

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

DOUGLAS B. WAKE

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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Family history; son of James I. Wake and Meta (“Dolly”) Nauheim Wake	
Born January 7, 1959; raised in Niagara Falls, New York	1959-1975
Rotary International Youth Exchange Student, Sweden	1975-1976
Columbia College, New York, New York	1976-1979
Columbia University School of International Affairs	1979-1980
New York City Department of Consumer Affairs researcher on energy issues	1980-1981
Entered Foreign Service	April 1981
Sworn in	May 1, 1981
A100 course, other short-term training	Apr-Aug 1981
Met future spouse in Consular Training (ConGenRoslyn)	June 1981
Married Constance (Connie) Philipot	June 1988

Foreign Service Posts

United States Mission to the United Nations Junior Reporting Officer	Fall 1981
Stockholm, Sweden Consular Officer, with short detail to Political Section	1982-1983
United States Mission to the United Nations – Economic and Social Affairs Officer Human rights and social/humanitarian issues	1983-1986
Delegate to UN Commission on Human Rights, Geneva	1984-1986
Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs (future Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Affairs) Human Rights Officer for Europe and Eurasia	1986-1987
Delegate to Vienna Meeting of Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE)	1986-1988
Foreign Service Institute – Russian Language Training	1987-1988

Leningrad, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (now St. Petersburg, Russia)	1988-1990
Political/Economic Officer	
Political upheaval and economic hardship in Northwest Russia and beyond	
Baltic States struggle to reestablish their independence	
Baltic Way on 50 th anniversary of Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact	Aug 23, 1989
("hands across the Baltic")	
"Commuting" between Leningrad and Helsinki (tandem Foreign Service spouse was serving as Economic Officer)	
Foreign Service Institute – Burmese Language Training	1990-1991
Rangoon, Burma (Yangon, Myanmar) – Political Officer	1991-1993
Military rule, repression, political stagnation	
Human rights abuses, narcotics production, ethnic strife	
Aung San Suu Kyi under house arrest, wins Nobel Peace Prize	
Foreign Service Institute – Latvian Language Training	1993-1994
Riga, Latvia – Political Officer	1994-1997
Deputy Chief of Mission	1995-1997
Final stages of ex-Soviet troop withdrawal	
Demolition of ex-Soviet Skrunda radar	
Political and economic transition, major banking crisis	
Challenges of integration, naturalization of non-citizens	
Early steps toward European Union and NATO accession	
Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs – Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Foreign Service Fellow	1997-1998
Office of the Coordinator of United States Assistance to the New Independent States of the former Soviet Union	1998-2000
Director, Economic Affairs	
Collapse of Russian financial system, major U.S. food aid program	
Assistance to Ukraine, Kharkiv Initiative	
Poland-Ukraine-U.S. Assistance Initiative (PAUCI)	
Moscow, Russian Federation – Chief, Political / Internal Unit	2000-2003
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Crackdown on independent media, backsliding on democracy and human rights	
Continuing conflict in Chechnya	
Yekaterinburg, Russia – Acting Consul General	Summer 2003
Office of European Regional Security, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs Coordinator, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Affairs	2003-2004
Maastricht Ministerial	Dec 2003
Berlin Conference on Anti-Semitism	Apr 2004
OSCE Mission to Serbia and Montenegro, Belgrade, Serbia	2004-2006
Deputy Head of Mission (on "secondment" from the U.S. Government to the OSCE)	

Post-Milosevic institution-building
 Post-conflict stabilization in Albanian majority areas of South Serbia
 Peaceful dissolution of State Union of Serbia and Montenegro after May 2006
 referendum on independence of Montenegro

Bureau of International Organization Affairs 2006-2008
 Director, Office of United Nations Peacekeeping, Sanctions and Counter-Terrorism
 Expansion of UN peacekeeping operations in Lebanon
 New “hybrid” UN-African Union peacekeeping operation in Darfur (UNAMID)

Professor of International Relations and State Department Adviser,
 United States Army War College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania 2008-2009

Retired from the Foreign Service July 2009

Post-Foreign Service Employment

OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Warsaw, Poland 2009-2013
 First Deputy Director

INTERVIEW

Q: Today is the third of April 2014 with Douglas Wake. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. And you go by Doug?

WAKE: Doug, yeah.

Q: Doug let's start at the beginning. When and where were you born?

WAKE: I was born in Niagara Falls, New York on the 7th of January 1959.

Q: What the hell were you doing in Niagara Falls?

WAKE: Well that's where my parents were, so that's why I was born there. My dad was a haberdasher; he had a small men's clothing store in the city of Niagara Falls, New York, and had been there since a little earlier in the '50s. He's still there today aged 93, almost 94, although they moved to a place called Lewiston which is a few steps away from Niagara Falls.

Q: Oh good. Okay let's talk about your family. Let's stay on your father's side. What do you know about where they came from and let's go back as far as you know.

WAKE: It's a little bit of a sad story because my father's father was an immigrant to the United States at the end of the 19th century and he was naturalized in Cattaraugus, New York, in the early part of the 20th century 19-0 something. His citizenship documents say

he was a subject of Austria. He was Jewish but somehow my father never really learned before his father's death, which was sometime in the 1940s, where his father really was from. So Austria in the end of the 19th century was a pretty broad concept and whether he was from present-day Austria or somewhere else in the Austro-Hungarian Empire has never been determined. My father had made some effort to try and track down some supporting documents and learned at that time that naturalization records in New York State didn't go much further than the courthouse building, which had burned down, and that was the story. Someday maybe I'll try to research this again but his mother was also an immigrant, from Western Germany, and also Jewish. She was from a little town called Bad Rappenau, which I actually at one point visited and where I found a couple grave stones which were apparently of my ancestors. That's the father's side pretty much as far as we know.

Q: On the father's side where did they go to school, what's their schooling?

WAKE: I can't really tell you about his parents except that his father was in the same business and had a small clothing store as did several cousins that were in the clothing business in smaller towns in New York State. My father grew up in that small town of Cattaraugus, New York, and then went to Ohio State. He was in the ROTC program and ended up serving in Europe during the Second World War.

Q: What sort of military service?

WAKE: He was Army, Quarter Master Corps. The war provided a link to the family history because he was actually the first person born in the United States from the family who was back in that village I mentioned, Bad Rappenau. His unit passed through that part of Germany, which is not too far from Heidelberg, as part of the invasion/occupation after D Day.

Q: Did he ever talk about the war?

WAKE: A little bit but reluctantly and sort of late in life as I think is rather typical of people of that generation.

Q: It is and ...

WAKE: He did talk about being in charge, so to speak, of displaced persons and the sort of terrible state that people were in after the occupation. He also did mention – not with incredible detail, but he did mention – being in one of the concentration camps shortly after liberation and the terrible stench and scenes there.

Q: How about on your mother's side? Where did her family come from?

WAKE: Her family also came from let's say Germanic Jewish background. I think from Germany proper, what we would call Germany today, but perhaps unusually in the case of a Jewish family, the roots go a little bit further back than many in the United States.

Her mother was born in Columbus, Georgia in the latter part of the 19th century, and her father was born in New York City. And even on one side, I believe it was her grandfather on her father's side, there was a London connection. So it was a while back before you got back to the roots in Germany. I don't think there was any correspondence; there was no connection to relatives on that side of the ocean because it was so far back.

Q: Where did she grow up and what about schooling for her?

WAKE: My mother herself was born in New York, grew up in Flushing which she always insisted on calling Long Island even though it was part of New York City, Queens. She went to William and Mary in Virginia and then got a master's in teaching at Teachers College of Columbia University. So she was back in New York living at home and got a master's degree.

Q: It was sort of the preeminent teacher's school.

WAKE: Yes, it was a good education, which she used to do some teaching; she taught mainly math although in my memory she was only doing some limited substitute teaching. So by the time that the family business was established, she was involved also in the business - not full-time but part time.

Q: Do you have brothers or sisters?

WAKE: Yeah, one of each.

Q: Well did the family speak German or your parents speak German?

WAKE: No, no, I believe that my maternal grandmother, who I knew, might have been able to still understand something. There was no active use but she might have heard it in her family. On the other side, my father's side, his father died before I was born and his mother just after I was born. I know from a second-hand source that they had accents but if they ever used German among themselves or any other language is not something I've ever been able to determine. I have no evidence that anybody in the family ever used Yiddish which is an indication to me that they were probably more from the West...

Q: More from the West than...

WAKE: ...if they were from more central Europe then it was from urban environments and not from rural places where people had spoken Yiddish.

Q: With your parents how Jewish were they?

WAKE: Not very. They were sort of adamantly Reform Jews, which means they went to the temple for high holidays and occasional more social related events connected with the Reform Synagogue of which there was one in Niagara Falls, New York. My father would always tell stories about how in one place they lived in Virginia for a time between

marriage and him starting his business in Niagara Falls that he was in one community where there was only one Synagogue and someone insisted in trying to put a skull cap, a yarmulke, on his head. He insisted on taking it off because his tradition was not to use the Hebrew language or any clothing that was special; it was a very assimilationist approach.

Q: Was the store in Niagara Falls the first store of your father's?

WAKE: Yeah, as I said, his father had been in the business and I actually don't know whether that was sold to someone else or closed. I have one vague recollection of being in the town of Cattaraugus, which is south of Buffalo, not so far from Niagara Falls, and being shown where the store was. But it wasn't being used for that purpose anymore. My father moved to Niagara Falls first to work for someone else. He had been working for a big clothing store after the war in Virginia. It was part of a big chain; I think it was called Allied Stores or something like that. I think he didn't really like working for a big operation and then through some connection, which I couldn't tell you the details of, he moved to Niagara Falls and started working in another small clothing store and then actually opened up his own to be the competitor of his former boss; a friendly competitor as they remained friends throughout their lives. When I was born there was actually a boom in Niagara Falls history because they were building a big power plant there and the population had grown to over 100,000. It's much, much smaller now and I don't know if it supports any small specialty high quality clothing store like that but, of course, with all the changes and big box stores it's very hard to run that kind of business now.

Q: You were born in what year?

WAKE: In '59.

Q: In '59. As a small child growing up what was Niagara Falls like?

WAKE: It was an industrial town still doing a lot of business. Whether it was doing well or not, it's hard for me to say, but there was a lot of chemical and related industry because of cheap power and water. There had been hydropower in Niagara Falls for decades but there was a new big project that had been finished about the time I was born so the economy was not so bad. But that was sort of the beginning of the end because you had change taking place that started to marginalize all of these Northeastern rust belt communities. It was also a fairly polluted city at the same time it tried to be a tourist town, which was a bit of a tension and a challenge. Already the urban center of Niagara Falls was decaying quite a bit and there were always efforts to do some kind of urban renewal and so on, which were never to this day fully successful. There always was a sense of jealousy that things looked a little prettier and they were doing a little better on the other side of the river where Niagara Falls, Ontario, was a more popular tourist attraction. There was a lot of wistfulness in Niagara Falls about the heyday of Niagara Falls being the honeymoon capital of the world, which was kind of disappearing about the time I was growing up.

Q: Was there much going on honeymoon wise?

WAKE: I think there still were lots of little motels and a couple of maybe decent hotels that I think did business in the summer. I mean it is very attractive and there is a tourist attraction to the Falls themselves and the park around it but there was a sense that this was something that people did when getting around by car was the main way that people traveled and now it's much easier for people to fly off to the beach somewhere or whatever people would do for their honeymoons or vacations in general; it still is attractive to lots of people. My father's business was in a part of town which was not right by the Falls but there was an area that catered specifically to tourists and is still struggling along.

Q: What about as a kid? How was Niagara Falls for being a kid?

WAKE: A little boring. The fact that you did have the Falls and the gorge along the river added a little interest but there wasn't so much to do in the town and there wasn't a sense among people who had any kind of ambition that this was the place you necessarily wanted to stay.

Q: You went to public school there?

WAKE: I went to public school in the city of Niagara Falls from elementary school through sixth grade and then my parents moved just a few miles to a town called Lewiston which is a bit north of the city of Niagara Falls and that put me in a different school system.

Q: How were you in school?

WAKE: I was a good student.

Q: Did any particular subjects intrigue you more than others?

WAKE: I guess it's partly projecting backwards now from later in life but, I think social studies, which was the term for the complex of things we would call geography, history or politics probably interested me most. I was quite good in arithmetic, math, up to a certain level that I reached but it never attracted me as something I would want to stick with. I sort of felt that I had logical thinking skills and I could figure out how to solve these problems but they weren't the problems that particularly grabbed me. It was more people and places.

Q: What sort of reading and were you a reader?

WAKE: I guess I was a moderately active reader. From early on I can remember reading some science fiction, some adventure stories, spy stories and these sorts of things that were typical for people of that generation. As I got into high school I remember I had to do one kind of independent study program and actually did something where again looking back it might have been important that I ended up doing some intensive study on

Crime and Punishment or something. A Russian novel may have influenced my life in a way.

Q: Where did your family fall politically?

WAKE: Clearly in the middle. My parents, I believe, were both registered as Republicans which was the thing that reflected my father's small business approach as opposed to his ethnic background or anything else. In Western New York being a Republican was not a disadvantage in terms of voting in primaries and things. If you were elsewhere in New York State if you wanted to have any influence you had to be a Democrat since the primaries were usually the decisive things. But they were not so politically active, although politics affected my life as a child to a large extent because I had an older brother and we were in the Viet Nam era and there was a lot of contention about those issues at the dinner table.

Q: You went to high school in Niagara Falls?

WAKE: Living in this place called Lewiston, I was in something called the Lewiston-Porter Central School District. A kind of important detail for me personally is that, while I was in junior high school, my family hosted an exchange student from Australia through the Rotary program. Although my father was not a member of the Rotary Club, we hosted this young girl from Australia and had a very good experience with the program. Then, after my tenth grade, I actually ended up going to Sweden as a Rotary exchange student. And I managed, as I mentioned having been a pretty good student and maybe being a little bit scheming, I don't know, managed to make that year in Sweden count as a little bit more than just my eleventh grade because I also did a little extra work for my high school in the United States while I was in Sweden and ended up never going back to high school. So I actually only did tenth grade in the United States and then after one more year went off to university without ever having come back. So I graduated from Lewiston Porter High School having only gone through tenth grade there but getting credit for the rest of the work I did.

Q: Let's talk about your time in Sweden. How did this strike you?

WAKE: It was my first experience outside the United States except for Canada where I had spent a lot of time because of living right on the border and having spent time at summer camps in Canada and so on. It initially struck me as similar in some ways to the northern part of the United States and Canada in terms of its open spaces: large country, small population. It was a country which I found very pleasant and I had a very good experience with the host family that I lived in, which I've still been in touch with over the years. It struck me as a very efficient and well-functioning place with a high degree of social cohesion and consensus. There was a rather common approach to the world that you would find in such a fairly homogenous society, although it was beginning to change. There were the beginnings of immigration and...

Q: They were beginning to absorb immigrants too, weren't they?

WAKE: They were beginning to, although, as we get a little further, on I'll mention that I was back in Sweden as my first post in the Foreign Service. It was during those later experiences where I started to see more and also that was when I was in Stockholm. As an exchange student I was in a smaller city. Its immigrant population was actually mostly from neighboring Finland at the time; it was less "immigration" than the initial free flow of population and labor mobility among the Nordic countries.

Q: You were in Sweden what years?

WAKE: I was there from '75-'76 as a student and I lived in a town about 100 kilometers south of Stockholm called Oxelösund, and I went to school in a little bit larger town in the same region, Nyköping.

Q: How did you find the education there?

WAKE: I found it to be of high quality but perhaps a bit rigid in comparison to the way American education worked. For example, everyone in the *gymnasium*, that sort of high school program, was already in a track that was either the natural sciences or the social sciences or something like that which required a large number of different courses with very little choice or selection; I think almost none except maybe one choice of what your third language was going to be. But, of course, in comparison to American education that was something that was quite advanced that people studied English from an early age and by the time they were in *gymnasium* in the high school equivalent they were studying at least two more languages.

Q: Yeah, had the sexual revolution hit Sweden at that time in high school?

WAKE: It had, although, at least from what I witnessed, it was not to a degree that one might have expected from reading shocking American reports. But people had a more relaxed, I would say, less dogmatic view of sex before marriage.

Q: What about how was Viet Nam playing at that time or the residue of Viet Nam?

WAKE: The media was still very firmly...I don't want to say "anti-American"...but there was a strong leftist consensus within media which was critical of the U.S. Of course, the war had just ended for the U.S. when I got there. Therefore, it wasn't a hot issue as it may have been a few years before but certainly the still prime minister at the time, Olof Palme, was known as a strong opponent of American involvement in Viet Nam. There was a sense beyond Viet Nam of Sweden's responsibility to show solidarity with people who were oppressed around the world which often was defined as people who were in countries that were opposed to the West or the United States. Not exclusively but Sweden had a big aid program and it was skewed toward countries like Viet Nam, there was still at that time a pretty strong relationship with Cuba, there was a strong relationship with...

Q: Tanzania.

WAKE: ...Tanzania and, of course, the opposition to apartheid then.

Q: Did you feel that you were in, if not a hostile country, a not really that friendly country; you were a kid?

WAKE: Personally, I found the people very friendly and didn't see this really converted to a personal level but it was clear that it was a country where the majority views and the leadership were quite critical of the U.S. which had just gone through not just Viet Nam but Watergate and was doing a lot of soul-searching itself.

Q: It was a very difficult period. Did this experience in Sweden give you a feel for wanting to get involved in foreign affairs?

WAKE: Very much although I've thought about this many times and don't believe that the idea of being a diplomat and working as an American Foreign Service officer crossed my mind or even was a concept I really understood – despite the fact that while in Sweden I did for purely practical reasons had at least one engagement with the American Embassy. I took some advanced placement tests or aptitude tests in connection with applying to colleges in the United States. They were run at the American Center in Stockholm so I had to go up to Stockholm and there was this thing that was connected to the Embassy. It never occurred to me that that was the business that I wanted to be in but I liked being overseas and I liked dealing with people of a different culture. Learning a new language was definitely a big influence, after growing up on the border, growing up near Canada and having this exchange student experience which was an intense experience, having someone in the family that was from another culture and then doing it myself. It kind of persuaded me that just going back home to a small town of Niagara Falls was not something that I was going to do.

Q: When you went back what were you going to do?

WAKE: I went back only for summers after that and never lived in my parents' home again for longer than summers because I went back and started at Columbia College in the fall of '76.

Q: Where is Columbia College?

WAKE: In New York, part of Columbia University.

Q: What part of Columbia University?

WAKE: The undergraduate, at that time undergraduate men's college; it's been coeducational for many years now but at that time...

Q: Barnard?

WAKE: Barnard was and has continued to be a single sex women's college to this day. It is affiliated with Columbia University, but Columbia College at that time was male only and only became coed afterwards.

Q: What was it like I mean a college set in the middle of New York City?

WAKE: I enjoyed the experience very much but it was a reality that this was one of the darkest eras in New York City for public services, crime, public transportation. It was gritty...it was a time that things were not running very well. I often repeat the story that while I was standing in line to go to the first evening event for orientation at Columbia College inside the campus at 114th Street and Broadway there was a murder on 114th street and Broadway on the other side of the gate of a student who was just packing out to leave after spending time in that neighborhood. The campus itself seemed to be a relatively safe oasis. But in a city, as I say, not doing well. It was still New York City and it still had all the cultural and other amenities that for someone from Niagara Falls – even having lived in another country but in a small town in another country – it was a lot of opportunity and a great place, I thought, to be a student.

Q: By this time all the protests against Viet Nam were over and all weren't they?

WAKE: They were and as a matter of fact when I was applying to colleges Columbia was one of several that seemed interesting to me and actually seemed particularly interesting because I had some early conversations with a recruiter from Columbia when I was still in the United States in tenth grade and my mother had gone there and New York City was attractive. It was one of a handful of places that my parents had absolutely told my older brother and sister not to apply to because they didn't want their child to go to that place in dangerous New York City where there was also all this let's not use the word "revolutionary" but radical student activity and so on. By the second half of the seventies Viet Nam was over and that was gone. There was some student activism related to apartheid trying to encourage the university not to invest in companies that were doing business in South Africa.

There also were still remnants of the other issues which had led to student activism at Columbia which were more local. There was a plan at Columbia around the same time as the Viet Nam demonstrations to take over larger parts of the neighborhood and to build a gym in Morningside Park which was very controversial, also symbolically, where the community was going to have access to the gym and where the students were and all that had been stopped. I think, if we look at this in 2014, Columbia University had expanded rather dramatically but at that time it was an era of retrenchment in terms of community relations. I was actually involved not at a high political level but through a community youth program dealing with elementary students from the community, taking them on trips around the city to broaden their perspective. It was something that I did all four years when I was at Columbia and enjoyed.

Q: Who was mayor when you were there?

WAKE: By the time I finished college it was Ed Koch and I can tell you that very firmly because I actually ended up working for New York City before I joined the Foreign Service.

Q: How about the culture life of New York and being a student on a limited budget and all. Were you able to enjoy the fruits of New York?

WAKE: Yeah, you could, I've never to this day been a person who is an intense every day consumer of high culture, theater, symphony and all this sort of thing. But you certainly had a chance if you were living in New York for four years as a student to try them all out either because you splurge on something to go to the theater or because you, as a student, figured out where you could get half-priced tickets for this or you waited until your parents came and you went to that. So there was a lot and then there was a lot also on the lower end in New York that you can do for free or very inexpensively. So over time you got to see a lot.

I mentioned that I did this thing with children on Saturday mornings, this community youth program where we'd take kids around the city. I saw a lot of things doing that, which I never would have seen otherwise. We took them to the top of the World Trade Center and we took them to a botanical garden and a children's museum in Brooklyn and you ended up riding the subway everywhere, Coney Island, not again for high culture but for a real look at New York beyond the obvious, beyond the university in the center of Manhattan.

Q: Of course, being in such a city is such an education in itself. There are tremendous opportunities to look and gawk.

WAKE: Exactly, exactly, it's a wonderful city to walk and maybe starting about the time I spent the exchange student year in Sweden and certainly the four years I was in New York as a student I became an inveterate walker and New York is a great city to do that. You can spend hours going through neighborhoods and neighborhoods.

Q: What was your field of study?

WAKE: I majored in history and had a so-called concentration in political science; it was a balance of both. I didn't narrow in or zero-in very intensely on one very precise topic although there was a strong Russia focus. I should say when I had been an exchange student in Sweden in 1976, just before I left Sweden, another student and I, so two high school students from the United States who were in neighboring communities in Sweden, went to the Soviet Union together...

Q: Ah.

WAKE: ...for a very short visit. They had these packaged tours from Sweden where you would take a ship to Finland, a bus across Finland and then spend two or three nights in

Leningrad. But I did that as a 17 year old in 1976 and that plus other things in my readings persuaded me that Russia was an area of real interest. Of course, it was the other big power in the world. So even if I didn't know if I wanted to be an American diplomat I had the sense that this was something very important. So both in my history and political science studies I focused a lot of attention on Russia and the Soviet Union and American-Soviet Union relations. That was probably the biggest focus but as I said I also tried to keep it fairly broad and did some other things.

Q: When you were in the Soviet Union did you come away with any impressions?

WAKE: Certainly there were impressions of a place that was very different, a place that was pretty rigidly controlled. The things that I remember are limited but they include things like walking on Nevsky Prospekt and having someone come up and talk to us because they wanted to talk with a foreigner and test out their English and maybe try to buy our blue jeans or something like that. Also an impression of Leningrad, of course, as a really beautiful city - one which I ended up going back to in my Foreign Service career, and I'd probably leave it at that. There was also...it was clear that this was a place that was really far behind the West in terms of physical amenities and so on (apart from the metro, the famous good infrastructure of getting around underground).

Q: Did New York attract you as a place to work?

WAKE: It did, it did, and I ended up there for a few stints in the course of my working life. First, well I should say, as in high school, I somehow gamed the system so that I managed to graduate from college in three years and one summer.

Q: You always were cutting corners.

WAKE: I was always cutting corners yes but I cut that corner also with a broader strategic plan to cut another corner which was to get a master's degree in the fourth year because there was a joint program between Columbia College and its School of International Affairs, now known as School of International and Public Affairs. So in four years and a summer I was able to do both a bachelors and a master's degree. I had the masters in international affairs - it's a sort of professional school where you normally do a two-year program - but it was possible to count some courses twice so that was the cutting corners aspect there. So by 1980 I had those two degrees and knew I was interested in something international and had, by that time, understood that there was this thing called the Foreign Service. I wasn't quite sure what this was but I had taken the Foreign Service exam and was waiting for a response. I stayed in New York and actually worked in New York City for a year. That's where I mentioned Ed Koch because I was at the Department of Consumer Affairs working for the Commissioner of Consumer Affairs. That commissioner, Bruce Ratner, has become well known in a different life because he is now a big developer. Ed Koch was the mayor. I was there as a researcher in the Consumer Affairs Department focusing on energy issues, the daily burdens of paying for energy costs in that period of rising prices in the City and was by that time living in Brooklyn. I spent nearly a year out in Brooklyn when the Foreign Service called.

Q: Were you attracted to urban government?

WAKE: Yes and no. I found the job interesting working in New York City's government but it wasn't something that I actually saw as a long-term occupation partly because I had this bug for international affairs and so on. I liked the fact that I was in a part of city government that was designed to help individuals and kind of, should I say "right the balance" or create a little bit more level playing field between consumers and businesses, but it wasn't something that I necessarily felt was my calling for a long time.

Q: Well this was a period of civil rights. Did that hit you? I mean you weren't in a southern city but things that were going on. Did it hit you much?

WAKE: Yeah, first of all growing up in the '60s and seeing what was going on around the country, one was inevitably drawn to follow these issues and they were interesting to me. I felt very strongly that everyone in the country should have equal opportunities and equal rights and was distressed, as I reached consciousness in the '60s to learn how difficult things were for some parts of the population. They also played out in more practical ways because there were debates in the North as well as the South about things like whether there should be busing of school children to integrate schools. People had strong views on those issues, including in the communities where I lived. I grew up in an almost all white neighborhood but there were African-American communities not very far away in Niagara Falls and there was some integration of the school that I went to as an elementary school student and almost none in my junior and senior high school because of the different jurisdiction. But yes, these issues were still prominent in my college and working days. And I mentioned dealing with children from the neighborhood in New York City as part of this community youth group program. They were virtually all either African-American or Hispanic children who faced real challenges because in many cases neither they nor their supposedly bilingual teachers were particularly fluent in English and it was obviously a bad start for people who were going to have to live in the society.

Q: Going back to the academic side of things in your political science/historical studies did you find yourself concentrating on any particular languages and areas or countries?

WAKE: The biggest focus which ended up being consistent throughout my Foreign Service career was Russian, well the Soviet Union, although that wasn't exclusive. I took some course in African literature and I took some course in revolutions which focused on case studies in Asia but there was a focus on what, at that time, was then the Communist world and its past more than anything else. As far as you hinted at the language issue the only language which I really could say I had any real grounding in when I started my college education was Swedish as a result of being an exchange student and actually having an opportunity to learn Swedish very well in my family and through some other opportunities associated with the schooling. I studied a little French as an elementary school student but it didn't carry through my secondary school career. Because of this Russia interest, I did pick up Russian toward the end of my college education; I hinted at

trying to get as much done as possible in a few years. I didn't take any language in my early years in college because the Swedish was counted as fulfilling the language requirement. You had to know one language to graduate from Columbia College and I had Swedish. But then I did start Russian when I was moving into that graduate program and had a couple of years of college Russian by the time I left, though not nearly enough to really use it effectively; that came later.

Q: Well did you consider that and looking back at it your time for the City of New York sort of a parenthesis?

WAKE: Pretty much, pretty much. It was certainly a different perspective. As I spent almost all of my working life from 1981 to 2009 as a U.S. federal government employee, having that city government perspective is a useful one. And I have a couple of friendships from that time. But it was a short time; I was only there less than a year.

Q: Speaking of employment did you work in your father's store as a kid?

WAKE: I did. From a very early age I was the person who washed the windows and...

Q: Stock boy?

WAKE: ...yeah, some of that kind of work. Then in my teen years it was expected and it was part of growing up that I was working there occasionally on weekends but especially during the Christmas rush season and some Saturdays. I think one summer during university I actually spent a good part of the summer working there. Until the federal government changed the system and I went on the new retirement system the only Social Security quarters I had were from 14 years old through my teen years working at my father's store because I was a properly paid registered employee. Well, that's not totally true: I did a couple of other summer jobs, one working in a paper mill and one working in an environmental control, pollution control, facility.

Q: Do paper mills smell badly when you were working there?

WAKE: They do. A detail that I learned about is if that, if you are producing tissue paper, it isn't as bad as if you are making coated paper. We were doing tissue paper, Kleenex, toilet tissue and that sort of thing and it's not as nearly as bad as if you are in a paper mill where you are doing the finely polished coated paper. Apparently those mills have different chemicals and things but we did not have that. People asked that question before but when I said no, it didn't seem that bad, they would say, "Yeah, but you weren't making the paper for magazines or whatever." That apparently is a lot more smelly.

Q: Okay you are a couple years out from college and you've got a master's degree...

WAKE: A bachelor's and a master's. As I mentioned, I got this master of international affairs, a so-called professional degree, from Columbia.

Q: So what were you thinking about?

WAKE: Well I knew I had applied for this Foreign Service thing. Like I said, I didn't know too much about it but I hadn't been rejected. I had just gone from the written to the oral and then filled out the forms for the security clearance and medical. They don't tell you if you are going to end up on a register and if you end up on a register whether you will be selected; at least that's the way it was at the time. But before I could really think much about other options - because the New York City job was certainly something I would gladly have done for a couple of years - within about nine months I got a letter from the State Department saying not only was I on a register but I could be in the next class which was only a few weeks away.

We were then in the early days of the Reagan administration, March-April 1981, and there was a lot of talk about freezing the federal budget, freezing the federal workforce. So even though I wasn't really 100 percent sure this was what I wanted to do and even though they made it clear that it was possible to defer entry (but then there was no guarantee whether you would get in next time), I said, "Well they are offering it to me now, it's a federal government job in an organization that's possibly not going to be hiring much over the coming years. Let me try it out." I didn't have enough knowledge about the Foreign Service or confidence about the job that I knew it was something that I wanted to do.

I do have one story that I've always remembered when people would come to me later and tell me that they were thinking of moving on from a particular office or job, because I felt a little bad I'd only been nine months in this place. I was one of the junior researchers, who were all recent college graduates in a team around the commissioner of consumer affairs. The rest of the office included a lot of older people who had been working for years on very technical issues like making sure the weights and measures of New York City were proper and doing inspections and things like that. So we were a close team with him and I went into the commissioner and said, "I know I haven't been here so long but as I mentioned in my initial interview I was also thinking about the Foreign Service." (He didn't remember that, of course.) "But I think I am going to take this job." I said. "I hope you aren't upset about that." I always remembered that his reaction was what I would consider to be the right one, which was to say: "You should do whatever is best for you, but are you sure this is what you want? I have a couple of people I know in the State Department and maybe you ought to call them up and see whether this is right for you." I did in, fact, end up making a couple of telephone calls, one to a cousin of his who was working as an analyst in the State Department as a civil servant by the name of Aaron David Miller who has since become one of the lead negotiators on Middle East peace over the course of decades.

Q: I saw him on TV a few days ago.

WAKE: He is on TV all the time and I have only had a brief email exchange with him in the past year but when I was thinking about joining the Foreign Service he was one of the people I talked to, to say "what is the State Department?" He gave me a nice balanced

view from the point of view from a civil servant and referred me to somebody else to get a Foreign Service officer point of view. It sounded interesting enough that I decided, ok, I'll try this out, and that was the fateful decision to take off and move, within a few weeks.

Q: Do you recall any of the questions asked in the oral exam?

WAKE: Specifically I can't come up with them right now. What I remember was the part that I found the most challenging was being put in hypothetical situations: something to do with public affairs, something to do with consular affairs, something to do with a political situation that I had to think on my feet to answer; that's what I remember about the oral part of the exam. I was in the early days after the court decisions which led to a broader all day process. It wasn't just an interview. So I do remember there was also an inbox and there was a group exercise. I do remember the group exercise was an effort to debate among our country team about who should go out on some international visitor program, a real life, typical life experience where you are both supporting your candidate and listening carefully to the arguments on the other side.

Q: Well your time in a New York City office must have helped a bit, didn't it?

WAKE: I mean it was my first office work experience of that kind so that probably helped. The other thing I always told people when they asked me - including a couple students I dealt with in a little exercise that I coached within the past week - is nothing beats reading the New York Times every day for the months before you are in the exam. Just having an understanding of what's going on in the world and then a common sense view of how you deal with it and probably also having been an exchange student even though that was quite early. The idea of being in another culture and having to think on your feet, how to represent yourself, didn't hurt.

Q: Well then when did you come to the State Department?

WAKE: The end of April 1981.

Q: What was your A-100 course like?

WAKE: I was in the so-called fourth class because it was just after the changeover to the new Foreign Service Act. We were about 42 if I'm not mistaken; a few lateral entry people through different programs but mostly classical junior officers coming in. I think I was the second youngest in the class which I think made me the second youngest in the Foreign Service. I was surprised to learn when I joined the Foreign Service that already then the average age was either late twenties or early thirties; I think it's gone up since then but at that time I was surprised to find the number of my colleagues who were either really very senior retired military who were starting a second career in their forties or people who had more advanced degrees and/or work experience, former Peace Corps volunteers. It was a typical mix I would say, I wouldn't say there was anything unique about my class looking back at it. There were a couple who ended up ambassadors more

than once and many of us who didn't. I don't think there was anything extraordinary about it. We got along well.

Q: As you went in did you fix on where you wanted to go and what you wanted to do even if you didn't know much about how would it come about?

WAKE: I had been selected and I think at this time you didn't even...maybe you expressed a preference but in any case I'd been selected as a political officer and that seemed right to me. It seemed that was the kind of work I would be interested in doing at the same time I had through these contacts even before joining and then obviously the training you get I understood I'm probably going to do consular work at the beginning. I mean in a sense it's hard to recall exactly what was in my mind at the time but the focus was on things which I ended up doing, that is building on what I had done in university and so on and thinking about the political relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union and what we then called satellites or allies; it was something I was quite interested in.

I also developed an interest already in university - and this is probably a product of being in New York - in the United Nations.

Q: Had you been able to go and sit in sessions?

WAKE: Yeah, there is a story I'll tell you in a second that goes even further backwards but I did two things at university which were related directly to the UN. One, I worked a little bit at the university radio station, WKCR, which at that time had a direct feed from the General Assembly of the UN and when there wasn't much more interesting to broadcast they actually broadcast that feed. I was occasionally responsible for doing a little commentary or at least the filler to announce "today we are going to hear the General Assembly debate" on such and such a topic. That was done remotely for the most part because we actually sat up there on 114th Street and had the signal from the UN. But then I did an internship in my last year when I was in that graduate program at the United Nations Association of the U.S. and that gave me a UN pass. I was over at the UN to pick up the press releases and other materials, listen in on events and prepare at least the first draft of some paper. I remember there was a paper that summarized the work of the previous General Assembly; there was also something on refugee issues.

I said there was one other story which I would go back to only because it might be of interest to break the monotony. When I was less than ten years old - I'm thinking I was about eight or nine - my sister who is considerably older went to Italy for a semester abroad program. At that time the semester abroad program of Syracuse University in Florence began with a trans-Atlantic ocean crossing from New York City by ship. So my parents and I and my sister went to New York City, we put her on the ship and my parents took me to the United Nations and we were, in fact, able to hear a debate. This probably should have pushed me in a different direction because I still remember that the debate was in this committee on economic and social affairs. I once did a little research to actually find the report of this meeting and I think I might have been able to pull it up. It

was a rather obscure committee but it was one with a public gallery and they had tickets for that particular moment so we went to see it. It was really fascinating because they were debating for the entire time whether or not that body was going to meet on George Washington's birthday or not. They had various important arguments about how much work they had to do and on the other side how important this national holiday of the host country was. It was such an interesting debate that we stayed long enough that we missed our flight back to Buffalo, New York. As I say, the importance of the discussion that these high-level diplomats were having probably should have persuaded me to stay away from all multilateral affairs; but I ended up drawing a different conclusion, which was how interesting it was.

Q: How to talk to people. You know you have huge debates on commas.

WAKE: Yes, commas can be very important in multilateral affairs.

Q: Yeah.

WAKE: Yes, I've had the experience with that later on. So there was a multilateral interest and a Russia, Soviet Union, interest and both actually did carry through to a large part of my career.

Q: Well how did you feel about the A-100 course looking back on it. Did it serve the purpose of acquainting you with the State Department and the Foreign Service?

WAKE: I thought it did. I've run into people from other diplomatic services and they have very long term professional preparation before they ever go out to their first posts. I wouldn't necessarily say there is anything wrong with our system that does this more quickly. I found it to be fine.

Q: Well then what was your first post?

WAKE: Well that's an interesting development because, of course, I was told by everyone that you will see a list of posts on your set of choices on which you can bid and you might as well forget about the ones where you've already lived or know anything about the language because they will always send you somewhere different, right?

Q: Yeah.

WAKE: So I was pretty convinced that the one place I wasn't going to be able to go was Stockholm, which was on the Foreign Service list. Also, because the job opened up in January and this was May and they wanted someone to learn the language; but I already spoke Swedish so there was a gap in there for language training. I bid on Stockholm just as a throwaway but also on other places I thought were quite interesting. They had to have a selection around the world including a few in Eastern Europe that seemed interesting to me. Well, what happened? They decided that this kid, who had only spent time in one foreign country besides Canada (which was Sweden) and only one other city

besides his home town and Sweden (which was New York) was going to go to Sweden. And in order to fill that four-month gap that had been intended for language training, they would send me back to New York! Immediately after training I went to USUN - to the mission at the UN - and did a three or four month detail as a reporting officer during the General Assembly that took place that year. Then I moved on to my first real post which was a consular officer tour in Stockholm starting...

Q: Let's talk about the UN period. What did that mean for you?

WAKE: Just because I remember it now, before I get into the UN period, just one detail.

Q: Sure.

WAKE: You asked about how A-100 prepared me for life in the Foreign Service and I thought it was fine. I also did the consular training course, the so-call ConGen Rosslyn course which at that time was done in groups of four students that started every couple of days. I thought that prepared me very well for my work as a consular officer in Stockholm; it also had a very big impact on my life because one of the other four students was a woman named Connie Philipot. Connie was on her way to Rome while I was on my way to Stockholm. She later became my spouse and part of the tandem couple that spent I much of my time in the Foreign Service with.

Q: That's great.

WAKE: So that's just a detail but anyway she then went off to Italy. We were not romantically involved at that time; we just got to know each other during that intense period spending, whatever it is, twenty days in the same room.

Yes, then I went off to New York via a little bit of time in offices in the International Organizations bureau ("IO"), just for consultation and familiarization in. That was a lot of fun and it was a great way for a very junior person to feel like you've come into diplomacy big time because even if you are sitting in the back row of the U.S. delegation most of the time you are sitting in the back row of the delegation in the General Assembly of the United Nations where foreign ministers and prime ministers and presidents are sitting around the tables especially during that initial three-week general debate period.

There were three junior officers and we rotated the sessions during the first part so that we covered all the debate and then later on one of us covered the plenary of the General Assembly and others covered different committees to take notes and write reporting cables back to Washington. It was quite an exciting period for somebody so junior to be engaged and involved with so many different nations around the conference rooms. The U.S. delegation was headed by a controversial political Ambassador Jeanne Kirkpatrick at the time but it also had various public and Congressional members and, of course, there is a hierarchy here and you are at the bottom of it. People took the time to get to know you as well as you to get to know them and to some extent people depended on you

because you were the one there taking the notes when they weren't listening and they weren't paying attention and there were times when you were the only person sitting in the U.S. delegation. While you were not really authorized to do or say anything, you were there.

Q: That's great. Do you recall any of the issues that were coming up?

WAKE: There were a couple of things that were memorable. One of which was - and this one had an impact throughout that session - was that the new secretary general was being selected. Up to that point the Secretary Generals had always been European, I think with a single exception of U Thant who had been from Burma. So there was certainly a strong push for the next secretary general to be from the Third World. One of the very strong candidates supported by the largest group, which was the African group, was Salim Salim, who was the foreign minister at the time from Tanzania. The country happens to be officially called the United Republic of Tanzania and, therefore, sits right next to the United States of America. It was striking to the extent to which a foreign minister of a not unimportant, not small, country spent much of his September/October or November sitting at the same table that sometimes at the other end had just a junior officer from the most junior part of the U.S. delegation. His personal priority was not just to represent Tanzania but to become Secretary General of the United Nations.

While it was, of course, officially not known and as a junior officer in the American delegation you would not be privy to what the U.S. instructions were in these secret ballots, it was pretty clear that Salim Salim was the candidate supported by the Chinese and perhaps would have been acceptable to the Soviet Union but somebody the United States did not want. So there was this also very weird tension that, of course, the outward politeness and respect for an important foreign minister who was from a not insignificant country in Africa was also someone who was being probably sabotaged at the time by the United States reportedly because he had once danced in the halls of the General Assembly when the vote had taken place to seat the Communist Chinese instead of the Taiwan authorities years earlier. In the end Perez de Cuellar, a Latin American, got the post.

The other thing that is memorable to me is that this was a period of especially intense U.S.-Soviet competition and acrimony. It was the beginning of the Reagan administration, which had taken a very hard line on Soviet business, and it was still less than two years after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, so the Soviets were on the receiving end of criticism. Not only from the West on the Afghanistan issue - it was one issue on which the West was lined up also with the Islamic world because the invasion of Afghanistan was something they didn't like either. On many other issues the Soviet Union had the voting bloc in its favor because it portrayed itself as a friend of the Third World, the non-aligned, and I did have the opportunity to hear the Soviet position laid out by Foreign Minister Gromyko. I recall having been the note taker and the person writing about this. In the U.S. delegation, as I mentioned, there were public and Congressional delegates; this is a long standing tradition and I think it continues till this day. One of the so-called public delegates was a former senator by the name of John Sherman Cooper...

Q: Oh yes, from Kentucky.

WAKE: ...from Kentucky. He has since died, but at that time was...one could check this, but I would say at least in his 80s.

Q: He had been to Germany.

WAKE: He had already been ambassador to both East Germany and India. He was seated at the U.S. delegation table when Andrei Gromyko gave his speech which was a very long one and which attacked the United States on every page for ringing the world with bases and missiles and imperialist encirclement was on the rise and so on and so forth. There was a lot of focus on missiles and plans for new deployments in Europe and so on. Senator Cooper, who was very sharp, didn't hear very well and so he sat there stone-faced and listened to the speech but really didn't get very much of it. He asked me as the junior reporting officer, could I get a copy of the speech? I didn't know if I would be able to or not as sometimes you could and sometimes you couldn't. But I walked over, probably to the language services of the UN - I don't think it was to the Soviet delegation - but I did in any case get an English language copy of the speech which was about thirty pages long. The other important detail here is that when John Sherman Cooper had been a senator he had been not a public but a Congressional member of the delegation to, I believe it was the Fourth General Assembly of the United Nations, in 1949 or so. So I brought the speech text over to former Senator Cooper who carefully read through page by page. And then he said, "That's the same damn speech he gave the last time I was here." Having been from 1949 to 1981, it was a 32 year sequence. But, of course, Gromyko had been the foreign minister since that time and gave more or less the same speech.

Q: Today is the 24th of June 2014 continuing after a summer hiatus with Douglas Wake?

WAKE: Correct.

Q: We left off where you had been working with John Sherman Cooper and Andrei Gromyko gave the same speech thirty years before.

WAKE: Roughly, a little bit more than thirty I think.

Q: Well I guess if you've been doing it for that long you've got a nice file cabinet assembled. Well now you went to Sweden, is that right?

WAKE: That's right. That discussion that we completed last time was about a short temporary assignment at the U.S. Mission at the UN before going off to my first real tour which was as a consular officer in Stockholm.

Q: Okay, well you were there in Stockholm from when to when?

WAKE: From January of 1982 until the middle of 1983; it was a short 18-month tour.

Q: Okay, how stood relations with Sweden? One would be thinking it would be rather close but it's always been a troubled relationship.

WAKE: During those years they were I would say somewhat on the mend, if you think of it in terms of the really difficult period of the Viet Nam War, but not untroubled particularly because of the differences that Sweden and its closest partners had with the U.S. on things like Latin American policy, especially Central America policy. Human rights policy more generally as the Reagan administration had come into office and specifically our support of the governments in Central America which were being challenged, as we put it, by rather radical left-wing movements. Our policy was not at all popular in Sweden....

Q: Who was the ambassador there?

WAKE: The ambassador during my time was a political appointee by the name of Franklin Forsberg. He was a Swedish-American with some sort of business background and when I said relations were on the mend he was a good part of it in the sense that he was a people-to-people kind of political ambassador. He recognized that there was expertise elsewhere in the State Department and in the Embassy on the fine points of diplomacy in terms of policy but drawing on his connection to the Swedish American community and his interest in travel, he visited practically every corner of Sweden and in that sense I think was a good ambassador helping partly overcome some of the political troubles. There also was what may have been one of the highest-level visits in a considerable period; I can't say for sure who else had been in the past but the vice president visited during my time.

Q: Normally when I think about it there really hasn't been an awful lot of high-level attention paid to Scandinavia.

WAKE: No, and at that time as a neutral and as a country perceived to be on the left especially as that administration came into power just sending the vice president there for a pretty much goodwill visit...

Q: Who was that?

WAKE: It was George Bush.

Q: From all accounts looking back on it he was probably one of the best prepared vice presidents we've had in foreign affairs.

WAKE: Sure, and that was a good visit. Of course, I was a very junior person and the most junior person in the embassy. I had the profound, serious responsibility of dealing with motor pool issues during the high-level visit which was extremely difficult in Sweden because all you had to do basically was snap your fingers and you had a fleet of

excellent first-rate Volvo's or whatever it was, with well-dressed and very professional drivers. The Secret Service was extremely happy and, of course, they took care of their closest cover of the vice president but they were very happy to have that efficiency of the country.

Q: Well you started out as a consular officer.

WAKE: I was a consular officer. Although I was a political cone officer it was the practice then, I think, as it has been through most years in the Foreign Service that most people start out with a consular tour. Because it was not a large enough embassy to have a formal rotational program, it was a pure consular assignment of 18 months although the DCM, Deputy Chief of Mission, who had sort of formal responsibility for the junior officer development program, did make sure that there was a small informal rotational program; so I was able to spend a couple months in the political section out of that 18 months.

Q: Who was the DCM?

WAKE: The DCM was a guy by the name of Sherrod McCall who had spent a lot of time in the Soviet world both in country, I think, and on the desk in Washington.

Q: Well let's talk a little about the consular work. What sort of things did you have in the way of difficulties?

WAKE: There were a few interesting aspects to the work and maybe preface to say a large part of the work was not very interesting because Swedes were extremely low-risk travelers. They were eligible for multiple entry, indefinite validity visas and for the vast majority of applicants there were few questions. In fact, one of the consular issues we had to deal with was simply explaining to them that yes, it really does mean indefinite validity even if your passport has expired you can take your old passport and your new passport and the immigration officer should allow you through. Then you would get a few cases in which the immigration officers hadn't and they would say well please put my visa in the new passport so I can get another multiple entry indefinite validity visa. That was the simple part.

The only real problems with Swedish visa applicants were of the nature that you would almost consider trivial, although they were still legal issues. You had a considerable tradition in the U.S. of using Swedish au pairs to take care of children...

Q: Oh yeah.

WAKE: While there was very little abuse that would concern you in terms of either long term overstays or abuse of the au pairs themselves, it was a violation because they were going on nonimmigrant visas and engaging in a bit of deception in order to get those visas. So it was a little cat and mouse game to try and figure out who had the least likely story about the family they were going to visit for twelve months in Florida because they

had just met on the beach in Greece or something and they were just going as friends. But those were the kind of issues that took up more time than they deserved.

The issues that were of more interest on the visa side involved third country nationals. There were a couple of groups that were in Sweden in fairly large numbers as a result of what at the time were recent fairly dramatic political developments. A fair number of Iranians found their way to Sweden one way or another – some only to apply for American visas, but others because it was a place providing a certain degree of refuge for people who hadn't agreed with the Khomeini revolution. Probably some people, who had been there longer than others, hadn't agreed with the shah and had gotten some kind of status earlier on. But overall there was enough of an Iranian population in Sweden that it created some challenges for us as visa officers. The U.S embassy in Tehran had closed as a result of the hostage crisis and, therefore, even for those applicants who had from a humanitarian perspective fairly strong reasons to go and visit relatives in the United States or to continue studies which they may have in the U.S., it was virtually impossible for us to determine who had a permanent residence abroad which they had no intention of abandoning if that residence was in Iran. If that residence had been in Sweden, then we would evaluate it on the basis on their ties to Sweden and in such cases it was more likely that a few of them would get visas.

Q: Did you have any problems from a leftover of people who deserted from the American Army? Sweden had been a place of refuge during the Viet Nam war and there had been an amnesty but I was wondering whether...

WAKE: There were. There were both former draft dodgers and there were in very small numbers deserters who had found their way to Sweden. I would have had to go back and refresh my memory with research about the various pardons that had been issued but in most cases if people were draft dodgers they had been covered by one of the pardons. I believe there was one issued by President Ford and one by President Carter, if I'm not mistaken, so that their cases could be handled rather simply if they showed up and wanted to go back to the United States and continue residence. I don't remember all of the precise legal details but those were the easier cases. The somewhat more difficult cases, and there were a couple, were those who had relinquished their citizenship. These individuals also could have been there just as draft dodgers but I think in a couple cases there were also deserters, people who had actually left the U.S. military in an unauthorized manner. Even there I believe there was a quite lenient policy but they would have to at least go back and report to their unit. Perhaps there was some penalty – I can't remember the exact details – but there were, in my eighteen months, a handful of cases we dealt with.

There were also a couple of people, as I recall, who had relinquished citizenship, wanted to go back for family reasons as visitors on non-immigrant visas, which was possible, but I believe there might have been a waiver issue if there was a criminal issue. So it was a bit of a leftover legacy in Sweden.

Back on the visa issue the other thing that was even more directly affecting Sweden at precisely the time I came was the Polish crisis. I got there in January 1982 and Poland had declared martial law - Polish General Jaruzelski had declared martial law - in December of '81. There were some thousands of Poles in Sweden who had come mostly legally for temporary purposes and then overstayed their permission to do temporary work the previous summer or for some other reason they had been able to come for a temporary purpose and then, watching the development of the political situation in Poland in the course of 1980-81, quite a few decided not to go back. As is the case with almost all of the Polish diaspora, practically everyone who at least found their way to the American Embassy had a cousin, a brother, an uncle, an aunt in Chicago, Buffalo, whatever the relevant place was and they were looking for non-immigrant visas to pay short visits, of course, which presented us with a pretty serious problem given the expectation that people were not going to go back to Poland anytime soon as long as martial law was in effect. The good thing from our perspective was that Swedish policy was very clear that anyone who had arrived before December 13th, I believe was the date, in 1981, had the equivalent of what we would call extended voluntary departure. They had not a formal refugee status but permission to remain in Sweden for the duration of the crisis at least. So while we had to say no to a lot of people, you can't go visit your cousin in Chicago, we could say with full confidence that if you hadn't already taken care of this you can just walk down to the Swedish police station and register yourself, tell your story, the same story you told me, and you will be able to stay in Sweden. Then if your cousin would like to visit you I'm sure your cousin can come and visit Sweden; there is no requirement for Americans to get visas to come to Sweden.

So it was a bit of an addition to the work load and not always so nice to have to say no to people who really did have strong ties to the U.S. Ultimately, many of them probably established strong ties to Sweden and ended up living there or returned to Poland sometime later.

Q: How about people from some other countries, like guest workers? In Yugoslavia I met people back in the '60s and I would get cards in the '70s saying they went to Sweden and are working at Volvo.

WAKE: We had a pretty wide range of nationalities and national backgrounds. Many people had come, particularly from Central and Eastern Europe, either as guest workers or as a result of something like the 1956 events in Hungary or the 1968 events in Czechoslovakia. By the time I was working there, these people were pretty well integrated and they either had Swedish citizenship or they had long term residence permits in their non-citizen or refugee documents. They were, of course, scrutinized more closely than Swedish citizens who always lived in Sweden but they were often eligible for visas because they were really just planning to go and spend their well-earned money in the United States on vacations or something like that.

On the American citizen side, and maybe this would be the last issue I can think of in consular work, we did have a few interesting, a small number, but a few interesting prison cases. I had a couple of gentlemen, two gentlemen, who had both been convicted

in the same case involving narcotics and exploitation of prostitution. One of these gentlemen had escaped from a long sentence – it may have been a life sentence – that he was serving for a murder in the United States and the other one was a fugitive from justice in Virginia where he had been accused of a rape. The alleged rapist – I say alleged because as far as I know it was never proven, unless maybe the case finally came to trial years later – was a disabled American veteran (although he seemed to be in pretty good health). He was the subject of an extradition request by the United States but he wasn't extradited to the United States because Sweden refused to extradite anyone who had the possibility of facing the death penalty (which was the case for rape in the state of Virginia). But then, after Sweden had refused his extradition request and while he was continuing to receive his monthly benefits as a disabled American veteran despite his presence on a wanted list in Virginia, then he was accused in this major narcotics case in Sweden. The case had taken place before I got there but I had to visit him every once in a while and I even had to visit him to take care of the documentation of a child that he had fathered while he was in prison. The child was properly documented as an American citizen because it was very clear from the record that the prisoner (the alleged rapist) was the father of this child whose mother was also convicted in the same case with him. Then we had to answer a lot of mail about the fact that unfortunately the mother could not go and visit the grandparents in the United States because she was ineligible for a visa under section 212(a)(23) of the Immigration and Nationality Act or whatever it was. So that was an interesting case.

Then there was a convicted murderer, I won't say alleged, because he had been convicted of the crime. In both cases these guys had been convicted and sentenced to what in Swedish terms was quite a long sentence, I think it was maybe ten years and deportation. The question was, was Sweden going to deport the alleged rapist to the country they refused to extradite him to? I think they probably did in the end but that was after my time. That was kind of an interesting aspect.

Otherwise day-to-day consular work was not very exciting because there was this large number of Swedes who just wanted to go and spend their time on vacation.

Q: Did you get involved in any political reporting?

WAKE: Yeah, I mentioned there was an informal rotational program, in which the DCM ensured that each of the two junior consular officers was freed up to spend some time in another section and in my case it was the political section. This allowed me to do a little bit of reporting and I was thinking about this as I was coming over here. There were really only two issues that I can recall working on that were of any interest.

One was the follow up to an incident that had occurred I want to say in '81, which was known as the Whiskey on the Rocks incident. This was when a whiskey class submarine...

Q: Of the Soviet Union.

WAKE: ...of the Soviet Union showed up stuck on a part of the Swedish archipelago inside Swedish territorial waters and that became a big political incident. It was over by the time I was there but there were constant reports of new incursions by Swedish submarines.

Q: Apparently, the Soviets were probing but it was sort of an exercise.

WAKE: Yeah.

Q: I think for the sub force.

WAIT: The Swedes at least through the channels that I was familiar with (that is, in the political section) were not particularly anxious to share a lot of details about this; they may have been sharing it through some other channels that I wasn't aware of. But we in the political section, through the formalities of diplomatic exchange and just trying to read the press, tried to get a sense of how frequent these things were. Was it getting to be more or less common? It was very difficult to get hard data at that level and as I say there may have been others that were watching it a little more at the technical level. It was definitely in political dialog and it was also important in the Swedish domestic political scene because you had, of course, formal neutrality, a *de facto* Western lifestyle and Western perspective on security matters but outwardly, formally, people were shocked that the Soviet Union was not recognizing that this was a sovereign city and country.

Q: Did you find in any of your contacts any great sympathy for the Soviet Union?

WAKE: In terms of people that I personally dealt with I would say "not really" – but there was still a tendency in the media to be much more forgiving of the Soviet Union than the United States. This was despite being after the invasion of Afghanistan. That had changed attitudes a bit, the invasion of Afghanistan, but there still was a tendency to be a bit more forgiving of Soviet policy than of American. We were beginning to get to the debate about medium-range nuclear weapons; although Sweden wasn't a direct player, certainly it was a place the Soviet Union tried to exercise some soft power.

The one other political issue I was asked to work on also had to do with the Soviet Union – but specifically with regard to territory that we in the United States didn't recognize as the Soviet Union. That was the Baltic states which, of course, are very close neighbors and which became very important later in my career but at that time it was the very mundane task of preparing the annual human rights reports which by policy and by practice were always done separately for the three Baltic States because the United States recognized them not as part of the Soviet Union but as independent states. Of course, to the extent that the reports covered the political system, the legal system, the general practices of the way the government treated the people, the Baltic States were *de facto* exactly the same as the Soviet Union. What I was asked to do and what I assumed people were doing for many years in any neighboring countries was to see whether there was any information available in Sweden about the human rights situation in Latvia,

Lithuania and Estonia that would shed a little more light on the specifics on the situation. There was, because there were émigré groups there.

Q: Yeah.

WAKE: So in my very, very small role in the political section I made a few phone calls and got a few documents about what abuses had taken place in the previous years that had been alleged, at least, by Latvian and Swedish groups and Estonian and Swedish groups and that sort of thing. But it is a theme that comes back in my life because I ended up serving a lot of time in that part of the world later on.

Q: Well how did you find life in Sweden? Were you married at the time?

WAKE: I was not married at the time although I had met the person who would become my wife in ConGen Rosslyn and training in Arlington. We were not romantically attached and had gone off in different directions. So I was single.

Q: I would have thought that this would have been like a kid thrown into a candy store.

WAKE: One might think that but it wasn't all that exciting a life in Sweden for a junior consular officer in the American Embassy.

Q: Well the Swedes are quite formal aren't they?

WAKE: As I had discussed in an earlier session, I had been an exchange student in Sweden as well. So I knew the language and I had a sense of cultural traditions and so on. The answer is yes, but once you got to know people they can be very friendly. I have lifelong attachments to people in Sweden, specifically the family I lived with when I was an exchange student there. But formal initial contacts, yes, and more so at that time probably than now. Now Sweden is part of the European Union and more integrated into the European and world cultures.

Q: Well did you find the informal relations you were looked upon with certain standoffishness because of Viet Nam and because of our Central American policy and all that?

WAKE: I think maybe a little bit but not very much. When people would see me as someone different – not dark skin, but dark hair at least and probably not Swedish and certainly not speaking native Swedish – maybe there would be a little bit of standoffishness. Then as people realized I spoke the language reasonably well and understood the culture well I would tend to be quite well accepted and I think as in many of my interactions around the world people actually have a pretty sophisticated way of distinguishing between a country's policies and the human factor.

Q: Well after this time you were getting ready to move on. Where did you go?

WAKE: I had a sort of slow start of getting out to new places. After having been an exchange student in Sweden and then spending both my college years and my first short tour in New York, I go back to Sweden as a consular officer and then my next tour was in New York.

Q: Huh.

WAKE: Not completely coincidentally, of course. I knew something about the UN and the U.S. Mission to the UN from my brief experience there in the fall of 1981 when I first joined the Foreign Service. I was looking to stay overseas if possible, I was very interested in Central and Eastern Europe, I had a number of different bids on posts and for one reason or another none of them worked out. On the other hand, there was a slot in New York as the more junior person following the human rights, social and humanitarian issues in the UN and that is what I ended up doing in the summer of 1983 for initially a two year tour which I extended to almost three. That's where I spent those years.

Q: What piece of the action did you have?

WAKE: I was in the so-called economic and social affairs section, the ECOSOC section. That section is divided between those who work more on pure economic issues, which was not my forte, and those who work on the human rights, refugee and other so-called social issues like narcotic drug control, the status of women, social development more generally and that was the portfolio that I had for nearly three years. The main arena was the Third Committee of the General Assembly, the committee that deals with those issues in the fall during the General Assembly. Fortunately for me both in professional and personal terms, what was then called the Commission on Human Rights (and which no longer exists in quite the same form) met in Geneva every year from the beginning of February through the middle of March. I did that for three years so that would have been '84, '85, and '86; then, during the rest of the year, I was working on those same issues less intensely because there weren't on-going daily meetings.

Q: Some of the other countries were spending a large amount of attention in Africa. Did you get involved in that at all?

WAKE: The main Africa issue that came across my desk, that was in my portfolio, was really South Africa. As someone who sat in vast numbers of UN meetings both in that 1981 period and then during this three year period, of course, I recognized the African continent had the largest membership in the UN. Their biggest political focus was on the apartheid system in South Africa, what was considered to be the South African occupation of Namibia, then to a lesser extent the after effects of the Portuguese departure from Mozambique and Angola. But if ask what came up in the Third Committee on Africa, it was a vast number of resolutions and decisions and speeches about the evils of the apartheid regime and in many cases the U.S. in this period was on the defensive. This was the period of the so-called constructive engagement policy of the Reagan administration which was perhaps justifiable on its merits but was easily ridiculed by those who saw engagement as an excuse for being soft on apartheid South

Africa. Then there were those with malicious intent, beyond the facts, who suggested the United States and South Africa were closely involved in military and nuclear collaboration and so on, usually together with Israel, and these were the kinds of things that one had to deal with rhetorically.

Q: How did you find working in the UN? In a way I've heard people say they'd go to internal meetings and have discussions over a comma or something like that. I mean I don't know if this is fair or not?

WAKE: It's only a little bit of a caricature. I mean, I'm guilty as charged as someone who ended up dealing with multilateral affairs for much of my professional career. I'm both frustrated by it and sometimes fascinated by the diplomacy of multilateral engagement where you do fight about words because words are perceived to be the battleground on which you are fighting over policies. The broad answer is that I enjoyed the work because I think first of all there is an important role for multilateral institutions like the UN. There is the old story that if you didn't have them somebody else would invent them.

Q: Yeah.

WAKE: And it does provide an opportunity for a vast range of personal interactions with people from all over the world so, particularly when you're at a lower level in the Foreign Service, you are dealing with people you might not otherwise come in contact with from a whole range of countries. Sometimes the work is enormously frustrating because you are doing the same thing, you are spending hours arguing over a comma or you are spending hours just really rehashing the same thing that has been done year after year without having made any real difference.

There were a couple of things that were particularly satisfying during those years when I look back at them. The human rights agenda in the UN had been pretty static over a number of years. You had dealt, of course, with South Africa and apartheid and you dealt with the situation in the Middle East usually involving both valid and much exaggerated criticism of Israeli policies and you had these Central and South American situations where friends of the United States were on the defensive in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Chile. And there was very little prospect for moving those issues in the UN to a better place from an American perspective, particularly because much of the world perceived the situation in those countries as getting worse over time rather than better and the voice of the United States on these issues wasn't taken all that seriously.

Where I said there were some satisfying aspects is that there were some new issues that one was able to get onto the UN agenda. Not satisfying that these issues were there, because one never wants to see human rights violations, but in those years, early '80s, it was possible for the first time to actually have UN mechanisms investigating human rights in Afghanistan, human rights in Iran and to establish some new standards and new mechanisms that I think continue to play some role. There was a convention against torture that was adopted at the time which was a big Western priority and one that the

Reagan administration inherited from previous administrations as a priority but did continue to push for. And it was possible despite a lot of resistance from different parts of the world to get a convention which is still on the books and which now has force which eventually the United States ratified. You'd have another debate about the United States respect for it during recent years but that is not something I personally was professionally involved in.

But in any case, there were some things that were satisfying on the human rights agenda and there were also some things that were enormously frustrating. In those years, I guess throughout that time, the head of the U.S. delegation to the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva and eventually one of the ambassadors in New York (because the UN always has five ambassadors to the UN), was someone I ended up working for also in Washington later and that was Richard Schifter.

Q: Who?

WAKE: Richard Schifter. He was a Reagan administration political appointee initially although he was a Democrat by background, a sort of neoconservative Scoop Jackson Democrat who was close to Jeanne Kirkpatrick and that group. But he was the ambassador that followed human rights issues at least part of the time I was in New York and was the representative to the UN Human Rights Commission and then he became the assistant secretary for human rights and humanitarian affairs which is the place I went next.

One of the other ambassadors that I worked for during part of my time has since passed away and that was someone I had the highest respect for, a woman by the name of Patricia Byrne. I don't know if you ever ran across her; she was a career Foreign Service officer who started her career in the 1950s dealing with, I guess it was the negotiations over the status of Indo-China in the 1950s. She was very devoted to her work and was a very warm human being and overcame big obstacles. She actually had polio as a child and had difficulty even walking but demonstrated that if you really care about what you are doing you could overcome a lot. She was quite a good person to work with. The ambassador after Jeanne Kirkpatrick left was another sort of historic figure although I can't say I had very much contact with him and that was Vernon Walters, as the permanent representative of the U.S. to the UN.

So that was those years.

Q: Was this the period of the short-range nuclear weapons, the SS-20 and all?

WAKE: I can't remember now exactly when the deal was finally reached for the elimination...that was in '86 or something like that but this was a constant...as a matter of fact every Soviet speech in the Third Committee dealing with human rights or in the UN Human Rights Commission while acknowledging that human rights is a very important topic would always talk about how our greatest threat to human rights was the threat to the right to life posed by American medium-range nuclear weapons. They never

worried about Soviet short-range and intermediate-range weapons because they didn't pose any threat to life but the Americans did. And it was a big political issue that hung over a lot of international life. Of course, you had the whole Reagan administration effort to develop this Strategic Defense Initiative, Star Wars, and that sort of thing as well.

Q: Did you find it difficult defending President Ronald Reagan?

WAKE: I found it challenging on the issues we talked about – the human rights issues in Central America – where I was no expert on the issues but it was pretty clear to me that the administration view coming out of Washington was to consistently minimize problems, human rights violations by the regimes, consistently blame rebel forces for practically everything that went wrong, sometimes in contradiction to what you would get from objective sources including American Embassy reporting. That was an area where it was not so easy but you're a Foreign Service officer, you are committed to the policy of the administration and you support the administration.

Q: What was your impression of some of the delegations there in their effectiveness and competence and all at the UN?

WAKE: You mean not U.S. but other delegations?

Q: The other delegations.

WAKE: You had vast variety. I'm trying to remember which country it was in the Caribbean, one of the new island states, where the permanent representative drove a taxi part time and worked as permanent representative part time and obviously had no contact with his capital and voted however he thought he could get away with. Then you had delegations like by the way the Soviet delegation which was clearly acting on very precise instructions, very carefully prepared for everything that they did. Not necessarily very flexible, because their instructions didn't give them that flexibility. But you had a real wide range and I have to say in my work in the Third Committee in the human rights work and Human Rights Commission over in Geneva I had a very dedicated and I think highly professional set of counterparts and colleagues from within the Western delegations. This was an area of policy that those countries took seriously in the UN, maybe in contrast to some of the economic issues where it was clear what had happened in the Second Committee of the General Assembly didn't really have much impact on the economy of The Netherlands or Belgium or Sweden. You could say the same thing about the Third Committee and its human rights work but at least this was the forum in which they could express themselves and they could take leadership on different issues so that the Dutch have the lead on one issue or the Belgians on another or the British on another. Those colleagues I found to be quite professional.

Q: Did you find that you could make progress by hammering away on a particular aspect of human rights?

WAKE: If the question is whether it had any impact on the ground it was always very hard to tell. Later in my career working on things like Soviet and post-Soviet countries I think I could point to more specific instances where there were some more impact results. Regarding the work of the UN, I would say at best you would see indirect results, at best you would see efforts by countries to release prisoners or carry out some kind of liberalization policy which might be timed to get best impact in something like the UN Human Rights Commission. There were occasional cases like that but I wouldn't overstate the case. It was always felt that certain countries did care about their international reputations and the evidence for that was how hard they fought. I mean one of the interesting examples was the case of Afghanistan where the Soviet Union had usually not worried too much about the UN on human rights issues because it had a kind of automatic majority with its friends in the Third World or those who would at least vote with them for reasons of anti-Americanism or whatever. But when all of a sudden, the Soviet Union had invaded and occupied a predominantly Muslim country the dynamics had turned and the Soviet Union exercised enormous diplomacy and pressure to try and keep the resolution from being adopted on human rights in Afghanistan. Even though they had already been condemned for their invasion, they would do everything possible to avoid another front being opened which was a human rights investigation that would focus in on Soviet tactics and so on. In that they failed, but they worked very hard. So it indicated that they did at least care about how they were perceived in the world on this issue. So I don't know how much more there is to say about my time at USUN.

Q: Well what did you think of your boss? How did he direct you and all?

WAKE: Well, depends on who you mean by my boss. I had a lot of bosses, some of whom I already mentioned. I even had one boss who later ran for president, by the way, a guy by the name of Alan Keyes. I don't know if you remember there was...

Q: Oh yeah, sort of an odd duck. People I've talked to said he tended to go around and lecture to people who knew the business better than he did.

WAKE: Yeah, he was pretty sure of himself. I never had any difficulty in personal relations with him but I didn't agree with very many things in terms of...his very conservative political ideology. He was certainly a character, as were some of the other ambassadors I've mentioned. Ambassador Byrne, whom I liked very much, and Ambassador Schifter, for whom I had enormous respect although I didn't always agree with him on every issue either. At the level of my direct supervisors there was another group of people, the heads of the economic and social affairs section, of whom there were at least two if not more. Generally, I found the people working at the U.S. Mission at the UN were generally quite serious and responsible diplomats. I always had pretty good relations with my bosses and colleagues.

Q: Then what did you do?

WAKE: Then I came down to Washington and that's where I worked again for one of the people who had been a political appointee ambassador in New York as I went to what

was then the Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs. This is the bureau which is now known as Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Affairs. I guess the name change was in the '90s but this was 1986 when I went. I was almost three years in New York, I had a little trouble with the assignment process because there was something called midlevel training that had been introduced for all Foreign Service officers at that time. This was said to be very important and one must schedule it in at the appropriate times so I was going to do that in the spring of 1986. I was then able to start looking at jobs in the summer of 1986 and then all of a sudden they cancelled the midlevel course and they decided it had been a big mistake and they weren't going to do it again. So I had to scramble to get an assignment and at one point somehow the Latin American Bureau – the Inter-American Affairs Bureau as it was called at the time – had decided I was a perfect candidate to go to Georgetown, Guyana; a place I'd never expressed the least bit of interest in and to this day have no particular interest in. But somehow I was available because of this cancelation of that midlevel course for an assignment that just happened to start at an odd time. I said, "No, I think I would like to try and find something else."

I managed to get myself assigned to this job, what was then the only human rights officer responsible for the European bureau within "HA", the human rights and humanitarian affairs bureau. They had a variety of offices or units including the one dealing with the human rights reports and the ones dealing with the asylum issues but the Office of Human Rights, so called, had a country focus and just had one officer per bureau. I think now that office involves 20-30 people but we were five at the time. I had responsibility for the "EUR" bureau (which was then the Bureau of European and Canadian Affairs), and that turned out to me be an enormously important assignment for my own personal and professional development (although a very short one).

I got there in 1986 and one of the first things I did was to take one of these familiarization trips out to four Central European Eastern countries. So it was my first chance to visit what was then Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia – two countries that don't exist anymore exactly in the same form – plus Romania and Hungary, and that was a chance to learn about the situations and the level of differentiation that had already developed among these Communist countries. This is very early in the Gorbachev period, 1986, but already you could see some taking more advantage than others of the changes. Of course, the Hungarians were taking advantage anyway for quite a period of opportunities to liberalize a bit.

Then what became very important to me was that, in the same year that I started in that bureau with the European portfolio, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, CSCE, had one of its major review conferences beginning in Vienna. I ended up on the delegation to that review conference for much of my tour in Washington; I was actually detailed out to Vienna to work on that delegation. I was the person who worked on a lot of the proposals relating to human rights and expansion of human contacts and in general the so-called third basket of the Helsinki Process. This was I guess the third big follow up after the Helsinki Final Act had been adopted in 1975 between East and West; then there had been a conference in Belgrade in the late '70s and one in Madrid in the

early '80s that had both been rather difficult affairs because of the East-West conflict. Then this one opened in '86 in Vienna and I was on the delegation from Washington.

This was 1986, so there is still the Soviet Union. What we are talking about is a conference that on the one hand was still an opportunity for the West to highlight all the abuses and beat up on the Soviet Union and the East for all the so-called implementation failures in failing to implement especially the Helsinki Final Act from 1975. But it also was an effort to move forward on a military security agenda because it was an effort to launch the conventional forces in Europe talks that were going to replace the long moribund Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction talks, MBFR. So it was a chance to put human rights on the same plane as the security issues and basically see a linkage between the two. When the conference started it was clear that it could probably launch a new set of conventional force negotiations but the U.S. was only going to agree to that if the Soviet Union made certain concessions on human rights issues. That had to do with things like allowing Andrei Sakharov to go back to Moscow, releasing political prisoners, releasing or allowing the immigration of larger numbers of people, especially Soviet Jews, who had been refused permission to leave, and an end to the jamming of the radio stations Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe. Those things didn't seem very realistic in the fall of 1986 but most of those things had happened by the time the conference was over at the beginning of 1989, thanks mainly to the changes taking place in the Soviet Union under Gorbachev.

So being involved in that conference gave me a kind of further push in the direction of things which ended up dominating my career in multilateral issues, human rights issues, focus on Central and Eastern Europe, which I continue to do. The head of the delegation there was somebody again whom I had enormous respect for and is also no longer with us: Warren Zimmermann, the person who also was the last U.S. ambassador to Yugoslavia, was head of the delegation. His two deputies were Bob Frowick, who worked on the military security issues, and Sam Wise, who was the staff director for the Congressional Helsinki Commission after leaving the Foreign Service. It's a little unfortunate to think that these three – the head of delegation and his two deputies – have all since passed away, but they were all in their own way real pros in terms of the negotiation, the leadership of the U.S. approach which had to be coordinated closely with European allies who were not always quite as anxious to make the same noise that we did about Soviet or East German or Polish human rights violations. We were able to maintain a good working relationship with our Western partners and the meeting I think had a good result.

I wasn't there throughout the entire meeting through some kind of chance circumstances; I ended up getting an opportunity to basically cut that assignment short in order to go into Russian language training for an assignment in Leningrad. The chance circumstances were complicated but they had to do with the fact in the fall of 1986 there was a major U.S.-Soviet spat over espionage which started when there was a Soviet spy arrested in New York who did not have diplomatic immunity because he was not an accredited diplomat. Then the Soviets arrested Nick Daniloff, who was a Time Magazine correspondent in Moscow, and by the time this thing escalated there were large-scale

expulsions from both countries and one of the impacts of that was the U.S. consulate in Leningrad was looking for someone to do political/economic work on a different cycle than had previously been planned. In the short-term they had filled it with someone coming over from Moscow but in the longer term they were looking for someone off-cycle to bid on the job in Leningrad to start in the summer of 1988. By chance the job was tentatively offered to somebody who was sharing an office with me in Vienna and that person didn't want it, so I took it. I ended up going into Russian language training in the summer of 1987 after about just a year and a half or so in that job in the human rights bureau. Even while I was studying Russian, Ambassador Zimmermann, the head of the U.S. delegation, asked me to come back for one more round in Vienna because it was at a point that the negotiations were proceeding on the human rights...

Q: This was Warren Zimmerman?

WAKE: Yeah, yeah. He headed that delegation as the last thing he did before going to Yugoslavia as ambassador. I guess he went out in '89 and then he was the last ambassador during the Milosevic period. But he asked me to come back in the early part of 1988 when it was already clear that things which had seemed impossible in 1986 were perhaps possible to negotiate within the multilateral framework because the Soviet Union had become a completely different negotiating partner.

Q: Had you more or less gotten yourself a stamp as a multilateral person, would you say?

WAKE: You know I think it's the kind of stamp you end up putting on yourself through the positions that you seek. The fact that I ended up dealing a lot with these multilateral issues in the human rights bureau involved an element of chance. I bid on the position because of my interest in two parts of the portfolio, the human rights part and the fact that it was countries I was very interested in: the Soviet Union and its neighbors. I didn't actually know at the time that I got the job that I would be going off to Vienna to spend a lot of it in a multilateral negotiation but when I did it I found that I actually enjoyed it. In fact, though, from that point on it was a number of years that I was not working in that area. I was working more on bilateral issues for about another ten to fifteen years so it was more a self-label but I knew it was something that I wanted to come back to if I had the opportunity.

Q: It's fascinating once you did it. How did you find some of the powers like India for example? India seems to take a major place at the table on matters in international affairs but was it a very effective one or not?

WAKE: Well, for that I would have to go back to my time in the UN. I think India tended to act in multilateral organizations as a self-proclaimed or perceived leader of the developing world and in that probably had a certain amount of success and respect. Something that I would say and this is not related so much to the period of my career we are talking about but I've seen over the years is that India has been much less likely to act in the international organizations let's say as the leader of the democratic world or of the

free world despite the fact that it is the largest country that almost always over the past decades has had democratic elections and been governed in an amazingly open way considering the size of the country and its poverty and so on. But they are not focused on that, internationally; they are focused on being champion of the poor, being champion of the less developed and that is something that has often been frustrating to American policymakers, American diplomats that would see India even in that Cold War era abstaining on a resolution to condemn the Soviet Union for its invasion of Afghanistan when clearly it would have been more consistent to its democratic and other traditions to be with Western countries on issues like that. But there was always a sense of trying to balance things and the United States was in many of these years perceived as being on the other side because it was closely aligned with Pakistan and so on. I'm no India expert, so that's not my field really.

Q: How did you feel about this is all the Reagan administration wasn't it?

WAKE: Yeah, both my UN time and my CSCE, my Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Vienna time was all Reagan administration time.

Q: How much attention do you think the Reagan administration emanating from the White House and the State Department paid to humanitarian affairs?

WAKE: You know I think as with many administrations it evolved a bit over time. At the beginning the attention was all negative; it was all to show that the UN was corrupt and backward and controlled by forces that were not supportive of the United States. But, over time I think the Reagan administration, like many administrations, finds that there also are practical and cooperative things that can be accomplished through the UN and by the way for the president it's a great forum. So I don't have the numbers in my head but I suspect that Ronald Reagan was in the General Assembly in September most years to give a high-profile speech and found that it was a place that you could reach people and it was a good place to meet people and have that kind of dialogue. But it was never the central element of American policy, not in any administration and certainly not in this administration.

Q: In many ways the Reagan administration probably had to deal with it more because it started off as such a hostile manner.

WAKE: It started off in a hostile manner and it also – let's see, what year was the invasion of Grenada? So there was condemnation...

Q: 1981.

WAKE: ...condemnation by the UN. There were lots of resolutions that the U.S. found itself either forced to or decided to veto because of the criticism of Israel or what was considered to be overly hostile criticism of South Africa. And, of course, especially during the Jeanne Kirkpatrick years but even with Vernon Walters there were high-profile ambassadors. I would say it was still an evolution in thinking. I think about

somebody like this Ambassador Schifter that I mentioned who was ideologically very close to the Reagan administration on the issues but was also someone who would consider it worth enormous efforts to try to lobby to get one more vote to condemn a human rights violator or one more country that would express its voice on the right side of an issue. Then once you get into that sort of practical diplomacy it shows that you take the institution somewhat seriously. As far as the OSCE or what was then the CSCE, Conference on Security on Cooperation in Europe, there I think it was a different dynamic because that was always seen as an important...

Q: It really was...

WAKE: ...way of lining up others and working with others to highlight the abuses that were taking place, the lack of respect for not just human rights but also open ways of doing business and generally the proper organization of international behavior.

Q: Were you assigned specifically to that?

WAKE: As the officer following Europe within the human rights bureau I was at those CSCE conferences that took place in many rounds for seven-eight weeks at a time on about four or five occasions between 1986 and 1988. So, I had a long intense involvement in the process that starts with a lot of name-calling and so-called implementation review and then eventually moves toward negotiating a new hopefully more positive forward-looking document which in those years turned out to be possible because you had more flexibility from the East and more practical progress on those issues. So yeah, that was something that I got involved in and that I worked on later in my career both in Washington and overseas. That was until basically...

Q: I get mixed up on my dates. Did Yugoslavia take place when you were with the CSCE?

WAKE: No, I was away from it when Yugoslavia broke up. Yugoslavia when I was doing CSCE in the '80s was a kind of a moderate voice within the East or they were an Eastward leaning part of the neutral and non-aligned. They were not a part of the NATO or Warsaw Pact blocs so they saw themselves as somehow being in-between. Of course they were clearly a Communist country and a Communist country with serious restrictions on human rights but at the same time it was a country that people could travel from. You mentioned gastarbeiters, guest workers from Yugoslavia; it was a completely different situation from the Warsaw Pact where people were really hemmed in. But the crisis didn't really emerge until just after that CSCE meeting which ended at the beginning of 1989 and it was 1989 that I think Milosevic made...

Q: You will not beat us.

WAKE: That's right, his famous speech I guess about this time of year. It's June...what is the date?

Q: It was it was St. Irenaeus Day which is a couple days from now.

WAKE: Is it June 28th?

Q: It's the 28th.

WAKE: The 28th, yeah, so we are coming up on the 25th anniversary actually of that speech.

Q: Yeah.

WAKE: We're coming up on a lot of 25th anniversaries in 2014 but no, I mean Yugoslavia was a surprisingly quiet player at that time. I mentioned that I previously visited Yugoslavia in that capacity as human rights officer for Europe and Eurasia and that was in 1986. I guess the Sarajevo Olympics had just taken place, does that sound right, '84, the Winter Olympics? In any case, when I visited Yugoslavia it was actually a very interesting visit because I went from the human rights bureau, I think I was the first person who had ever gone specifically from that bureau to visit Yugoslavia.

Q: That shows that things moved very rapidly.

WAKE: Yeah but this was in '86 and Yugoslavia was kind of the most friendly, along with Romania, of the countries in the broadly speaking Communist world. Of course it wasn't an ally of the Soviet Union and it was the one Communist country that was most friendly to the United States along with Romania. But, it actually had a quite poor human rights record because there were hundreds of people who had been imprisoned for their advocacy of Albanian or Kosovo nationalism as a result of disturbances on campuses and other demonstrations in that period running up in the early to mid-eighties. So they were very sensitive about Americans coming to look at human rights issues and I did ask to go and was able to go to visit Pristina in Kosovo and I was able to go to Zagreb where we knew that there were still Serb-Croat tensions.

I must say the idea of going to Bosnia never occurred to any of us. The idea in 1986 that Bosnia was going to be a place where there was going to be large-scale ethnic conflict and violence was frankly not in any of our minds. Bosnia was the place where the Sarajevo Olympics had been this demonstration of ethnic harmony and multi-ethnic, multi-religious society. But when I visited Zagreb, one could certainly feel that the hatreds of past generations were not completely gone. People despite the rhetoric about fraternal Yugoslavia would say in the next breath, whisper to you, about how those Serbs had killed so many of our Croats in the 1940s and vice versa. Kosovo was just interesting in anecdotal terms. The embassy in Belgrade was actually rather nervous about the fact somebody was coming from the human rights bureau because they knew that was something the local authorities might not be so happy about: the Americans sending somebody from that particular part of the State Department and particularly to Kosovo.

So the embassy, in order to be gentle to all sides, said, "Oh sure Doug when you come to Yugoslavia we'll try to arrange a trip to Kosovo for you, to Pristina." And to the

authorities they said that the political counselor of the American Embassy would like to pay a visit to Kosovo to meet with journalists and government officials and perhaps visit a medium-sized enterprise and by the way he will be accompanied by an officer from the State Department by the name of Douglas Wake. So they didn't really emphasize that this was a human rights visit but some of the meetings were something about the judiciary and the rule of law. So it was clear that there were some meetings that would allow some perspective on the issues that were of interest. But the Yugoslav authorities very cleverly decided that they would arrange a couple of meetings in a newspaper, in a court and then they would take us to see the medium sized enterprise somewhere 10:30 or 11:00 in the morning and this was a pig farm which we visited for about five or six hours.

Q: Oh my God.

WAKE: We heard about worker self-management and the pig farm and learned about all the different stages of development of the pigs and the production of the meat and so on. Somehow that became the largest filler of time during our one day visit to Pristina but I still had a chance to get a flavor that this was a place that might have some problems again. Of course, one had no idea that this was going to be quite the issue on the international agenda that it became for the next fifteen years.

Q: Well is Milosevic seen as sort of a thorn in the side at that point, a real trouble maker?

WAKE: Not yet, not yet. I'm trying to remember if Milosevic had taken over and if so, had it only been in Serbia as a province. I'm not sure he was even there yet as a prominent figure on the political scene. You still had this collective rotating presidency and it was clear that there was nervousness about Kosovo but you know this was still the Cold War world and no one was expecting any of this to break out into anything violent.

Q: No. While you were working on this how did you find living in New York because New York is horribly expensive and you have to be near the UN which makes it more expensive? I mean this is difficult isn't it?

WAKE: It would be, except that there was a pretty good program for housing...actually the U.S. Mission rented housing for people. You had to pay a small percentage of your salary to reimburse the government for some part of it but frankly it was a pretty good deal particularly for a junior or single person. Then moving back to Washington, I was in an apartment and this was a period though that life was beginning to get a little bit complicated because my soon to be wife was...actually we started our romantic relationship while I was in New York and she was in Washington so there was a bit of a commute there. Then I came down to Washington and we spent a lot of time together, but during the time I was in Washington working on these CSCE issues she was assigned to Helsinki and went off in 1987 to what started out as a two-year tour in Helsinki while I was still back in Washington. It was during that period we decided that we would get married in 1988 and spend the first two years of our marriage commuting between Helsinki and Leningrad.

Q: Oh boy.

WAKE: So that was a little bit of an interesting way to enter that part of our life.

Q: The CSCE period lasted until when?

WAKE: The conference that I was talking about lasted until the beginning of '89 but I was actually out of it...initially I only did it for a little over a year because I then went off to Russian language training but I pulled out of Russian language training to help again in 1988. So the last part for me was in the winter or early spring of '88. Then I finished my Russian language study, got married and went to Leningrad in summer of '88.

Q: Let's talk a little bit about Russian language training and then we will stop. How did you find it?

WAKE: I was pretty impressed with the way it was done at FSI, the Foreign Service Institute. I've now done a number of languages at FSI. That was my first and they each have had their strengths and let's say they go in waves of exactly what methodology is used and so on. What I liked about Russian at the time was first of all that it was a big team because it was still a language that was taught to a lot of people so you had the opportunity to hear and work with a large number of native speakers. Some of them were excellent teachers with a good pedagogical method, some of them were not so good as teachers but it was still interesting to hear their stories and hear different voices and inflections and so on. I thought it was reasonably well organized. Of course, there always are critics of these big programs because there is too much of this and too little of that and so on.

I liked the fact in Russian that there was a fair amount of emphasis on getting grammar right and getting the structures right; not everybody likes that but I did. It helped me that I already had some Russian, not a lot, but I had a couple years of college Russian that actually made it possible for me to start my Russian language training a little bit late. It was normally a 44-week program but starting late allowed me to finish up my work in the human rights bureau and to go off and visit my fiancé, now wife, who had just arrived in Finland. It also allowed me to take off those weeks in 1988 when I went back to the CSCE conference. When I was asked to do that, I said, "Fine with me but let's make sure that the Foreign Service Institute thinks that I'm still going to be able to get at least my required 3-3 level of Russian." I was and in fact I did a little better than that. I can't remember what I came out with at the end of the language training but later on I ended up at a higher level, 4-4, also. I can't complain about that at all. They did their best.

Q: Had you had much contact with Russians in your various international jobs in Sweden and all?

WAKE: Sweden almost not at all but in the UN and in the CSCE context as kind of sparring counterparts but also as people that you could chat with on the side, yes. I'm

talking about Russian diplomats, almost exclusively; this wasn't a period when you had private citizen or academic Russians all over Washington like you do now. So the Russian language training teachers were already a big increase in the number of people who grew up in Russia that you got to talk to.

Q: So you went to, well, then it was the Soviet Union. When did you go?

WAKE: I went in the summer of 1988.

Q: Wow, interesting time.

WAKE: Fascinating times and we will pick it up in our next conversation.

Q: Today is the 3rd of February 2015 and this is Doug Wake. It's been quite a hiatus since we did it but I understand you've checked it and its 1988 and you are off to Leningrad. Where had you been before?

WAKE: I had been in language training from September 1987 to June 1988. During that time, I'd also taken a break from language training and gone off to Vienna for, I guess, about eight weeks to work at the U.S. delegation to the CSCE, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, meeting that was going on. As we discussed, this was something that carried over from my previous assignment in Washington in the bureau which was then called Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs.

Q: CSCE is really a remarkable statement or organization or what have you.

WAKE: I like to think so. A lot of people don't give it that much credit anymore. But I am one of the few people in the Foreign Service who had the CSCE and the OSCE, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, as a thread through my career and even beyond because the last thing I did was work at OSCE.

Q: I may have mentioned before I was a retired election monitor in Bosnia. Anyway,...

WAKE: Jumping ahead, I spent two stints last year (that's 2014) observing elections in Ukraine as an OSCE observer; we'll come to that in a few years.

Q: So what was your job in Leningrad and what was the situation?

WAKE: Well I was the sole political-economic officer in a relatively small consulate that had a consul general, a deputy principal officer, myself and just a few other people doing administrative and consular work although we all were engaged in trying to follow the evolving political situation. Three years now into Gorbachev's rule and the beginning of perestroika and the parameters that are important to point out are that the consular district was not just northwestern Russia, meaning Leningrad region and a few other Oblasts, regions, in that corner of the country, in that corner of the Russian Federation but also the three Baltic Republics. That becomes an important part of the work we are doing because

by 1988 the drive to restore independence in the three Baltic Republics is pretty well in train. Leningrad also becomes very interesting politically although upon arrival in 1988 its reputation was that Leningrad was one of the most conservative local and regional leaderships, very repressive, and that the intelligence services were particularly active in looking at the small number of Western consulates there and the KGB even uses us as a training ground to keep an eye on people from those foreign powers that they had allowed to put some presence there.

Q: As you got there what was the general feeling about whether the Soviet Union and Gorbachev?

WAKE: Well no one, certainly in Washington, that had any position of responsibility was questioning the future of the Soviet Union as a country. The idea that the Soviet Union would be gone within a little over three years just never crossed people's minds. The question that a lot of people were asking about Gorbachev was not even yet whether he would succeed; this comes later also as he has more opposition from conservative forces. The question was, "Is he real?" Is this somebody who really wants to change the system, whose reforms in the area of economic openness, a little bit of private enterprise, a little bit of more liberal policy toward particularly expression because of glasnost was something that was fundamentally going to change the system; that was the big debate in Washington. By 1988 there was perhaps a greater sense that the changes were real than there was a year or two earlier but there were still kind many questions, including questions driven by things like the continuing pretty tough stance in a place like Leningrad, for example, toward dissent and public expression.

Q: Was Leningrad showing people who had been there before...was it showing any signs of real change?

WAKE: Under the surface yes. But as I said, the leadership was very conservative. The first secretary of the Communist Party of the Leningrad region was a guy by the name of Yuri Solovyev, who was a hardline leader and at least a candidate member if not a full member of the Politburo. He was very much of the old school as leader of the Oblast (regional) administration, which in the specific context of Leningrad was the most important Communist Party post. So at the leadership level you didn't see much sign of change in 1988, but I'll soon get to changes that took place within a few months.

At the level of what we now would like to call civil society, the informal activists, human rights lobbying, yes there were people pushing the envelope and taking advantage of the fact that at least in Moscow Gorbachev was saying that there was a willingness to hear different voices and to talk about the past. For example, you had the chapter of "Memorial," the organization that was looking into the Stalinist era war crimes, you had a lot of what were called *neformaly*, informal groups, which were not even trying to become registered as officially accredited non-governmental organizations because that was a status that really only applied to groups that were either pro-government or completely non-political. So these groups were operating in a kind of gray zone where some of them were willing, for the first time, around that period to approach people from

the American consulate and hand us a piece of *samizdat* literature, a piece of literature that was typed up.

Q: Self-published work.

WAKE: Self-published work, exactly. One woman in particular, who has continued to be active throughout the post-Soviet period as well, was publishing a bi-weekly chronicle of events and in this chronicle of events you would read that there really was a lot of informal group activity campaigning on behalf of political prisoners, raising issues of the environment, of administrative abuses. I should say there was a prehistory to this which I'm sure was reported by the consulate in the past but which I didn't witness because it took place in 1987 and that was when the Leningrad authorities were about to demolish a historic hotel by the name of Angleterre. This one had a real history because of the suicide there in 1925 of a prominent Soviet poet, Sergey Yesenin. But it was also valued architecturally, as it was a building from the pre-Soviet period. When the Soviet authorities made a deal with a Finnish company to knock this down and build a replica of it, the informal community had coalesced around this issue as the first thing that they were willing to go out into the streets and demonstrate about.

I've read and heard different versions of the story but essentially, because of Gorbachev in Moscow, at first the local authorities weren't quite sure what they were supposed to do about a demonstration that grew to hundreds, if not thousands of people, on an issue that was not too highly political; it was a historic preservation architectural issue. So they made some pretense of trying to negotiate with these people or at least talk to them and persuade them to go home – and then they knocked the building down. This became a real crystallizing moment apparently for these groups, all of whom would talk about it a year later when I arrived and all of them seemed to have been there. So everyone who was active in this sort of democratic reform community who had no official status at the time in 1988 could point back to this incident as something that really solidified the community against the authorities and created a lot of bitterness also because of the outcome. In fact, when the replica was built it looked just like the old building and you can look at the two pictures together and from a lay person's point of view it probably wasn't a bad thing to do but it had a symbolic importance.

Q: How about jokes? One of the great things about the Soviet Union was all the comments and jokes proliferated.

WAKE: They did, yes they did.

Q: Do you recall any of the ones?

WAKE: You know I'd be stretching my memory right now to come up with any profound ones. There were these classics, of course, which had gone back much further than this time about the fact that some American leader told the Soviet leader that the difference between our two countries is that in America anybody who wants can criticize the American president and the Soviet leaders says, "Well, that's true in my country too;

anyone who wants can criticize the American president.” There are much better jokes that don’t come to mind right now.

Q: When I was in Yugoslavia I recall the joke the definition of a sardine was a whale that had gone through the various stages of Communism.

WAKE: I actually read one just the other day which I can’t say I remember from the time but it had to do with a current controversy about the minister of culture in the Russian Federation. This one was an old joke from Soviet times: apparently at a Comecon or Warsaw Pact meeting, the Soviet leader rather suspiciously asked the Czechoslovak Communist Party leader, “Why does Czechoslovakia have a ministry of naval affairs?” The Czechoslovak leader, according to this story, said, “I don’t ask you why the Soviet Union has a ministry of cultural affairs.”

In any case the situation was outwardly in Leningrad, as I say, one where the authorities were in control but these informal groups would seek to organize small demonstrations on one or another political issue. This put the authorities in kind of a bind because they weren’t quite sure on a particular day whether they were going to break it up or just hope that it died out. They used both approaches in 1988 when I arrived. They tried to push people a little bit from the center of town and if they would organize something a little bit outside the center of town they would be a little bit more tolerant. They were also a bit more tolerant for what we called right-wing or nationalist groups, one which became well known as Pamyat (or “memory”) – not “Memorial,” which was a liberal group recalling the memory of the Soviet period but “Pamyat” which was recalling the memory of the Czarist and nationalist glories of Russia. So these things were all going on and we as consulate officers or I as the political-economic officer would try to get around town and see what was going on. While this quite clearly got attention from the Soviet authorities, I was able to move around and do things without interference.

Q: When you arrived there what was the state of political repression or repression of harassment from the KGB or something? Were you warned not to do certain things?

WAKE: Well it was clear you would be followed – certainly not all of the time, but you could be watched and you needed to be aware of that. If you were meeting with Soviet counterparts you had to be sure that they understood the risks they were taking and most of the people at that point did and had made the choice that they were willing to see Americans; those that came to see us knew that they might be watched. There was one issue that arose when I was there which the U.S. made a public complaint about so it’s in some way been declassified. This was the fact that, in the consulate, which had been open since the early 1970s, ’74 I think if I’m not mistaken, we were given a building that was renovated for the use of the consulate, which we knew to be right next door to a KGB facility. In the course of the time I was there and I can’t remember now whether this was ’88 or ’89, a rather sophisticated listening system device was discovered and we did make a public complaint about it. I used to tell people that the thing was analyzed and it was put there so when a pencil was dropped on my desk or the desk that any political/economic officer had occupied for the past 15 years or so it was broadcast. So

that was one aspect you just knew that if you were speaking or engaged in any kind of communication that you had at a minimum, to be careful but probably assume that it was going to be picked up.

There were incidents of harassment including just before I arrived. As I recall, there was one of these “slashed tire incidents” where a consulate officer who had contact with what were considered by the authorities to be unsavory people woke up a day or two later with a couple of slashed tires on a car in front of his apartment. These incidents were tailing off as I arrived in the sense of being brutally harassing and there was nothing like an incident that I knew had taken place in Leningrad a few years earlier where a predecessor of mine had been beaten up by unknown people but in a city where there wasn’t very much crime so it was likely to have been orchestrated.

There were a couple people that still, when I arrived – at least one and maybe more – were imprisoned in part because of contact with the consulate. One of these was an interesting case because this incident had occurred a number of years before and only shortly after I arrived did the individual’s mother get in touch with the consulate and say that my son is in prison or a labor camp because he had these contacts with someone from the consulate a number of years before and I hope you can do something to help. It was, of course, very difficult to help and it was a particularly difficult case because he hadn’t been accused of anti-Soviet agitation or propaganda; he had been accused of treason for his contacts with the consulate. What I did do and what was actually very interesting was at least to keep in touch with this woman who was a retired school teacher quite well up in years already. I would visit her in her apartment and learn about her visits to her son which were something like out of 19th century novels when she would take long train rides and then still be quite a long way from where she had to go to a labor camp or prison to visit her son Misha who himself became an organizer in prison and labor camps on behalf of human rights. He was not released until after I left in 1990 but now lives in the United States and someone who I finally ran into when he was coming to visit a successor of mine in the State Department. But I would visit her in this communal apartment in Leningrad filled with family paintings from an earlier era when they had been collectors.

There was still quite an element of repression. There is one incident that I recall in Leningrad from 1988. While I was there one of the first big visits we had, I believe it was about November 1988, was a visit of the members of the U.S. Congressional Helsinki Commission. If I’m not mistaken that was the first time they were allowed to visit as the Commission, because of its focus on the Helsinki Final Act and human rights issues, that’s the first time as the Commission they were able to visit the Soviet Union; mainly, of course they were going to Moscow to talk with the leadership in Moscow but as many of these Congressional groups would do they would make a weekend stop in Leningrad. I remember we were able to organize a big breakfast or brunch reception with everyone we knew in the unofficial human rights and democracy and refusenik community because still one of the big issues was that there were a lot of Jewish Soviet citizens who were unable to leave because of restrictions on their exit because of alleged secrecy or some other bureaucratic barrier to their getting an exit visit. Usually they were alleged to hold

state secrets or they had a relative that had claims against them, the so-called poor relatives that wouldn't let them go. So we had a bunch of these people together for a brunch with this Congressional Helsinki Commission and, of course, they exchanged cards and made contacts and so on. Then in the evening the local Communist Party authorities, or the city I guess, the Soviet administration of Leningrad had organized for our Congressional delegation, which they were trying to be nice to because they were now in a new era, they organized them to go to the ballet at the famous Leningrad ballet. Of course, the Congressmen took up this offer, in any case most of them did take this offer to go to this cultural event, but there were a few that decided they were going to do things a little differently. A couple of these Congressmen decided they would go and meet with people who had organized something they called the "Demokraticheskii soyuz," the "Democratic Union," which they called a political party in a country where there was, of course, only one political party.

Q: Yeah.

WAKE: A small number of these Congressmen accompanied by myself and I can't remember if there was another consular officer went to the apartment of one of the leaders of this "Democratic Union" which was a political party that probably could have all fit in that apartment; it was a very small number of people who were rather rash to use the term in 1988. But one thing that was profound about this incident and was probably particularly irritating to the local authorities was that I think they actually used the cars that had been put at their disposal by the city of Leningrad to go to this dissident's apartment so there was no secret that they were going. I think they did it during intermission of the ballet so they took advantage of the invitation to go to the ballet for half of the ballet and then they went to this dissident's apartment. But this meeting became the subject of a long-standing investigation by the KGB into the contacts with foreigners by these individuals and while no charges were ever brought, I was told by the participants in the meeting and got indications maybe even from some of the Soviet press reporting that this may have been the last investigation ever carried out in the Soviet Union under Article 70 which was the "Anti-Soviet Agitation and Propaganda" article of the Criminal Code. Literally dozens of times, people were called in to be questioned about what had taken place during this rather modest meeting of a few people in an apartment in Leningrad. I do also remember that another Congressman, Chris Smith from New Jersey, who was very interested in religious freedom, went off to visit some unregistered Baptists that evening and because the consulate was very small we didn't have anyone to go with him. He did go with a Russian speaking member of the staff from the Helsinki Commission but I do remember standing around the hotel at about 1:30 in the morning wondering what we were going to do to report the disappearance of this Congressman and his staff member. He finally showed up and reported on a wonderful meeting with these unregistered Baptists who had welcomed their counterpart from the United States very warmly. So there were sort of exciting things going on in that area. Maybe before we get into real changes in Leningrad it would be useful to talk a little bit about the rest of the consular district.

Q: Absolutely.

WAKE: Because this is where immediately one felt that things had changed dramatically. Leningrad was a big contrast between the hardline leadership and the bubbling up of civil society that was still trying to find its way. The first times I went to the three Baltic Republics it was clear the dramatic change was well under way there. The summer of 1988 had seen a big song festival in Tallinn which sort of gave its name to this singing revolution aspect of the Baltic drive to reestablish independence. I had been given by representatives of the various Baltic-American organizations, the Baltic organizations here in the Washington area, the names and contacts of some people who would be willing to be contacted even though, of course, there was a risk in talking to foreigners and talking to people from the American Embassy in particular, but these were people who were clearly beyond fear and had had regular contacts with their American émigré counterparts. Between that and the established contacts of the consulate, already on my first meetings in all three Baltic Republics we came across people who were tirelessly and fiercely campaigning for what they considered to be the reestablishment of the independence that in legal terms, *de jure*, the United States had never stopped recognizing. We had never recognized the Soviet incorporation so we'd always recognized them as independent states.

I think over the course of the two years that I served in Leningrad I was in one or the other of the Baltic Republics between fifteen and twenty times. The first couple of visits were to Estonia which was the closest Republic to get to from Leningrad and also perceived in 1988 as the one that was moving the fastest and furthest on establishing or trying to reestablish its independence. The first time I went to Estonia with the deputy principal officer who already had established some contacts there and we did find people who were telling us about the fact that there was now an Estonian National Independence Party. Unlike in Leningrad, where you have a handful of people that called themselves a party, this was a group convinced they were going to compete for political power even though legally they had no way to do that in 1988. There was also another movement that was forming, a so-called Estonian citizens' movement, which was to create alternative structures based on those who in their view had claims to Estonian citizenship based on those that had been citizens when the Soviet Union invaded the Baltic republics in 1940...

Q: Had many Estonians been moved out of Estonia by Stalin?

WAKE: Yes, but in demographic terms the biggest factor was not that. Yes, there had been large scale deportations of all three Baltic populations between the Soviet invasion of 1940 and the Nazi invasion of 1941. There had been a large-scale deportation of those considered to be unloyal elements in all three Baltic Republics in June of 1941 and then there was another big deportation in March of 1949; so, after the restoration of Soviet power by Stalin. This did involve tens of thousands of people. Ironically, the first deportations actually saved some of these people because they ended up much further east and therefore outside the scope of the immediate brunt of the fighting in World War II; so that is a factor.

The other two factors though that really affected the demographics were that quite a number of citizens of all three republics fled the country to the west either just as the Soviets were invading in 1940 or as the Soviets were coming back in 1945. Many of those that fled in 1945 ended up in displaced person camps in Germany and ended up emigrating to the United States, or Canada or Australia. Some from Estonia, in particular, left on boats and went to Sweden but then the other big demographic factor after 1945 is not so much that the Estonians are leaving but that Russians and those of other nationalities are being brought in, in the course of Soviet industrialization. So as more industry is being built in Latvia and Estonia in particular the demographic situation for the Baltic populations becomes more precarious. By the time of the breakup of the Soviet Union in Latvia the Latvians were only a bare majority of the population of the republic; in Estonia I think they had about 60 percent Estonians and about 40 percent Russians, Ukrainians and other nationalities.

On my second visit to Estonia already in October of 1988 the Estonians rather remarkably are organizing something called the Congress of the Popular Front and popular fronts became the lead organizations in the independence struggles in all three republics. The Estonian Popular Front was a totally bottom-up kind of organization as you first looked at it because it was civil society, as we call it now, non-governmental people organizing as they said, “In support of Perestroika,” but, in fact, the independence push was if not explicit it was implicit in everything they were doing. But the interesting thing was that many of the people who were active in the Estonian Popular Front Congress were or had recently been members of the Communist Party. Even the leadership of the Estonian Communist Party gave some kind of tacit approval to this Popular Front movement, hoping to contain it, hoping to keep it within the Soviet system. But you had the amazing spectacle for an American consulate officer sitting in one of the back rows of people who had been released from labor camp days before on anti-Soviet agitation charges sitting there in one case still wearing his prison uniform as the first secretary of the Communist Party of Estonia was politely giving remarks that don’t exactly welcome the push for independence, of course, but give an indication that most of what these people are doing is well-meaning and acceptable and, of course, needs to be brought into the broader context of Soviet reforms. But this was dramatically different than anything you were seeing at that early stage in any part of Russia, I believe, and certainly in Leningrad.

Things were similar when we first visited Latvia and Lithuania in that year, 1988, although at that stage the Estonians were for one reason or another, considered, as I said, to be the leaders in the push for independence. They were willing to go a little farther than the Latvians and the Lithuanians in doing things of a formal nature like reestablishing the pre-War – that is, the interwar – independence era flags and anthems. And the symbolism was very important as you started to walk around these so-called Soviet Republics and see that you have the flags of the independence-era republics which had been completely banned, illegal until ’86, ’87 even into ’88, and then suddenly they are everywhere and starting to fly on official buildings.

Q: I understand singing is very much part of the whole Baltic culture.

WAKE: Very much, they have a Baltic song festival. I believe it is every five years or maybe it is even more often, and it rotates among the republics; it had been in Estonia in '88 and that was really a solidifying moment I think for the Estonian population. These are the places like the song festival, like the Popular Front Congress that I mentioned, that even if on the one hand there is an official tolerance because there was this Stalinist policy of allowing things which were termed to be “national in form but socialist in content.” These national manifestations also provided the platform for people to be explicit about their push for independence in ways that went well beyond what the Soviet authorities had expected or hoped for.

Q: Were any of these making a particular effort to make contact with you all or were you responding to the fact that you knew that there were going to be these meetings?

WAKE: It evolved over time. I mean, usually the first contact would come from our side based on the fact that these were people that we knew had some openness and willingness to talk to us. But then again as things opened up more you would start to receive invitations to these events or when you saw one person they would encourage you to be back for some event that was taking place a month or so hence. Of course, the foreign observation of these events was seen at a certain point as protection, it was seen as something that they welcomed and it also had a tradition even in the era of very individual acts of the brave push for independence which had taken place in the darker years of Soviet rule. There had often been an appeal to the United Nations or an appeal to the international community as the basis of whatever statements because no one really expected to get any help, nobody expected to change the mind of Stalin or Brezhnev or any other leader of the Soviet Union. So they were looking for the international community, sometimes unrealistically, of course, looking for the international community for help, sometimes accusingly because of Yalta and the idea that the West had abandoned them. But there was great appreciation, I have to say, for the fact that the United States had never recognized the incorporation of the Baltics into the Soviet Union.

Q: We had their embassies.

WAKE: Yeah, we had Baltic embassies in Washington and this was well known. Radio Free Europe, and other means such as VOA and BBC, had insured that there was a high level of understanding among thinking people in the Baltic Republics that the West was at least rhetorically committed to their cause. Of course, there was also a certain frustration and bitterness that – whether people referred to Yalta or they referred to Hungary in 1956 – this had not resulted in real material support. There had been some Western support for the so-called Forest Brothers who were resisting Soviet rule in the late 1940s and early 1950s, but that had not ended well.

Maybe the thing that brings the two parts together of the more challenging situation in Leningrad where the authorities showed no interest in change from below and that more complex situation in the Baltic Republics is the elections that Gorbachev authorized in March of 1989 for the so-called Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR. This was to

be a new kind of superstructure above the long-existing Supreme Soviet and the Congress of People's Deputies elections by Gorbachev's design were going to be competitive. You were going to have at least two candidates in each race and there could be different sources of nominations; still there weren't alternative political parties and there were reserved seats for the Communist Party and other official organizations like the Academy of Sciences but there was a large number of seats that was going to be competed through elections and the nominations for elections could come not just from the Communist Party but from so-called social organizations or groups of voters or work collectives so people at work could get together and nominate candidates. In both the Leningrad area and in the Baltic Republics people seized this opportunity enthusiastically. They figured out how within the constraints of no alternative political party to *de facto* create alternative political movements, call them. So in the Baltic Republics the organizing principle was this set of Popular Fronts, the Estonian and Latvian Popular Fronts and in Lithuania it was called *Sajudis* which was the Lithuanian word for the movement.

In Leningrad there was something called "Democratic Elections 1989" which was a completely ad hoc grouping of these informal organizations and activists, many of whom saw their roots in that campaign I'd mentioned back a couple of years earlier to save a historical architectural monuments. They figured out how to be in many cases rather sophisticated in organizing their campaign so that they had one opposition candidate per electoral district that they would campaign for rather than splitting the votes among several. They used the legal provisions the Soviet system had put in place to get people nominated. What this meant is that reform supporters were on the ballots and were able to campaign and there was an unprecedented amount of openness even in Leningrad in terms of televised debates, public debates, a possibility of people putting alternative platforms out in front of voters; mind you not to rule the country. This was for a parliament that was going to then elect a smaller group as the Supreme Soviet and after all in a country where the Communist Party still retained all the levers of authority and was the real power. The Soviet power was only the official administrative power but the Communist Party ran the country.

Nevertheless, people saw this as an opportunity and the two interesting things that we really saw were, as we talked to people in both Estonia, for example, and in Leningrad, they were telling us we are going to win this and the only question is going to be whether the authorities are going to count the votes fairly and to announce the results – because we know we are going to win. We had doubts about both issues. First, were these crazy wild-eyed activists that were willing to talk to the American consulate, were they actually going to be able to convince their fellow Soviet citizens to vote for them or were most Soviet citizens going to do what they always did and vote for the leadership? The second question was, well, okay, even if they do, will the authorities publish the results properly? Will they count the votes and publish them? Surprisingly the answer to both questions was yes.

Q: Yeah.

WAKE: They were able in the Baltic Republics rather easily to sweep almost every seat in the individual mandate districts that they sent to Moscow and all of a sudden you had all these Baltic independence activists, or close to it, people who were at least extreme critics of the Soviet regime, as members of the Congress of People's Deputies of the Soviet Union. Eventually they pulled out, withdrew, when they got further toward their independence push but at the time they used the platform very effectively to talk about the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939, to talk about Soviet crimes against their people.

In Leningrad it was also possible for democratic forces to sweep many of the seats and the most dramatic thing which really in my view completely changed the climate in the city and in the political life of that region was that the first secretary of the Communist Party whom I mentioned before, this Yuri Solovyev, by tradition was expected to run for and be a member of the national parliament. Of course, his power was within the Communist Party of the Leningrad region which was an unelected position, he was a Communist Party official, but the senior Communist Party officials had always been in the national parliament and they always ran for these seats in the Supreme Soviet as a totally formal thing. Maybe he was a little nervous about whether he would get elected in a competitive election so even though Gorbachev had pushed for multiple candidate elections he decided that he would use what we later in OSCE terms and in election monitoring terms called "administrative resources" to push the election in his own direction by getting courts to rule all of his opponents to be ineligible to run; something improper in the way they filled out their petitions or their forms or some procedural issue had not been followed properly in the meeting that had nominated the candidate.

So in one rather working class district on the outskirts in an industrial area of Leningrad, Yuri Solovyev was the only candidate on the ballot. But the nice thing about the Soviet system in elections was that it was possible to cross the name of the candidate out and under Soviet law if you did so it was a vote "against" the candidate. Historically only one person had been there, but there was a possibility to vote against the candidate. Soviet candidates historically had always been voted in with not 100 percent but 99.999 percent of the vote because someone had invalidated their ballot or crossed a name out. Well, in the district where this first secretary of the Communist Party was the only candidate, informal activists launched an education campaign to let people know that they could cross his name out and if they did so they would be voting against him and under Soviet law if he didn't get at least 50 percent plus one of the ballots cast he would lose the election; he would not be elected. No one else would be elected because there was no other candidate but it would be an invalid election.

I had really a sort of coincidence, when I was going around town a week or two before the election of seeing this in action; nobody had told me to go there but I just was traveling around the city as I did by subway and popping up in different subway stations. I don't even know if I was aware that this was where he was the candidate or not, maybe I was. But, I came up from the metro and saw this big red and white sign with the words in Russian, "cross Solovyev out," or "Solovyeva vycherkniy!", to cross him out and then an education campaign for voters explaining how to do this legally on the Soviet ballot and that it was secret and they could do this while they were in the ballot box and they

would have no retaliation against them. Of course, people might not have believed that; it was the Soviet Union and people were very suspicious of authority. So we again wondered whether this was really going to make much difference and if it did, so what, they could still just announce whatever result they wanted.

Q: Yeah.

WAKE: But, with the power of Moscow in this case of dictating that elections were going to be held in a certain way, actually in the Soviet system that still carried some sway and the Soviet directive from on high was that you are going to count the ballots properly and announce the results. The same election commission people who had previously had a pretty easy day, because 99.9 percent of the people always voted for the same candidate, counted the ballots in this district and Mr. Solovyev, I think, had somewhere around 40 percent of the people vote in favor of him and more than 50 percent – somewhere I think close to 60 percent – voted against him. It took a little bit of time before this was acknowledged in Leningradskaya Pravda, the official newspaper, so I can't remember now whether it appeared in Monday's newspaper after a Sunday election but by Tuesday it was public information that the first secretary of the Communist Party of Leningrad Oblast in his handpicked district where he was the only candidate had not been able to persuade more than half the people to check the box. It didn't affect his position as first secretary of the Communist Party immediately but it was a dramatic signal to the entire population, anyone reading Leningradskaya Pravda, that this guy and the system he represents can be challenged and there is a day after; you wake up and it is in the newspaper rather than everybody is in labor camp. To me that affected dramatically the course of events, at least locally, for the rest of the time I was there.

Q: Were you getting a buzz from your Russian staff and also around and about this whole movement at the time?

WAKE: People around and about yes, but keep in mind that in 1986 as a result of one of these escalating espionage scandals the Soviet authorities had withdrawn all the local staff from the embassy and the consulate in Leningrad; so we actually had no Russian staff. Our administrative services were all provided by American staff including contractors from a U.S. company of which we just had two or three people in Leningrad. We did – through some quirk in U.S.-Soviet relations that had to do with some, I think, Caribbean staff at the Soviet Embassy in Washington – we were able to have two Finns work for us. But as far as local people who knew what was going on we had to go find them. The local staff did not provide the window into society that they do in other places.

Q: So often in most other countries.

WAKE: Yes, this was an exceptional aspect and an exceptional aspect of this also meant that our time was a little bit taken up by things like rotating duty to drive to the airport to pick up the classified pouch so all staff had to do this every so often to go to the airport. We all got training on how to properly drive a truck around restricted areas of a Soviet

airport, follow the lines as you must in order to not clip the wings of an airplane and so on. We all learned how to go on Thursday nights, I believe it was, down to the train station to drag heavy bags off the train for the unclassified pouch; all these things of which had normally been done by Soviet staff.

Of course, there had always been one American in the past who gently received the classified pouch from the American courier. But the drivers in the past had been the Soviet employees, and now we had to do it ourselves; that was all sort of the landscape. One other part of the landscape that gets back to your question about security, which I just saw reference to in a Foreign Service Journal piece by Shawn Dorman, the editor, was that we were doing all of our telegrams, if they were classified, on yellow legal pads and sending them out by pouch to Helsinki to be typed up because of a suspected, if not proven, compromise to the communications system that had occurred shortly before I arrived. I was never able to type a classified telegram in Leningrad or to have it transmitted in less than three or four days because it went out by pouch and then someone had to type it in Helsinki and eventually it would be transmitted maybe with some typographical errors that I would only catch a week later.

In any case, while there was no local Russian staff, there was a buzz among Soviet citizens that we had contact with; people were recognizing that things were changing. This Communist Party leader who lost his election stayed in his party position for a while but some months later General Secretary Gorbachev came to Leningrad and by the time his couple of hour visit to Leningrad was over there was a new first secretary of the Communist Party. Solovyev, the one that had lost the election, ended up disgraced and later even stripped of his membership in the Communist Party and accused of corruption for improperly acquiring a Mercedes while he was still in power. So changes were really underway. We in the consulate were trying to report them as best we could on our yellow pieces of paper with our limited staff. Some of the things we were reporting on may have seemed more dramatic than what people were seeing in Moscow because the Baltic States really were the most dramatically advanced in pushing to get rid of the Soviet system and because they were the ones actually pushing for independence where that push in other republics was less pronounced, less dramatic at that stage; maybe the other exception would be Georgia.

Q: How about the embassy? Were they saying things are happening here you watch here or were they focused on you too? How stood the embassy?

WAKE: I guess without being too harsh or flippant I would say to some extent the embassy ignored us. No, "ignored" is the wrong word, just kind of let us do our thing without a lot of feedback. So not too much sense that what we were saying was a major factor in their calculations or assessments. Another thing which did frankly irritate us a couple of times was the fact that while it was our consular district we would occasionally learn of a visit by an embassy Moscow officer to particularly one of the Baltic Republics only after the fact or in one case because I ran into someone in the same restaurant. We found that to be a little bit let's say disappointing, to use a modest word, because, of course we would never do the same thing in areas of the Soviet Union, which are not part

of our consular district. While, of course, the embassy had overall responsibility we thought it was a common courtesy. It was once in a rare while overlooked, I'm sure it was just overlooked, not anyone trying to be...

Q: But no I can see...

WAKE: There were a number of these visits that seemed like people from Moscow were coming to see how it looked to them; no one ever said it was because they didn't believe our assessments. It may have also been because the Baltic Republics were the most interesting places to be so people really wanted to be there.

Q: Were you under any constraints vis-a-vie the Baltic Republics either from the Soviet side or from our side?

WAKE: There were and I'm glad you asked that because it's an important footnote to history I guess at this point. It may have been mentioned by others in this oral history project who were closer to the origins of this policy but when the consulate was established in I believe this was '74 one of the questions that arose first of all with the Soviet authorities was what would be the consular district and how would it be spelled out in bilateral agreements. There was a bit of a political problem because it was agreed and understood as far as I know and I wasn't there that it would be certain Oblasts of the Russian Federation, basically comprising the northwestern parts of the Soviet Union, and the three Baltic Republics. The problem was that when you tried to write this down in Soviet speak this would be the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic, the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic; these were terms which the United States absolutely refused to use. As a matter of fact, even discussing with the Soviet authorities the question of consular matters in the Baltic Republics could be seen as a violation of the non-recognition policy.

For practical reasons, however, it was understood in Washington that one had to work with Soviet authorities at least to the degree that you could get access because there were national interest reasons to have access to the Baltic Republics including American citizens who were resident there or dual nationals who had been caught there and not allowed to leave. So the way that this was solved was that in the bilateral agreement establishing the consulate – and it may have been the same agreement that established the Soviet consulate in San Francisco – the consular district was defined as certain regions in what we now call the Russian Federation (Leningrad, Pskov, Novgorod, Arkhangelsk, Murmansk, the Karelian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic) – and then the three cities of Riga, Tallinn and Vilnius. So technically, in the bilateral agreement, there was actually only responsibility for the three cities which happen to be the capitals of the Baltic Republics. Now the reason for that was in order not to mention the name of the three republics. So technically if someone from Moscow, for example, were making this argument they could say if they were going to someplace else in Estonia or Latvia or Lithuania that it was their consular district because if it hadn't been given to Leningrad it was still part of the embassy's consular district.

The more important question then, was, alright, if the consulate has the responsibility to go to these three capital cities anyway, whom do they meet with? How can you justify meeting with people in these republics without compromising the so-called non-recognition policy? A memo was drafted in I believe it was 1974, that was still in force when we were there in the late Soviet period which spelled out precisely those officials with whom you could not meet. Memory may not serve me 100 percent well but what I know is that you could not meet with the first or second secretaries of the Communist Party of any of the three republics, with the chair of the Supreme Soviet of any of the three republics (who was the *de facto* president or chief executive) or with any of the ministers of the Soviet Socialist Republics. This policy remained in effect until sometime in 1990. It was apparently something that the Soviets, of course, had known about and tried to use against the consulate in the past, for example, by having an American consulate officer arrive – even a junior one – and be met at the airport by the “Foreign Minister” who just happened to come to the aid of this arriving foreign diplomat. This didn’t happen in my time but I knew it had happened in the past. Then, somehow pictures of this handshake between the innocent junior American diplomat and the so-called “Foreign Minister” of the so-called Latvian, Lithuanian or Estonian Soviet Republic would find its way into publications that might eventually get to the émigré community, which would then question whether the American government was still following its non-recognition policy, and it would bring discord and confusion. These games were not played really when I was there to that extent.

For us it started to create a different problem which was not so much during the period we’ve already talked about but in 1990 when we also had elections to the republic-level parliaments in all three republics which produced pro-independence governments and pro-independence parliaments. All of a sudden, the question becomes if, for example, Vytautas Landsbergis has been elected as the chair of the Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic, which, by the way, on the same day had changed the name to the Republic of Lithuania and declared that they were an independent country – wasn’t it pretty ridiculous that we from the American consulate could no longer meet with him? Well eventually U.S. policy caught up with reality but there was a window in which it was impossible to seek a meeting with the people that you actually needed to see in a couple of places. When I tell you a story a bit later about my last departure from Lithuania I’ll explain how we solved that problem.

Q: Did you have an increased number of émigré Lithuanians, Estonians coming from the States to there and how were they treated and all?

WAKE: The answer is yes, the situation varied by republic and over time but by 1990, which was my last year there before the end of my tour, there were émigrés *de facto* residing “temporarily”, let’s say, I think in all three republics. Lithuania is the case that I know the best where people came back and actually were doing things like serving as assistants to the parliaments and governments of the pro-independence regime even when the Soviet Union didn’t recognize them. You also had the other phenomenon which is that travel was becoming much easier for people from those republics not just for emigration purposes but to go and lobby in Washington or meet with their relatives.

It had always been a little bit easier for people from the Baltics to get out and come back because at least they had the justification of relatives abroad that they could go and see. But there was a lot more flow back and forth, to answer your question. It was obviously viewed warily by the Soviets. Sometimes contacts with foreigners, particularly émigré organizations, was something that would be highlighted in official (probably KGB-planted) stories in official newspapers to cast aspersions upon legitimate activists in the countries because, if this person is meeting with someone from the World Federation of Free Latvians or whatever, he must be an American spy. Usually the footnote would be that the person who left the country was collaborating with the Nazis in World War II or their fathers were and so these things were still used against people. But at the same time the Baltic pro-independence leaderships and activists welcomed these contacts because it gave them access indirectly to American political leadership and in some cases more technical expertise; people who had come to the United States, Canada or elsewhere and were engaged in the nitty-gritty, the nuts and bolts of government or business could be helpful advisors to people who were trying to build a new country.

Q: This is, of course, '89 was the year one talks about all hell breaks loose and the Wall crumbled. Was that playing a role in things that were happening or was that all of a sudden happening and change everything...how did this work?

WAKE: There was, of course, a complicated interrelationship among events in the Soviet Union proper and particularly Russia proper and the Baltic States — which the Soviet Union considered to be part of their country but which the Baltic citizens did not consider to be part of the country — and in Central and Eastern Europe and other Warsaw Pact countries. They were all watching each other and the activists saw their causes as being linked because if, for example, Solidarity had failed and there'd been another crackdown in Poland rather than a negotiated solution in 1989 to produce a non-Communist government it would have sent a completely different signal. I often point out that these developments I mentioned in the Soviet Union in March of 1989 actually preceded a lot of the dramatic change in Central and Eastern Europe. The difference is that these Soviet elections in March 1989 merely showed a preference by people in Leningrad and the Baltic States. In Moscow also there were quite liberal results of the elections but they didn't change the system whereas by June of 1989 in Poland you had elections for a non-Communist parliament that actually then sat down with the Communist leadership and had a round table discussion that changed the system. So people remember Poland June 1989 much more than they remember these early developments in the Soviet Union but I think they all were part of the same process and certainly activists became more bold in the Soviet Union as they saw that the Soviet leadership did nothing to stop the revolutions, if you will, in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria. I mean you are right, by '89, by the end of the year, most of the dominos had fallen except those within the Soviet Union itself.

Q: I would think as a political officer in all this must have been an extremely exciting period or was it happening in a way so gradually that it was like being in a pot in the waters just gradually getting warmer?

WAKE: No, it was not a sense of being gradual; it was a sense perhaps of being dramatic but without any clarity about the end game. So it was a series of dramatic developments, for example, going to the Baltic States if we take the story beyond what I already mentioned in late '88, early '89 and mid-'89 to go in August '89 when there are maybe two million people holding hands between Tallinn and Vilnius; we were up in Tallinn at the time our consul general was down in Vilnius.

Q: Yeah.

WAKE: You know this is something dramatic and that kind of thing when we were in March of '89 we go to Riga and there are thousands of people demonstrating to mark the 40th anniversary of one of those deportations that I mentioned and that happening just before they had their elections in the Congress of People's Deputies. So it's a series of dramatic developments where people are telling you things, again more dramatically in the Baltics than in Leningrad, about their plans or even their confidence that they are going to completely change life as we know it. I mean people were already telling us in '88 that these republics will be independent again within a short time. Did we believe them? Not necessarily. Did we report it? Of course. Did we start to report it more regularly and citing more sources as time went on? Yes. I don't know that you can say that's like the gradually boiling pot; I think it's like a series of dramatic fires breaking out all over without knowing whether they are going to be contained or not. There were conflicting signals on this because you had the tolerance by Moscow of so much that was going on and people losing their fear at the same time you had still some efforts to crack down if not much in our part of the country anymore by the middle of 1989 than in other places.

Q: Were you there when Gorbachev got pushed around...didn't he get involved in something in the Baltic States, as I recall?

WAKE: Well, yes he did but no, the most dramatic effort to crack down in the Baltic States was in January of '91.

Q: This is a radio business?

WAKE: Yes and I had left by then. You've probably not yet had the chance to talk to George Krol, who is now going on to his third ambassadorship more or less this week; he is going out to Kazakhstan. But George was my successor as the political-economic officer in Leningrad and he was right in the middle of those events. In fact, had just left Vilnius with a Lithuanian parliamentarian in his car on the way to Riga after Vilnius TV tower was attacked and just before there was shooting at the Interior Ministry building across from the hotel where he was staying in Riga; but that's '91.

Q: But while you were there the republics weren't declared were they?

WAKE: Yes they were, and the sequence was this. I mentioned the 50th anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact commemorated in August 1989 by this massive demonstration. That led to harsh warnings from Moscow that this nationalism was getting out of hand and should be brought under control, which didn't have very much effect. At some point shortly thereafter, I want to say January 1990, Gorbachev made a visit to Vilnius which by that time had become the sort of leading force in the independence movement. Not that the others were far behind, but the Lithuanians had taken the lead – perhaps because of the fact that they have a much more dominant majority within the population – the ethnic Lithuanians are more like 90 percent rather than 60 or 52 percent of the population – and other reasons such as a larger population and maybe more enthusiastic or charismatic leadership. They seemed to be in the forefront of the push for independence and even their Communist Party had declared that it wanted to be independent of the Soviet Communist Party. They weren't declaring that they wanted to be an independent country but that the Lithuanian Communist Party wanted to have a separate status from the Soviet Communist Party.

Gorbachev went to Lithuania, as I say, I think it was January 1990; one of my colleagues was there at the time down in Lithuania. I was in Leningrad. It seems that his belief was that he was going to try to persuade the intellectuals, the sort of Communist era intellectuals of Lithuania including the leadership of the Communist Party, that the Soviet Union was continuing to reform and that it would be in your interest to stay within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union rather than have an independent Lithuanian Communist Party. What he was met by was about a million people on the streets who had no interest in whether the Lithuanian Communist Party or the Soviet Communist Party were part of the same organization because they didn't want part of any of it. It seems like he may have gotten the message that this was a bigger issue than just...

Q: Being a party thing.

WAKE: Yeah. From that point on the die was cast that these people were going to declare independence. Now in a way you can say Gorbachev facilitated this or the Soviet system facilitated this because they went ahead, allowed and encouraged all republics to have competitive elections for the parliaments of the republics in 1990. The election that I mentioned before was only for a national Soviet talk shop which was very important politically and influenced the intellectual climate because people were able to debate on television issues that had never been debated before but it didn't have any ability to declare the independence of a particular republic.

In 1990 such elections took place in all three republics and in all three republics again the Popular Front forces organized well and swept the elections and in different ways between February and May they all declared the restoration of their pre-War independence. I say in different ways because the Lithuanians declared the immediate restoration of their independence as of the date of their declaration, March 11; the election had taken place on February 24th. My wife and I were present there and, of course, it's completely coincidental that my wife had a, let's see, we were in 1990 so she had a 35th birthday on the 25th of February. So, of course, we were only celebrating her

birthday when we were drinking champagne after midnight and happened to be in the headquarters of Sajudis which was the Popular Front of Lithuania which was celebrating its victory in the elections on the 24th of February after which they were about to declare independence. Of course, as American diplomats we weren't celebrating any particular political party's victory. But the fact is they were the first and in March they declared this full restoration of independence. The Estonians and Latvians did it a bit later in 1990 and with a few more caveats; they declared the beginning of a process of the restoration of their independence partly because of the fact that the reaction to the Lithuanian declaration was quite harsh.

First the Soviet authorities reacted rhetorically, then in terms of a kind of show of military force. There were some economic measures taken against Lithuania which forced them also to back away for the time being from the full implementation of their decision. Here is where the consulate and yours truly get involved in a particularly interesting incident; my sort of footnote in somebody's history including an indirect reference in Jack Matlock's history of the region. The election took place and we were present in late February; that in itself had an interesting aspect from an American perspective because there was a big Congressional delegation that wanted to come and observe the election. The Soviet authorities prevented them from getting to town on Election Day but eventually gave them visas so that they could come in the day after election and *de facto* also celebrate with the victorious.

Q: Yeah.

WAKE: I remember Dick Durbin was a member of that delegation; I can't remember who all the others were although I have this record somewhere. The Lithuanian parliament then got in the business of establishing itself, electing its leadership, declaring independence, an event for which I was not present but one of my colleagues from the consulate was and then going about the business of amending the legislation of Lithuania to bring it into line with the new status as an independent republic. They had some transition measures carrying out Soviet law until they could replace it because, of course, you still needed criminal laws in place and so on and not everything from 1930s was still relevant so they had to go through and sort through this rather routinely if you can be acting in a routine manner when you are in a kind of revolutionary situation. Soviet authorities had this harsh rhetoric but didn't crackdown in any physical way.

The deputy principal officer of the consulate and I decided we should go down and take a look at how things were going a couple of weeks later so this was like the third week of March. So a month after the elections a couple weeks after the declaration of independence, Jon Purnell (who was the deputy principal officer) and I went down and parked ourselves at the Lithuanian parliament because it was a place you could meet a lot of people you had known previously as independence activists from another life. Now they were all sitting in one building running what they considered to be their country and interestingly there were some of these émigré Lithuanians there, a certain amount of media although not too much anymore because the media doesn't stay active too long. But this was at a time when the Soviet authorities were making more and more

threatening noises, nothing physical had been done yet but they were making threatening noises; you can't establish your own interior ministry and your own tax authorities and all the practical things that the Lithuanians were getting ready to do. We would watch these threatening broadcasts on Soviet news together with Lithuanians who would shake their fists at the television and then go back about their business. We were there for just a few days but one Friday night I remember because it was relevant to the story, we are approached by a stringer for the Los Angeles Times who says, "You're American diplomats, right? Are you the American diplomats that are being expelled from Lithuania?" "Interesting question," we said, "We don't know what you're talking about." She said, "Well I heard something on the BBC." "Hmm, interesting, still don't know what you are talking about."

Well this is before the era of mobile phones or anything like that. We thought, "well maybe we ought to go back and check in with the consulate." So we went back to the hotel, which was the only place we would have a phone line we could use, and we called the consulate. They said, "Well yeah, actually we've been trying to get in touch with you. The Soviet Foreign Ministry has declared that all foreign diplomats must leave the territory of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic within twelve hours." "Well how do you know that?" "Well, someone from the foreign ministry mentioned this to the DCM at the embassy in Moscow at a reception tonight and the DCM in Moscow said I can't accept that sort of news at a reception. If this really official you have to make an official communication." He was called into the foreign ministry on Friday night after business hours and was either handed a piece of paper or just told, I can't remember that part of it, that indeed all foreign diplomats had to leave. As far as we knew we were the only two foreign diplomats in Lithuania at the time. So we said, "What are we supposed to do?" The consulate said, "You have to leave. We don't really recognize the Soviet incorporation of the Baltic States into the Soviet Union but, of course, you are accredited to the Soviet Union. You are here because you filed a travel note that said you are going to Lithuania so you have to leave." "Within twelve hours?" "Well, you have to try."

So we went down to the desk of the hotel – remember it's Friday night, and we are in a Lithuanian hotel which is run by an official organization, of course. But now at a time when Lithuanians are already considering themselves to be living in an independent country and we said, "We need to leave tonight; can you get us train tickets for the evening train?" They said, "Well no, you are foreigners; you have to buy your tickets through Intourist." "Yeah, okay. Aren't you an Intourist hotel?" "Oh yeah but that office doesn't open until Monday morning so we can't really help you." Monday morning was when we were planning to leave anyway by air but we were pretty clear that our colleagues in Moscow and Leningrad didn't think that staying around until Monday morning was an appropriate response to a direct order from the Soviet government that we needed to leave.

So it turned out that Hertz had just opened its first ever rental car franchise inside what at least Moscow considered to be the Soviet Union; it was a sort of quasi-operation in Lithuania. So we hired a car and driver, but we hired the car and driver to leave only the next morning so we would be at least be leaving Vilnius in...maybe kind of, sort of,

maybe twelve hours. It would be a little later before we left Lithuania. So we arranged that, at an outrageously high price that we kept trying to charge the Soviet government, but they never paid. In the meantime we had to go back to the parliament to let people know what happened and say goodbye, which we did. Then there was this question which I mentioned to you before about recognition. It seemed like we would want to pass this message on to senior people in the Lithuanian government because this was obviously a signal from Moscow that things were getting worse. If they wanted all the foreign diplomats out there might be a reason, we didn't know what it was but it seemed serious.

Q: Yeah.

WAKE: So we talked to people that we had contact with and, of course, we didn't ask for a meeting with President Landsbergis, the chairman of the Supreme Soviet (which now called itself the "Supreme Council") because that was still not part of U.S. policy. We couldn't ask for a meeting with someone at such a high level who had been elected as a result of these "Soviet" elections. But somehow someone pulled us into his office and we did have a conversation in which he said, "You don't recognize the Soviet incorporation of Lithuania into the Soviet Union; why don't you just stay?" We explained to him that we couldn't actually do that and that maybe he shouldn't make too much of a thing about this because, in fact, this was probably exactly what the Soviets were trying to do – to show at least there was one thing in Lithuania they could control. That probably was at least one explanation for our "expulsion": they could at least get the American diplomats out, while it would be a more difficult thing for them to take certain other steps. It probably also played a little bit into the high-level debates which were going on in Washington about what would it take to recognize that this new government that declared itself to be independent was actually the successor of the legitimate regime from the 1930s that we recognized as the government of Lithuania. Well, one fact was control over territory, control over events within the republic. Well, this was obviously one little way in which the Soviet authorities could say the Lithuanians don't control their own territory.

Q: Technically all your authorities as a consular officer came from...

WAKE: From Moscow, from the Soviet authorities.

Q: Russia. I mean even legally.

WAKE: Yeah, yeah, it would have been a revolutionary step for the United States to say we are keeping diplomats in "independent Lithuania." Obviously, in later years you end up with many *de facto* situations where people are in "ungoverned territories" but this was the Soviet Union, this was our nuclear superpower counterpart. If they tell your diplomats you have to leave, you leave. So we did. We didn't get out quite within twelve hours but we took this rental car ride back to Leningrad.

There were two sorts of follow ups that are interesting. In the middle of the night we got a call because we did decide we were only going to leave in the morning. So in the middle of the night we get a call from the State Department Operations Center. "We've

heard that there is a column of tanks or armored vehicles in the center of Vilnius, is it true?" We said, "Well actually we were asleep. We don't know. We'll look out the window." We didn't see anything. In fact, we had been told the night before that Lithuanians had heard rumors of a large column of vehicles heading toward Vilnius but they had heard that it had stopped. Well, it turned out, in fact, it hadn't stopped and somewhere in the wee hours of the morning something like 80 vehicles ran past the Lithuanian parliament and left again, just to tell the Lithuanians the Soviet Union still does have some force to bring to bear on this situation. Whether the reason for the departure order was that they actually expected us to be gone by that time or whether there was any connection between those two things we never knew. It would have been typical of the way things were going at that point that maybe they ordered the foreign diplomats to leave because they were going to have this show of military force but they had gotten the timing a little bit screwed up because things were not working so well anymore. But any way we were gone and no American diplomats were allowed back into Lithuania for the remainder of the time I was there.

The Soviet authorities loosened this up subsequently which is why my successor was there when the violence took place in '91 but until the summer of '90 we weren't allowed to go. We filed travel notes requesting permission to go a number of times and we counted up the refusals and every time we were refused our colleagues in Washington made sure that somebody from the Soviet consulate in San Francisco was also denied a trip somewhere – usually to Disneyland or something, so it wasn't exactly equal, but there was an effort to apply some reciprocity principle. We also did send a note, if not more than one, asking for reimbursement of that rental car fee and we were told this was impossible because the diplomats in question had left the territory of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic in an unauthorized manner. It wasn't exactly clear in what manner we were supposed to leave the republic in twelve hours when there were no flights or trains for which we could buy tickets. Going by car was unauthorized at least for the \$700 fee that we asked them to pay.

Q: During this time was there any role for other consular officers from Germany, France or Sweden or something? What were they up to?

WAKE: The most active were the Nordics and particularly Sweden and Finland. There were some visits by either embassies in Moscow or consulates in Leningrad to the Baltics from other places; not very many countries had consulates in Leningrad. Some of the accredited diplomats actually had to come from Moscow. Sweden and Finland played a very interesting role in this because unlike the United States and the United Kingdom they had *de facto* recognized incorporation of the Baltics into the Soviet Union. They had not such a tough policy but in fact this allowed them a little flexibility in 1989 and 1990. While we could continue to go down from Leningrad as long as the Soviets would allow us, we couldn't even discuss the question of establishing a long-term presence in any of these republics because it would inevitably mean negotiating with the Soviet authorities about something that we didn't consider to be their business. Particularly at that time, to negotiate with the Soviet authorities on establishing let's say a consulate in Vilnius wouldn't have gone anywhere with the Soviets and it would have raised hackles among

the émigré community in the United States who would say “why are you talking to Moscow about this?”

The Swedes and the Finns didn't have that constraint because they already *de facto* had recognized. The Finns established an office in Tallinn in Estonia either late '89 or early 1990 which they called a branch office of their consulate in Leningrad. The Swedes did the same thing in Riga in 1990 which meant for the first time in about 50 years there was a permanent presence of foreign diplomats on the ground and these were people that we could talk to because they had a little bit more of a feel of what was going on, of who was who. They were really very interested, obviously with different degrees of caution, particularly on the Finnish part because of their historical foreign policy issues. Neither of them were yet members of the EU but they both had these links through immigration, through proximity, through historical common experience; Sweden had controlled these areas at one point in the distant past. The Finns and the Estonians speak a partly intelligible, not exactly mutually intelligible language but there is enough overlap that Estonians, in particular learn Finnish quite easily and many Estonians had learned Finnish because of watching the television from Finland across the Gulf. So these were the two most active. Maybe I missed something but other diplomatic players were less prominent at that time, at least as far as I recall. You did have the occasional Western journalists as well; obviously more than occasional in regard to these dramatic events like the Baltic Way and so on. There were things that we could not report to Washington as quickly as were getting into the press obviously particularly given if it was classified and we had to write it on that yellow piece of paper and send it out in slow fashion.

Q: Moving away from that, what was happening up in Arkhangelsk, Murmansk and all of that? I think of this from the war time when this is very important.

WAKE: You know I have to say that we were so focused on what was going on in our home base and the three Baltic Republics that our coverage of the rest of the consular district was frankly fairly modest. I made, for example, in two years one trip to Petrozavodsk, which is the capital of the Karelian Autonomous Republic, and one trip to Pskov. I believe that others made a total of less than a handful of trips to Arkhangelsk, Murmansk, Novgorod and other places outside the Baltics and politically these were not hot beds of activity.

Q: How about Karelia, that had been part of Finland hadn't it?

WAKE: Karelia was very interesting. The border had been much closer to the city of Leningrad before the Second World War, before the Soviet-Finnish War, Fenno-Soviet War. There was a lot of activity, not much directed toward either independence or association with Finland but a lot directed toward a revival of interest in both Finnish and Karelian culture. Finnish, because some of the people are ethnically the same as people across the border in Finland, and Karelian as a separate ethnic group that speaks a language that is close to Finnish but somewhat different. I had a particular view on this because my wife, whom I was commuting to see in the course of this assignment, was assigned to the American Embassy in Finland. We would get Neuvosto-Karjala, which

was the Soviet Karelian newspaper, delivered to the consulate regularly we would pouch that over to Connie because she was one of the only people serving in the region for the American government who could read it. None of us could read it, of course, because it was in Finnish. But she would find there also was a very lively debate about the same kind of issues that were being debated throughout the Soviet Union about the legacy of Stalinism and the painful historical moments with a particular Karelian focus because these people had experienced a particularly brutal time under Stalin and had borders changed and so on. There was if anything only a very limited push for independence. There was, however, significant opportunity that opened up for greater cultural expression and for greater emigration. So actually Finland ended up taking in a lot of people who left that region around the time of the end of the Soviet Union and the beginning of the post-Soviet period.

As a consular officer you'll appreciate one specific experience that I recall. I didn't do much consular work in Leningrad, it wasn't my assignment, but I was a back-up and it was a very small post. We had one full time consular officer for most of the time I think. But one time I was at the consular window and had an application for someone who wanted to go on an academic study program – I don't know if this was a Fulbright Program – but anyway it was an academic program. I noticed one complicating aspect on her visa application which was that she was born in the United States. I said, "Do you know if you are an American citizen?" She said, "Oh I don't want to talk about that." Well it turned out that this woman was born in the United States and had come to the Soviet Union in the 1930s...

Q: She's a Red Diaper baby.

WAKE: A Red Finn, exactly. So you know this group?

Q: You might explain what it is.

WAKE: Yeah. Her parents had left Finland as economic immigrants sometime just after 1917; it doesn't necessarily matter. They had stayed in the United States for a few years but then had gone back to a part of the Soviet Union where people spoke Finnish because Stalin had encouraged them to come to help build Socialism. So these are people who are sort of leftist activists in the United States who sympathized with the Soviet efforts to build Communism and Socialism and had returned to what ended up to be a very bad situation in the Soviet Union in the 1930s. But their young child had come with them. She grew up as a Soviet citizen not paying attention to the fact and probably even hiding the fact that she had been born in the United States. But in fact, the interesting thing is she was going to the United States because she wanted to study the phenomenon of her parents and others who had gone through this process of return to the Soviet Union from in most cases places like Minnesota and in some cases Canada as well. You may know more about this than I do.

Q: I know we've had people they call themselves Red Diaper babies.

WAKE: I hadn't heard the Red Diaper baby term but the Red Finns for sure including this woman, who I think by now, has actually immigrated to the United States. I think she was working on her dissertation which became a book on this phenomenon which was focused on her father's life and his misguided idealistic return to the Soviet Union. We only made one visit there, to Petrozavodsk, which is the main city in Karelia. But even in the Leningrad region there was a revival in Finnish culture because there had been a group – have you ever heard of a group called Inkeris, or Ingrian Finns?

Q: No.

WAKE: These are people who were Finnish or Finnic-speaking who lived in not only what is now Finland and the bordering region of Karelia but also in the Leningrad Region and Estonia for generations, centuries, who in early Soviet times had even been given a level of cultural autonomy and allowed to have Finnic or Finnish language schools and Lutheran churches. Then they were all brutally repressed in the late 1930s, mostly deported to places like Siberia and Kazakhstan. Some of them ended up on the Finnish side of the border after the Fenno-Soviet War as refugees and foolishly were persuaded “voluntarily” to return to the Soviet Union after World War II and again deported to these distant regions. In this '89-'90 period they were again having a cultural revival; there were some tens of thousands of people still not in any way seeking any kind of national recognition but at least some kind of cultural expression. My wife and I actually went to some kind of a first ever Inkeri festival that took place in '89 or '90 where you had people telling incredible stories of the dislocations to places distant.

Q: You were a political-economic officer. Was there anything in the economy of the Leningrad consular district close to Finland which made remarkable progress? Was there any spill over in other words were they producing anything other than military equipment?

WAKE: There were a few tentative joint ventures in areas like machinery, I want to say turbines, pumps, something like that. There was one I remember visiting that was making very modern equipment for export to Finland basically under Finnish management and leadership so it had the air completely different from visiting Soviet factories; so that was an element. The other elements in the economy that were notable were very small inroads of so-called cooperatives which were *de facto* private businesses under a certain size. It meant that there were just a handful of decent restaurants, mainly Caucasian, mainly Georgian but also Armenian and Azeri that were allowed to open in Leningrad. Rhetorically, there was this new economic policy of enterprises being allowed to have autonomy of their books basically. They could act almost like capitalist businesses within the Soviet system but it didn't have much impact; this was not “self-management” as that's a Yugoslav term but “economic autonomy” of enterprises. It didn't have much effect and the main economic reality that we saw during those two years was the gradual disappearance of almost all useful consumer goods and food.

So this was the period when it was extremely difficult for Soviet citizens to get the basics like meat and dairy products. Cheese was almost impossible to acquire in any normal

store or in Leningrad. The situation was a little better in the Baltic Republics and people would actually take the train down to Riga, for example, to go shopping. But in Leningrad it was very bad and by the time I left there were official rationing coupons for laundry soap, vodka and sugar, I believe it was, sugar being important because people used it to make samogon (illegal liquor). But more important than the rationing was just the fact that everything that was decent and available was on a black market being sold out of the back instead of the front of warehouses. The ruble *de facto* had devalued dramatically although as American diplomats you had to keep buying it on the official rate. Even that changed while we were there because they introduced something called the “tourist rate” which was still not as good as the black market rate but was ten times as good as the official commercial rate.

Q: What caused this?

WAKE: The system was just collapsing and you could come up with different explanations nationally for why it was happening. But it seemed like perhaps it was the effort to keep up with the West on military production combined with the fact that there was enough of an opening, liberalization that people started to take things into their own hands and the black market grew. It made the official market shrink and as the ruble lost its value there was even less and less incentive for people to actually work in official enterprises. So I’m not enough of an economist to explain why the whole thing collapsed but it was really coming apart.

One saving grace, of course, for diplomats in general, was that we had access to goods in other ways. We could get them from Stockmann, which was the Finnish company that sent things over on the train or you could buy certain things in the official hard-currency shops, the Beriozka. I had another trick which was, since I was duly married to someone who lived in Helsinki, we tried to each travel about once a month to visit. So every couple of weeks we would see each other and whoever was going to Finland would take the one product which was still widely available in the Soviet Union at extremely low prices, which was excellent bread. That would fill either my backpack or Connie’s backpack on the way to Finland and on the return trip the backpacks would be filled with fresh fruits and vegetables mainly and maybe a decent piece of cheese because those were the things you couldn’t really find in the Soviet markets. We had our own way of coping just as most Soviet citizens did; theirs usually involved some black market friends, some relative who had been a veteran of the war who had special dispensation; there were many ways that people acquired goods; they just weren’t in the stores that you could go into.

Q: Did you have a feeling that you were in a major country that was breaking down?

WAKE: Yes, breaking down for sure. We, I think, had a stronger sense than people perhaps in Moscow also because of seeing what was going on in other republics. But it was breaking down, for sure. So there were a lot of questions about just how this thing could be saved. One idea already floating, of course, was more radical economic reform but to some extent the ideology and the whole traditions in the Soviet system made it

difficult to do too much. Gorbachev had opened up so much already with the intellectual debate with glasnost, with the political openness of the elections, that while he made economic reforms none of them seemed to be leading to results he wanted and I suspect he was probably afraid of more radical reforms because he was already under pressure from conservatives who thought he had strayed too far from the right system.

WAKE: Yeah. If you've got two minutes I'll tell you one more story which isn't in my consular district in Leningrad but which might be of interest. In May of 1989 I was visited by my wife, who lived in Finland, my parents who were coming from the United States and my brother who lived in California at the time along his girlfriend. The important thing is that we planned this trip far in advance, it was Memorial Day Weekend so I had an extra holiday for my work and we decided we would go to one place outside our consular district that was rumored to be very interesting and different than our part of the country, which was Tbilisi, Georgia.

A little more than a month before our trip in April of 1989 there was a large demonstration in favor of Georgian independence which – unlike anything that happened in “our” part of the country – had been brutally repressed. So there had been a crackdown and you may remember the story where people were hit with shovels by the interior ministry forces and about 40 people were killed in front of the parliament of Georgia. So we thought we would not get permission to go to Georgia from the Soviet authorities given that they had basically closed the city to all foreigners after this brutal crackdown that killed 40 people.

However, maybe what worked in our favor was that we had applied for this trip before the crackdown and it was very clear that it was a family trip: parents, brother, wife. So we just figured we'll see what happens, we had gotten no notice that our permission had been cancelled, so we made the preparations to go and I had actually gotten in touch with the embassy in Moscow first of all to let them know that we were going to their consular district and also to see if there was anything they wanted me to look in on or anybody they wanted me to meet.

Basically I got the answer back no, no we'll try to go ourselves but don't worry about it. So I decided I was just going to just have a vacation in Georgia but on the way down to Georgia – and I think the KGB would never believe that this was a coincidence – but on the way to Georgia I'm sitting on the airplane next to a former Russian political prisoner who I had met in Leningrad. This former political prisoner, who was still a very active dissident, proceeds to tell me he's going to Georgia because, “This is Georgian Independence Day, which they haven't celebrated since the early 1920s, because this is the anniversary of the Menshevik government of Georgia which was declared as an independent republic in 1918.” Then this political prisoner, sitting next to me asks “Are you going to meet with anybody down in Georgia?” I said, “No, this is just my family and we are just going for vacation.” He gives me a piece of paper and says, “You ought to call this guy.” This guy turns out to be Zviad Gamsakhurdia, at that time a Helsinki Monitor human rights activist who had spent a number of years in prison in Georgia but who later becomes the president and ostensibly commits suicide in the course of the civil

war in Georgia in the early 1990s. But at this point he had just been released from a temporary detention for his role in the demonstrations that had taken place in April of '89 and led to the killing of people in front of the parliament.

So I called him up and he gave me an address. "This is where I live, everybody knows me. Just ask anybody on the street, tell them you are coming to see me." Little did I understand at the time the reason that everyone knew him was because he was the son of Georgia's most famous poet and, although he had just been released from prison, he was living in the house which was the museum dedicated to his father's life; a very nice villa. He received my wife and me and spent a couple of hours telling us about his role in the revolution which was going to bring independence and happiness to Georgia.

Also in the course of that time I think persuaded us that he was an extremely ethnocentric and bigoted person, given the comments he gave about every minority in Georgia and all the efforts of these people to undermine him on behalf of either the Soviets or the Turks or someone else. But it was a rather dramatic evening and, of course, as a good American diplomat I did write a reporting cable about this even though it was not in my consular district especially since we had first checked with the embassy in Moscow to let them know we were going and they said that they didn't have anything. We were praised for the report but criticized for going to their consular district without telling them, although we had. It was quite a memorable experience. And by the way, on that day there had been probably three or four hundred thousand people on the streets all waving independence-era Georgian flags and driving around in their cars honking their horns. You can imagine the questions from my parents about whether this was really a safe place to be. In fact, it was, because the authorities had decided to do nothing to stop it.

Q: Well this is probably a good place to stop. Where did you go after that; we'll put it as the end here?

WAKE: After that...

Q: In 1990.

WAKE: After that we went to language training to go to a completely different assignment which was Rangoon.

Q: Good God. Alright, well, we will pick this up the next time but it has been fascinating. We will pick this up the next time when you are off to take Burmese and off to Rangoon.

WAKE: Rangoon.

Q: Today is the 10th of February 2015 with Doug Wake and we are off to Rangoon. How did the Rangoon thing come about?

WAKE: Well, the Rangoon thing came about because I was part of a tandem couple and we had spent our first two years in Leningrad and Helsinki which was not too bad for an

arrangement that we basically made on our own but we were hoping we could live in the same place now that we were married.

Q: Yeah.

WAKE: As I've often told the story (maybe adding some spice that wasn't there), we were back during our R&R [rest and recreation travel] somewhere in the middle of our tours, middle of my tour in Leningrad, two-thirds of the way through Connie's tour to Helsinki, kind of knocking on doors as one does to see who might be interested in a tandem couple that had a lot of interest and focus especially on things like Central and Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, which was still hanging on at the time. But we noticed that there were jobs that had the right grade and the right cones, economic and political, and the right timing in Rangoon – a place that my wife had once visited in an economic bureau job because it was one of those posts that didn't have much commercial activity so the State Department backed up the commercial work rather than the Commerce Department. And we said, "Well, let's go in and at least talk to the desk officer." We did and the desk officer told us, "Yes, these are real jobs and no, they are not taken by anybody else," the usual conversation that you need to at least be sure that it's something that you might be vaguely interested in pursuing. We gave some indication that as a tandem couple we might vaguely be interested in these jobs. On the way out we're pretty sure we could hear that desk officer running off to his office director to say that he's got two live ones....

Q: I might point out to somebody reading this that there is this open bid list, there are jobs that are advertised, but they are not really there. Either somebody has already been promised...

WAKE: Either they've been taken by someone else or a switch at post that hasn't yet been reflected in the records.

Q: Yeah, so this is...

WAKE: This was real and probably not a pair of posts that had a huge number of early expressions of interest. So when we expressed interest and it was clear that they might be able to fill both jobs at the same time, we think that basically meant that if we put our names on the list we'd have a good chance. And it was a different area of the world than the region where we had previously focused our attention.

Q: But it was also in your line as a difficult political situation.

WAKE: A difficult political situation, human rights problems...

Q: Yeah.

WAKE: So that was probably 1989 or early '90 when we were having these discussions, then we went through a whole year of Burmese language training and found ourselves out there in the middle of 1991.

Q: Can you explain what the situation was in Burma or what was it called?

WAKE: The authorities had already begun to call it the Union of Myanmar, the U.S. government continued to call it Burma mainly because the authorities were the military authorities that we didn't like and the opposition both in and outside the country continued to call it Burma so we stuck with that. The situation was fairly grim. Of course the military or military-led government had been in place for decades by that time but in 1988 there had been a huge prodemocracy movement which came to be led by the daughter of one of the revolutionary founders of Burma, Aung San Suu Kyi, who had gone back to tend to her sick mother and ended up in the front of demonstrations of hundreds of thousands of people. After some fits and starts the government had cracked down and killed hundreds of people, estimates vary, but this was 1988 before we were there and then baldly had taken over as the State Law in Order Restoration Council, the SLORC, eliminating any pretense that it was an electoral democracy, for the moment, which had been a pretense in the previous decades.

The military junta said they were interested in a return to democracy, held elections in 1990 which were won by the National League for Democracy, Aung San Suu Kyi's party but the parliament chosen in those elections was never allowed to meet. Aung San Suu Kyi even before those elections had been put under house arrest; she was a few hundred meters, a few hundred yards away from the American embassy's residential compound on the same lake a few miles from where the then downtown embassy was. We drove past her house at least twice every day and never saw her during the two years we were there. She was behind barbed wire and machine-gun-toting guards the entire time. While in later eras she was allowed to receive some visitors including diplomatic visitors, in that two-year period to my knowledge the only outside visitor she was allowed to receive was her husband who was a British academic (who has since died). He visited her a couple of times, always after lengthy negotiations and never talking to people like the American embassy on the way out; maybe he had contact with the British embassy but if so that was a very low key thing. So that was the background.

By 1991 things had, I don't even want to say loosened up or liberalized, but they had moderated to the extent that it seemed possible to count more elected members of parliament being released from prison or detention than being taken in during my period. And I'm not sure we had any who died during my period but there had been a couple of deaths in detention already in that year between '90 and '91. People were extremely reluctant to speak to foreign diplomats, particularly American diplomats, because of their reasonable fear that we would be followed and that our conversations would be followed up by military intelligence and visits, so contacts were tough.

Q: So your job was what?

WAKE: I was a political officer.

Q: And your wife?

WAKE: Was the economic officer. We were two of the three substantive officers in a political-economic joint section but the head of that joint section the entire time we were there was the acting DCM because the DCM was the chargé d'affaires and there was no ambassador. The ambassador story was a bit interesting because there had been a very vocal outspoken American ambassador during the uprising of 1988 and I believe through the election period; I'm not sure exactly when he left.

Q: Who was that?

WAKE: Burt Levin. Ambassador Levin was hated by the Burmese military authorities, very popular among the people because he was known to be supportive of course not of a particular movement but democratic principles, all the things they didn't have in Burma at the time. He left, I think, more or less at the end of a regular ambassadorial tour much to the delight of the Burmese who also learned that then President Bush, the first George Bush, had nominated a new individual to be ambassador, someone who I don't think really had any Asia background and hadn't been outspoken in any way on Burma issues and so the Burmese government seemed quite enthusiastic about this and they gave agrément very quickly.

At some point however, they learned through a leak in the Washington Post that this gentleman, by the name of Frecky Vreeland, had a long career in the CIA, which had been inadvertently or mistakenly kept from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. It seems that the normal practice in such matters, which I'm not familiar with, was to send over some kind of classified bio. They didn't do it and it became a scandal that broke in the press and while apparently this was no big surprise to most people who followed this person's career or foreign policy to the Burmese it was a big surprise and they withdrew agrément because they were shocked that the U.S. was going to send such a person.

The Bush administration then nominated a second candidate, Parker Borg, a career professional whose area of expertise did include not Burma but Southeast Asia, narcotics issues, which was, of course, quite relevant to cooperation which the Burmese would have liked to restore because they had cooperation in the earlier era.

For the entire time we were at post, or at least until the change of administrations at the beginning of 1993, Parker was patiently studying Burmese and waiting for the Senate to act on his nomination. The foreign relations committee actually had a favorable vote on his nomination but attached some unacceptable conditions which the administration was not willing to go along with for constitutional reasons, for example, suggesting that the administration as part of the confirmation process would have to pledge that we would announce that the government of Burma was illegitimate, we would withdraw our defense attaché which was a counterproductive measure and I think there was a third condition that the administration considered unacceptable. It seems at some point in the

process a senior administration official – maybe it was the undersecretary for political affairs – had a conversation with Senator Moynihan who was the main person blocking this (allegedly because he had a staff member whose spouse was from one of the Burmese minority groups, but that’s only an allegation I can’t confirm). In any case, apparently at least there was one conversation, but Senator Moynihan either didn’t respond positively or didn’t remember the conversation the next day or something. It was never voted on and we had a chargé d’affaires, Pancho Huddle, the whole time I was there who later, I believe, became ambassador to Tajikistan.

That’s the line up so there were basically four key State Department people looking at substantive issues, diplomatic issues but all of us had difficulty having any real contact with the government.

Q: Well how bad was this as far as relations with the embassy going through these hoops that Congress puts up and all. I mean were you feeling the fact that we didn’t have a proper ambassador make any difference?

WAKE: Well it isn’t clear how much different it would have been with an ambassador because, of course, it was a military government which wasn’t necessarily very interested in the civilian and civil dialogue that most countries have with their American diplomatic colleagues. So would a higher-level person have made a difference? Some, I’m sure, but the general attitude of the government was to keep us at more than arm’s length. Ironically, there was perhaps a little more access for our military attachés because there were people in the Burmese military who had in that era still been trained in the United Kingdom, had some relatively good English skills, who were still active duty despite the really very crude leadership at the top of the military and the military’s so-called SLORC.

There were a few contacts that we were able to find as political-economic officers. As the economic officer, my wife had a little bit easier time dealing with some very non-controversial issues with parts of the government. I had very few official contacts at all, with not much more than protocol contacts in the ministry of foreign affairs. So trying to collect information was more a matter of triangulating between third country diplomats, older Burmese who didn’t have anything to lose because they didn’t work for the government or didn’t have any debts of any kind to the government and a very few brave people who would meet us on a street corner and tell us something. A lot of your reporting had to be based on what you could see and hear as you walked around. We did some travel and occasionally people would approach us. People were very friendly and interested in talking to foreigners but once they realized you were somehow official and it might not be considered patriotic by the government to talk to you then people backed away from that.

Q: Well then what was the embassy like?

WAKE: First of all it was an old building in the center of town that was rather gradually but steadily deteriorating to the point I know it’s been replaced by now. Housing, on the other hand, was beautiful British colonial corporate villas well above the standard you

were entitled to expect as American diplomats. But the daily business was to some extent just trying to think of things we could glean from the press, from our small contacts with whatever sources we had that might help shed some light on developments to Washington. We did our best on that and we actually won a global reporting award from the State Department for post reporting which was in some ways amazing because we were pulling this out of very limited information but I think that is what was respected: the fact that we tried to make the best of what was available.

The chargé d'affaires was very interested in making sure that we kept a steady flow of reporting no matter how difficult it was to get information and then we also tried to some way I wouldn't say "counter" but to put in context some of the international press reporting that was coming out of Thailand or elsewhere that maybe made the situation seem even more extreme than it was; it was bad enough as it was. The one thing that was a clear deterioration while we were there was a situation that is still in the news in 2015 which is the Muslim population in the southwestern part of the country, a place called Arakan State, on the Bangladesh border, claiming large scale repression. Many tens if not hundreds of thousands of people fled across the border to Bangladesh. We were never able to go to that region to see the Burmese side of the border. Of course, people in Bangladesh could see the camps on the other side of the border but this became a big international issue over which we had very little control or access. To the extent that the U.S. government was involved, it was much more through support to the UN on refugee relief. As I said, internally things were more stable but it's also worth noting as in any period from the 1940s until today there were a number of guerilla wars being fought on the borders of Burma, essentially ethnic based rebellions by people who never really accepted the Union of Burma or the Union of Myanmar as a unified state.

We did have one internationally dramatic development while we were there which was in December of my first year there, 1991. Aung San Suu Kyi, our neighbor who we never saw, won the Nobel Peace Prize. There were some very small and not very well organized demonstrations of support when she should have been in...

Q: Stockholm.

WAKE: ...Stockholm; in Oslo actually for the Peace Prize. Am I correct on that? Stockholm is for the other prizes and Oslo, I believe, is the Peace Prize. She should have been there but wasn't able to leave. There were some questions about whether the military might have offered her a deal that she could have left if she didn't come back but in any case she didn't have any intention of leaving at that point. There were some, as I say, minor, small-scale demonstrations. There was only one interesting story for the embassy in that regard because we didn't even witness any of it – it was all put down so quickly. But the embassy had a local staff member who was an employee of the Library of Congress, whose job was to procure publications for the Library in Washington; a very soft spoken young woman who had the bad fortune on the day of the Nobel Peace Prize being given to Aung San Suu Kyi of being on the university campus which was just across the street from where our residences were and very near where Aung San Suu Kyi's house was and was the hotbed if there was one of whatever political activity took

place. The area was then locked down and apparently for some time – I don't think it was terribly long – she was terrified that she would be identified as the American embassy instigator of these demonstrations which she was the completely innocent victim of. In fact, nothing happened to her. The campus was opened back up and she was able to go about her business. So that was in '91.

Over the course of the two years politically nothing much happened. The government introduced something called the constitutional convention which they retroactively defined as the reason these parliamentarians had been elected rather than to form a parliament. Of course, what they really meant was that these parliamentarians would be part of a process of drafting a constitution which as we look back in 2015 I think finally concluded in about 2006. So I think it took 13 years at least to draft that constitution and those elected members of parliament were only a small part of a very large constitutional convention that included handpicked military and other official people.

I don't know that I have much more to relate. We did have the odd Congressional visitor whose interest tended not to be so much the human rights and democracy situation but the narcotics situation. Particularly Congressman Rangel from New York was there a couple of times and the Burmese, eager to show that they were actually on the same side as the United States on this issue, flew us up to the border; it was a rather interesting experience to see as the Burmese had reached a temporary peace agreement with one of the rebel groups up along the Chinese border known as the Wa. When we flew into Wa territory it was rather clear that the Burmese government was not totally in charge of the situation because the people holding the RPGs and the Kalashnikovs on the other side of the fence when we landed the Burmese helicopters were the representatives of this United Wa State Army. But they were at peace with the Burmese government at the time and they were happy to show the American visitors that they were burning opium and heroin because they were also combating it while, in fact, they were well known to be major traffickers.

So it was in the summer of 1993 that we finished up in Burma. I'm not sure, as I say, that there is anything else you wanted to follow up on.

Q: What about visitors? You must have been debriefing lots of visitors or could they get in?

WAKE: You know people could get in, but there wasn't a lot of enthusiasm. We got the odd Congressional delegation focused on narcotics issues mainly, very few journalists who actually had difficulty getting visas to get in. There was a little bit of interest – and actually this is one change that the Burmese government introduced after 1988 – which was to open up the economy a bit. It had been this completely isolated closed so-called Socialist economy.

After 1988 they claimed to be opening up to the world market. In fact, it was small, very tentative steps, mainly involving the legalization of some border trade with China and their other neighbors but you did have the opening up of some blocks for oil exploration

on shore as well as eventually offshore. The onshore oil exploration didn't lead to much but it did mean, in connection with your question of visitors and other expats, that there was a resident population and occasional travel in and out by executives of some of the major oil companies who were exploring upcountry in Burma to see if they could find profitable exploitable oil deposits. In the end I don't believe any of those onshore exploration activities resulted in production because of a combination of disappointment with what they found under the ground and disappointment with the difficult business climate, the fact that building pipelines and doing all the infrastructure work would have been so difficult and expensive and corruption-ridden. There was a little bit different picture offshore where it was easier for Total, in particular, the French company but with an American partner, if I'm not mistaken, to do some gas exploitation which they then shipped from Burmese waters right over to Thailand which was the big customer. I think that is kind of the Burma picture.

Q: Did you feel pressure to try to stir things up or not?

WAKE: Not really. I mean there were certain nuances of difference between Washington and the post in the sense Washington was very vocal in criticizing the human rights violations and I think perhaps hoping that things would stir up again or that there would be real activists that would make an effort to renew the struggle for democracy but it just wasn't there. The level of fear in the population after the repression of 1988 and the cancelation of the election results in 1990 was so high that people were just not willing to stand up and do anything. Our role was really just to report that fact.

Q: Did you have any contact with what essentially was the Buddhist establishment?

WAKE: You know we really didn't and maybe that's a fault but I can't say whether at some point the chargé d'affaires may have made a call on a senior monk or something. Here again you had a real problem in that the Buddhist establishment had to some degree been involved in the revolution if you call it that or at least the democracy uprising and there were a lot of monks who were imprisoned not to mention killed for their role in 1988. What remained and was sort of outwardly the established Buddhist leadership were as best one could see almost completely under the thumb and loyal to the authorities, and the authorities made a great point of paying tribute to the monks, of contributing state resources to the building or renovation of pagodas and so on and shrines.

One of the big questions that was always in the background in that period I was there was the continuing role of the former dictator Ne Win, who was living on the other side of the same lake we all lived on. He was still alive but his influence on the new generation of military leadership was never quite fully known. Some thought that he controlled everything and others were not so sure. The connection to Buddhism and also to superstition is that he was someone who seemed to put a lot of stake in burnishing his image by his own contributions to religious buildings and who had a big superstition in regard to things like numbers. One of the odd aspects of Burmese life is that at that time the currency I think was the only one in the world that was not based on ten but was

based on nine, if I'm not mistaken; we had 45 kyat notes and 90 kyat notes. That was a bit strange.

Q: Did you and your colleagues have any impression of the military leadership?

WAKE: The impression we had and this would go to I think include our defense attachés was that the top leadership was quite unsophisticated and unaware of what was really going on in the world. There were some people who were not in the most decisive positions who had a better understanding because they lived outside and they had some training back before Burma had been so isolated. But the top leadership was believed to be rather ignorant of the world, rather misdirected in the way they were fighting the insurgencies along the borders because they seemed to put far too little emphasis on what I guess in certain contexts you'd call hearts and minds and it was all about military victory and creating a story they wanted people to hear through just fictional accounts that would only appear in newspapers that you would read. Most of the time we were in Rangoon, there was only one newspaper and it was published in both English and Burmese. When we got there, in English it was The Working People's Daily. As part of the ostensible liberalization reform they changed the name to The New Light of Myanmar but they didn't really change anything else. It was always reporting on large groups of happy peasants who had firmly rejected the outrages of the terrorists insurgents and held big demonstrations in places that no one had ever heard of.

Q: Could you get to the university campus?

WAKE: The university campus was off limits to us and I'm not sure if we were physically restricted but it was clear that you were supposed to have a reason to be there and we didn't have an accreditation to be there; so we did not go on the university campus. I can't remember now the precise sequence of the two years we were there but for part of the time we were there probably starting with those demonstrations in favor of Aung San Suu Kyi and for a very large part of the previous 30-year period the university was closed. This was a big problem because the level of education in this society had declined dramatically over the decades. It's the only place I've ever served or even visited, I think, where older people were much more likely to speak English, to have some broader global level of education than young people. Young people tended to only speak Burmese and to have a rather poor level of education.

Q: Did the Soviet Union and China have any impact on these events there?

WAKE: Well, it's interesting because I was there when the Soviet Union disappeared and the legacy of big power competition was clear from the fact that although it is a big country there was a disproportionately large presence particularly if you looked at the buildings of the Chinese, the Americans and the Soviets. I think this had something to do with the fact that Burma had called itself a neutral country, a non-aligned country, a leader of the non-aligned movement and there was a certain amount of great power competition that if nothing else was reflected in lots of diplomats competing with each other in a slightly earlier era. When we were there, the Chinese embassy was very large

and China was the preeminent supplier of weapons and the preeminent political supporter of the military junta. The Soviet Union, while it had an embassy, was going through its own collapse and the embassy was downsizing. We had some relatively friendly contacts with that embassy but the diplomats tended to be thinking more about their next job and whether they had a country to go back to than so much about Soviet influence in Rangoon.

One sort of humorous thing is that in Burma at that time there was something called a foreign correspondents' club. These were actually several older people we were able to talk to because the foreign correspondents were not foreign but were mostly Burmese. The foreign organizations like AP, AFP and Reuters had long since either been thrown out or had voluntarily downsized not to have expat reporters in Burma but they had stringers who called themselves the foreign correspondents of these organizations. There were two real foreigners who were correspondents, but they were state media correspondents: one for TASS, the Soviet news service, and one for the Chinese news service. The Chinese "journalist" was someone I don't think I ever met and as far as I know continued to do whatever that person did. The TASS correspondent had been there for a number of years and we would see him every once in a while at a so-called yacht club which was really just a place to have a drink. It was pretty clear that his main concern in 1991-'92 was how he was going to get himself back to Moscow and what he was going to do with all the files he had collected. He actually was a journalist and he had indeed learned quite a bit about what was going on in Burma. I don't know if it is actually true but he told us he had a bonfire just before he got on one of the last Aeroflot flights because there were some Aeroflot flights out of Burma that were still continuing into about '92.

I actually heard about the collapse of the Soviet Union while I was on my way up to Mandalay, the former royal capital and the second city in Burma when we were stopped along the way and I took a walk in the early morning in a small town and heard something on the BBC or the Voice of America; I'm not sure which. It was in Burmese, which I had studied for a year, and it included a long discussion about the life of Gorbachev. I heard this as I walked by someone's home early in the morning because the homes were just thatched buildings so it was possible to hear through the walls. I wondered if Gorbachev has died; this was August 1991. Later that day we got up to Mandalay where the American embassy still had a guest house which was a former consulate and along with my wife and myself visiting on a kind of political-economic trip there was one of the defense attachés who had been listening to an English language radio broadcast and told us about the coup in Moscow and wondered whether based on our background we thought it was going to succeed. We hemmed and hawed and speculated about it but that was '91 and then for the rest of the time the Soviet Union, as I say, was not really an influence and eventually didn't even exist. The Czechoslovaks also had an embassy there and they also went through quite a downsizing period at the point they were just trying to figure out how to get rid of the place. It was an outpost where all the major powers and Communist powers had had some presence but didn't really have anything to do in the early 1990s.

I actually just recently thought about that guest house in Mandalay because it had been a consulate, as I say, in an earlier period and the embassy was not able to sell the consulate building because they would have just had to sell it to the Burmese who would have paid for it in local currency which was basically worthless. So the American government kept this building in Mandalay for many years and for all I know they still have it but it was maintained as a guest house for visiting diplomats and it was maintained by the person who had previously worked in the consulate. I was just telling the story to someone because I had heard the name of the person who had closed the consulate who later went on to be an American ambassador in a number of places and now leads the Carter Center – a woman by the name of Maryanne Peters. I don't know if you've ever run cross her but apparently she had the sad job in somewhere I believe in 1980 or so of passing along to the consulate staff the news that this American consulate was going to close and that the U.S. government had decided its only presence was going to be in Rangoon.

Shall we move on beyond Burma or any other questions?

Q: The only thing I'm just thinking where did you go after Burma?

WAKE: Via another year of language training to Riga. So Leningrad, Rangoon, Riga with language trainings in-between.

Q: How did you find Burmese as a language?

WAKE: Extremely difficult, it was the most unfamiliar to me of all the various languages I've studied. The language program here at FSI was somewhat challenged by the fact that the main instructor had herself not been in Burma since the early 1960s; so about 30 years when we were studying. She had come here as the spouse of a Burmese defense attaché office employee who never went back. I believe her husband had already died and she has since died, Daw Hlaing. She was supplemented a little bit during the course by a recent émigré refugee but it did limit us a bit because the Burmese we were hearing most of the time was not real fresh in terms of the way the language is spoken in the country. But I don't blame that for most of my own weakness in Burmese, it was just a very difficult language to learn. It was also personally a kind of interesting experience. Having just completed my first two years of marriage commuting between Helsinki and Leningrad, when I had only seen my wife an average of a couple days every couple of weeks, I was now spending literally almost 24 hours a day with her as we were studying Burmese in addition to living in the same household.

Q: How was the tribal situation? Did you get much of a feel for it or not?

WAKE: Well there are several ethnic minorities on the border; the Karen, the Kachin, the Shan, the Kayah, and the Wa are among the main ones. I don't know if I would use the word tribal but these different ethnic groups had never really been integrated well into the country. Some of them had rather privileged positions in the colonial era because they had been the household staff; they had been the assistants to the administrators of British India which included Burma. So they were in some ways more familiar with working

with foreigners, many of them were Christian as opposed to Buddhist. These groups varied in their traditions and practices and some in the North toward the Thai and Chinese borders were very dependent on the opium trade. The Karen on the other hand along the Thai border claimed, at least, not to engage in such a trade but they had been warriors, many of them for generations, so it was very difficult to think about integrating them into the country and it's still one of the main challenges the country faces.

There was this special problem of the Muslims in Arakan State that I mentioned who were treated by the Burmese as being almost illegal aliens, a pariah population even though some of them had been there for many generations. And then there were Muslims throughout the country who were also treated suspiciously by many Burmese, who also incidentally were very suspicious of Chinese, who they believed to be buying up the country using drug money and Chinese weapon money. Some of this was probably exaggerated and some of this may have been to some extent true.

Q: Did we have any contact with the Chinese embassy?

WAKE: You know, I don't recall myself having any direct contact. I'm sure that our chargé d'affaires at official events had some contact, maybe we put together a report once or twice in the course of the time I was there, I can't remember. The Chinese were seen as being very much the bank rollers and the allies of a government we found most distasteful and I don't think there was really any serious dialogue.

Q: What about Thailand?

WAKE: Thailand was in one sense, and this goes for all the ASEAN countries regardless of their own sense of democracy, in one sense they were trying to play a bit of a bridge role between the critical West and the understanding East. They, of course, were not particularly thrilled with the idea that China had gained a big influence in Burma so they wanted to show that the neighborhood could be more friendly. But particularly Thailand as an ally of the United States or a good friend of the United States was cautious of going too far in lauding the Burmese because they were a bit of a pariah. Thailand, itself, went through at least one dramatic series of developments when we were there; we were in Burma and they had the military annul an election and then, as I recall, hand power back after some big demonstrations.

Where the Thai were important to Burma was a lot of illegal trade, a lot of illegal logging trade across the border. Thailand was also the home of the largest, I think, resident long time single population of refugees mainly from the Karen group. The Thai allowed them to stay along the border, allowed the international community to feed them and house them but was also suspicious or nervous about having these refugees enter too closely into Thai society. So there were jokes about how these were two neighbors without really a common border because there were no normal border crossing points. There were informal business crossing points, refugee flows but you couldn't really drive as a normal person from one to the other because the whole border region was engulfed in insurgencies, in illegal trade, and so on.

Q: What was social life like there?

WAKE: It was rather active within the expat community and sometimes including a few of those I would call safe contacts from the older Anglicized Burmese professional educated community. Unlike any other place I ever served in my career, we had four household staff; a driver, a house keeper, a cook and a gardener, so it was very easy to entertain each other. Food was relatively easy to obtain and you didn't have to do it yourself; you could send your staff to the market and so on so there were a lot of dinner parties and this sort of thing. But I wouldn't say it was a particularly interesting social life. It was a kind of closed group of people who were all trying to figure out what was going on and how to occupy their time.

We made some friends there and there was strangely enough a one couple presence of the ICRC, the International Committee of the Red Cross, which the Burmese had allowed only because – along with the delegate teaching a bit on humanitarian law, which the military probably didn't really want to hear about – the husband in this couple was an expert in making artificial limbs. This was a service the ICRC provided without regard to the reason people had lost their limbs and in many case these were soldiers who had stepped on mines or otherwise had accidents; so there was a benefit for the government. Anyway, these were among the people we became friendly with, but the community was fairly small. Apart from those Socialist embassies that I mentioned, from the Western world you had the major countries but I think our main contacts tended to be with the British, the Australians, and just a handful of others. There was a small international community of international organizations including UNDP, the UN Development Program, and the UN drug control agency that is now UNODC.

Q: Did you feel you accomplished anything or was this a sort of showing of flying the flag hand holding operation?

WAKE: Much more the latter. I mean you would take satisfaction in small things like the fact that you were there to hear people's stories if they were brave enough to come to talk to you. You could encourage them that the outside world had not completely forgotten the country. If someone had a story about a human rights issue, about an arrest or a killing or something, that you could get the story back to someone that would read it maybe in Washington. But those were small sources of satisfaction. The idea that you really were making any change either in the bilateral relationship or in the destiny of the country just wasn't there; it was not the right time for that.

Q: You think of a country like this which is fascinating but you can't grab it.

WAKE: No, there were people including particularly our immediate boss, our acting deputy chief of mission who was a real Asia hand who thought it was most important to just try and understand the place and understand the background and the religious and the cultural background and try to explain that to Washington so that people would have a greater feel for the reasons things were going to take a long time and so on. Frankly, that

wasn't very welcome in Washington and it wasn't something that seemed to really have very much direct relation to U.S. interest because people in Washington didn't really want to hear why nothing was going to change. They wanted to hear whether anything was going to change and we couldn't give them much positive news on that front.

Q: Well then, by the way, was the military presence, the armed soldiers on the streets or how...?

WAKE: There were and it would go up and down. They would try to project on the basis of whether there was an important anniversary coming up or a holiday or something like that, whether there was any risk of civic unrest or demonstrations and usually would preemptively put a lot of people around key installations and government buildings and so on. This presence outside Aung San Suu Kyi's house also went up and down a little bit with the international climate and how much they seemed nervous about whether anybody would try to demonstrate in front of her home or take advantage in some way.

There was this very weird phenomenon of billboards around town and around the country with rather banal slogans of the military – sometimes in English, which was very strange because not that many, especially younger Burmese people, spoke English. The one that was very close to Aung San Suu Kyi's home that we went past every day was a red poster with white on it with the text "Crush All Destructive Elements." So one was reminded each day when one drove by the leader of the opposition's house that one should crush all these destructive elements, whoever they were. These things were out and about; some of them praised the glory of the Tatmadaw, which was the name for the Burmese armed forces in the local language.

I have to say as time went on during those couple of years the outward feel of being in a military dictatorship reduced a little bit, not dramatically, a little bit. I would have to go back and research this but I believe we did have an easing if not a total elimination during the time I was there of a curfew. There was, when I arrived, at least some period when you shouldn't be out between I think it was eleven and six or something like that but that curfew gradually went away. The government was pretty confident that they had things in hand in the main part of the country; of course, the borders were different. Travel was largely restricted to major centers where tourists were permitted. You could ask to go other places but you needed to wait two weeks for permission and sometimes you wouldn't get it. In the course of two years we got to quite a number of places but there were other parts of the country that were not accessible.

Q: What was Mandalay like?

WAKE: Mandalay was a bit more lively than Rangoon, maybe lively wasn't the word but it seemed a bit more open, more commercially active. There was a greater Chinese business presence that you could see although it was sometimes was hard to distinguish between what you saw and what you were being told by Burmese who were incredibly suspicious of the Chinese business presence. More, I won't say "new" but newer, cars were coming in because there was this border trade with China and as you were closer to

China in Mandalay and there was a little bit more money there vehicles were coming in. You had the old palace and moat and so on; it had a different look to it. Of course, a major difference, going upcountry in Burma from Rangoon is that the climate is a bit cooler, a bit drier and that applies to Mandalay to some extent and some of the other places up in the north that the British and the Burmese had used as a kind of retreat, resorts in the hot rainy season.

Q: Were we concerned that the Chinese might be using Burma as an invasion point at some point to India or anything like that?

WAKE: I think it would be an exaggeration to say we were concerned; the Indians were concerned. We would every so often both hear from the Indian Embassy in Rangoon and see press reports that had been clearly planted from Indian sources about militarization of ports along the Burmese coast; there are some islands that go out into the Bay of Bengal that they consider to be threatening. We to the extent we could pay attention to how the Burmese were developing their infrastructure, tried to report what we heard but, of course, we couldn't physically see most of this and I think the Indian concerns may have been a little bit exaggerated. On the other hand, Burma was getting a significant amount of Chinese military equipment as well as a little bit of other equipment. They were running out the life of some Bell helicopters that the U.S. had given them when they were doing anti-narcotics work. They still ran these but they had to beg, borrow and steal to get the spare parts and they were replacing them with Soviet models including from Poland; some were delivered while we were there. This was a big issue that the United States raised as a problem but, of course, this was just around the time of the transition in Eastern Europe.

Q: Did you get involved in the drug business reporting?

WAKE: Reporting, yes, to the extent that we could learn anything about what was going on. We also had a DEA, Drug Enforcement Agency, person there. There had been a couple of policy disputes between the DEA and the State Department over how far the DEA should go in trying to work with the Burmese government because, of course, the State Department was extremely skeptical of any dealings with these military rulers who were believed themselves to have ties to drug trafficking and who had ties to major human rights violations and so on. The DEA was much more interested in trying to find any way they could to make some cases and find some allies. Before my time one DEA chief had been sent home by I believe it was either the chargé or the last ambassador and I know after my time there were some controversies including one that led to a big lawsuit because the DEA person claimed publicly that the chargé had been inappropriately accessing his communications and that his civil rights had been violated. There is a whole story here that is not from precisely my time but it reflects the fact that any attempt to work with Burma on fighting narcotics was very controversial because on the one hand you couldn't fight it without the Burmese government's help but on the other hand there were suspicions about whether you were dealing with the devil. This is why these visits by people like Charlie Rangel, the Congressman, were seen to some

extent as shows by the Burmese government to try to show that they could be a legitimate partner but they never led very far in my time.

Q: So were you glad to leave?

WAKE: Two years was enough. Culturally the place is fascinating; life was comfortable although warm weather, hot weather, and wet weather were not our favorites when I speak for myself and my wife. So no big regrets that we did it but two years was basically enough, particularly in professional terms, because the idea that you would be there another year writing more reports about somebody either being arrested or released without any real change in the political situation wasn't a prospect that we were looking forward to so much. It's a completely different situation today but we're not there today.

Q: Your next language then?

WAKE: Latvian.

Q: Latvian?

WAKE: Yeah.

Q: Was the Baltic lure there or was this...

WAKE: It was. Because I had been in Leningrad and my wife had visited many times during that period of the push to restore independence, the idea that we could go back and serve in one of the countries that had succeeded in this was a real interest and we were actually rather surprised after several efforts through the personnel system to express our interest and willingness...we would even have been willing to leave Burma early if it had been possible to go and help out with some of the major work that was being done to establish new embassies and so on. Obviously because we were at a small isolated post that didn't really make much sense from Burma but when we left we made it clear that we would be interested in doing that sort of thing and we were sort of surprised that it was possible for us both to end up in Riga because it is a very small post at the time; but we did. That was something we were very much interested in and it turned out to be a great experience.

Q: What was Latvian like as a language?

WAKE: It's one of only two living languages that are in the so-called Balto-Slavic group, or Baltic group, along with Lithuanian. You also had Old Prussian, which was most closely related but is no longer in use. So in that sense people will tell you it's a group that is very unique. On the other hand, I have to say I found it, especially after Burmese, to be...let's not say "easy" but manageable – particularly having already learned Russian and learned, of all things, Swedish. It's very clear that many of the influences in Latvian come from either the Slavic language family (especially Russian) or from the Germanic language family (German and Swedish). So in vocabulary there are many words that have

a root in one or the other of those families that I had previous experience with. The grammar is closer to Russian than to any other language, I think; a similar structure of verbs and noun cases. Of course, it is a separate language and, of course, it was not easy. And there were different challenges at FSI [the Foreign Service Institute] than with Burmese, where you had the same teacher who had been there for thirty years.

In the case of Latvian, what you had was a very new program. We were practically the first generation going through a full year language program; my wife actually studied Russian to go to Riga. She had some Russian language background but her post was designated Russian language at the time, which had some plusses and some minuses. Some of the plusses were that Riga is to this day a majority Russian language city and much of the business community and many of the economic actors actually spoke Russian better than Latvian; but I studied Latvian having already spent a couple years in the Soviet Union in Leningrad. I won't say I became a brilliant Latvian speaker but I could manage, I could read quite easily and the question that always comes up is how much you actually end up using it in the country. I used it a lot for reading and social and informal contacts. Already by that time the diplomatic community, the foreign ministry and major government structures had a pretty high level of English language ability.

Q: Russian was...

WAKE: Russian was always an option as a common language, almost all Latvians and, let's say, residents of Latvia at that time regardless of their ethnic background or citizenship spoke Russian. But you had to be careful from a political perspective not to suggest it unless it was the only option and then to ask whether it would be okay to use Russian; that's for any kind of official context. On the streets you could quickly determine, I mean in markets and stores and so on, that some people would actually prefer to speak Russian.

Q: What was the proportion of Russian and Latvian in the country?

WAKE: The ethnic Latvian population by the time of independence being restored in 1991 was down to about 52 percent, the other 48 percent is not all Russian. It is Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Jewish, Polish and other groups. Of that 48 percent, of course, some portion spoke both languages. Using those numbers is also somewhat artificial because it was a country that – when it was still a republic considered to be a Republic of the Soviet Union – had, I believe, the highest rate of intermarriage of any. So many people had mixed backgrounds and, therefore, some people who identified themselves as Russian or another nationality in the Soviet Union might later identify themselves as Latvian.

The more significant division when we arrived was between citizens and noncitizens. This is because the Latvians, like the Estonians, when they restored independence, adopted citizenship laws which only gave citizenship of the restored republics to those who had had citizenship in 1940 when the Soviet Union invaded and their direct dependents. This meant that a large percentage, not that whole 48 percent, but a large

percentage of the population that had moved to Latvia during the Soviet period or were the children of the people who moved to Latvian during the Soviet period, who didn't have roots in the independence era Latvia, were not citizens of the country on the adoption of that law. This became a big political issue. There was a citizenship naturalization procedure which involved language knowledge as well as a test about the history and so on about the country. And, the number of people that were being naturalized in the early '90s when we first got there was relatively small and this became a big issue in relations with Russia, it became a big issue with relations with the international community. One of our objectives was to support as much as possible both a formal liberalization of the language requirement and particularly the naturalization procedures and also to support things like Latvian language training so that those who wanted to become citizens actually had the opportunity to learn the language. This is something we worked on politically through advocacy but also in partnership with organizations like the UNDP, UN Development Program, that actually tried to assist the Latvian government in developing better language and naturalization procedures. There were some steps forward during those three years but it was still an issue when we left and to some extent still is today.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

WAKE: There were two ambassadors during my time. The first was a Foreign Service officer, himself of Latvian background, Ints Silins.

Q: Who I've interviewed.

WAKE: Who you've interviewed so then you've probably heard a lot about this period already although he was only there during my time for one year. His tour ended in 1995 after whom the new ambassador was Larry Napper. I don't know if you've had a chance to interview Larry; it would be interesting to do so, both on this period and other aspects of his career. By the way it's Larry C. Napper, it is not Lawrence. He is out in one of the universities in Texas. He was and is a proud Texan and he like Ints Silins had a background in Soviet Affairs, had been the director of the Soviet desk on the day the Soviet Union collapsed or starting the summer of the coup.

They were both good ambassadors with different strengths and different challenges. In the case of Ambassador Silins – I don't know if this came through in interviewing him – but one challenge he faced was that, because he was Latvian-American, the Latvian-American community expected miracles from him as if he was their representative rather than a representative of the United States. And on the other hand, to some extent, I'm afraid he probably faced a certain number of suspicions from people who were in other parts of the U.S. government who wondered whether this person who was of Latvian background was going to be looking out for American interests. I think he did the best he could to find that proper role and proper balance but it may have been a bit of a challenge for him.

In that sense it was perhaps a bit easier for Ambassador Napper although, from the Latvian community perspective, the first question might have been whether he knew enough about the country and whether he recognized enough that this was not the Soviet Union because he had a background as a Russian speaker and a Soviet expert. One nice thing that Ambassador Napper was able to do before he got out to Riga was a fair amount of Latvian language training and the fact that he, as an American without any ethnic roots in the region, arrived on the scene and started speaking pretty respectable Latvian, won him an enormous amount of immediate credit. I would say his demeanor and his demonstrated concern for the people of the country and the fate of the country left him as a very popular figure throughout his time even if he had to deliver some very difficult messages sometimes.

Q: You were there from when to when?

WAKE: I was there from '94-'97.

Q: Alright, '94 what was the situation in Latvia would you say?

WAKE: We arrived in August of 1994 and Ambassador Silins said, "Things are fairly quiet, I'm going to take some leave, you should relax and get settled here." But there was one minor detail, which was that the Latvians and the Russians had just agreed in I believe June that there would be a final withdrawal of all the former Soviet troops by August 31, 1994. Oh, and by the way, Bill Clinton, the American president, had been there in July just before we arrived creating a certain number of expectations about things that would be given to the Latvians and support that would be offered. Some of these things started to come home to roost already in August when I was in charge when Ambassador Silins was gone for some days. But even when he was there we found that there were a couple sets of issues that we couldn't just put on hold until the weather got cooler.

One was that the agreement on Soviet troop withdrawals required anyone who was active duty when the agreement was reached, I believe it was June, to leave by August 31st. Any former Soviet military officer who was already retired was allowed to stay and there were special provisions on what kind of social benefits they would get from the Russian government; they would not get the benefits from the Latvian government nor would they become citizens, but they could stay indefinitely. I was called in sometime in August very shortly after I arrived to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and advised that a large number of people who were supposed to be in the first category (that is, active duty military who should have left by August 31st) had been demobilized in place and were seeking to stay in Latvia as if they were part of this second category of demobilized military officers that could remain as long as they didn't become citizens and didn't become a burden on the Latvian state.

Moreover, some of the people who were active duty and had been demobilized claimed they were going to leave Latvia but they couldn't do it because USAID [the U.S. Agency for International Development] had not yet built the houses that we had promised to build

for them in Russia. So all of a sudden a number of issues start to come together and yes indeed the U.S. government as part of the process of encouraging Russia to pull its troops out of the Baltics had offered \$160 million worth of support for housing in Russia for these demobilized military officers. But, of course, the program had gone slowly and it wasn't even clear in some cases whether housing was going to be built by the United States or simply vouchers were going to be given to finish housing that had already been started under construction in Russia and there were huge questions of corruption in terms of which Russian officers were going to get this American built housing. So this was one set of issues that faced us already in August 1994 as generally the Latvians were very happy that most of the active duty Russian soldiers were going to leave.

Then there was a special provision in the Latvian-Russian agreement about a radar station in Latvia that had been built as part of the U.S.-Soviet arms balance and had been covered under the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty as an early-warning radar facility that the Soviet Union was allowed to maintain, as it said in the treaty, on the "periphery" of the Soviet Union (so that no one had to mention that it was in Latvia or the Soviet Union). But this radar at Skrunda, which was the name of the town, had a very specific place in the agreement because the Russians insisted that the existing radar which had been built in the 1960s was needed for a number of additional years in order to provide early warning that was necessary for the strategic nuclear balance.

Of course, the United States recognized that this was sovereign Latvian territory and it should be up to the Latvians whether they allow the Russians to keep this facility there. But, it was true that there was an element of strategic balance and assurance provided by this early warning radar particularly because the Russians had fallen behind in building a replacement facility in Belarus. The Russians were also building a replacement or a supplemental facility in Skrunda, a so-called large phased-array radar on which they had stopped construction around 1989 or '90 but which was very prominent in the political debate in Latvia because unlike the old radar which was a very low to the ground, so-called "Hen House" building, the new unfinished radar had a 19-story receiver building in a completely flat farming area of Latvia. This "new" radar was perceived by Latvians as being an enormous symbol of the Soviet occupation and by many Latvians was believed to be harming their health and their crops although, in fact, it had never been activated.

So the agreement that had been reached between the Russians and the Latvians with a lot of encouragement from the Americans - and you probably heard about this from Ints Silins - was that the old facility could continue to operate for four additional years. The new unfinished facility would be provided to the Latvian government for its destruction, which *de facto* meant for its destruction by an American company which would be financed through a special program as part of the CTR, the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program. One of the things which I ended up doing in that very first couple of weeks in Latvia was receiving a delegation from the Defense Department to sign an agreement on the destruction of that radar. One of things we did was to go up and look at this 19 story building that had been built by the Soviets and then kind of semi-abandoned. We got an agreement and we eventually on the 4th of May 2005 knocked that building down using

an American contractor for this controlled demolition, but these kind of political issues were still hanging over the situation.

As far as the rest of the situation in Latvia it was very much an early transition in terms of the economy and the political system. Democratic elections had been held more than once so you had a system of basically Western-style parliamentary democracy restored. The basics of a market economy were being put in place but there were still enormous weaknesses in the economy and one of the biggest threats that we started to see immediately when we arrived and that really became an issue in the first year there was corruption. There were large numbers of banks in Latvia that among other things were homes for laundered money from Russian corruption. One of these banks was paying huge interest rates to depositors who were continually rolling over their profits and putting them back into the bank until one day in 1995 the whole thing collapsed. The largest single financial institution in the three Baltic Republics practically overnight turned out to have been something between a criminal enterprise, a pyramid scheme, money laundering operation and a bank but not really a bank. So all of a sudden four years into the restored independence it was clear that there was still a long way to go in terms of building a modern clean economic system. There were many, many gaps in the legal system. Needs for judicial reform and those things, of course, had been seen earlier but they really came to the fore during our first year there because of this banking crisis and it was something we tried to help address through USAID programs, through support from the Justice Department and a resident legal advisor. People went to some training with the FBI on these corruption and money laundering issues. And the Latvians were about to have a new set of elections in the second half of 1995.

So in 1995 they have elections which were nearly won by a populist leftist coalition where there was an absolute 50-50 split in the parliament that could have led to a very dangerous kind of government coming into power. But someone in the parliament switched votes and prevented that from happening and then a more mainstream government was put in place that had a business person of somewhat shady background or questionable background as the prime minister but someone who really said, "We've got to pull up our socks and do what's necessary for economic reform and for joining the European Union." Our sense was that for the last two years of our three-year tour there really was an enormous amount of progress on that economic reform front. People took seriously that there weren't going to be any gifts from the West. I mean, they were getting some assistance and so on, but if they were going to achieve their goal which was very much getting out of the links to the East and developing a Western-oriented economy and political system they had to do what was required on the economic reform front and on the political / rule of law / judicial front. A lot of things started to move.

In parallel there was the whole issue of let's say association with, if not yet accession to NATO, and that was another issue that hit the agenda as we were there.

Q: Were you deluged with well-meaning American organizations and individuals all trying to come in and give help and all that?

WAKE: Well I do remember some comment by our ambassador about the number of snouts in the trough of potential U.S. assistance dollars and there were a number of organizations that were trying to get their hands on some of the resources that had been allocated for assistance. But in reality the number of organizations that were really doing significant work on the ground there was fairly manageable I would say. They were the organizations that were well known throughout Central and Eastern Europe, NDI, IRI, National Endowment for Democracy on the democracy side and then as USAID implementers there were a number of partners including government agencies like the Treasury Department and the Commerce Department that sent technical assistance people. I think the problem you hinted at was probably much more serious in larger countries with larger assistance budgets; no one was going to get hugely rich on trying to help the Latvians. So the people who were there tended to be on a fairly modest scale and in general I think we had a pretty serious group of expats using American resources to provide support; gradually the EU was doing more and more. By the time we left we had been thinking about the so-called graduation strategy, thinking about how to get out of the assistance business and move the relationship more to a purely partnership, commercial and other kind of business.

Q: I assume the United States was very welcoming and being an American representative was kind of a ...you really were accepted, weren't you?

WAKE: Yeah, in the first place really doing this kind of work, political work, after Burma and the Soviet Union, not only civil society but the government was so glad to have us there and access was extremely easy. We had a lot of visitors, especially Congressional visitors and when senior people came, meetings with the president, prime minister, foreign minister, were granted routinely; this was not a problem. I'm sure today the former president or prime or foreign ministers would not remember my name as the more junior person in the delegations but we certainly had easy face-to-face relations with all these people. I remember one time in particular when Senator Lugar came, that because the ambassador happened to be away, I was the person escorting the senator to the meeting with the president. It's a small enough country and it was an open enough country with such hopes for strong relations with the United States that these things were very easy going. It didn't hurt, particularly when I arrived in 1994, that of the 100 members of parliament, I think about 18 of them were actually born outside Latvia. I shouldn't say born but at least had been living outside Latvia, and quite a few of them were Americans. So we had Latvian-Americans in a number of positions in the parliament including as the chairs of a number of committees in the parliament and at one point we had a Latvian-American as the defense minister and his twin brother as the Minister for European Integration; they were Olgerts and Valdis Pavlovskis, who had spent most of their lives in the United States and then gone back to serve. A number of other people in the government structures, particularly in the early phase, had an expat background, native speakers of English, were very welcoming to those of us who were clearly there to help from the Western side, U.S. embassy and other.

Q: You must have felt that you were really being useful.

WAKE: You did and there were the regular tasks of diplomatic reporting and trying to just figure out what was going on in the country but it was much more a sense that you were doing active work, that you were there to create a bridge between Latvians who might be looking for some kind of support and people who could provide it on the American side. You were delivering their messages back to people who would actually read them in Washington so it was quite a dramatic contrast from the couple of years I described in Burma where there wasn't much going on and if there had been nobody was much interested.

Q: Did you see the Latvian government moving basically in the right direction or were there a lot of false starts?

WAKE: A little of both. False starts related sometimes to things like domestic politics. I mean even if I take that example of what ended up happening with a \$7 million program by the United States to remove this ugly sore of an unfinished radar in the middle of the country, you had somebody from the environment ministry who wanted to make sure that his friend got the contract and you had somebody who was trying to argue that the Americans were getting too good a deal out of something which we were doing as an assistance project. On some of the reforms, you had agricultural interests that were not very inclined to see open markets and competition with the rest of Europe. But the thing that was so positive in comparison to many of these experiences around the region is that people at the top of the government didn't lose sight of the strategic goal and the strategic goal was "we want to join the European Union as quickly as possible, we want to integrate with Western economies and Western societies, we want to make it impossible to go back to that Soviet system." That overarching goal nine times out of ten overwhelmed the infighting or opposition that might come from a more retrograde force. The crime and corruption issue was the most serious one to overcome because that reached people in various places that might have dual loyalties because they saw their long term interest in the West but maybe they had some personal interest elsewhere. But in general from about the middle of 1995 until the time we left we saw mostly positive movement.

Q: How about the Europeans? What sort of role were they playing?

WAKE: Initially a little bit lower key than we were with the exception, I would say, of the Nordics; the Swedes and the Finns and the Danes were always quite interested in helping, while others were a bit more distant. But as the European Union's decision-making process moved toward openness to at least accepting the possibility of integration then the bureaucracy kind of came on line as well and there were more assistance programs and this was reflected in more activity also by embassies, pretty much always reflecting a bias in favor of neighbors; there wasn't much from Spain and Portugal or even Italy although Italy had a little bit of business activity. Germans and Nordics were the lead countries, the countries that were trying themselves to join the EU like Poland were also very supportive to the extent they could be.

Q: Okay on the NATO thing this must have been pretty major wasn't it?

WAKE: When I arrived sometime early in my tour I recall Washington asking all the embassies in these states “in-between”, let’s call them, the new democracies, what the expectations were and how host governments would react to different kinds of outcomes because this is Washington trying to make up its mind also on NATO enlargement strategy. We weren’t supposed to talk to governments about it really but we were supposed to speculate on it. I kind of recall, one would have to go back and find the responses that different embassies sent in but I kind of recall we made clear that the Latvians wanted their future to be in NATO, they saw that as their only real assurance guarantee against resurgent Russian pressure, nationalism, aggression, etc. But that they also understood that this wasn’t going to happen overnight and that the most important thing was that there be a process where they could be moving in the direction of NATO and that the door was not closed to them. I think we probably made it clear but one would have to go back and look at the text that this was also not going to be an unlimited patience, that at some point there would be frustration and maybe bitterness if they didn’t make it but we probably had a decade or so to work on it. Amazingly, in the end it happened within a decade, but we certainly didn’t know that at the time.

All we knew was that, by the time we left, the message was you are a member of the Partnership for Peace, your candidacy is welcome, the door is open if you meet the requirements and by the way there is a consensus among all NATO states to accept you. For the Latvians that was just barely enough. I mean, they would have liked to be told, you are joining tomorrow or in two years. But it was enough to give them an incentive to do everything they could with their limited capacity and their limited resources to start the process of integration into NATO types of equipment, to accept whatever training they could get. One of the things that President Clinton had promised to help with already in 1994, which was not NATO specific, was to build a Baltic Peacekeeping Battalion so Baltic troops could help address conflicts in other regions like the Balkans, like in the former Yugoslavia. So they were working on all of that stuff. We gradually over the course of the time I was there were able to do a bit more for them.

When I arrived there wasn’t even a Defense Attaché Office in Riga. The Defense Attaché responsible for Latvia was in Stockholm and hardly ever came to see us, but we did have something called the Military Liaison Team which was a team composed mainly of people from the Michigan National Guard or led at least by the Michigan National Guard that had a purely non-lethal mandate, a mandate to provide assistance in areas of administration and organization and morale and so on but not to do any lethal training. By the time I left we had provided some boots and uniforms but also some light weapons because there was a change in policy. First we provided weapons specifically for that peacekeeping battalion because it was clear that they would need some weapons if they were going to go to keep the peace in Bosnia or something. Then eventually we provided some “excess” rifles also to the Latvian National Guard, which was already a pretty big move in the direction of military support with a careful eye on how the Russians would react. But it was also clear that when the first round of NATO enlargement came the Baltics were not going to make it. This was a disappointment to them but one that was somewhat, I would say, ameliorated by the fact that there was a very clear statement at

the Madrid NATO Summit in 1997 not only that the door remained open but specifically mentioning the Baltic aspirations to join NATO in a very positive way.

One of the very last things that I did during my three years in Riga was to go down to Vilnius in Lithuania where Secretary Albright came immediately after the Madrid Summit as part of a congratulatory and consolation prize trip. The idea was for one senior official to congratulate the new members, those who were being invited to join – Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary; I think the president or vice president made some of the visits. But one of Secretary Albright's important stops was to go to Vilnius to see the three Baltic presidents and foreign ministers to say, "We really meant it when we said that the door is still open; this is not the end of the process, but a process that continues."

I think it was a relatively successful effort to make the best of the situation. Of course there was a lot of disappointment but there was also a lot of effort at all levels to make Baltic leaders know this wasn't the end. If NATO enlargement was going to be successful at all it had to make it through the American Senate in the first round and the best way to do that was - and I can still remember the now late Ron Asmus, who was Deputy Assistant Secretary of State - giving this message to Latvian officials: "The best way to get this thing started is we've got to get countries that have even more friends than you do in the American Senate through the process. So starting with Poland makes a lot of sense, Hungary and the Czech Republic will get through and then if you keep up your reforms, you keep up your steps to contribute, be more of a contributor than a drain on European security, your chance may come." No one was sure that chance would actually come so quickly. When I left in 1997 I would say we were satisfied that we'd done the best we could in supporting the process over those years but it took some twists of fate and history to also get them in a few years later.

Q: Well you know you talk about all these Soviet officers hanging around. We must have been looking over our shoulders during this time?

WAKE: You know to a large extent this was more of an issue of Latvians exerting control over their own county and enforcing their residence and immigration laws than what we really considered to be a security threat. Most of these people stayed in Latvia for one simple reason, which was that it was a more pleasant place for them to be living. Russia was still in a lot of economic turmoil, most people's incomes had gone way down, in Latvia you had a more Western environment, many of these people had done their vacationing and dacha residences had been on the Baltic Sea coast anyway so the idea that these people were really a big threat because they were former military wasn't major. There were, of course, always efforts by Moscow to stir things up one way or another with the Russian-speaking or ethnic Russian population in the Baltics, to raise issues at international levels of human rights violations but actually the former officers were not as much the issue as the former, let's call them, the Soviet "proletarian" immigrants, the people who came during the Soviet period to work in industrial enterprises. This was a group of people that were hit hard by economic reform, who didn't benefit so much from being in independent Latvia and were a bit more likely to have a certain amount of

nostalgia for the Soviet Union, tended to be lower educated and less likely to learn Latvian and more concerned that their linguistic opportunities were limited.

So there were these risks but I have to say during the entire three years we were there, there were no real civil disturbances or any kind of major manifestations of anti-government sentiment from ethnic Russians or anyone else. Some more sophisticated efforts were undertaken, for example to influence those 1995 elections, to blacken the name of Latvia abroad by planting stories about human rights issues; they were there. But frankly the place was remarkably stable considering what it had emerged from five years earlier and in comparison to the difficult and violent transitions you had in the former Yugoslavia, in places like Moldova and Georgia and Tajikistan, where you had civil wars. In Latvia you had an amazingly quiet, even serene environment despite some real issues of particularly the rights of these non-citizens.

Q: I plan to be interviewing your wife so I'll ask her what she was up to.

WAKE: Right.

Q: How was social life there?

WAKE: It was enjoyable, but we worked hard; it was a busy work life.

Q: I imagine it would be a very busy period.

WAKE: Yeah, but there was a relatively active social life that involved particularly a combination of the diplomatic and this quasi-expat community, Latvian-American community, people who had one foot in each society who were still very interested in having dealings with the embassy but also were connected in their work lives to the Latvian society. So for quite a while there was a happy hour kind of thing every Friday night at the embassy and, of course, the security was much less than it is today and it was downtown; the embassy has subsequently moved but at that point it was right in the center of town. The building had a tragic history because it had been the SS headquarters during World War II but in more recent years had been some kind of government building which was in a great location but it was sinking into the ground at an uneven rate so you could put a ping pong ball on one side of the ambassador's office and have it roll down at a pretty hefty speed. So it made sense at some point that the building needed to be replaced; we didn't own it but it did have a little cafeteria in the basement that we used as a happy hour facility on Fridays and that was a kind of gathering place.

Q: Was there much immigration?

WAKE: No, as a matter of fact the embassy didn't do immigrant visas; it only did non-immigrant visas. The immigrant visas were done in Poland and what the consular section did in Latvia was a sort of preliminary work especially with adoption cases. There were quite a few American adoptions of Latvian children, orphans and others, but overall it wasn't a huge flow in either direction. You did have a number of these people who came

back, some came back temporarily, some of them I know from being there in 2014 are still resident, one who my wife just happened to run into a couple of months ago in 2014 had set up a national human rights ombudsperson's office in Latvia. So she came back for a very specific cause of trying to help her parents' homeland to deal with certain issues and she has ended up living there; this is quite a common story. It's not a population that was leaving in great numbers. However, I'm afraid that over the last two decades, when you add it all up, quite a large number of people have left. Of course now it is even hard to keep track of how many people are coming and going because they are citizens of the European Union and they have open travel back and forth. Some people are working abroad for indefinite periods without any clear intentions about where they are going to end up because under EU laws it's not really quite the same issue as if they were in the U.S.

Q: Where did you go next?

WAKE: Next I came back to the U.S. and for one year was on a fellowship up in New York at Columbia University, which was my own alma mater, connected to the Harriman Institute of the School of International Public Affairs. Among other things I actually taught a course on the Baltic States.

Q: Good. Well we will pick it up at that point then.

WAKE: And there is not much to say about that but then I moved on to Washington and worked on assistance issues with the former Soviet Union.

Q: Okay, well we will pick this up then. Great.

Q: Today is March the 3rd, 2015 with Douglas Wake. Well you left Latvia when?

WAKE: In the summer of 1997.

Q: And then you taught where?

WAKE: Then I was at Columbia on a mid-career fellowship program that different people have used in different ways. I combined some study so that I could complete a so-called Certificate at the Harriman Institute of Columbia University which was an advanced recognition of study of the former Soviet Union and Central Eastern Europe on top of the master's degree I had gotten there almost 20 years earlier. That was the first thing I did and then I taught a course on the Baltic States, having just left Latvia and having also served in Leningrad during that period of Baltic independence restoration.

Q: How did you find the students?

WAKE: I found it to be actually quite different than when I had been there actually about sixteen, seventeen years before in the sense that there were many more graduate students who had a lot of life experience. A lot of foreign students and a lot of American students

who had done something with a non-governmental organization, been in the Peace Corps and even worked in a business and ended up being not sort a full generation younger than I was but only half a generation because many of them were already in their late twenties and early thirties.

Q: What were they looking for?

WAKE: Well, of course, they were looking for professional opportunities, careers. Most of the students I was dealing with were in the graduate School of International and Public Affairs, not in purely academic masters or PhD programs. So they were looking for careers in, broadly speaking, the international sector. You know you self-select so I ended up, because of my own interests, dealing more with people that were more focused on and in some cases from Central Europe and the former Soviet Union. Many of them were looking to work on promoting development and human rights in those regions. But more broadly there were, of course, many that were looking at private sector opportunities and international organizations.

Q: You did this for a year?

WAKE: I did that for just a year, yeah.

Q: Then where did you go?

WAKE: Then I went down to Washington where my wife was already living; we had just bought a house after coming back from Riga. For the first time we were able to have not only ourselves but also all our household goods in the same residence; they'd been in storage in different places since before we were married.

Q: Yeah.

WAKE: I had a job in what was then called in the State Department acronym S/NIS/C, which stood for the coordinator of U.S. Assistance to the New Independent States of the former Soviet Union. The S was to designate that it was not formally part of the European bureau and not subordinate to the ambassador-at-large for those countries who was also a kind of special envoy at the time but had a direct reporting relationship to the Secretary of State and even the President. Because of the way that the legislation had been written in the early '90s on assistance to the former Soviet Union there was this kind of dual role that the coordinator played at the State Department and basically as a representative of the NSC [National Security Council]. My position was called director for economic programs, which was the head of one of four units within the office. The others dealt with democracy programs, humanitarian assistance and non-proliferation programs (cooperative threat reduction, nuclear security and that sort of thing). So my position was basically focused on the coordination of U.S. government funding to support economic reform throughout the twelve new independent States. The Baltic States were not included because of the fact that we had never recognized them as being part of the Soviet Union and they were dealt with as part of Central Europe and Northern Europe.

But we had twelve difficult clients and the biggest share of U.S. assistance on the civilian side at that time not only on a per capita but on a dollar basis was going not to Russia but to Ukraine; Russia was second in dollar terms and was first if you also counted in all that security and nuclear non-proliferation assistance. But in terms of economic assistance, Ukraine was our biggest client and you can see as we sit here in 2015 what a brilliant success we had in promoting economic reform.

Q: What was the situation in Ukraine at the time you took this job?

WAKE: Well it was already then, what, seven years into independence? Things had settled into a level of, I would say, stagnation and corruption that has continued to plague the country. President Kuchma was already in power. However, you had, as you have consistently through modern Ukrainian history, an element of the elite including some within the government who were very committed to reform and were sophisticated enough to understand what needed to be done but just not necessarily able to deliver on it. So we had a tremendous amount of assistance given the size of the country. I think at one point the Ukraine account by itself just for economic and technical assistance which included some civilian nuclear security things but not military things, was over \$200 million a year; a pretty significant chunk. There were those who were eagerly absorbing advice about reform of the financial sector, the energy sector, you name it. The problem is that, if you look at what was promised in exchange for the U.S. assistance and what was actually then delivered through the system, there is a big gap. I always remind people now in this modern crisis over Ukraine how we had the best experts in the world who happened to work for USAID on energy efficiency and energy sector modernization explaining in detail to their Ukrainian counterparts who understood what needed to be done in order to make the system more efficient. This involved, of course, raising prices so that people were aware of what they were using because it actually hit them in the pocketbooks. Instead, subsidies continued, gas passing through the country in transit to Western Europe continued to be stolen by the Ukrainians. So there was a real problem there.

There were a couple of specific things that I got involved in because of a combination of the economic imperatives and political initiatives. One, which hit me the first day in the office, was that President Kuchma had just promised Secretary of State Albright at the time, that Ukraine would cease production of turbines for Iranian nuclear reactors. So Russia was building nuclear reactors in Iran ostensibly for civilian energy purposes. The issue is on the front pages of the newspaper today as we are talking in 2015 but at that time the so-called Bushehr reactors which were being built ostensibly for nuclear energy purposes depended on turbines that were being produced in the city of Kharkiv in Eastern Ukraine. The U.S. was trying to do everything possible to slow down this initiative, this construction, and pressured President Kuchma to halt production of these turbines for Iran. In exchange there were some promises made. I'd never seen a detailed report of the meetings. I've heard different versions but suffice to say from the Ukrainian perspective the promise was that the Americans will pay us in cash for all the lost income that we would have gotten from the Iranians and the Russians for these turbines that were going to be produced. From the U.S. perspective, it was something more in the nature of "we

have this office in the State Department that will start a new initiative to see if we can kind of help you in some way to promote economic development of the Kharkiv Region in order to substitute for some of the lost income and jobs from the turbine production.”

So Doug Wake in June of 1998, just after coming down from New York, hears that the first thing you are going to do is go to this Ukrainian city called Kharkiv and explain to them the kind of initiatives that we are prepared to take to help them to overcome the loss of what they described as tens if not hundreds of millions of dollars’ worth of income from the turbines. These were things like “we can do small business training” and “we can send a few people on exchange programs to the United States so they can learn more about how we do things. We can see whether we can get you in touch with somebody from Westinghouse or one of the other American energy companies involved in this kind of production to see if they might be interested in working with that factory in some way.” You can imagine the response this mid-level Foreign Service officer received when he went to Ukraine from people like the governor and the mayor and the head of the huge factory where they produced these turbines – or at this point, didn’t produce the turbines anymore – was kind of “where’s the beef? We thought the Secretary promised us something real and you’re offering us this minor kind of technical assistance.” Eventually we did launch something called the Kharkiv Initiative, we did deliver some of these modest American technical assistance programs but I have to say in the two years I was there and several visits to Kharkiv at some point also with my boss who was the coordinator of assistance there was always a sense of mismatch between what we were able to deliver and what the Ukrainians thought they had been promised; or made out to believe they had been promised. Maybe they had understood exactly what Secretary Albright had told them and it was very modest but they at least portrayed it as a quid pro quo where we weren’t paying our share.

Q: How do we feel about anything with the word nuclear and Iran together?

WAKE: Well at that time our position was that we should try to stop everything. Obviously the policy has evolved over the years and reality has seeped in and now I think if it’s peaceful nuclear energy and we really were 100 percent sure that’s all that was going on that seems to be within the realm of the current negotiations in 2015. But at that time we were trying to slow everything down and it was actually not a very practical measure. I’m not a nuclear energy expert but it seemed to me that it was pretty clear that if Russia was a major producer of nuclear power stations for its own use and for use in Ukraine, for example, and the Ukrainians weren’t going to sell the turbines to the Iranians, then Russia would find another way to produce them in one of its other factories. And, of course, that’s what they did. So the Ukrainians lost a lot of business buy it probably didn’t slow down the nuclear construction project very much.

At the same time a big project we had in Ukraine had to do with the aftermath of their nuclear disaster in Chernobyl. There was a lot of money going into building a so-called sarcophagus over the dead part of the reactors so that the radiation would not harm the environment for generations and there was some nuclear safety work for the continuing reactors they had. That was all more positive, I would say, in the sense that where

economic reform met with competing economic interests in Ukraine and people who didn't think the reforms would benefit them, everybody wanted nuclear safety to be enhanced so that kind of assistance, I think, was much appreciated.

One of the other challenges we had was because of the close ties between the United States and Ukraine including many Ukrainian Americans living in the United States. Some had gone back and formed businesses in Ukraine early on in the '90s. But by 1998 there was a handful of such cases that had gone very bad and the cheated American investors or the American investors who believe that they had been cheated by their Ukrainian partners or by Ukrainian government actions created a sort of competitive pressure within the U.S. system. At that time, on one side, the big push was "let's give Ukraine as much money as possible because it's a client or a friend we are trying to help." But there was an alternative or competing pressure: let's make sure we tie that assistance to better work on these investment cases, none of which during my time actually got resolved but all of which were always on the agenda at very high levels considering that they often involved quite small amounts of money by international standards and disputed issues of whose license wasn't approved and why that led to some investors losing their funds. But, of course, we had to do what we could for these people.

Q: When I think of Ukraine I think of this marvelous soil that it has, probably the best in the world, this black soil and one of the big things the Ukrainians would do was export of food.

WAKE: First of all it's true that it's a big producer and I'll mention food in a second as a different problem I dealt with mainly concerning Russia. But you had the problem throughout the former Soviet Union or at least in the more developed parts like Russia-Ukraine that they had not yet really completed a solid transition from the former collective farm system to a modern private agriculture system. So there were a lot of inefficiencies. There was a little bit of technical advice from the U.S. on this although I can't remember that we had any big USDA, U.S. Department of Agriculture, program. What we did have in our dialogue and I remember this very distinctly was advice about how to get the government out of the sector to make it more efficient.

One of the issues that must have been in multiple communiqués because I remember people actually joking about it sarcastically was that the Ukrainians would receive one or another kind of U.S. assistance and it would be highlighted in some part of the joint statement that we would reach. And as one of their steps, they would commit to privatize their grain elevators; every year they would commit to privatize their grain elevators but they never did because somehow there was an economic interest for certain people and the government to hold on to these kind of bottleneck facilities because farmers would produce but then it would have to go through a State distribution system and somebody would be able to skim off it. Nevertheless, I think the Ukrainian agriculture system has been, if not a success story, at least an important buttress to their economy; if they didn't have that, they would really be in trouble because so much of their industry has fallen behind modern standards.

There was one other Ukraine-related piece of business and then maybe I should move on. There was a bright idea and I don't say this critically but one of those ideas that is a great idea that's hard to implement in practice. The idea was that we should look at how well Poland was doing by the mid to late 1990s and how many problems Ukraine still had given that they had come from a similar cultural and economic and political background. So couldn't we work with Poland to advise the Ukrainians on how to make their reforms work better? This evolved into something that had a terrible acronym: it was the Poland-America-Ukraine Cooperation Initiative, PAUCI.

I've often thought one could do a case study in how a good idea runs into bureaucratic and political challenges by looking at this initiative where you had not only three different countries with very different perspectives on the issues but also three different U.S. embassies, three different USAID missions, different officials within all of these governments in some cases on the Polish side from a very well-meaning but also particular perspective thinking, "ah, we know exactly which Polish institution is going to be able to use U.S. money to help Ukraine." And Ukrainians thinking "wouldn't it be better if you'd just give us the money so we can do it ourselves?" It then ran into a bit of a problem when we finally picked a contractor to implement the program that in a separate Ukraine-related activity had a bookkeeper steal a lot of money and you had to reset that business. So I understand that eventually this PAUCI thing produced some success and I've met veterans of it in recent years, and it still exists, who say it's been a modest but useful kind of support for Ukrainian reform. But it was one of the most painful aspects of the two years I spent in that job because it was just very hard to get it going.

Maybe one other...of course we dealt with twelve countries and there were issues in all of them but the other big thing I ended up spending my time on was the fact that within two or three months on the job in August of 1998 you had the Russian economic collapse, the collapse of the ruble, the sort of free-fall of the economy. This led to many different kinds of let's say internal reviews and reconsiderations of whether we were doing the right things. But one of the urgent things that came up because Russia had become so dependent on imported food products from the West that they paid for with their IMF, International Money Fund, loans and some of the privatization money was real concern among some people in 1998 that there would be a food crisis in Russia and that people were actually going to suffer as a result of the lack of imported food now that the ruble was one-fifth of its previous rate over the course of a week or something. I can't remember exactly...

Q: Yeah.

WAKE: ...the fall but it was a dramatic fall. This led some people in Moscow both in the Agriculture Ministry of the Russian Federation and in the agriculture attaché's office of the United States Embassy to say, "Ah, wouldn't this be a time to provide some United States food assistance to Russia again?" Something that had been done right at the beginning of the post-Soviet period and, of course, back in Soviet times the Soviet Union had purchased grain from the United States. But this didn't continue on a government-to-

government basis anymore in the late '90s and all of a sudden the request was made by the Russian side: could the United States provide a large food assistance program, mostly grain but also a little bit of meat? I have to say that the Department of Agriculture of the United States was enthusiastically in favor of this idea because the Department of Agriculture likes the idea of exporting American food in general and exporting American food in large quantities also has the benefit of driving up prices in the United States, which the American farmers like.

Q: Yeah.

WAKE: So it seemed to those players to be a good deal for everybody; for the agriculture ministry, the Russian Federation and for the USDA, U.S. Department of Agriculture people. When the idea got back to Washington reactions were a little bit more cautious because of several questions about whether it was really economically in the interest of Russia to get a lot of food dumped on the market because this might discourage them from growing their own. Also, what was going to happen under this U.S. agricultural assistance between the delivery and the consumer and who was going to be able to skim off how much and what the corruption potential was? So what we ended up with, in short, for an intense period starting in the summer of 1998, were very high level discussions within the administration led by the National Security Council, NSC, led by Carlos Pascual who later had some other senior positions, but was at that time the NSC senior director for Russia and other countries. These were discussions about determining whether Russia needed food assistance, if so, how much and how it could be delivered in such a way that corruption would be minimized. In the end, we did have a fairly major program; I think it was over a billion dollars, three million tons of grain, I think, and small quantities of beef, if I remember. A whole unique system was put in place for monitoring how the grain would be sold down the line because there would have to be a point at which it wasn't just to be given to consumers; it was to be sold and get into the regular distribution system. A whole set of monitors involving among other things many of the spouses and family members of American embassy people were traveling all over Russia for years, a couple of years anyway, to assess and make sure that this food and this money were going where it was supposed to and so on.

It was interesting to be involved in it and interesting to see the dynamics in Washington where, in fact, the job of the State Department and the NSC was in some sense to curb the enthusiasm of the USDA people and in the end a consensus was reached on a program that made sense. Some of the things the Russians asked for, probably because they were encouraged to ask for them by USDA, were never delivered because of the fact there was too much concern in Washington that these would be programs that would either be too disruptive to the market or would have too much corruption potential. One of the things I remember that we had big debates over whether we would provide poultry because on the one hand the poultry industry in the United States wanted to restore the market which they had and on the other hand there was a big concern that this should be a normal commercial business because if people wanted to buy this stuff they could. Then ironically, later, within a few years poultry became a big issue between the United States and Russia not because we were trying to give it to them but because they were trying to

keep our poultry out through all sorts of phony arguments about phytosanitary suitability and so on.

Q: Had the poultry industry developed in Russia so much?

WAKE: The Russian poultry industry did develop a lot over the '90s. It had been a terrible under-developed sector in Soviet times but then developed because it did face competition, both from commercial imports and so-called humanitarian assistance. I don't know if you've ever heard the term "Bush legs" but in the early '90's the first President Bush was associated with the delivery of humanitarian assistance to Russia. This assistance often came in the form of frozen chicken legs which people both survived on and hated at the same. They were not very attractive big boxes of frozen legs which were widely understood to be a part of the chicken Americans didn't like as much. So it was considered to be a kind of dumping thing but it did leave the Russian industry to develop a competitive approach. Actually I think it's one of the better sectors in the Russian agricultural economy now.

WAKE: When you were there corruption was just plain endemic within the whole system wasn't it?

WAKE: Well, yes. We will get to my next stay in Moscow probably in a few minutes but when I was first living in what was still the Soviet Union corruption was in a sense controlled by the state. There, of course, were criminals and black markets but criminals in black markets had a hard time surviving if they didn't have some sort of toleration by at least local officials. It was very much fueled in the late 1980s, the first time I was working in that part of the world I was working in the Soviet Union, by shortages, the fact that there wasn't enough to go around, the currency was fairly worthless so the currency that was most valuable was goods and people who had access to goods would use them.

Then as things opened up in the '90s, while I wasn't living in Russia again until 2000, you had the whole business of privatization and selling off of state resources which in one sense was very much encouraged by the United States as part of the economic reform. You have to get it out of government hands and into private hands, but this had tremendous potential for abuse because people got resources not through being the highest bidders but through their connections and got things at low state prices and sold them for private market prices. So a lot of wealth was transferred or generated through what we would call corrupt means; not always illegal means strictly speaking and this is always one of the issues now when you look at who became the oligarchs and who became the big economic players in Russia. Some of them clearly used illegal means including violent means and murder and everything else. Others got their positions more through connections and taking advantage of the absence of law or lack of clarity in the legislative framework in the '90s.

Q: How about corruption within the suppliers in the United States was this a problem?

WAKE: In terms of suppliers of assistance or...?

Q: Yeah.

WAKE: You know, in my time I can't say that I saw real evidence of that. There was one case still pending when I entered the office, which became quite prominent and well known, involving some people from Harvard University, in fact. They had formed a consultancy or NGO that had the name something like Harvard International Institute for Development or something like that. I can't remember the exact acronym. But they had been involved in the earlier '90s in providing advice on issues like privatization and the stock market and the allegation surfaced then that some of the same people or their relatives or associates were essentially using insider information to invest and make money on the Russian stock market. This was a case that, I believe, was somehow settled later without anyone going to jail. I don't really know the details but there may have been a legal settlement with the Justice Department. What I know is that during the time I was in the office this was a case that one absolutely didn't talk about, not because anybody was being coy about it, but it was simply under investigation by the Justice Department and any questions were referred outside our office. There were probably some bad judgments made at minimum in how people mixed assistance and business.

While I was there I would say I was less concerned about corruption than maybe inefficiency including that of our own Treasury Department. Even though you think of the Treasury Department as the department that prints the money, in the world of international assistance they are an implementing partner who has to get money from the State Department or AID or someone. So if you are going to send a Treasury Department consultant or contractor out to Russia to sit with the Ministry of Finance or the central bankers to give them advice, that has to be funded out of the assistance budget not out of the budget of the Treasury Department. And I was a little shocked to learn early in my time in that office that for one Treasury Department contractor to spend a year in Moscow or Kiev to provide assistance - admittedly involving some short term additional support from other people - cost just short of \$500,000 a year.

When I thought about what we were able to do through sending some Peace Corps volunteers or sending some people on exchange programs where they might pick up a lot of knowledge in the course of a couple of weeks, I had to wonder about these programs. But they were considered in Washington to be very important because you had senior advisors in these places where the perception was that, even if they are not undertaking all of the reforms they should be, you are delivering messages that may be remembered later. I have to say in the Russia case for everything that went wrong in Russia it did take some of the good USAID and U.S. Treasury Department financial and economic advice actually in the early Putin years. A lot of what was happening during the Yeltsin years was that the advice was being given and put on the shelf and people were patted on the head and said, "Thank you very much," and they went ahead and continued as they were operating before. But some of those good economic reform packages that were on the shelf did get implemented in the early Putin years. It did become easier because the price of oil went up and the recovery, therefore, from the economic crisis was quite dramatic

and there were resources available to do things; unfortunately it wasn't maintained. What positive reforms did take place in the early Putin years were not carried through to the present.

Q: Well this must have been kind of heady?

WAKE: Was it kind of ...?

Q: Heady?

WAKE: Well, yes and no. It was, when you were dealing with something like NSC and other meetings on the future of Russia and Ukraine. This was still the Clinton Administration and you may recall that under President Clinton there were high-level commissions dealing with both Russia and Ukraine. In the Russia case it was the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission, the vice president of the United States and the prime minister of Russia headed this commission. In the case of Ukraine it was the Gore-Kuchma Commission so the vice president of the United States dealt with the president of Ukraine. Whenever there was a meeting of one of those commissions, about once every six months, there would be a lot of high-level meetings in Washington involving all of the relevant agencies to prepare. Yes, those were some of the only times I sat in White House and NSC meetings on a regular basis.

I have to say very early in my time in that office one of these meetings was going to come up in Ukraine and uniquely the only time in my two years in that office I was invited to join my boss for a briefing of the vice president. So we had Vice President Gore across the table as the Treasury Department and the assistance coordinator and others were briefing. I actually remember the assistance coordinator, who at that time was Richard Morningstar, who later went on to some other roles in energy policy, actually talking about something you had mentioned earlier which was how he had traveled across Ukraine and just saw the enormous potential of all this beautiful land and all this agricultural potential that was unfortunately not being used efficiently. And he said, "Mr. Vice President it's really important that you stress the importance of reform." Unfortunately, Vice President Gore must have come back from an important trip the night before and he was actually sleeping while my boss was trying to explain to him with great enthusiasm how to provide economic reform in Ukraine. So it was heady in that sense but there were also a lot of nitty-gritty details.

A lot of this assistance business has to do with Congressional notifications and details of transferring money around the government from one account to another.

Q: How did you find the role of Congress during this?

WAKE: Actually, remarkably supportive. There was really very little partisan contention over these programs at the time. I think it helped that the coordinator, the person I worked directly for, Ambassador Bill Taylor, was a kind of career-government person. Although he was not a Foreign Service officer, he was somebody who had good ties across

Washington with people in both parties. He had at one point worked for Bill Bradley on a campaign so he had that Democratic connection but he had also started working for Dick Armitage early in the period when we were assisting the independent states after the collapse of the Soviet Union when it was still the Bush administration. So, he had good ties and he understood the importance of dealing with Congress.

The one thing that was maybe a little more troubling was that Congress would try to micromanage certain aspects of the budget so that the fact that you had very large per capita assistance programs for Ukraine, Georgia, and Armenia perhaps out of all proportion to the role among the twelve countries of the former Soviet Union very much had to do with the political influence of the Ukrainian-American community and the Armenian-American community on Congress and in the case of Georgia it was a different factor which was that people were still enamored of Shevardnadze for his role in the peaceful dissolution of the Soviet Union. Then there were more particular interests like the fact that when the budget was passed for Ukraine there was some specific language in either the bill or in the committee reports making it clear that certain kinds of contracts would go, for example, to companies in Kentucky that dealt with nuclear safety matters that just happened to be in the same state as an important appropriator. Similar things happened with Alaska and the work involving the Russian Far East when the late Senator Stevens was involved and so there were these places where the assistance was maybe not delivered in the most efficient way because Congress had said you must use this particular vehicle.

But Congress was generally supportive and the dollar figures were pretty high at that time. They were declining a little bit; they declined much more in the 2000s but in the late '90s they were declining. There were a lot of earmarks and restrictions on funding, particularly for Russia, but they were more bureaucratic headaches than anything else. You had restrictions, for example, on this issue of nuclear cooperation with Iran. The law said you had to cut the assistance fifty percent to Russian government recipients if Russia was continuing to cooperate with Iran but nobody said where the fifty percent number started so you could actually play games with how to deliver the right amount of assistance to those government agencies that you wanted to help, which was fairly limited anyway. We were moving into a new era and we wanted to do more assistance with civil society and regions. We had an initiative to try and help those Russian regions that were more reform-oriented. I wouldn't, looking back on it, necessarily say it was any brilliant success but we were at least trying to get out of Moscow and do grassroots work in places that had more reform-oriented governors and economic sectors.

Q: Did you find that the Russian officials pretty much on board understanding what was going on or was there a real problem of communications?

WAKE: You know certainly dialogue and access was much better than it can be in the current climate, in the 2015 climate. On the other hand, this was a country several years into very painful transition and facing a big political transition because everyone knew Yeltsin was already out of it and would be leaving office. So a lot of their attention was elsewhere. When you talk about economic reforms, a lot of things had been done earlier

during the '90s. The idea of taking too many new steps at that moment was to some extent maybe a distraction. Of course, by the fall of 1999 you already had the rise of Putin not as president but as prime minister and then you had the surprise resignation of Yeltsin handing over power immediately in 2000 on New Year's Day. In '99 you also had the distraction of the parliamentary election, which by the way I went to observe; I was sent out by my office to join the embassy's observation effort and went to a city not too far from Moscow called Vladimir. Of course, those were elections that still essentially took place under reasonably democratic procedures but it was at a point when the media was used very much by the outgoing Yeltsin, incoming Putin forces to shift public opinion in favor of what later became the Putin party that was then called the Unity Party, Yedinstvo, and later became United Russia; so things were challenging.

We also had long-standing disputes that never were resolved and as far as I know to this day have never been resolved over things like Russian taxation of American assistance; that was something that really bothered the Congress and for understandable reasons: you shouldn't be giving assistance and then having taxes charged on it, but this was a constant source of dispute and frustration. Any number of Foreign Service officers including yours truly probably have something in their evaluation reports about what a great job we did in resolving the problems with Russia over taxation of assistance and yet these problems then would emerge the next year for some other Foreign Service officer to solve. Ambassador Pickering had actually solved these problems some time earlier in the '90s in a famous memorandum that he had agreed with a deputy foreign minister that had clarified everything, except that then everything fell apart again when some mid-level finance ministry official decided that he read the law different way.

Q: Was there an element of dealing with European efforts to help Russia?

WAKE: There was, of course. The issue of coordination is a constant one and our office was called the coordinator of U.S. assistance and we were expected to coordinate with other players. Not only in this job but in other jobs I found this is easier to talk about than to do in practice because everybody has their own planning cycle, their own specific parliamentary pressures, and their own expertise that they think they're best able to deliver. So we tried, I would put it that way. I think I was only in Brussels once in connection with that job and that was specifically over this issue of food assistance because the Europeans were actually quite concerned that the United States was going to, in a way, screw up on balance in the agriculture market also to the disadvantage of Europeans who were not providing free assistance but saw this as an important market for them.

I wouldn't say we ever actually saw eye-to-eye but I did go to Brussels and speak with European Union counterparts together with the person who was dealing with this at the agriculture department. That was Asif Chaudry, who later became an ambassador to Moldova, who had been the agriculture attaché in Moscow and then went back to USDA. We traveled together to Brussels to basically describe what we were planning to do and also to ease European concerns that this was something we were going to be doing for years on a massive scale. We tried to explain that this was a onetime response to what

we saw as a shock to the Russian economy from the ruble crisis and that we hoped, as they did, that things would return to market circumstances quickly so that one wouldn't be dealing with trade-disrupting assistance.

Otherwise, yes, we knew what the Europeans were doing and we tried to coordinate with them and one of the vehicles was the G7 / G8 process. But I must say from my own perception the G7 / G8 process was much more about writing talking points and memos and papers in Washington than anything that really had an impact on true coordination of assistance. There would always be commitments of G7 / G8 leaders to better coordinate their assistance and sometimes they'd even set up mechanisms to do this, which in my experience was not particularly effective.

Q: Was Vice President Gore a major driver of this whole process?

WAKE: He was. Whether he was a driver, he was certainly somebody who was very involved because these bilateral commissions, bi-national commissions, were meeting a couple times a year anyway. So at least once a year in Moscow or Kiev and once a year in Washington and if you think about it, that's four times a year that you have a couple of days of engagement with your counterparts from these countries and each time multiple cabinet officials would travel to Moscow or from Moscow or Kiev. It did involve a lot. When problems came up that someone wanted to address in a phone call or in a letter that wasn't quite at the level of the president, the vice president would get involved; I mean I can't say I saw much of that personally. I mentioned I once was in a meeting that he was in but I think there was a role and in fact every one of these high-level or let's say high working-level meetings about preparation for these things would involve both the National Security Council and the office of the vice president. He had a staff of people that were dealing with these things and that is itself unusual, to have staff of the office of the vice president specifically focused on a couple of countries like this.

Then there was a complicated structure of subordinate bodies so that in both the Russia and Ukraine cases my boss, the Coordinator of Assistance to the New Independent States, was the chair of a Committee on Sustainable Economic Cooperation which reported to the bi-national commission. This meant that there were a lot more meetings, a lot more paper and always clearance by the Office of the Vice President because you wouldn't want something agreed at the level of Ambassador Taylor that wouldn't then sell at the level of the vice president. There weren't particular problems in this regard but it meant a lot of coordination. All this structure, I think, was abolished in the next administration.

Q: You did this for how long?

WAKE: Two years, two years.

Q: It must have been exhausting wasn't it?

WAKE: It was a pretty intense job. Mostly a Washington job but I guess I got to Ukraine and Russia each, well, three to four times, maybe a little bit more in the case of Ukraine

and then there were a couple of these coordination meetings in Poland and Brussels. I did get to visit a number of the other countries as well; I was in Moldova which was a favorite recipient of assistance because they were doing some good work on land reform. I didn't get to the Caucasus but I did travel to four of the five Central Asian countries together with the deputy to the ambassador at large for the New Independent States. The Ambassador at Large was Steve Sestanovich who is now up at Columbia University but at that time was in government as the coordinator for all the policy issues related to the former Soviet Union. One of his deputies was Ross Wilson, who later became ambassador to Turkey and Azerbaijan. Ross led a trip one time together with defense department and treasury department officials to four of the Central Asian countries where we discussed economic reforms.

So it was a busy job, an enjoyable job. I liked working with these countries and seeing the diversity of their approaches as you were now coming on to a decade of their independence after the Soviet system. You saw a lot of differences in how things were playing out; some positive and some negative. It was a very nice office to work in; it was a real mix of people because it had been established kind of ad hoc in the early '90s and therefore had a regular Foreign Service - Civil Service mix. It ended up with a number of contractors and some people who were retired military, particularly delivering humanitarian assistance; there were big humanitarian assistance programs that were delivered through cooperation between the U.S. military and, for example, pharmaceutical companies or NGOs that received product from them but also the U.S. military would do building of schools and things like that. You had different people in the office and in a way it was almost a 24-hour office because some of these retired military people would come in at four or five in the morning to start talking to Central Asia and then there were those of us who were more or less the late arrivers, late departers. Everybody was committed to trying to push this thing forward even though one had to have a sense of humor and realism about how much we were actually going to be able to have an impact on the world through these programs.

So that was two years.

Q: And then what?

WAKE: Then Moscow.

Q: Ah ha.

WAKE: Then Moscow, where I served as the chief of what was called the political internal unit; the unit that followed domestic politics in Russia in a very large political section.

Q: And what was your wife doing?

WAKE: When we were in the U.S. for the three years that I did the academic program and the assistance coordination she started in Washington. That's when we bought that

townhouse in Arlington. And my wife Connie spent two years actually in a very intense job as first the economic officer and deputy director and then eventually the acting director of the office of North Central European Affairs. So this was the office that was actively working with countries like Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia as they were moving toward membership in NATO and the European Union. While it was not one of their countries directly involved, this was also in the run-up to the Kosovo War so she was acting director of the North Central Europe office when the people across the hall were essentially involved in the last of the Yugoslav wars; the Kosovo War. Naturally this was a big issue for the countries she was working with because several of them were about to join NATO at the point that NATO was for the first time in 50 years actually fighting a military conflict with Serbia. Then in the summer of 1999 she moved over to the National Defense University; she had a year at what was then called ICAF, the Industrial College of the Armed Forces. Now I think they call it the Eisenhower College but it's the other part of the National Defense University next door to the National War College.

Q: Okay you were in Moscow from when to when?

WAKE: Summer of 2000 to the summer of 2003.

Q: Who was the ambassador at the time?

WAKE: The first year was Jim Collins and then the next two Sandy Vershbow.

Q: And the DCM?

WAKE: We had three DCMS in those three years. For some odd reason that had to do with people's calendars and so on, the first year was John Ordway who later went on to a couple ambassadorships, the second year Paul Smith who had been the consul general in St. Petersburg and moved over to Moscow to be the DCM for one year, and then in 2002 John Beyrle (who later became ambassador to Russia) came as the DCM.

Q: Oh, okay. When you arrived there what would you say was the situation, how would you describe the situation?

WAKE: Well there was a new guy in charge and everybody knew that Putin had this KGB/FSB background although he hadn't been a particularly well-known figure on the national scene before 1999 when he quickly rose to become prime minister and then was appointed acting president and won his own election in the spring of 2000; so he was quite new in office. It was clear that the country had gone through tremendous change and disruption and some would say chaos over the previous decade and you had this person who was in charge now who was determined to make things more orderly, to put it mildly, and I'm talking now in the terms that we saw things in 2000 which were obviously quite different than we see them in 201. Even then we saw that this was somebody determined to, as he openly stated, reestablish the sort of verticality, the

vertical of power. He thought there was too much autonomy of regions and even of cities and local administrations.

It's important to note also that while I was still in that assistance coordination job and continuing through all of the time I was in Moscow we also had a war going on. I mean the rise of Putin was, of course, closely associated with the apartment bombings, let's call them suspicious apartment bombings, in the fall of 1999 in Russia, so before I got there. His quick rise to power on a tough guy campaign coincided with the beginning of the second Chechen War, the efforts by Russia to reestablish control over Chechnya which it had essentially agreed in the mid-1990s would be autonomous with a status to be determined later. So the Chechens were basically running their own affairs, quite badly in fact, but they were running their own affairs until '99 when a really rather brutal campaign started. This was the background the whole time I was there that you didn't see on a day-to-day basis in any of the places that we traveled regularly but there was this violent conflict going on down in Chechnya.

In fact, that was one of the things we were tasked to cover as the internal political reporting unit because this was a war that was internal to the Russian Federation. There was – I don't want to say just a wait and see attitude toward Putin – but there was a sense of still trying to size this guy up. We know he's more energetic, younger, more sober than his predecessor, that he has this security background that both means he is probably pretty smart and that he also has been involved in some things that we might not look too kindly on. So there was this sense of just trying to figure out what the new situation was going to be. How much were things going to be changed to make things more orderly in a positive way because there definitely was a sense that things were not working very well in the country and to what extent was this centralization, verticalization attitude going to really involve restrictions on people's rights and a roll back from the gains of the 1990s in terms of media and so on. I would say the time I arrived we had our concerns but still tried to have an open mind on things. Over the three years I was there things became a lot clearer – not as clear as they are in 2015, but certainly there were many, many negative developments over those three years that we were responsible for chronicling and relatively few positive developments except on the economic front.

On the economic front, as I mentioned before, there were some reforms undertaken and they benefitted from the high oil price, people were gaining income not only in Moscow but it was starting to trickle down and people were doing better outside. This was a big source of Putin's support.

Q: One of the things that struck about people I've talked to who served in the Soviet Union and I observed this in Yugoslavia too my time there was you leave the capital city and you were out in these towns, not little villages, and you were practically back in the 14th century or something. The economy, things moved by ox cart and the town pump. Was this changing?

WAKE: It was changing, though to some extent this was true throughout the former Communist world as you've described it. To some extent places like the Moscow region

and St. Petersburg region were always quite a bit ahead of let's say the other Republics of the Soviet Union that later became independent countries, which we found to be quite poor; Central Asia and the Caucasus in particular but also Moldova and Ukraine when you get out of the center of those places they are really, really poor. In Russia it was always a little bit different in the two capitals, Moscow and Leningrad, now called St. Petersburg. The trend that I would highlight from the early 2000s was the one I mentioned that you were starting to get a number of other cities developing something like a middle class. This doesn't mean that most people were doing much better but as a visitor you visibly saw more modern restaurants, cafes, stores, shopping centers not just in Moscow where they were sprouting all over but also in these many cities of over a million people like Novosibirsk, Vladivostok and Krasnoyarsk and the cities on the Volga like Samara. Another example where I actually ended up spending about six weeks in the summer of 2002 as the acting consul general was Yekaterinburg, the formerly Sverdlovsk, which was Yeltsin's hometown.

These cities were doing pretty well by the standards of what people remembered from Soviet times. Even more dramatic, although I didn't visit them myself, were a few of the towns in the real oil district. But in general the change from the '80s to the '90s to the early 2000s was that you were starting to see the benefit of these high oil prices produce so much wealth that it was trickling down to people who worked not only in those industries but in general. That's not to say there was an overall wonderful level of well-being but one of the things that was very important to a lot of ordinary people was that government salaries and pensions were being paid and were being paid on time. In the Yeltsin years for many people they were not, and that already creates a different climate for people.

Q: Well you were dealing with internal political affairs. How was the idea of not having a politically repressive regime as opposed to a dictated government from the center as it had been before; how was that playing?

WAKE: It was a real time of transition and testing the water as Putin had come in. Yeltsin had this slogan "give the regions as much autonomy as they can swallow." Some regions had taken that very seriously and tried to work out their own development strategies, sometimes based on corrupt local leaders, sometimes based on real competitive electoral processes. Putin made clear he wanted to change that but he didn't make clear how much he wanted to change that; so there was a real testing. Could you still have a free election in one of these regions where someone who was not supported by the Kremlin could win? The answer in 2000, 2001, and 2002 was sometimes yes and the person who was not supported by the Kremlin might also be somebody the United States was not thrilled with. It might have been a Communist but the Communist Party was not the governing party.

As those three years went by the screws tightened. There still were ostensibly competitive elections when I left. It was a bit later that they cancelled the popular elections for governors but at that time there were still popular elections. They always had multiple candidates, sometimes there were candidates that did oppose the Kremlin but it became

more and more difficult for those candidates to do well. Where in the early period you just saw the Kremlin trying to tip the balance maybe by giving some money to someone or some free advertising, I remember in 2002 or 2003 in Ingushetia, one of the Republics very near Chechnya, the popularly-elected and popular president was leaving office and he had a very clearly designated successor who was genuinely popular and would win an election. The Kremlin did everything they could to essentially make it impossible for that person to run through manipulating court decisions and pressure tactics and so on. This was a change from the way it had been in the '90s and in 2000.

Q: Was the embassy sending out warning bells about this whole thing?

WAKE: We were reporting as we saw it. There is another question about how people in Washington were reading the messages, particularly after 9/11. I found that, where there had been a huge interest in regional developments in Russia and what was going on outside Moscow when I first arrived, this interest really declined quite a bit when President Putin was our partner in the struggle against terrorism. Remember his first reaction was to call President Bush. I think he was the first world leader who called President Bush to express condolences, and he essentially played on the theme that we are all in this together against those terrorists like the ones we face in Chechnya. For a lot of the time I was there this was one important strain in the relationship. On the other hand, it didn't last so long because Russians quickly became frustrated that while they had expressed unconditional support for the United States and had allowed overflights of their territory to conduct the war in Afghanistan and so on we were still continuing to criticize them as they did things that my section was reporting on. These were things like taking over the main independent television station, NTV, ostensibly through Gazprom, the State gas company but basically through the government forcing out the leadership and journalists of the independent television station that had criticized Putin and then doing the same thing with two other television stations as these journalists moved from one to the other.

Washington was speaking openly about our concerns about media freedom and human rights more generally, not to mention the situation in Chechnya where, yes, we agreed that Chechnya was an integral part of the Russian Federation and that they had the right to maintain sovereignty over it. We had a lot of criticism of the way the war was being carried out, the atrocities that were quite well documented including by the journalist Anna Politkovskaya who was one of our contacts. By the way not everyone is aware that she was an American citizen through a quirk of birth to a technical staff member of the UN in New York; I still remember meeting with her. As a formality, which we all knew that she would ignore, we reminded her that as an American citizen she was advised not to travel to the North Caucasus and that places like Chechnya were dangerous for American citizens. Of course, little did we know that shortly after I departed Moscow she would not be harmed in Chechnya, as she had been a couple of times, but would be shot to death on the streets in Moscow. So that's a sad memory along with some others.

Q: Was there developing a cadre of what used to be called "refuseniks" but people who are really opposed to the regimes who were living in semi-exile?

WAKE: Yes and no, we didn't have refuseniks in the sense of people being forbidden to leave the country. Anybody who wanted to leave basically could, assuming they could get a visa to go somewhere else. But what you had was a marginalization of what in the '90s had been a mainstream political opposition. In the '90s you had had people like Boris Nemtsov and now we sit here four days after his assassination; he was an absolute symbol of this phenomenon because in the 1990s he had been a deputy prime minister, he had been a governor of Nizhny Novgorod, an important regional capital. Some including he in an interview suggested that he was a possible successor to Yeltsin but he was probably a little bit too liberal for some of the powers that be among the oligarchs.

When I arrived, Boris Nemtsov was still a member of parliament, he was a leader of one of the opposition parties that had a reduced but still vocal role in the parliament. They were never able to stop anything but they were able to speak openly and publicly about their concerns about the direction the country was going. But although there was no national election during the time I was there, and these guys were still in the parliament when I left, their marginalization and the fact that they would be pushed out of the parliament the next time around was becoming clearer and clearer.

There were also people who were more radical critics that had even in the Yeltsin administration become those kind of lone voices. I mean Sergei Kovalev, who was a former political prisoner, or Yelena Bonner, the widow of Andrey Sakharov; these are people who were bitterly critical from the day I arrived until the day I left and basically thought even the first war in Chechnya which started in the '90s was a breaking point where Russia had abandoned its possible democratic course. But this was increasing; more and more people were feeling marginalized, including all these journalists that I mentioned, although in the print media and on radio it was still very lively as it remained for quite a number of years. So there were outlets for people to speak and write and criticize and meet with foreign diplomats. One of our problems was that our access to officialdom was getting more limited; even the U.S ambassador had a hard time meeting people in the presidential administration.

Q: I assume this was deliberate, wasn't it? The word was out, don't go, or what? Or was it just caution? What was happening?

WAKE: It was deliberate, particularly with regard to people who were in the executive part of the administration. Parliament was still pretty easy. Whether they were opposition or even pro-government people in parliament, you could meet; you wouldn't hear much from them but you could meet them. Opposition people were easy to meet, including Communists you could meet, who were sort of opposition because they were basically supportive of Putin but not part of his structure. In the regions, you could still meet people pretty easily although some governors became inaccessible or less accessible. It was the people who really made the decisions in the country that you had trouble talking to. You had to have a high-level visit for anybody to see Putin, which makes sense – he's the president of a big country – but the fact was that the American ambassador couldn't see the deputy head of his administration without writing a letter and waiting three

months or something and then getting a call you know all of a sudden you can go and see him today. These were people who were much more in the background in the security services and they were not interested or comfortable with meeting Americans; they didn't see that we had anything to do to help them. They saw us much more as adversaries.

Q: Was it a former KGB type of operation still working on you all?

WAKE: It was. It didn't necessarily have an impact on you so much on a day to day basis but you had to be aware of it and that people were still being followed and people were still being listened to. During the time I was there, we had a major one of these spy scandal expulsion businesses. To be fair, this was initiated more or less by the United States, it's chicken and egg all these things. This was in the wake of the Hansen case, the FBI agent who had divulged names of lots of people who were subsequently arrested or killed and was a real blow to American interests. It was a traitorous act by this American but again Russia was obviously the guilty party that had recruited him. Somehow in the wake of that there were a bunch of expulsions in the U.S. A certain number of people were expelled immediately, a certain number of people were told they had to leave within a number of days; I can't remember exactly.

Of course the hammer fell on us in the same way, the exact same numbers had to leave whether or not they were people the Russians believed to be intelligence agents; they found the requisite number of people to expel. This was quite disruptive. Ironically two of the entities that it had disrupted in the embassy had essentially nothing to do with intelligence collection or intelligence business. One was the diplomatic security office because I guess having the name security in their title was enough; they were all hit by this which affected the continuity of normal security operations in the embassy in terms of just protecting facilities. These expulsions also hit people who had military backgrounds but in most cases were much older retired people in the so-called POW/MIA office; there was an office that still existed in the American Embassy as a legacy of the allegations that people had been abducted during Viet Nam and sent to the Soviet Union. So you had this big office of, I don't know how many, retired military people who were doing nothing but conducting interviews with elderly Russian citizens and Russian veterans to try to find and mostly debunk any stories of alleged sightings of Americans and completely harmless to any modern operations throughout the Russian state. But they expelled them too as part of this tit-for-tat business I guess because it brought the numbers down.

Q: Did we have the new embassy by this time?

WAKE: We were in the new embassy. I was the second occupant – but the first occupant to serve a full tour – in my office, as we all were; the embassy had only opened some time in either earlier 2000 or in '99; this was after decades of being built, taken down, and built up again.

Q: How was social life?

WAKE: We didn't have time for that. No, I exaggerate because I mean one of the actual pleasant things about serving in Moscow at that time was in connection with this revival of the economy after 1998 it was still reasonably inexpensive if you had dollars because the ruble had not really recovered that much. So the prices were still quite low for people with dollars and new businesses were opening all the time that were quite interesting. You had all modern shopping, you had restaurants opening, and you had cafes and things. We did work long hours though, quite long hours. My wife was doing a kind of parallel job in the economic section, she was one of the deputies to the economic counselor and worked on economic reform issues. We were fortunate, my wife and I, in that we did not live on the compound. We lived a few metro stops away or trolley bus stops so we were out in the city all the time. We were able to travel and enjoy seeing parts of Russia, mostly on business. While there were still travel restrictions, there were a few places you could go that were outside the center of Moscow if you followed certain routes that were more touristic places but pleasant places to go for weekends.

Q: Were the arts pretty open?

WAKE: Yeah, yeah and actually theater was interesting. I mean our Russian was good enough that you didn't catch everything but you could see some really innovative things in the theater and of course music and all that has always been maintained at a high level. So there was never really a shortage of things to do. We ended up having a mix of contacts with other Americans, with a broader expat community and some with Russians. It would be hard to say you had Russian friends but you had people you could meet who were connected to your work that were pleasant contacts and people you could enjoy having a meal with. By that time some of them were more traveled and sophisticated than most people in the world because of the fact that some of these were people who had benefitted in one way or another from the money of the '90s.

Q: Well you left there then?

WAKE: I left in the summer of 2003.

Q: What did you think when you left: whither American-Russian relations?

WAKE: I'd say we were pretty pessimistic and I would say for at least two reasons. One, the glow of the immediate post 9/11 period had by that time pretty much completely worn off because by then you also had the U.S. invasion of Iraq. So you went from a high point of U.S. popularity both publicly and within the Russian government circles as another victim of these terrible terrorists that we can work together with back to the idea that America is the lone ranger that doesn't care what the UN Security Council says which means doesn't care what Russian can stop but will go ahead and do what it wants to. And a sense among Russians that they hadn't gotten, at the official level, any benefits from the support they had given to the United States after 9/11. So in that sense I'd say things were pretty much on a downhill track. Then, more closer to my work and my heart anyway, the domestic scene was getting more and more restrictive. I still remember that we saw Mikhail Khodorkovsky at the last 4th of July reception that I attended; he had not

yet been arrested. But there were widespread rumors that he would be. There were pressures on his businesses and it was remarkable to see that there was a lot of space between him and anyone who was connected to the Russian government at that 4th of July party. People who would talk to him were foreigners and dissidents...

Q: He was oligarch of oligarchs wasn't he?

WAKE: He was oligarch of oligarchs but he had created an image for himself as being the respectable oligarch because he had cleaned up the way his Yukos oil company ran. Enough foreign investors were willing to partner with him, he was trying to create kind of a model of more corporate responsibility. I don't say this with any apology on what he may have done to make his money and keep it in the '90s but he was using some of that money to support non-governmental civil society efforts, human rights groups. So this was, of course, why he became a threat to the Kremlin because he didn't take the message that he was supposed to stick to business and nothing else. But I guess also in terms of this negative perception, the war in Chechnya was grinding on. This is not related to U.S.–Russian relations, but there had been this terrible takeover by Chechens of the theater in Moscow, the Dubrovka Theater. These Chechens, many of them widows of what they considered in their terms to be martyrs from the war against the Russians, took over and threatened to bomb this theater and then the Russian “rescue operation” ended up killing all of them. I think, altogether about 150 people including many of the theatergoers died when the authorities used this gas to demobilize people and then came in and shot all of the terrorists. It was a really bad climate from things like that. I mentioned already Anna Politkovskaya, who we knew was skating on thin ice, although, of course, we didn't know she would be shot in the streets of Moscow. But there was another case where a more junior political officer and I had gone to see someone in the sort of rightist opposition, rightist in the sense of being sort of market reform-oriented and human rights-oriented. Not a particularly well-known figure by the name of Sergei Yushenkov, but a very sincere and democratically inclined politician, a member of parliament. This officer and I saw him only two or three weeks before he was assassinated on the streets. For no clear reason. The case has never been resolved and...

Q: This assassination business is a different type of operation than under Stalin; he put them in jail and then maybe killed them.

WAKE: I mean some people who are writing about this most recent case from last weekend about Boris Nemtsov are recalling that there was one famous case in the Stalin years which was the...

Q: The mayor of Leningrad?

WAKE: Yeah, Kirov, in 1934, which some saw, particularly in retrospect, as the opening chapter in the purges because it was one of their own in a way that was assassinated because he was getting too popular. But you are right: in most cases when people died under Stalin and Brezhnev and the later leaders up to Gorbachev it was more likely they died because of poor prison conditions and so on. The last really prominent case I know

of that kind was in 1986 although there may have been others. But there was this Anatoly Marchenko who died while we were, and I think I mentioned this earlier, in Vienna at the CSCE meeting and it became a cause célèbre and maybe led to some liberalization. But these assassinations, of course, there were many such cases in the '90s involving business and crime figures; the techniques were very much mastered and developed in that context.

I've been thinking about this a lot over the last few days. People are writing about it constantly but I know of four cases of people that I personally had the occasion to meet. One person whom I first saw as an academic speaker at the ethnographic museum in Leningrad, a woman by the name of Galina Starovoytova, became active in politics and was assassinated already in 1998 in St. Petersburg. Then there was Sergei Yushenkov, whom I mentioned and we saw in the spring of 2003. Then Anna Politkovskaya was killed after we left in 2003; I think her murder was in 2004 or 2005. And then Nemtsov. I can't say I was a friend or even a contact in a close way but I still remember sitting next to him at Spaso House, at the American ambassador's residence for a lunch. I believe it was February of 2003 and he was one of those people who wasn't afraid to speak his mind. He knew they were on the short end of a long rise of Putin but still believed that there was a chance in the future.

Q: Just what was your feeling about George Bush II's invasion of Iraq and maybe the officers around at the embassy in Moscow? Did we see this as not being justified or not?

WAKE: You know my colleagues in the external part of the political section and the leadership of the embassy had to go and push this approach with the Russian government constantly and it wasn't something I'd say led to open dissent or anything like that but I think there was a lot of concern that particularly on this weapons of mass destruction issue we didn't have that much. We were supposed to be involved in a close relationship with Russia in the struggle against terrorism; we had all kinds of counter terrorism committees of cooperation and so on. We all know that there might be something else we weren't privy to. because there might be some other channels of intelligence cooperation, but when political officers and the leadership of the embassy were trying to persuade the Russians that this was really something that had to be addressed by the international community I think there was a feeling that the information was a little thin.

Q: Yeah.

WAKE: Now, of course, you know when Colin Powell, who was a very popular Secretary of State, tried to make the case and went to the UN Security Council, probably people tried to believe that he must have had the right information. But it wasn't selling very well in Russia. I mean I do remember this lunch that took place before the invasion when things were very much just about to break and I do remember what Boris Nemtsov said which was, "Well of course he is going to invade Iraq because they tried to kill his father." So in their view this thing was on auto pilot in Washington. Not everybody had that particular view but there was a view that this couldn't really be stopped. The ironic thing is that even the opposition, the liberal opposition, was against the American

invasion of Iraq or at least was not willing to publicly stand up and support it. But they also believed quite mistakenly that Russia would be the loser because they thought America would quickly take over Iraq, take over its oil industry, increase production and oil prices would go down and Russia would suffer. They didn't foresee any better than George Bush did that this was going to take years, cost thousands of lives, and continue through a period of higher oil prices that only ended in, what, 2014?

Q: Well this is probably a good place to stop. Doug, where did you go afterwards?

WAKE: Came back to Washington for one year where I served in the European bureau in the regional political security office as the coordinator for OSCE affairs; so back to something that I had worked on in the past and that I ended up spending even more of my life on. So I was the OSCE coordinator in EUR/RPM, so-called.

Q: And then what?

WAKE: Then actually was seconded, was on loan, to the OSCE for two years as its deputy in Belgrade, deputy head of the mission to Serbia and Montenegro for most of the two years, to Serbia only for the last month or so because of the final split between Serbia and Montenegro in 2006.

Q: Good, okay then well we will pick that up at that point. Thank you very much.

WAKE: Thank you.

Q: It's a fascinating period.

Q: Today is the eleventh of March 2015 with Douglas Wake and do you know where we stopped off?

WAKE: I do and if you'll allow me a one minute interval...

Q: Sure.

WAKE: ...looking at the date this morning I was recalling where I was 25 years ago, which is already back in our chronology. But that was the day I was sitting in the consulate in Leningrad on the telephone to a colleague, the public affairs officer from Leningrad, who was down in Vilnius reporting in real time about the decision of the Lithuanian parliament to declare the restoration of the independence of the Lithuanian Republic and typing it into an ancient word processing machine of some kind which produced a telegram that certainly wasn't the first report that reached Washington about this event since it was very much in the news. People were all over Vilnius from the international media but it was the report of record from the consular district in any case. We made sure that we got something out that night that said they had, I think, voted. As I just looked this morning in an old New York Times story, if the New York Times was accurate, it was 124-0 including lots of people who had been long-time members of the

Lithuanian and previously Soviet Communist Parties; it was a fairly dramatic event. I was just the scribe, between the person on the ground and the cable that went to Washington.

Q: Was there a Russian reaction, a discernible Russian reaction to this from your perspective?

WAKE: There was. I mean it wasn't just Russia, it was still the authorities of the Soviet Union. They first reported it fairly straight but then pretty quickly reverted to the position that at a minimum this was something that could not be undertaken unilaterally by the forces in Vilnius. Some people in Moscow were willing to see the Baltic States as a special case because of their history and the possibility that they might get more autonomy or even independence at that moment didn't equate to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Still there was reaction, which got increasingly fierce over the course of months.

Q: Was there a Soviet Union at this time?

WAKE: There was a Soviet Union and there was a Soviet Union for another year and a half. This was a declaration that was an important step in the dance, in the game that led to the collapse a year and a half later but we talked a lot about that before. I just mentioned it because today is an important anniversary.

Q: I like to note these things.

WAKE: Yeah. So where we were in our chronology, as I recall, was also related to that part of the world; I had just come back from Moscow in 2003. I was moving into an office which has had slightly different names over the years and I never quite remember if it was European Political and Security Affairs or something similar; the acronym is EUR/RPM because it was originally the European Regional Politico-Military office within the European bureau of the State Department. My specific responsibility was to be the coordinator for OSCE affairs – for the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe – which had the rank in the office of one of several deputies; there was a principal deputy. It was a very large office. There was a principal deputy and several deputies that had specific units. The other units all dealt with some aspect of NATO or conventional arms issues. My unit dealt with the OSCE which was kind of a historical legacy from the time that this was a Cold War conference between the Soviet Union, the United States and all the European powers and it had been handled as a European affairs issue rather than a classic international organizations issue. So I had that responsibility, heading a unit with generally four staff, give or take one; it was a small unit in an office that had at least twenty people, most of whom as I say were focused on NATO and coalition issues. The United States had just invaded Iraq; there was a lot of attention to those issues, of course. Just to put this in context personally: I had managed to work this assignment to be only a year, the reason being that my wife, with whom I had served together for three years in Moscow, had gotten an onward assignment beginning a year later in 2004 as the deputy chief of mission in Minsk, in Belarus. I did not have an onward assignment either in Minsk or anywhere else but we decided that opportunity for her was an important one

and that somehow I would try to get back to the region, at least, to Europe after one and not two years. So I had just a one year assignment in the OSCE office.

I arrived at a time when the impact not only of the Iraq War but other developments meant that tensions internationally were relatively high not only with our traditional adversaries like Russia but even with our traditional allies like France and Germany with whom we had had a big dispute over whether to go forward in Iraq without a Security Council resolution. The OSCE, of course, technically didn't deal with those issues or that part of the world but I was surprised when I entered the office in August of 2003 to learn that there was a very high priority request from somewhere in the upper reaches of the State Department that we explore whether the OSCE, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, could take a leading role in training Iraqi police to take over the responsibilities of security and stabilization that the United States wanted to hand off, of course, now that the war had been so successful in the early days. This seemed to many people at the working level to be a completely outlandish idea but someone had made the correct observation that the OSCE actually had some good experience in training police officers to work in post-conflict environments. It had done so in the former Yugoslavia in the Balkans, particularly in Kosovo with a very large police training school but also to a lesser extent in Bosnia and Serbia and I even worked on such programs later in my career; we'll get to that. But the idea that OSCE would work "out of area" in a controversial environment where there was no consensus on anything, even with many of our closest allies (apart from allies like the United Kingdom that were with us), seemed like a very crazy idea. But someone at a high level in the State Department decided that we should really explore this very seriously. And we did, we sent out some messages asking our embassies to go in and explore this in places like Berlin, Moscow and Paris as well as London; the idea quickly died.

Q: Did you get laughed at?

WAKE: I don't recall the text of any of the replies but I'm sure that people found polite ways to say that their interlocutors didn't consider it to be appropriate as a role for this organization which, after all, was a small organization and stressed to do its own work in post-conflict areas like the former Yugoslavia and certainly was also an organization that operated by consensus. That was just a little prelude to the work which actually was quite interesting over the year I was there.

The other high priority from a Washington political perspective which turned out to be an interesting aspect of the job was related to the sort of post-9/11 environment in which particularly in Western Europe there had been a number of manifestations of intolerance and particularly anti-Semitism. Also discrimination against Muslims as a backlash against 9/11 but the concern in the U.S. for understandable reasons was that there had been a number of attacks on Jewish institutions, synagogues, schools as well as individuals in Western Europe and that this wasn't getting enough attention and particularly there weren't institutions in place to deal with issues like educating people to understand the importance of anti-Semitism, understand the history of the Holocaust and so on. The OSCE seemed like an institution that might be able to deal with this in part

because it was not controversial on an East-West basis; it was a phenomenon that exists everywhere including in the United States, including in Russia, but Western and to some extent the new states of Central Europe were more the focus. So there was an interest that had already been played out in one small meeting in Vienna and the U.S. supported having a big conference on anti-Semitism in Europe and ways to combat it and ways to address the phenomenon. Interestingly, the lead partner on this activity was Germany, which as I said had very poor relations with the United States over Iraq and a number of other issues.

For historical reasons the Germans wanted to take a leading role in Europe in showing they were concerned about the resurgence of anti-Semitism, they wanted to show that this was something that could be addressed internationally and they actually offered to host a major international conference on anti-Semitism under the auspices of the OSCE. This became during my short stay in that office one of the highest single priorities. It was assisted, more or less coincidentally, by the fact that in my office we had a so-called exchange diplomat. There was a program which originally had an odd name called the Fellowship of Hope and later became known as the Transatlantic Diplomatic Fellows Program (“TDF”). So I actually had a German diplomat working in my office and he was essentially on loan to the State Department and he was to work with us as a U.S. staff officer in the European bureau. But the fact that I had someone who had links back also to the German foreign ministry, which was the host of this major conference, that the United States wanted to have at the highest possible level, really was extremely helpful.

In the end, the year that I was in that office turned out to be one of, if not the only times, in the history of the OSCE that the U.S. Secretary of State attended two OSCE conferences within a few months. One was the annual ministerial meeting in December 2003, which took place in Maastricht, the Netherlands, because the Netherlands held the so-called “Chairmanship-in-Office” of the OSCE in that year. The other, in I believe April of 2004, was this major conference on anti-Semitism hosted by and at the German foreign ministry but with a reception hosted by the chancellor and a very high-level of attendance partly because U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell put his personal mark on it by going. You had ministers from a number of other countries and very prominent Holocaust survivors and writers and scholars on this issue. It was deemed to be quite a successful effort to put attention on the issue and also direct the OSCE’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, which I later worked for, to develop programs not to just have conferences to talk about how terrible anti-Semitism is but to actually look at ways that curriculums in schools could address this issue. And also ways that, without banning or restricting freedom of the media, you could try to get positive messages out about cooperation among different groups including Jews. As a part of this process, of course, for both political and real reasons of concern there was a certain balance reached also so there would be efforts to address issues of discrimination against Muslims, and discrimination against Christians and other groups. So the OSCE was tasked with playing a much larger role in that area.

That was one major I would say accomplishment during the time I was in the office. I don't count it as my accomplishment but an accomplishment of the U.S. and OSCE together.

Q: Well looking at this were you as a body able to come up with what the hell caused anti-Semitism?

WAKE: Well it's such a long standing historical phenomenon so deep rooted in so many countries that volumes have been written about that topic. At a particular time you can usually associate it with the desire to have a scapegoat because of economic downturn or some other problem but why particularly Jews are singled out in this regard probably has something to do with a perceived separateness or a perceived distinctness from the majority cultures in many countries. But, of course, as I say this is something that scholars have delved into volumes and we were more focused on whether there were some small steps that could be taken. One very small step, which was considered to be good U.S. experience to transfer or to offer to the rest of the community was simply getting a handle on how often the manifestation of hate – whether it's anti-Semitism or discrimination against Muslims or Jews or Christians or African-Americans – how often it leads to actual crimes. And, in fact, the United States had already a pretty good practice of recording data on hate crime admittedly dispersed by local police throughout the country but pretty well consolidated by the FBI and Justice Department reporting that was published openly.

It gave a sense, first of all, that the United States was not innocent in this issue. There were thousands of hate crimes taking place in the United States in any given year and some are very serious and some are very minor like a swastika being painted somewhere and others involve up to murder. But the idea was that this was something that the rest of the international community or at least the OSCE community, Europe and Eurasia, could commit itself to in order to know the dimensions of the problem and recognize that we are all in this together. That was a commitment that was made in a consensus document at the end of 2003 already and built on over the years to collect the data and also to report it to the OSCE so that there could be a common report. I know from working on this issue later that even more than ten years after that conference there is a real diversity or discrepancy among the ways in which different countries do this reporting.

In some cases, there are even legal restrictions because you are not allowed to ask in certain countries about the ethnic background even of a crime victim. But it's an area where it's possible to get some kind of commitment and then when you know where hate crimes take place and how frequently, it allows you to focus more on what the danger signs are, for example, that such crimes are likely to take place and to address another set of issues where the United States is perhaps more advanced than most which is the idea that the same crime may be punished more severely if the motivation was ethnic or religious or some other kind of hatred. Not all countries have those laws and in the United States it depends on the State although at the federal level there are provisions that allow specific attention to the bias motive of a crime. So this was something that at least was kicked off in that period and it was kicked off because in part it was a high-level

conference and when we have a high-level conference then people have to think about what comes out of it. So one thing was hate crime reporting and another was education and training of law enforcement people also to recognize the problem.

One of the other major things the OSCE was involved in during the year I was the coordinator was election observation in Georgia. The OSCE is involved in election observation throughout the area that it covers, which is North America but also all of Europe, the former Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia. But that particular year Georgia was going to have parliamentary elections. Former Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze was still the president of Georgia; he was not himself up for reelection at that moment but there were parliamentary elections which were hotly contested and there was a lot of attention on whether they would be fair. As I understood the story, as I came into the office in the fall of 2003, former Secretary of State Baker was somehow enlisted to talk to his friend Eduard Shevardnadze and explain to him that it would be good to have an extra long-term OSCE observer mission, and an extra-large OSCE observer mission. Secretary Baker, who was retired from government service, had worked closely with Shevardnadze in the peaceful dissolution of the Soviet Union and the settlement of the peaceful reunification of Germany and all those issues that had been solved or not solved but at least addressed in that period from 1989 to 1991. So Shevardnadze was persuaded by Baker to have an extra-large mission so that he could show that he was really a democrat and he was open to having free and fair elections. Shevardnadze, either believing he could fool the observers or believing he could really have a free and fair election and his people would win, agreed to this.

So the OSCE deployed a very large observer mission and as you may recall the election was then contested because of alleged voter fraud, falsification of the results. When it turned out that the president's party and his allies had won the parliamentary election and the opposition contested that, we ended up with what was known as the Rose Revolution where the results of the parliamentary elections were ultimately overturned. Shevardnadze resigned in the face of widespread street demonstrations and there were then new presidential elections called almost overnight in I believe the beginning of January 2004 for which the OSCE had to deploy another big election observation mission over the Christmas holiday period no less. This initially consumed a lot of attention and the United States ended up putting up some extra money to make sure that the administration of the new presidential elections would be above board and organized by new electoral officials not tainted by the previous bad elections. There was money for putting special ink on people's fingers so they would not be able to vote twice.

I remember just one micro part of the story which was that, while most of these observers were recruited from outside the government, we did send a couple of U.S. government staff members to observe the election including one from my office and one from I believe it was from the Justice Department but in any case another agency within the executive branch, someone who had some election experience. But we also had the issue that this was a very cold and snowy Christmas period in the United States and in Western Europe including all of the places that these people needed to transit. So I had one staff member in my office who I believe went from Washington to New York to two or three

other capitals in Western Europe; I think it was Amsterdam, Prague and maybe one more. She always seemed to have a snow delay that got her to the next destination just after the only flight that week to Tbilisi had left. Finally having failed to find any connection to get to Tbilisi in time for the elections, they ended up back at JFK airport spending New Year's Eve there as she had diligently done everything possible to observe elections that she just couldn't get to. But the elections took place and the former opposition leader, then candidate Mikheil Saakashvili won the election with 90 percent of the vote and it was deemed to be a very fair and free vote because as things are in Georgia the public opinion had swung dramatically against the old regime and the corrupt practices of Shevardnadze and a new force was swept into power that managed to stay there for two terms anyway, whatever that added up to. So that was one of our big issues.

The other thing that attracts attention every year is that the OSCE has a ministerial meeting under the chairmanship of the country designated as the Chairman-in-Office which that year was the Netherlands; as I mentioned, they had this meeting in Maastricht. Secretary Powell was a bit reluctant to go to the Ministerial. While he had not gone to the previous year's ministerial which had been in Portugal, in Porto, he had gotten a very negative report back on the meeting from whoever did represent the United States; the undersecretary for political affairs, I guess that was Mark Grossman at the time. It had been a very difficult meeting at which at the end a final document was agreed among all, at that time 55 participating States in the OSCE, but essentially a last minute negotiation between the United States and the European Union and Russia cobbled together some face-saving way to explain that this was 2002 and that the Russian government already in 1999 had agreed to withdraw its forces from Moldova and Georgia but hadn't done so. So there was an effort to keep papering over this fact and explain that it would happen soon, which the Russians were prepared to promise in 2002. By 2003, the year that I was involved in this, the Russians were no longer prepared to make any promises to implement those commitments and, in fact, they had reinterpreted those commitments to say that they had never promised to leave.

Q: What was the problem?

WAKE: The problem, as one maybe sees even more clearly looking back at this from 2015, was that – although the Russian forces in these two republics, in Moldova and Georgia, were a very small scale presence – they were reluctant to pull them back and leave these two Western-oriented republics more open to NATO and EU integration. In the case of Moldova it was a special situation because there was this break-away territory of Transnistria and the Russian forces were on that territory ostensibly keeping the peace and ostensibly watching over some old stores of ammunition that were there. In Georgia the situation was a little different, there was actually a base or two in Georgia which had been agreed at the beginning but then the Georgians wanted the Russians out after the lease ended. In fact, they did subsequently pull out of those bases, out of Georgia proper, but there were some other issues with break-away issues in Georgia.

The Moldova issue was linked to an ultimate settlement of the so-called Transnistria situation; the status of the break-away territory on the Eastern side of the Nistru River.

What I really think made it impossible to have any agreement in 2003 at the OSCE ministerial was that Russia had been working its own angle on solving this problem, bilaterally with the authorities in Moldova. They had worked on a deal in a negotiating process led by a deputy head of the Russian presidential administration, by the name of Dmitriy Kozak. They had worked out a 25-year basing agreement with the then president of Moldova. There was an agreement that was about to be signed in the fall of 2003 and President Putin was going to get on an airplane and go and actually witness the signature of this agreement on the 25-year basing of Russian troops in Moldova which, if it had been agreed by the Moldovan president, the Western community would have had nothing to say about because it would no longer be an issue of implementing the commitments from 1999 to withdraw the troops; it would be a subsequent bilateral agreement to keep them there. What happened after that agreement had been tentatively reached but before it had been signed is that there was a strong lobbying effort by the United States, the European Union and the OSCE through its mission in Moldova to persuade the president of Moldova not to sign this agreement and he backed down.

The Moldovan president eventually accepted the argument that was given to him not so much by the OSCE which had a mission headed by an American in Chisinau and not so much by the American ambassador in Chisinau (although admittedly they were both involved) but especially by Javier Solana, the high representative of the European Union for foreign policy who basically said to the Moldovans, “If you want to get closer to the European Union don’t agree to this formal basing of Russian troops in your territory.” And he backed down, the president of Moldova, did not sign the agreement and this by all accounts infuriated President Putin who had by that time been in office a bit over three years. This would have been a big foreign policy success for him to have regulated the issue with Moldova in a way that suited Russian interests. We, again now with benefit of hindsight, know the strong interest Russia had in continuing the basing arrangements that it had in the Black Sea and Ukraine, etc. So this really soured the climate.

The Russians did everything they could to make it look like it was the West who had refused to agree to a joint political statement in Maastricht at this OSCE meeting but, in fact, no one really stood up and supported the Russian position. Since the OSCE is a consensus organization and since it is an organization where you need all 55 to agree (now it’s 57, but at that time 55 participating States), at one point at about two o’clock in the morning during a late night negotiation between Russia, the United States and the EU the Russian delegation simply walked out of the room and said there wasn’t going to be a deal. Instead at the final meeting of that Maastricht Ministerial the Dutch foreign minister, as the chair of the meeting, read a statement that essentially said, “most states” took a particular position on all the international issues of the time and left aside the fact that Russia had blocked it. So we had no overall grand political declaration at the OSCE ministerial in 2003, which was a break with previous practice.

But the meeting was, nevertheless, by Western countries, seen to be an overall success for two reasons. One, because Russia was completely isolated in its opposition to a joint statement that would have reiterated all previous commitments and also because on practical matters like addressing intolerance and anti-Semitism, on a new action plan to

promote the rights of the Roma people in Europe, on a new action plan to address trafficking in human beings, there were actual decisions taken which Russia agreed to because it wasn't part of the overall political declaration. So that was the regular event of the year in the OSCE calendar.

In April we had this anti-Semitism conference and I would only mention one other issue that the OSCE dealt with that year that I got involved in because it had some serious high-level attention. That was the question whether the OSCE could get involved in observing or at least somehow supporting the electoral process in Afghanistan. I mentioned at the beginning how some people in the administration had tried to get the OSCE involved in Iraq which was a complete non-starter because of the differences in the international community over Iraq. Afghanistan was a little bit different case because there was a practice in the OSCE that neighboring states could have a special relationship to be so-called Partners for Co-operation. You had from the beginning six Partners for Co-operation from way back in 1975, six partners in the Mediterranean Region and you had already established partnerships with Japan and Thailand and South Korea in Asia. The proposal from various countries had been pushed a couple years earlier that Afghanistan could also be a partner for cooperation. This had already been agreed before I came into the office but it didn't have any real significance because Afghanistan was a country at war; there really wasn't anything it could do except attend the meetings and make nice words about how they also would like to endorse democratic practices and so on.

In 2004 there was an interest in seeing whether the OSCE could do something practical in Afghanistan to observe the elections that were coming up. The first reaction from the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights was extremely negative. Their first response was: how could we observe elections in a place that there was a war, how can we deploy our normal methodology which involves having lots of unarmed civilian observers out all over the country?

The political message from Washington, which was supported by a number of our European friends (including those that didn't agree with us on Iraq, like Germany), was yes, it would be good to get the OSCE somehow involved to give more credibility and professionalism to the electoral process in Afghanistan. When I left the office, this was still an issue under discussion in part because it required Afghanistan to make a formal request. Not surprisingly no one in Kabul in the ministry of foreign affairs was familiar with making a request for the OSCE to observe its elections; it had never been done and never even been thought of before. So the idea was gently suggested to them and there were probably some texts put in front of them that suggested how they might request assistance from the OSCE.

While that was an issue still pending when I left the office ultimately it resulted in agreement that the OSCE would play a modest role in providing so-called electoral support missions to make recommendations on how to better organize elections and to not formally observe the process but monitor some aspects on what was going on in Kabul. That's something that happened repeatedly over all subsequent national elections

in Afghanistan even though, as I say, Afghanistan is not a member of the OSCE because of its status as a partner. And it became possible because of the fact that there was a certain consensus on stabilizing Afghanistan that did not divide East and West, did not divide Russia and the United States or Germany and the United States during this time over conflict over Iraq. That was a place that people could agree that we'd like to have the OSCE work. What I know from later experience with this is that, of course, it was always an exercise that would be quite modest in scale and quite expensive because even for a very small team in Afghanistan the security arrangements and the logistics were far more costly and so on than deploying a team to Georgia or to Moldova where you had a relatively stable situation and no particular security risks. So those were some of the highlights of the year I spent in the OSCE.

Q: Where did the driving force come from in this office?

WAKE: Well the most important personality, perhaps, who is now deceased, was the U.S. ambassador in Vienna, the ambassador to the OSCE, who was a political appointee by the name of Stephan Minikes. He was a very colorful figure whose career had mostly been as a lobbyist. He was a lawyer I believe, and had been a lobbyist among other things on issues like big transportation interests. He had been a major contributor to the Bush campaign; he was himself, I believe, born in Vienna of Jewish origin and was very, very committed to this issue of the OSCE addressing anti-Semitism issues. He was very committed to the OSCE being a bigger player on the international scene than it had been in the past despite working in an administration which he fully supported as a Republican campaign donor, an administration which was very skeptical of multilateral organizations and multilateral approaches. He was always there to try to find the silver lining in a way that the OSCE could do something to promote both American interests and its broader security goals. He was a tireless workaholic, was extremely demanding of his staff, was extremely fickle in certain ways but he was, I would say, the most dominant force in how the United States dealt with this small organization in this particular time. He had an excellent deputy by the name Douglas Davidson who went on to work a number of senior positions in related areas as an OSCE official and as the U.S. ambassador at-large actually on Holocaust issues. Ambassador Minikes, as I say, was really active and very well connected in Washington including in the White House.

There is one Steve Minikes story since you asked about individuals that I will relate. He had a very odd quirk which maybe grew from the fact that he was a man of some wealth and probably was used to having a car and driver when necessary although he was also a very active person; he rode a bicycle for recreation but he never wore an overcoat. He didn't own an overcoat, which many people found a bit odd, but he probably managed most of the time to have transportation provided to him as a senior ambassador or partner in his law firm or whatever it was. At one point he was back in Washington on consultations and he was staying with a friend out in Arlington, I believe it was Arlington, and he had a meeting scheduled in the White House; the White House mess. He was going to have breakfast with someone who actually ended up in a famous scandal, Scooter Libby, adviser to Vice President Cheney.

Scooter Libby was a Cheney advisor and somehow Minikes had a connection with him and they were going to have breakfast together at the White House on one of these wonderful mornings when there was a blizzard. And it was impossible for Ambassador Minikes to get a taxi. He called all the taxi services and none of them were available and he had a meeting at the White House. So what did Ambassador Minikes, the man who owns no overcoat, do, but go out to the nearest major road and start hitchhiking? Ambassador Minikes, as I said, is now deceased but at that time he was probably in his 60s or 70s, at least his 60s. So he managed to get a ride apparently, took him right to the White House and I heard about this story a little bit later because in the afternoon he had a meeting on Capitol Hill. He was in the office of some powerful Congressman that he knew from his prior time as a lobbyist. The reason I heard about the story is that one of my colleagues was along with him and as he walks into this Congressional office the clerk or intern in the office says to his colleagues, "That's the ambassador that was hitchhiking this morning to the White House!" So he had made a name for himself in that particular Congressional office quite apart from the fact that he was going to drop by to visit one of his old friends.

Q: Did you run into during this period of time people who were pretty skeptical about our going into Iraq?

WAKE: Oh of course, I mean it was an issue that divided people in Washington, divided people in the United States and many people in the State Department had their questions. Dealing in a multilateral environment, Iraq was something on which even good friends in Western Europe, NATO allies, those with whom most of our interests were shared in an organization like the OSCE, just had a different view. This evolved over time and after a while Iraq became an operation that got a certain level of sanction from the international community, after the fact, when it was no longer simply a U.S.-UK invading force but there was the semblance of an electoral process and the beginning of a sense that the international community was there to support stabilization efforts rather than simply an invasion. But 2003/2004 was the worst time of division.

You asked about drivers. I should just mention the rest of the players who were key on the U.S. side. The Secretary of State obviously didn't pay a lot of attention to OSCE issues; he had a lot of other things on his mind but he did attend two meetings in the course of that year and he certainly knew how to spell OSCE and what its particular role was in the panoply of international players. The Assistant Secretary for European Affairs was very knowledgeable and engaged on the issues, Beth Jones, as someone who had served herself in countries that OSCE had focused on like Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, where she had been ambassador. The Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary was Charlie Ries but the deputy assistant secretary that worked most with us because he had the responsibility for NATO and OSCE matters was Bob Bradtke, Robert Bradtke, who later went on to be ambassador to Croatia and was extremely knowledgeable and skilled in dealing with OSCE issues. He often had that role of interface at the high level between Washington and Ambassador Minikes in Vienna. Below him the office director was a guy by the name of Dan Russell and there were a couple of principal deputies in the office, one of whom was Stu Jones who actually during that year went off to a sort of

urgent assignment in Iraq and later on became U.S. ambassador to both Egypt and Jordan.

I should mention one other big player and that's the Congressional Helsinki Commission which I think I mentioned in an earlier context from my prior life working on CSCE (now OSCE) matters. The issues that the OSCE dealt with that year, particularly the anti-Semitism conference, were of great concern to both the chair and the co-chair of the Helsinki Commission. At that time two of the key players were Ben Cardin, Senator from Maryland and Chris Smith, Congressman from New Jersey but there were a number of other players. Actually, I think the chair was probably Alcee Hastings of Florida; in any case, Hastings, Smith and Cardin were all very active and their staff – some of whom had been working on these issues for 20 or 30 years – were always involved and supportive; generally relations between State and Congress on these issues was quite good.

Q: Well it must have been both a productive and pleasant environment.

WAKE: It was, it was. There were difficult times in this anti-Semitism effort in particular. There was a U.S. position driven by Ambassador Minikes that it was very important to explicitly state in an OSCE document that nothing could justify anti-Semitism including events in the Middle East, including attitudes toward Israel. Of course, in European countries, often the trigger for anti-Semitic attacks was that something happened in the Middle East. A Palestinian was killed somewhere and then there was an attack on Jews in France or something. The point was that there should be an explicit statement that this is never acceptable. It was difficult to get such a statement on a consensus basis given the membership of the OSCE including Islamic countries like Turkey, including the reluctance of some Europeans to seem to be bringing Middle East issues into the OSCE context. It was a big fight to get there and in the end the way it was done was there was no agreed statement at that OSCE conference that everybody stood up and joined consensus on. There was instead a statement that was read by the then chair of the meeting, which was Bulgarian Foreign Minister Solomon Passy, but he did so after extensive consultations so that no one would object. It became a very important text in the OSCE context, the so-called Berlin Declaration, even though it had never been voted on or agreed by consensus. So there were some tough moments and there were some tough moments also over budget issues.

Q: I take it you found OSCE to be a really quite productive organization.

WAKE: I found it to be one – to use a phrase I don't use too often – to be one that punched above its weight. Given the relatively small cost in both dollars and diplomatic capital that the U.S. put into it, compared to say the United Nations or NATO or something, I thought we got a lot out of it. And because it was ruled by consensus it was difficult to get certain things but it also meant that it never adopted anything we didn't agree with; it's a double negative but we always managed to have our views in formal statements or they just didn't get adopted. And as I'll explain in a minute as we move to another OSCE part of my career when OSCE worked in the field, it did so at very low cost to the United States because most of the staff were on loan from other governments

at no cost to the United States and the administrative costs were shared on a basis that was much more favorable to the U.S. than in the UN, for example. In the OSCE the United States paid between nine and fifteen percent of the budget depending on which part of the budget whereas in the UN it's between 22 and 28 percent. So as far as me personally, I knew I was only in this job for one year, I knew my wife was going off to Minsk in the summer of 2004 but I didn't actually know when I started that job what I was going to be doing in the summer of 2004.

So along with worrying about Georgia and anti-Semitism and Moldova and all these other issues I was trying to figure out an assignment I could line up for myself and it didn't turn out to be so easy to find anything right in the neighborhood of Belarus which is, after all, not a country that has a lot of close neighbors with lots of Foreign Service jobs at the senior level or O1 level in the Foreign Service system. But, having worked in the OSCE office, I knew there were a few opportunities for people to be on loan, to be "seconded" to the OSCE from the State Department. None of them was in or too close to Minsk but there was an opportunity in Belgrade and that's what I ended up getting assigned to; I was to be the deputy head of the OSCE mission in Belgrade. That was not an automatic thing that the State Department could just decide because it had to also be approved by OSCE. There had been a *de facto* practice that the United States from the establishment of the OSCE mission in Belgrade had always had the deputy as an American Foreign Service officer on loan but "always" just meant there had been two cases since the mission had been established after the fall of Milosevic in 2000. So there was no guarantee and, in fact, OSCE rules suggest that no post belongs to a particular country; the United States had to nominate me. There was at least one other candidate, I understood, nominated by another country, but in the end I was accepted as the deputy head of the OSEC mission in Belgrade and I took up that job in September 2004.

So that was a transition for me in a couple of senses. One, I was still paid by and housed by the U.S. Government, but I was not working for the United States Government; I was on loan to the OSCE and, to the credit of people who worked on these matters both in Washington and in Belgrade, this was understood and respected. Of course, I was still an American Foreign Service officer and I would keep in touch with my colleagues and so on. But I was working for the head of the OSCE mission, who happened to be an Italian during my first year and a Norwegian during the last months I was there. I was working under their rules and under their procedures which were new to me. It was a quite different multilateral environment and, by the way, I was commuting between Belgrade and Minsk in order to see my spouse every so often. She was able to come to Belgrade a little less often than I was able to go to Minsk because she was the deputy in the American Embassy where rules were even stricter about making sure if the ambassador was gone the deputy had to be there as the *chargé*. We managed to work that part out and I found the work inside the OSCE if anything to be more interesting than work on OSCE matters from the Washington policy perspective.

Q: You were doing this from when to when?

WAKE: From 2004 September until the beginning of August 2006.

Q: Where was the office located?

WAKE: The office was in Belgrade and we were in a former government guest house of some kind that had a bit of history itself because the Kosovo War had apparently been settled by Milosevic and the special envoy Ahtisaari in that building. There was a story, whether it was true or not I don't know, that Ahtisaari sort of pointed from the upper floor of that building where you could see a lot of Belgrade and said, "Basically you have to accept this deal or all of that will be flattened." Not speaking on behalf of anyone really because he was a mediator but basically telling Milosevic that these Westerners are serious and if you don't agree things will get worse. I don't know if that part is true. Anyway, it was on a street called Boulevard Mira and a little bit away from the center of Belgrade; actually a very pleasant compound which involved a number of buildings but now they've moved over to a new site.

Q: Was it in Dedinje?

WAKE: I lived in the neighborhood called Dedinje, and it was just down below there; I don't know if it was still called that. It was on the way out of town, very near where there is a monument and burial place of Tito; it's a rather green area. I lived up above the hill in that neighborhood very near where, in fact, Milosevic had also lived, and the U.S. ambassador's residence was one street over from mine. So it was a very comfortable life; I could walk to work. We were the OSCE mission to Serbia and Montenegro because at that moment the first Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia and then the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia had both ceased to exist and something had been cobbled together with the support and basically pressure of the European Union called the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro which was established in 2003. Basically it was established as a way of avoiding yet another split within Yugoslavia. The State Union of Serbia and Montenegro was, as we now know, a temporary construct because its founding document, the so-called Constitutional Charter of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, provided that either side within three years could organize a referendum on independence. This basically meant Montenegro could organize a referendum of independence because the Serbs were interested in keeping the union together for the most part.

So one of the big issues that played out during the entire time I was there was the relationship between the two parts of the so-called State Union and ultimately when I left it was no longer the OSCE mission to Serbia and Montenegro. It was the OSCE mission to Serbia; a new mission to Montenegro had been established on the basis of the former OSCE office in Podgorica. The subordinate office of our mission obtained its own status shortly after the Montenegrins held a referendum which successfully resulted in their independence. So during my two years in Belgrade that was one of the key issues.

Ironically, I was told at the time that one of the reasons the Europeans had insisted on a three year window for kind of a freeze period for the Serbia–Montenegro issues to be resolved by referendum was that they hoped that the Serbs and the Montenegrins would get to work together well enough that they would not actually then go through with a

referendum and they would have established a kind of loose confederation that would allow no new states to be established, no further breakup, risk of violence and so on. The other thing was that at least some people in Brussels and elsewhere apparently thought if you waited from until 2003 until 2006 they could first resolve the Kosovo problem successfully and then they could deal with the Montenegro problem thereafter; as we know, the Kosovo issue dragged out considerably longer. In fact, there was a big setback in 2004 in Kosovo when there were big anti-Serb riots, demonstrations and deaths. But the mission I worked in had almost nothing to do with the Kosovo issue because there was a separate large OSCE mission in Kosovo.

What we did get involved in to some extent was the Serbia-Montenegro issue. While the European Union had kind of the lead on negotiations in developing a framework for the referendum on independence in Montenegro, quietly the OSCE mission provided a lot of technical expertise and support because the EU didn't really have people on the ground who understood the legal dynamics or the political dynamics as well as some of the people in the OSCE mission. So we, without any real fanfare, lent expertise to the special envoy to the EU, a Slovak by the name of Miroslav Lajcak, who brilliantly, as it turns out in retrospect, designed a system where the referendum on independence in Montenegro would take place with a 55 percent threshold. It had no real precedence in international law or international practice but he determined first of all that there really was no international standard on how you do a referendum on independence because there are so many different practices from Canada and Quebec and various other cases.

The reason Lajcak chose 55 percent or, to be technical, the reason he recommended it to the players on the ground, was that both sides thought they might be able to win. That is, the pro-independence Montenegrins thought they would be able to win with 55 percent of the vote, while the anti-independence forces in Montenegro thought that maybe they could get a blocking share. They knew they couldn't get a blocking majority but they thought they could maybe get 45 percent. The result was that people were encouraged not to boycott but to participate. And because everyone participated for the most part, because there was large scale participation and no formal boycott, it made it harder than for people to question the results.

The other thing that made it hard to question the results which was not the responsibility of my office but was the responsibility of the OSCE was a big observation mission, per capita probably one of the largest observation missions of any voting process in Europe. You only have about 600 thousand people in Montenegro and there were hundreds and hundreds of international observers for the referendum that took place in May of 2006. It was not a large margin but there was enough of a margin above 55 percent that it really couldn't be questioned seriously. It was briefly questioned by some in Serbia but the Serbian president, Boris Tadic, flew down immediately to Podgorica to congratulate the Montenegrins on their independence and we had one case in Europe, in former Yugoslavia, where two pieces of the former Yugoslavia separated without any violence or long-term conflict.

In fact, while there were issues to resolve, of course, relating to how diplomacy would be carried out, who got the ownership of the buildings and all these sorts of things, most of this was done pretty peacefully and most of it was worked out pretty well in advance because the Montenegrins knew that under that charter of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro if they were the ones who held the referendum they would be considered the new state under international law. Serbia would inherit essentially the continuous status that had been Serbia-Montenegro and previous Yugoslavia including its ownership of buildings and its role in international organizations and so on. Montenegro had to join the OSCE and other organizations but it was able to do so rather quickly and that was a smooth part of dealing with the politics of the region. The main mandate of the Mission where I worked was not these high political issues of the relations between Serbia and Montenegro; it was institution-building and support for modernizing and democratizing institutions in Serbia and Montenegro that had, of course, been first under Yugoslav Communism and then under Milosevic's nationalist and quite backward looking rule. So the priorities were police reform, judicial reform, media reform, a little bit of work on economic and environmental issues and overall democratization issues.

Q: Not a ministry for smuggling?

WAKE: No, but we did look at this issue both in our rule of law programs and in our police reform programs. We did try to have some anticorruption / organized crime work where we brought in expertise from Northern Europe, from the United States and Western Europe to try to begin inculcating some kind of, I don't want to say Western values, but at least some practices of how a modern police force, a modern court system address issues of corruption and organized crime which were huge issues and remain big issues. But we had serious partners in many of these institutions. There was always a mix of old thinkers who resisted any outside advice or influence and generally younger people (but not always younger people) with more of a world outlook that realized that they had fallen behind because of the leaderships that they had, particularly under Milosevic. The practical kind of training programs on the ground occupied a large part of the mission's resources.

We had a pretty large mission and when we served Montenegro as a constituent part of this union the mission had about 250 staff members – about 60 or so international and the rest local staff members in five locations. Apart from the main office where I worked in Belgrade there was an office in Podgorica, the capital of Montenegro, and then in both Montenegro and Serbia there were small offices that were specifically devoted to police training that were co-located with their own police training institutes. Then we had a special priority program in what we called South Serbia which specifically involved three municipalities in the southern part of Serbia proper, not in Kosovo, but in Serbia proper sort of hemmed in between Kosovo, Macedonia and the rest of Serbia and even Bulgaria on the other side, which had an Albanian majority population. At the end of the Milosevic era, so in 2000 and 2001, there had been a small-scale armed uprising by the Albanians in that region which was fueled in part by the way the Kosovo War had been settled during 1999. There was kind of a buffer zone along the border or the

administrative boundary between Kosovo and the rest of Serbia which had neither Serbian troops nor NATO troops.

The Albanians took advantage of this to form a so-called liberation army of these three municipalities. The Liberation Army of Preševo, Bujanovac, and Medveđa, these three tiny municipalities actually, ended up fighting a small-scale conflict in which a number of dozens if not hundreds of Serbians, mainly law enforcement people, were killed; some of these so-called rebels were also killed. The conflict came as a real unpleasant surprise to Western countries who had been totally supportive of Albanian aspirations in Kosovo but had no interest in seeing Serbia proper break apart through a further destabilization and were quite surprised that it happened on their watch because the armed supplies had come in along the line between Kosovo and these municipalities. So before I was involved in this, NATO, the OSCE mission and the United States were quite involved as a kind of trilateral mediation and pressure group in getting the Albanians to lay down their arms in exchange for an agreement from the Serbs that they would allow the Albanian majorities in these municipalities to play a greater role in local affairs.

Previously under Milosevic there had been a kind of gerrymandering scene so that even though the Albanians were the majorities in these three municipalities, they never had any seats in the local administrations, they didn't have the mayors and they didn't have the authorities. So the deal was this: you guys stop fighting, lay down your arms, for the most part there was an amnesty with maybe a few exceptions for people who had been particularly involved in the worst violence, but then we the international community will facilitate a process and the Serbian authorities agreed a process where the election law will be amended. We will have immediate elections in these municipalities where it will be possible for these majorities to win seats and over the long term attention will be paid to development of these municipalities which had been very much ignored by Milosevic and previous Yugoslav governments (because they were the Albanian populations, so why bother to put good roads or industry there?).

By 2004, when I arrived, this thing had been rather well stabilized but there were still tensions. One of the ways of addressing the tension was that the OSCE mission had a very small office down in a place called Bujanovac in Southern Serbia with actually only one expat employee, a British guy. He had on his staff an Albanian and a Serb as interpreters but much more as liaison to the community. Then there was a small police training element because part of the deal was that some of the former fighters in this Albanian insurgency could qualify to join something called the Multi-Ethnic Policing Element so that you would no longer just have Serbs running around policing Albanian communities; you would have a multi-ethnic Serbian and Albanian mix; there was also a Roma population and some other minorities, even Bulgarians and others.

Q: Romas – these were gypsies?

WAKE: Yes. That was a fairly large part of the population which had been very much used by both sides. Part of the way that the Serbs had lorded over the Albanians was to buy or somehow fraudulently use the Roma to vote for the Serbian candidates; they were

very much under pressure from both sides. Also part of the Roma community were people who had fled from Kosovo where they had been pushed out in 1999 so there were a lot of issues there in a small area. In my two years in Belgrade I probably was down in that region at least a half a dozen times and we had this full-time presence on the ground. We had forty ambassadors visit one time from Vienna just to see what was going on in this OSCE operation there.

Q: What about migration; were a lot of the young folk heading elsewhere?

WAKE: A lot of the young folk were heading elsewhere although at that time you were beginning to have this problem that young people in Serbia who basically lived in a country that had been the most open in the Communist world were now some of the most cut off from Europe. They needed visas to go anywhere, which had been very easy for Yugoslavs to get in Communist times if they wanted to go and travel and work; there was a big demand in the '60s and '70s and even into the '80s. But no, these people were living in what had until 2000 been a pariah state, under sanctions, cut off, so it was hard but still people did travel and yes, there were a lot of Serbs that went both for legitimate and other business outside; so there was that kind of migration. Between the various republics of the former Yugoslavia what had been a quite open single country where people moved easily from Ljubljana to Belgrade to Podgorica to Zagreb was now much more closed because all these countries had their own difficult histories with each other. So even if Serbs could go to Croatia and many still owned property on beaches or on islands in Croatia, there was always a nervousness about whether they could go using their Serbian license plates or whether they would be subject to attacks or discrimination. So it was a difficult time for people to move.

But since you asked about migration, I will just mention that one of the policy issues we dealt with in the aftermath of these wars was the situation of refugees and internally displaced persons. I got there almost ten years after the Dayton Agreement to solve the war in Bosnia and even longer after the ceasefire between Serbia and Croatia but there still were a lot of issues involving refugees and displaced persons from that conflict in the early '90s. There were particularly a lot of ethnic Serbs who had been pushed out of Croatia in the last days of the war in Croatia who were living in Serbia and they were actually quite a negative influence on Serbian politics because they were very radicalized by their experience. There was a big initiative among the OSCE missions in Serbia-Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia to try to work together with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the European Union to come up with long-term solutions to all these refugee issues, either to get people the opportunity to move back or to get them compensation for the property they lost.

To be blunt, the parties involved – and particularly, I have to say, the Croatians, who were moving the most quickly toward joining the European Union – were not all that interested in addressing the claims of Serbs that had been considered a sort of fifth column for Serbia pushed out in 1994-95 even though in many cases these were innocent civilians who had fled in the wake of war. One of the twists was that they had a very extensive privatization program for what had previously been Socialist owned housing in

Croatia. However, if you were absent, not in your housing, in 1995 you lost your claim to privatize it. Well, of course, all these people who had been pushed out at the end of the war had no possibility of privatizing and then there was an issue if they could somehow get some compensation or vouchers to go back. It was a long-standing issue that we made modest, extremely modest progress on but ultimately I think, most of those people who were displaced by the war needed to settle in the countries that they ended up in. This was different for Bosnia because it had been managed by the international community, right after 1995 I think, and they found ways to resettle people, refugees, and get them back into, if not their homes, then into communities where they would be welcomed. So those were some of the key issues we dealt with.

For me personally it was just interesting to be in a multilateral environment where instead of having an American boss, American staff and maybe just the nationals of the host country as your colleagues in the office I had, as I said, first an Italian and then a Norwegian boss, the five departments which reported directly to me were headed at various times by German, French, Serbian, Dutch, and Greek nationals and the staff was very multinational. It was mostly West Europeans and Americans with local staff from Serbia and Montenegro; there were not many staff members at that time from the Eastern parts of the OSCE, from Russia and its neighbors. It was a very interesting job and I got a lot of exposure to the OSCE political process in Vienna when I would go to defend or present the budget or other issues in Vienna to the ambassadors there or to the delegations. It was a very pleasant place to live, as I say, much more pleasant in many ways than the one where my wife was working under the constant eye of the security services of President Lukashenko's Belarus.

Q: How did you find the social life there?

WAKE: Well in one sense I'd say I was quite busy and didn't have a huge social life but within the mission itself because of its international character it was very easy to find people to engage with in different ways. Life in Belgrade was really...let's say the city was coming alive after the dark years of wars in the former Yugoslavia and the economic sanctions and so on. While the economy was still not doing tremendously well, more bars, cafés and restaurants and so on were opening plus they always had this tradition even in Yugoslav times of being rather outgoing social people. So it was really easy to find ways to spend time. I was able to get out and around not only the city but the country quite easily. I did have my own car which I used at times and then there were official trips to South Serbia, to Montenegro to which you would normally fly. When my wife visited we tried to get around the country and once we even put our car on the train. They had one of these things where you could take it overnight from Belgrade down to the Montenegrin coast and then we got to Budva and Herceg Novi and Kotor and all those wonderful places along the coast.

Q: The Fjord of Kotor is gorgeous.

WAKE: Yeah, yeah it is, what do they call it? Boka Kotorska.

Q: Cetinje is not the capital anymore, is it?

WAKE: It isn't. The capital is Podgorica and I actually never got to Cetinje although I got near there to some other place up in the mountains on my very last trip to Montenegro, which was to mark the opening of the OSCE mission in Montenegro. We had a somewhat difficult relationship with our office in Podgorica, just as countries have difficult relationships with their provinces and embassies with their consulates.

Q: Oh yeah.

WAKE: We had issues with the office in Montenegro where the mentality there was perhaps more that this was a foregone conclusion that it was going to be an independent country whereas in Belgrade we had to take a more wait and see attitude that this was up to the political process that will take place. But finally, when things were settled and the mission to Montenegro was established as a mission, then the Secretary General of the OSCE and some other senior officials came to a ceremonial opening and we had a very nice lunch hosted by the foreign minister up in some mountain rest house or guest house or something where you had wonderful food.

Q: Did you feel Montenegro was going to be viable?

WAKE: You know, we did, and I think so far it's more or less turned out that way although it's viable because of a very limited set of income sources like tourism and real estate. It's turned out they've ended up with a lot of Russian investment, which has its mixed impact. But it is such a small population that it's got enough to do well, although there was a huge crime and corruption problem reaching to very high levels that needed to be addressed and was not totally addressed during the time we were there.

Q: This is what they used to do way back.

WAKE: And actually one of the issues that in a very limited way affected the work of the mission. My first year or so there we had an Italian Head of the Mission and, of course, his job was to represent all 55 at that time participating States of the OSCE including Serbia-Montenegro and the United States and Russia, Italy and everybody else in a neutral fashion and not to take a position on issues like the independence of Montenegro until the thing was resolved by the political process. But he also was a career diplomat in the Foreign Service of a country that had indicted the sitting prime minister of Montenegro, or if not indicted then at least had an investigative judge come close to bringing the final steps of an indictment for cigarette smuggling in Italy. So the Italians had a particularly cautious view on the desirability of Montenegrin independence although in the end they've also been supportive as the rest of the international community was when there was a democratic process to bring it about.

Q: I used to watch the so-called blue boats off Naples; I was consul general in Naples, and they would all paint their motorboats the same color and they were all made by the

same outfit and all go out to the smuggling ships off the coast of Naples and then load boxes, some fake boxes and then start going back and forth...

WAKE: What were they smuggling to and from?

Q: They were smuggling mainly cigarettes but I think drugs were beginning to come in but it was cigarettes and whiskey.

WAKE: Yeah.

Q: One time I was having a luncheon and we were talking about how awful smoking was and I said, "Could everybody please hold up their cigarettes." Not one of them had an official stamp on them.

WAKE: You remind me there was a case while I was in Belgrade which didn't specifically involve our mission except that we got tasked to try and track somebody down when an employee of the OSCE mission in Skopje in Macedonia used an official car ostensibly to spend a weekend vacation in Belgrade, which was allowed under the rules at the time. But instead he drove through Serbia and ended up going through Serbia and eventually found his way to an Italian port where he was arrested trying to unload a large amount of heroin which was stuffed in the wheel covers of his OSCE official vehicle. OSCE, needless to say, didn't even begin to make a claim that this person had any sort of diplomatic immunity in Italy because he didn't and OSCE would have waived it even if he had. I think he probably ended up serving a significant sentence.

Q: Was there concern or were there actual involvement about Russians buying up property because most of the Russian money came from people who were involved in dubious enterprises.

WAKE: It was an issue of some concern, for us as an OSCE mission it wasn't something that was in our portfolio or in our mandate to worry about except to the extent I suppose it was involved in some sort of clear criminal activity. We were more involved in the training end of law enforcement; we weren't involved in cases. But it was certainly a concern.

There also was an issue with the only real industry in Montenegro, a big aluminum plant which had been bought by a Russian businessman who I know was on the visa ban list for the United States and then there were a lot of issues when the Russian business pulled out of it and essentially left a large number of unemployed people on the Montenegrin economy. This was some scheme from Yugoslav times to take advantage of aluminum which may or may not have been local and energy which was artificially priced low enough to make the aluminum production efficient; on market economy terms it would not have ever been built there.

Q: Well then this is probably a good place to stop because then you went where?

WAKE: Then I went back to Washington for what became my last assignment in the Foreign Service in an active job in the sense that I finished my Foreign Service career with a year teaching at the Army War College. The last policy job I had was as director of the office of peacekeeping, sanctions and counter terrorism; a real mouthful, in the international organizations bureau, but essentially a peacekeeping position.

Q: Okay, we will pick it up then and we'll move on beyond your Foreign Service career because you were involved in other things.

WAKE: Then I did another four years in OSCE after that.

Q: Great.

Q: Today is the 20th of March 2015 and later today we'll have the what is it...

WAKE: The vernal equinox.

Q: And you'd left your, I can't remember what job it was but you are going back to Washington for your final assignment. Do you want to talk about what that was?

WAKE: Yeah, I had been in Belgrade on loan seconded to the OSCE to serve as the deputy head of the mission there. I came back to Washington to take up the position of Director of the Office of Peacekeeping, Sanctions and Counterterrorism; it's a real mouthful, in the Bureau of International Organization Affairs, the "IO" bureau of the State Department. That was a position that focused on UN peacekeeping primarily.

Q: Well let's talk about peacekeeping. When you were there, what year now?

WAKE: I was in that position from 2006 to 2008.

Q: Let's see 2006 so you got in there. What was the peacekeeping situation in the world?

WAKE: I'll talk about United Nations peacekeeping and exclude any other operations carried out by other organizations and I'll exclude the higher level peacekeeping operations, if you can call them that, that were being conducted by NATO and the United States in places like Iraq and Afghanistan. What we focused on in this office were about 18 United Nations peacekeeping operations give or take one or two over the course of the period I was there. Ranging from a very small number of military observers in places that they had been operating for decades like the Middle East or the India-Pakistan border...

Q: Would that include Sinai?

WAKE: Sinai actually is not a United Nations peacekeeping operation either, because it is a specific mission mandated as a result of the Camp David Accords where the United States and some others are carrying out the operation; so that actually wasn't included. But there are a couple ancient peacekeeping operations in the Middle East, one that goes

back all the way back to the 1940s called the UN Truce Supervision Operation (UNTSO), a very small number of observers. Then there is the UN Disengagement Observer Force in the Golan (UNDOF), which has been there since the '70s. And the UN has a Military Observer Group for India-Pakistan (UNMOGIP); a very small operation also. But those are one side of the spectrum.

The other side are very large peacekeeping operations that were in place and have continued to this day in a number of African countries, particularly at that point large operations had been deployed to the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, and Sudan to police the peace between Sudan proper and South Sudan as well as some non-African operations of considerable size in places like Haiti and East Timor. That's not the whole picture but those are the big ones.

What really affected my work was that I started I think the first day after Labor Day in September of 2006 and the UN Security Council had just adopted two resolutions mandating dramatic increases in the size of two operations. They had to do with the crises of the day: the first was in Lebanon where you had just had a major conflict between Israel and the...

Q: Hezbollah?

WAKE: ...Hezbollah forces in Lebanon with large-scale military destruction which led to an agreement in August of 2006 on a cease-fire and a large increase in the size of what was called the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). The UN had had a very small force, I think it was about 2,000 troops, since the earlier conflict in Lebanon which had been totally ineffective in stopping the new war from breaking out in 2006. It was a relatively small observer force without any mandate or capacity to really stop that war from breaking out. But as part of the agreement brokered by the international community so that indirectly the Israelis and Hezbollah could agree on something together with the Lebanese government, the force of about 2,000 was to be increased to 15,000. It was to get an increased mandate and powers to ensure, ensure may be too strong a word, but it had a mandate to really facilitate deployment of the Lebanese army all the way down toward the border with Israel where it had not operated for years because of the internal disputes within Lebanon and the role of Hezbollah; it also got a mandate to monitor the area near the border to ensure heavy weapons like rockets were not reintroduced.

How effectively that mission performed is a question but what was important from my perspective as the director of the UN peacekeeping office in the State Department was to see that mandate to increase the size of the force was carried out by the United Nations as quickly as possible. In fact, it was relatively smooth because of the political support for the agreement and the fact that a number of countries including Western countries that had not been doing much UN peacekeeping like France and Italy actually stood up to the plate and deployed troops. So from the very narrow perspective of the bureaucrat in the State Department watching this issue from a UN peacekeeping perspective, it was a pretty smooth operation to increase the size of the force and we didn't have to lift too many fingers to worry about it.

The other decision, however, that had been taken just I think the previous workday before I came into the office, was also to increase the size of a UN peacekeeping force in Africa. This was the UN Mission in Sudan which already had I believe somewhere between fifteen and 20 thousand troops, as I said, mandated to police the agreement between the north and the south of Sudan. However, after that agreement had been relatively successfully brokered including by the United States and the UN had deployed this mission a new problem had broken out in Sudan and that was the conflict in Darfur. This was the western region of Sudan where there was large-scale conflict involving both government troops and the so-called Janjaweed militia, which was a government-supported militia, against the people of the Darfur region, which was portrayed by many including the then U.S. administration of George W. Bush as a genocidal campaign. This was some of the strongest language used against any government for its treatment of its own people that one can remember. It was really a very brutal situation where there had been only a weak African Union peacekeeping operation that had not been able to stabilize the situation or protect civilians.

So what the United Nations Security Council did in August of 2006 was mandated that the existing UN Mission in Sudan which had only a north-south Sudan mandate would now also deploy over 20,000 troops to the west of the country, an additional 20,000-plus troops to Darfur to protect civilians and attempt to stabilize that region. The reason that this was a lot more complicated for the international community and for my office in particular than for example this Lebanon situation was that the president of Sudan immediately rejected the deployment of troops to his country. The Lebanon case had been negotiated, agreed between the parties concerned including Israel and Hezbollah; it had been a unanimous Security Council resolution. In the case of Darfur on the other hand, the United Nations Security Council resolution had been adopted with only the abstentions of China, Russia and the only Arab member of the Security Council at the time which was Qatar. So instead of a clear consensus unanimous statement of the international community with support of the host country, you had brewing conflict when the president of the host country said, "I don't want those UN troops here."

What followed was a very painful process in the first year of my tenure in that job of watching the international community and participating as a policy office on UN peacekeeping watching how the international community sought to renegotiate the mandate of the peacekeeping force in Darfur so that it would be acceptable to the president of Sudan but still have some teeth, still have some capacity to do its job which was to protect civilians one might say against the president of Sudan. So we had a real dilemma on our hands. There was a special negotiator for Sudan, a former USAID director by the name of Andrew Natsios, there were a number of very high-level meetings which did not involve my office or me directly but had serious implications for my office because it was all about the future of UN peacekeeping in Sudan.

Finally, about a year after the original UN Security Council resolution was adopted, there was agreement on something called a United Nations-African Union hybrid force in Darfur. The idea of the hybrid force grew out of the fact that there was already an African

Union presence on the ground. The original plan had been for this African Union presence to simply be replaced by a United Nations presence, understanding that some of the same troops might move from one operation to the other, but the idea was that the United Nations operation would be better funded, better commanded with a clear mandate and a clear ability to carry out its work. The idea of a hybrid force, something in which both the African Union and the United Nations had a role, was new. It was accepted politically as a compromise to get the buy-in of reluctant players, most prominently the government of Sudan itself, but there was no understanding anywhere about how such an operation would actually be carried out, what the respective roles of the two organizations would be in the command of the operation, how it would be functioning in practice, whether instructions would come from Addis Ababa where the African Union was hosted or New York as was traditional for UN peacekeeping operations.

After the agreement in principle about the idea of a hybrid force there were very intense negotiations about what this would mean in practice and how it would be characterized in the UN Security Council resolution. It took from the time I got into the job, which was just after the adoption of the first resolution, until about a year later, I believe it was July of 2007, when you finally had the adoption of a new Security Council resolution mandating this so-called hybrid force. A year had been basically wasted, had been lost in terms of deploying an effective peacekeeping operation in the area. The African Union had remained on the ground but had a very weak mandate, a very low level of equipment, training and funding and was widely perceived as being ineffective in carrying out the role of protecting civilians. So then we finally got agreement to deploy this hybrid force. The number was even higher, as we were going to deploy about 26 thousand people to Darfur, this relatively large region of Sudan.

During the second year of my two-year tour, a lot of attention was focused on the fact that the UN Security Council resolution even with the support of the host country is not at all equal to actually getting those troops on the ground. I mentioned the Lebanon case where the UN Security Council resolution was implemented quickly because there were players ready to deploy and there was agreement on the role that the troops would play. In the Darfur case, there was an understanding that this hybrid nature of the force meant that most of the troops would come from Africa rather than the traditional suppliers of UN peacekeeping troops which were, at that time, mainly from South Asia. And there was no clarity about who was going to provide key enabling equipment like helicopters...

Q: Oh yes.

WAKE: ...which are always in short supply and were in particularly short supply at that time because of the Afghan and Iraq operations which took up a lot of the helicopter capacity of not only the United States but of a number of other western partners. So many of the days that I was in that job our main goal was to get out one more telegram requesting one more demarche in a particular capital asking the government of one or another country to supply troops, helicopters and other kinds of support for this Darfur operation.

By the time I left in 2008 I think we were maybe halfway there. Of course, we started with something like seven or eight thousand African Union troops that were “re-hatted,” redeployed as UN troops, but that was a long way from the 26,000 that we were trying to get. We did manage to get some other countries to step up to the plate and deploy forces. It was very difficult to come up with all the equipment that was needed although there were some contributions. I think in subsequent years it finally got close to its mandated level and I guess you would have mixed accounts of how effective it was, but this was a major priority during the two years I was there.

Of course, there were a lot of other UN peacekeeping operations going on and each of them had its own particular issues with regard to renewals of mandates every six months or every year. That was the standard that had in earlier years been every six months but by the time I was in the office we had tried to get as many mandates as possible to roll over for a year at a time to give the UN and the troop-contributing countries a little bit more stability. There were a couple of mandates that never expired because they dated back to that very early period; they were those small operations I mentioned in the Middle East and India-Pakistan.

There was also a very special case of the mandate for Kosovo where the military forces that were deployed had never been under UN command; they were NATO forces in the so-called KFOR operation but the UN at that time still had a couple thousand police officers and the transition that was going on then was to move from UN policing to European Union policing. This was a complicated issue because the Russian Federation in particular refused to agree to any new Security Council resolution that affected the status of Kosovo; so it all had to be done within the existing UN framework.

During my time in the office I unfortunately didn't get very much opportunity to visit UN peacekeeping operations and, in fact, I only saw one on the ground which was the one physically closest to Washington. I got down to Haiti for not much more than a day of familiarization. There is one very sad follow-on to that visit to Haiti. When I was there I only had time for a small number of meetings, one of which was with the special representative for the Secretary General – the civilian head of the UN peacekeeping operation in Haiti. We met in his office and at that time it was a Guatemalan man by the name of Edward Mullet who subsequently went to New York to become the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping. His replacement was the previous Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping, so two people just traded jobs. Unfortunately, his successor – the person who had moved from New York to Port au Prince – actually died in that office where we sat, as a result of the earthquake in I believe it was 2010. It was extremely destructive out in the country but also took a lot of victims particularly among the civilian management of the UN peacekeeping operation. A lot of the military forces were deployed out to the countryside where they were maybe subject to some effects or injury but because so much of the management was in one of these high-rise, poorly constructed buildings, many of them died on the scene in Port au Prince; it was a real tragic situation, after I had no longer worked in that capacity. I often thought back of sitting in that office across from the person who could have died in that office. Instead,

that Guatemalan gentleman, Mr. Mullet, who was in New York when the earthquake took place in Haiti, immediately went back down to Haiti and took up his old job of managing the peacekeeping operation in the absence of the person who had been killed.

Q: Well let's talk a bit about your impression of the peacekeeping qualities of the troops. Let's take the Sudan first.

WAKE: I think the big picture story I would tell is that we need to understand UN peacekeeping as a particular tool within the framework of all military options to address a security situation. UN peacekeepers in many, if not most cases, are very professional. They are trained reasonably well to carry out their functions but they are not U.S. or NATO level nimble or high-powered forces. They are forces that have a particular role in observation, stabilization, to some extent protection of civilians but even that one involves using serious force which is something that a number of countries only engage in reluctantly because the traditional view of UN peacekeeping had been to see the peacekeepers as a buffer between forces that had already agreed to disengage. The tradition of UN peacekeeping was that you can be effective simply by being there and showing a presence and making it clear that you are kind of a trip wire if anybody crosses the line. By 2006 when I started in this job – and it is even more the case in 2015 as we are speaking – the nature of UN peacekeeping has been in a rapid transition to something much more like what the U.S. military would call stability operations or even irregular warfare where you have some kind of peace settlement in place...maybe. But you have many players on the scene who are not buying into that peace agreement and are continuing to pursue their goals through violence or nefarious means and, the capacity of UN peacekeepers to deal with this is a constant challenge. There are many cases where UN peacekeepers have been fairly criticized, sometimes unfairly but in many cases fairly criticized, for being too timid, too likely to stay in their bases or their secure surroundings when things get hot. There have also been some terrible cases in which UN peacekeepers have been guilty themselves of sexual exploitation and abuse of the local population. These cases got a lot of media and a lot of attention which we were constantly dealing with in our contacts for an example with the American Congress.

So it's a mixed picture. What I would say though in defense of UN peacekeepers and the troop-contributing countries that are primarily developing countries and rather poor countries is that they are given enormous work to do with relatively limited resources. A country like the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, is larger than Western Europe and so when we hear it's the largest UN peacekeeping operation in the world and it's got 25 or 30 thousand troops we have to compare that to the hundreds of thousands of troops in... pick your U.S. target of the past years, be it Iraq or Viet Nam. Let's face it: we're not so successful in pacifying these places with very large and well-equipped forces. So when you think about the enormous territory that these people are asked to stabilize or exercise some influence over with the resources they have, I think we have to say that this is a bargain for the international community and a great contribution to stability even if it's not nearly what we might like it to be.

Q: Okay this is a military operation. Is there a set of high-ranking officers from one country or another sitting around saying we'll deploy here, we'll deploy there. I mean in other words, who is manipulating these troops?

WAKE: Well in each case you have several key factors. The first is the mandate from the UN Security Council that spells out levels of troops, areas of operation and goals for the operation. Is it to ensure that no one crosses the cease fire line or is it to do something much more ambitious like stabilize the situation where there is an ongoing conflict? So that is sort of the first set of parameters.

Then to get closer to your question you have a command in the country which has both a civilian and a military component. There is always a special representative of the secretary-general who is the civilian overall leader of the mission and a force commander who is traditionally a high-ranking military officer of the country that is contributing the largest share of the troops in the country.

Then, of course, there is New York. That is the Secretary-General as the highest-ranking civilian official and his Department of Peacekeeping Operations, which has both military and civilians who provide the instructions. New York is like the Pentagon and the White House with regard to UN peacekeeping operations. The force commander on the ground is something like the U.S. military commander in a particular operation. And, of course, there is an additional element that the force commander and the special representative of the Secretary-General are dealing with in a multilateral environment, which is that the troops are going to be contributed by various countries and each country's contingent will have its own command structure.

In formal terms these troops are all under the UN command but there is sometimes an issue of national caveats or limitations on the work that are dictated either in writing or in practice by the way a particular country carries out its work. It's probably also worth mentioning that the largest share of UN peacekeeping operations when I was working on this, and this is even more true today, are so-called integrated missions or comprehensive missions where the military component is only part of a larger operation that includes what we might call institution-building or nation-building tasks involving democracy, human rights, elections, gender issues, even some limited work on infrastructure so that the line between a pure military peacekeeping operation and pure development work or economic engagement of the international community is not so clear. This is particularly the case in big operations like the Congo where the special representative of the secretary general not only is controlling the largest UN military operation in the world but also vast numbers of people who are engaged in other tasks. By the way, I think the UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has the largest air force in Africa, civilian and military.

Q: One of the problems I recall reading about from time to time in some of these African troops are more like occupying troops; they would take property. I assume you had a certain amount of responsibility going back to our own masters in Washington of seeing this thing work well; if they are looting, that's not working well.

WAKE: No, that's right. During my time I don't recall that there were any dramatic cases of that particular kind. There were a number of scandals, some of them that had a longer history and just came to light during those years that had to do with, in particular, financial abuse and corruption because of the very large scale of these operations by African standards so there were issues of contracts and procurement and so on. There were these sexual exploitation and abuse cases which were the most dramatic, exploitation of the local population; more of those cases had come to light and been dealt with in earlier years and the UN had put a lot of attention on its so-called no tolerance policy and they were reporting on a monthly basis of any allegations of these kinds of abuse. As far as this sort of looting, marauding nature of troops I can't say that was a phenomenon that came to light so much while I was working there. There was, of course, a lot of attention to discipline issues overall.

One of the challenges of discipline issues in UN peacekeeping is that the ultimate authority over the military troops is the troop contributing country's own military justice system. So if you have, for example, Rwandan troops alleged to commit abuses against the local population in Sudan, it's not the force commander or the UN in New York that can do anything but send that person home, it's then the Rwandan military justice system that needs to deal with them. By the way, when people would raise the question of whether there should be a United Nations military justice system to deal with such abuses, you immediately had people in the legal offices in places like the U.S. Pentagon saying, "Wait a minute; this is a matter of national sovereignty. We control our own forces, we are responsible for discipline." So this was an area where you could cajole and you could demand reporting from the troop contributing countries as to how alleged abuse was dealt with, but you couldn't actually take it over. Civilians were a different story where a certain amount of discipline could be exercised by the international organization itself but with the military there is a long-standing tradition that the discipline is within the force.

So this was an issue that one had to address. As I say, the criticisms that came up during my time probably had more to do with effectiveness than with abuse. Another set of criticisms had to do with the possibility that the existence of the UN peacekeeping force actually prolonged the conflict because it removed any incentive for the parties to reach agreement among themselves if they could conveniently say that they had a UN peacekeeping force, either separating them or providing stability. There was a lot of criticism in the Bush administration that was in power at the time against some of these very long-standing peacekeeping situations I had mentioned in the Middle East and India-Pakistan.

I have not yet mentioned the peacekeeping force in Western Sahara, which by the time I was working on these issues had already been in place at least since the early '90s. Its mandate was ostensibly to organize a referendum on the future status of Western Sahara. There was no referendum organized and there was no intention in any near term to organize a referendum but for the international community to have some presence along the line of conflict between the Moroccans and the Polisario was better than nothing.

Similarly on Cyprus, there had been a peacekeeping force for decades, there had been no conflict, no hot conflict for decades, the peacekeeping operation was widely considered to be a very soft assignment for the troops in question and it was one of the few places that Western European countries sent their troops because there was very little risk anything negative was going to happen to them; they could enjoy being on a pleasant Mediterranean island. Questions were often asked the value of having those troops there. But on the other hand, whenever someone seriously discussed the possibility of removing them, the question would be asked about who would take responsibility on the day after the Turkish and Greek Cypriot forces may have accidentally stumbled into some sort of conflict because of the absence of UN peacekeeping. So every six months the peacekeeping force was renewed. At that time, this was also the case for Georgia, where there was a small operation in Abkhazia. That operation died a quick death after the 2008 war but that was just after I left the office.

So what we had was I think about the largest number of UN peacekeeping forces deployed at any time up to that moment. Somewhat ironically in an administration that was considered to be quite skeptical about international organizations and multilateral military activities, what you found in the history of most of the large peacekeeping organizations that I dealt with by 2006 was that they had been enthusiastically supported by the Bush administration as a way of dealing with a small regional problem that was relatively low cost and did not involve deploying American forces. Some of these places involved significant United States interests; resolving both the conflict in Liberia and the conflict in Haiti were considered to be priorities of the United States but not places the United States wanted to send its own troops. So this was the dynamic. Nevertheless, from my perspective, Darfur was the peacekeeping challenge that took up most of my time.

We did have another piece of the office which dealt with the sanctions and counterterrorism activities of the UN. So I like to say that the office dealt with all the UN tools that were deployed when bad things happened. We were, of course, not responsible for any of the major work that was done in this decade after 2001 by the United States and its partners on counterterrorism. But we did deal with the small things that were done within a UN context such as developing a little bit more multilateral cooperation on counterterrorism activities and sanctioning Al Qaeda and Taliban individuals, blocking their assets and travel; these were things that were managed by a small unit in my office that was headed for much of my tour by an excellent long-time State Department international lawyer by the name of John Sandage. John insured that on the sanctions and counterterrorism side, I didn't have to devote too much attention because things were being handled in a very professional way. The UN at that time had sanction regimes not only against the Taliban and Al Qaeda individuals but also against a number of individuals and organizations that were perceived to be impeding implementation of peace processes in Africa. So this involved people like Charles Taylor from Liberia and his associates as well as similar so-called spoilers or unreconciled forces when there had been peace settlements involving major players but some others had continued to fight or to block the peacekeeping operations. These people were on UN sanctions lists that were managed by committees of the Security Council and the policy toward those committees

and the extensions of their mandates and their reporting was followed by our office, by the small sanctions and counterterrorism unit.

Q: Well now let's take an operation such as the Congo. What were they doing? What were the forces? It's a largely unknown situation; the area is huge, communications are poor. What was going on there during your time?

WAKE: My time started with a bit of optimism because there had been elections, I'm thinking earlier in 2006 or in 2005, that were carried about with massive UN and international support but were perceived as being relatively free and close enough to international standards that the international community was pretty supportive. The initial success was, as I recall, you had also acceptance of the result by the losers which, of course, in any election is a key factor. So you had a sense they had gotten over a major hurdle and that now it was a matter of building a more stable society and UN peacekeepers were there more as a deterrent to troublemakers than as active let's say peacemakers.

Now the big rub, which has continued to be a problem for at least the subsequent decade, is the very complicated situation which I wouldn't begin to explain because I don't fully understand, in the Eastern part of the Congo. There you had a lot of diversity both of ethnic groups, economic interests, ties to the forces that carried out the genocide in neighboring Rwanda, all of them with ties to mining interests and other important economic interests. There you had instability breaking out every so often, efforts by the Congolese forces essentially allied with the UN peacekeeping operation to marginalize some of these rebel groups but also the allegations the Congolese forces carried out their own human rights violations and really no good resolution of these issues during the time I was there. I'm aware that as we speak in 2015 this has gone through several more iterations and the UN has actually had its most aggressive operation ever in Eastern Congo where they actually had a mandate not only to keep the peace but to go after and marginalize and neutralize rebel groups that were impeding the peace. Even there I think the jury is still out about how successful that has been.

The best case is the one I described in the beginning where you had peace between formally rebellious let's say formally competing forces confirmed by an election where the results were accepted and UN peacekeepers act as deterrents to new trouble from breaking out. Where you had active rebellion or conflict and UN peacekeepers had to go in and try to straighten things out it was much more difficult.

Q: Who gave the orders to peacekeepers to go in and fire if they had to?

WAKE: Ultimately those decisions were, I believe, the force commander on the ground within parameters set by the rules of engagement for that particular operation that had been cleared through New York. So on a real time situation the decision might have to be made on the ground but to the extent that there was possibility of consulting - let's say, if it is Congo, either Kinshasa or New York - they would be expected to do so. The big reason for firing without prior consultation, obviously, would be defense of the troops

themselves. That's maybe the easier case. The more difficult case is to decide you are going to leave your barracks and go and defend the woman who is being attacked while going out to fetch water ten kilometers away from your headquarters where you might be putting the force at risk as well. Then there is a calculation about whether your mandate is sufficiently robust and your forces sufficiently robust to go out and actually do the job of protecting people. There are a lot of gray areas in this, a lot of murky matters.

Of course, the best situation is one in which the mere presence of the international forces creates a certain amount of fear and reluctance and inability of troublemakers to get support. I mentioned these integrated missions as well; the mandates of these integrated missions often includes a so-called DDR – disarmament, demobilization and reintegration – component where it's not just a matter of trying to intimidate bad guys into laying low but also to try to get their weapons from them and give them jobs or somehow try to integrate them into society or give them weapons and put them into security forces so that they can somehow be contributors to the new society that is being built as a result of the settlement. It works better in some cases than others and in some cases it looks like it's working very well. We had one in my time in East Timor where the UN was mainly involved in policing. The Australians had some military forces and that was all going very well and downsizing was well underway when one former political force made the calculation that they could seize power and reverse the political situation that had been established through relatively free elections. Then you had to go back to a higher level of force until things stabilized again. These things don't generally stabilize very quickly because they tend to involve ethnic, religious or political conflicts that had been brewing for years or decades and the international community tends to want quick solutions which allows the mission to be completed in six months. Instead you usually end up...

Q: Sure, a Shiite-Sunni problem and you have three months to do it.

WAKE: Yeah, exactly, no matter that it's been brewing for several hundreds or thousands of years. So one of my jobs, which I actually enjoyed quite a bit, was to go and explain this every single month to staffers for at least four Congressional committees. In the 1990s when there had been tremendous criticism of UN peacekeeping as a result of the failures in Rwanda and Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Congress had gotten very interested in the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping and the amount of money the United States was spending on it and had introduced, if not legislation, at least language accompanying legislation on UN peacekeeping funding that provided that the State Department would brief the relevant committees of the Congress on a monthly basis. We called these the round the world briefings, it was a major task for our office on an almost constant basis to keep...

Q: I can imagine.

WAKE: ...ourselves up to date. Actually I had two military officers on detail from the Pentagon and one of them was the coordinator for the office of these briefings. I also had a budget person who kept good track of the very large amounts of money that were being

spent on these operations. We would go every month to the Senate Foreign Relations and Senate Appropriations staff and on the House side their counterparts. Occasionally we'd also do the briefing for the Senate Armed Services committee and as a result I was up leading a small team from our office, usually two or three of us, roughly four times a month for two years talking to staffers, not to members but to staffers, from these committees about what had changed over the previous month if anything, what mandates were going to be renewed over the coming months, what changes there might be in the mandates. We tended to focus a lot on those Security Council developments because that was the policy and political piece but there would often be questions also if there had been any flare-ups or scandals or news reports about any of these operations. As I say, I basically enjoyed it because I found that most of the staffers that we dealt with were actually quite interested and knowledgeable about the operations; they were real professionals. But it did keep us on our toes and sometimes they would ask questions, of course, that we didn't know the answers to and we'd have to go back and do some research or talk to our colleagues in New York at the U.S. Mission to the UN or to track down the answers from the UN.

It was a fairly intense job mainly because of the high-profile attention on Darfur – the president of the United States was personally interested on that issue – but also just because of the constant schedule of Congressional briefings, issues dealing with finance. The United States at that time was millions of dollars in arrears for peacekeeping mainly because in the 1990s a cap had been placed on the amount the U.S. would pay for peacekeeping at 25 percent of the UN peacekeeping budget whereas our authorized share was a bit larger. In the '90s it was at some point over 30 percent and by the time I was working on it, it was only a little over 26 percent, I think, of UN peacekeeping, which was a different scale than the UN regular budget. But the difference between 25 percent and 26 percent when you are dealing with budgets of one to two billion adds up over the years so over the years we had developed rather large arrears and we were always trying to persuade the Congress to allow us to pay those off. This was the official position most of the time of the administration although that kind of went up and down depending on other priorities in the budget. By the time I left we had not fully resolved this question; I think by now it has been taken care of. At that time, we were constantly reminded that we, the United States, were mandating all these operations through our vote in the Security Council, we were pushing for the UN to do more and yet we were not fulfilling our financial obligations.

Q: Looking at this what were your impressions of what contingent of troops were the best peacekeepers and not the best?

WAKE: You know, I can't say that I have a very strong impression. In the rare cases when troops from NATO countries or more developed countries were deployed, as I mentioned Italy and France were countries that deployed to Lebanon, they would bring with them a much higher level of training and equipment than the other peacekeepers. The peacekeepers in Africa that had a particularly good reputation I recall were the Rwandans and the South Africans although with the Rwandans there were always lingering questions about whether a particular force or a particular commander had been

involved in abuses during the period not so much of the genocide but the response or reaction to the genocide in Rwanda. So there were some small clouds over these forces but they tended to be well trained and we were talking now about a period that was more than ten years after the violent conflict in Rwanda.

Among the forces that were most numerous you had three South Asian countries that were always just around the same level of overall numbers and they were India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. I think the Indians probably had the longest tradition of peacekeeping and perhaps the best training and experience although that's not to denigrate the others. Actually I had an opportunity during my stay in that office to visit India because uniquely among all the troop contributors in the UN, the United States had a special bilateral exchange with India where every year either Indian exerts on peacekeeping would come to Washington or we would go to New Delhi to discuss the picture essentially based on the time when the United States was the clear main financial contributor to the UN peacekeeping operations and India was the largest contributor of troops. During my time, whether India was the largest, or the second or the third didn't matter so much they were still a very important troop contributor and they also had a very well-developed training program and training center both for their own peacekeepers and for other peacekeepers from developing countries. They liked to point out that they had been involved in just about every UN peacekeeping operation since the beginning of the UN and they took it very seriously. It was an important element in the way they trained their own troops for their own operations so that UN peacekeepers from India would go back and serve in the Indian military. So I would say that was an important component.

There was one other than I would mention because they played a special role in a country important to us and that was Brazilian peacekeepers...

Q: Oh.

WAKE: ...who had the lead role in the operation in Haiti. During my time this was an operation that broke the mold of UN peacekeeping on crime issues. It was determined in the Haitian situation the real problem preventing a return to normality at that period was gang activity and the power of organized crime gangs in Port au Prince. The Brazilians drawing to some extent on their own experience in dealing with crime incidents in Brazil carried out quite aggressive anti-crime operations and anti-gang operations in Haiti. That was considered to be a relatively effective step, a controversial one, because it put Brazilian peacekeepers at risk. They didn't just sit in their barracks; they actually went into slums that were controlled by very nasty gang leaders and went after these gang leaders. This was kind of uncharted territory in UN peacekeeping which the U.S. was supportive of, although we had very, very few people in peacekeeping operations at all; the United States contribution was less than 100 people of the more than 100 thousand in UN peacekeeping. We did have a few in Haiti that were in staff positions helping out basically with what in the UN is usually called analyses, a euphemism for intelligence, but basically trying to help identify who were the bad guys to go after in these gangs.

Q: Did you get any feel for how our...I'm using a big word but the Pentagon, our military felt about peacekeeping?

WAKE: There was quite a low level of interest among most policymakers in the Pentagon, in the Defense Department. My sense was that they did not see UN peacekeeping as a negative thing; they saw it as something quite different from what they, in the Pentagon, did and something which fit reasonably well into a distribution of labor where they would focus on the problems that were of high priority interest to the United States at that moment, i.e., Iraq, Afghanistan and the war on terrorism. And if UN peacekeeping could somehow at a lower level without necessarily tremendous effectiveness but without too many problems could keep a lid on some other situations that was a good thing. But, for example, when we were dealing with mandate issues where we always had as a matter of good bureaucratic practice clearances involving the Pentagon and ultimately approval of the relevant staff in the National Security Council because these were mandates creating commitments for the United States under international law when they are adopted in the UN Security Council, the Defense Department tended to be involved on a relatively low level and relatively pro forma. It was, of course, the case that we had a couple of DOD officers working in our office, as I mentioned; we had a colonel and a lieutenant colonel who were detailed to us and that was a great help to me because that gave some expertise in the office on the actual military strategic and operational side of these things. But bureaucratically the Pentagon and DOD overall showed a relatively low level of interest. I think that's been different at other times in the past but at that time it was not something that they were so interested in.

I will mention one area where I did see a lot of Pentagon people and that was in the quite regular meetings either in person or through video conference on the situation in Sudan because that was the one that had White House attention. It had a lot of attention in the American non-governmental community because you had a real civilian humanitarian tragedy that led to the so-called Save Darfur NGO, non-governmental movement. There were usually Pentagon people in the room or on the video conferencing but I would have to say their major priority tended to be to put damper on any expectation that the United States could play a military role in saving civilians in Sudan even by providing equipment or anything else. It was always considered to be something that was too difficult and too much a distraction from the main war fighting business of the day.

Q: What about air lift? I would think this would be....

WAKE: You know that's a fair question because there were some cases where we did provide air lift particularly to get forces into Darfur when it finally happened. It wasn't a routine thing, it wasn't something we were doing all the time or that cost a lot of money. There were a few cases when we assisted in getting troops or equipment from other countries in and I should say there was another side bar that was not even a UN peacekeeping operation; there was still an African Union operation in Somalia. That did get a fair amount of U.S. military training and equipment support but it didn't actually, for technical reasons, didn't go through my office because it wasn't a UN peacekeeping

operation. But even the air lift and so on, for UN operations, was really quite modest; mostly they did it themselves. They did it commercially unless it was provided by another military power.

Q: What about, I always think about, a couple small nations, Samoa and Fiji, that apparently from what I've read, took great pride in their troops?

WAKE: There were a few small contributors that continued to be active and Fiji was one. Fiji actually was a bit of a controversial case during my time because there had just been a military coup in Fiji. So on the one hand Fijian troops were considered to be effective and had been long-standing participants in peacekeeping but on the other hand there was distaste for working with the Fijian military because of its own role in the quashing of democracy on Fiji. I think that pragmatism won out and since this was a UN operation and not a U.S. operation, we didn't insist that anything be changed. I'm trying to think what other small countries may have had outsized roles and I'm sure there were some.

What had changed by the time I was working on this you didn't have the Canada's and the Sweden's playing big roles as they had in earlier years.

Q: How about the Indians and the Pakistanis; they had their internal problems but how did they work together outside?

WAKE: My sense is that when they were in third countries they worked together fine. Maybe there weren't too many cases where they had major deployments at the same location but if they needed to cooperate in the field or they needed to cooperate in headquarters among Indian and Pakistani colonels or generals it didn't seem that this was an issue.

Q: Well they really operated greatly from their British training at very much the same level.

WAKE: Exactly, exactly. I guess Nepal was another small country that had an outsized role, also with the same tradition.

Q: What about sanctions and all did you get much involved with that?

WAKE: As I said the UN had sanctions against these specific players, we didn't get involved in sanctions that were just U.S. based. In the UN context you had the terrorism related sanctions against the Taliban and Al Qaeda, you had non-proliferation sanctions involving North Korea and Iran in particular, and you had these peace-related sanctions, all of which in my time had to do with Africa, that were against the players who were impeding peace processes. They all also had six-month or one-year mandate renewals which had to be adopted in the Security Council. Sometimes these would be controversial; there were lists of people that had to be added or taken off lists through consensus processes on committees in New York and you also had a couple of sanction regimes involving arms.

For example, while there was no general sanction against providing arms to Sudan there were sanctions against providing arms that would be used in Darfur. This created a huge problem in terms of verification and accountability because, of course, no one providing arms to Sudan would say they are providing them to violate the UN sanctions but then you'd find that those Chinese weapons that were provided to the central government just happened to turn up in the Darfur region in the conflict against civilians. There was a quite good expert group in New York as one of these sanctions committees that had a lot of good data on what was being done. One of the problems was that a lot of these things were confidential within the UN Security Council and at least one of those reports leaked out at the time and proved quite embarrassing particularly to China because it showed that the sanctions regime was being flouted. Of course, as today in 2015, one of the big issues on the agenda was trying to deal with Iran on its nuclear program.

At that time relations were pretty bad and sanctions were being added to the extent that the United States could persuade its allies to ratchet up sanctions; it did so actually for both Iran and North Korea. Our office was involved obviously not at the high political level where these things got attention of Secretaries and Undersecretaries on a daily basis in Washington but to the extent that there were technical questions of how the sanctions would be expressed or established through Security Council language and what sort of monitoring and implementing mechanisms there would be. This was something that particular unit in my office dealing with sanctions and counterterrorism would handle. Personally I was less involved because I had such a strong high-powered State Department lawyer who was running that unit and he knew what needed to be done.

Q: You know you said terrorism. Terrorism, of course, is so widespread it's sort of like the common cold practically. Did you have a piece of the action?

WAKE: We had two very small pieces of the action. The sanctions piece of the action was really only a carryover from the immediate reaction to 9/11 so it involved the Taliban and Al Qaida. If you wanted to then send another group to the UN sanctions list for terrorism you would always have a problem getting a consensus. If you wanted to add the IRA, the PLO, you name your group and you will find someone who doesn't consider that group to be a terrorist or doesn't believe that they should be sanctioned at the UN level. So in fact that was a very limited thing; the only thing that was continuing several years later after 9/11 was a new person's name would be added to the list because they were found to be associated with Al Qaida or Taliban or someone died and their name was taken off the list or their assets were unfrozen because there was no reason to block their assets from going to their family members or something like that.

Then the other piece was a policy piece of counterterrorism within the United Nations which again is very small compared to the U.S. counterterrorism effort but there was considerable work put in just to adopt a counterterrorism strategy in the UN and then to establishing some exchanges of information and training on counterterrorism issues. There again, our office had a limited role in the policy level of that. The operational contact with the UN on carrying out any of these activities would be other parts of the

State Department or other parts of the government. So it wasn't something that was terribly time consuming, for our 15 person office, but it was part of the work; counterterrorism was part of the work for one or two people.

Q: Okay, well you left this office when?

WAKE: I left this office in June, I guess, of 2008.

Q: And then what?

WAKE: Then I went to the U.S. Army War College as an instructor, a State Department faculty adviser.

Q: This is up in Carlisle.

WAKE: Up in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. My wife and I managed to get parallel assignments up there so we would both...

Q: What was she doing?

WAKE: She and I both were in Carlisle and we were both instructors and State Department faculty advisors. During the two years that I had been in the International Organizations bureau she had been on the Policy Planning Staff of the Secretary, working on Russia and former Soviet issues. But we both in one sense felt ready for something that would be a little bit different pace; we weren't quite sure what would be next in our careers, if anything, in the Foreign Service but this teaching opportunity seemed interesting to us. We were able to line it up so that we could both be up there. There is not a tremendous amount to say about that year except I basically enjoyed the experience of teaching, mostly working with a seminar of I think 17 students, most of whom were U.S. military officers with a couple of foreign military officers and a couple of civilians. Teaching focused on the standard Army War College courses that were most related to policy and civilian activities; obviously, not the operational military work. The whole point of the Army War College experience for the students is to get them to a more strategic policy level.

One of the things I found was that you had people who were more or less of my generation, maybe slightly younger, who had reached the level of colonel and in some cases lieutenant colonel. Their experiences were with the same government, working for the United States government, but were dramatically different from mine because they had tended to command large numbers of people at least at the level of say a company or maybe even a battalion. They had large financial resources at their disposal, dramatically larger than anyone in the State Department would deal with it at that level leaving aside UN peacekeeping where I might sign a few checks for a lot of money but I didn't have any control over it. But on the other hand, the idea of drafting a policy memo that might go to the National Security Council and ultimately might be seen by a cabinet secretary or even the president was something so far from their experience that this was the reason

for them to be at the War College, to really understand what it was like to be at the policy and strategic level that for a State Department officer was much more familiar. So it was a good experience and I hope we were able to contribute a little to their understanding of both the way the policy process works and the constraints that the State Department is under because many of these military officers were extremely surprised to learn how small the State Department is in terms of its personnel and financial resources in comparison to the Pentagon.

Q: Well you left there when?

WAKE: I left there in the summer of 2009 and at the same time I left the Foreign Service.

Q: This is about the time you acquired a house up in the hills?

WAKE: Actually, we had done that at an earlier stage. When we came back from Moscow in 2003 we knew we were only going to be in the Washington area for one year but somehow the idea of the *dacha*, my previous experience in Sweden with the *stuga*, which is the summer house in Swedish terms, led us to think it would be nice to have some place we could go to on weekends and maybe look to as a semi-retirement home sometime in the future. We bought a place in Linden, Virginia, which is out near Front Royal, Virginia.

Q: There's an apple place or a pie place or something like that there?

WAKE: There is. It's actually at a place called The Apple House where you head up the mountain and get off the paved road and go up.

Q: We often went to The Apple House.

WAKE: Well the Apple House is about three miles from our place in Linden; we'll have to have you out there sometime. It's one more mile on paved road and then a couple miles on a road that will be pretty mucky on a day like today but with nice views out over the valley. What we bought was apparently an old hunter's cabin from the 1960s but in the 1990s someone had put up essentially a three-bedroom house next to it and used the hunter's cabin as the living room. So it's a modern enough house with a little bit of character in the old part.

Q: You know when you go through Thoroughfare Gap there?

WAKE: Ah huh.

Q: Back in the Civil War my grandfather was with a troop of the Regiment of Wisconsin volunteers...

WAKE: My goodness.

Q: ...basically German speaking and their first job, this is '62 I guess or so, was guarding Thoroughfare Gap and then they ended up at Chancellorsville and Gettysburg and all that sort of stuff but every time I go by there I tip my hat to my grandfather.

WAKE: That's interesting. I'll have to tip mine to him today when we go out there. It's interesting you went back to that purchase of our place in Linden. It is, of course, really part of the same valley that you get to when you are up through Gettysburg going off to Carlisle. We actually found when we were living in Carlisle and had a relatively easy work life, without long Friday evenings and so on, that it was just about two hours down Route 81 through the Cumberland Valley eventually toward the Shenandoah Valley that we could get to our weekend place there. We also perhaps foolishly, thinking we would be there a couple years, bought a place up in Carlisle, a small townhouse that we still own to this day because it's not the best real estate market there. We've always been able to rent it out without any difficulty.

Q: Okay, well I want to thank you very much.

WAKE: The only question I have is whether you'd want to hear any broad overview of what I did for the next four years working for the OSCE.

Q: Oh yeah, why don't we do that?

WAKE: I don't want to go into a lot of detail about it also because it's not a U.S. government position but...

Q: That doesn't bother me.

WAKE: I don't think it would take more than a few minutes just to give you the basic picture. It's actually why I left the Foreign Service because I was only 50 exactly at the time and had no clear sense of what would be next. But I had extended my one year stay as my wife and I planned a second year at the War College which would have been into 2010. Somewhere early in 2009 I saw a vacancy announcement for the position of the so-called First Deputy Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the OSCE; another one of these big long titles. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe has this office in Warsaw that focuses on elections, human rights, democracy, tolerance, non-discrimination and they had an advertisement for the number two position in the office which would be a direct contract – not a loan from any government, but actually paid directly from the organization. Because I knew something about the OSCE from my prior work, over decades even, I thought that might be an interesting job and I knew that a couple of Americans had had that job in the past. But the incumbent when I was looking into it was not an American; it was a Norwegian and the director was a Slovenian. I got in touch with the U.S. Mission to the OSCE in Vienna and said, "Do you think there is any chance that I could get this job," I at least expressed my interest in applying and got an answer back saying, "Well you can go ahead and try but unlikely that they will take an American for this job." At that time it was open to

applicants from all, I guess there were 56 states, in the OSCE. So I said, “Alright, it doesn’t cost anything to send in an application.”

In the end, I was invited to an interview in Warsaw by an interview panel, multinational in character. Somehow that panel, headed by a Serb with a Russian and a UK national and a German and I’m not sure who else recommended to that Slovenian head of mission that I’d be the next number two in the office. It took quite a while to get it approved through all the levels of OSCE but eventually I was offered the job and my wife and I decided I would go ahead and leave the Foreign Service and do this and she would stay in Carlisle through the next academic year or at least until she could determine if there was a way to get over and work in Europe while staying in the Foreign Service.

I took that position and I occupied it then for four years, which was the maximum allowed under the rules of the OSCE. They have a sort of non-career policy where the most senior positions like that are limited in time and in this case to four years. I had a very intense, challenging, but enjoyable experience as the number two in an operation with about 150 staff based in Warsaw focusing on those issues I mentioned across all participating States in the OSCE from the United States and Canada to all of Europe and the former Soviet Union. In the course of those four years I managed to visit in connection with elections or some other business probably a couple dozen countries including most of the former Soviet and former Yugoslav states. I hope I played a positive role in keeping that office focused on some important commitments that OSCE states had made in the early period from 1975 into the early ‘90s especially.

Q: What were these commitments, the important ones?

WAKE: The basic commitments that already went back to 1975 in the Helsinki Final Act were respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms including freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief. More generally all of the human rights in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was kind of incorporated by reference, but then more explicitly in the late 1980s and into the early 1990s as the Cold War was ending and the wall was coming down there were very explicit commitments on holding free and fair elections which would be transparent and involve universal suffrage, that would involve separation of political parties from state institutions.

Subsequently even more recent commitments were made on things like combating trafficking of persons, promoting the rights of the Roma population in Europe and combating discriminating and intolerance; a number of things which I’ve talked about already when I was working on the OSCE as the coordinator for these issues in an earlier job. But now I was involved more in the operational side of programs to either assist states in building their capacity to implement their commitments or especially in the case of elections to monitor how they were implementing those commitments and to report on it publicly. Everything that the office I worked on, essentially everything we did was completely open and transparent and led to reports over the course of my four years on elections in almost every state in the OSCE. We liked to joke by the time I left, when Mongolia had joined as the 57th participating state in the OSCE, we had engaged in some

sort of election-related activity in 56 of our participating states. The exception was the Holy See (the Vatican), which was a full member of the OSCE - a participating State - but had never invited the OSCE to observe its elections.

Q: You have to stand outside on the main Piazza and watch for white smoke.

WAKE: Watch for white smoke; exactly. But election observation was interesting and we did it in Russia during my time. I wasn't personally directly involved but we observed both the parliamentary and the presidential elections which had not been possible four years earlier. I give credit to the director of ODIHR for finding a way to get that mission in, despite the fact that it was one that was quite...let's say the findings of which were not necessarily to the liking to the government in question.

Q: Were there any particular difficult things that you dealt with?

WAKE: There was one overriding issue which was the built-in problem of an office whose mandate is related to human rights and democracy in an organization that operates by consensus when many of the countries that are part of that consensus do not respect human rights or have fully functioning democracies. So you had to find ways to fall back on the mandate that had been approved on an earlier moment to keep reminding countries that you were only there to assist them in doing what they had promised to do but to do that in a way which avoided them using the kind of nuclear weapon that they had which would be to cut off your budget and prevent you from operating. They couldn't change the mandate because the mandate could only be changed by consensus.

Q: Yeah.

WAKE: But it's true that each year the budget and the staffing for the office had to be approved by consensus. The good thing is that it had been approved every year as a package along with other activities in the organization in other fields and the friends of our office, which was mainly the West Europeans and the United States and Canada, would always insist that if there was going to be an OSCE at all there is going to be such an organization that is going to have a strong Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. Nevertheless, that was the biggest challenge: this dilemma of how much you could do to fulfill your mandate when the board of directors, if you will, are the very people that you're trying to keep an eye on.

There were more practical issues that came up particularly with organizing an annual meeting, a two-week long meeting on human rights and democracy that takes place in Warsaw every September. It's a big challenge to set up a two-week meeting with dozens of agenda items and over one thousand participants every year. And it's a particular challenge when again the agenda of the meeting and the specifics of its priorities for any given year have to be approved by consensus in that body of the OSCE, the so-called Permanent Council, that meets in Vienna and adopts all its decisions by consensus. You tended to get your approved agenda on the last day before they went off for vacation at the end of July for a meeting that started in September; the intervening period included a

four-week vacation in Europe and to try and organize things was a very big practical challenge. I had great staff to help me do it but that was the big issue.

You also had to deal every year with a different chairmanship; most of the chairmanships we dealt with were pretty helpful. These were different countries that took on that role but there was a particular challenge in 2010 because for the first time ever there was a former Soviet state as the chair; that was Kazakhstan. Just about the time I got in the office in 2009 the most prominent human rights defender in Kazakhstan was arrested for his role in a fatal car accident. He had, in fact, killed a pedestrian in a car accident but one in which he probably was not the guilty party; the pedestrian ran out into the dark street somewhere. But on my first visit to Kazakhstan in September of 2010 I was on a bumpy road up to the detention center to visit this gentleman by the name of Yevgeny Zhovtis. He was not released during the entire period of the Kazakh chairmanship but we continued to maintain contact and support for him, also because he was a member of our own office's special expert advisory committee on freedom of association; he was a real expert on that issue and after his release he continued to work with us.

Q: Thank you for sharing some details about your work in the OSCE as well as the Foreign Service. This is a good chance to let people know about something like the OSCE and so many of these other things like peacekeeping and all. These organizations are now well established and are doing really good work. All we hear about are the failures.

WAKE: Yes, that's true. There are failures, but there is also a lot of valuable work. I always like to point out that multilateral organizations do such work at quite a low cost to the American taxpayer when you compare it to either our bilateral assistance and diplomatic activities or particularly to our military activities. By comparison the amount spent on these multilateral activities is really pennies.

Q: Okay, well I thank you very much. It's been great.

WAKE: Thank you.

End of interview