the Soviet delegation in the adjoining villa after their vehicle's failure to navigate through the massive Tiananmen crowds to reach the GHOP to attend the official banquet planned that night.

On the drive home from Liu's banquet, Kim and I made our last visit to Tiananmen Square. The crowds had peaked. The next morning, a few thousand students began hunger strikes on the Square, demanding government concessions. Ambulances were positioned on nearby streets to whisk them to hospitals. The worldwide media coverage centered on the hunger strikers and the massive demonstration, pushing the Sino-Soviet summit out of the limelight.

An embassy notetaker and I crashed the daily press briefing given by Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesman, Gannedi Gerasimov. Gerasimov reacted to the Tiananmen chaos with his marvelous sense of humor. He joked about the futility of placing signs in the windows of Soviet vehicles identifying them as Soviet to make headway through the Chinese student crowds cheering Gorbachev's political reforms.

Our embassy reporting on the important Sino-Soviet normalization summit benefitted from Gerasimov's distribution of each day's written speeches and toasts by Chinese and Soviet leaders, and the agreements signed. We folded his comments and the tidbits from his media handouts into our daily analytical reviews of each day's events.

The two sides issued a joint communique on the last day of Gorbachev's visit. It summarized the beginning of Sino-Soviet normalization. It outlined plans for demobilization of troops on each side of the Sino-Soviet border and increased cooperation in political, economic, trade and scientific areas.

The movement from estrangement to “normalcy” on the Sino-Soviet side of the Great Power Triangle contributed to global stability. For that reason, President Bush in his February talks with Deng Xiaoping had welcomed Gorbachev’s imminent visit to China. The Triangle would remain in fundamental equilibrium for about 2 decades through Gorbachev’s tenure, the Soviet Union’s 1991 collapse, and Yeltsin’s period at the helm. Putin and Xi Jinping later made the Sino-Soviet side a semi-alliance opposed to the United States.

The embassy assumed that the CCP leadership’s tolerance of the Tiananmen demonstrations would end on the day Gorbachev departed, May 19.

Before dawn on May 19, CCP General Secretary Zhao Ziyang unexpectedly appeared on the square with Premier Li Peng. The May 20 *People’s Daily* printed a front page photo of Zhao surrounded by students making one last appeal.

In tears, while signing students hats and shirts, Zhao again beseeched the divided student leaders to agree to a negotiating process to address their goals and return to their universities. Some students stated their agreement. Others shouted their disagreement. Most stood silent. The lack of continued disunity on a way ahead among the student leaders guaranteed that the CCP would use deadly force to clear the Square.

During the night of May 19 - May 20, Kim and I were in our apartment packing out and preparing for our departure on the morning of May 20. That same night, a well-scripted CCP meeting of party leaders, including Deng Xiaoping, at the Zhongnanhai leadership compound, purged Zhao Ziyang, the CCP General Secretary. They appointed conservative Premier Li Peng the party spokesman for the clampdown on the Tiananmen Demonstrations. Reading from a prepared text at the meeting, Li sternly called on party and security forces to restore normal order on Tiananmen Square.

That night, Kim and I in our 4<sup>th</sup> floor apartment were not aware of the high level CCP decision to crush the demonstrations. We finished packing and went to bed. The loud, shrieking noise of numerous fast-moving scooters on the streets below woke us up in the wee hours of our departure morning on May 20.

We looked down through a window at the street below —dozens of students on motor scooters emitting a continuous sharp roar darted to and from Tiananmen. My assumption was that they had learned of the CCP decision and were preparing to defy it. And defy it they did by organizing “people’s” blockades on the main roads leading into Beijing that impeded the military’s entrance into the city for 2 weeks.

During the late morning of May 20, while waiting in a Beijing airport lobby for our flight to be called. The TV set in the room was dark. It then suddenly blinked off and on. After one “off” pause, Li Peng suddenly appeared on the screen. He was dressed in a dark Mao suit that harked back to Mao’s Cultural Revolution. Reading from a written document, he angrily announced the imposition of martial law. He threatened government action to restore order and stability.

Kim and I boarded our American carrier flight shortly after watching Li Peng give his martial law speech. The speech preordained the CCP's resort to force and the coming Tiananmen June 3-4 massacre. We watched that tragedy unfold on TV after our return to Washington.

*Q: Even though the Communist state, one would assume, would be very disciplined and follow orders according to whatever the party told them—it seems like things got out of hand even for the party and they went back to a very old style of governance.*

TOMSEN: In a nutshell, that's what happened. Deng, China's paramount leader, ordered the crackdown. The "old style" of CCP rule continues today in Xi Jinping's China. There have been no new attempts to revive Hu Yaobang's and Zhao Ziyang's political reforms since the Tiananmen massacre.

In the late 1990's, Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin became another victim of a conservative backlash against political liberalization. He was Russia's reformist prime minister for 6 years before Vladimir Putin and his KGB orbit forced him from office.

Chernomyrdin is today remembered for his famous sarcastic quips lamenting the comeback of Russian autocracy under Putin. Hu and Zhao would have shared his despair: "We wanted the best, but it turned out like always." Another one: "Forever what we have had in Russia is not what was needed." A final one. "The (reform) principles that were principled were unprincipled."

So, in the end, the Chinese Communist Party hardliners prevailed—as they continue to do so today.

*End of Part Two*