

ROMANIA

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ROBERT G. CLEVELAND
1st Secretary of Legation
Bucharest (1946-1948)

Robert G. Cleveland grew up in a family that traveled extensively abroad, spoke French at home, and had many European friends. He was appointed to the Foreign Service in 1946. His career included assignments in Bucharest, Paris, Sydney, Bangkok, and Belgrade. He was interviewed by Horace G. Torbert in 1990.

CLEVELAND: After a very brief period of indoctrination and language study, I was assigned to Bucharest as First Secretary of Legation. The job was to handle the execution of the economic aspects of the Romanian Peace Treaty, which had just been negotiated. We were expecting our second child at that point; when I asked if I was needed at the post right away, I was told that in the Foreign Service, as in the Navy, one is present at the keel laying but not always at the launching!

An interesting sidelight on the assignment was that the widow of the late American Ambassador to Romania heard about our prospective departure. She proceeded to show us what can only be called excessive hospitality. In our naivete, we first thought it was pure altruism; however, just before I left, she insisted that I take with me a large and heavy suitcase containing all sorts of things for her dear friend, a Romanian grandee named Savel Radulescu, a former adviser to the King. I was torn between my feeling that this would be improper, and the difficulty of turning down a rather prominent and very insistent lady. With my fingers crossed, I took the bag! Later, she kept mailing stuff through the pouch until we had to get the Department to stop her.

Romania was not considered a desirable launching pad for kids then (or now), so off I sailed on the USS America, leaving my wife to cope at home. No cars were available in Europe in those days, so I brought one with me. I landed in Southampton, crossed the Channel, and after a fairly eventful trip across Europe through military zones, finally reached Bucharest.

Perhaps I should mention that during a brief stop in Paris, I ran into an FSO stationed there who was bitterly resentful of us Manpower FSO's because he felt the Act adversely affected his career. At the time, quite a few felt that way, but it soon passed. As it happens, that particular FSO didn't last much longer in the Service.

While I was at sea, Secretary Marshall made his famous speech at Harvard. I didn't hear it or know about it, and the first time it reached my ears was, embarrassingly enough, from Gheorghe Grafencu, the former Foreign Minister of Romania, who was in exile in Switzerland. He was naturally very enthusiastic about the idea, hoping it would be extended to Romania. We all know what happened!

Having been told in Washington that I was urgently needed in Bucharest, I found when I got there that the need wasn't so urgent, because the Peace Treaty had not yet been ratified. That's life in the Foreign Service! In June, 1947, our State Department office was still technically attached to the American General who represented the U. S. on the tripartite Allied Control Commission, whose other members were the British and Soviets. At that point the Peace Treaty had been signed but not ratified, so we were not yet a Legation. Ratification took place in the fall of 1947.

Beside Peace Treaty implementation, I handled economic reporting and commercial work. One of my first jobs after arriving involved dealing directly with the Soviets on the subject of German external assets. This was my introduction to "realpolitik!" After the Armistice that established the Control Commission, the Soviets proceeded to seize everything that could be called a German asset and many other things besides. Several American companies, including IBM and Singer had branches in Romania that they held through their German companies. There was also a Steinway piano in the Opera House still owned by Steinway. The Soviets grabbed this along with everything else. We spent a lot of time and effort trying to convince the Soviets that they were taking American property. We got nowhere. They had the troops!

The last half of 1947 was a depressing period. King Michael was still on the throne during the period, but the infamous Vishinsky visit caused the creation of a "coalition" government which was actually entirely under total communist control. Not only were the Soviets milking the Romanian economy, but they moved rapidly to establish Romania as a satellite. This culminated in the abdication of the King in December, and the creation of the "Romanian Popular Republic." All during this period, we were of course sending full telegraphic reports to Washington. We dutifully reported the abdication and all the events surrounding it, complete with commentary. Several days later the State Department wired that it had read about the abdication in the New York Times; where was our report? It turned out that our messages were sent through military facilities via Frankfurt, and were held up over Christmas.

Q: No automatic switching in those days?

CLEVELAND: No; the system was primitive, and dependent on others. It's good that State now has its own facilities.

Q: When did our mission formally become a Legation?

CLEVELAND: This took place after the Peace Treaty was ratified; our Minister, Rudolf Schoenfeld arrived in October, 1947.

Q: Did you feel you learned from him?

CLEVELAND: To begin with, none of us, including the Minister, had any experience in operating in a Soviet satellite. It was a new and totally different experience for everybody. Mr. Schoenfeld was an odd, controversial character; he was an old-time FSO, a bachelor, and very difficult to work for. He had enormous respect for the Department and its rules and methods, which he'd learned in the '20s and '30s. Most of us found it hard to adapt to his way of thinking. His specialty was drafting; he was hard on his own and everyone else's. Getting a telegram out of the Legation was a major production, involving many drafts. To answer your question, all this effort did seem to improve my drafting. At least, when I got to Paris, my stuff went out without a hitch!

Q: What was life like in Bucharest in those days?

CLEVELAND: When I first arrived, life was fairly easy. After my wife arrived, we rented very cheaply a beautiful house that had belonged to a member of the royal family. Help was cheap and competent. Food was fairly good, especially when supplemented from our small commissary. We met many Romanians, mostly of the old regime, whom we found agreeable and fairly interesting, but not really informative as to political developments. These contacts ceased after the King's abdication; our Romanian friends were afraid to see us. Their fear was well founded; at least one person whom I knew well ended up digging the Danube Canal at forced labor. The entire Western diplomatic colony was isolated, and became very intimate and social, living in each other's pockets and trading rumors about developments. However, we did make some lifetime friends among our colleagues.

An awkward feature of life was foreign exchange. When I first arrived, there was galloping inflation, with the value of the local currency reachings millions to the dollar. For example, when I reached the border on the way to Bucharest, I changed a five dollar bill into *Lei*, out of which I paid for gas, food and a hotel room for the 500 mile trip. My first weeks were in a "luxury" hotel where I had a suite for fifty cents a night. Then came currency reform which impoverished the whole population, and faced the Legation with an outrageous official rate, a form of highway robbery. It also threatened to impoverish the Legation staff. We got some relief in the form of increased allowances from the Department, but were hard put to make do for a while.

Q: What language did you generally communicate in?

CLEVELAND: Regrettably, our opportunities to talk with Romanian officials were almost nonexistent. I spoke pretty good French; it is the *lingua franca* of Romania; however, I did work hard on Romanian. By the time we left, I'd made some progress; in fact, we still use some Romanian phrases in the family

Q: I note that you left for Paris at the end of 1948. Why such a short tour?

CLEVELAND: My assignment was, as I said, Treaty implementation and economic and commercial work. We tried to negotiate the practical application of the Treaty provisions; with great trouble, we would get an appointment with someone in the Foreign Office. We requested action on these matters, and kept pressing, but nothing ever happened. By the end of 1948, it became clear that we were wasting our time. Perhaps our proposals went through Party channels to Moscow, or perhaps they were just dropped. In light of the experience in Romania and other Eastern European Countries, Washington called a conference in Rome in June, 1948 to discuss the fabric of our relationships with Eastern Europe. Mission Chiefs and staff members from each country met with officers from the Department. Based on the consensus at that meeting, Washington decided to reduce staffs in the area. Several of us were transferred; the Clevelands were ordered to Paris. I was delighted at the challenge after the frustrations of Bucharest, but we were both very sorry to leave friends and colleagues, more than we ever made in a subsequent post!

Q: How could sum things up?

CLEVELAND: Prewar Romania had some of the trappings of democracy; it had a king, but also a constitution, a parliament, political parties etc., But it was politically oligarchic and economically capitalist but monopolistic. There was an enormous gap between the haves and the have-nots. The Communists had fertile ground.

After the War, we watched it become a servile Soviet satellite. We were not there to witness the process of agricultural collectivization, which ruined its rich agricultural potential, nor the industrialization which created an urban underclass out of its peasantry. We did observe this in several later visits.

Q: They did of course have some oil.

CLEVELAND: At Ploesti, which we bombed during the War, there was the oil which, along with agricultural exports, had kept Romania in fairly good shape for many years. When we were there, the Soviets were taking most of it, so petrol and fuel oil became very scarce.

Q: Are there any short anecdotes about life in Bucharest?

CLEVELAND: Here are a few snapshots:

A long procession of "voluntary" peasants on their way into town for some demonstration or other, all stopping to relieve themselves in the street outside our house. Our elderly American child nurse, while pretending to be shocked, watched through binoculars!

Dinner at the house of a pre-revolutionary magnate with a footman in white gloves behind every chair.

A "furnished" summer cottage we looked at - when we asked about staff quarters, we were shown a couple of tiny rooms whose only furniture was straw on the floor!

The Royal Swedish Embassy and the Swedish Ambassador - both real pre-war products - the kind of thing one reads about in novels - everything impeccable and old-fashioned.

The visit of Marshal Tito to Bucharest. His train arrived at the Royal Station near our house. Uniformed soldiers entered our house. My wife was sick in bed; she called me at the office; I rushed home in a rage and pushed them out of the house. Lucky I wasn't shot!

MURAT WILLIAMS
Political Officer
Bucharest (1949-1951)

Ambassador Williams was born and raised in Virginia and was educated at the University of Virginia and Oxford University. After serving in the US Navy in World War II, he joined the State Department, serving in Washington, D.C., where he worked with the Refugee Relief Program, and abroad. His foreign posts include San Salvador, Bucharest, Salonika, Bern and Tel Aviv. Mr. Williams served as U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador from 1961 to 1964. Ambassador Williams was interviewed by Melvin Spector in 1990. He died in 1994.

WILLIAMS: As I was saying I wanted to go to the Soviet Union but instead I was sent to Bucharest.

Q: Were you given any training, language training, before you left?

WILLIAMS: No, it didn't seem to be necessary to have special training. My assignment was to be in the political section of the legation, but it so happened that the person who was to go as the Deputy Chief of Mission, Ed Gullion, couldn't get a visa.

Q: Why was that?

WILLIAMS: our friends always thought that it was suspicious that I was able to get a visa – I must have better connections with the communists. I don't think they had ever heard of me, they had heard of Ed, and since I was unknown they gave me a visa. By the time I got there, October 1949, the legation was getting smaller rather than larger.

Once more I had the good fortune of having an excellent chief, Rudolf Schoenfeld. He was a Foreign Service officer of great experience. He was very correct with his dealings with the communists. We weren't able to accomplish much in Bucharest while I was there. In fact, the Romanian government began to seriously restrict our movements. They would not let us go out of town without special permission. We couldn't even go to Lake Snagov without special permission. We were followed wherever we went. No one could get a visa to go to Bucharest except our couriers. We went about eight months waiting for another officer to arrive.

Q: How large was the legation at that point in terms of Americans?

WILLIAMS: It was a large legation, when I arrived there were over fifty. But two or three months after I got there the Romanian Foreign Office summoned Ambassador Schoenfeld and told him that our legation must be reduced to a maximum of ten persons including all levels. We no longer had guards over the 24-hour period. We had at one time only seven persons because we couldn't get visas for clerks or officers.

Q: They were denying visas based on what they conceived to be the political biases of the people being selected?

WILLIAMS: By this time it was not just a question of the quality of the person who might be coming, but there was an absolute limit to the number of Americans they wanted to have in the country.

We had some very fine local employees who were invaluable. But life became very difficult for them. Two or three, by the time I had arrived, had been picked up and imprisoned. Two of them actually showed up in a show trial. There were three or four others, who, during my early months there, were seized on their way to work and never heard from again. We could protest this kind of thing, but our influence in Romania was zero at that time. We had several clerks in our consulate who fortunately were Jewish and were able to go to Israel.

The only traffic jam, by the way, that I ever saw in Bucharest in those days, was in front of the Israeli Legation – Romanian Jews were lining up to get exit visas so that they could go to Israel.

The shortage of personnel in the legation was such that I would have to take turns sleeping at the legation or staying at the legation all night. We had no marine guards. We realized that we were bugged. We had a regular schedule. There were two other Foreign Service officers during most of that time. We took turns with the guard whose name was Leopold Supinski, standing guard there.

On one occasion I remember my wife came to the legation to speak to me during the daytime hours and couldn't find me anywhere. She was told that I might be in the bathroom with the rest of the officers. There we were in the bathroom with the water running so that we couldn't be overheard. As a matter of fact, I don't know how interested anyone is in this particular fact, but we were bugged in our living quarters and our offices. We were unable to get any technician into the country to find the bugs for us – couldn't get a visa – so we always assumed we were talking with bugs listening. After we left, when we finally got a technician in, there were twenty or more bugs found in our bedroom. On the golf course – strange that there still was a golf course, but it had been reduced to six holes – we had to be aware of the caddies. They reported on us.

Q: That put a strain on your family life as well as on your official life.

WILLIAMS: Our official life was very much limited in those days. I think the most useful thing that I did at that time was to prepare a weekly telegram to the Department summarizing the contents of the Cominform Journal which happened to be published in Bucharest.

Q: Cominform Journal?

WILLIAMS: The Cominform Journal was a paper which was printed under the supervision of the Communist Party in many languages and sent around the world. It would tell the loyal communists in the various countries what was going on and what they had to do. It was the means of instructing communists all over the world what the Party thought was the right course of action to take. We had a Romanian who went to their office every Friday and waited for the Cominform Journal to appear. He was instructed to bring the first copy he could get in French, English, Spanish, etc., any of the languages that we could speak, quickly back to our office where I usually had the duty of summarizing it and sending it to Washington. Some people told me later that that was about the only telegram from Bucharest that anyone in the Department paid any attention to. We just happened to be in the location where the orders for the communists around the world were issued.

Q: You were able to cable those back to Washington?

WILLIAMS: We were able to cable those back to Washington. I can't remember what our cable system was, but that obviously could be sent clear.

Q: Did you have relationships there with other embassies?

WILLIAMS: Yes. With the British, Turkish, Finnish, Italian. There weren't a great many Western legations, but we did keep in touch with those that were there. Sometimes I think our life was a little too restricted to them. But we did our best to get out among Romanians as much as we could. But it was almost suicidal for a Romanian to come to us--for any to come to have lunch or dinner with us.

Q: The man in power than was the one who was overturned last year?

WILLIAMS: No, this was long before Ceausescu. This was the days of Gheorghiu-Dej. The President of the Republic was an old doctor Constantin Parhon, who was an expert in geriatric medicine. He could make old people feel young, but he was rather old himself. I do remember seeing him in the legislature going to sleep. The most important character at that time in Romania was a woman, Anna Pauker, who was very close to Stalin and very high up in international communism. She was the Foreign Minister. She was an extraordinary woman, very capable, very popular. I have seen two sides of her. I have seen her in the national assembly looking furious, condemning Yankees and other Westerns in very harsh terms. But I have also seen her in her office where she was as smooth and charming as any woman would be expected to be. She smoked excellent cigarettes. I can still remember the smell of the Balkan cigarettes. And she dressed very well.

Q: In what language did you communicate?

WILLIAMS: Usually in French. Romanian was not a very difficult language. It was so much like Latin and Italian that we could read the newspapers without any trouble.

Anna Pauker was the daughter of a rabbi and I thought at one time that I was probably one of the few Foreign Service officers who had to deal with two Foreign Ministers who were both women and both daughters of rabbis. There is a great contrast between Anna Pauker in Romania and that great lady Golda Meir in Israel. I had to deal with both of them and, of course, had much closer relations with Golda Meir than with Anna Pauker. They each were very forceful and strong but diametrically different in political orientations. Anna Pauker was the most outstanding character that I had anything to do with in Bucharest.

Q: What was your relationship with Washington? How did you feel about the "backstopping" from the Department?

WILLIAMS: Well, there was not much that the Department could do. We began to be restricted to Bucharest and not allowed to travel in the country. The same restriction was put on Romanian diplomats in Washington. When our legation was reduced in Bucharest the Romanian legation in Washington was also reduced. Sometimes it seemed that we were merely keeping the flag flying – keeping the legation open, not achieving anything and reporting a great deal of secondhand material. But it was instructive.

Q: You were in Romania for how long?

WILLIAMS: About two years. I was ordered to come back to take a position in the office of the Deputy Under Secretary for Political Affairs, Freedman Matthews. Another great opportunity I had to serve with an outstanding diplomat. Doc Matthews was one of our great diplomats in the post-war period. He was very influential. He avoided becoming a celebrity diplomat like some of his successors. He never gave interviews to the newspapers or to television. He had no desire to make himself a celebrated person. He just did his job.

Q: What position did he hold at that point?

WILLIAMS: Deputy Under Secretary for Political Affairs, the job which later Robert Murphy had.

Q: More or less the third position in the Department. Kind of the senior political position in the Department.

WILLIAMS: Yes. That was a time when I did all kinds of little jobs for Doc Matthews. I would read the telegrams early in the morning, pick out the ones that I knew he would be most interested in and get them in to him. If something was happening in the distant part of the world, and the telegrams didn't make it clear to him, occasionally Doc would say, "Go down to see so-and-so and see what really is going on here and come back and tell me." I would go and see the country director and then go back to tell Doc that so-and-so says this is the situation. Doc knew how to judge the worth of so-and-so's comments. I worked hard with Doc and got along quite well with him. I admired him extravagantly. It is hard for me to remember any particular things that we did in those days. But we did keep up with everything.

Q: This was the period of the beginning of the Korean War, I believe. Is that right?

WILLIAMS: It was after that. It was 1951, the Korean War had already begun.

Q: NATO was being formed.

WILLIAMS: Yes. I left that job two years later to go to the War College.

Q: Before we leave your experience with Doc Matthews, how did he deal with his assistant secretaries? Did he have staff meetings?

WILLIAMS: Yes, he had a staff meeting almost every day with all the geographic assistant secretaries. I had an old friend, Fritz Nolting, who was senior assistant to Doc Matthews. Fritz and I used to do the same kind of work – he in a more senior position than I.

Q: You said that you dealt with the incoming telegrams, did you deal with the outgoing telegrams too?

WILLIAMS: Yes, because so many of them had to be approved by Doc.

Q: There was a Secretariat in those days was there not?

WILLIAMS: Yes. We had very close relations with the Secretariat. In Mr. Acheson's day...

Q: Was Acheson the Secretary of State?

WILLIAMS: Yes.

Q: And the Under Secretary for State was James Webb, I believe.

WILLIAMS: At one time, yes. I am afraid I can not offer anything particularly useful about that particular job. I do know that Doc was terribly disappointed when his old college friend Adlai Stevenson didn't make it to the presidency.

Q: Doc Matthews knew Adlai Stevenson?

WILLIAMS: Yes. They were close. Fritz and I would alternately attend the Secretary's staff meeting.

Q: What view did you have of Secretary Acheson?

WILLIAMS: I respected him enormously. He was a marvel lawyer diplomat. And, of course, much more affable than his successor, Mr. Dulles. Mr. Dulles never seemed to smile.

Q: Let's talk a little about people's personalities. How important is it for saying, for example, that someone had a sense of humor?

WILLIAMS: A sense of humor was terribly important. You can't keep people working for you unless you show a little sense of humor sometime. If you are always stern, determined people don't enjoy working with you, no matter what the cause is. Mr. Dulles, of course, had his causes – they were mainly anti-communist. He worked terribly hard. There is no surprise that he should eventually have the trouble he had because he just seemed to take no time for rest or even to have a good lunch – something like that.

Q: When you say the trouble he had, you mean his physical ailments?

WILLIAMS: Yes. He treated his body rather harshly. But those days in Washington don't seem to offer examples or incidents that one remembers. I don't remember those days in Washington nearly as well as I do time spent in the field.

DAVID E. MARK
Deputy Chief of Mission
Bucharest (1952-1954)

Ambassador David E. Mark graduated from Columbia University in 1943. Shortly after completing a year of law school, he was drafted into the U.S. Army. Near the end of World War II, Ambassador Mark joined the Foreign Service. He served in Korea, Romania, Switzerland, Burundi, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by Henry Precht on July 28, 1989.

MARK: Actually, the Bucharest experience was pretty useful because I became the DCM, and I was not even 30 years old at the time and thus I lucked into a serious job. The reason it happened was that there had been a DCM, but he was suddenly called away to become the DCM in Bolivia. A close friend of his had been made ambassador to Bolivia and had exercised his prerogative to get the guy he wanted as his DCM. That left Bucharest without a DCM, and they decided not to fill the job with anyone else. I had been sent there as the political officer, but I became the DCM for two years.

It was technically not an embassy; it was a legation, one of the last legations that the U.S. has ever had. And the minister plenipotentiary was a man named Harold Shantz, who was a delightful old-timer--also a bachelor, by the way--in the Foreign Service, who recounted such tales as having been the chargé d'affaires to Liberia in 1935 or '37 when the government there was so broke (and how much has changed, may I ask?) that the electricity bill was unpaid for the Congress, the lights went out, and they all lit candles to carry on legislative and political business in the Congress.

Well, Harold Shantz gave me an education in mission management, and the experience was also interesting because then, as now, Romania was the most internally Stalinist of the satellites.

Q: Was Ceausescu in charge?

MARK: Oh, no. Mr. Ceausescu, I don't know what he was doing at the time; he was working his way up. A man named Georghe Gheorghiu-Dej was in charge, and he had just ousted, in some communist maneuver, a predecessor red regime.

When I say that it was Stalinist, and remains Stalinist to this day, there was an additional factor that made it even worse at the time. The Soviets had, in fact, virtually taken over anything of value in Romania by creating about 20 or 22 joint Soviet-Romanian, supposedly 50-50 companies. Well, you can imagine who ran them, and that included the airline, the steel mills, the insurance company, road transport, harbors, any other kind of industry that you can think of. There was virtually nothing that was left to the Romanians except farming. There were all these Soviet-Romanian joint this or that.

When Stalin died in March 1953, Romania, alone among the satellites, had a week of mourning. The whole place was closed down. I mean they were that closely tied to Moscow, and yet it's surprising that within three or four months of that time, they began breaking away. Not only were they breaking up these joint companies, but they were beginning to establish distance from the Soviet Union, keeping the domestic Stalinist features, but establishing this distance internationally.

It was very curious, and we had no direct inkling of what was going on in late 1953 and early 1954, but the Danish chargé d'affaires had been a longtime resident of Romania and had amazing contacts all over the place. Thus, he assembled all the pieces of information that spelled out the changes. I studied Romanian and could speak it at the time--I can't now--but my study went on for only three months, and then, my teacher was arrested and sent out to the most feared forced labor camp.

At that time, the regime had a 30,000-people enforced labor Gulag-type site, where they were building a canal that was going to shorten the route between the Danube and the Black Sea by a relatively few miles. Foreign diplomats were then not usually allowed to travel around the country except that they could get permission for one-day summer trips, without staying overnight, to the Black Sea coast. They could not go to Constanta on the Black Sea, but to a little seaside resort called Eforia, just below Constanta where one changed trains.

Enroute to Constanta, we actually went through the Gulag. You could see these poor ragged people in long lines pushing handcarts, pushing things on rails to build this canal, which was abandoned, of course, soon after Stalin's death. The canal project was renewed much later on in a different form and completed by more modern methods. But in any case, Romania was a classic example of how a Communist satellite was molded and made to function, as well as of how thoroughly the Soviets at that time dominated the East European area.

Q: What business did we have with Romania? What was our agenda with Romania during this--what was the period you were there?

MARK: It was from 1952 to 1954, two years. We had no business to speak of. We had some consular activities. Americans of Romanian descent, of course, sought to help their relatives who

were trying to get out of the country. We made some interventions with the regime, which, of course, were completely brushed aside. The U.S. had, I guess, some residual connections with the royal family which had formally been ousted in 1947. We had no--

Q: Were they living in the United States?

MARK: No. I think they were living in Europe at the time. We had no economic business to speak of. That had been expropriated. I mean the Romanian telephone system had been part of IT&T at one time. That was how IT&T got started around the world as an international telephone and telegraph company in some of these East European countries, but that had long been expropriated. So basically we were a listening and watching post and, of course, the CIA operated to the extent that it could in Romania. It was very difficult in those times.

Q: Did you have any useful contacts with the Romanian government?

MARK: Not with the government. We had minor contacts with some of the old regime people who were still around, although the government was very ruthless in harassing anyone who dealt with us. They even in effect murdered one of our local staff. They pumped so much Sodium penathol, the truth drug, into her that she died, and so it was pretty dangerous to have associations with us.

The one sort of light incident that happened concerned the diplomatic club. There was a diplomatic club on the outskirts of Bucharest that also had a six-hole golf course. It had earlier had, in pre-communist days, an 18-hole golf course but the Soviets and the Romanians had confiscated 12 holes very soon after they took over. So we were left with six plus the clubhouse, and the diplomatic corps used it a great deal, except for the Soviets who weren't club members.

Well the Romanian communists had established a people's park in the 12-hole area that had been confiscated, and they announced that they wanted to take over the remaining six holes to expand the people's park. We, of course, talked to some of our Soviet colleagues about this, and the Soviets finally said, "Well, the Soviet embassy really didn't have enough space for playing volleyball"--which was their favorite sport--"so could they get volleyball courts built at the diplomatic club if they joined?" And we said, "Oh, sure. Absolutely."

And so after a good bit of negotiation, we arrived at an arrangement whereby the Soviets would enroll enough members so they would have a 52% or 53% majority and thus be able to gain control of the diplomatic club board. Indeed, they joined in just the right numbers and once they were in there, of course, they weren't going to give up the six-hole golf course area to the Romanian people's park. Thus, the club was preserved by this difficult negotiation that we had had with the Soviets. But that's a sign of how important our regular diplomatic business was in the Romanian capital.

Q: Why did we have a legation and not an embassy? When did we change it to an embassy and why?

MARK: I think because throughout Eastern Europe we had had legations before the war.

Q: The traditional thing?

MARK: Traditional thing and it was changed, I guess, sometime in the late '50s when we just decided that having legations had gone out of fashion and that it made our chief of mission technically inferior in rank to foreign ambassadors who were assigned to the country; so we just gave it up.

Q: Did you have a lot of contact with the other embassies in the capital?

MARK: Oh, we had a lot of contact, particularly with the French who were very active in Bucharest and who had more insights into things. Romania had been more of a prewar French cultural colony. Not that Bucharest really was the Paris of the East as was claimed, but nevertheless there was more French influence there. I can even remember once having to interpret between the French and Soviet ambassadors since neither spoke the other's language, and I spoke both.

Q: Your French was also much better?

MARK: Yes. My French had gotten considerably better after high school.

EMORY C. SWANK
Deputy Chief of Mission
Bucharest (1957-1960)

Ambassador Emory C. Swank was born in 1922 in Maryland. He entered the Foreign Service in 1946. His career included positions in China, Indonesia, the Soviet Union, and Romania, and an ambassadorship to Cambodia. He was interviewed by Henry Precht in 1988.

SWANK: I was not to remain in DRS more than 27 months. In the fall of 1957 I received a call from Wallace Stuart, then in Personnel, asking if I would be prepared to go out as Deputy Chief of Mission to Bucharest, Romania. (Wally had been a cabin mate on the Army transport Admiral Benson which had transported us to Shanghai in 1946.) I was naturally pleased at the prospect of enlarged responsibilities as DCM. In the event, Romania turned out to be a backwater post, lacking the excitement and bustle of Moscow and Washington. But I nonetheless found it of interest. We had a slow resumption of cultural exchanges. We had the beginnings of negotiations on Romanian debt to the U.S. and Romanian assets the U.S. had frozen when relations chilled after the war. During my tour the Soviet Union pulled its occupation forces out of Romania. I have always believed that Soviet Ambassador A. A. Epishev, later promoted to top political commissar in the armed forces by Brezhnev, had recommended the move to the Politburo. He was on excellent terms with Romanian leader Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and had possibly concluded that internal controls were repressive enough to make a Soviet military presence superfluous. My tour preceded Romania's later maverick behavior in foreign policy, but even in

this period an Israeli Minister was actively promoting Jewish emigration, a development not paralleled elsewhere in the bloc.

Our chief reporting vehicle was the WEEKA, a required weekly compilation of developments that received wide distribution in Washington. My colleagues and I occasionally had problems identifying items worthwhile reporting. Personally, Bucharest was a pleasant post. The legation was small and permitted friendships to be developed in some depth. This tour was the start of a lifelong friendship with Clifton R. Wharton, the first black career officer to be promoted to Chief of Mission. Following Romania, Clif was named Ambassador to Norway. He and I lamented the poverty of our contacts with influential Romanians. We were never able to obtain any insights into the workings of the Politburo or the circumstances that propelled Nicolai Ceausescu's subsequent rise to power.

OWEN B. LEE
Administrative Officer
Bucharest (1960-1963)

Owen B. Lee served in the U.S. Navy during World War II. He graduated from Harvard University in 1949 and studied in Paris, France at Institut d'Etudes Politiques. His Foreign Service career included positions in Germany, Bolivia, Romania, and Spain. He was interviewed by Thomas Dunnigan on December 4, 1996.

LEE: I was interested in taking Russian and going to Eastern Europe, but someone had told me that they had fewer people for other languages and that I would be assured of an assignment if I took one of the other languages. If you took Russian, I was told, I might not get assigned to Russia for several years. So, I decided on Romanian. I studied Romanian at the FSI and, after completing five months, I went on to a mid-career course and then on to Romania in the summer of 1960.

Q: *And there you had Ambassador Clifton Wharton?*

LEE: Very briefly. He was there only two weeks after I arrived. This was the election year of John F. Kennedy and we went for 14 months without a minister after Wharton left. We were a legation in those days. We had a DCM and an economic officer and I was the administrative officer. There was no political officer. There was also a consular officer. At the time I was there the consular officer, economic officer and myself had all been trained in Romanian together. The economic officer was an FSO like myself. The consular officer was the Station Chief. We had no USIA officer at the time. So, in effect, during those 14 months, in many respects, I played the role of the DCM. They were very trying months because, in addition to being administrative officer, I had security.

Security was not the easiest thing in that part of the world, particularly at that time when we didn't have U.S. Marines for guards. We only had ourselves, which meant that I was responsible

for seeing that every officer of the legation served periodically on a schedule which I drew up. Now, I might add that in addition we had military attachés. We had an air attaché, an army attaché. In fact there were three military officers. But, they did not share the responsibility of security. Security was the sole responsibility of the State Department. That created some awkward problems.

Q: Well,, there weren't very many State Department people there.

LEE: Exactly. So it meant that it came around frequently and it was a 24-hour job. We had to stay overnight in the legation by ourselves when we were there. That was a very difficult issue for me because I first of all did not like the security when I first got there. I found that there was laxity about how the legation was controlled at night. As a younger man who had worked in a hotel at one time I was familiar with the system whereby a building inspection is done with a key and a disk. In that way you know that the person who is checking has been to each one of these keyed places in the building. We had nothing like that when I arrived. All we had was a statement by the officer that he had checked the building during the night and nothing more. I ordered from the States the hotel-type device and had it installed. I did not make myself popular with my colleagues because what it meant was that I, as security officer, could check on them. Every morning I asked for the disk that was in this machine to be shown to me. And, of course, on the disk I could tell what hour they checked at certain stations in the building.

Q: Did they know at what hour they were supposed to do this?

LEE: Yes, they did. I was very flexible on the instructions because I did not want to give the Romanians the idea that we checked at certain hours. I said that I wanted it checked twice in the night and they could pick their time, do it at random. That is the only way to do that. That was the way we handled it. This was effective, I think, because within the building we had other security devices. Once it was put on, they protected the most sensitive areas of the legation. But, the rest of the building was open and as long as someone checked from time to time it probably would have denied the Romanians from having access to it, although you could not be sure. Anyway, the system we had was pretty good.

At the time we had two officers from the other agency and one of them gave me considerable difficulty because he had a different view of security. His view was that we should dig a trench around the building and look for wires that the Romanians might plant for access to the building. I first of all felt several things about this idea. One was that even if we dug them up they could put them in again because we could not control the outside at night, so what good would it do. Secondly, and this was one of my main security preoccupations the whole time I was in Romania, I never wanted the Romanians to think for a minute that we Americans were afraid, insecure, or intimidated by anything they were doing. So, I did not want to have anything to do with digging a trench. Unfortunately, because of the absence of the minister, there was not enough authority and this man went ahead to dig his trench. I could not stop him. He started his trench but gave up in the end. But it did not make for a good atmosphere. And then, of course, having been there before I arrived and having me immediately introduce some new security things which I thought were a little bit more effective, made it difficult.

But, I have to go to another security issue that has an almost humorous end to it. I knew that in diplomatic practice if ever there is a fire in a building no amount of extraterritoriality can protect you from allowing the local fire department from coming and putting out the fire. I had discovered that in our legation everything was quite lax and, in my efforts to tighten up security, I had them clean up all fire hazards. I made inspections everywhere in the building. In the basement I discovered there was one room that was closed and one of the Romanian locals had the key. He opened it and I went into the room and discovered it was full of incendiary bombs, bullets, guns, etc. Apparently much of it had been left there since the Second World War. Some of the incendiary bombs had been designed to melt down safes in the event of evacuation. But, of course, no one would ever want to use them because they would probably set everything else on fire if they were going to melt down safes, etc. All this was thrown together, and I thought, created a serious fire hazard.

What were we to do? Well, I ended up by cabling the State Department asking for advice. I have to say I didn't get any help whatsoever. I never got an answer. I decided I had to do something on my own. Well, I was probably the one person who had more contact with the Romanians than any other person in the legation. I spoke good Romanian. But, being the administrative officer, I was the one who had to deal with anything that had to do with housekeeping. My contact was the protocol office in the foreign ministry. I went to the acting chargé and said there was only one thing to do. To inform the Romanians. They were going to be shocked to have us come in and tell them that we have some guns, some ammunition, some incendiary bombs which we want them to destroy. He approved and I made an appointment with the protocol office. They were a little taken aback when they read the list. I said that I didn't want anything more to do with this and was turning it over to them. Well, they couldn't give me an answer right then and there, but they called me back several days later and said they would do it. So, they came in with a truck and we turned the stuff over to them and I was able to clear our basement of what I considered a real fire hazard. It was interesting to turn it over to them and see the expression on their faces when I did it.

We had another security incident that ended up with an even more amusing end to it, although it started out badly. On April 19, 1961 the Bay of Pigs took place. The same day we had a terrible attack against the legation in Bucharest. At the time our local employees all went home for lunch and most of the Americans went home for lunch. This day, the legation knew nothing about what was going on in the Bay of Pigs. All we knew is that suddenly shortly after noon there appeared in front of the legation crowds of shouting people. I was there with the chargé, the economic officer, and maybe one or two others. The crowd started to throw things, throw placards--down with the United States, etc. It was clearly a well organized government-sponsored demonstration. Then things began to come through the windows so we decided the only thing we could do was to get into the interior area of the reception area on the second floor. All the offices in that older building had doors that led into this reception area. There were five offices, so by closing the doors entering those offices, we in effect had a barrier to where we were safe and could not get hurt.

Meanwhile we called the foreign ministry. The economic officer, who spoke good Romanian and I switched speaking to officials trying to make them understand that we wanted the police to come to protect us. Each time they told us they did not understand what we were saying. So, we

knew we were helpless and just had to batten down the hatches, which is what we did. Meanwhile, the missiles were coming onto the roof and rolling down on top of our heads-- stones, etc. What we didn't know, because we couldn't see, is that they were ripping up the iron fence on the property and throwing the bars as spears into the building, one of which landed on my desk I discovered later. We could hear things crashing through windows below us in the consular area and we thought they had entered the building. However, there must have been an order given because they suddenly stopped and just disappeared. Meanwhile our place was a shambles. Every window was broken, there were rocks and stones all over the place. Had we been sitting in our offices we surely would have been hurt.

Q: Had you tried any communication with Washington during this period?

LEE: No, we didn't. All we had was a normal telephone and we were not near any radio. There was a radio available to the agency but that was in a section where missiles could have gotten in. Furthermore, the agency people were not there to operate it. I might add also we had a doctor assigned to the legation at that time and he was playing golf at that time.

Q: A wise thing to do I would say.

LEE: We inspected the building. When I went into the consular section, the American flag in the consular officer's office was still standing which told me they had not entered the building. Obviously the crowd had instructions to do everything but not to enter the building. That was reassuring. Later on that night I had to work out some sort of security arrangement and got all the staff together, including the military attachés and said, "We are going to have an extra chore here because it is not going to be the job of one person to stay and supervise this building, we are going to have to have two." I was most disappointed and have never forgotten that a colonel in the U.S. Army, a major in the U.S. Army and a colonel in the Air Force said that they could not help, it was not their job, adding that, unless they were armed, they could not stand guard duty. I thought, well, we will do it, and we did. We had to do that until we were able to have the building repaired.

Q: Did you report their shameful conduct to Washington?

LEE: No, I never reported that.

Q: In my view, that should have been reported.

LEE: The damage to the building was substantial, but I noticed that in the communications area, the most central part of the building, the windows were smashed, etc., but before they were smashed the windows were not genuine opaque windows. They were made opaque by soap or something else that had been done years earlier. So I thought that this might be the chance to remedy that.

The Romanians very correctly called the next day and said they would take care of everything, just send them a list. I made an inventory and included opaque windows. When they came in to

do the work, which I supervised myself, they put in the opaque windows. I was very proud of the fact that I got something better out of this than we had in the beginning.

I should add that I had one decision I had to make, a very troublesome one, going back to the demonstration. After the demonstration ended, the people left, etc. and I and one of the other officers went out onto the lawn and started to clean up and pick up a bit. Then it occurred to me, because I was so angry, that I should throw it all back into the street. I started throwing it over what was left of the fence onto the street, and a Romanian officer came over and said this was not the thing to do. At first I started to say, "The hell with you," but then I thought about it and decided it probably was not the right thing to do. So, I stopped doing what emotionally I felt most inclined to do.

Another troubling incident happened in Romania involving my wife and me. It too had a humorous ending. One morning when I was at work I got a desperate call from my wife. She said she was calling from a private Romanian home, and had just been in an automobile accident. The police were there but they didn't want her to make a call. A Romanian woman had let her in to make a call. I had to come right away, my wife said, because they were going to move the car, etc. I said I would be right there.

I immediately made arrangement for an official car and ran down to the military attachés' office and asked for a camera, which they handed me, and then left. I lost no time for one reason. We had had an accident earlier involving one of the communication clerks and because she did not understand Romanian and because no one was around at the time, her car was moved and the case was over. The "Militzia" had built up everything against her. It was an awful situation for the clerk who was treated very badly by the Romanians. With that in mind I wanted to get there as quickly as possible in an attempt to avoid this happening to my wife. I reached the place of the accident and I could see immediately what had happened by the way the cars involved were positioned. A great big Buick, which in Romania meant high officials, had passed a stop sign and my wife had run into them. The first thing I did was to take photographs. I went from corner to corner and every position possible. The Romanian officials, three of them, were still inside the Buick. From the number plate I could tell the car was from Dobrudja, possibly the communist leaders from the province of Dobrudja. There were police all around. My wife told me there was a police station just a half a block away, but they would not let her call from there. Fortunately one Romanian woman let her use her phone to call me.

After taking the pictures, and I had taken a picture of the "Stop" sign which had the Romanian word "Oprire", meaning to stop, on it, I went to the police station. There were a number of policemen there and I asked what the circumstances of the accident were. They said my wife had run into this car, etc. I asked if the car had stopped and they said the sign didn't mean stop. I had them repeat that the sign "Oprire" did not mean stop. The policemen obviously fearful of the people who might be in the car, repeated that it didn't mean stop at all. I said, "Thank you very much," and left.

I immediately went back to the legation and started drafting a diplomatic note protesting (1) that my wife could not use a telephone, and (2) that the police said that the sign "Oprire" does not mean stop. I said that this accident was not my wife's fault and asked for damages for our car,

etc. Within an hour I had a note delivered to the foreign ministry. The following morning I got a telephone call from the protocol office. They were very sorry that all this had taken place, etc. and, if I came by, they would make arrangements to take care of my car. I had a small Mercedes and they said they would order a new grill for the front and there would be no problem. Well, they ordered the grill from West Germany and everything was taken care of. The only thing that saved us was the fact that we moved quickly with the protest and we had them in terms of denying that the stop sign meant stop, as if I didn't know Romanian.

Now, the postscript to all of this is that I took the camera back to the military attachés' office and thanked them for its use and then said I would remove the film. They said, "Oh, there was no film in the camera." Fortunately, it had fooled the police anyway.

Q: Tell me about the local staff at the legation. Did you supervise them?

LEE: We had local staff and they were all professionally competent, let's put it this way, the key word is trust. I always had two interpretations of trust. One, you can trust someone to do a job you give them and then there is the second trust, trusting a person to be loyal in the sense we think of as being loyal. We had some excellent employees and we all trusted them in the work that they did. We also had some that were trustful in a broader sense.

Q: You knew which ones they were?

LEE: Yes, we knew which ones they were. Most of them, however, were less trustful because of the pressures that could be put on them. For example, I mentioned earlier the case of the room with all those guns, etc. Obviously the older man, the Romanian, who gave me the key wasn't going to do anything about it. He wasn't going to tell anybody about these things. He just felt they were there for him to take care of. Of the less trustful people, I will give a good example. We had a young officer, a single man, who as it turned out, had a long career in the Foreign Service, but that was his first assignment. He was the budget and fiscal officer. I remember talking to him one day and asking, "Dick, did you have a good weekend?" He said, "Oh, yes. I went to the races." They still had some sort of racing setup there that you could go to and bet. He said he had run into Mircea Popescu, who was one of the employees in the legation. Dick added, "He had a girlfriend and another girl with him." I said, "That is interesting. You know, Dick, I don't think you can go to the races any more." It was hard on single people. But, it was clear to me that the Romanians were taking the first step to set up this young man. It happened to be one of the employees who had perfect English, a little too perfect, and the sort of man I knew just wouldn't do. But Dick had a good sense of humor about the whole thing.

Q: How did you get local employees? Were they referred to you by the protocol office?

LEE: Yes. They were referred to us by the protocol office. When I was there I never hired anybody new. Most of them had been there many years, actually. One Romanian woman, a former employee I went to see in Paris. One of the things that bothered me was that this woman had worked for what was then the public information service and had been ousted by the Romanians. We also had at the same time at the British legation the same sort of incident. What bothered me was the British had taken care of the Romanian woman, giving her a pension. We

didn't do anything for our employee. That bothered me because when these people work for us in that part of the world and get into trouble with their own government because they are allegedly too close to us, and we don't take care of them and they are forced to leave, it is not good. I remember seeing this woman in Paris and trying to see if something could be done for her but it couldn't.

We had some very loyal people over the years, but there were others who were not. You knew which ones were trying to be more than helpful to the security people. You also knew everyone was under pressure, but some wouldn't endanger you if possible, while others you knew one way or another would try to get you into trouble.

Q: Romania was still then a very loyal member of the Soviet bloc was it not, under Mr. Gheorghiu-Dej?

LEE: Oh yes.

Q: Khrushchev visited Romania during this period didn't he?

LEE: Just before I arrived. The interesting thing about Khrushchev's visit, and that is one of the things of general political interest, is that Khrushchev went to Romania in June 1960. He went there because it was the annual meeting of the Communist Party. Interestingly enough, the Chinese leaders were also at that meeting in June 1960. It is at this meeting that the Russians and the Chinese first had a breakdown in communications. The Romanians were the first ones to see it and they were the first ones to draw the consequences. Romanian efforts to gain a little independence in foreign affairs started at that time and they used the leverage of the incipient Sino-Soviet conflict to do it. I was there for three years (1960-63) when this started with practically imperceptible things. For example, the spelling of the word Romania. In the Romanian language the Russians had imposed the idea that it should be spelled Romin. The Romanians always wanted to think of themselves as Romans, with an "a". They introduced the "a". The Romanians changed the spelling the same way so that it was Roumain in French. They changed the name of several provinces back to the original names before the communists took over. These were little nationalist things that went on and gave you a hint. Then a year later in 1961, the Romanians took the first independent step by not showing up for one of the Communist Economic (COMECON) meetings.

Q: I remember that was commented on widely.

LEE: That is when they really started to become a little independent in foreign affairs.

Q: Well, they saw they had a China card to play too, perhaps. What were our relations with the Soviet embassy, if any?

LEE: We had practically no communication with the Soviet embassy. I remember I went to the Soviet embassy once when they invited us to see a movie. It was a movie with a railroad and two moving trains, one trying to catch up with the other, with the Soviet Union catching up with the United States by 1970 and then passing us.

Q: A good Khrushchev doctrine.

LEE: Yes. But, we had no relations. The last two years I was there, Minister William Crawford became ambassador and stayed on with Jack Shaw, both of whom had Russian language experience. But Russian was useless in Romania. The Romanians didn't speak Russian, they spoke French and are culturally oriented with Mediterranean Europe. I can't say the Russian embassy was a very active one.

Q: Was the legation able to deal with the Romanian officials?

LEE: The Romanians were good diplomats. They had very good people. They had some who you might say were not very well-bred diplomats, but in general, they were very good. The people we dealt with were decent enough, although they were committed communists. I would say the worst ones I dealt with were the ones who were in protocol, who were most likely to be security-type people anyway. Once in a while I had to talk to them and the first thing you know they were trying to indoctrinate you. They had a routine they would go through. You could see they had rehearsed it. It was very tiresome to have to put up with this when you are sitting there wanting to take care of other business, but they were basically good diplomats..

Q: I have known a number of Romanian diplomats at posts and agree with you they are good diplomats.

LEE: It was with the protocol people that we had the greatest trouble.

We had another major problem when I was there. We got a notice one day from the protocol office indicating they wanted to increase rents. Nobody owned their properties among the Western nations. So, we were all handed a new bill one day. The Romanians made no bones about it saying they were a capital city like Paris and therefore they were going to charge Paris rents. Well, we all knew we weren't paying much rent at the time; they hadn't raised them in years. But suddenly they woke up to this fact and decided to adjust them. I called some of the other friendly missions and they were all upset about it. I took the lead in generating opposition to the whole thing. The first thing I told everybody at a meeting of non-communist missions, was not to talk to protocol because that would get us nowhere. We should write to the foreign minister on this one. I said that this issue should be politicized. Since they were accustomed to politicizing everything, it now was our turn. And, what does everybody do? The Israelis were a little bit hesitant, but we all agreed not to pay.

With that joint action, we got some reaction; they wanted to talk. Of course, what they wanted to do was to talk to each mission individually. They got to the Israelis first and they, for reasons of their own, which were understandable--they were in effect ransoming Jews from Romania and the Romanians were allowing them to leave--didn't want to have any part of this. They were ready to pay in the end. So, they were the first to cave. There were two or three other missions who caved, but in each case they had made some headway in bringing down the price. All of us managed to bring it down some. The United States caved, too, in the end. Why? I have to say I disagreed with my minister. He wanted to get a new building, an additional building that would

house the American School. So, he wanted to show some flexibility and in the end we agreed on a new rental contract and we got the house for the school.

Q: Didn't Washington have any views on this?

LEE: Yes, Washington did, but in the end the minister prevailed because of the school. One country did not cave and my hat is off to them, Italy. Why didn't the Italians cave? Very simple. Under the Italian system at that time, each officer received money to cover everything, salary and housing, and the embassy too. They were given a fixed amount of money and that was it. So, the Italians said they would not pay. In the end they got what they wanted.

Q: Were you able to travel about the country at all?

LEE: We were able to travel a good deal.

As a follow-up to the story about the accident in Bucharest in which my wife was involved, it so happens that the Romanian authorities did repair the car, but it wasn't repaired as it should have been. It developed a leak in the radiator which I didn't discover until later when we made a trip to the Carpathian Mountains where the legation had a small house which was kept as a sort of vacation spot for people in the legation to get out of Bucharest from time to time. We left one weekend for the mountains and by the time we got to Ploesti, the famous oil refinery center, the radiator was boiling over. Now, we were not supposed to go into Ploesti and the Romanians did not want us to go in there either. The way we went to the mountains was a bypass, but by the time we got to the bypass, I realized I couldn't make it and would have to stop and get water, etc. I had the thought that maybe the radiator was leaking because of the accident.

Well, I turned off and had no problem going into town, although I had to stop every now and then to let the engine cool off. Eventually I got into the city and asked someone where I could get the car repaired. At first I couldn't get anyone to show me the way, but finally someone gave me directions. We got to a repair facility and they immediately went to work on the car. It didn't take them but a few minutes to find out that, indeed, there was a leak in the radiator. They said they would have to take it out, solder it and then put it back in. I told them to go ahead. It didn't take more than an hour. Meanwhile my wife and I and the children were sitting there and talking to some of the other workers there and it was very pleasant. Before they finished the job, it occurred to me through observation that this wasn't a regular gas station. Gas stations as we know them didn't exist quite the same way anyway, but this one didn't seem like a regular Romanian gas station. It suddenly dawned on me that maybe we were at the police gas station and that it was security people who were taking care of our car. This made me smile inside because it didn't matter to me who took care of the car. In the end it didn't cost us anything. We may have given them some cigarettes, I don't remember. They seemed to be very friendly, no anti-American feeling or anything unpleasant whatsoever.

I must say on this question of anti-Americanism, I think when we talk about communist Romania you have to put things in the right perspective. In many cities in the West Americans often lose friends because we are so numerous and overwhelm people by our presence. At other times and places where we are few and rarely seen, we are greatly appreciated. This I have heard expressed

many times. Well, in that part of the world at that time we were few in number and greatly appreciated. There never was any anti-American feeling outside Bucharest.

I have one good example to give. My wife and I made one trip to Belgrade, Yugoslavia. On the way back we went through the Banat, which is adjacent to Yugoslavia. I can't remember the name of the town we stopped in but I had to find directions and slowed down and stopped. Our car had diplomatic plates and everybody recognized in a small town like that it was a car from Bucharest and came over and asked where we were from. I answered, "America." With that you would have thought that I had said "sesame" or something because the whole town turned out. You would have thought we were John F. Kennedy going through the town. We couldn't have been more popular. A policeman was standing close by at one point but gradually drifted off, realizing it wasn't his place. The people had taken over. They weren't afraid to talk to me. They said anything they wanted. They talked about America being a great place, they had relatives in Cleveland, etc. I have never forgotten that experience. All you had to do is to get out of the capital city and you realize how popular Americans were.

Some of this may go back to something the U.S. did that few people ever point out and is perhaps one of the greatest proofs of what I call political influence that we can possibly muster. Just shortly before I went to Romania in 1960, we concluded a post-war financial agreement with Bucharest whereby all the claims rising from the war were settled. Now, the Romanians wanted to conclude that for one good reason, they needed foreign exchange. They would get foreign exchange if the United States resumed payments of social security to Americans and Romanians who were beneficiaries of U.S. social security living in Romania. We resumed payments of social security entitlements in 1960 and made sure they were handled through the consular section of the legation. We also made sure the people who received them got the full value of dollars. In the end the Romanian government got the dollars and we got something else. We got the political influence of having beneficiaries all over the country receiving checks in dollars. This had a tremendous influence. I don't know how it can be evaluated, but I ascribe some of the welcome we received in that little town to this sort of thing.

Q: And all over Eastern Europe.

LEE: Yes, all over Eastern Europe it was pretty much the same circumstance. But, it is a fact that no amount of communist propaganda could diminish the reputation of the United States as a country that stuck to its promises and commitments.

Q: When you were there could you foresee the rise of Ceausescu?

LEE: Ceausescu was well known as one of the Politburo members at the time. I have to say that when I came back to the United States and was working in INR, we had to make an estimate of who would be the new leader, I picked Nicolae Ceausescu. Other people picked another man, Prime Minister Maurer, who was certainly much more liked in the West. He was much more of a sophisticated man and knew how to get along with people from the Western world. But to me, that didn't count for much. Ceausescu was the man who had all the power in the party.

Q: Any other comments about your days in Romania or shall we move on to INR where you went next?

LEE: Let me mention something more about Romania. Another story. While I was acting as the USIA representative we were trying to make inroads into the cultural life of Romania. We managed to obtain the services of two well known Americans, Jack Lemmon and Shirley MacLaine. They came to Bucharest for two weeks in 1962. I had the privilege of teaching them a few expressions in Romanian and taking them around the country. They were tremendous. We were in Bucharest a few days initially and then we went to various regional cities, Iasi, Cluj, Timisoara and Brasov. We had a film that we brought with us. Unfortunately, the film was not one of their films. The film we had was *The Old Man of the Sea* with Spencer Tracy, which was a very good film and the Romanians appreciated it very much. Before each presentation, Jack Lemmon and Shirley MacLaine would put on a little skit in Romanian. Now how could they do that? Well, in Bucharest shortly after their arrival we got together, the three of us with a lady and a gentleman, Romanians who spoke English, and spent a lot of time going through various phrases that they should use in the presentation. They learned it beautifully and pulled it off just splendidly. Of course it made a tremendous hit in Romania. The film did too and there were many receptions.

But, let me tell you about what I remember the most about them. I remember distinctly being told by the Romanian authorities that we couldn't take the plane from Cluj to Timisoara and it would take too long driving, so we should take the train. They said they would provide some food. Well, we got to the train and we had a compartment. In the compartment there was a whole case of wine, lots of salami and lots of bread. It was an all day ride. It didn't take long before Jack Lemmon got up and went to the next compartment and started talking to Romanians. The first thing you know he would bring one back to the compartment and we had to serve him a drink. So, we had the wine, the sandwiches and had to talk with everybody. Then, when that ended, Shirley MacLaine had the idea that we should sing songs. Now, we three Americans thought we knew American songs. We didn't know any compared to the two Romanians. They knew the American songs perfectly. We sang and had the greatest time in the world. But, that was the proof to me that our two Romanian companions were working for the security people with extensive English language training.

When we arrived in Timisoara, the minister was waiting for us. I don't know what impression we made when we got off the train because we had finished the case of wine and all the food and had had just a grand time the whole day.

I had another personal experience in Romania which would qualify, I suppose, as a "good deed", but which also throws some light on what it was like to live in a communist country in 1962.

Bucharest, of all the countries behind the Iron Curtain, was unique in many ways. It had, for example, a well-kept 9-hole golf course attached to the Diplomatic Club reserved exclusively for foreign diplomats. It was located adjacent to Lake Herastrau in the northern part of Bucharest. It also had tennis courts and extensive areas for children to play. We went there often to get some fresh air and, not being a golfer, to walk beside the fairways.

One Sunday late in the winter I took my daughter and one of her friends, both aged 5, to the Club for a walk on the golf course which was not in use. There wasn't much snow on the ground but it had been cold and the lake was covered with ice. As we reached the point which jutted into the lake, I noticed two young boys who were crossing the lake towards us on foot. The sun was behind them as they walked in a northerly direction, seemingly without concern for the thickness of the ice. As we reached the edge of the lake, I noticed immediately that the ice had melted along the northern edge, indicating that the ice was probably thinner adjacent to the edge. It struck me that the boys, who had struck out from the southern, shaded edge of the lake where the ice was thicker, were probably unaware that the ice might be thinner on the northern edge which received more sun.

I followed the boys as they walked and, as they drew closer, tried to warn them with hand signals and shouts as to the potential danger. They paid no heed. Hardly had they reached some 75' from the shore, they both fell through the ice, fortunately only up to their necks. They were terrified. I immediately turned to the two girls and, with the utmost seriousness and confidence in their understanding of my instructions, told them to return post haste to the Clubhouse and seek help in the form of men with ropes, ladders, and boots with which to bring the two boys to shore. As soon as they ran off, I turned to the boys, urging them not to move (for fear they might step into a lower water level or hidden hole) but to keep their hands out of the water on top of the surrounding ice as best they could. I could see that they were soaking wet, shivering from the cold, and fearful of what might happen. To calm their fears, I said the help was on its way (I hoped) and they would be brought to safety. Indeed, help did come within a matter of minutes. The two girls did their job well. Some five or six men, Romanian staffers and bartenders at the Club, appeared breathless from running to the scene, carrying exactly what was needed.

Into the water they went, throwing ropes to the boys who grabbed them and were gradually pulled from the icy holes which their bodies had pierced through the ice. As soon as they were within 15' of the shore, the men broke through the thin ice and pulled them off the ice and carried them to shore. They had blankets which they threw around the boys who looked as if they would shake to death from shivering. We brought them back to the Clubhouse, stripped them of their wet clothes, and stood them covered with blankets before the open wood fire. It wasn't long before they recovered fully from the chill and slipped on some clothing which someone had found. By this time, it was clear to me that everything was being handled quite satisfactorily by Romanians; there was no further need of me or the two girls. We left for home, but not before I gave them a hot chocolate for doing such an excellent job in following instructions. I was proud of my daughter (Charlotte) and her friend (Amy).

That evening, I received the only telephone call from a Romanian in my entire three years. The father of one of the boys called to express in the very warmest terms his thanks for what I and the girls had done to help bring his son and his companion to safety. The conversation was brief but the message was clear.

Q. Can you tell me about any other frustrations - professional or personal - you experienced living behind the Iron Curtain?

LEE: Indeed, there were two occasions when, as a U.S. official, I felt totally helpless in the desire to assist young people from Iraq and East Germany (German Democratic Republic) who had the courage to call at the legation. Never have I felt so frustrated in the role of representing the U.S. as when I had to turn away these erstwhile refugees from communist controls.

There was always the chance that any visitors to the legation coming so-to-speak "off the street" might be Romanian-sponsored provocateurs. Consequently, we had Departmental instructions not to encourage or seek to help would-be refugees who came to the legation. It was a problem throughout the communist bloc of countries, but in Romania, some foreign student visitors thought they might find an easier way of getting to the West.

Somehow, I was designated to meet with these callers, probably because I spoke Romanian and German. The Iraqis were not as frustrating to talk with as the East Germans. There was nothing I could say to the latter who were usually on vacation, hopefully seeking ways to break through the Iron Curtain. The Iraqis, however, were government-sponsored students studying petroleum exploitation - the one area where Romania had some expertise. But there were factions among the Iraqis: some were committed to communist ideology, others were not. I recall meeting with one group of five Iraqis who recounted to me a pitched battle between the two antagonistic groups which took place just north of Ploesti, the oil center of Romania. I had separate verification of this disturbance among the Iraqi students. Fortunately, I was able to "suggest" to them that, if they could reach East Berlin, they would probably have little difficulty crossing the city to West Berlin with their Iraqi passports (an option altogether closed for the East Germans). Although courteous and respectful, the Iraqi students were incredulous, perhaps even a little resentful, that an "American official" couldn't do more for them. My impression was that some of these students, accustomed as they were to government spoon-feeding and to thinking that the U.S.A. could do almost anything, felt let down altogether. Some, I believe, made it to the West via East Berlin. I hope so because these Iraqis had no idea of the circumstances which they would encounter when they accepted to study petroleum engineering in Romania.

My conversations with the East Germans were less strained. They were much more aware of what was going on politically and could accept, albeit resignedly, my explanation of why the legation could not help them. It was almost as if they had expected to be told what they heard from me. It was a trying experience for me to see these young men and women bow their heads dejectedly and leave the legation. At the same time, I felt that their search for an exit to the West would continue. (It did. The breakthrough came in neighboring Hungary in 1989 when the regime allowed vacationing East Germans to cross into Austria, the trigger for the unraveling of the GDR and, eventually, the entire Soviet Bloc.)

WILLIAM A. CRAWFORD
Minister
Romania (1961-1965)

Ambassador Crawford was born in New York and educated at Haverford College and Universities in Spain and France. He joined the Foreign Service in 1941 and

was posted to Havana. He subsequently served in Moscow, Paris and Prague before being named Minister to Romania and later as Ambassador to that country. In his Washington assignments, Ambassador Crawford dealt primarily with Soviet Union and Soviet bloc Affairs. Ambassador Crawford was interviewed by H.G. Torbert in 1989 and by William W. Moss in 1971.

Excerpts from 1971 interview by William W. Moss

Q: What sort of preparation did you undergo...

CRAWFORD: Then?

Q: Yes...before you went over?

CRAWFORD: Well, I got hold of what reading I could, looking into recent party congresses and that kind of thing. I also gave special attention to the unusually interesting RCP [Romanian Communist Party] plenum then in session. Most of the material I got from the Department. There wasn't a great deal published outside that I found to be that relevant. I had less than two months before I went over, so I crammed on the language at the Foreign Service Institute and did a bit of reading and consulting.

Q: I have two dates for your appointment.

CRAWFORD: You do?

Q: One is late November and the other is late December.

CRAWFORD: Well, I was appointed in late November, and then, as I recall, around the eighteenth or nineteenth of December, I was sworn in. And I think it was the day or so after that when I first went to see the President.

Q: Could you recount that meeting for us?

CRAWFORD: That meeting?

Q: Yes.

CRAWFORD: It took place in the Oval Room, and it lasted about fifteen minutes. It was just for him to meet me. And there were many cameras there to record the event, although I never was able to get a picture of it after all that.

Q: Maybe we can find one in the file for you.

CRAWFORD: Well, that would be fine if you could.

Q: I'll ask somebody to have a box opened.

CRAWFORD: I would be delighted. And so we talked at his desk for about five minutes with the cameras going and then for another ten or so afterwards. We exchanged amenities, and he asked me some questions about Romania. About all that I recall of particular interest was that he seemed to be rather surprised that Romanians were Latins and that Romanian was a Latin language.

Q: Yes.

CRAWFORD: And yet he told me he had been to Romania himself in the summer of 1939, I believe, when his father was ambassador to London. He had spent two or three days there then, and seemed to recall with considerable enthusiasm how beautiful the Romanian women were. Well, that's about it. It was just a once-over lightly. He was most charming and agreeable, and I was glad I'd had the chance to meet him.

Q: I've heard a great deal about the importance of this personal meeting of ambassadors with the President.

CRAWFORD: Well, there's no question about it; it is very important indeed, especially for his ambassador. You can then say, "Yes, when I saw him, the President..." which reinforces your position a good deal in dealing with the government to which you're going. And also, subsequently, if you see the President again and have fuller talks with him, as I was fortunate enough to do, you've laid a foundation for understanding each other better, and other things can result. And I contrast the way Kennedy handled this with the way President Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] did subsequently, who had little time for his ambassadors. And I really think that it's highly worthwhile for the President to give of his time to establish this kind of personal relationship with his ambassador. It can be very productive, not only in terms of reinforcing the ambassador's hand when he's representing the President abroad, but quite possibly in terms of the things they can accomplish together within our government afterwards.

Q: Did you have any particular instructions, going out?

CRAWFORD: He didn't give me any particular instructions.

Q: What about the Secretary?

CRAWFORD: Just to keep us from having problems was the main thing: keep the flag flying, keep the lid on. And that was about it.

Q: I guess the next appropriate question is, how were you received in Bucharest?

CRAWFORD: Well, I was received there very well. I had the possibility to meet, to call on many of the top people within the government at the ministerial level, and I did so. This had not always been done so extensively before, I found out later. And I was helped by the fact that I spoke fluent French. French happens to be the second language in Romania, and although all of those to whom I was speaking were Communists, many of them--the Communist movement having

been underground before the war, and having really operated abroad as a section of the French Communist Party--had spent the prewar years and often the war years in France. And quite a number of them came back with French wives. Anyhow they spoke French very well. As a result, I found that when it became known that I could speak French; we dispensed with an interpreter most of the time. In a Communist country, this is a very helpful thing, because it encourages everybody to speak out more freely, and it doesn't give you both the feeling that the police are keeping tabs on you to quite the same degree. So the interviews that I had turned out to be fairly informal and relaxed affairs, and I got to know quite a bit about many of the people with whom I was subsequently to deal.

Q: Would you, for my benefit and for the record, pronounce the names of these people-- the party chief, for instance.

CRAWFORD: Right. Gheorghiu-Dej [Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej] (Gay-órghiu-Dezh)

Q: Gheorghiu-Dej.

CRAWFORD: Gheorghiu-Dej, yes. H was both Secretary General of the party and Head of State.

Q: Yes, and the other chap--what is it?--Ceausescu [Nicolae Ceausescu]?

CRAWFORD: Ceausescu. Nicolae Ceausescu. (Chow-shés-coo)

Q: Okay. Now, in looking over the files that I have; I run into very little information during 1962 of any particular interest. Does this reflect what was going on, or were there important developments in '62?

CRAWFORD: In Romania?

Q: Right, in Romania.

CRAWFORD: Well, there were some important developments in '62. The kettle was bubbling. But the real showdowns with Moscow didn't occur until '63 and '64. Yet to give you a picture of what was going on then, I should first let you have very briefly a little background on the fifties. Because the sixties were in great contrast with the fifties, which had really been a period of the deep-freeze, if you will. Nevertheless, there were three major developments during the fifties which had great bearing on the sixties. At the outset of the fifties, Dej was already the party leader, but most of those in charge around him were an outfit of ex-Muscovites--people like Teohari Georgescu, Vasile Luca and Ana Pauker. They were the Romanians of the Comintern vintage, all Stalinist toadies and hardliners, who had spent the war years in Moscow and come back with the Soviet army in '44-'45. However, in '52, just before Stalin's [Joseph V. Stalin] death, this group was ousted by Dej and his brand of home-grown Communists who had long been his closest friends and associates and had shared many years with him in prison. Ana Pauker and her ilk wound up under house arrest, and she died several years later. The new

leadership was of another breed with a strong nationalist orientation--Communists who had spent virtually no time in Moscow...

Q: But in Paris.

CRAWFORD: In Paris to a degree, but only those at the second echelon. The nine at the very highest level who comprised the Politburo [Political Bureau] were almost all ex-trade union men who had been in prison in Romania with Dej from about '33 to '44. They hadn't had the chance to get away much to Moscow or anywhere else, and it was they who took over and ran things. So that you have the expulsion of the Muscovite variety of Communist and the take-over of the party leadership by Dej and his homegrown variety in '52. This was an important watershed. And then in '56, you have the Soviet decision to abolish the so-called Sovroms, or mixed economic companies, which were the means whereby the Soviets had dominated every phase of economic activity, and the Soviets had held a controlling interest in each. And then finally, in '58, you had the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Romania, probably as a reward for good behavior during the Hungarian uprising. So with the homegrown variety of Communists taking over in the early fifties, followed by the removal of most Soviet economic controls, and then by the withdrawal of the Soviet armed presence in the late fifties, the stage was set, if the Romanians wanted to take advantage of it, for moving in new directions.

So, when you say you hadn't noticed that there was very much going on in '62, actually a good deal had already taken place. Moreover, against this setting, the Romanians had proceeded to make a very important decision in '59. They had adopted a six-year plan which was designed to transform the country from a primarily agrarian economy to a balanced industrial-agrarian economy with a diversified modern industry. And by the time I reached there in '62, this plan was already getting into high gear and working out very well indeed. In fact, the Romanian economy was moving forward at one of the fastest rates of any country in Europe. Of course, this isn't altogether surprising, because as one of the more backward, it was starting from a lower base. Yet industrialization was now moving at a great clip, with primarily western assistance, and when I arrived, there were already some four hundred West European engineers and technicians in Romania setting up industrial plants of one kind or other.

Q: They were engaging in whole-plant importation from Western Europe, is that right?

CRAWFORD: That's right. They were, already.

Q: Yes.

CRAWFORD: And this included petrochemicals and tires, hydroelectric stations, paper plants, and even Romanian steel.

Q: This would be at Galatz. In the machine building and machine tool industries; and it was later to include a new steel combine which was going to double the production of

CRAWFORD: Yes, this was to be at Galatz. And so forth. Anyway, there was a great movement afoot in new directions to establish a strong modern industrial base that was going to transform

the country. They were now well launched on the program for two or three years and growing even a bit heady with success. So this economic transformation was the most important thing that was happening, and it held the key to other major impending developments in '62 and beyond.

Q: All right. In that period, were you beginning to get feelers from the Romanians for perhaps American participation in this?

CRAWFORD: Yes we were. The new Romanian Minister to Washington had already made an approach in late March of '62...

Q: Right. And his name is...

CRAWFORD: Balaceanu [Petre Balaceanu]. After having called on Secretary Hodges [Luther H. Hodges] initially, to pay his respects, he'd been encouraged to go and see Behrman [Jack N. Behrman] over at [Department of] Commerce, who was Hodges' deputy, about what Romania might be interested in buying from us. And so he had presented Behrman with a list of ten plants valued at some \$200 million for which the Romanians wanted Commerce to authorize export licenses.

Q: Was the synthetic rubber plant on that list?

CRAWFORD: That's right. The two synthetic rubber plants--one the polybutadiene, and the other the polyisoprene--were among them. So these were presented in March to the Department of Commerce. And in May, the Department of Commerce said, "Sorry, but we can't approve licenses of nine out of the ten, and we're going to need more information before we can consider the tenth, et cetera." So the Romanians got no farther, and when I saw Balaceanu in the summer of '62 when he came back to Bucharest on holiday, he was pretty depressed. He'd made his big pitch, and he'd been told no soap. So much for their approach to us at that time. And to illustrate just how small was our trade then, our total trade turnover with Romania was but slightly above one million dollars, whereas Romania's turnover that year with West Germany alone, with whom they had no diplomatic relations yet, had reached some \$150 million. So although her trade with our NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] allies was growing rapidly, it was going nowhere with us.

However, other things were occurring, for the Romanians were running into serious problems with the Russians. In June of '62, Khrushchev made a state visit to Romania, and he spent a week or so traveling around the country with Dej to see the new Romanian industry. And, from all the reports that we got, he not only didn't like what he saw but told the Romanians in pretty abusive language that they were on the wrong track and shouldn't be going ahead with this kind of thing. We heard that he was very insulting to Dej, and as Dej had to take all this on his home grounds, he was very sour in turn. Apparently the purpose--as well as the net result--of the visit, was to tell the Romanians to climb off their effort towards industrialization and to get back to doing mainly what they'd always done so well as a breadbasket for Europe.

So there was this sort of pressure, on the one hand, by early summer, and for the rest of the year we had reports of growing differences between Bucharest and Moscow on matters relating to

CEMA [Council for Economic Mutual Assistance]. This all bubbled beneath the surface for a while and eventually came to a boil at the CEMA Executive Committee session in Moscow in February of 1963. At this important meeting, the Russians pressed their proposals for a so-called Socialist international division of labor, which amounted to an effort on Moscow's part to have certain specialized tasks allotted to each of the Eastern European countries, these to be decided upon really by CEMA itself, and then to carry out a very tight coordination of national plans based upon such specialization. And apparently the effort was made to get this generally accepted while at the same time telling Romania that the industrial projects that had been incorporated in the six-year plan were not things that really, at second glance, ought to be carried forward or encouraged. However, the Romanians took a strong stand and successfully resisted the idea of any such specialization being decided by CEMA, or of changing their own objectives. They flatly refused to budge, and in March of '63 convened a much ballyhooed party plenum to confirm their stand. However, continuing pressure was put on them. And then at a crucial meeting of CEMA party and state heads held in Moscow in July, Dej finally won out, and Khrushchev's plan for a supranational CEMA central planning organization was quietly buried. We had had reports since the fall of '62 that Khrushchev was pressured hard for such a supranational planning body, but that the Romanians were stoutly resisting.

So, during the course of 1962, you had a real pressure play developing on the part of Moscow to alter the new direction of the Romanian economy which it had apparently approved in principle back in '59 or '60. Because when the six-year plan was decided upon, it was presumably done with Moscow's okay--if a very reluctant okay. But at that time, Moscow had had a couple of fairly successful initial years developing its virgin lands program, and so the necessity for Romania remaining a breadbasket to the same degree then seemed perhaps less pressing. So Moscow may have said, "Okay. We don't think this is necessarily a terribly good idea, but if you insist, why, go ahead and try your hand at it." Well, the Romanians had tried their hand at it, and meanwhile Moscow had several very bad years in the virgin lands and was now facing an increasingly difficult agricultural situation. And so Khrushchev came down to tell them to call off the show. But by this time the rate of Romanian industrial development was reaching the point where the Romanians were not to be dissuaded. They had begun to learn a good deal from their recent contacts with the West, and they had the bit in their teeth.

Already their pattern of trade was changing considerably. Back in '59-'60, it had been about 80 percent with the bloc, but by the end of '62 this was reduced to about 65 percent. And this was another matter bothering the Russians, because the Romanians were now exporting their foodstuffs mainly to the West to pay for western industrial plants. They were sending Western Europe large quantities of their corn and wheat, and lots of pork, and geese to Strasbourg for "foie gras." And about half of their tractor production, and other farm equipment, was all going to the West. Well, this meant that the countries like Czechoslovakia and Poland and East Germany, which had been depending--as had the Soviet Union--on Romanian foodstuffs, were put in a bind, because they then had to look for them elsewhere. And for the bloc countries of the northern tier, it meant they either had to get them from the Soviet Union or from the West, and in the latter case, spend some of their scarce foreign exchange to do so.

On the other hand, the Romanians were thinking along the same lines, figuring, "What's the point in our selling corn, for example, to Poland to feed Polish hogs so that Poland can then export her

hams to the West in return for the foreign exchange she needs to import Western plant equipment?" The Romanians decided they might as well be doing the same themselves, and this is really what was going on. So the bloc countries were beginning to feel the pinch resulting from Romania's dealings with the West and the changing pattern of her foreign trade, as a means of carrying out her industrialization program. By the end of '62, we were beginning to get the flak from the CEMA meetings and to see that there was a real hassle going on. Moreover, hoist as they now were on their nationalist petard, the Romanians were showing a lot more guts than we had really given them credit for.

On the internal side in '62, we also began to see the onset of a derussification campaign that was soon to snowball. When I arrived, for example, the Russians had already been taken somewhat to task by the RCP plenum the month before, when party history was rewritten in a strongly nationalistic, and implicitly anti-Russian, manner. Then, several months later, the enormous statue of Stalin was quietly removed from Stalin Park. Nothing was ever mentioned in the paper about it, but a tent was raised around it and Stalin's statue disappeared overnight. The park was then renamed--but for no living person, because they'd decided against that kind of thing--and so Stalin disappeared. Of course, this roughly coincided with developments elsewhere at this time throughout the bloc. But before long, other derussification measures were being carried out within the country, which I could speak about.

Q: Okay. Now, you have, in response to this Romanian independence, some attempts by the Soviet Union to bring them into line, among which are a visit by Khrushchev himself in '63. Did he actually come, or did he find out...

CRAWFORD: Yes, a secret visit by Khrushchev. We had good evidence that he did. And this was believed by most of the other missions there, including the Yugoslavs. The meeting was apparently held in Transylvania, up close to the Yugoslav border. I don't recall at the moment what all the pieces of evidence were, but I know the evidence was very strong. I've forgotten the approximate date, but I think it was somewhere in the middle of '63. It was part of the continuing Soviet pressure campaign reacting to Romanian resistance that spring to its efforts to reorganize CEMA. You'll recall that following the CEMA meeting in Moscow in February of that year, the Romanian Central Committee had met in March and categorically reaffirmed its opposition to Moscow's position on CEMA. At that meeting, they came out with a strong statement opposing the idea of any supranational authority within CEMA, insisting on equal treatment for all members and noninterference in each other's affairs, and bilateral plans rather than joint plans, et cetera.

Q: And this occasioned your report back to Washington?

CRAWFORD: We reported all this, and the meetings which were then promptly held around the country for everybody to study and learn the lessons of what had gone on. So it seemed to us at this point that if the Romanians had not won out, at least there was a standoff, and that it could well be that the Russians would apply further pressures, which they did. One couldn't tell which way it might go, but the Romanians had made it perfectly clear that they were not going to go back on their industrialization program. So we proceeded to make a broad in-depth analysis of the situation, accompanied by specific recommendations for U.S. policy.

Excerpts from 1989 Interview by H.G. Torbert

CRAWFORD: Yes, Minister to Romania. That was in November of '61.

Q: Was this something that was in the works for a long time or did it come as a surprise to you? As career officers go, you were fairly young at that time to get your own mission.

CRAWFORD: Yes that's right. It did come as rather a surprise. I was simply called by the Director General of Foreign Service one day and asked to go over to the White House the next day. I talked to Ralph Dungan and we had quite a talk. He was most interested in what was going on and apparently had some recommendations from Ambassador Reinhardt in Rome with regard to the opening to the left in Italy, where they were discussing improving relations with the communists and getting in touch with some of the overtures that the left was making. We kicked that one around a bit. We had a very interesting talk. I didn't hear anything for a couple of months or so, but then I learned that I was going back to Romania.

Q: How did this strike you compared to Czechoslovakia for instance, of course you were at a higher level. You were in charge.

CRAWFORD: I was not expecting a great deal. Traditionally Romania had been sort of the end of the line and things, they were in Czechoslovakia throughout the '50's, had been in the deep freeze. I thought this would be a very, very interesting place for somebody like myself, who enjoyed following some of the more intricate details. But I didn't anticipate what was coming which was a kind of a national revolution that occurred during the period that I was there. I had been brought up to believe that most things in the communist world were fairly monolithic and were run from Moscow. I hadn't experienced what happened thereafter in Romania.

Q: Was Ceausescu already in power?

CRAWFORD: No. Gheorghiu-Dej was. Ceausescu was the mascot on his team. He was the youngest of the whole group. What actually had happened as I realized after I was there for a bit was that in 1952 the Romanian communist hard-liners who had been trained in Moscow and were loyal to Stalin were ousted.

Gheorghiu-Dej and his group came in. They had never spent any time in Moscow, and they had been in prison before the war and for a good part of the war. They were communist trade unionists types. In '56 the so called mixed companies that had been established by the Russians--the Russian-Romanian type companies--were eliminated. In '58 the Russians withdrew their troops from Romania, largely because the Romanians had been more or less on their best behavior during the Hungarian uprising.

So a kind of a nationalist group took over in '52, and the Russian economic controls were relaxed in '56, Russian troops were withdrawn in '58. The stage then was set for the Romanians to begin to move around on their own a bit more.

I observed from that point on that Romania had decided it would no longer be just a bread basket, but would have a sort of a mixed industrial agrarian economy. They thought that the Russians had approved of this. In '59 or so, the Russians believed their own agriculture was doing well, so the Romanians were apparently allowed to go ahead with their move toward industrialization. Then the Russians had a couple of bad agricultural years. But the Romanians had already started in this direction.

Q: What did they start with, steel mills?

CRAWFORD: Steel mills were among those things but there were also chemical plants, paper mills, and a whole variety of industrial operations which they began to bring in from the west. I could go on at length on this but it's a fairly long story in itself and I've covered a good part of it in the oral interview that I did with the Kennedy Library back in March of '71.

Q: I think one of the useful things for our purposes has to do with your methods of operation as a chief of mission in Eastern Europe. What did you spend your time doing in this job? What do you think of as the important things that you did?

CRAWFORD: The first thing was in furthering what was already under way. At that time we had an ongoing cultural agreement with Romania, the only one in Eastern Europe. My initial work was to implement that cultural agreement. In a year or two, I negotiated a new cultural agreement, and was much involved in cultural matters. I think that that was a good thing because it gave the Americans and the Romanians an opportunity to establish a kind of working relationship on something which we could agree and to get to know each other better, and your methods of operation.

Then a whole variety of things occurred, which led the Romanians to begin to break with the Russians. The Russians were trying to get the Romanians to go back on their attempts to set up a broader-based economy. The Romanians, in '62, '63 and '64, broke away, step by step, from Russian control over the organization of their economy. Their goal was to set up the kind of economy they wanted, and eventually they turned to us more and more for help and support.

My main job was to report to Washington and to try to persuade them that all these things were really happening. It wasn't easy. First of all, we had to be on top of what was going on. Next, we had to try to persuade the people in the Department who had been in Romania in the '50's that things were really changing. So, we had a reporting job to do for several years.

Finally, when we had done our reporting and things had moved to the point where the Romanians were obviously taking a different tack than the Russians on a variety of things, when we tried to persuade the Department to follow our recommendations to reward the Romanians to a degree for the independent steps they were taking. In this respect I was terribly fortunate because in 1963 we had had a visit from an American Cabinet member, Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman who spent three days in Romania. He convened his politburo and had long discussions with Freeman, laying out on the table what they wanted from us in terms of support for their economic program.

Then I was called back to Washington on another matter, but I let the White House know that I was there and the fortunately President asked to see me. I had an hour with him, laying out our problem.

Q: You may have been the last ambassador to have an hour with the President.

CRAWFORD: There was nobody else in the office and he was vastly interested in what was going on.

Q: Was it President Kennedy?

CRAWFORD: It was Kennedy. This was in August 22 or 23 of '63 just three months before he died. The next day he got on the phone to the department of Commerce about Romania. I saw Franklin D. Roosevelt Jr., the Under Secretary of Commerce, the next day. The problem at issue was that we had not responded to a request the Romanians had made to us for certain industrial plants they were interested in setting up. We had in fact turned them down on virtually everything, whereupon the Romanians proceeded to get these same plants from our European allies. We were, on the one hand, not benefiting financially in a business way, nor were we rewarding the Romanians for the independent actions that they had been taking.

This had all been recently documented by our embassy. The President wanted very much to get all this into the hands of the Commerce department. He wanted a new approach taken, in general, to eastern European trade, and he was exceedingly interested in the Romanian aspect. We got things started. Apparently there already had been a certain amount of study of this problem by the Export Control Review board, and it was then being considered by the President, though I had not realized this. A month later the President signed off, strongly encouraging the recommendations that they had come up with, which were along the lines of what I had been recommending. The main thing was that the President got things moving.

Q: This was essentially a more liberal export control policy?

CRAWFORD: Essentially it was. The President wanted to reward each Eastern European government individually, depending on how much effort it was putting into actions that were independent of Moscow.

Q: Did MFN come in and do it at this time?

CRAWFORD: Eventually it did, after President Kennedy got things moving. He was then assassinated. Johnson carried on with the recommendations and Romania was viewed as an example of what the Department wanted to see done. The result was that some six months later Harriman lead a team of U.S. negotiators who met with the Romanians here in Washington, and they wound up with various agreements.

The seventh floor took the lead in these developments. I forgot to mention that I came back that time on a plane with a Romanian Deputy Foreign Minister--Malitza and had long talks with him on that plane. Then I took him to meet Harriman and we had several luncheons together with

Harriman. The Romanians were able to persuade Harriman about what they were doing and what they wanted in support from us. Harriman was very sympathetic and he discussed it with Secretary of State Rusk. Harriman eventually wound up heading our negotiations. So there was a coincidence of my meeting with the Romanian Deputy Foreign Minister, having long talks with him and with Harriman, and then going to see the President. Also, these events showed that it is much easier to get things done at the seventh floor and White House levels.

Q: Now in retrospect, looking back twenty-five years more or less things went along pretty well, Romania was a good boy for years and years. Now it all seems to be falling apart. It certainly had started falling apart by the time I got to Bulgaria in 1970. What is the reason for that from your perspective?

CRAWFORD: As I see it Dej carried through with a nationalistic program. Ceausescu pursued it also but put his own people in charge--a younger team. But Ceausescu was paranoid and terribly vain, and he was surrounded by a family which was very ambitious.

The best thing I can tell you is that when I went back to Romania occasionally after that and would read the Romanian press, it felt like Moscow again in '45. Everything was Ceausescu, his speeches, his wife's actions and so forth. It was a cult of the personality combined with nepotism, and he seemed to hold very tight controls internally.

Q: Is there any essential difference between the Romanian security police methods and the Soviets?

CRAWFORD: They learned, from the Russians, although they were not quite as heavy handed as the Russians. Liberalism ideas were not allowed to be expressed at all. The system was highly centralized.

Q: But basically your analysis of the fall of Romania is corruption and mismanagement more than anything else.

CRAWFORD: Yes.

Q: Have you anything else to add on Romania before we go on?

CRAWFORD: I found the Romanians to be an interesting group to get along with and pleasant. They loved a good time.

Q: The few Romanians I've known I've always found very pleasant.

CRAWFORD: They're pretty hard working.

Q: Meanwhile the U.S. mission was made an embassy?

CRAWFORD: It was made an embassy. I was appointed as the first ambassador. It took a little while because the elections were going on at the time. I stayed there for the year as ambassador.

OWEN B. LEE
Analyst, Romania and East Germany, INR
Washington DC (1963-1967)

Owen B. Lee served in the U.S. Navy during World War II. He graduated from Harvard University in 1949 and studied in Paris, France at Institut d'Etudes Politiques. His Foreign Service career included positions in Germany, Bolivia, Romania, and Spain. He was interviewed by Thomas Dunnigan on December 4, 1996.

Q: Your tour to Romania came to an end in 1963 and you came back to the Department where you were assigned to INR. I believe Roger Hilsman was in charge and Tom Hughes came on later.

LEE: Tom Hughes was in charge when I was there.

Q: What was your job in INR?

LEE: In INR I was made responsible as analyst for Romania and East Germany. I enjoyed both of them. Everybody always wondered how I ever got those two. Well, because I had the languages more than anything else, although I had also lived in Romania and West Germany (1951-55). These two positions were most interesting to me. I was in INR when Romania was moving out in an independent way, and many people felt East Germany was not doing that well. It was a fascinating time, I was there for four years (1963-67) But in one way I had not quite left Romania; I was asked in early 1964 to lead a visiting Romanian delegation around the United States. At that time we wanted to bring Romanian groups to the United States to see the country, hopefully to be influenced a little bit about the way we do things. So, they asked me to take a group of Romanians, officials in the electric power industry, including the minister. We travelled together for a month throughout the United States. The visit was organized by the Detroit Edison Company. It was perhaps one of the most interesting trips I have ever taken in this country because I saw public and power facilities, nuclear power facilities, and things I would not have normally seen, so it was an education for me. It was also an education being with these representatives of a communist country. We had several interesting experiences. There are two that stand out in my mind. One rather serious, the other has a humorous angle to it.

When we visited the Enrico Fermi nuclear power plant outside of Detroit, Michigan, it was about to be finished, and the Detroit Edison people couldn't have been more honest in describing both the technical and commercial part of the whole enterprise. And, of course, what struck the Romanians most was the commercial part. The technical part they were familiar with. It was the commercial part that interested them. What was so unique about that? Well, first of all, the fact that Detroit Edison combined the nuclear power plant with a regular coal-fired power plant so that one would offset the other depending on the peak times and the down times in terms of repairs of the reactors or the boilers. Two, the Detroit Edison people said as soon as they started

talking, not building, but merely talking about building a nuclear power plant, the coal companies came to them and said they were going to invest more money in newer coal cars to reduce the price of a ton of coal. So, they had already made money. This, of course, was what made the Romanians sit up. This whole commercial angle was openly described to them and opened their eyes to the workings of profit-based enterprise.

We went through the nuclear power plant which was impressive and then we visited other places in Detroit before the weekend. I remember it was a Sunday morning and we were going to leave Monday morning so it was a day off. Around 7:00 a.m. I had a telephone call from one of the Romanians, the minister, who said, "Mr. Lee, we have been working together here and have a lot of questions. Do you suppose there is any possibility that we could get together with the Detroit Edison people to talk some more about this nuclear power plant?" I said, "I don't know, but I can try." Well, I called my contact at Detroit Edison and we managed to get that same afternoon the key engineers of the plant together in a hotel room with these Romanian engineers. It was an unforgettable discussion. What was the purpose? The Romanians, coming from a small country, were very concerned about nuclear power. They needed it, they wanted it, but they were concerned about possible problems if something went wrong. Now, this was in the year 1964 before Three Mile Island and Chernobyl. They had any number of questions for these engineers about the technical security of the reactors, the whole complex of nuclear power. The responses they received, I have to say were thorough, as good as they could be at that time, but I had the distinct impression the Romanians were not satisfied. They could not accept what they heard about providing the security they felt was necessary in a nuclear power plant.

Q: Did they ever build a reactor?

LEE: I don't know if they have. But, for them, the security available did not outweigh the possible risks involved. I thought that was a very good outcome because I think the American engineers probably learned something from the Romanians because of the penetrating analysis that they had done. It may have been helpful.

Another time we went to Oak Ridge. The Tennessee Valley Authority was building what was at the time the largest coal-fired power plant in the world, a 1000 megawatt plant. Well, we got off the train and were met by cars. We drove over to Oak Ridge and went through the gate. I was sitting with the minister in the back of a car. I noticed he was looking around trying to observe everything that was going on. Suddenly he turned to me with a wistful look on his face and said, "Mr. Lee, this must be a government operation." I said, "Yes, it is. It is Oak Ridge." He said, "I thought so. There is a lot of idle equipment around here." I will never forget that. He was no more a communist than I was.

Q: When you were working at INR did you find that you got a lot of cooperation from the geographic bureaus? Did they find your material useful and want it? Or did they feel you were competing with them for the attention of the Secretary?

LEE: This was always the issue between INR and the geographical bureaus, but it never concerned me that much. There were times that some of the things that I had on Romania were helpful to the bureau, but I can't say there was that much. There was more interest in East

Germany because it was wrapped up in the bigger issue of Germany. We had the situation there where, although it was open in some ways, there was not that much knowledge about the way East Germany was functioning. There also was an overarching feeling, which was incorrect, that somehow East Germany was being supported by the Soviet Union. In my time in INR I was able to show them that the opposite was true. Everyone felt the Soviet Union was supporting East Germany economically but this "feeling" had no basis in facts.

This issue of East Germany's economy was one of the major battles I have had in my whole Foreign Service career, basically with the CIA. Sometime in 1966, possibly 1967, there was a requirement for an intelligence estimate of East Germany. I worked on it and the CIA worked on it. We did initial reports. The CIA came up with the conclusion that East Germany would collapse by 1975. I looked at this and thought they were crazy. I spent some time doing a report to refute this conclusion. My superiors in INR thought I was right and said, "Owen, you take it up with the CIA." I went to a meeting in Langley alone and met in a room with maybe 25 people, a panel headed by a former ambassador. They started with the report on East Germany. When they got to the picture of the economic outlook, for which the CIA was supposed to be responsible but which I had worked on, I said that I couldn't agree with their conclusion and was prepared to tell them why. So, I went into the whole explanation.

One point is East Germany had never nationalized all of industry. Two, many of the smaller industrial firms in East Germany were connected very closely with West German firms. There was a division of labor. The West German firms exported to the Free World, the East German firms, under the Interzonal trade arrangements, exported to West Germany second-rate products made in East Germany. Three, you had the only place of contact between the West and the East with hard currency flowing for non-commercial purposes into East Germany...the church, a whole host of sources. Four, you had certain industrial standards that were commonly followed in East Germany and West Germany. But there were a number of other economic features like this.

Then I pointed to the trade between the Soviet Union and East Germany where you had a bastard sort of situation. You have to think of it in colonial terms. One part furnishes raw materials and the other part manufactured goods. I said that was what was going on, but not the way people assumed. It was East Germany that was furnishing completed industrial plants to the Soviet Union for raw materials. The Russians were not paying commercial prices for those things. That is where you had your political implication and political price, the guarantee given the East German regime. It was the East Germans that were exporting capital goods to the USSR at below market prices. Then I pointed out the element of a certain sign of East German independence in economic matters. I mentioned the opening of a pipeline from Rostak to import oil from the Arab world rather than exclusively with the pipeline coming from Russia. There were a number of other things.

That meeting ended in a shambles and everyone was sent back to the drafting board. They accepted my statements and we eventually came out with an NIE that was more rational and based on the facts. I was guided by a friend's rhetorical question: has anyone ever seen a German fail in an industrial enterprise?

Q: Not that I can remember.

LEE: That is the question that had to be answered and no one asked that question. Even under the communist system they did very well compared to the other communist countries. Now, the problem was that we compared them to West Germany with which East Germany was no match.

Q: Did you cooperate closely with the DIA too?

LEE: Not much. However, the cooperation with the CIA was excellent. In this case it was just a faulty analysis and evaluation by the CIA. In the end East Germany did not collapse in 1975.

My years working as an analyst for Romania and East Germany (GDR) 1963-67 were among the most rewarding, perhaps not the comment that many other Foreign Service Officers might make. The Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR), particularly the division where I was assigned, the Research for the Soviet Bloc (RSB), offered opportunities for in-depth study of trends, analysis of political undercurrents, and preparation of tightly-knit papers. There was no better training ground for reporters in the field. During my tour I was particularly proud of two reports which I prepared on my own initiative, one of which earned a commendation from the CIA, related to the war in Vietnam.

The first report analyzed one of the questions which had puzzled the intelligence community: what was behind the recurrent Soviet complaints about Communist Chinese obstructionism in assisting the Vietnamese? How did I get involved in an issue like that? It goes back to my early months in INR when I met a veteran analyst of European transportation issues: waterways, railroads, roadways, etc. He was an Austrian-born specialist who had a unique knowledge of these issues and a host of documents. I turned to him for information on the Danube River, e.g. international regime which, of course, affected Romania. When he retired, I somehow picked up some of his files. They proved invaluable: he had collected information on every intra-bloc transportation agreement and plan since the end of World War II.

One day as I scanned the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), I noticed an item reporting that the Soviet Union and the Communist Chinese had just concluded (1966 or 1967) a new transportation plan regulating all exchanges of goods on their rail systems. Picked by curiosity, I went to my former colleague's files and found an earlier basic transportation agreement between the USSR and the Peoples' Republic (CPR). It was a revelation. Under its terms, concluded shortly after the Communist Chinese seized power in 1949, the Soviets and the Chinese agreed that (1) all goods transiting the USSR between China and Eastern Europe would pay a fixed kilometer rate, irrespective of the distance travelled, and (2) that the volume of goods shipped via rail would have to be fixed in annual plans which were to be negotiated between the parties. Could there be any basis here for thinking that the Chinese, who had to pay the fixed rates in sending goods to Eastern Europe, might oblige the Soviets to pay fixed rates for goods in transit from the USSR to Vietnam?

This was the tip-off that led to follow-up analysis, including whatever details were published on agreed annual plans, of the whole issue of mutual transit obligations. It became abundantly clear that the Chinese, taking full advantage of the earlier basic rail transit agreement, had turned the

tables on the Soviets and, through the mechanism of the fixed transit rates and the need for an annual, detailed plan of goods to be shipped, could control the type of goods shipped, the volume, and the delivery dates. They were in a position to exert powerful influence over both the Soviets on the sending end and the Vietnamese on the receiving end. This Chinese control over all shipments by land led, as we know, to Soviet deliveries by ship to Haiphong. This report helped clarify one aspect of the developing Sino-Soviet competition for influence in Hanoi as well as problems of Soviet bloc assistance to North Vietnam.

Q: It is understandable that your division - RSB - of INR was following closely whatever assistance the Soviet bloc was giving to North Vietnam at the height of the Vietnam War and our involvement. Did you have anything to contribute to this during your assignment?

LEE: Yes, I did, albeit on a modest scale, considering that the bulk of aid, particularly the military aid, was being sent by the Soviet Union itself. But the non-military aid, I have to say, received very little attention in the intelligence community until I did a paper focusing on it.

In my daily readings of FBIS and the host of other unclassified and classified documents concerning the Soviet bloc I was struck by seemingly isolated and unrelated references to shipments of field hospitals from Hungary, optical equipment from East Germany, and other non-military items from the other Eastern European communist countries to North Vietnam. One particular item, appearing in an unclassified CIA summary of the local East German press, attracted my attention and emboldened me to look further into the whole issue of non-military assistance provided by these countries to North Vietnam. The news item in question reported that a plant manufacturing bicycles which had been closed had recently been reopened to turn out folding bicycles "especially adapted for tropical conditions." There was only one destination for these bicycles. Gleanings of various classified documents revealed that these Eastern European satellites were also supplying some small military hardware as well: optical sighting/range-finding, or fire control devices from East Germany, light-hand-held rocket launchers (bazookas) from Romania, and a variety of light arms from Czechoslovakia.

A detailed and comprehensive report, drawing on all possible sources for information, took me several weeks. In the end, I prepared a report on the estimated annual contribution of all the East European communist countries to the North Vietnamese war effort. It was far more extensive than anyone in the intelligence community had dared to estimate. In all, I think the total value, estimated in dollars, was approximately \$100 million in 1967. Against the backdrop of the cost in billions of our own war effort in Vietnam, this seemed like a paltry sum. This would be a misleading inference. In my analysis, I postulated the possibility that in the overall Soviet effort to support North Vietnam a de facto division of labor had taken place: while the Soviets themselves would provide the costly heavy weaponry, the satellite countries would provide the non-military assistance and some small arms assistance.

My report was well received inasmuch as it cast some light on one aspect of the Vietnam War which had been overlooked in the repeated efforts to evaluate the resistance capacity and war-making capability of the North Vietnamese. The CIA was impressed enough to pass along some praise to my superiors. This praise was all the more remarkable and appreciated because the CIA itself had the basic responsibility to analyze and report on the economic conditions in the Soviet

Bloc. This is just another instance, among a host of others, where my experience in INR convinced me that intelligence analysis and reporting should never be left to a single agency of the U.S. Government and that the Department of State itself should always retain a capacity to perform intelligence research and analysis across the board.

In the same vein, I should add another experience, this time with respect to U.S. evaluation of the Soviet economy during the Cold War. When I was serving in INR/RSB, there was an "old hand" there who specialized in tracking and evaluating the Soviet economy. At the time I knew him, he was in his early seventies -- an "old man" in the eyes of many -- but he was extraordinarily energetic. Although a part-time contractor, he managed to get more serious work done than many of us working full-time. But Dr. Bloch had another unique attribute: he knew how to write a serious report with touches of a sense of humor. His reports on the Soviet economy reminded me of in-depth articles in the "Economist." With access to all the classified and unclassified documents available in Washington, he invariably came up with an assessment of the Soviet economy quite the opposite of what others -- CIA, DIA, INR/RSB itself -- were writing. Fortunately, INR allowed his reports to be printed and circulated even if they couldn't be given official support.

As it turns out in retrospect, Dr. Bloch's observations, analyses, and conclusions about the Soviet economy were the only ones which hit the mark. In the mid-sixties he was the only person I knew of who delved into the real workings of the Soviet economy, i.e. distribution of goods, waste of capital resources, employment of redundant labor, below-standard levels of maintenance throughout the economy, etc. which undercut the efficiency of the Soviet economic machine. He pieced together the real life travails of the average Soviet citizen trying to make ends meet, obtain consumer goods, increase their living standards, etc. to show how slowly and ineffectually the production and distribution of goods and services was. The exception, of course, was the Soviet military production system. As Dr. Bloch pointed out over and over, the USSR was operating a "war economy" with all that means in terms of sacrifices for the general population. In retrospect, his reports should have received more attention but, then, I wonder, did some people -- the military/industrial complex identified by President Eisenhower -- have reservations about showing the true state of the Soviet economy?

Q: Then in 1967 you moved over to the Defense Department.

LEE: I was at the National Military Command Center (NMCC).

ROBERT K. GEIS
Press and Cultural Officer, USIS
Bucharest (1964-1966)

Mr. Geis was born in Havana, Cuba of American parents and was raised in Houston, Texas. He was educated at Rice University and American University. Entering the Foreign Service in 1962, he served as Cultural Affairs Officer and/or Public Affairs Officer in Argentina, Romania, Ecuador, USSR, Italy and Trinidad

and Tobago. His service also included several Washington assignments with USIA. In the years 1973 and 1974 Mr. Geis studied at Johns Hopkins University (SAIS) and the George Washington University. Mr. Geis was interviewed by Lewis Hoffacker in 1999.

GEIS: [...] I was selected in a rather hush-hush fashion to train for work in Communist Eastern Europe, and specifically in Romania. The reason things were kind of hush-hush was that I was going to be the first to go to a Communist country without transferring into the State Department, which was the policy at the time. In other words, I was going to go openly as a USIS officer, although there was no USIS in existence in these countries. We were considered, and we were called, the press and cultural section of whatever, the legation or embassy, and in the case, there was a legation in Bucharest. After six months of Romanian language training (I found that Spanish helped quite a bit in that, being as Romania is a Romance language), I was ready to go on to Bucharest.

Bucharest at the time was called the People's Republic of Romania. This was a Latin culture in sort of a Slavic sea. It was a testing ground at that time for Lyndon Baines Johnson's policy of bridge-building toward select Communist countries. In other words, the idea was that we would select certain Communist countries that seemed more amenable to better relation with the United States and concentrate on those countries. Romania was one of the countries. And it was a policy which I find definitely bore fruit at the end of the decade of the '60s in a very interesting way.

Q: *Was that Ceausescu?*

GEIS: He was not yet president, no. He became president while I was there. In December of 1964, Minister William Crawford presented his credentials - or re-presented them, I might say - to the old dictator of Romania, who was called Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, and it was at that time then that the U.S. legation was raised to embassy level. Later on, Ceausescu became the head of the Party.

Q: *If you want to talk about Crawford and the way he ran the embassy, feel free.*

GEIS: Yes, he was a fine ambassador, he and his wife, Barbara. He was very excited, I might add, at being there when the legation became an embassy and being able to present his credentials and such. He was followed by Richard H. Davis and his wife, Harriet. Davis was probably the best ambassador and the best ambassadorial pair that I ever had in my career. He was a person of great intellect, style, and a real pro. Our program in Romania was rather limited, but at that time we had a wonderful graphic arts of the USA exhibit. This was early in 1965. It was one of USIA's best in a series of what are called East-West exhibits, for which young language-speaking U.S. guides were recruited in the U.S. and sent out to interpret the exhibit to the host country. This recruiting of guides was a task I was later to become involved in. At that time, the embassy had as a Romanian employee one of the country's brightest young writers, Alexandru Ivasiuc. It was truly unusual to have a person of his caliber as an advisor to the Political Section. And through Alex I was fortunate in meeting a number of young artists, writers, and intellectuals of Bucharest. This became sort of a pattern in my career, and one of its most rewarding aspects. I also began a modest personal collection of art through these contacts.

Q: *Excuse me, this was a commie regime, so you were being watched all the time.*

GEIS: Absolutely.

Q: *And this great guy who was your conduit into the intellectual community was obviously reporting back to his masters.*

GEIS: That's right.

Q: *And so the embassy was, in effect, penetrated.*

GEIS: Yes.

Q: *But that's all right. You learned to live in that environment, and you didn't say anything that would put you in jail or PNGed.*

GEIS: Yes, you're absolutely right. The thing that was interesting about Alex is that, although obviously he was vetted by the authorities to come and work for the embassy, he was somewhat of a free agent, I think. He really was. He was a person of real artistic stature, and as I said, it was extremely unusual to have a person like this in our embassy, and he was helping the Political Section do some reporting that was very unusual in its ability to penetrate into Romanian Communist society.

Q: *Did he survive?*

GEIS: Oh, very much so.

Q: *In other words, he died a normal death.*

GEIS: Well, he didn't die a normal death, but he did survive. In fact, I don't think I made a note of that. I'm glad you mentioned it. Now I'll just leaf ahead and mention the way he died because it was very sad. He ended up, once he left the embassy's employment, he went on to a really distinguished career as a writer and very tragically died in the famous Bucharest earthquake. He was walking down a street, and the thing fell on his head. It was just incredible.

Q: *And he was not old.*

GEIS: No, he would have been in his '40s. It was a terrible loss. It really was. Of a good friend, too.

But anyway, to go on, some of the intellectuals I met at that time later gained reputations in this country. They include the director Andrei Serban and the noted writer Petru Popescu. This was 1964, and I had just received what became one of the major attractions in the city. I had a 1964 Mustang convertible, racing green, and this car, I have to admit, was the talk of Bucharest. In

fact, I would often have to kind of push my way through crowds of people to get to the car. I'm not sure my profile should have been that high.

Q: *Your profile was pretty high.*

GEIS: It was not as high should have been, but was a little too high.

Q: *What a great car. I hope you kept it.*

GEIS: No, afraid not. I went ahead and sold it while I was there, before I left, but it was a lot of fun. One of the memorable episodes from our exchange program at this time was the visit of the noted American writer John Updike.

Q: *Oh, boy.*

GEIS: His visit is recounted in his work *Bech: A Book*, in the chapter called "Bech in Romania," in which I was portrayed with considerable artistic license as Philips. Updike enjoyed, as he put it, and I quote, "mocking his fellow Americans," and I found that he was a fairly mocking individual. I found that he could be surprisingly insensitive and not a very sympathetic personality.

Q: *How interesting. Very interesting.*

GEIS: Also at this time, we had a modest Fulbright program - a student exchange program - and this program brought a bright, attractive young linguist to Bucharest in the fall of 1965. Arlene Jennings and I were married in June of 1966 in Bucharest. We said "*Da*" at the People's Council, which was a civil ceremony, and we said "*Ja*" at the Lutheran Church. And then we honeymooned at the embassy's villa in the Carpathian Mountains. This was a wonderful retreat which we had in this Communist country sort of for rest and recuperation. It was at the famous resort town of Sinaia.

CARL A. BASTIANI
Romanian Area and Language Study, FSI
Washington, DC (1964-1965)

Consular/Economic Officer
Bucharest (1965-1968)

Mr. Bastiani was born and raised in Pennsylvania and educated at Seminaries in Iowa and Illinois and at the University of Chicago and Georgetown University. A specialist in Italian and Romanian affairs, Mr. Bastiani served at four posts in Italy (Naples, Genoa, Rome and Turin) and in Romania and Poland. He also had several tours of duty at the State Department in Washington, DC. Mr. Bastiani was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2008.

Q: Okay, Now let's talk about 20 minutes your assignment to Romanian language training, and then we'll go on to Romania. How'd you find Romanian? It's supposed to be a little like Italian and Latin. Did you find it was a fairly easy language to learn?

BASTIANI: For me it was. In fact, it was so easy that it interfered with my Italian. I had the privilege of being tutored by Nicolai Chiacu. He was the Romanian tutor, absolutely dedicated to forcing you to speak this language whether you liked it or not. I was in a class with just two others and he practiced the oral-audio method exclusively from the first day. *Buna dimineata*, good morning, *Inco data*, again, slamming his fist on the table. And he would drill, drill, drill listening intently with eyes closed until he heard you say it exactly. *'Im para bine se va cunosc*, pleased to meet you, over and over. He wouldn't tolerate any slow speaking; you'd be sweating by the time you got out of there. I became a total convert to this method of learning a language, because after nine months of Romanian language training, I was speaking it fluently; my only real limitation was vocabulary. And he gave me a grade of four; I thought that was a little exaggerated, but...

Q: A five is bilingual, four is..

BASTIANI: Expert or whatever.

Q: A very fine mark, three is adequate in the FSI series, goes one to five.

BASTIANI: Yes. Every work day I had six hours with him. At this time my wife was home pregnant with our third child; all her pregnancies were difficult and she was in bed most of the day. We had this manual of conversations and exercises based on them conversations which he drilled into memory. The idea was that after six hours of tutoring you would go home and do some more studying of the manual. I never cracked a book when I got home. I was so saturated by the time I got home I didn't look at it; during the last few months anyway, I was doing dinners and household chores besides watching TV with the family.

And I can tell you a good story regarding a friend's experience with Chiacu. Bob Frowick was my predecessor in INR, Intelligence and Research, and before that we had served together in Bucharest. Bob was in Romanian with Chiacu before me. Over the Christmas holidays he went skiing and broke a leg. While he was in the hospital, Chiacu went every day after tutoring at the Institute to the hospital to tutor Frowick; he wouldn't let him get out of it.

I learned well too from Chiacu because he would make statements one would consider anti-Semitic. He would say he wasn't, he was only citing facts, just being objective. He wouldn't accept any rejoinder in English. I think he provoked me deliberately to force me to argue in Romanian. He is the best language teacher I ever encountered in my entire life.

Q: Were you picking up any feeling about Romania? Often when you're a language student you get an idea from your tutor and maybe other sources before you go out. And this was Romania before Ceausescu, I guess.

BASTIANI: He had just come in.

Q: He came in around '67 or so?

BASTIANI: He came in around '65.

Q: Sixty-five.

BASTIANI: Yes, after Gheorghiu-Dej.

Q: Well, What were you picking up about him and from your reading about Romania?

BASTIANI: Okay, we had area studies as well. We knew it was one of the Soviet satellites, totalitarian, but also, well I also learned that it was a country extremely well endowed with resources and beauty. And that reminds me of another joke making the rounds at the time about Romania. When God created Romania he said oh, I'm going to put there the most beautiful mountains with beautiful forests; and leading up to these mountains the most beautiful rolling hills; and a river winding down to a beautiful delta, the Danube River; with marvelous climate and beautiful white beaches on the Black Sea., St. Michael interrupts and says, "God, you go on with this, Romania will be Paradise on earth." And God said, "You're right. I know what I'll do; I'll put Romanians there." Well, you can't tell that joke without insulting any Romanian who hears it; and you can use it to put down any ethnic group you chose by substituting them.

But you had asked about the Romanian language itself. I learned from Chiacu who is a linguist in his own right, that it is closer to the spoken Latin at the time of the Romans than the Western Romance Languages are. It is very faithful to the orthography, spelling of the words. It is what spoken Latin developed into in the East, as opposed to Western romance languages. At the same time – and this I think I got elsewhere or discovered myself – it is spoken more with a different cadence, and has many Slav words and Turkish words in its vocabulary. You know, of course that the Ottoman Turks dominated the Balkans for about 400 years, including Romania. To one who knows Italian, Romanian sounds like a language you should understand, but don't. There are many phrases that are almost identical in meaning; and words that are identical, but with somewhat different meanings. Good evening in Romanian is *buna seara*, and in Italian, *buona sera*. Good bye, until we meet again, in Romanian is *La revedere*; and in Italian, *Arrivederci*; and so on. I became so immersed in Romanian that I was embarrassed when I would try to speak Italian to an Italian diplomat in Bucharest. I found I couldn't without Romanian popping up. That's how I realized that the social environment is very important to speak fluently in a language you know. At some point during my Romanian tour I flew to Rome for a Conference, I believe. On arrival at the airport, Customs raised a problem with my luggage. Suddenly my Italian came on strong with no Romanian whatsoever mixed in. I was back in the environment in which my buried Italian came up onto my frontal lobes, so to speak.

Q: Okay. This is a good place to start your tour there. You got to Romania when?

BASTIANI: I got to Romania in 1965, in the summer.

Q: And you were there how long?

BASTIANI: For about two and a half years.

Q: Was this your first exposure to the Communist world?

BASTIANI: Yes, that is correct.

Q: Okay, let's talk about the situation. Before we get to what you were doing, what was the situation in Romania in '65, both internally and externally? And after that we'll talk about American interests in Romania.

BASTIANI: Nicolai Ceausescu had just replaced Gheorghiu-Dej. Gheorghiu-Dej was one of the three founders of the Communist party, and leader of a triumvirate in Romania. He was the chief. Ana Pauker, I don't know if you ever heard of her?

Q: Yes.

BASTIANI: She was a member, and considered loyal to Moscow. Dej, although originally loyal to Stalin, had long since put Romania on the road to autonomy from Moscow. He set the stage for this by getting the Soviets to withdraw their troops from Romania in 1958, in exchange, I would guess, for the cooperation he gave them in crushing the Hungarian revolt in 1956. I recall reading that he had permitted transit of Russian troops to crush the revolt, and the temporary imprisonment of Imre Nagy in Romania before his trial and execution. Since then he had begun opening up to trade with West, and not cooperating fully with Comecon's Socialist Division of Labor among the satellites. When Dej died, Ceausescu, with the help of other leaders who supported the policy of national autonomy, emerged as the strongman and took over.

Now, Ceausescu at this time was favored by us because he continued the policy of autonomy vis-à-vis the Soviets. He gained some popularity among the people for it. I characterized him as a nationalistic communist. He was thoroughly Stalinist on how to run the country, but at the same time very Romanian in autonomy toward the Soviets. In defense of it toward the Soviets and its more subservient satellites, he used to the hilt as boilerplate in his speeches the language of the Moscow Declaration of 1957 that socialist countries based their relations on the principles of complete equality, independence, sovereignty, and non-interference in one another's affairs. Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin's crimes in 1956 had opened the way to it.

At this time toward East Europe, our policy was polycentricism, dealing with each of the satellites as though they were really independent, just to encourage autonomy. The Romanians had clearly shown that they were giving priority to national interests. Ceausescu was actively negotiating to buy modern turn-key industrial technology from the West without a by-your-leave from Moscow. Moscow was doing the same anyway, and could hardly object openly. To pay for this technology he squeezed his own people and exported to the West whatever products were salable, oil and wheat especially.

Q: Yes. And of course Romania was basically a country full of agricultural bounty; I mean it was a breadbasket.

BASTIANI: Indeed. Agriculture was wheat and very much cultivated because of Romania's endowment of fertile land. Western tourism was also very much promoted as an industry to acquire marks, dollars, francs, and other convertible Western currencies. There was a good joke that was told by the Romanians themselves that well characterized the situation. One night it was given to a person to visit hell. There he was wined and dined, and enjoyed himself with every kind of entertainment. So when he got back to earth he thought well, that wasn't bad at all. I could take that for all eternity instead of heaven. Why should I live a good moral life to avoid going to hell. So he lived a very immoral life and when he died was sent straight to hell. When he got there, they immediately slapped on the chains, put a shovel in his hands, stood him in front of a hot furnace and ordered him to shovel coal. He screamed, "What happened? This is not what I found when I was here before." And they told him, "Ah, but then you were a tourist."

That's how the Romanians considered their own situation. They were in a sort of living hell; they were exploited; all the best products were exported. I remember an instance when we had a visiting military attaché or diplomat from Moscow. Now, they were exporting the best not only to the West but found it necessary to export some of it to the Soviet Union for imports they needed. We were discussing what produce and eggs were available on the local market; in Bucharest there were only these little golf balls they called eggs. The best eggs in the diplomatic store in Moscow, said our guests, are imported from Romania.

The Ceausescu regime even resorted unscrupulously to selling people for money, Jews primarily. There were still many Jews in Romania, and the Israelis were quite willing to have them immigrate to Israel. A system was set up whereby the Israelis paid a price for every emigrant who was allowed to immigrate to Israel via a refugee camp in Italy. There was a price list based on education, profession, sex, what have you. The Israelis paid it. The Jewish emigrants who were processed for exit had all their valuables taken from them. There was a special arrangement with Alitalia to fly them to a refugee camp between Rome and Naples as I recall. From there, some with relatives in the U.S. would opt to go to States or other countries, but most would then continue on to Israel. In my time the estimate was that 25 percent of Israelis were of Romanian origin. Prices were paid also for Germans, though as far as I know, not according to price list. As a result of the war, there were many divided families from ethnic German communities in Romania which had been there for centuries.

Speaking of divided German families, the most were in East and West Germany. East Germans couldn't travel to the West, but rather easily within the Eastern bloc. West Germans could easily get tourist visas to go to Romania, under Romania's program to acquire hard currency. By pre-arrangement they would meet on the marvelous beaches of Mamaia in Romania.

Q: Were the East Germans able to slip out and get to the West from there?

BASTIANI: I don't believe many could. It was simply a way of visiting with each other.

Q: How would you describe the differences as you saw it at the time between our relationship with Tito's Yugoslavia and with Romania at the time? He had early broken with the Soviet Union and we had quite close ties with Tito at that time.

BASTIANI: We, of course, had been supporting Tito economically for a much longer time and in many more ways after he broke with Stalin for the same reasons as we supported Ceausescu. Tito even accepted Marshall Plan aid at a time when he was considered a member of the Soviet bloc. Moreover, in the '60s as Yugoslavia became more liberal internally, this support was much easier to justify, especially after he made his peace with the Catholic Church.

Tito was also a leader and organizer of the Non-aligned Movement.

I don't think Ceausescu ever dared join it in its heyday, but he did try to imitate Tito in establishing bilateral relations with just about everybody and anybody on every continent. While the Romanian analyst in INR, the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, I did a piece in 1970 or '71 I titled "The Peripatetic Ceausescu," simply listing the many visits to foreign countries he had scheduled over the next six months or so. But I don't think Tito ever got as close to China as Romania did when China and the Soviet Union were openly at odds. They were much more compatible with respect to their domestic policies. Romania I learned while in INR was used as an intermediary by China to send one or two secret messages to us on the issue of Vietnam.

They had a common border and did collaborate over it. There were ethnic Serb villages in the western Timisoara area of Romania. We have always talked about balkanization in the Balkans, but it wasn't just between countries; it was also within countries.

During my tour in Romania, I did consular work the first two years or so and economic work the rest of the time. While in the Consular section, I and the economic officer I eventually replaced made a trip with the embassy suburban...

Q: Suburban being a type...

BASTIANI: ...Being a vehicle, a four wheel drive vehicle that could travel these muddy roads in Western Romania, to check out some Social Security recipients. Our Social Security system is very generous in that it pays benefits to anyone who paid into it for the required period, even if they did so as an illegal resident, and then retired to their home country. There is no citizenship or legal residency requirement. When they reached 62 or 65, they could file for it through our Embassy or Consulate. Most countries then and now, I believe, will not pay pensions to their citizens living outside their boundaries – certainly in my time no Eastern European country did this sort of thing. I'm not sure we ever insisted on reciprocity in the matter.

In Romania, the monthly checks would come to the Embassy for distribution by mail to the recipients. But we began to worry whether some of these recipients were still alive, considering their ages. The receipt we enclosed would always come back signed before we sent the next check, but we were afraid this receipt was signed by some relative or cousin. So we picked out what we thought were potential problem cases and went off to visit them; it was a real education for me about Western Romania.

You go down a muddy road and you come to a village and every resident was Romanian and spoke only Romanian. You go two miles down the road, you come to another village, and every resident is Hungarian and speaks Hungarian. You go two miles west or two miles north and every resident is German and speaks German. And you went the other direction and you'd have a Serb village and they spoke Serb. They were just fragmented as villages into ethnic groups. I assume the children had to learn Romanian in the local school, but it wasn't spoken at home.

Well, on this trip we were shadowed by the secret police, and they didn't make a secret of it either. We knew they were in that little car behind us. On one occasion we had gone down a muddy road and visited a woman. Coming back we saw them stuck in the mud. In our visits, the Polaroid camera I brought along worked magic in breaking the ice and getting communication started. You would take a picture and a minute later give it to the subject. One woman was so pleased she begged us to return after the children returned from school to take their picture. In return, almost invariably, they would give us a bottle of homemade tuica, which was triple distilled prune juice, almost pure alcohol. You could put a match to it, you know, and it would just burn until it was gone.

Q: While you were doing that I was in Yugoslavia as Chief of the Consular Section doing the same thing, going out and looking at Social Security cases too. What were you finding? Were most of these people still alive? I mean, was there a widespread problem?

BASTIANI: No, we did not find a widespread problem. In fact I don't recall finding a single fraudulent case on this trip.

Q: This is true in Yugoslavia too.

In Turkey there were major problems but I'm not saying that I found them when I went out. I don't think we were followed as much, but I used to go out by myself and travel around to areas and do investigations. I always made a point of dropping by the local police and saying I'm the American Consul; can you help me find so and so, and explain what I was doing. I'm sure they called up and checked, but the idea was to let everybody know what I was doing so that you weren't having people wondering what the hell is this guy doing with local police?

Well, let's take a look at the Embassy. Who was the ambassador while you were there?

BASTIANI: When I arrived, the Ambassador was William Crawford, but for most of my tour it was Richard Harding Davis, not to be confused with the other Davises who were ambassadors. I must say he was my favorite of all the ambassadors I served under. As a person, he was outstanding. He really looked out for his people and kept up the morale at this post.

Q: Would you say this was an embassy kind of under siege? Was it a difficult post or what?

BASTIANI: It was a difficult post. The embassy even today is still in the same mansion it took over when it opened after the war. It's walled in and the Romanians always have had their own police outside. In fact, they would intercept people, not even let them come into the Embassy.

Because of Ceausescu's autonomy from the Soviet Union, we found that the Soviets were watched about as much as we were. He did not collaborate with the Soviets on the various ministerial levels like most of the other satellites did, all of them, really. Later on I'll have some interesting things to say, I think, about how the relations between the Polish authorities and the Soviet Union were handled, and contrast those with what I am telling you now about the relations between Romanian authorities and the Soviets.

But at the same time Ceausescu was, already in the 60s, probably more Stalinist towards his own people than the Soviets were then. His secret police were absolutely brutal. We had a Romanian writer employed as an FSN, Alexandru Ivasiuc. He was I assume required to report to the secret police about us, but he was really a dissident knowledgeable about everything, you know, party politics and all the rest. To us he was an invaluable source of information. How he was allowed to be employed as an FSN in our Embassy I don't know, but when Ceausescu came to power, there was a brief liberal period. I'm sure that he was forced to make reports as other Foreign Service nationals. None of them could have worked for us without permission from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and particularly, the secret police, so you had to assume they all reported. At one point he was beaten up, had teeth knocked out.

I don't know when he left the Embassy's employment, it must have been soon after I left in 1968. He obviously remained a dissident, but had several novels published and became a recognized author. He died in 1977, allegedly in the severe earthquake which hit Romania in 1977. I wonder. When I researched him on the internet, I discovered that another Romanian author had died in the same earthquake, but I couldn't find whether he too was a dissident. The secret police of those East European regimes had ways of getting rid of controversial dissidents through so-called accidents. They learned this from the Soviets.

And then we had an extremely helpful administrative FSN who had been there forever, Rick Samoil. Anything you needed, he would find. Without these people we couldn't have operated. We couldn't hire except through the Diplomatic Service Office of the Foreign Ministry. You couldn't even hire maids except through them. And so we lived in a kind of a fishbowl where we couldn't have contact with the local people. When we arrived – my family and I – we traveled by car, a ship and car. I always maximized per diem on travel to and from post as I could. At this time we had three children, the youngest was only two months old when we brought her from the United States all the way to Romania. After arrival we were put into temporary lodging, an apartment in a building that the Embassy rented through the Diplomatic Service Office. The neighbor in the adjoining apartment was a professor of some sort with a daughter about 17 who was studying English. We liked her and began to use her as a babysitter. Then one day we couldn't talk to them. They had been told not to associate with us in any way. Of course it would have been foolish for us to try; it would have only gotten them into trouble. The only Romanians you could really associate with were the ones who were obviously agents of the secret police. I came to know three or four of them because you'd see them in the major restaurants talking to foreigners very freely. They had no fear whatsoever in doing so, because that was their job. They would even offer to exchange money for you at a black market rate.

Q: You know, sometimes in the Soviet Union and some of the other countries, there were times when our relations weren't that great, and the secret police would puncture your tires or rough you up. Was there any of this going on?

BASTIANI: In Romania at this time, no. I personally, and other officers of the Consulate under martial law in Poland did later on.

Q: But you didn't in Romania. How about the young blond girl who all of a sudden says I wonder if you could help me with my English, or something like that. I kept waiting for that; I spent five years in Yugoslavia and it never happened, but in the Soviet Union of course, this is...

BASTIANI: ...I got my approaches, not in person, but when I was the duty officer sleeping in the Embassy. At this time the Embassy did not have direct communications with the Department other than through a dedicated telex line to Vienna. We did not have Marine guards during the first part of my tour, so the male members of the Embassy staff took turns, week by week, sleeping in the secure area of the Embassy where we had a buzzer. If there was a flash telegram, an immediate action telegram from Washington this buzzer would go off and we would then do what was necessary to receive it and get it decoded. We also had to make regular rounds all over the Embassy several times a night to security stations into which we inserted a key to prove we checked. The basement was infested with about the largest cockroaches I ever saw. I always hated to go down there because before you could get to the light you'd hear the crunch of cockroaches underneath your feet. And then they would all scurry when the light came on.

But, getting back to your original question, two or three times the phone rang while I was on duty, and a sweet voice would come on the line asking whether I was lonely, and try to engage me in conversation. Each time, I simply slammed the receiver down.

Q: So, could you travel around the country without getting permission?

BASTIANI: There were closed areas. We had to get permission to travel to certain areas – I don't remember where they were – of course the travel of our military attaches was what they watched the most. But you know all this security is not just because they were worried about us spying, but because they didn't trust their own people. They didn't want their people to have contact with Western diplomats. This was especially true in Poland under martial law.

Q: Well, let's talk about consular work. What was consular work? I mean, you talked about investigating Social Security; was there much in the way of visa work?

BASTIANI: Yes. As in the rest of East Europe, we intervened as we could to have exit visas issued to applicants qualified under our immigration law. These concerned almost exclusively divided families, a spouse or child or parent or sibling of a U.S. citizen or legal immigrant resident wishing to join family in the U.S. In East Europe, this was not just a major consular activity, but we made it political by getting the ambassadors and high level visitors, even presidents to bring these cases up when visiting or hosting leaders of these countries. So we processed immigration visas. There were of course some citizenship cases. If we found a claimant was under our law entitled to a passport, we really went to bat for him or her to get an

exit visa from the Romanians. They of course considered such people Romanian citizens under their law. In such cases, you might say that possession is nine-tenths of the law; they had them there. Of course we also processed all requests for diplomatic visas, the so-called A visas, no problem there on the basis of reciprocity. I'm reminded that I once had a visit from couple of their counterintelligence people – they were so obvious – pretending to be interested in traveling to the U.S. I played along, and gave them the information we gave everyone.

Q: Well, in the early days in Yugoslavia, before my time, I'm told that these people would come into our Embassy, but they all wore the same type of shoes that were issued to policemen, and shoes were scarce at the time.

BASTIANI: Yes. I mentioned this little transient apartment we lived in on arrival; I don't think they'd cleaned the drapes for 10 years and the carpet was filthy. We had a maid of German origin maid who had a terrible time keeping our little Carol from crawling around on the floor, because it was so dirty. My oldest daughter came down with a severe case of boils that we had to have an American doctor come in from Belgrade to treat. It was hardship. Well, our own technical security people would come from Frankfurt to sweep the Embassy, and our residences.

Q: You're talking about sweeping, in that they were looking for bugs?

BASTIANI: They were looking for bugs. In that apartment, they pulled a microphone from the wall between the beds in our bedroom. On the other hand, there was an upside to being bugged. Any time you had an urgent need for a repair service, you complained about it loudly to make sure they picked it up. For example, "We've already had three requests put in to the Diplomatic Service Office of the Foreign Ministry, to repair the plumbing leak in the kitchen, and we've gotten no service at all. They are really inefficient." And maybe the next day a plumber shows up.

Q: Were there many American tourists, and did they have any particular problems?

BASTIANI: There weren't a whole lot, but I did have a couple of interesting protection and welfare cases. One was kind of tragic. One had to do with a Romanian who had come to the United States and become a citizen, and amassed a substantial amount of money; in his old age, having no relatives in the U.S., he returned to Romania where he had some distant relative. After some time he fell ill, became disillusioned with his life there and the relative, and wanted to return to the United States. He had not given up his citizenship, but because he had all this money this relative was supposed to inherit, the Romanians would not allow him to leave the country. He was bedridden with a tube into his abdomen...what do you call it?

Q: Well, in other words for waste.

BASTIANI: For urine, yes. He wanted to give this money to a charity in the United States. My predecessor had been pushing this case for a long time, and had already helped him to do a new will which bequeathed all his money to the charity. I believe he had even given the Romanians a copy of the will.

Well, I continued the pleadings, and eventually they finally issued an exit visa. so he could leave because he had dual citizenship. The tragic thing about it is that he never made it back to the United States. We flew him to a hospital in Germany where he passed away.

The second case is almost unbelievable. There was a young lady who was obviously a mental case. She had been in a mental institution in the United States somewhere in the Midwest, Kansas or Nebraska. Somehow she got it into her head that she had a marriage proposal from Kosygin – I guess he was the Soviet Prime Minister at the time – and she had to go to the Soviet Union to accept this proposal. And I don't know how she managed it, but she flew to London, and then got herself onto a flight to Bucharest. On arrival at the airport she tried to board a flight to Moscow to accept this marriage proposal.

Well, the Romanians had to restrain her physically; they forcibly put her into a cab, escorted her to the Embassy, and dumped her on us – on me – I was the consular officer. She was obviously exhausted, disheveled, her dress torn at a shoulder, and I get this amazing story from her. At one point she laid her back on the couch and put her feet straight up in the air. Then she tells me that, if she didn't get to Moscow, well, she also had a marriage proposal from the Romanian Foreign minister, and she would accept that instead.

Of course, what I had to do was get her back to the States as soon as possible; this was not a P and W case you could fob off to Belgrade or Vienna. There was putting her in a hotel while we made arrangements. I wasn't going to bring her home to my three children. Fortunately, I had an assistant vice consul, a young lady, who had a kind of circular apartment with an inner sanctum bedroom so to speak which could be closed off. So we put her in this apartment with the vice-consul – Walsh was her name – watching over her. There weren't many Western airlines you could go to at the time, only Austrian Airlines and Sabena as I remember. Fortunately, I had a very good relationship with the Sabena agent. In fact, he's the one who also took my bedridden case.

Q: The Belgian...

BASTIANI: The Belgian airline. He accepted her as an escorted passenger all the way to New York where we had arranged through the Department for some institution to take her in hand. I don't recall dealing with any U.S. relatives. The Department did it all. The Romanians, I'm sure, were happy to see her go. In any event, from the time they dumped her on us, she was not violent in any way.

Q: Well, on the economic side, it must have been kind of dismal reporting these administrative shortages. You know, the place was almost a basket case, wasn't it?

BASTIANI: It was a basket case for the local people but not for us. The thing about being in the Foreign Service abroad is the U.S. Government really takes care of you, almost too much to my mind. We are so well taken care of. and we have the best of both worlds.

So how did we solve that problem in Romania? Well, the ambassador was entitled to his own transportation. Periodically, he would arrange to have a C-130, the big Air Force cargo airplane

to come from Frankfurt to pick him up. In advance, every American on the staff put in his shopping list for Commissary and PX items to a sergeant there who moonlighted filling these orders. And all these orders, identified by name, would go onto this C-130, you know, meat, everything, cereal, just as you would shop in a supermarket, or at Macy's to the extent the PX had what you wanted. The Air Force loved to do these trips, because it gave their pilots experience flying over East Europe. At the airport, the plane would park along the fence near the terminal, and our trucks would load directly from it while a Romanian Customs official walked back and forth with his hands behind his back – as I once observed. The orders were delivered directly to the homes. Most of us had an extra freezer.

The other line of supply food from the West was Ostermann and Peterson, a Danish or Dutch company. They used to run a truck to Bucharest about every two weeks, and my wife and I bought these big beautiful eggs from them, six dozen at a time. It's amazing how long eggs will keep if refrigerated.

Q: Well Carl, what about the economic statistics and all? What were we interested in? How did that work?

BASTIANI: The Romanians, of course, put out their official statistics. The Agency, the CIA and INR, State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research in Washington had figured out that they were falsified, over or under by a factor of about 10 percent. They had to have numbers which were reasonably consistent; you can't run a country without them. And the U.N. was always asking for them. So we used their statistics a great deal in our reporting as corrected at times by our own people.

When I switched from consular to economic work about midway in my tour, I found I couldn't go out to talk to people at all. I couldn't go out to a factory and talk to them; I couldn't even talk to an official in an economic Ministry. Every meeting had to be arranged officially through the Diplomatic Service Office, and most of the time you got no reply whatsoever. In order to try to prime the pump, so to speak, I requested a meeting with someone in their Ministry of Minerals or Mines for the purpose of presenting our Department of Interior's two volume publication on the world's mineral resources. It was – and probably still is – a world authority on the subject. Of course, in the U.S. the Department of Interior does not correspond to Ministries of Interior in the rest of the world which are the police. I did finally get a reply to our Note requesting the appointment, setting up a meeting. Well I went over, made the presentation, got no information in return, and that was the end of our relationship.

If we wanted to invite Romanian officials to a dinner, we would have to send the invitations through the Diplomatic Service Office and often not know who was going to show up until the last minute. You knew they couldn't come unless they had permission, and you just could not establish a personal direct relationship if they did. The only people outside our own community you could establish personal relationships with, of course, were other foreign diplomats. And so we all lived in a sort of a fishbowl; you would go frequently to receptions at other embassies – national day receptions were happening all the time, and we diplomats were seeing each other all the time. At one, I remember I wanted to punch a particular Swede in the nose one day, but that's another story.

Q: What happened?

BASTIANI: Well, this was the time in the mid '60s when the Russians were way ahead of us in space, Sputnik and all the rest. Meanwhile our very open rocket program was having one failure after another. This Swede was openly anti-American and pro-Soviet, and was rubbing it in to me when we got on the subject of space programs.

Q: Alright, you're talking about punching...

BASTIANI: Yes. I said, Kennedy had committed us to going to go to the moon by 1969, and we would get there first. He just laughed and I got the urge. We'd each had a couple of drinks, which probably had something to do with it. Anyway, I've often wished

I'd kept his name or some way to get in touch with him when we landed on the moon to send him a message.

You know, when you're going to so many receptions – once to three on the same evening – you have to watch yourself, and I developed this technique. My drink then was Scotch and soda and I would start with one and drink it slowly, then I would have a coke or a mineral water, and then another Scotch and soda. And when I lost count I quit. It worked.

Q: With me it was one Scotch and water, double Scotch, and then after that ginger ale. You know, you had to do that.

BASTIANI: You had to do it.

Q: And I think most people do because it's a working occasion, these are not cocktail parties just for fun.

BASTIANI: For me not in Romania and Poland. I sometimes found that when I was being entertained by the other side, they were out to get me drunk.

Q: Yes..

BASTIANI: But I managed to avoid that.

Q: Was there any contact, almost sort of mutual suffering with the Soviet diplomats, or not?

BASTIANI: I keep getting Poland and Romania a little mixed up. But no, in Romania, as far as I know, we didn't have any contact at all with Soviet diplomats. I certainly didn't.

And I don't think it would have sent the right message to the Romanians who were watching us both.

Q: But of course, to somebody who's not familiar with the situation during the height of the Cold War, there were no Soviet troops in Romania.

BASTIANI: That's right. And Ceausescu did everything to make sure they never came back. He was quite good at that.

Q: What was sort of the general reading that you were getting at the Embassy of Ceausescu and Madame Ceausescu?

BASTIANI: OK. Of Madame Ceausescu, to my departure in 1968; she had not yet emerged as a co-ruler. Because of Ceausescu's autonomy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union we favored him – you know that old diplomatic saw: the enemy of my enemy is my friend. So early on we gave Romania most favored nation treatment to encourage direct trade between us. I told you he was after modern turnkey technology. Well, as one German representative of a company remarked, "Just because you put a Steinway piano in a house, doesn't mean you're going to get good music out of it." He doubted that the Romanians could run these plants. But Ceausescu would not accept secondhand technology; he was always looking for the latest. His way of running the Party and the country was to select able people loyal to him, people who were as equally ruthless as himself in getting things done.

On the economic side, I remember we had an organized visit at one point to Ploesti, oil producing area north of Bucharest at which I got to converse with some Romanian economic officials. It had to do with a potential deal between an American oil or oil equipment supply company.

And Ploesti reminds me of the one and only occasion on which we mixed socially with Romanians, when my wife and I were guests at a large open air wedding celebration amid the beautiful vineyards on the foothills of the mountains north of Ploesti. We had previously witnessed the wedding itself in a Romanian Orthodox church done with full liturgy and chants. The vineyards had been confiscated from the family of the bride – they may have retained some formal title to them. We had a marvelous time conversing, and even trying to dance at the banquet. The story about me my wife liked to tell was that when a small cockroach came out from leaves of lettuce on my plate, I simply pushed it aside and kept eating. I didn't want to embarrass the hosts by calling attention to it. Dorothy had a phobia for any kind of insect. I'm still trying to recall how we got invited; it must have been through our marvelous visa FSN, Ms. Gane, whose first name slips my mind at the moment.

The Romanians we associated with on a daily basis, of course, were the local the FSNs. Ms. Gane had been the daughter of the chief of police prior to the war. I believe she still held formal title to the mansion she inherited, but she was confined to a small former servant's room in which to live; the rest was inhabited by Romanians who were given residence there by the authorities, presumably persons loyal to the Party. But it hadn't broken her spirit; she was a cheerful and charming person, and extremely skilled in our visa procedures. The other was also skilled and efficient, but I suspected the one who reported to the Secret Service. You had to assume they were all forced to report. But she too I felt was as loyal as I felt she thought she

could be, and efficient in our passport procedures. And we learned so much from them about what was going on in Bucharest.

Q: This is one of the mistakes that people outside make. At one point I think Congress said get rid of all Foreign Service National employees in the Soviet Union, and put Americans in. It put us at a tremendous disadvantage because – though we knew that in communist dictatorships they had to report – these people saw how open were, and eventually it caught on, and they reciprocated. And you learned so much more from them than if you had Americans only working for you, Americans trying to deal with the public when they have no idea what's going on in it.

BASTIANI: Yes indeed... For recreation, the Embassy leased a large home in Sinaia, a ski and winter sport resort in the mountains north of Bucharest, near Brasov. The American staff paid for the lease, and we took turns going up there on weekends with our families. It had belonged to an official to the king, his personal secretary if I recall correctly – the king's mountain castle was located there – and was big enough for two families to go up together. That's where our older daughters were introduced to skiing. These excursions are also happy memories.

Q: I was wondering whether our economic Counselor in Belgrade when I was there – this was say '62 to '67 – who talked about Cleveland setting up a golf course there ever succeeded. Was there a golf course in Bucharest while you were there?

BASTIANI: There was indeed. There was the one-third remnant of a full pre-war golf course bordering on a lake. All that was left were six holes though before I left they were adding three more. The rest had been nationalized and turned into farmland and/or a public park. There still existed a golf club known as the Diplomatic Golf Club, with an excellent professional, Paul Tomita, who gave lessons. We'd play the six holes three times around to get our 18 hole scores. On those six holes, on certain fairways you would encounter a flock of sheep; I guess that's how I guess they mowed the fairways. For fertilizer, I guess, the sheep left little black stuff in their wake which got on your balls.

You couldn't play alone; you couldn't carry your own bag, let me put it that way. There was a group of caddies, who would assign one of their number to regular players. I was assigned this woman caddie, I didn't pick her. As soon as I showed up at the golf course on the weekend, she would emerge from the group pick up my bag, and off we'd go.

Well, I was a lousy golfer. I refused to take lessons. I overswung; I guess I used golf there as a way of releasing my stresses rather than working at it to improve my game. Anyway, at one point my caddie became pregnant, and she was getting bigger and bigger and bigger around the middle. I'd slice the ball into the bushes and say, forget it, forget it; I'll play another ball. I kept worrying that she was going to need delivery assistance on the course. She was have caddied for me practically to the day of delivery. She disappeared for a week or two. I knew from the other caddies that she had given birth. When she reappeared, Dorothy, for the next weekend or two a few weeks Dorothy would load me up with a bag of baby clothing for her. We had it in abundance. That golf course was such a boon to those of us who played. Of course, our military attachés were the best golfers among us. I used to like to watch *them* play. I imagine that was true at most of our Embassies which had access to golf courses.

Later on I heard that the Clubhouse, which was a beautiful wooden structure had burnt down and then that the whole course got taken over. But we used to brag that we had the only golf course between Western Europe and Taiwan. Businessmen, especially the Japanese used it. It seemed the first thing they would do after checking into a hotel was come out to the course and swing away. I mean that literally. I once watched one miss the ball three times in a row on the first tee.

Q: Well, when you left there, you left about when...

BASTIANI: I left in '68 I left. I was there from about the middle of '65 to August '68.

Q: How was Vietnam treated?

BASTIANI: We had the coordinated, worldwide demonstrations against our policy in Vietnam with the same slogans showing up in Bucharest as in Warsaw, and Berlin; the Soviets and North Vietnamese were good at getting these demonstrations staged against our intervention in Vietnam. They were not spontaneous. They were always controlled; you know; there was always a limit on how violent they could be; how much they could throw at us. It was a ritual; it but it wasn't the people protesting; it was the party, the authorities who staged them to show their solidarity with their Vietnamese comrades.

Q: Did you get any high level visits, Americans coming...?

BASTIANI: Yes. I think I mentioned that my first job in INR in 1969 the day I reported there was to do the first draft of the briefing book for President Nixon's visit in August, which had been announced on the weekend. That was about two years after I left Romania. I remember vividly the moment when I heard the news on the radio while sitting in my living room. In my time we had a Secretary of Commerce visit with his retinue. And there were more. The Romanians really rolled out the red carpet for this sort of thing, given the priority they were giving to the purchase of turnkey plants.

Mention of turnkey plants reminds me that I had a death case to deal with while in the Consular Section in connection with one of them. An American engineer/executive from Corning had come over to close a deal for a plant or advise on one already under construction in Northeast Romania. There, in their usual fashion the Romanians were wining and dining him, when he had a fatal heart attack.

They notified us immediately and offered every cooperation. I think they were really worried that that we were going to blame them for this guy's death, and interfere with this deal. So they almost insisted that a consul go there immediately to do the consular thing. It was quite an experience. I flew on a local Romanian airliner. It was the Soviet made version of our C-47 or DC-3. I sat near an open door in the back. There were mail bags thrown on the seats in front of me. And because of the overcast it flew at a low altitude, just clearing the hills. I no sooner got there than they rushed me in to observe the autopsy from start to finish, you know, with gown and mask. I think they had delayed the start for my arrival. And I had no doubt that this had been

an honest to gosh heart attack. He had a heart condition for which he carried a nitro-glycerin medication.

And then, of course, it was my job to write that letter to his wife in the States, and arrange shipment of the body to the States. The widow couldn't have been nicer in her thanks to the Embassy for what we did. It was another case that proves that protection and welfare work is about the most interesting consular work you can do abroad.

HARRY G. BARNES, JR.
Romanian Language Training, FSI
Washington, DC (1967-1968)

Deputy Chief of Mission
Bucharest (1968-1971)

Ambassador Barnes was born in Minnesota and raised in Minnesota and New York. He was educated at Amherst College and Columbia University. After service in the US Army in World War II, he joined the Foreign Service and was posted in 1950 to Bombay, India. His other foreign posts include Prague, Moscow, Kathmandu and Bucharest. He served as United States Ambassador to Romania (1974-1977; India (1981-1985) and Chile (1985-1996) in addition to having several senior level assignments at the State Department in Washington. Ambassador Barnes was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.

Q: From to '67 to '68 you were taking Romanian at FSI, is that correct?

BARNES: Having had a second South Asian assignment, I then opted, when I had a chance to start making choices, then opted to come back to Eastern Europe and I heard that the embassy in Bucharest needed a DCM. I knew the ambassador, Dick Davis who had been the DCM in Moscow when we were there so I got in touch with him and asked him if he was prepared to take me on as DCM for Bucharest. He said, "Yes." So that intervening year between '67 and '68, I was back in Washington going to FSI's Romanian course.

When I left Kathmandu, my family had gone ahead, so I arranged to stop over in Bucharest because I knew the then DCM, John Neubert. It was a semi incognito visit. I was there as a friend of his, stopping over. I was not there as the DCM designate of the embassy but I had a chance to look at the situation.

Q: Let's talk a bit about you know, were you looking at the situation there but also you're back before you went to Romania. How did we see Romania at that time and the Ceausescu regime which was rather at its peak?

BARNES: Ceausescu took control in '65 and began fairly early on to try to differentiate himself – as the embodiment of Romania - from the rest of the Warsaw Pact, almost like there being a

separate Romanian road to socialism. He didn't use that expression as such. Part of this came in domestic activities in the sense that he just decided Romania would not go along with the Soviet views of what Romania's role was in CEMA, Council on Economic and Mutual Assistance, the rough equivalent of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty organization) for economic purposes. For example, the Soviets felt that Romania ought to be essentially an agricultural country producing for the benefit of the whole community but of course particularly for the Soviet Union. Ceausescu thought that agriculture had been indeed one of Romania's strengths and didn't want to do away with that, but he thought that Romania couldn't progress economically unless it had an industrial base much greater than it had at that time. So there was a split almost in dogma there, somewhat visible, not overly so but enough so that the U.S. could pick that up and others did as well.

Secondly, we thought it was in Romania's interest to diversify its relations with other countries and in part with the assistance of the then prime minister, his name was Maurer, an economist himself, began to work on arrangements with other countries which involving exchanges of ideas with the new Rumanian regime was open to some modifications of traditional hostile relations with NATO members. So such things as allowing Romanians of German descent to leave the country, it was important to the Germans at that time, allowing Jews to leave Rumania was important to Israel, without of course doing anything for Israel even though there was a price and the Israelis paid it. It was against the line on pro-Arab entirely and anti-Israeli. Probably that as anything was an attempt to improve some of the relations with China at the same time, the Sino-Soviet split that we were talking about earlier.

The fact that you had in part of the Soviet Empire a country that was apparently willing to be somewhat different, was obviously interesting to the U.S. and so things like changing the status of our mission from a legation to an embassy happened during this first couple of years of Ceausescu regime with one side of it, some exchange programs began to be developing. That was something else.

The sense I got in Washington was that we ought to keep looking for opportunities to suggest collaborative activities with the Romanians. It would be in our benefit but also would tend to reinforce this approach of theirs.

One small example turned out to have some significance later on. I have forgotten what the year was, '66 perhaps? A then private citizen by the name of Richard Nixon visited Romania and they had encouraged him to do so. He was very well received by Ceausescu at that time.

So that was sort of the atmosphere which I encountered.

Parenthetically, to go back to what I said before; this was a period when I did the commuting between Washington and New York; go up for a day for classes and research and at that time there were such things as overnight trains and get on late at night, sleep on the train, get off at 6 A.M. or something like that in New York and then go . . .

Q: Well, then you went to Bucharest, you were there from 1968 to May of 1971. Now, who was the Ambassador?

BARNES: The ambassador was Dick Davis for the first part of that tour [Editor's Note: Ambassador Davis served in Romania from December 1965 to August 6, 1969] and then Leonard Meeker who had been Legal Advisor to the Department for the second part [Editor's Note: Ambassador Meeker presented his credential on September 16, 1969 and left Bucharest in May 1973].

Q: How did you find Ambassador Davis?

BARNES: Well, first of all, we had served together in Moscow and that was in the Khrushchev period which was a period of some change. As an American diplomat you never felt terribly welcome in the Soviet Union in that period. It made for a fairly close knit community, so we were good friends with the Davises and so I knew I had that backing to start with as his DCM. Also because he had a broad Eastern European background and particularly the Soviet background. Dick could take a lot for granted when we was able to communicate on the substantive as well as the personal level.

Q: On the ground when you got there, how did you see Ceausescu regime?

BARNES: Without putting too fine a point on it, however I would have seen when I arrived at the end of August, there would be a change two days later because two days later is when the Soviets invaded Czechoslovakia.

Q: Oh, yes, this was in August of '68.

BARNES: Yes, on the 20th of August '68 and Ceausescu quite quickly denounced the invasion as a violation of the norms of Socialist friendship or whatever phrase he used. But it was clear both because one knew that the Soviet troops had been joined by these token forces from Poland, Hungary, and other Eastern Europeans, yet Romania was clearly the odd country out. That next morning I went down to the...have you ever been to Bucharest?

You may recall though the royal palace is a large square and in front of that and Ceausescu spoke from the balcony of that on the square and condemned the invasion publicly, that Romania would not participate in that sort of activity. Not only was the square packed, which could have been explained in a Communist country by the fact that everybody was told to be there, but the final note that Ceausescu struck was taken up by the crowd. I can't tell you again how much of that was artificial and how much was not, but my sense was from talking to people in the next couple of days or so that it was partly spontaneous. It was very, very popular. This goes back to a whole bunch of questions of the Romanian-Russian relations, not to mention Romanian-Soviet relations.

So the next couple of weeks we at the embassy would were caught up in trying to understand, guess where Romania was going with this approach because it seemed clear to us that they

couldn't get away with too much for too long and it is true there were a lot of rumors in that first week or ten days that Soviet troops were massing on the Romanian border and there was going to be an invasion and they were recruiting stands that were set up to accept the volunteers for all sorts of military service. They organized what they called the Patriotic Guard which is sort of like a civilian militia. A couple of days later was a Romanian national holiday, August 23 and units of the Patriotic Guard which had been created in the last couple of days marched there as well.

As it turned out, about ten days or two weeks later, Ceausescu, if not shut up, at least was more restrained in his comments, putting more stress on the Romanian unique position, Romania's unique role in trying to meet the needs of his people, not in terms of a broader lesson for the socialist community and so on, but more toned down defiance as an assertion of their own special nature and so on, and de-emphasis on the communist community and so the sense of real danger that there could be an invasion or something like that, dissipated.

Q: Were we at the embassy getting reports through our intelligence saying any about Soviet possibilities and so forth?

BARNES: We had some. We had some but I mentioned before the reports about maneuvers and so on. There was some concern from Washington, but basically after about two weeks or so, it calmed down. There didn't seem to be great movement in that direction.

What Ceausescu did do in order to take advantage of his popularity was to loosen up some of the controls. The cultural media were able to be much more outspoken about, what should I say, Romanian virtue. This fit in with Ceausescu's own emphasis on Romania particular but also the cultural press was able to talk some about general human values and so on so. It represented a modification there. There was some relaxation in terms of people being able to travel outside the country. There had been some loosening of those restrictions in the previous two, three years or so after '65 but there was more of it now. There was a greater willingness to look for ways of cooperating, if only symbolically, with Western European countries, nonaligned were understood to go along and then some attention to the Chinese relationship.

Q: What about the Yugoslav relationship because Tito was still around and there had seemed to be a relationship between what Ceausescu did and what Tito did.

BARNES: That was certainly perceived by both the Romanians and the Yugoslavs, as far as I could tell be getting to know people at the Yugoslav Embassy at the time. I can't remember specifically Tito-Ceausescu visits but I am sure there must have been some. That was an obvious place too.

Q: To put this in perspective, you were there until '71, before the Ceausescu regime really turned, I won't say crazy, but way off in abhorrent behavior in a way, wasn't it?

BARNES: Yes, I guess in general. There were stages in this. For example, in the summer, August again, of '69, Nixon came to Romania. He had been watching a splash down of one of our space vehicles in the Pacific and he spent about 24 hours in Bucharest so this would have

been almost exactly a year after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and the fact that there was a Romanian invitation and an American acceptance gave very dramatic thumbing of noses, so to speak, on the Romanian part as far as the Soviet Union was concerned.

Nixon got a tumultuous reception. Again, to some extent possibly organized but I would have to say that there was such a break with the communist period, even if only symbolic and it was such a message to the Romanians probably exaggerated in their understanding as to its implications. Let's say a message, because in the latter months of the Second World War, the Romanians somehow hoped that the Americans would come save them from the Soviets. That didn't happen. One of the standard lines one heard in Romania from Romanians was recalling how even in '48 or even in the '50s people would say, "Have you heard, the Americans are coming?" Somehow the Americans were going to liberate them.

Nixon's visit also gave impetus to a considerable increase in exchange activity and general attempts on both sides to try to find ways of at least symbolizing the change, the dramatic change in the relationship.

From a personal standpoint, I had a rather unique experience in conjunction with the Nixon visit. About two days, maybe three before when Nixon was due to arrive, Dick Davis sought me out and said, "I have just had a message from the party that they want an American to be Nixon's interpreter and you are it." The earlier variation had been to have an American citizen of Romanian descent as the other speaker but somewhere in the party it had been decided that they wanted an American. So I had to appear next to Nixon on the platform at the airport with Ceausescu and translate his remarks which I didn't have ahead of time.

Q: I'm told Nixon was, by people who have been caught up in this, he would not stick to a text.

BARNES: Well, since I didn't have a text, it didn't make much difference in that case. Then I had to do it again at the official dinner and he had one phrase, something like, this was definitely extemporaneous on his part, "It's been an exhausting day, exhausting hospitality." I have forgotten, there was a third way he used "exhausting." I was stumped and it was obvious to everyone there that I was stumped. But I just laughed and passed it off. I did in the period, in part because I was charge in between Dick and Leon Meeker, but also because we had other visitors, I ended up being an interpreter a good part of the time, saw a lot of Ceausescu in that context.

Q: What was your impression of Ceausescu?

BARNES: It is hard here to separate, except for some specific events, it is hard to separate what I remember from '68 to '71 when I was DCM and when what I remember from '74 to '77. For example, Ceausescu came to the U.S. a couple of times and I came along as the interpreter, among other things. There was one visit in '70 and one or two in the other period so my impressions of him come in part from those travel experiences and part from sitting in often as the interpreter, although sometimes just accompanying visitors when one would go around and see him at his office. He would sometimes receive you at the party central committee because he remained the secretary general of the party; sometimes it would be in the presidential palace, the former royal palace in his role as of head of the council of state which was head of state.

A couple of general impressions: He seemed to have very little doubt about his own capabilities, his own wisdom, very little doubt therefore that he knew what was best for Romania. He might know best for other places too but certainly knew what was best for Romania. He was someone who liked to talk and had little reluctance to say what he thought his interlocutor ought to hear; not so much from arrogance, it wasn't quite that. It was perhaps the same sureness in himself and in what he had to say was relevant to his visitor as well as to him. Not an inquisitive mind and, in fact partly the same self-assurance - he probably knew what he needed to know. He wouldn't necessarily probe his interlocutors and yet at the same time he could get into a conversation where he would argue with his interlocutor and make his case in different ways. Yet a good part of the time he seemed to be determined to try to find some common ground because I think he felt that as long as you could maintain a sense of some common interest it would redound to his general benefit.

Q: In your impression he was not a person who was so fixed in his ideas. I assume he probably had yes-men around. Did he sort of relish getting outside that circle, do you think?

BARNES: That's what I was trying to get at just now, up to a point. I didn't feel that intellectual curiosity, a visitor was not someone from whom he might be able to learn, even in part. But it was somebody whom he had to convince of the relevance of his ideas and he was smart enough. Some people, Romanians, used to call him clever, rather than smart, rather than intelligent. He was smart enough to know that he couldn't appear to ignore his interlocutors' ideas or in some cases to go along with the visitor, but it was his agenda a good part, most of the time, I would say.

Q: What was the nature of governance the first time you were there? You know, later he became betrayed as kind of a monster in some of the things he started doing.

BARNES: No. Certainly with respect to the situation of the Romanian people, it was significantly better than it had been in the '50s, maybe the early '60s, although there were a few signs of change toward the end of the fifties. This period that came with the invasion of Czechoslovakia did provide, as I mentioned, for some loosening up inside Romania and then over next years the atmosphere remained paradoxically becoming more restrictive in some respects, but also remaining somewhat open in others. In other words, the ability to travel was still fairly extensive, the ability to exchange ideas with people coming to Romania, being able to talk to groups of Romanians, intellectuals in this case were not cut off from visitors. Now how freely they could express their own ideas and under what circumstances was still another question.

In May of '71, which was the year we left after the first tour, he took a trip to China and to North Korea. He came back obviously from his statements obviously impressed with the discipline shown by those societies, which were headed by Mao and Kim Il Soong in North Korea. In the period between May of '71 and when we came back in March of '74 there began to be some tightening up but with more I would say in the area of how the government was organized and the tasks that were given to the government; the emphasis on discipline, the emphasis on self reliance which was Kim Il Soong's favorite slogan, which fitted in some ways with Ceausescu's that Romania having its own ways. So although the situation didn't get that much better on the

whole, during my second tour, it didn't get that much worse. The sorts of things you referred to began to happen more in the '80s.

Q: What about Madame Ceausescu during this time?

BARNES: She became increasingly a part of the scene and if I were to over generalize, her role during our first years there, '68 to '71, was more background. She traveled with him when he came to the States, for example, and was in the public in that sense. She began to assume the more important role in terms of the party hierarchy. That became more pronounced in the second period of '74 to '77 that we were there.

Q: Were you there, you made a trip to the United States when you were DCM?

BARNES: He made one when I was DCM, I am not sure I am right on this; he made two during the second period. I think the second one was just after I got back to Washington. [Editor's Note: A Google search suggests that Ceausescu traveled to the U.S. in December 1970, 1973, and April 1978. President Nixon visited Romania in August 1969 and President Ford visited in August 1975]

Q: Let's stick to this first period. I have heard that they weren't exactly the greatest houseguests so maybe that was again something of a later period than that.

BARNES: I think he came again to the States. He came again during the early months of the Carter administration and I have forgotten if he came in Reagan's period or not. I don't remember houseguest stories. She as a distinction I would make, in meetings that I attended with American visitors in the second period, she was apt to be there not always, but was there somewhat more often. She became even much more of a public figure and got some of the same official adulation that he did. It was known her world role in personnel decisions was becoming increasingly large. In fact, she may have even been given something formally on that score but that part I am not sure about.

Q: During this first period, let's say dealing with the foreign ministry did you find, was this, were these officials you could deal with or were they always looking over their shoulders?

BARNES: The answer I have to give you is yes to both points. On the whole, Romanian officials with whom we dealt in the Foreign Ministry, but this would applied to some of the other ministries as well, particularly the economic ones, there was an ease in conducting themselves. For the most part, as if they were comfortable. So if there was a looking over the shoulder it was not that visible. Occasionally, you would find somebody who would say that they would have to check that with their colleagues or something of that sort of thing. By then the Americans were pretty knowledgeable as well.

I was involved in the second period in more negotiations than I was in the first, simply a factor I think of the increase in overall perception common interest. When I came back, it was still a Nixon White House. A couple of months after I got back to Bucharest, Nixon had been replaced

by Ford. Ford came once and Kissinger came at least once on his own in addition to accompanying the President.

But there was a difference in the second time; it was in part because we were working on some more concrete understanding, not some of the symbolic things. The most important one of those was the most favored nation treaty. Congress had passed the so-called Jackson-Vanik Bill which tied giving Most Favored Nation (MFN) treaty to non market countries to their immigration policies; in the case of the Soviet Union with regard to the ability of Jews to emigrate from the Soviet Union. Romania had a fairly large but not very large, maybe 100,000 people in the Jewish community when we got into the MFN negotiations. Those negotiations and others for the most part were not easy but I generally had the feeling that the people with whom I was dealing had adequate authority to reach understandings, but I don't have any recollection of backing out of agreements that we had reached. Occasionally I would try to see Ceausescu, this was the second time when I was ambassador, if there was something I thought that needed to be taken up with him. But on the whole, like MFN, I dealt with the deputy foreign trade minister and the foreign minister. I had access to just about anybody I wanted to see in the society, good access to party officials, as well as to the Romanian government, particularly to Ceausescu's foreign policy advisor, actually somebody I had dealt with in the non communist world and the communist world as well.

Q: How did the Jackson-Vanik negotiations work? We were moving back and forth between your first and second tours...?

BARNES: They were done in Bucharest between me and the deputy foreign trade minister with instructions obviously from Washington and I had the participation of two people coming from Washington as well. They went on for some time but obviously were successful. I don't recall any major obstacles, there were occasional delays.

Q: During both times you were there was Romania sort of a site for Jews emigrating from the Soviet Union?

BARNES: No. It was a question of emigration of Jews from Romania itself because the Romanian Russian border was about as tense as many borders with non communist countries. No favoritism there. The Soviets, you may remember turned down Jackson-Vanik. They wouldn't go along with Jackson-Vanik.

Q: Well, it's interesting on the Jewish question. We sent President Grant sent a consular officer to Romania in 1875 or so to look after the Jewish population there during some pogroms. It was an interesting.

BARNES: That's something I never learned.

Q: What role did the Soviet Embassy play there? Were they excluded?

BARNES: Watchful. They certainly were effective, well, I am not sure what effective might be because they obviously had their own contacts and so on. There were periodic occasions for

celebrating or recognizing or remembering the strong ties between the great Soviet Union, the role of the glorious Red Army in liberating Bucharest but even there, August 23 is the national holiday. That was the day when there was an uprising in Bucharest as the Soviet Army was advancing. I am pretty sure but I can't be precise, I am pretty sure until the early mid '60s when things began to change a bit, when Ceausescu came in the 23rd of August would have been celebrated as the day of liberation by the glorious Soviet Army and maybe the uprising of the Romanian people as well. By '68 when we got there and in wake of the Soviet invasion was of Czechoslovakia; it was clearly a Romanian holiday. The Soviet Army was sort of lost in the telling, put off to the side. I didn't see that much of my Soviet colleagues either time. When I did I didn't find them all that forthcoming and there obviously a Cold War element to that.

Q: Was Bessarabia and now Moldova, was this an issue? This is this hunk of land that the Soviets took over, I guess in 1940, or something?

BARNES: Depending on how far back you want to go, but most recently was 1940. I mentioned I commuted to New York to do my master's at Columbia. My master's thesis was on Bessarabia, so I had a certain interest in that.

My thesis was on unification as Romanians call it. Bessarabia was Romania in 1918. So I had a certain interest. I was able to find a few historians who could talk about the period which I was interested in, of course, implicitly about the situation there at that point but no it wasn't an issue.

Q: It wasn't a matter of our lost province...

BARNES: For two reasons I think: one was it was too dangerous to talk about. Even though the regime was very patriotic, it wasn't raising the Bessarabian question. Actually, it was a combination of Bessarabia and Ikovia. Secondly, I think most Romanians many would have felt that is impossible in any foreseeable future that we can visualize.

Q: What about relations with Bulgaria?

BARNES: Well, there was a territorial issue there, Dobruja, and going back to the Balkan Wars and before that the Ottoman Empire. Romania's relations with the other communist countries were for the most part fairly tepid and because Bulgaria at that point, at least from Romanian perspective, seemed to be particularly slavish in terms of their adulation of the Soviet Union, the Romanian-Bulgarian relationship was not all that great. Although appearances were kept up. But it wasn't from a territorial standpoint, it wasn't as difficult as the relationship with Hungary, where the Hungarians had claims still on Transylvania. Nor even as much, however little that was, with Bessarabia.

Ceausescu would exchanged visits occasionally with the heads of the Communist Party of the other countries. If anywhere there was a little bit of openness, I would say probably with Poland. This was before Solidarity.

Q: Hungary was, they have minority problems also, don't they?

BARNES: The Hungarian minority problem that is the minorities in Hungary are very small in number. So it was not a Hungarian problem from the Romanian side because the Romanians were not that concerned about the small numbers of Romanians in Hungary. All Hungarian governments, including present day, remain concerned about the status problems of the Hungarian minority in Transylvania. Number wise, in terms of the total population, last figures I think I saw, probably seven percent of the total Romanian population is of Hungarian ethnic origin and almost all of those, except for Bucharest, almost all of those are in Transylvania.

What is worth noting is there was in 1956 a series of demonstrations which were suppressed, of course, in sympathy with the Hungarian Revolution. These were not just Hungarian, they were Romanians as well.

What the Romanian Communists did and I think much of this goes back to pre Ceausescu times, I don't know the exact dates, was to sort of redraw the map of Transylvania and set up the equivalent of county organizations which tended to reduce the impact of Hungarian...I think there were only two counties which had a majority, a slight majority maybe 51, 52 percent Hungarian. The issue was when and where the Hungarian language should be used has been continued up until the present time. There has been some headway from the Hungarian standpoint with the current Romanian government but it's dwindled.

Q: How did Embassy officers operate in the area? Getting around and you know, compared to the Soviet Union where the KGB is doing all sorts of things, but how about Romania?

BARNES: Like always from European countries, the host government at no extra charge provided a police post outside the embassy, including the ambassador's residence as well. It meant that Romanian citizens wanting to come to the embassy would have to run something of a gauntlet and could be turned back by this reception committee. That was reduced substantially already in the first period I was there and less in the second. They were still there but there were more like surveillance contingency, just one policeman in a booth right by the gate and then at least couple around the perimeter.

My first negotiations in late '68 or early '69 was a reciprocal lifting of travel notification restrictions and closed areas. So we and the Romanians both agreed there would no longer be a requirement, in this case - 24 hours in Romania, for traveling outside of Bucharest. The only restriction would be areas that were specifically posted with sign boards with the symbol *do not enter*-type thing. So that meant in effect, we could travel freely. Since our cars were foreign cars, since our cars had diplomatic license plates on them and since we didn't try to play games, it wasn't difficult to tell where we were going or who we are. When you checked into a hotel you produced your diplomatic card, passport. But it didn't mean there wasn't surveillance, they were just a little less obvious.

Q: It sounds a bit like my time in Yugoslavia, '62 to '67 when I was the head of the consular section. I was required to travel and investigate whether American citizens needed attention. I didn't want to upset anybody and made a point of dropping by the police and asking how to get to such and such a place. Just to let them know and explain what I was about.

BARNES: Just to follow that theme for a moment. As I said there were other ways of keeping track of us. One day, during my first period there, probably early '69, one day one of my colleagues appeared at the door in my office making gestures to get my attention, obviously not talking and I looked rather puzzled and he made this gesture and I handed him a piece of paper and he wrote, "You are on the air." Somehow my voice had been picked up elsewhere in the embassy and broadcast. We couldn't figure out; was there a microphone somewhere in my office? Was that how they were doing it? It didn't seem for various reasons to be it. Then my colleague said, "Go to another office and let me check and see whether it's you or whether it is something in place (in the office)," through a certain amount of triangulation and so on. We came to the conclusion it was me that was broadcasting!. I was asked, "Is there anything different about you today?" I said, "Yes, come to think of it, I am wearing a pair of shoes that I just had repaired and had new heels put on." Experimentation determined that there was a microphone in the heel of the shoes. I had sent them out with our maid. She'd come back and I'd put them on one day and then when I started to walk around the house, they didn't feel comfortable. One heel felt a little bit higher so I sent them back and when they came back they were OK but that of course, gave a clue to as to where to look.

People have told me they have gone through a security course at the Department and that my shoes are on display. Dick Davis wrote back to SY (Office of Security), "Don't you think, we at least sent the shoe in, don't you think you ought to reimburse Harry for the price of new shoes?" The Department response was, "We will replace the one shoe." He finally persuaded them to pay for a pair of shoes. (laughter)

Q: Was there any harassment in driving around or anything like that?

BARNES: No, not of the type I remember from Prague or from Moscow. We tried to make sure every one of our people weren't being foolish in terms of attracting attention or doing things

Q: How about military attaches? They have a distinct set of way of doing things which can cause problems.

BARNES: Again, maybe we were lucky, hard to be absolutely sure. Maybe its they had such good discipline. Their people were so well trained but no, no incidents as I recall.

Q: How did the Vietnam War play while you were there this first time?

BARNES: .The war, in a way, was more of an issue in the first time, 68 to 71, to the extent it was an issue. Whereas by 1975, we were getting out of Vietnam. Essentially it was one of those things where we disagreed. Romania, as a staunch supporter, at least in words, of the epic struggle of the brave Vietnamese people and would say critical things about American efforts to dominate. We essentially would assert in various ways what we were doing was in the interests of the Vietnamese people and trying to avoid any outside regime being imposed on upon them against their will and so on.

Q: You didn't have demonstrations?

BARNES: There weren't demonstrations. Part of the Romanian talent, if that's the word, was that you agreed on the major things, and you recognized the differences on what program seemed to be minor questions in that particular relationship, not that Vietnam was minor for the United States as a whole, but it was much more important to us at that point than Romania be a continuing thorn in the Soviet side, than the Romanian support to the U.S. military efforts in Vietnam.

Q: How about students? Were there student exchanges?

BARNES: There were student exchanges, exchanges of professors as well.

Q: How did they work?

BARNES: In general, quite well. The American student and professor exchanges I knew better because I was in Romania at the time. The ones in the U.S. I knew somewhat more second hand. The cooperation again on the whole, occasionally there were complications but on the whole the cooperation given by the universities, both to the exchange students and the professors was good and made it a practice usually twice a year to go visit the students and professors in their places of work and encourage them to come by and see me. Not surprisingly, there were some professorial colleagues who were more helpful and some who were somewhat less helpful, but on the whole the Americans students and professors were well received.

Q: Was there much American tourism there?

BARNES: Pretty limited, certainly more than in the '60s. With the notoriety that Romania got, or publicity whatever you want to call it, after '68 and the defiance of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, it seemed like a more interesting destination. Tourist facilities were pretty limited. One had the feeling that the state travel agency had among its missions, perhaps its most important mission, was keeping track of tourists so that tourists can do things that tourists shouldn't do.

Q: How about Romanian-Americans? Were they much of a factor?

BARNES: Some, in part because there are so many Americans who were academics and had written and were still writing on Romania and for them, after '68, the chance to work in the country in the context of a formal exchange arrangements for some of them, because of the acquaintances they had built up over the years, was a welcome thing. So again, with due respect the Americans had to show, but being of Romanian descent, they would be aware of the need to do this, due respect to being careful what you said to who, where.

Q: You didn't have the problem that we had in Yugoslavia of Croatian Americans coming back, you know wanting to be Croatian.

BARNES: No, the closest you could get to that might be Transylvanian Hungarian might end up being of importance of Hungary.

Q: How did the Nixon visit go when he was president when you were there? Presidential visits...I've heard people liking them to, an earthquake.

BARNES: Well, the earthquake aspects came primarily in terms of arrangements for the visit, the logistics because we had teams from the White House, the Secret Service, the State Department, all descending on the Embassy. We had a group of Romanian counterparts that on the whole were pretty good. They knew it was imperative that it be successful. They also knew that there were limits that they had to observe, for in dealing with Americans because Americans were defined as dangerous at certain points so this is something of a shift. It wasn't a complete surprise obviously, by that time, at that point.

As I mentioned earlier, he was greeted with great enthusiasm. The streets were literally packed and I had seen enough of what we used to call, "rent a crowds" to be pretty sure that this was genuine; or at least a lot of it was genuine. Nixon by that time had been himself was enough of a politician to be able to sense what crowds are like. I rode back into town with him as the interpreter together with his official escort, the head of protocol and so on, and it was clear both from the way he looked and what he would say from time to time about how impressed he was with the reception he was getting.

Q: Did you get a feel for the chemistry between Ceausescu and Nixon?

BARNES: No, I would say there was a certain amount, going back to my description of Ceausescu. I don't know if I used the word "canny"; I'll use the word "clever", somewhere in that area. I think there was some similarity, at least on that aspect between Nixon and Ceausescu and probably recognized it in each other.

Also I think Nixon came with a certain amount of admiration for Ceausescu and in terms of Ceausescu being willing to stand up as much as he did to the Soviets and try to be somewhat independent.

Ceausescu is a little harder to judge because I didn't really have the experience of seeing Ceausescu in the presence of another chief of state. I saw a lot of Ceausescu but not with that particular aspect. If I had to guess, I would guess that he would probably have some respect, admiration – I'm not sure which is the proper word - for Nixon as a politician. I can't say how deeply Ceausescu's knowledge of the American system went, but he probably had enough to know that Nixon had some political skills.

CARL A. BASTIANI
Analyst, Romania, Bureau of Intelligence and Research
Washington, DC (1969-1971)

Mr. Bastiani was born and raised in Pennsylvania and educated at Seminaries in Iowa and Illinois and at the University of Chicago and Georgetown University. A specialist in Italian and Romanian affairs, Mr. Bastiani served at four posts in

Italy (Naples, Genoa, Rome and Turin) and in Romania and Poland. He also had several tours of duty at the State Department in Washington, DC. Mr. Bastiani was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2008.

Q: So we'll pick this up in...this is 1968?

BASTIANI: Sixty-nine.

Q: In '69 you moved to INR.

BASTIANI: Yes, I had only spent about a year in the Special Exchanges Office.

Q: So we'll pick it up then. Okay?

BASTIANI: Yes. I even began to speculate or analyze the meaning of the words we used in our intelligence briefs. For instance, the word that came up constantly, especially in the output of the Soviet office, was "may." What does "may" mean? For example, the Soviets are selling missiles to Egypt; this could be for four different reasons, each listed as a "may" as the purpose for the policy makers to choose from. If the intelligence analyst doesn't know which reason it was, how can the one responsible for reacting to the Soviet move? Does it mean 50/50 probability, or more likely than not likely? In this particular piece I don't recall that they listed them in order of probability. You know, there's a huge difference between possibility and probability. And in my academic work in philosophy I had really focused on probability because anything is possible that is not self-contradictory. So I couldn't see that kind of writing as useful to a policy maker.

Policy makers, the guys who have to call the shots in the bureaus; they really need good intelligence analysis. They don't have time to do all this research, and I didn't think we were fulfilling our mission in INR very well with the way we hedged and fudged. You got the impression that a report would never come up with a definite or highly probable conclusion, unless it was already obvious.

This is what was going on in my time. In this work, we never have all the facts, but on the basis of what we do have, we have a working hypothesis which we carry forward day after day as more data becomes available until we where you can say it's highly probable that this is what they are up to. Of course you don't want to blow your credibility; you don't want to predict something, and then find out that you are wrong. So you hedge when you aren't sure. But being wrong in some cases need not hurt you, if you are the most knowledgeable person on a subject. In fact, Hartman; is that his name?

Q: Art Hartman?

BASTIANI: He was in INR in 1968 and had assured the White House that the Soviets would not go into Czechoslovakia to crush Dubcek's Prague spring. But shortly thereafter, when Kissinger became Nixon's national security advisor, he went to the White House as Kissinger's man for East Europe.

Q: No, you can't be sure, but I think this has been one of the great criticisms of the Central Intelligence Agency in that it seems to be almost a straight line of conventional wisdom. I have my own little philosophy on this. If you're talking to the President every day you can't say, "Gee, I think the Soviet Union may fall." You know, you can't speculate very much as the Principal Advisor to the President; whereas in the State Department, you know, there are real indicators that something might be going on here or there, and it doesn't gain notoriety, though, of course, everything leaks. And people I talked to have not found the CIA overly useful. These are bright people. But I think it's too big, and the more layering you have the more they tend to modify. I mean in other words, analysts can't get out of line. I imagine you might have observed that in the Vatican and the Church, a big organization like that.

BASTIANI: It's common to any large institution, I think. It's how human nature reacts within an institutional environment. You know, the one principle I set on quite early in analyzing is you must try to see *what's* true, not *who's* right. So if you only have "what's true" as your objective you're going to err far less often than when your vision is complicated by sentimental loyalties to your office's position, or you have too much concern for your relations with your boss because he happens to have a different view.

Q: But in INR you were dealing with two, really dictatorial, autocratic and rather peculiar people in Albania and Romania, Ceausescu and... how do you pronounce his name?

BASTIANI: Hoxha.

Q: Hoxha. But did you find the fact that these were sort of freewheeling types, I would think more freewheeling than you'd have coming out of the politburo types in the Soviet Union where, I mean, it was really a joint operation.

BASTIANI: You're right. Both of these maximum leaders were more like Stalin. They ran things; everybody else kowtowed to them, because it was dangerous, even physically dangerous, to contradict. Whereas, from the time of Khrushchev, it was much more of a collective leadership in the Soviet Union. Not of the entire politburo; the politburos of all these countries included token representatives of businessmen, women, what have you, with no real influence.

Q: Minorities.

BASTIANI: Minorities, etcetera. But there was an inner core which collectively wielded all the power. I can speak much more to that subject when we get to Poland.

Q: But I'd like to speak to these two because these are rather peculiar countries; they weren't very vital to anybody but at the same time I would think that you would sort of find one or the other leader sort of running off at the mouth or revealing things that probably wouldn't happen say in the Soviet Union.

BASTIANI: Yes. Well, with regard to Ceausescu, he disliked, hated the Russians. I heard different stories, but one was that as a young, upcoming Romanian leader, while in Moscow for training he was beaten up by Russian colleagues. In fact he spoke with a sort of a lisp, and

people attributed it to the fact that he had had his jaw broken by roughnecks in Russia. At the same time, as the national leader he had a lot of guts.

Another story I heard is that on one of those usual consultations in Moscow Brezhnev held with individual satellite leaders, Brezhnev was upbraiding him for breaking ranks on trade with West Germany or whatever. "How dare you? And Ceausescu said, "This is how." He got up, walked out of the room, went straight to the airport, and flew back to Bucharest. The autonomy was real; and I was a good analyst on Romania because I saw that, and in my reports showed how he demonstrated it.

And we at the same time, this is when they began to talk about polycentrism in Eastern Europe where we would deal with each of these East European countries as much as possible directly. The aim was to loosen their ties with the Soviet Union. The Soviets had this grand plan for the Socialist Division of Labor: this country specializes in this industry, that one in another and so forth in the Comecon. Soviet post-war policy in East Europe was really in a way a reflection of our own policy. We found it necessary to found NATO, and then they founded the Warsaw Pact. We organized NATO, or the Europeans organized among themselves the Common Market, and they organized Comecon. The difference was that in the West, this was all voluntary, whereas in the East it wasn't; also that we wanted countries across the curtain to deal with each other directly, especially in the economic sphere, and they wished to control it from the center.

Q: Well, we'd started this polycentric approach or whatever; is that the right term?

BASTIANI: That was the term, yes.

Q: You know, we really jumped for Tito – given the fact that he had broken with the Soviet Union, and we supported him for his lifetime. When you were dealing with Romania, were we calling Ceausescu the new Tito?

BASTIANI: Well, I don't recall that we ever used that term, no. Tito openly broke with the Soviet Union and was never a member of the Warsaw Pact. Ceausescu never did leave the Pact, I think, because that would probably have caused the Soviets to invade. He had to limit himself to what he was sure he could get away with. But we followed Romania's relations with Yugoslavia, which were better than they were with other East European countries, and we saw that they were, to some extent cooperating where they could. Tito wasn't a thoroughly totalitarian leader domestically like Ceausescu. Another country in the bloc Ceausescu could collaborate with on the issue of Soviet intervention was Hungary with its so-called "goulash communism."

Q: Kádár?

BASTIANI: Kádár, yes. You could see that the Romanians and they were together in opposing, as they could, international trade policies being imposed on all of these countries by Moscow.

Q: No, Tito was, quite frankly, much more benevolent and smarter. But he had to deal with a rather fractious country which did fracture 10 years or so after his death. To keep it together, he had his constraints.

BASTIANI: Indeed he did.

Q. Did you find that our policy was turning sort of a blind eye to human rights, because one, this country, Romania, was showing its independence from the Soviet Union and two, in one way or another was helping the Jewish problem by getting people out either to Israel or the United States? I would think these issues would have dominated our policy.

BASTIANI: Yes. Well, I don't recall in my career that human rights in East-West relations, became a major issue until President Carter. Human rights, yes – we were constantly trying to reunite families – but we, even though we never recognized the incorporation of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia into the Soviet Union and supported their little governments in exile here in Washington, we didn't make human rights a condition to improving direct relations. A good friend of mine, Irv Shiffman, when he was in the Office of East European affairs, had the responsibility for maintaining relations with the Latvian, Lithuanian, and Estonian Embassies, which some teased him about. We did have the annual Captive Nations Congressional Resolutions and Presidential Proclamations, but these were to some extent a reflection of domestic politics to satisfy ethnic groups from the bloc who pressured Washington. Just about everyone in international relations sort of accepted the division into East and West as a permanent fact you had to adjust to like the weather or the Alps. The only things that we could do usefully were to relieve tensions through disarmament negotiations, trade and cultural relations across the divide. Most academics accepted the permanence of the division and pursued careers writing about it.

In international relations, when you have an impossible situation which can explode into a major war, you do what you can to contain it. That was our containment policy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union from the late '40s onward, of which Kennan was the author. Then you try to change the terms of the equation over time until a point is reached where a solution might become possible. That's why we got into all those disarmament negotiations in Europe, measures to promote coexistence, and all the rest. And that's how I see the Middle East today; I don't think we're anywhere near the point where an agreement acceptable to both sides is possible.

But anyway, that's how we were operating in East-West relations. Part of trying to change the terms of the equation was polycentrism. We did give most favored nation treatment on trade to Romania. We didn't get all that far with cultural relations. But we did have some secret communication with them in intelligence.

I remember while I was in INR, and we were in this bind in Vietnam, the Romanians were particularly friendly with the Chinese who supported their autonomy. I forgot to mention that. Sino-Soviet differences at their height at that time, and an issue in their relations to with North Vietnam which they both assisted. The Chinese considered Vietnam within their sphere of influence only. At one point, the Chinese passed a message to us through the Romanians, saying that if you want an honorable settlement in Vietnam, deal with us. Don't rely on the Soviets. I remember learning that this report came through, but did not see the actual message. I assume it got short shrift at the White House.

Personally, I think this was one of Kissinger's big mistakes. He didn't make many, but I think he relied too much on trying to get the Russians to help us in Vietnam with the North Vietnamese. To my mind, the Soviets couldn't have been happier with our problems there; they went all out in supplying them with SAM missiles and training their pilots.

Q: From your perspective, how did the Nixon trip to Romania go?

BASTIANI: It went extremely well. Off hand, I only have memory of the impression. But I believe he was accompanied by maybe the Secretary of Commerce and one or two others at that level.

Q: And Hearst Junior of the newspaper family; I know he was there, and brought some other people with him, reporters. The reason I remember this is his whole party at one point wanted to go to Vietnam to see it. They had visas from Romania in their passports, so the only way they could get into Vietnam if they arrived from the Belgrade airport, was if the American Consul General went out to the airport and sign them in. I was the American Consul General and I cursed that trip, because I had to basically assure the South Vietnamese that Mr. Hearst, of a very conservative newspaper, was all right to go there. Obviously the South Vietnamese didn't want people who traipsed over Communist countries to come into their country unless they were assured by us.

But anyway, I was just wondering what we were afraid of. Did we make too much of Romania? I mean, how did we feel about it from your perspective?

BASTIANI: Well, my perspective results from the fact that Romania was my job: I spent most of my working day on it. Other people would probably say we made too much of Romania because of its relative unimportance. But I saw that Romania was not just an irritant the Soviet Union tolerated, but seen as an obstacle to working its will within the bloc. One story I'm sure was well-sourced had to do with an official visit of Khrushchev. Khrushchev was a kind of blunt guy in his dealings, both within the bloc and in Western countries as we well know. Well, Khrushchev was there on a visit said words to this effect to Ceausescu and Romanian leaders, "You know, we have this very cooperative ally, Bulgaria, separated from us by Romania. You are the problem; you should fall in line so we can have harmonious relations." Todor Zhivkov, Bulgaria's maximum leader at the time was so close to the Soviets, that he may have even envisioned Bulgaria becoming another Socialist State of the Soviet Union. I once mused that that original maximum druthers of the Soviets was that all the countries of the bloc would eventually ask for admission into the Union.

Ceausescu's Romanian nationalism did have the sentimental support of the Romania people. Since liberation from the Turks, they prided themselves on their Western culture rooted in Roman Empire. The architecture in the center of Bucharest was modeled on that of France. I recall a French diplomat was quoted as saying: "The Romanians say Bucharest is the Paris of the East; just so they don't try to say that Paris is the Bucharest of the West." In fact, while Bucharest is large with a population of more than two million in my time, as soon as you got a couple of kilometers from the center, it was an overgrown village. The streets weren't paved, little modern sewage, just an endless expanse of cottage within the city limits.

I used to say to say as we traveled through Vienna, Budapest, and Bucharest, that Vienna was obviously once the capital of a great empire. You could see that Budapest, the former co-capital, also was a flourishing great city. But Bucharest with a similar population was really an overgrown village. The majority of the population was poor, to some extent even worse off than the Bulgarians.

Q: Well, at the time how was Madam Ceausescu viewed?

BASTIANI: During my tour and even my two years in INR she wasn't all that prominent. She was becoming prominent when I was in INR but not yet important enough for me to write any intelligence briefs about her. She flaunted an advanced degree in something.

Q: Yes, I'm told the whole thing was very dubious.

BASTIANI: But there was no evidence that she was influencing her husband when I was there. Ceausescu's system was quite simple; he chose good men, good in the sense of efficient and bright and so forth, and demanded that they get things done and that's the way he operated. Her notoriety came somewhat later.

Q: Well at the time was Ceausescu seen as, you know, I mean, when we move into the '80s, he really, was doing terrible things as far as having too many children born and uncared for and sort of destroying the economy and starving the people. Was that as apparent when you were there, and in dealing with it in INR?

BASTIANI: Yes. Ceausescu was ruthless in exploiting anything that could earn hard currency. And that meant squeezing the people, the standard of living. It must have gotten even worse in the 80's when Ceausescu decided to pay off the billions owed to Western countries and banks. But there was no overt opposition; there were no riots because the controls were so severe. You know, there is passage from the New Testament, Christ saying that there's not a bird that flies that isn't cared for by my Father, or something like that. Well, there was nothing that went on in Romania that wasn't followed and controlled by the secret police. Nobody dared to rebel.

With regard to the decree banning abortion, issued while I was there, to increase the population, the joke then was: Under Communism all the means of production were nationalized and belong to the State, but now Ceausescu has even nationalized the last private means of production, childbearing.

In the schools, the children were taught to glorify Romania's industries – even my little daughter who went to a German kindergarten came home singing songs in German like “Romania we love you, your chimneys are smoking;” “smoking” as evidence of industrial production. Pollution wasn't even a minimal concern. It was totalitarianism down to the individual level. As I remarked earlier, more so at that time, than in the Soviet Union itself.

Q: How would you describe your relationship with, particularly, the Romania desk, and the Soviet office of the European Bureau?

BASTIANI: My relationship with the Romanian desk was quite good. Kaplan, I can't quite remember his first name, was then the desk officer. Anyway, he was a desk officer who solicited information from me and even asked me to do things. So I had an excellent relationship with the desk. Not with the Soviet office in the Bureau; I had no reason to have any relations with them. All my troubles were with the Soviet analysts in INR. I do believe as a result of my experience in INR that I think any Foreign Service officer who really wants to work in the political/economic sphere would do well to have an early tour in INR. It is so educational. I had the mindset already because of my educational background, but to learn to evaluate intelligence write intelligence reports is absolutely essential.

One thing which bothered me about intelligence work when I was doing it is how we responded to requests about specific developments on which we had limited information. This concerns CIA's output as well. For example, something takes place in say an African country harmful to our relations, and we're asked whether the Soviets were involved. The least helpful answer was to say that we have no confirming information that they were, and leave it at that. That answer implies that, if the Soviets were behind it, we would know about it. This sort of response was made repeatedly even with respect to the extent of Soviet involvement in the imposition of martial law in Poland. And I will have a lot more to say about that when we get to Poland – those years were really the best professional four years of my career.

Q: Obviously the question I'm posing now will have much more pertinence in Poland, but in dealing still with Romania, did the Vatican have any – not influence – but any representation in Romania? And also, was the Vatican a source for getting intelligence. And I'm speaking of overt stuff; I mean from nuncios and that sort.

BASTIANI: To my recollection, no. I can't recall any kind of relations or exchange of visits or anything between the Vatican and the Romanians. Only after the fall of Communism did that become possible. And then a priest I knew well from my Seminary days was made a Bishop and the first Nuncio to Romania, Bukovsky, originally from Czechoslovakia, specifically Slovakia where Catholicism was strong. He later became the Church's first Nuncio in Moscow.

In fact, the Catholic Church in Romania was tiny; it had the Orthodox rite, but was loyal to the Vatican. Restrictions on religion under Ceausescu amounted to persecution. Religion was made the handmaiden of the regime; public manifestations were forbidden. Atheism was the official religion and inculcated in the schools. Not even the Orthodox Church to which most Romanians belonged had any kind of autonomy; in fact it was used by Ceausescu's regime, domestically and internationally.

There was one church in the center of Bucharest with the Western rite my wife and I used to go to. I guess that it was like the one in Moscow, ministering more to the diplomatic community than the Romanians. It was sparsely attended then; quite the contrary to what we found when we visited Romania as tourists in 1999 – so crowded with *Romanians* that we could hardly get in.

Q: Okay. Well then, you left INR in '71 or so?

BASTIANI: I left INR, yes, in 1971.

JAY K. KATZEN
Commercial Officer, Political Officer
Bucharest (1969-1971)

Jay K. Katzen was born in New York in 1936. He graduated from Princeton in 1958 and then received an M.A. at Yale the following year and entered the Foreign Service in 1959. He served in Australia, Burundi, Romania, and Mali. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in June 1990.

Q: What were you doing in Romania?

KATZEN: I was initially commercial officer for nine months and then political officer. I had been trained in Romanian language, as I mentioned, prior to going there. One of the lyrical parts of the assignment was that, just two weeks after I arrived, the Nixon visit took place, which gave the entire embassy staff, particularly Romanian language officers, an exposure at a level which they had previously not experienced. Similarly, it showed the Romanians that there were a lot of things that Americans did in a fashion that was not dissimilar to the way they would like to do things. So there was an experience of working together and a very brief window in the presence of our embassy in Bucharest which enabled us to travel, albeit under significant surveillance, and to see things that, prior to that and thereafter, were difficult to be visited.

Q: Could you give us an idea, because we're talking now, in 1990, where Romania has gone through both a change and not so much a change, but what was the situation in Romania in '69 to '71?

KATZEN: Nicolae Ceausescu had been in power I think for three years, having replaced a man called Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej. Ceausescu was a very forceful Communist, a self-styled Romanian patriot, who at least in the early days I think felt that he could carve out an independence vis-à-vis the West which could gain him foreign exchange and investment, which would be good to foster his own economy, his own industrialization, while maintaining a very rigid Stalinist control at home. A control which included a very distasteful security apparatus as well as a cult of the leader which rivaled those in Bulgaria and...

Q: Had it already developed by the time you were there?

KATZEN: Yes, it clearly had. Two things we did made our time more pleasurable: one, we lived in a workers' apartment building (which subsequently came down with an earthquake), and secondly, we had our boy, Timothy, as the first American enrolled in a Romanian kindergarten. I vividly remember Timothy coming home one day and wondering why I was going to work on Nicolae Ceausescu's birthday. So there was already that cult burgeoning. Timothy also at one juncture reflected that it was interesting that I took as my birthday August 23, which also happened to be that which Romania celebrated as its liberation day. So there clearly were quirks

in the system. But the bestiality of Ceausescu and his wife became far more intense as the years went by. These were days when that had not quite been as intense as it ultimately became, at least for those outside it.

Q: What were our interests in Romania at the time, particularly culminating in a presidential visit, which in Eastern Europe was practically unheard of?

KATZEN: The feeling was that by diversifying Romania's ties economically, culturally, and industrially, a web could be developed that made it even more difficult for Romania to extricate herself from and for the Soviets to force them out of. A position which, from the Romanian point of view, was seen as one which would gather support for them in times of adversity, if, for instance, they chose to criticize and not participate in the invasion of Czechoslovakia; similarly, to continue to maintain an Israeli presence in Bucharest.

Q: How much did our ties with Israel dominate our role in Romania?

KATZEN: Very little, basically because most of the Jewish population in Romania had already left. There was an apparatus that the Romanians always liked to point visitors toward, a rabbi, Rabbi Rosen, who also was very active in Communist Party activities. But religious services were not encouraged. In fact, I think that there were no kosher butchers allowed nor cantors encouraged. So that whatever Jewish ritual existed, in the full sense of the word, I think had to be clandestine.

Q: Each time is different in an embassy. This time, was there a feeling of hope that things would change? Was it an optimistic feeling, or was our policy of encouraging them sort of accepted by the embassy? How did we feel about it?

KATZEN: I think there was a period of optimism there. And a feeling that because of our cooperation, for instance, in providing material after a ghastly spring flood they had, and other efforts at cooperation: space exhibits and trade fairs and so on, that this could be fostered. At the same time, though, the government clearly was led and held by a very vicious security operation.

Just parenthetically, what the Romanians would do on each newcomer was to run a profile, to see how that individual behaved, what his garbage looked like, what he had to talk about, for roughly a two-week period--electronic and personal surveillance. Then they would examine the raw material, data that they had developed on you and your spouse, and determine whether either was worth cultivating.

And if it were not (as it clearly was in my case), follow-ups were done in an almost burlesque way on an annual, alphabetical basis. So that a Finnish colleague of mine would call me when he was being put on heavy surveillance (his name being spelled just a few letters before mine) and say, "Jay, they'll be following you soon."

The Romanians got the last laugh on the Finns, incidentally, because of all the places the Finns thought were sacred and would not be violated by eavesdropping, the Romanians cleverly put a bug inside the thermostat of the Finnish ambassador's sauna.

So these had for Americans, for visitors, a burlesque aspect. When the plumbing didn't work, you could yell at the wall that Socialist plumbing clearly can't operate. And an hour later or so, Popescu, the plumber, would knock on the door--just having happened to be in the neighborhood.

Similarly, just before we left, we would tell the walls that there was this or that person who obviously had been arrested and isn't it a shame we can't say hello to him or her. And the next morning, as by levitation, he or she would appear in front of the door, looking pale but walking a poodle that clearly had been given to him or her for the day.

But the tragedy obviously is that while these may be burlesque moments for us, they were, and to a great degree continue to be, tragic moments for the Romanian people.

Q: We had no particular what we would today call a human rights program. Were we trying to get people out?

KATZEN: We would press the Romanians with lists of people who, either because of claims of dual citizenship or one reason or another, had applied for visas, some of whom were eligible for visas but could not get their documentation to leave Romania, and we would continually present those lists to the Romanians. It was not anywhere of the magnitude, I would say, of the program that Pat Derian and others moved toward during the Carter administration.

Q: How about your dealings with the Romanian officials? Did you find them responsive, or did everything have to come from up above?

KATZEN: It varied. Relationships with the people were very good. The annoyance for people was that, after speaking with us, they would then have to spend an afternoon preparing a report for the security on that contact. Humorously, our ambassador in the country, Leonard Meeker, often would not only chide the Romanians about their disrespect for the environment but would say, "Fine, let's have a morning meeting, because you'll require all afternoon, sir, to prepare your report."

But when there was business that could have been done...I mentioned earlier that I'd begun on the commercial side, and there were a number of American companies...Sears, Roebuck, as I recall, was interested in having Romania produce hammers for sale in the United States.

At first, the Romanians were absolutely floored by the volume that would be required on the production side. But secondly, when the inevitable glitches occurred, we learned that the director of the steel mill could not speak to his counterpart at the fabricating end. Instead, he needed to go through the central planning office. So that cumbersome bureaucracy, volume requirements, and quality control problems led to the end of that relationship.

Access, though, was greatly improved by the Nixon visit. There were a number of prominent Romanians whom embassy people met during the visit, through all parts of Romanian life, whom otherwise we likely would not have met. And those relationships endured. And the Romanians,

for their side, could explain to the security people: Well, look, we met Smith during the Nixon visit and that's why we went to his house last night.

Q: How did the Vietnam War play in Romania?

KATZEN: Corneliu Manescu, who was foreign minister at the time and a very distinguished Romanian diplomat who was among the people who led to the ouster of Ceausescu at Christmastime, spoke to us frequently about ways whereby Romania could play some mediating role. Otherwise, it was not a source of great propaganda for the Romanians. The Soviets, obviously, and the Vietnamese, whose Viet Cong office had representation in Bucharest at the time, obviously played it up big. The media got standard Communist news agency stories, which they played up. The Romanian security periodically would use it as an issue for discussion, to try to see whether an American was loyal or not to the cause. But beyond that, it was not an issue that daily was discussed.

Q: What was your impression of how the Soviets operated in Romania?

KATZEN: I'll give you two examples, because I think that they are very indicative of that.

Sarge Shriver had been ambassador in Paris and was exploring at the time running for governor of Maryland. Having seen how Bobby Kennedy had tested the waters in Warsaw during the visit that he had made there. Shriver decided to come over and visit Bucharest, anticipating that we would have crowds in the streets to greet Sarge Shriver as a member of the Kennedy family. Well, nothing very much happened at all. He and Mrs. Shriver were received by Ceausescu at the last minute, and he returned to Paris and ultimately to private life.

The Soviet ambassador, a man called Basov, came to the embassy one day thereafter, and pounded on the reception desk and said, "I have no appointment. I demand to see the ambassador." Which he did, I think he saw the chargé at the time, and said, "I demand to know why the American ambassador to Paris is visiting Romania." We explained to him what I just mentioned, and that had absolutely no effect upon him at all. He was a candidate member of the Central Committee, one of the two Soviet diplomats, I think, at the time who were, and later went on to become ambassador to Chile when Allende headed the government, but was clearly lacking in any ability to fathom that explanation.

Then a few months later, Manescu, the foreign minister who had served, as I mentioned, as president of the General Assembly in New York and at that time met Ambassador Shirley Temple Black, who was with our delegation in New York for that General Assembly, invited her to come visit Bucharest.

This time, Basov came back to the embassy again and said, in a wonderfully clumsy phrase, "I demand to know what Shirley Temple, American child actress, is doing in Romania." Again we explained the reason for her visit. And yet again he somehow felt in both instances that Soviet sovereignty over Romania (which didn't exist) had been violated by such visits.

Q: That's very, very odd--in the first place, the lack of finesse, and also the lack of understanding. You were a political officer in a state under tight Communist security with a personality cult and all, how did you go about your business?

KATZEN: We would, obviously, read the newspapers and other official material that came in the morning and see if there was anything among the tea leaves to be read that was worth pursuing. We would spend a fair amount of time talking to Romanian contacts, both within and outside the government, because it was at that time easy to do. Whether we got the truth or not was quite another matter. We traveled a lot, talking to a variety of people. We observed things like who was saying what, what the government orders at parades were, what materials, what foodstuffs were available, who was saying what to whom. We talked an awful lot to people from other embassies and tried to triangulate whatever information we developed. And we leaned to a great extent on the basic matrix we knew of information that Washington was eager that we develop while we were there. So there were reporting requirements, and we tried to fit what we could learn against those requirements.

Q: What would Washington be interested in particularly?

KATZEN: Washington obviously was interested in what Romanian bilateral relations were with the Soviets, how they perceived those as going. What the leadership group was like, who was moving up, who was moving down, whether there was any movement at all. General welfare of the people. The role of the military, the role of the security. How the people in the interior were going vis-à-vis the people in Bucharest. The plight of the German and obviously the Hungarian minorities within Romania and how they were handled. How the workers in the mines were being treated. What the general feeling of Romanians was insofar as trying to increase the amount of independence, if you will, they had within the geography they lived. For instance, at that time there was some interest in getting the Romanians closer to the Greeks. Ceausescu, for his part, saw greater leverage coming his way by improving his relationship with the shah. So those are the kinds of things we kept an eye on, as well, obviously, as military movements, the extent to which the Romanians participated in Warsaw Pact operations and maneuvers and so on.

Q: Moving on, you left Romania in 1971?

KATZEN: Yes.

ROBERT K. GEIS
Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS
Bucharest (1969-1972)

Mr. Geis was born in Havana, Cuba of American parents and was raised in Houston, Texas. He was educated at Rice University and American University. Entering the Foreign Service in 1962, he served as Cultural Affairs Officer and/or Public Affairs Officer in Argentina, Romania, Ecuador, USSR, Italy and Trinidad and Tobago. His service also included several Washington assignments with

USIA. In the years 1973 and 1974 Mr. Geis studied at Johns Hopkins University (SAIS) and the George Washington University. Mr. Geis was interviewed by Lewis Hoffacker in 1999.

GEIS: Right in the middle of the visit of the TV team, while we were in Houston for the moon landing, I was abruptly called back to Washington and sent to Bucharest for the Nixon visit. And then I stayed on. So here we were, going back to Bucharest all of a sudden. Our very beloved Dick Davis was still ambassador, but he was due to leave in just a very short while. The Nixon visit actually prompted a sort of a reunion of our colleagues of our previous tour in Bucharest. The visit was a great success and was the subject of a USIA documentary film and culminated, most importantly for me, in the signing of the cultural center agreement. So here we were, beginning to work on this cultural center. It was an interminable and frustrating process, mainly due to Romanian recalcitrance in showing us suitable sites.

Meanwhile, in a personal note, on December the 21st, 1969, my daughter, Katherine Jennings Geis, was born in the famous hostage hospital in Wiesbaden, West Germany, and my life was changed forever, as all parents know.

Putting together the American Library in Bucharest was a unique experience. When we were finally shown an acceptable complex of what were 19th-century buildings - this took a couple of years, actually, to locate this complex - we began to work on renovation. USIA in Washington put considerable resources of money and talent to create a vibrant venue, including a 10,000-volume library, a multimedia theater, and exhibit space. My wife Arlene created an English teaching program. At that time I also recruited an excellent local staff for the library. The library was finally inaugurated in January of 1972 with much fanfare by USIA Director Frank Shakespeare and the Romanian deputy foreign minister. But at that time only the library was ready to go, so we made a virtue out of necessity and had two other library openings as each part of the complex was completed. The second opening of the library was the theater part, and in April, again of '72, this part was opened. Our guest of honor was the famed author James Michener, and at that time I was pleased to receive from Michener the Agency's Meritorious Honor Award for my work in putting the library together.

The first performing arts group in the library was the wonderful William Warfield and a group of his friends who were doing excerpts from *Porgy and Bess*. Finally in June of '72, the third opening of the library actually was the opening of our exhibit facilities, and that event brought Secretary of State William Rogers. Our first exhibit was a modern American art exhibit from the University of Texas at Austin, the very fine Michener collection. On the political side during this period, although we didn't know it at the time, Romanians were helping with contacts with the Chinese which would lead eventually to Nixon's historic visit to China.

Q: So Romania was a fair-haired boy.

GEIS: Very much so under Nixon, because he remembered well what they'd done to him.

Q: But even under Johnson - Bridges to Eastern Europe.

GEIS: Yes, that's right.

Q: It's interesting that Romania should have been that. That was strategy.

GEIS: Well, one of the things that contributed to that, too, of course, was the fact that Romania, during the Czech crisis, in 1968, had refused to let Soviet troops cross the country to go to Czechoslovakia. And so that endeared Romanians to the United States, as you can imagine, and it was a further reason why we chose to lavish a certain amount of attention on Romania, including such things as most favored nation treatment, which I think - I'm not sure whether it was the Nixon visit, but sometime around that period - Romanians were given MFN.

Q: And Ceausescu, as I recall, came to Houston in the '70s. Now, you weren't in Bucharest at that time.

GEIS: I would have been, yes, but I honestly don't remember that at all.

Q: Well, I remember he arrived. I was sort of surprised. There was a lot of fanfare, and I assume he went to Washington.

GEIS: I'm sure he would have, yes. So he had a visit to the U.S.

Q: They gave him the benefit of the doubt in those days.

GEIS: Yes, well, the man really went crazy later on.

Q: Yes, well, we know that.

GEIS: At this time he was viewed - in fact, even particularly because of his actions vis-à-vis the Czech invasion - he had gained a certain amount of popularity in Romania. I mean, he was not beloved by any means, and later on he was despised, but at that time he was viewed as sort of a nationalist, and there was a certain positive feeling about him.

Q: But he hadn't built his palace by then, had he?

GEIS: No, he had not. He hadn't started that.

Q: Then he was really around the bend.

GEIS: And the cult of personality was beginning to be built at that time, but not to the extreme that occurred later on.

ARTHUR W. LEWIS
Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS
Bucharest (1969-1972)

Ambassador Lewis was born in New York and educated at Dartmouth College. He served in the US Navy in World War II and continued in the Navy until joining the Foreign Service of USIA in 1968. His foreign posts in USIA were Bucharest, Lusaka, and Addis Ababa, serving as Cultural and Public Affairs Officer. In 1983 He was appointed US Ambassador to Sierra Leone, where he served until 1986. Ambassador Lewis was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1989.

Q: Let's talk about your first overseas assignment. You were the Cultural Affairs Officer in Bucharest from 1969-72. What were your responsibilities?

LEWIS: Interestingly enough, I arrived in Bucharest with probably a two-plus in Romanian speaking and understanding. My predecessor had to leave in a hurry. I became eventually in charge of the educational exchange program--the Fulbright program. Subsequently, I discovered that a lot of students were really jazz lovers. So I made a great effort to bring American jazz musicians to Romania. Over the three years, we developed a regular routine of bringing jazz musicians through Western Europe and then Eastern Europe, including Romania.

Romania was in an expansive state at that time. It was opening to the West and looking for opportunities to trade more with the West. The Romanians wanted to get away from the "the granary of Eastern Europe" image which they had in the past. The idea of American jazz was accepted by the authorities, even if they didn't really like it. In Eastern Europe, when you deal with cultural attractions, you must deal through State institutions. I spent a lot of time working with these institutions, bringing various cultural attractions, not only jazz, but for example also American plays and other cultural attractions. These gave a different view of the United States from that acquired by a lot of young Romanians. I spent a lot of time working with University students' clubs. That was possible only because the Romanians wanted to change their orientation.

Q: That is very interesting because today the Romanians are the hard liners. But in the late '60s and early 70s, Romania was the hope of Eastern Europe and was going in the direction that Yugoslavia took. How did you deal with the local authorities all of whom must have been members of the Communist Party? Were they cooperating under duress or did they seem interested in your programs?

LEWIS: Romania was occupied by the Soviets until 1962. It was under the rule of , who himself was a Stalinist figure. It was 1965 when he died and Ceausescu came to power. It was believed that Ceausescu, supposedly the great liberator, was the great "opener" to the West. Indeed he was, from an economic point of view, but from the social and cultural point, Romania with the strangest kind of openness in its international affairs, was still one of the most domestically repressive Eastern European nations. I didn't think that has ever changed. This fact has become now much more noticeable and much better known. Even in those days, Romania was internally a repressive state. We were probably viewing it with hope rather than realistically. Even though we have had an adversarial relationship with the Soviet Union and the Soviet block, we have always harbored hope of eventual change. That hope has flourished at times; at other times, it has withered. We are a society that strongly believes in change and the inevitability of change. We

accept change. For us, therefore, it is normal assumption as we enter into diplomatic relationships with other States.

Q: Did you believe that the cultural program was an assist to that process of change?

LEWIS: Yes, because, even though the Romanians knew and understood the power of culture and what it can do, they were still willing to allow a certain amount of cultural exchange. I have seen certain cultural attractions taking place in Romania and frightening the authorities. I remember a group called "Blood, Sweat and Tears" which almost caused a riot. They were almost thrown out of the country along with me. The group didn't want to continue its performances in Romania because of its repressiveness, as illustrated by what the authorities did to the young people who wanted to hear them.

First of all, the group was on the cutting edge of the 60s' modern musical groups. They sang of a kind of freedom that young people saw and felt strongly in the West and particularly the United States. Their music reflected the very vital dynamism on a United States that was going through a profound change. The young people of Easter Europe had heard some of this music on the "Voice of America". English is the preferred language in Eastern Europe because it is the language of science and technology. At that point, no one yet understood that it was also the language of finance and economics. It was a language that many young people understood and responded to in Eastern Europe. While I don't remember the name of particular songs, they were extremely popular and the young Romanians wanted to hear them. I do remember that in the concerts, the young people got so vociferous in the audience that the authorities stepped on the stage and tried to stop the performance. The musical group refused; then the authorities turned off the electricity so that there was no sound. They nevertheless continued to play and the audience of 15-20,000 arose and began to break up the chairs and lit fires. I was right there wondering what I had wrought.

Interestingly enough, this episode resulted in a Romanian decision that they didn't want the group anymore. The group decided that it would not perform any longer in Romania. We came to a stand-off. I had a meeting with the group in which it became clear that my 42-year old perception was not too much different than their views which were those of 20 or 21 year olds. I was young at heart. I was able to talk to them and got them to agree to continue the tour if the Romanian government would not interfere. I finally talked to the governmental institution I had to deal with and got it to agree to lower everyone's temperature and permit the tour to continue. If they hadn't allowed the tour to continue, it would have complicated relationships between Romania and the United States. The group had after all come at the invitation the Romanian government. The tensions were calmed and the tour was completed. The group then went to Warsaw and became someone else's problem.

Q: What instruction were you getting from Washington?

LEWIS: "Don't let this get out of hand. It is your problem, but don't let it get out of hand". Ambassador Leonard Meeker was involved in a peripheral way, but I think he was perceived by the group as an old fuddy-duddy. He let me handle it and take care of it. Eventually, we were able to put the pieces back together.

Q: This is what diplomacy is all about: tensions between sovereign states created by a young rock group and Communist authorities.

LEWIS: You never think of it in that fashion. Even putting the pieces back together within the American community representing different generations was difficult.

Q: Did you have many touring play groups and did have to be careful about which plays were presented? Or other cultural events?

LEWIS: Yes. We had a couple of Thornton Wilder plays which were better received because they were held under University auspices and the people who attended were mostly University students majoring in English or literature. They didn't have the emotional content and velocity of musical groups. Somehow music is a most powerful instrument. That is one lesson I learned.

LEONARD MEEKER
Ambassador
Romania (1969-1973)

Ambassador Leonard Meeker was born in New Jersey in 1916. He graduated from Amherst College in 1937 and received his law degree from Harvard University. After serving in the army in World War II, he worked for the Departments of Treasury and Justice before joining the Department of State in 1946. Ambassador Meeker was interviewed by Robert Martens in 1989.

Q: Let us turn now to another topic entirely, that is, to Romania. You were ambassador to Romania from about 1969, that is the beginning of the Nixon Administration, up through early 1973. This is a period when the Romanians were becoming a fairly, in fact, a quite significant country for US policy, due primarily to the refusal of Romania to participate in the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia. Romania's sort of maverick reputation began at this point--actually it had been going on a few years before--but it became very clear in this period. This was also the period when President Nixon included Romania as one of the very small number of stops on an around the world trip that he had made not too long after the beginning of his first administration. Could you comment on the hopes and expectations that we, the United States, had concerning Romania at that time, particularly in light of the very authoritarian course that Romania has pursued since? Obviously, this was a very authoritarian state even at that time, and had very many blemishes. We all know that the image that Romania has in the world has declined considerably in the years that have subsequently passed.

MEEKER: In 1969 the United States took a particular interest in Romania because of its assertion of independence from the Soviet Union, and its rejection of the idea of hegemony out of Moscow. This was an interest which the US took, in part, as a means of affording a little protection for Romania against possible Soviet attempts to take it over, in the way that the Soviet Union had taken over Czechoslovakia in 1968. We wanted to encourage as much independence

on the part of Eastern European countries as was feasible, and that was, indeed, very limited, indeed. We also wanted, through our political actions and declarations, to afford whatever protection we could to Romania against further Soviet encroachment.

Those, I think, were the two basic reasons for special US interest in Romania at that time. There was, indeed, an apprehension that Romania might be the target of a Soviet move, such as had taken place the year before in Czechoslovakia. That apprehension did not really begin to dissipate until about 1971.

During 1969, I think the US government was not under any illusions about the character of the Romanian government's internal administration. While Romania pursued a somewhat independent foreign policy, and did so courageously, in the face of Soviet displeasure, the internal administration of the country was even referred to as Stalinist. The best thing that could be said about the Romania internal administration at that time, was that executions had stopped. Dissent was not permitted. There was not political freedom, but at least Romanians were not being put to death for political dissent, as had happened in earlier years from World War II on through the '50s.

So when one looks at the history of Romania from the early '70s until the present time, there is, perhaps, not surprise, but there is, surely, disappointment that Romania's course has been so negative, as viewed from our standpoint. I think we had the hope that, along with the independence in foreign policy, there could be some liberalization in the administration of Romania, and that this might come about in the course of time, but not rapidly. During 1968, '69, even in '70, the Romanian government did permit some Romanians to travel abroad. That permission was ended after 1970 because too many Romanians simply failed to return.

Q: I'd like to interject a comment or two. I might say, for the record, that I was Ambassador Meeker's deputy chief of mission during part of that period. The Foreign Minister told me once that--somewhat later--that during the invasion of Czechoslovakia, the Soviets moved large forces up to the frontier, including great masses of armor, which were revved up and made as noisy as possible, with the idea of putting as much pressure on Romania as they could, and that many of the Romanian decisions were made as a result of that. They were quite afraid but, nevertheless, resolved that they would try to stand up. One of the unfortunate, or fortunate, decisions made, they said, he said, was that they saw Czechoslovakia had acceded to the Warsaw Pact invasion, in part, because several leading members of the--although very much in the minority--of the central committee had invited the Soviets in. So the conclusion was reached that you cannot do two things at one time: liberalize internally and maintain your independence. They opted entirely for the second. Therefore, Ceausescu was more or less designated as the only voice that could speak.

As time went on, he used that concentration of power that was designed for external purposes also for internal purposes, and enforced a line of action internally against, in my belief, a substantial portion of the central committee. This led progressively to the personal side of power for its own sake. In other words, Lord Acton's famous adage about "All power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely," a great deal of that has taken place.

MEEKER: The Soviet threat against Romania, certainly, was a very lively one for about three years after 1968. [Telephone interruption] There were rumors over a period of time, often out of Vienna, that there would be Soviet military action against Romania. Usually, the rumors were in relation to Warsaw Pact maneuvers. From time to time it would be announced that such maneuvers would be held in Bulgaria, that Soviet troops would cross Romania on their way to Bulgaria, and, perhaps, they would not return home.

These rumors and the threats that they implied seemed to come to an end in September of 1971, when Brezhnev made a visit to Tito. I think there is some reason to believe that Tito made strong representations to Brezhnev not to press the so-called Brezhnev Doctrine. It was as a result of that visit that the Soviet Union relaxed its psychological warfare campaign against Romania.

As to why the Romanian government, and Ceausescu in particular, pursued very autocratic policies in the internal administration of the country--There probably is also the element that the leadership doubted that the Romanian people could handle democracy. I remember, once, asking Prime Minister Maurer directly why it would not be feasible and desirable to institute and operate more democratic institutions in the political life of Romania. He was a very highly educated and experienced and very wise man. His answer, somewhat ruefully stated, was that he was afraid that Romanians were simply not ready, not qualified to operate democratic institutions.

Somewhat later, he did try, as Prime Minister, to introduce real debate into the grand national assembly, which met every year, and operated largely as a rubber stamp for government proposed measures. One year he arranged for genuine debate on a measure that was introduced by a government minister. He arranged for some of the members of the assembly to raise questions about the proposal to move amendments. I used to go to the sessions in the grand national assembly to observe what was happening, and I was there during the days when Mr. [Maurer] tried out this experiment.

What happened was that the scene became disorderly as the various amendments were moved. Members of the assembly didn't know what to do. They didn't understand what was going on. The President of the assembly, Stefan Voitec, finally, in bewilderment, and not knowing what his role should be, looked pleadingly over to [Mr. Maurer] and said, "What shall we do?" That was the defeat of Maurer's idea, because he then had to take the rostrum himself, give his answers to the various proposals for change that had been made, his suggestions for disposing of the amendments which had been moved. Thereupon, the assembly proceeded to do exactly what Maurer had said. You could see that he was a disappointed man and that his estimate of the political level of sophistication of his countrymen was born out by the facts.

Q: I believe somewhere along in there, too, he became in considerable agreement with Ceausescu in internal policy, namely, the degree of a certain forced paced economic development. There was a secret speech given by him, and clues that we finally heard something about, but never came out in the press.

MEEKER: Yes.

Q: Then his tenure was short, thereafter.

MEEKER: Yes, that's right. Maurer was an exceedingly intelligent man, and was not in full agreement with Ceausescu, and in his later years felt able to say a little bit about his disagreements, although he never made any major move.

Q: Incidentally, do you have any particular insights into the State visit of President Nixon? That was, I think, in 1969--Or Ceausescu's return trip to the United States?

MEEKER: I was not yet in Bucharest when President Nixon visited Romania. I did come to Washington at the time of the Ceausescu visit in 1970. It seemed to me a rather standard--and not very interesting--state visit in which the forms of conversations took place, and also there was a great deal of tourism with President Ceausescu visiting Williamsburg, going to Detroit, Niagara Falls, and New York.

Q: Sounds familiar. [Laughter] While there were many difficulties in the Romania of our time, my impression is that embassy morale was generally rather good at that point. I've been frequently told over the years, that--and have since--that morale is quite bad. I think it has a great deal to do with the fact that the internal situation is darkened over that period, that the hopes that we had for Romania have declined. However, to go back to the earlier period, what would your views be on the embassy that we had at that period, under your ambassadorship?

MEEKER: I thought that the embassy was a splendid institution and functioned exactly as it should. There were a large collection of very able officers, who did their jobs with professional skill and understanding. The morale of the embassy as a whole seemed to me very good, indeed. The conditions of life were not easy for all embassy members in all respects, but they dealt with their problems in a very objective, sensible manner. I can imagine, from hearing about conditions in Romania during recent years, that the conditions of life for members of diplomatic missions have deteriorated very greatly. The problems facing even a foreigner living in the diplomatic community in Bucharest would be far greater than what we experienced twenty years ago.

Q: Can you comment on any particular issues or events that took place in your period there? Does anything stand out that you might want to comment on?

MEEKER: I suppose one event which, in a way, stands out is the Ceausescu visit to China in the summer of 1971, the early summer. Ceausescu made a long visit to China and North Vietnam in the late spring, early summer of 1971. He returned from that visit with the sense that China under Mao represented true communism, and was an example which Romania should try to emulate. After he returned, one of the members of the inner circle of Ceausescu, asked me to come to his office. He gave me a long briefing on what had happened during the visit, and what had happened in the thinking of Nicolae Ceausescu. The immediate aftermath of this was one of those 4 to 5 hours speeches by Ceausescu to the Party, in which he reported on his visit, and announced for Romania a so-called 17 point ideological program. This was announced in July of 1971. It contained ever so many measures which were completely hateful to Romanians. It involved the end of Western movies in Romania, and the end of the importation of Western

music on records. It involved so-called voluntary work on Sunday mornings. This seemed to me to be a turning point in Romania's recent history, from which it has gone steadily downhill.

ROBERT J. MARTENS
Deputy Chief of Mission
Bucharest (1971-1974)

Robert Martens grew up in Kansas City, Missouri. He entered the U.S. Army in July of 1943 at the age of 17 and served in Europe. In 1949, Mr. Martens graduated from the University of Southern California. He entered the Foreign Service in January 1951. His career included positions in Italy, the Soviet Union, Indonesia, Burma, Austria, Romania, Sweden, and Washington, DC. Mr. Martens was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1991.

MARTENS: I was pulled out of Rangoon suddenly on just a week or two notice. I had been promoted in the meantime, and I was too senior for the job in Burma. So I came back for Romanian language training for about six months, and then went to Bucharest, arriving there in June 1971, and remaining until June 1974. The ambassador was Leonard Meeker, who had previously been the legal adviser to the State Department. Len remained ambassador until the beginning of the second Nixon administration, but his appointment was not continued. He was a Democrat. And Watergate was just breaking. I was Chargé then for a year, and finally Harry Barnes, who had been DCM before me, came as ambassador. He arrived about February or March of '74, and I remained as DCM until the school year was completed and then came back.

Q: I wonder, Bob, if you could describe the political situation in Romania? What were American interests in Romania? Particularly, in the light of recent events, it is very important to get a picture of how we saw things then.

MARTENS: Well, Romania was often described as the maverick of Eastern Europe. I got to hate that term because it became such an overused and banal expression, but there was something in it. Let me give a little bit of the background, and history, here and what my understanding is of the situation in Romania and the rise of Ceausescu, his personality, the power relationships, and so on, because I think there's a lot of misunderstanding about it.

After Gheorghiu-Dej, the previous communist leader of Romania died about 1965, Ceausescu became primus inter pares in the Politburo but without full power initially. He had some conflicts in this period, mostly with people who were considered more hardline than he. His first great struggle was with the head of the secret police, and they were the two rivals for leadership. The rest of the leadership more or less united around Ceausescu as the lesser evil, I suppose. You had a situation of collective leadership for a while. There were some other top people being thrown out by then, but Ceausescu, although certainly already becoming dominant by the time I arrived, had not achieved the level of personality cult or complete dictatorship that later obtained. Or was even obtained in the latter part of my time there.

To understand what happened in Romania one should begin with the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1969 in which the Romanians refused to participate. Romania came under tremendous pressure from the Soviets at that time, and in fact was threatened with invasion. I had a long conversation once with Gheorghe Macovescu, the Foreign Minister, who I had already known 10 or 15 years earlier when we negotiated the first U.S.-Romanian exchange agreement when Macovescu was the Romanian Minister to Washington. Anyway, Macovescu described how the Soviets brought long columns of armor up to the frontier and they revved up their motors and acted like they were going to come across. Of course, it scared the hell out of the Romanians. The Romanians, according to him, and other members of the Romanian Politburo told me much the same on other occasions, decided then that you could not do two things at once. You could not, as Dubcek had tried to do in Czechoslovakia, get your independence from the Soviet Union and simultaneously have a democratic regime, because if you tried to democratize as they did, the Soviets would be able to pick even a very remote minority voice in the Party and say that that was the true voice of the proletariat and that the Soviets would have to come in and save the proletariat of this country who were being overwhelmed by agents of the capitalist powers, and revisionists, and all sorts of things like that. So this resulted in a sort of unity of view among the Romanian leadership that you had to have in Romania a figure at the top who would be the one voice who would speak for Romania, because of the foreign threat. So they all agreed on doing that, and agreed that Ceausescu would be this voice.

Now, Ceausescu took this further as time went on. In essence there was not a deviation from this original purpose, but Ceausescu had a more extreme view of it. He believed that Romania over the long term--let's say 20 years, which was by coincidence more or less his period of life expectancy--that in that period Romania would have to build its power internally by forced industrialization, would have to increase its population radically so it would become in essence the France of Eastern Europe, and could play a role vis-a-vis the Soviet Union that France was perceived as playing vis-a-vis the United States, a role of considerable independence.

So, to do this you had to have a very high reinvestment rate, which was in fact the highest in the world--33%-- by far the highest in the world. That, of course, squeezed the population terribly. Everything that was being produced was being either sold in the west, or used to mobilize capital to have this very fast industrial growth rate. There was agreement on the general course, there was not agreement on detail, and several members of the Politburo--the number two, Prime Minister Maurer, was known to us to oppose such a high reinvestment rate, Maurer made a secret speech on the subject at Cluj in which he strongly attacked the rate of growth. The conflict also became visible in the official press and we reported this at the time. Ceausescu had launched a campaign in which he called for fulfillment of the five-year plan in four and a half years. We then began to notice that there were two slogans that seemed at first glance to be the same. One was to fulfill the five-year plan in four and a half years, and the other was to fulfill the five-year plan ahead of time: indinte de termen, was the expression in Romanian.

Now if you think about it, every Communist had to be in favor of fulfilling the five-year plan on time. If you fulfilled the five-year plan one second ahead of time, you would be ahead of time. So there would be no commitment to four and a half years. So, while it appeared at first glance that there was no difference, there was in fact a major difference, and I would say we began to count up the various statements on the subject by the members of the Central Committee who

were also heads of the "judets", the various counties in Romania which, as in all Communist countries, form the largest percentage of the Central Committee--the party leaders of these regions. We counted up and we saw that about 80 or 90% of them were using the expression "ahead of time", not "four and a half years." So we came to the conclusion that there was tremendous opposition within the Party to Ceausescu's forced draft policy although it was being carefully concealed in the official propaganda image. And it is my opinion then that, because of this, Ceausescu began to use his personality cult, in which everybody had agreed because of the foreign threat that only he could speak for the country, to intimidate everybody, and to ensure that the country was going to follow the internal course that he thought proper.

So you had two factors going into the first phase in the development of the personality cult that were not based on his own ego necessarily, but on political considerations--one the foreign policy threat that they all agreed on, and secondly, the internal economic policy, which was somewhat related to it, in which Ceausescu was in favor of a course that was more extreme than much of the party wanted. Now a third factor comes in, and became dominant over time, and that was the ego factor that I think was a corollary or a sequel to these other two factors. So Ceausescu began to like power for its own sake. That was probably true all along, but this became a much more predominant factor as time went on, and it was aided and abetted by the similar proclivities of his wife who became much more prominent during the period that I was there--particularly in the latter half of my period. During the first half she was not that well known, but as time went on, by 1973, she was already being named to a lot of senior party positions. By the time I left in '74, she had gotten even more and this continued on until she became practically a reigning queen along with Ceausescu as a reigning king. And a great many of the people that had been senior members of the party in the earlier period were kicked out and many of them that I knew who were, in spite of being Communists, were men of some pragmatism and some moral responsibility, I would say. And many of them even in my time shook their heads in regard to Ceausescu. Even shortly after I first arrived the former Foreign Minister happened to be sitting next to me in a large tent following the annual diplomatic hunt. I was Chargé then--this was about six or seven months after I arrived--and this was Corneliu Manescu, a figure fairly well known in the West. He had once been a candidate to be Secretary General of the UN, not a very strong candidate, but certainly one put forward by the Romanians. Anyway, Corneliu Manescu, a very kind of Frenchified old-school, not an old-school Communist, but an old-school diplomat type, but a member of the Party as you had to be in that country, turned to me and said, "Can't you shut him up?" I was amazed because I was only a Chargé and the room was filled with ambassadors and members of the Politburo, but I guess because I was American he said, "God, we have to get that guy shut up," meaning Ceausescu, who had been going on and holding forth for about an hour, I guess, monopolizing conversation. The conversation was between Ceausescu and the Israeli ambassador, a former Romanian Jew, over Middle East policy and what should be done regarding the West Bank.

You would see the great fear that already permeated the society and even within the leadership increasing gradually over time. Now our interest in Romania was that we certainly wanted to encourage independent tendencies in Eastern Europe, not just as a narrow realpolitik approach, but really as part of a long-term process of gradually encouraging greater diversity to unfold in the Soviet Union itself, and in Eastern Europe. This had been the a broad basis of our attitudes in formulating the exchange program about which I talked earlier. It was a policy that we did not

see coming to fruition until a great deal of time had passed. It was not just a narrow anti-Soviet thing, but it was part of a policy of gradual change throughout the area. So we wanted to encourage those tendencies toward independence. At the same time we recognized fully that this was a pretty horrible regime internally. We certainly did not like their human rights policy, for example. Their policy in regard to immigration was pretty awful and we made frequent representations on behalf of relatives of American citizens or resident aliens, presenting lists, for example, of people whom we encouraged to be released to the West, and so on.

Q: Much success with those lists?

MARTENS: Not much. Only once in a while you'd get someone out but we tried. We particularly tried to use leverage when prominent Americans came to Romania, and there would be a chance to put a list forward again, and sometimes that would have an effect when they were trying to influence a visitor. Romania was...it took place in this period where you had a tremendous interest by the Romanians, and by Ceausescu in particular, toward expanding contacts with the outside world. He could not get out of the Warsaw Pact. He did not allow Soviet forces into Romania, did not cooperate in Warsaw Pact maneuvers, and that sort of thing. But, since he couldn't get out of the Pact, he tried to more or less neutralize it by having as many contacts with other parts of the world as possible including pro-forma contacts even when there wasn't much substantive meaning in it. So you had people coming in from all kinds of petty African states, for example, who would be given very splashy welcomes. Anybody of consequence who had any kind of a name in the United States, or anywhere in the West, would be similarly received. The entire diplomatic corps, the ambassadors and Chargés--I went out a number of times as Chargé, and most of the Central Committee would go out and have to stand around at the airport, and there would be a ceremony in which the visiting dignitary would be received. And there would be a review by Ceausescu, and he and the high level visitor would march down the line of diplomats with bands playing, and so on, and crowds, obviously organized, shouting, "Ceausescu Pe Che Re," which meant, "Ceausescu, PCR, PCR were the initials of the Communist Party of Romania, and there were some other similar slogans being shouted. One result was that you could have a fair amount of contact with Romanian officials on these occasions. I spoke Romanian quite well then, and you could have some mixing in with people in the leadership that you had met previously. So it was a great opportunity.

Interestingly enough, the personality cult praise of Ceausescu by the claque at the airport were not emulated by the crowds on the way into the city. The regime would release people from the factories and offices on such occasions, and they had to stand along the streets. Of course, Ceausescu and his immediate entourage, and the visiting head of state or other visiting dignitary, would be at the head of the column and everybody else had to scramble to get into a line of cars. I remember times when my wife and I were maybe 50 cars back, and there would be total silence by the Romanian people as this line of cars passed up the main street into the city until the American flag was seen at a distance and slowly a roar would begin to come up from the population cheering the United States. It was rather embarrassing sometimes. It would not have been embarrassing if the visitor was American, but when the visitor was from the Central African Republic, or some place like that, it was somewhat embarrassing. But we did get these tremendous cheers, and there was obviously a total dissatisfaction in the population with the kind of system they had. This was true, of course, in all the countries of Eastern Europe. I think I

mentioned in earlier interviews example after example that I've had in my life. Some of this fear, and this show of friendliness towards the United States would go up to the top leadership of the Communist Party. I mentioned Corneliu Manescu earlier.

Another example was--I won't mention his name, I guess--but he was a member of the Romanian Politburo and had been to the United States on one occasion. He had led a delegation of five or six people besides himself. He was not only a Politburo but also a Minister within the government. When the delegation came back, I gave a dinner party for them and it came off very well. All the Americans present spoke Romanian, so the entire evening was in Romanian. We hit it off very nicely. When the dinner concluded we went into the living room and I sat down on a couch with this particular Politburo member, and it was the kind of situation where you don't jump right into politics. So I asked him about his visit to the United States and whether he had had a chance to see an American football game--the visit was taking place in the fall, and this man had a background in athletics, he had been an athlete himself in his youth, and he was involved with Party supervision over Romanian athletes in addition to his main job. He said, "No, something I really wanted to do was to see an American football game, and I'm sorry I wasn't able to." I said, "Well, you know we get movies of American football games occasionally, and if you'd like to see one I could put one on and you could come over to the house. Or if you didn't want to do that (there was this American library that had been approved during Nixon's visit two or three years earlier) we could put it on at the American library. Perhaps you could come to that." He turned absolutely pale and said, "I just couldn't do that. I would like to but why don't you do this. Why don't you send a letter, not mentioning me by name, to the government and suggest that a senior official come to this event, and perhaps, because of my background in athletics, I would be chosen." Here was a member of the Politburo who was not able to make that kind of decision, who was scared to death that he might get nailed as being friendly to the United States, even though he obviously wanted to be, and who backed off from any kind of involvement. Anyway, that was another insight.

Q: Particularly as this went on, did you feel under any constraints as far as reporting on what was going on in Romania? I say this particularly in light of the constraints that were very definitely put on our embassy in Iran by the Nixon-Kissinger team. The Shah was their boy, and we were told not to report on things that were unfavorable to the Shah. Nixon and Kissinger sort of had a world view and they didn't want people mucking it up.

MARTENS: I don't think so, but I must say, I don't think there was any real disagreement between the official view and our view. We both favored the policy of trying to open Romania up gradually, trying to encourage Romanian independence. We also favored increasing our trade, from a commercial standpoint. It did increase by four or five times while I was there. It was still not any great figure, but it all helped. There was no major difference on the policy level. Now there was an interesting difference on a straight analytical level. The CIA analyst who had been involved with Romania for some years had developed some views that were not in accord with those that we developed after I got there, mainly on the degree to which there were differences in the leadership. CIA in Washington ignored our reporting totally in coming out with about a 15 or 20 page document on Romania which had a nice shiny cover, and which was distributed all over Washington. We got a copy, and I sent back a cable that said, "There appears to be two Bucharests in the world. One is on the banks of the Potomac, and one is near the banks of the

Danube, and they don't seem to have any relationship whatsoever." It was a very strong statement saying, "You can have your opinions and there's nothing wrong with that, but you should at least acknowledge that other opinions exist, and acknowledge the reporting that has been coming in from the embassy over a considerable period of time," which they had totally ignored. And our Embassy view, incidentally, was endorsed by our station chief--it was a one man operation incidentally--who went in with a similar cable saying, "I agree with Bob Martens." So there was no question in the embassy over some fundamental analytical differences with Washington analysis on that subject. But that was the only major disagreement.

I might say something else: interestingly enough we did not have very close surveillance from the Romanian security police. We obviously were bugged in the buildings. We assumed that. There were two or three cases which I'm obviously not going to get into. There were also attempts by the Securitate to entrap Americans from the embassy, in two cases I can think of. In both cases I sent the Americans home in about 24 or 48 hours. I remember exactly what it was but I'm not going to get into it.

Q: The only thing I'm asking is, when you say "entrap", and maybe you can talk in more general terms. Is it sex entrapment?

MARTENS: Sex entrapment, yes. But on the other hand, we were not followed. There were no travel restrictions on us. There were no areas in the country off limits. You could take off without any notice, and travel anywhere you wanted to. I never noticed any vehicle or foot surveillance, and I'm very good at finding it. I was followed constantly in the Soviet Union. I took a trip into Bulgaria from Romania, I picked up tails immediately across the border and observed them all the way--different groups of tails--throughout my stay in Bulgaria. As soon as I crossed the border back, I never noticed tails again. On several occasions our station chief ran a little exercise in which he would come in behind to see if he could find tails behind me. He never found them. We knew, on the other hand, that the Soviets were being tailed closely, and they were. The Soviets were given travel restrictions, and not allowed to travel to certain areas of the country. It was rather an interesting sort of environment. This doesn't mean that this wasn't a terribly closed society. You could not have, or it was very difficult, let's say, to have Romanian friends. You had these contacts whenever you could think up excuses--they had sort of an official tinge to them. You got to know some people very well then but you couldn't go to their house and talk to them informally. There had to be an official occasion.

The only two exceptions to that were a leading reporter for one of the two major newspapers who used to come to my house fairly often. I'm sure he had to report on these conversations. He was probably working to some extent for the Securitate on the side, but we hit it off very nicely. In fact, I think we became very good friends and he was a very smart man and he saw through the system. He later visited me in the States, kissed me on both cheeks. He had no reason to see me here, it was all after I had retired. So I know there was a human relationship under this.

There was also a woman who was a language teacher for the embassy whose husband was a doctor that my wife and I became very friendly with. They were scared to death at times, but we did keep up the relationship with them and saw them fairly frequently. We used to take trips out into the countryside with them, but she had the protection of being a sort of quasi-employee in

the embassy as a language teaching role. But these were the only real exceptions, and otherwise there was that iron curtain type wall there very similar to what one had experienced in the Soviet Union, in some ways maybe tighter in Romania than in the Soviet Union.

Q: Within the embassy then, if there were these tactics of the Romanian government of oppression of its people, there was no problem in reporting on this?

MARTENS: Oh, no, except the people were so scared they wouldn't talk to you easily, but no, there was no problem there. No problem on reporting on anything. We did extensive reporting. I found it a very rich reporting opportunity, frankly. Frequently I would come into the Embassy on a Saturday and send out maybe three or four cables covering different conversations I had had the night before--Friday night. I did a lot of political reporting. We had two political officers who were both very good. But I probably did more than 50% of the reporting, part of the reason for that being that invitations would tend to go from other embassies, or from the Romanians, to the ambassador, the DCM, and the Defense Attaché, and nobody else. So I went to a lot of functions, and therefore had a lot of chance to build up contacts and talk to people that the other people didn't have. And the second factor was that I was the only one in the embassy that had extensive experience with Communist countries, and knew how to go about analyzing events and reading between the lines in the newspapers. The other people got very good at it in time, but you didn't come in knowing this. The type of reporting you do in those types of closed societies is very different from what you do in the open societies of the West that most of our officers had previously had contact with. Most of them had a kind of Latin type background because of the similarity of languages which probably led to their selection for Romanian training. Later on we got an officer who had a previous Soviet background, but this was not generally the case. I also spoke Russian and had a number of contacts with the Eastern European embassies, some of which were extremely productive. A lot of those conversations had to be carried on in Russian, and not Romanian.

Q: Did you find you had a role in having American visitors coming to the embassy sort of a bit starry eyed about Romania because Romania had stood up to the Soviets on Czechoslovakia, and you had to sort of dampen them down, and say the reality...

MARTENS: It's an interesting question because I can see that's a logical one, but not really. Most of the people that came were fairly prominent. We had a number of U.S. senators, congressmen and governors. Sometimes we had three or four in a week. They were usually pretty well briefed. They were not deeply knowledgeable about the country but they understood that Romania was playing this dissident role. But they also understood that this was a tightly controlled and difficult country. Some of the conversations that came out of their visits were extremely interesting. Senator Scott, I think it was, who was the Republican minority leader...

Q: Yes, Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania.

MARTENS: ...was one that came. Another was a Democratic senator from Wyoming, who later had a job in the State Department after he failed to be re-elected...

Q: Gale McGee.

MARTENS: Now Gale McGee had a three hour conversation with Emil Bodnarash, who was the number three man in the leadership, and a man who had been considered years before, that if anybody was pro-Soviet in the leadership, it was Bodnarash. He had a Ukrainian name, he'd been the Political Commissar of the Romanian Communist forces that came in with the Red Army, he had been Defense Minister in the brutal Ana Pauker government that was first set up by the Soviets in '45- '46 or so. But Bodnarash turned out to be entirely different from that assumption. It was really strange. We had this three hour conversation, Bodnarash attacked the Communist system all over the place, attacked the Soviet Union, said the Soviet Union should be broken up into pieces. One of his favorite expressions was, "We don't want any more Yalta sell- outs."

Q: Referring to the Yalta agreement of 1945.

MARTENS: The expression was one very similar to what right wing Republicans were saying about the Democrats in the McCarthy era. But Bodnarash's statement seemed even more extreme than the right wing in the United States had said about Yalta. Later there was a conversation between Bodnarash and Hugh Scott when the same expression came out. I still had some reservations that Bodnarash's strong anti-Soviet statements may have been tailored to an American audience but I ran across a situation later in which I know that Bodnarash used this same statement within the friendly leadership of the Romanian Communist Party when no Americans were around. I happen to know that, I can't say why I know that, but I know it happened. So this was not something that was put on for an American audience. Even at the time I thought Bodnarash was expressing his real thoughts. You sit and listen to somebody for two or three hours and you get a pretty good idea of what their views are, and what they think. In other words, I think there was a tremendous falling off of real belief within the Communist world. The same thing was true of Maurer who is the man I spoke of earlier, the man who was number two in the leadership, was Prime Minister, and who left the government because...it never came out, but it was because of his basic disagreement with Ceausescu and Ceausescu's economic forced march policy. I can't remember who I was escorting, but I was over at the Prime Minister's office with a group of prominent Americans. In the course of the conversation, Maurer said something like, "Well, all these Nineteenth Century economists were all right in their time (the previous conversation had led to this) but as for David Ricardo and John Stewart Mill and Karl Marx, what do they have to do with the modern world?" Now for a supposed true Marxist, a leader of the Communist Party, to say that Karl Marx had nothing to do with the modern world, was rather strange. I almost dropped my teeth at that remark. Maurer didn't push it further, he said it as sort of an aside. I don't think the other Americans even picked it up. But I was astounded by that, and I thought it very revealing as to Maurer's real thinking. Here was a man who had really lost his real commitment to Marxist theory. These people all remained in the leadership. They all remained Communists because it was the only thing to be. He'd been a Communist before the war. This kind of revelation wasn't true of Ceausescu. I never saw a difference between Ceausescu as an individual and Ceausescu in his public statements. He seemed fully committed to the official ideology; he always talked in the same propaganda jargon. I met with him on a number of occasions over the period I was there. I accompanied him to the United States for his invitation to the White House, took him around the country, sat in the airplane compartment with him as he flew around the eastern United States, had a long talk with him down at the Black Sea coast once for about an hour. This latter was sort of a tour d'horizon of the world. That took place

not because he was interested in my views, but because I was accompanying a very senior American visitor who Ceausescu wanted to talk to about foreign policy. But this man, although in the foreign policy field allegedly, was unable to converse on any foreign policy subject whatsoever. So it turned out that I sort of had to take over the conversation, not because I was trying to assert myself, but because the American side of the conversation had to be held up. While talking to Ceausescu on all these things, I would turn to the other fellow occasionally and say, "Don't you think so?" and things like that. Of course, this fellow would agree. He was totally incompetent really. One did have these opportunities to see Ceausescu fairly often.

Q: What was your impression of Ceausescu? When really now, I mean he was deposed and executed. So much of the stuff that has come out is extremely uncomplimentary about him.

MARTENS: He was also highly intelligent.

Q: One gets the picture that he wasn't highly intelligent.

MARTENS: For example, he had an extremely good grasp of almost every major issue in the world. He even referred in the Black Sea talk I mentioned to a visit I had made to the Foreign Ministry on a bilateral issue of no great consequence a day or two later, so he obviously had been briefed on it. He was able to carry on the conversation at a level of competence equal to the man who had specialized on the subject. So he was very able, very intelligent. The unfortunate thing that the old adage of Lord Acton applied, "All power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Even by my time Ceausescu was a terrible tyrant. I recall a man that was Ceausescu's interpreter. I had known him previously when he was already interpreting for Ceausescu but in the earlier phase he had a substantive job in the Foreign Ministry and I had dealt with him on one or two occasions on substantive matters. I saw this man on my visit down to the Black Sea coast. He accompanied the American VIP and myself as we walked from our quarters to Ceausescu's villa. Along the way he said, "God, I would do anything to get away from this man. This is the most oppressive environment that you could possibly imagine." He didn't say much more-- this is not an exact quote, but that's the idea. But he certainly left the impression that it was almost unbearable to work for Ceausescu. Ceausescu's ego- mania would come out in other ways. I mentioned the diplomatic hunts that I attended--two in the three years I was there.

Q: Diplomatic hunt was a...

MARTENS: ...was a hunt presided over by Ceausescu, It was also attended by other leading members of the Party and Government, and all the chiefs of mission were invited. Most of them went whether they actually hunted or not, and you'd spend a day out there. The interesting part was not the actual shooting, although that would go on, but at the end of it there would be a large tent about the size of a Quonset hut in which Ceausescu would hold forth with everybody, and it was a great opportunity to get insights into Ceausescu, and the leadership. There was even some chance to hear some interesting repartee. On my second diplomatic hunt I was given the place of honor even though I was a mere Chargé, and it was not because of me but part of an effort to put down the Soviet ambassador. They put the Soviet ambassador further down the line of huntsmen although he was really one of the more senior ambassadors there, and put me, a lowly Chargé

between Ceausescu and a man who had now become Prime Minister, Manea Manescu. Manea Manescu was by then number two in the regime. This is Manea Manescu not Corneliu Manescu that I mentioned earlier. At the previous diplomatic hunt, I had not participated in the shooting but this time I did--it was the first time I had used a firearm since I was a young man in the Army. At the end of the actual hunt, they laid out all the birds and hares that had been shot and then announced the results. The results were...and this may be slightly but not much off but this is the idea...the leading total game bagged by any hunter was, believe it or not, Ceausescu with 452. The second best was Manea Manescu, the Prime Minister with 105. Everybody else had an even five including all of the chiefs of mission there. So there was this need on Ceausescu's part to portray himself as the greatest of everything. And he was a good shot, of course, he had two people standing behind him with loaded guns and they kept handing one to him, and he would take one shot and hand it back, and take another one. Nevertheless, the whole thing was just an absolute farce.

Q: I read recently an account...I don't know if it's true or not, that he used to make trips to the various provinces, and they would always have to put a hunt on. And this was a terrible strain because the local huntsman would usually try to get...they would tame a bear, and then tranquilize it, and train it to go to people so that...Ceausescu, I mean at the time, they would blow a whistle and that would rumble the bear and Ceausescu then would shoot the bear. Because if he didn't get a bear, or a boar, or whatever one was supposed to get, he'd be very, very angry.

MARTENS: That could be, I don't know. I would take some of this with a grain of salt because there was a great effort afterward by people to put him down. He certainly was a good shot. He was a far better shot than I was, there's no question about that.

He also had a sense of humor. I remember at the first of these two diplomatic hunts that I attended, at the end there was a little ceremony where you sit in a kind of forest glade--I suppose a Romanian tradition--and the chief of the hunt would stand there with a little switch and spank, in a kind of jocular way, the people who were on the hunt for the first time. So anybody who had been there previously would not go through this, but the new ones had to go through it. The Soviet ambassador had been through it before so he didn't have to go through it, but there was a new Czech ambassador, a fairly elderly frail looking fellow, and as he got up to the place where he was to be spanked, Ceausescu with a big laugh turned and handed the switch to the Soviet ambassador, and said, "You're used to spanking the Czechs, why don't you do it?" It was really rather funny, and when I came up I said in Romanian something like--one of the great slogans of the regime then was, "Non-use of force or the threat of force." This phrase seemed to be practically every other sentence in their official pronouncements, so I said something like, "I thought you were in favor of non-use of force or the threat of force." That got a laugh.

Q: How did he react on his trip to the United States? We obviously put our best face forward. Did this seem to impress him? Or was he seeing it through Marxist eyes?

MARTENS: Incidentally with him were Manea Manescu who by now was the Prime Minister, and George Macovescu, the Foreign Minister, who I knew fairly well. There was a big state dinner at the White House.

Q: His wife, I assume, Elena, was with them.

MARTENS: Elena was along. The state dinner was a very formal affair. Earlier, the Nixons received the Romanian party in an upstairs sitting room. While Nixon was downstairs waiting to meet Ceausescu at the door of the White House I was upstairs with Kissinger, the chief of protocol, Manea Manescu, the Foreign Minister, and Mrs. Nixon. I have a high opinion of Mrs. Nixon from that meeting, by the way, not so high of Henry. Later on I went around the country with the Romanian visitors in Air Force one or its like. In the front of the airplane Ceausescu and his wife sat across from each other on one side of the aisle and on our side were Manea Manescu, Gheorghe Macovescu and myself. On the various flights, none of them very long--two or three hours, I suppose, but maybe four or five of these flights--it was obvious that the two senior Romanians were just scared to death of the two Ceausescus. They hardly talked. The two Ceausescus sat and talked to each other but not to the other two or to me. I got into an occasional conversation with Macovescu but it was all rather stilted. I probably should have gone into the back of the plane and let them all alone, but I thought this was a great opportunity to sit with them, and see what I could learn, or get some feel for these people. In fact I did have a couple of interesting conversations, particularly with Macovescu. It was clear that they were just scared to death of their leader and his wife. While the Ceausescus said very little to their subordinates, that little was rather curt and in a manner that kind of put them down. The difference of position and rank was very clear.

Q: Was he or his wife interested and say, "Okay, here's the city of Dallas. How does Dallas work?"

MARTENS: None of that at all. They were totally aloof, and kept to themselves throughout. Their interest when we got to the cities on the itinerary was mainly in seeing the big industrial concerns they were visiting and traipsing through, and, of course, they would ask technical questions of the guides in the various plants. And their other interest was in attending meetings that had been set up with Romanian-American groups. Again, this was all very formal, and there was a great distance between them and these local people, but there was this effort to show interest. Now there may have been things going on on the side that were not apparent. Certainly there were long-term efforts by the Romanian regime to penetrate these ethnic Romanian groups. However, I don't think that this particular visit contributed to any such effort very much, this was something that was done for the record, I think.

Q: What about when you were in Romania...

MARTENS: I was with a number of Soviet visiting groups in the past...I think I mentioned one in a previous interview...Soviet leaders who came to the United States at levels lower than the very top leadership-- ministers of this and that. During those experiences I found a lot of the Soviets very interested, and you could talk to them about the nature of Dallas or Cleveland, or whatever place it was.

Q: In Romania we obviously wanted Romania to be strong, and self-supportive. How did we feel about this reinvestment in Romania? Was this a concern to us because it turned out to be pretty

much a...particularly later on...pretty much of a disaster as far as what it did for the Romanians in this very rich country, and like so many of these it sort of brought it to...

MARTENS: Well, I think there was not a thing we could do about it. I mean Communist countries, in those days, they obviously had their own agenda, and there was no way you could influence them on their internal policies so it was out of the question to try and talk to them about it. Their own leaders couldn't talk to Ceausescu about it, at least successfully. It also probably should be said in fairness to Ceausescu's policy, that while all of us thought it was a mistake to go so far in squeezing the people to develop an industrial base, the degree to which that policy collapsed was influenced not only because of its inherent weaknesses but because of changes in the international economic picture. In other words, the failure was partially a result of the same things that happened in the world economy to get the Latin American countries, and Nigeria, and others in...

Q: Particularly the oil change in price.

MARTENS: The oil, but also the changes in interest rates, financial conditions, the terms of trade, the degree to which a country could count on income from the sale of commodities in one period and then find it changed in another period. All that kind of thing. In the early period, in other words, calculations were made on how much a country could sell abroad and what it would get for its exports and then how much it could safely borrow to meet its objectives. A country trying to pursue a high growth rate figured you could get ahead even faster if it borrowed heavily. So the Romanians borrowed heavily like everybody else. The Poles did it, all the Latin American countries, and so on, and they thought nothing was going to change, and they then could pay it back. I'm not an economist, but the situation changed radically and then it became very difficult to pay back. The Romanians encountered the same trouble as in Latin America, and in the same time period. Now one thing you have to say for Romania, is that they did pay it back. This can be said from both a favorable and an unfavorable standpoint. The unfavorable side is that they continued to squeeze the hell out of their population in order to do it, but from the standpoint of the outside world, they did pay off their debts while the other countries didn't. And they finally paid them all off in the latter part of the Ceausescu period.

It's worth saying I was later considered to go back as ambassador but it all fell through. I just wanted to say that, and get it over with.

JONATHAN B. RICKERT
Consular/Political Officer
Bucharest (1971-1974)

Jonathan Rickert was born and raised in Washington, DC and educated at Princeton and Yale Universities. After service in the US Army, he joined the Foreign Service in 1963, serving tours in both Washington and abroad. His foreign posts include London, Moscow, Port au Spain, Sofia and Bucharest, where he served as Deputy Chief of Mission. In his Washington assignments Mr.

Rickert dealt primarily with Eastern and Central European Affairs. Mr. Rickert was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

Q: You did language training and then you went to Bucharest.

RICKERT: That's right. I went through language training at FSI [Foreign Services Institute] with the famous Nicholai Kiakov, who taught generations of Romanian language students. It was a good experience in the sense that I went through with my future DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission] Bob Martins, the econ officer Don DeManti, with admin officer Del Shray, and with the consular officer who was my immediate supervisor or boss – although we were the same grade, he was a step above me – Frank Tumminia. So, we got to know each other, and those experiences can sometimes lead to unhappy beginnings, but in this case, everyone got on very well and it was a good beginning.

Q: So you went as a consular officer in Bucharest?

RICKERT: That's correct. After the course, I went to Sweden where my wife had gone a little bit earlier. We picked up a Volvo and drove to Romania, which was more of an adventure in those days than it would be today. And, we arrived shortly after Independence Day in July, '71. That was the beginning of the really fascinating chapter. If I add it all up, as it turns out later in my career, I ended up spending seven years in all in Romania, and nine years dealing exclusively with Romania and subsequently as a desk officer, then as director for the office which covered Romania another three years, where I spent most of my time in Romania because it was the problem child in that office. So, without any design or forethought, I ended up spending 12 years of my career doing solely or largely Romania. So, starting in July '71, it was the beginning of something that couldn't be foreseen at that time.

Q: Well, it certainly sounds like the Department's investment in you, in terms of the Romanian language instruction, was very well returned over the years. So what was happening, as far as consular work in Romania was concerned, when you first got there in July of '71?

RICKERT: Well, the section at that time was made up of two full time FSOs and one half-time Vice-Consul, who had other duties. We were doing about 2,000 NIVs a year, of which a number were chicken feed by today's standards. But, a number of them were done on the basis of diplomatic notes, which accompanied the passport – either a diplomatic passport, or what they called a service passport in Romania, the equivalent of an official passport. Those weren't interviewed, but everybody else was interviewed. Then we did a couple of hundred – I don't remember exact number – of immigrant visas a year, mostly immediate family members. It was a good situation for me in that because there weren't that many applicants, one could really interview them. My normal interviews lasted 15 minutes, instead of 15 seconds today. They ranged much beyond what was specifically necessary for the visa. Many people came from provinces, places that we could go to but where we weren't likely to spend much time. One could ask about living conditions and availability of food and other things. So, it was very useful from that standpoint. Also, linguistically it was very helpful because I barely scraped by with a 3-3 coming out of FSI. But, by the end of my tour in Romania I had a 4-4 in Romanian, and it

was largely due to the two years out of the three that I spent doing consular work where I used it all the time.

Q: Were you encouraged to do some political reporting based on some of these conversations you had?

RICKERT: Yes, we did some reporting, and since I hoped and did eventually move to the political section, I picked up odds and ends that the political officer couldn't handle for one reason or another. In those days, for those who remember that period, a lot of the reporting done at these Eastern European posts was based on press and media. So, some of it involved taking articles and translating them and evaluating them and taking them in context with a comment, and I did some of that. I also did ... since immigration was a growing issue and became an even bigger issue with the OSCE Treaty and Helsinki Treaty eventually in 1975, there was a lot of congressional interest and other interest by ethnic groups in the States and so forth. So, I did reporting on conditions for applicants for visas. I remember one airgram about difficulties that people told me about in even applying for passports. From the Romanian point of view, the first line of defense was to deny people a passport. Many of the people we spoke to would come in and complain that they couldn't get a passport and wanted our help with that, and we had to say as politely as we could that we're in the business of issuing visas and that we don't issue passports. While we feel their pain and understand your frustration, there's not a whole lot that we can do to get your passport.

I remember doing one report on the excuses that were given to people and the ways in which people bought places in line ... all the things that anyone who has lived in an economy of shortages knows. It's the same tricks, same problems and it was a real eye opening for someone coming from a country where if you wanted a passport, you went to the post office or elsewhere and got a form, filled it in and got it as a matter of course; it was a right. There, it was a matter of chicanery and bribery and good luck and a whole bunch of other things, over which the applicant himself or herself really had very little control.

Q: Did you do some control in the country?

RICKERT: Fortunately, yes. Our ambassador, the first ambassador there, was Len Meeker, the former legal advisor in the Department of State, who was a career civil servant and was really an excellent ambassador. He worked very hard on his Romanian, used it extensively, and was a man of high intellect and very high standards in general. He encouraged everyone to travel for any reason or no reason. As a consequence, one way or another, I visited every city in Romania of a 100,000 people or more, except for one, which I still haven't visited after all these years. Bucharest had, if I recall correctly, at that time, a million and a half people. Due to the Communist policy of spreading industry around the country, there were a dozen or more cities with somewhere in the range of 100,000 people. This was planned growth. I was able to visit virtually all of them. Of course, most of the travel was done by car, so you got to see a lot in between.

Q: How open was the country for a diplomat, an American diplomat, at this point? Did you feel under surveillance all the time? To what extent could you have – socially or otherwise – have

contact with the Romanians?

RICKERT: It was about as most open during the post-WWII period because Richard Nixon had visited in 1969 and that had been a major event for Romania and for U.S.-Romania relations. There's one little anecdote that if I didn't say it in the Soviet part, I ought to say here, because it's important historically.

Nixon came to Moscow in the spring of 1968 as part of his effort to raise his profile as an international statesman as he prepared to run for the presidency. When he got there, the Soviets ... in effect, he was in the Soviet Union for a week. Virtually no one saw him. He was completely frozen out. He tried to see Khrushchev, which of course was turned down. He tried to see luminaries in the current government. Nobody saw him. Ambassador Thompson had to be very creative to find things for a high-powered American former vice president to do. I remember he held a reception for the American and foreign journalists. He held representational dinners with diplomats. He sent him off to central Asia to visit that area. Nixon, by all appearances, bore this very ... well, he didn't complain in my hearing. He stayed at the residence and I was living at the residence. I had several meals with him, so I heard him speak. He was very correct about this, but I looked in his memoirs and he hasn't said – I haven't been able to find anything much about it – the fact is, when he became President ... Oh! After he left the Soviet Union he went to Bucharest and he was treated as a – and this is in 1968 – he was treated like a sitting president. They pulled out all stops, everything the best. Huge crowds, warm reception, everything else. Then when he became president and had a chance to decide where to start his official traveling, it wasn't to Moscow which would have been the logical place, it wasn't to Warsaw, which politically might have been an appropriate place to go. It was to Bucharest: first U.S. president ever to visit. The Romanians never forgot that and always had a very high regard for Nixon because they felt he, in effect, put them on the map and gave them a chance to demonstrate what they wished were true, that they were not under the Soviet thumb.

Q: Okay, you mentioned that in your third year, you became a political officer in Bucharest, is there anything else that you want to say about the consular two years before we move on?

RICKERT: Well, there were a lot of interesting things that happened. Although access to the consulate was controlled, it was amazing who got through. I think, sometimes by design, people who were mentally unstable were allowed to come through. We ended up interviewing people who at first looked to be normal and sensible but the more you talk with them the more you found that they were from other planets. I remember one guy who came in who told me very confidentially that he had a method of launching rockets with psychic power. I said, oh that's very interesting, can you give me any information on it? He said, "Well, I have all of the information and I'm willing to demonstrate it once I reach the United States." So he wasn't completely crazy. There were others who were being attacked by rays of various sorts who had the authorities putting substances in their bread ... a whole range of these folks. I assumed the consulate was bugged so I can only imagine the *securitante* there ... the local KBG folks sitting back, listening to the tapes of the poor consulate officers dealing with these well-known local unbalanced people and seeing how we handled them for better or for worse.

There were also people who wanted help in defecting, help getting out of the country. I remember one guy who came through who claimed he walked from Russia--he was Russian. He crossed the Prut by swimming and had walked to Bucharest and was going to keep walking until he could cross the Danube into Yugoslavia and go west. He was a rather Rasputin-like character. I immediately informed the DCM Bob Martins about him, and Bob, who had spent time in the Soviet Union and had great sympathy for Russians informally – and I'm sure contrary to regulations – passed the hat in the embassy; people put in some money which we gave to this gentleman for his onward journey. He was definitely Russian, but how much of the rest of the story was true, no one knows. There were those types of things that were very interesting.

One of the most interesting things I did as a consulate officer was interviewing the small number of people who, because of U.S. political pressure or because of family ties or because of successful bribing of the appropriate person were able to get passports and exit visas to immigrate to the States. These people usually had relatives in the States, and we would interview them, and one question would always be, obviously: are you or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party? Many of them, I'm sure, lied through their teeth and there was no way that we could check it, but a surprising number said, "Yes, I was a member." There was a system in place for those cases to be referred to Washington for adjudication as to whether or not they – within the meaning of the law – had been involuntary members. Washington at that time was very liberal with these cases, and most of the people who applied – actually, all of them – were judged to be involuntary. They claimed that they needed to be party members in order to maintain their job or for education or whatever ... One must remember that the Romanian party was a mass party of about three million in numbers out of the population of 22, 23 million people. There was an open door policy. A lot of people entered voluntarily and a lot of people were sort of swept in.

The most trying case for me, the only one where I knowingly, probably broke the law was with a Jewish gentleman. We talked about his background and I asked him if he had been a party member and he told me yes. I asked, "Why did you join?" And he said, "Because I believed." The *only* wrong answer. I said, how is that? And he said that his family was from northern Transylvania, which was under Hungarian control during WWII. They had all been sent off to the camps and killed and he was about 18 at the end of the war. He said to him it looked as though there were only two alternatives politically: Communism or Fascism. Fascism had killed his family. Communism promised a better future, so he joined the party. He was in the party for two or three years, went to a university, and he said he quickly found out that it wasn't what he thought it was. He couldn't fulfill the requirement under the law that he had resigned ... he would have had to have resigned and worked actively against the party in order to qualify as an involuntary member. But, he just stopped paying his dues. In Romania and other countries in those days, they periodically checked the list of members and those who didn't pay their dues were dropped from the roles and that was that. That was what happened to him. He had never been a party member afterwards. But I was very moved by his story, which, if I followed the law precisely and exactly, would have meant that he could not get a visa. I told him that as far as I was concerned he was an involuntary member and I hoped on reaching the United States he would never say anything to the contrary. I concluded that it would be a moral injustice, if not a legal one, for somebody who told, or appeared to be telling, a 100% truth to be kept out, while scores of people who lied through their teeth were allowed in.

There were others. I remember a woman who was a very simple woman; worked in a sewing factory, a clothing factory. She told me that she was told by her boss, "You're one of the best workers. You have to join." "But I don't want to join." "You have to join." "But I go to church every Sunday." "It doesn't matter. You can be a church-goer and be a party member." This was out in the provinces someplace, so she joined. It seemed to me that she was very clearly an involuntary member. There was another fellow from northern Romania who said he joined. He was married with two kids who all lived in one room. He said that the party recruiter told him that he could get two rooms if he joined the party. He joined, and he said, "I'm still in one room." So, there were a lot of things that went on. I think U.S. law at the time might have made very good sense for former Communists from the UK or France or Britain, but it didn't make a lot of sense for former members who are living in totalitarian environments.

Q: To what extent, did you as consular officer, get involved with American citizens, travelers, residents, or anyone else?

RICKERT: I did visas, and my colleague did American citizen services. When he was gone, I covered for him, so I did a few of those cases. But I would say that more than 95% of my work was tied up in visas. We had roughly, if I recall correctly, around 500 dual nationals living in Romania, whose parents had immigrated to the States after WWI, who were born in the States. Then, when the depression came, their parents usually lost their jobs and then returned to Romania in order to survive, really. So they were American-born. We consider them to be U.S. citizens; the Romanians consider them to be Romanian citizens. One of our bi-lateral issues was pursuing the interest of these people in returning to the United States. We did this on periodic lists that we forwarded to the foreign ministry. Usually there was no movement on our list. But occasionally there would be a high level American visitor coming. In Romanian fashion, there would be an effort by the Romanians to please the visitor and some names would be approved and they would go off to the States. Unfortunately, many of these people didn't speak English. They were American in name and passport, but they had come back as small children or infants so they really knew nothing about the United States and sometimes, I'm afraid, went with really unrealistic expectations as to what they would find when they arrived here.

Q: They were given American passports, of course?

RICKERT: Right.

Q: Did the Romanians – you consider them Romanian citizens – recognize that?

RICKERT: No. In many cases it wasn't a requirement. Many of those who left as immigrants from Romania either wanted to or were forced to or felt they ought to renounce their Romanian citizenship. There was a method whereby they could pay what was a large fee in those days for such poor people, and apply to divest themselves of their Romanian citizenship. They were given a passport document that looked like a regular passport except it had a brown cover and it said: "*f_r_cet__enie*" – for those without citizenship – it's stateless, in other words. Many people who came in for immigrant visas, came in with the brown passport. Others, when they got to the States, would apply to renounce their citizenship, even though we explained that as far as the

U.S. was concerned, what citizenship the Romanians considered them to have was irrelevant, particularly once they got to the United States. It could only be relevant if they were ever to return to Romania as a visitor or something like that. That was a little quirk in the work that we had there.

Q: Well, I think in 1973 you went to the political section. What did you do there? Maybe we can talk now a little bit more about the general state of Romanian-American relations and Romania's place in Eastern Europe and also as it relates, I suppose, to the Middle East. This was about the time of a major Middle East war.

RICKERT: I mentioned that I arrived in July, 1971. At the time President Ceausescu was traveling in the Far East. He went to Beijing and Pyongyang and maybe some other places. By all accounts, since the revolution, people have determined that it was the real turning point in his political development. With hindsight, people have concluded that he was very impressed, especially with what he saw in Pyongyang, North Korea, which was a country on a much closer scale to that of Romania than that of China. He was reputed to have liked the hero-worship of the Korean people, the discipline, the order, the way things worked. I don't know what he was shown; it probably had a turnout of dancers and singers and marchers and ... demonstrators of the controlled Communist variety, not of the uncontrolled American variety. With hindsight, we can see that Romania's long slide into more of a repressive internal situation probably did begin after that visit. So it was an important time. We did not see that at that time. There were a few measures taken when he got back. He banned Western Rock and Roll from the radios, and people were a little bit more nervous about contacts for a bit, but it kind of blew over and people thought, "Well, it was just a temporary aberration." There really was a lot of optimism in the early '70s that things were going to get better and Romania would move more in a Yugoslav direction than anything else. Romania had good relations with Yugoslavia. Tito and Ceausescu got on well; they had similar aspirations in certain ways, and similar concerns. So it was disappointing to see over the subsequent years that there was a long slide towards what was probably, after Albania, the most repressive regime in central Eastern Europe.

As you mentioned, I moved to the political section in the summer of '73. Ed Mainland was the supervisory political officer over me. A lot of what we did was working with the press and media to try to discern what was going on inside the country. There was a lot of the Romanian version of Kremlinology--tea leaf reading. Romanian officials were largely available, but not terribly open. You could get meetings and you could talk with them, but they really kept very closely to the party line in those respects, and who can blame them? One false step and they could find themselves in the outer provinces some place. It's interesting to note that the present President of Romania, Ion Iliescu, was a member, at the time I arrived, of the political executive bureau, which was the Romanian equivalent of the politburo. He was not, by all accounts, in favor of the Ceausescu line. In Romanian fashion, he wasn't sent off to a prison camp or anything like that, but he was steadily demoted through the '70s and '80s until, at the time of the revolution, he was heading a publishing house in Bucharest, a scientific publishing house. But he went through provincial party leadership posts and then was dropped from the central committee and gradually got by until he was -- he wasn't kicked out of the party -- he was, I guess from Ceausescu's point of view, de-fanged as a potential rival. That was another sign in retrospect of the way in which things were going.

Q: As the junior political officer, were you doing mostly internal domestic things, as you say, particularly, reading the tea leaves and the newspapers?

RICKERT: Did that, and also a lot of sharing of information with our diplomatic colleagues. Everyone had access to little pieces of the picture. In Communist times, I'm sure not only in Romania but in all of those countries, there were much closer relationships with the friendly embassies, NATO in particular, but also neutrals like Sweden and Switzerland. Often you would find, on a particular issue, perhaps the Egyptians or the Japanese or somebody else would be particularly well-informed. One spent a lot of time exchanging information with colleagues. In the case of NATO colleagues, there were regular meetings which we pooled our ignorance and try to turn it in to something that was less than ignorant. Whenever there were visits--and the Romanians did promote visits as part of their effort to increase their independence in foreign policy independence. If anyone came at a high level from any country, it was quite possible that one would pick up tidbits from talking to official dinners or other things with ministers with party officials and so forth, but not at my level. The ambassadors and the senior people would. Those tidbits were shared extensively within these semi-official circles that we had and contributed to the overall analysis.

So, what we were trying to do was to figure out in what way Romania was going. That was done through the press and through these personal contacts of one sort or another and also, of course, to influence it. One of the main influences that we had was visits, and there were a number of visits to Romania during my time there. Congress found Romania to be somewhat sexy. Hugh Scott came. He was the Republican Senate leader of the time. Ted Kennedy came. I was his "control officer," if that misnomer can be used; no one controlled Ted Kennedy. He was accompanied by his foreign policy advisor at the time, Bob Hunter, who eventually became Ambassador to NATO, and a fascinating character named Jim King. He was head of personnel in the Carter administration and one of the most interesting political operatives I had ever come across ... There were many others who came. There was a delegation of governors with Dale Bumpers and Marvin Mandel for example. I remember David Rockefeller came. There were hopes that Romania would open up economically and provide a venue for American investment, and Rockefeller came for that purpose. Secretary of State William Rogers came at one point. We had been working on a bi-lateral consular convention with Romanians for a long time. Frank Tumminia, the other consular officer, and I were negotiating this with the head of Romania's consular division, a Mr. Bodesco who was a particularly dour and inflexible gentleman. All the negotiating, by the way, we did in Romania. But we weren't getting very far very fast, and we heard one day that Rogers would be coming and he wanted something to sign. So it was determined that the consular convention would be the thing to sign. So State's Legal Bureau, "L", sent out a lawyer, Phil Shamwell, to help us with the negotiations. All of the issues on which we had been told to say "no, no, no" suddenly became "yes, yes, yes" and we quickly came to an agreement on a consular convention which was duly signed during Secretary Rogers' visit. One little aside: I won't toot my horn on this, but it was negotiated in Romania and then translated into English. I got the Romanian text the night before it was to be signed and my Romanian was far from perfect, but after it was signed I did find a couple of little mistakes in it which I pointed out to the Romanians and they were embarrassed. Phil said "No, there isn't a mistake" and I insisted, then he said, "Well, we accept that the text could be interpreted in the

way in which you interpreted it.” So we had to go through the whole ring-a-roll of mending the treaty which involved exchanges of notes and a lot of other things which was a lot of work. It taught me a lesson about reading not only the large print, but also the fine print. These were not points that would have caused problems in U.S.-Romanian relations but they were, in effect, typos – slightly worse than typos – but they shouldn’t have been in a treaty that was going to be considered by a Senate of the United States.

Q: Were the same mistakes in the English version or the Romanian?

RICKERT: Oh, no, no. It was in the Romanian.

Q: You talked some about the independent foreign policy line Romania was trying to follow at that time. Why don’t you talk a little bit more about that, how did that manifest, what did you see of Soviet pressures, the Soviet role in Romania as far as foreign policy was concerned, or anything else?

RICKERT: Yes. The Soviets had the largest embassy by far, and had very good access through Romania. But through a number of means, including those about which we don’t discuss, it was clear to the leadership of the embassy at the time that the desire of Romania was to strike an independent direction in foreign policy – a reasonably independent direction. They weren’t trying to get out of the Warsaw Pact or anything like that – but to create for themselves some room for maneuver was genuine. For example, during the 1973 war, the Arab-Israeli war, all of the Eastern Europeans except Romania broke relations with Israel. Romania was the first country, and for a long time the only Warsaw-Pact country, to have diplomatic relations with the Federal Republic of Germany. The relations with the United States were conducted in a way which was very different from the way Czechoslovakia or Hungary or even Poland conducted their relations. How much of this was symbolic and superficial and how much was genuine? Scholars of the future will have to say. But it seemed to me, even at my low level, that this was a possible crack in the Warsaw Pact that the United States government decided that it was worth trying to exploit. Therefore, a lot more attention was given to Romania as a country then it would otherwise have garnered as a medium-sized, not terribly important, satellite of the Soviet Union.

The Soviets, to my mind, were smart enough to apply their pressure for the most part privately. We’d see the indirect signs of it, but we wouldn’t see terribly direct signs. I had a theory, which I can’t prove, that among the satellites, the Soviets were willing to allow a certain degree of independence in domestic policy, as happened in Hungary with the various loosening up of socialist orthodoxy on the economic side, or foreign policy as happened in Romania, but never both in the same country. Romania, while it was doing a number of things in the foreign policy area, allowing ethnic Germans to immigrate to West Germany, allowing Jews to immigrate to Israel, both done for a price by the way ... these people were in effect bought out. But allowing them to go – which wasn’t happening in the other countries – Romania was allowed to get away with these things, while, at the same time, it was pursuing a very tough and orthodox internal policy. There was no danger of parties arising that would be contrary to the Communist party, or solidarity movements rising, or Charter ‘77 movements, or any of the other kinds of manifestations that eventually occurred in the more western of the central European countries. So, I think – and this is purely opinion – that the Soviets were willing to tolerate a certain amount

of independence in the foreign policy field as long as they kept their lid on very tightly domestically, which they certainly did.

Q: Would you say that our approach then, in that context, was to perhaps follow a different policy towards Romania than towards other Eastern European countries to encourage more independence to try to take advantage of it, to try to have more visits ... perhaps to treat Romania differently on the one hand, but on the other, really not take very much interest in their internal situation. The repressive internal: that was not a major issue for us at that time until sometime later, I thought.

RICKERT: That's right, not in the early '70s. I think, from my perspective, our focus was on the foreign policy side. Human rights, to my recollection, became a really important matter in U.S. foreign policy with the advent of President Carter. Not that it was missing before then, but Carter was the one who raised it to the top of the agenda in our relations with many countries, including those of Central and Eastern Europe. Before then, of course, we talked about our values and we talked about the need for greater freedom and independence and, of course, greater movement of people and so forth. But we didn't apply the same pressures on Romania, which is the one that I can speak of from direct experience, as we did later. Part of that was due to, of course, to the Helsinki Agreement. We talked about the freedom of movement and that was something that became very important post '75 but it was really, from my perspective, it was Carter who kind of gave that whole basket of issues the prominence that it eventually had. Internally, we watched, and we, of course, raised issues, particularly issues that we learned of: persecution for religious beliefs or other such things in individual cases. But it was a smaller part of our effort at that time than it became subsequently.

Q: Okay, anything else you want to say about this first tour in Bucharest, '71 to '74?

RICKERT: Romanians are cautious, but their innate friendliness really overcame a lot of their inhibitions. They wouldn't flaunt it, but they wanted to be friendly with the United States and with Americans and with other foreigners. We were able to develop friendships with people in the '70s which have persisted to this time, not with official or government people, but with cultural people. We became good friends with Romania's leading painter, a man named Cornelia Bobba who died a few years ago in his '90s and whose widow is still alive in Bucharest and whom I see every time I go there. Another painter who we got to know, he did a portrait of my wife, which we treasure, another painter was ... a man named Yardges Billedon who was not of the same level of painter, but was a wonderful human being whom we resumed contact with again after returning later in this saga. They invited us to their homes, which didn't happen in the Soviet Union, and was not to happen in Bulgaria when we went there. We developed close relations with a number of the FSNs [Foreign Service Nationals] on a personal level. There were others that we were able to associate with, and these people always behaved correctly on political matters. They told us later when we returned later, with a great grin, that they had to report on our meetings, which we knew. But they apologized for doing this, and it was the only way that they could maintain contact, which was to provide information on our not very political conversations.

Another thing was the closeness of the diplomatic corps in Bucharest. Not only did we share information together and help each other out professionally in a lot of different ways, but also we socialized to a great extent. There was a lot of creativity that went in to the parties that were given. One, I remember, was held in a cabana up in the mountains. It was a farewell for a very popular British diplomat. About 50 people gathered up there. He was hiking with some friends, which led to this place and half of the younger to younger-middle aged diplomatic corps was waiting in the cabana for him and we had a great party there. There were other parties with themes and events: scavenger hunts, which drove the Romanian secret police mad. In fact, we were told after one that we should not engage in such activity because it was disrupting them. People chasing around Bucharest in cars at high speeds at all times of the day and night trying to get ... I don't know what but ...

Q: Following clues ...

RICKERT: Following clues! So, that was certainly one of the happy memories. Another thing that was really typical of Romania at that time, which was also typical of other countries in the region, was the political jokes. The Romanians were very adept at circulating these jokes, even people who probably shouldn't have. But it was one of their outlets. I still remember some of them. In fact, you asked what I did in the political section. One of our periodic airgrams was a collection of political jokes collected from all sections at the embassy and put together in an airgram about once a quarter and sent in. I thought sometimes that I really ought to go to the declassification center and fish these out, I mean, because I know Moscow and other posts did the same and put them in to a publication of some sort because there were little gems there.

In 1972, Romania and United States ended up as the finalists to the Davis Cup which was played in Bucharest. The match was played on clay, which was nothing sinister there. Romanians learn on clay. Americans prefer hard courses. Our Davis Cup team was not delighted with the prospect of playing the Romanians on clay in Bucharest. But we went to a number of the matches and it was an extremely exciting Davis Cup.

Another thing I remember: A journalist used to show up from time to time. In one case, my boss was out, the head of the political section. A rather – not terribly – well known, Time magazine reporter named Strobe Talbott appeared. I took him home for lunch to my apartment. We lived in an all-Romanian building on the fifth floor in a one bedroom apartment. It was a nice apartment, but the elevator didn't work most of the time, which was a bit of a hindrance. But the first thing that Strobe did when he came in was look at my bookcase. I had then the two volumes of Khrushchev Remembers, which he had translated from the Russian. I remember he remarked on my excellent taste in books. He was based in Belgrade at that time and used to cover the region and came to Bucharest on occasion. Romanians never forget. I remember going with a group of embassy colleagues to Snagov Monastery, which was about 30 miles north of Bucharest. It was where the remains of Vlad Tepes – Vlad the Impaler – are buried. He is, of course, the model for Dracula – the extensive literature that has ensued from Vlad Tepes. There was a monk at this monastery who was showing us around. It was a ruin, but it was looked after by a monk. He showed us a grave, or a reputed grave, with great awe and dignity. Someone asked him, "Well didn't he impale a lot of people? Why do you consider him to be such a hero?" "Oh, he only impaled Turks."

So, that was good enough for him.

Q: [Chuckle] You mentioned that Leonard Meeker was the ambassador when you were in the consular section in the early period. Was he there throughout your time or did somebody come in?

RICKERT: He was there for two years, or a better part of two years. And then Bob Martins became chargé for an extended period close to a year. Then Harry Barnes came, by my recollection, February '74. By his recollection, March '74. But, in any case, he came in the early part of '74. We were together then for three or four months. Harry, of course, had been DCM at an earlier time before Meeker, when Nixon had come to Romania, and had, in fact, ended up being Nixon's interpreter because the U.S. government interpreter turned out not to be able to handle the job. So Harry got some well-deserved prominence from that particular incident at that time and still spoke excellent Romanian, which he still speaks today.

Q: Okay, anything else about Bucharest?

RICKERT: Well, Romania is a beautiful country – with wonderful mountain landscapes, attractive seashores, rural areas that are still very much 19th century in many respects ... One of the unique treasures of Romania are the monasteries in Moldova, which are Orthodox monasteries. They are famous for their frescos. Well, most Orthodox monasteries are famous for their frescos one way or another, but the ones in Moldova – and there are many of them – are famous because the frescos are not only painted on the inside of the church but also on the external walls. They have been maintained quite well. They used colors, apparently; no one knows exactly ... The blues are supposed to be made from ground-up lapis lazuli and other mineral colors that don't fade. So visiting the monasteries was one of the memorable experiences. My wife and I drove up once with a Swedish DCM and his wife, and we, as one could, stayed at the monasteries and ate meals there and then drove around. Although the Romanians had an official anti-religion policy as in any other areas, it was not enforced because the Orthodox Church was so much a part of their national history and their national culture. Even party members told me in many cases ... I was married in a registry office in Bucharest, but, of course, I went back to my village for a church wedding. Of course, my children were baptized in the village, never in Bucharest, always in the village. That part of Romanian culture was still very much alive.

Easter in Romania was something fantastic in the '70s. Churchgoing was discouraged, and churches in Bucharest were mainly attended by older people and very young people, children, grandparents and others who didn't have official positions. But at Easter, my wife and I would usually go around, the services start at ten and it would be over after midnight. We would drive around and visit three or four churches and the churches would be packed. One custom that I didn't see in Bulgaria or Russia, it may be a common custom but ... in Romania, at the end of the Easter service, each member of the congregation takes a candle and goes up to the Pascal Candle at the front of the church and lights it. The tradition, in Romania at least, is that if you get home with it, if the candle is still lit, it's good luck for the next year. So, after the services were over, we would be driving around in Bucharest, and we'd see trams with people with their candles,

people in taxis with their candles. We even saw couples necking on park benches with their candles. As I had written elsewhere, it's impossible to say how religious any country is. But of the Communist countries that I had any association with, and one way or another it was many of them, Romania was more open with its maintenance of Orthodox traditions, including people crossing themselves when they passed a church on the street, and so forth. Probably in Roman Catholic Poland it was on the same level or a higher level. Of the Orthodox countries, there was none other that I saw that degree of maintenance, or at least many of the outer signs of their Orthodox past.

Q: Could you say anything about, in this period, the early '70s, Romania's relationships with its immediate neighbors? Hungary, Bulgaria?

RICKERT: Yeah. I was struck by the degree to which Romanians were totally ignorant of Bulgaria. I served later in Bulgaria, so I had the chance to see the same phenomenon from the same perspective. I often remarked that Romanians knew a lot more about the U.S. than they knew about Bulgaria, and I found out later that the Bulgarians knew a lot more about, say, the Federal Republic of Germany than they knew about Romania despite the fact that they were members of the same comicon, Warsaw Pact. The Romanians knew a lot about Hungary and didn't like what they knew. Hungary occupied northern Transylvania during WWII. There was a fear of irredentism. Although Hungarians and Romanians got on perfectly well on a human level, there was always a feeling of unease. Romanians did like the Yugoslavs. They felt they were rather maverick brethren, in a sense, perhaps, somewhat of an insurance policy for their own maverick tendencies. Then, for the rest of their neighbors, it was the Soviet Union. The longest border was the Soviet Union. I heard in the '90s, when people have asked senior Romanian officials who their best neighbor was, I heard the comment which could equally apply probably to the '70s when I was there the first time. This was the then foreign minister speaking in the early '90s. He thought for a moment and said: "Our best neighbor is the Black Sea."

MARTEN VAN HEUVEN
Romania and Albania Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1973-1974)

Marten Van Heuven was born in the Netherlands in 1932. He received his BA and LLB from Yale University and his MIA from Columbia University. His positions abroad included Berlin, Brussels, The Hague, Bonn and Geneva. Charles Stuart Kennedy interviewed him on January 31, 2003.

Q: Today is March 11, 2003. You were doing Romania and Albania from '73 to when?

VAN HEUVEN: For two years, '73 and '74.

Q: What were relations with Albania and what were our concerns with Albania during this period?

VAN HEUVEN: The answer is very simple. We had no relations with Albania. We hadn't had relations since 1945. Of course, there had been no effective relations even earlier, during World War II. But it was a country that was aligned mostly with communist China. It was an outcast in the European Communist bloc. It was a closed country. There was very little news coming out of it. There were few people going into it, certainly not Americans. There was an Albanian diaspora in the United States in Brooklyn and in Worcester, Mass., and somewhere in the middle west as well, but they didn't constitute any significant presence in domestic political terms. There was nobody on the Hill of Albanian extraction, nor was there any particular interest in Albania in Congress.

Q: All this is terribly important in the American context of things. All you need is one congressperson or chief of staff in an important committee who's got an Albanian connection and you've got a policy.

VAN HEUVEN: We did have the occasional appearance in Washington of the son of King Zog, a gentleman of enormous length and stature named Leka. I think his nationality was Australian. He had some property here in Virginia and from time to time he appeared and sought recognition on the Hill, without much success. I never met him and he was never a factor in our relationship with Albania.

Q: Was there any talk during your time about opening relations with Albania? We hadn't had relations with China and all of a sudden this was a period we were beginning to start to do that.

VAN HEUVEN: It was generally recognized that any opening to Eastern Europe was far off, and that in that process Albania would be at the bottom of the list. The country had no strategic significance for us, except perhaps as a political outpost for Chinese communism in contradistinction to Soviet communism. In that sense, it was of interest to us, since Albania was a thorn in the Soviet communist side. That is about as far as it went. I did address the issue of relations with Albania in an article I wrote at the time. It got approved for publication. It was a minor thing. It was a speculative piece, making the point that resumption of relations would be a slow process. But there was no basis for believing that this was going to happen anytime soon.

Q: Let's go to Romania. This was really your work, wasn't it?

VAN HEUVEN: Romania was really my work. It was a full-time job. Desk officers catch all sorts of stray cats and dogs, so they're never lost for things to do. Romania was clearly in the lower tier of those countries that the European Bureau was looking after. For me it was a complete change of pace. I had been in high pressure, high visibility posts as a junior officer. Here I was basically in charge of a very minor slice of the pie. It just gave me a different role. Compared to the two immediately preceding years in ACDA, working conditions were much better, because at least they were sort of 8:30 to 5:30 and not on the weekends. I was at that point 30 years old and this job gave me my first experience in bilateral diplomacy. So a whole lot of things were new to me. For instance, the role of the care and feeding of the needs of the post, which would extend from personnel matters to matters having to do with guidance and policy. A lot of them were pretty pedestrian issues, the typical management of how to keep a post going in a difficult climate overseas. Given the communications and unlike the posts I had been used to,

where we did everything by cable, the guts of my office's exchanges with Embassy Bucharest consisted of an exchange by letters via pouch, which I would produce every Friday and which the DCM, my opposite number at the embassy, would produce every Thursday. And so each week there was mail crossing in the pouch. That kept me and the post apprized as to what was going on and what we did. Looking back it was a strange way of operating. Today, this would all be done by cable traffic or classified e-mail. But we were still relying very much on the pouch in those days.

Q: When you arrived on the desk, what were you getting from your colleagues of how we looked upon Ceausescu?

VAN HEUVEN: That was a subject that did not take a long time getting used to. There were two things about Ceausescu. One was that he was a dictator of a particularly unpleasant and virulent kind. The other was that he had been kind to Richard Nixon when Nixon had been out of office. Consequently, as president Nixon had residual good feelings away from the fact that he had been treated well by Ceausescu during his years in the political wilderness. So there was a paradox. My two visits to the post certainly underlined the first of these two observations. I saw a very repressive regime in action, this time not an East German one but in a way an even nastier one. At least it wasn't directly dependent on Moscow. It was something of its own and it was a pity to see a country with rich cultural history and an elegant language, and made up of interesting and nice people, suppressed by a person of the type of Ceausescu. But we did deal with Ceausescu. In fact, Ceausescu came to the United States on a state visit during my time on the desk. All the stops were pulled out. He was in fact the last state visitor to the Nixon White House. I remember the sunny day, the band on the lawn of the White House. As the desk officer, Ruth and I were at the tail end of the receiving line. I still have a picture of that. Both Ceausescus were there. After the visit, we had lots of stories to tell about how difficult the retinue were that the Ceausescus brought along, and how paranoid they were about themselves and their security. They were also socially ill at ease and maladroit. The Nixons also looked uncomfortable. So, it was an interesting sight to see those four on the White House lawn, not knowing how to deal with one another in a nice way. It was really like a stage set of Japanese puppets.

Q: I've heard that the Ceausescus were not a fun couple to entertain for those who were trying to make their visit a pleasant one.

VAN HEUVEN: She was a pill and he was something slightly less than a pill. There were no smiles, no laughs. It was all seriousness. Of course, in that environment they were on strange territory and would have been ill at ease even under normal circumstances. But they were not fun. Some of the other Romanians I dealt with were of a different sort. The Romanian ambassador in Washington, Corneliu Bogdan, was a wise and considerate diplomat. He was one of the few Jews in the Romanian service. After the turn of events in Europe, he played a major role, but only very briefly because he had a heart attack and died. This was a pity for his country and for him. Some of the embassy personnel were cultivated, I had good relations with them, and I saw them fairly regularly. I discovered later that one of them had already been turned by my colleagues in the Agency, eventually received political asylum, and disappeared into the woodwork of American society.

That said, Romania posed problems for us. They targeted our people, sometimes successfully. The Romanian security services were excellent. We had difficulties in that respect. The methods were the traditional ones, basically operating with knowledge of personal behavior that could lead to-

Q: Compromising pictures?

VAN HEUVEN: Those were compromising conversations, pictures, other situations. We had to be very careful. On my first visit there, I was put up in a hotel. Within half an hour they changed my room. Then, the embassy decided that I'd better go and stay with the DCM. So it was just like East Germany. I knew I was being bugged, being watched. I took a trip with John Baker and Jonathan Rickert, our control officer, through Romania, visiting the German-speaking part of the country. I was surprised and pleased to find that German was the predominant language in some areas. Many left before the events of 1990 and managed to emigrate back to Germany. Still there is a good German residue in Romania, a Lutheran German minority. It is a beautiful country. It was very poor. And very poorly run.

Q: Were we looking at the country as being itself poor? Romania had oil, not a lot, but solid oil. It had what must have been terribly fertile country at the mouth of the Danube and the delta and all that. Or maybe it wasn't as rich as it would seem.

VAN HEUVEN: It wasn't as rich as it would seem. The oil was there and it was a source of income. The facilities, however, were antiquated and the industry was in bad shape. I don't recall the agricultural situation except that there was no hunger. This suggested to me that the Romanians produced enough to feed themselves. But the Securitate was everywhere and it was a society that was deathly afraid of their neighbors, or anyone else. There were many informers. The penalties for being caught as a nonconformist were severe. They would not get shot, but life could be made very unpleasant if you did not conform.

Q: Were there some of these social things that one heard about later on, about promoting children, the production of children without really taking care of them and social engineering? Or did that come later?

VAN HEUVEN: We found out about that later. At the time, we didn't really know about that simply because we didn't have that sort of access. None of the western diplomats in Romania did. The embassies did a lot of talking to each other. There was one diplomatic club, where everybody went for entertainment - tennis, swimming. You needed permission to go on a trip. There was tight control over what the foreign diplomatic establishment could do, observe, and help with.

I ought to mention Harry Barnes. My time on the desk spanned two ambassadors. One was Leonard Meeker, for whom I worked before in L. At that time he was assistant legal adviser. He became deputy legal adviser and eventually Legal Adviser. Following that, he became ambassador to Romania. On my first visit, he and his wife, Beverley, were in residence in Bucharest. I remember the visit because, ahead of their times, Beverley had put up "no smoking" signs in the residence. This was a shocking thing, because every Romanian smoked. A lot of the

Westerners did, too. But she was an environmentally conscious person and insisted on her way. Barnes was an activist ambassador. I went through getting him prepped in Washington before he went out, and got a measure of him. A marvelous man full of energy, imagination, and boundless ideas. It turned out that he was so good at reaching out to Romanians - the few that he could reach out to in his time as chief of mission - that when the time came for him to leave, the reaction of the people he had befriended was one of bitter disappointment. Here was a case of an ambassador who, in a way, had overdone it, leaving impressions and creating hopes that he could not possibly fulfill. He did what came naturally to him, but it came at a price of the feelings of a lot of his Romanian friends who saw in him the promise of a better future which at the time did not materialize.

Q: Romania was touted as being sort of like Yugoslavia. Were we able to use Romania in reaching the Eastern bloc, the eastern communist world?

VAN HEUVEN: If the president or then Secretary of State Kissinger had any grand designs among these lines, they were carefully hidden from the desk officer. I did have to bear in mind that the president had a soft spot for Ceausescu and therefore for Romania. That was what permitted the state visit to go forward, even though it seemed rather incongruous at the time. Romania, however, saw itself as a broker on a number of global issues. Perhaps its imagination as to what it might do exceeded its actual ability to do so. But it was not unusual to come upon Romanian diplomatic activity, whether in arms control, in East-West relations, or in relations with China. This made Romania interesting to watch. At the time, we had to assess how much was smoke and how much was fire and whether this would be useful to us, or not useful to us. So Romania was not a passive country. The Romanians stirred themselves without having behind them an entire nonaligned movement, as did Yugoslavia. They played a role in the nonaligned movement, but not a leadership role. They carved out their role as an individual country. This reflected Ceausescu's vision of himself and of his country in Europe and in the world. In my opinion, this vision never really amounted to much. In retrospect, I don't think that there is much left of any Romanian footprints on the course of history of those years. But for me it did mean following the cable traffic carefully, because you never know. Some report from somewhere in the world might come in indicating that the Romanians were up to something. In that sense, it was an interesting assignment.

Q: I would think that with Romania meddling in the policies of the big boys and thinking that it was a much greater player than not, you as a desk officer would find yourself... You had to run around and clear things and check on things. The people who were representing the more serious countries like the Soviets or the Chinese or something like that would sort of say, "Go away. Don't bother us." Did you find yourself having to intrude in this?

VAN HEUVEN: Because of the known interest of the president, if there was something for me to say about Romania, it was not that difficult to bring something to a person's attention. We had a pretty good system in the European Bureau for sifting information and making sure that what was important got to the top and what wasn't was put aside. I don't recall being stiffed on anything in particular. I was supported by the fact that I had two articulate ambassadors at post who could speak up for themselves, and often did. But Romania was not a friend. Romania was on the other side of the East-West divide. And while it may have been up to its own game, it was

not a country that we could in any respect count on. The sum total for me of the experience was to learn how to deal with American colleagues who were behind the Iron Curtain rather than right on the border or on the western side of it, and to be able to watch the evolution of events with a certain degree of patience. Certainly, the eventual evolution of what happened, and the death of Ceausescu, were not possible to foretell at that point.

Q: I served a little before this in Yugoslavia. There all of us who served in the embassy had a certain respect for Tito. We weren't 100% for him but we had a respect for him. Did you find any respect for Ceausescu

VAN HEUVEN: No. If there was any respect, it was respect for the way in which the man exercised power. We saw Ceausescu as he was. Obviously, I didn't see him in Bucharest. I did observe Ceausescu in Washington - and on the trip that the United States offered him after the visit to Washington. I was part of the group that traveled along with him on the same plane. He was a dour person; no sense of humor. But he had his country's interests at mind. We went to the White Company in Cleveland, which made huge tractor machinery. We went to General Electric outside of Hartford, Connecticut. He was interested in putting Romania on the map and making connections with big industry. American industry, of course, was interested in the possibilities of doing business. So on that trip, Ceausescu got a pretty nice reception. The trip was fast. We spent two and a half days hopping around the Northeast before I saw him off at Kennedy airport.

Q: Mrs. Ceausescu had pretensions to being a scientific marvel. She had fake degrees in science, didn't she? Did you have to play the game of saying, "You must be interested in seeing the science labs?"

VAN HEUVEN: We did not have a special program for Mrs. C. In Washington she went right along with her husband. This was a state visit and a state visit is a set bit of pieces, many of which are social. She was on the same plane, she went to the same factories. She didn't really have a role of her own. I think she sort of kept behind him as they were touring the plants and making conversation and doing the visits. But she was a pill and she looked the part. She was no fun.

INTS M. SILINS
Economic-Commercial Officer
Bucharest (1973-1975)

Ambassador Silins was born in Latvia and raised in Latvia and Maryland. He was educated at Princeton and Harvard Universities. He entered the Foreign Service in 1969 and served abroad in Saigon, Duc Thanh (Vietnam), Bucharest, Stockholm, Port au Prince, Leningrad and Strasbourg. In 1990 he was appointed United States Representative to the Baltic States, resident in Riga, Latvia, and from 1992 to 1995, he served as United States Ambassador to Latvia. He also had

several tours of duty at the Department of State in Washington, D.C. Ambassador Silins was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.

Q: As an economic-commercial officer, what were you doing?

SILINS: I was doing a lot of traveling around and reporting. I was going to as many factories as I could and reporting on general economic conditions, analyzing their stupid five year plans. But also a lot of business facilitation because we had big U.S. companies doing business with Romania. By big I mean Boeing, for example, and McDonnell Douglas. Boeing was successfully selling aircraft, McDonnell Douglas was trying to. A big bank had set up a branch there, Manufacturers Hanover Trust. We had a computer manufacturer, Control Data Corporation, that was going into a joint venture. Plus a lot of smaller operations, and so I was pretty busy with American businessmen, most of whom had a very hard time in their negotiations with the Romanians. Romanians were fiendish negotiators, would often put two competitors side-by-side and go from one to the other, back and forth, squeezing each one for the last penny that they could on a contract. And since often the Romanian partner didn't perform on their side of contracts, I had trade complaints to attend to.

Q: What was morale like at the post?

SILINS: Good. Excellent. It was fine because, as I say, at that time Romania was considered to be very special and we had impressive colleagues from other embassies to work with. Our living conditions were exceptionally good. There was even a club, a diplomatic club there.

Q: The famous nine-hole golf course?

SILINS: That's the one. And with a swimming pool, tennis courts. It was just unbeatable for a Warsaw Pact post. It promoted an active, almost sybaritic social life among the foreign community, which in turn fed the illusion that all was well in Romania. The sordid reality underneath became clear to me only much, much later. One source was a book published in 1987 by a defector, Ion Pacepa, who had been a top Romanian intelligence official. It's called Red Horizons and is unbelievably sordid but, sad to say, presumably accurate. I didn't have the stomach to finish it. The book is in a class by itself. Pacepa's report that Romania's so-called maverick foreign policy was actually a complex scam that Ceausescu hatched in 1972 is actually one of his less troubling revelations, at least on the nastiness scale.

**E. ASHLEY WILLS
Press Attaché, USIS
Bucharest (1973-1977)**

Ambassador Wills was born in Tennessee and raised in Tennessee and Georgia. He was educated at the University of Virginia and John Hopkins University. Entering the Foreign Service (USIA) in 1972, Ambassador Wills served abroad in the field of public affairs in Romania, South Africa, Barbados, Yugoslavia and

Belgium and in India as Deputy Chief of Mission. He also served in Washington as Deputy Director for Southern Africa Affairs for USIA and as Political Advisor to the US Military Commander in the invasion of Grenada. From 2000 to 2003 he was US Ambassador to Sri Lanka. His final posting was as Assistant US Trade Representative. Ambassador Wills was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2008.

Q: I want to stop there; I want to go back. You arrived in Romania in 1973?

WILLS: Uh huh.

Q: How would you describe the situation in Romania at that time as you saw it? This is your first foreign country.

WILLS: Yes, it was strange, it was shocking, it was a Communist dictatorship of the worst kind, very oppressive. Ceausescu had cultivated a reputation of being a maverick and he had defied the Soviets on a few foreign policy things. But internally he was extraordinarily orthodox and cruel. He was exporting anything that the country made that was of any quality or utility and depriving the population of basic items so that at night, there were no lights on in the city as Bucharest was a city of probably a million and a half and there were no lights at night, it was odd. Then everybody drove around in their little Dacias, which was an old Renault design from the early '50s that the Communist Romanians had bought. It was a gray and grim place. Romania as a country was gorgeous and we were able to travel outside the city as long as we notified the foreign ministry a couple days ahead. When I was an aide to Ambassador Barnes, he traveled all the time and I had to go with him so I saw a lot of the country. My Romanian was pretty good, not great, but like 3+ 3+ when I got there and it ended up being 4 or 4+ by the time I left three years later.

One thing I remember about this time when I was a junior officer that might be of interest to historians was we spent a lot of money on Voice of America broadcasts in the languages of Eastern Europe. Because my Romanian was pretty good I would do a weekly report back to VOA headquarters in Romanian about what was going on at the U.S. Embassy and it would be broadcast over VOA. But I was also in charge of monitoring VOA's signals. My wife and I lived in this little bitty apartment in a Romanian apartment building, we were the only foreigners in the building so that was quite odd, and two or three times a week I would go up to the roof with my short-wave radio and tune the various frequencies that the Voice used to broadcast in Romanian. I distinctly recall how funky and exciting it was to be up on that roof with the wind and the rain whatever the elements were tuning my short-wave radio, people don't even know what short-wave radios are today but back then it was a significant way to transmit information.

So that was what Romania was like, it was also the first few months of our marriage. We were very, very excited about being there and the embassy was small enough to be a real community and that had mainly advantages but it also had disadvantages. There were several affairs going on involving members of staff in the embassy. One guy who later got sent home was having an affair with a Romanian woman; that was very much against the rules. The wife of one of the communicators was fooling around with the economic counselor and I remember once we had a

big dance party at our home and I made the mistake of venturing out onto our porch at some point in the proceedings thinking that no one was there, just to get some fresh air, and lo and behold they were fooling around outside. It was shocking to my 23-year old sensibility; but that was the way it was. We lived in isolation really within the Romanian community. We could have official dealings but we really couldn't have Romanian friends and the diplomatic community was pretty small so the U.S. embassy people tended to stay together and that, as I say, was mainly good but it did have its disadvantages.

I remember after we had been there a year I asked for leave; we wanted to go to someplace nearby; I'd saved up my money. I was making \$9,200 a year when I was appointed to the Foreign Service. I mentioned earlier that we had to stop in Frankfurt to buy provisions, the only way you could buy provisions was by the case and my wife and I making \$9,200 a year spent \$2,000 on food before we entered Romania. It was a severe blow to our finances but we managed to recover and after a year we saved enough money to go on leave. We decided to go to Greece and Turkey and I never will forget as long as I live I mentioned that there were no lights, no advertising, no neon anywhere in Bucharest. When we landed at Athens airport in May of 1974 on our first vacation, our first time out of Romania it was so thrilling to see lights at night; to see signs, advertising signs, it was a huge thing for us.

Q: I was consul general there when you arrived.

WILLS: Oh really?

Q: I was getting ready to leave there, yeah.

WILLS: It was a wonderful place. We went to Istanbul, which remains one of my favorite cities in the world. We stayed in the famous Pierra Palas Hotel, which now has been renovated and costs a fortune but in those days even a junior FSO could afford it. So anyway the second eighteen months I was the information officer. We had a presidential visit that was a huge deal.

Q: Who was the president? That would have been Nixon.

WILLS: Well, Nixon when I got there and then he resigned and Gerald Ford became president and Ford visited Romania.

Q: How were Romanian-American relations at the time?

WILLS: Pretty good in the sense that Nixon, and later Ford, realized that Ceausescu could help the United States in a lot of ways in opening to China for example; much of that was done through Ceausescu. Kissinger would use Ceausescu who had good relations with the Chinese unlike the Russians or the Soviets. Some of the early contacts between Kissinger and Zhou En-lai were made through Ceausescu as the intermediary. He also helped us with our Middle East diplomacy; he was able to communicate effectively with Yasser Arafat. At that time we were not dealing with Arafat; later we did and Ceausescu helped us. As a trade off for using Ceausescu's good offices, we ignored what he was doing internally or didn't draw attention to it; this was before the days of human rights reports.

Q: This was Kissinger's time and his real politic was...

WILLS: Kissinger came through a couple of times as I recall, at least once, before President Ford came through. When President Ford came through, he also visited as Secretary of State so he came twice and maybe three times. So as the press attaché at the embassy I was exposed to all kinds of big events; I was not central to any of them but I was able to observe them and it was really fun. I edited the embassy's magazine, which was very well regarded in Romania; we translated it into Romanian. I learned a lot about journalism layout again, did a lot of writing. So as the press attaché unlike everybody else in the embassy I was able to deal with Romanian journalists quite a lot and my Romanian got better and better. So it was a wonderful three years.

Q: Well let's take this in order. This was your first job with USIA and you were rotated through various things. How did the various elements of USIA work appeal to you?

WILLS: I liked it but I was even then attracted to other parts of Foreign Service work as well. I liked it because we seemed to have more leeway and we weren't quite as tight and hung up as the State Department officers appeared to be, at least those who were serving in the Communist world. There was a free-spiritedness about USIA that I liked. But when I worked in the political section and the economic section I studied a lot of economics and politics in college I enjoyed the analytical work. I was pretty good at it at least I was told that I was and Ambassador Barnes and Dick Viets both encouraged me to convert to the State Department. In fact, Harry went so far as to arrange when I was coming up for reassignment for me to go back to the Department and work in the OPS Center as a watch officer but I decided I didn't want to do that. I wanted to give USIA another shot, even though I was not sure that I wanted to devote my whole professional life to that. I wanted to give it one more tour of duty in a more open society so I delayed my decision to leave the Foreign Service and sought a second assignment.

I never will forget we were first assigned to a place called Salvador Bahia in Brazil, a branch USIA post there. I would have to come back to Washington to take Portuguese and we were both really excited about that and then we got a cable saying, "Oops, we decided to close that branch post so we are going to assign you to Fez, Morocco." That seemed an exciting place as well. They told us we were going to come back and learn French and not Arabic and that was great. Then they sent us another cable saying, "Oops, we decided to close Fez as well so we are going to ask you to go to Durban, South Africa, to open a USIS branch post. That appealed to me, all three of them would have been great; the other two would have been great but this one turned out to be great. Jimmy Carter had just been elected president, this was late in 1976 and I as a Georgian was especially happy that he had been elected. I thought going to South Africa would be an exciting thing; my wife agreed and off we went. I had to learn all about the aspects of USIS work that I had never experienced before.

Q: I want to go back, keep moving you back again.

WILLS: Yeah, I want to go ahead because I don't have a long time.

Q: That's okay I'll control it. Let's talk about the press officer. I'd spent five years in Yugoslavia in the '60s and the press was turgid, I guess is the most active word one could use about them. How did you find the Romanian press and the work with them?

WILLS: To call it a press is an exaggeration, it was propaganda, all of them were instruments of Ceausescu's dictatorship and they knew it. There was no freedom of the press at all. They only wrote what they were told to write. But I could use my relationships to get them to write, at least, about the United States even if we didn't necessarily like what they wrote. I remember at one point in my tour, I was the press officer, but Harry talked with the political officer and decided to make me the human rights officer in the embassy as well. I developed a close relationship with a Romanian dissident who had come back from Paris named Paul Goma; he was a novelist. I should have mentioned that. There are so many stories that I could tell.

Q: Well do tell.

WILLS: So I became the human rights officer as well as the press officer. I met with many Romanian dissidents but Paul was one that I got especially along with, he was then about forty or forty-five. He didn't speak English so our whole relationship was in Romanian and I saw him several times. I remember the first time I saw him at his home and, of course, the Romanian authorities didn't like this at all and I knew it. The next morning I came out of the garage at the apartment building where we lived and I had a little Volkswagen bug that my wife drove but I needed a car to get back and forth to the embassy. I bought from the motor pool an old American car that had been used as an official vehicle for years and years and years. It was a 1963 Chrysler, big, heavy vehicle but it was fine for driving the three miles or so to the embassy. I came out of that garage that particular morning after I had met Paul Goma the first time and the Romanian security guys are called Securitate, the Securitate agents all seem to wear long black leather trench coats and we could identify them no matter where we went in Romania and we were all frequently followed. This car came up and cut me off as I left the driveway of the apartment building and these two Securitate guys got out and walked over to my car, knocked on the window and I rolled down the window, it was a winter day and they told me in Romanian don't ever go see Paul Goma again or else, in Romanian. I said in my then improving Romanian, "Du te in pizda matei." which is a very inelegant thing to say to a Romanian, basically it means hop up your mothers private parts. Then I said, "Fuck you," in English. They looked at me and got really huffy, got back in their car and left. I, of course, reported this to the embassy and the embassy wouldn't let me see Goma again for a couple months. But I did renew my relationship in a couple months and they never bothered me again and I don't know why.

The other interesting thing about life in Romania at that time as I say I traveled quite a lot when I was working for Harry Barnes but I also traveled a lot as the press attaché. Very often, I don't want to say every trip, when you would go out to provincial towns in Romania you would have to stay in the state approved hotel and these beautiful Romanian women would seem to happen into your life some how or other. Now I, of course, was a dashing and handsome young diplomat and one could understand the great attraction these young women would have had for me [pause for laughter] but it was clear that this was not a natural organic sort of thing. These women were agents of the Securitate. That must have happened fifteen times in the eighteen months I was the press attaché at the embassy. The Romanians were kind of oafish about it; these Romanian

women were clearly not seasoned agents. They knew I was twenty-three, twenty-four or twenty-five, they would have had a file on me. So they were in their first years or months as security agents and they weren't very good at it either. So it was amusing and flattering as long as you didn't let it go anywhere because it was clear they wanted you to take up their offers of romance in exchange for secret information.

Q: Did this type of liaison have any effect at the embassy? Were there any problems?

WILLS: You mean?

Q: In other words...

WILLS: The relationship with Paul Goma or with these women?

Q: No, I'm talking about with the Securitate using the honey trap or what have you?

WILLS: Well yeah, there were a couple officers who sadly succumbed to these approaches. I referred to one earlier, he was sent home. Actually both of them were sent home. The other junior economic officer fell in with a Romanian woman, one has to assume she was Securitate agent, and he was sent home as well. I would report, and I assumed everybody did, any contact like that because the security people needed to know what was going on.

Q: In a way it seems to be almost at cross-purposes as one Securitate that's how you learn to play the game in the Soviet Union. But if you are trying to make nice to the United States, which they were at the time it was to Romania's benefit to compromise diplomats is not a good way to work. I mean it just sounds like a dysfunctional policy.

WILLS: Yeah, it was self-defeating I think and yet they did it and continued to do it after I left I heard right up to the end. Ceausescu in those days, I was there from '73-'76 was brutal but he got worse and the '80s I heard were nightmarish. I mentioned he was exporting the country's wealth such as it was, mainly agricultural goods to earn hard currency so that he could industrialize, big steel factories and oil and natural gas facilities. He wanted to industrialize Romania in a hurry and as the country's resources depleted it's foreign exchange earnings declined in the '80s and he apparently became less and less generous internally and I heard from Romanian, I don't want to say I had friends but people I had known there that it was "après moi, le deluge," as the French say, and that is why he, unlike all the other Communist leaders who were overthrown, was taken out and shot. The anger against him...

Q: And his wife.

WILLS: ...and his wife and Goma said, that was one of the great lies I'm not quoting but paraphrasing "If you are going to tell a lie make it a big one, the bigger the lie the more it will be believed in the end." Every day I lived in Romania the Romanian press such as it was would have stories about the glorious scientific achievements of Elena Ceausescu who was a PhD. a world famous inventor. There would be stories all the time about how she had perfected a process that had eluded Western chemists one day and physicists the next. This woman was a

genius of historic proportions. In fact, the woman didn't even have a high school education, it was all bullshit. She had no training as a scientist, hadn't taken science when she was in high school. This was all created as a persona by the propaganda machine; the Ceausescu's were less Communist than they were potentates. Communism was a convenience, they were dictators, they were in it for themselves. I used to drive out to the diplomatic club, as I said, everybody in the country drove these ugly polluting little Dacias and every once in a while you would hear this rumble of a car exhaust, I would hear this incredible engine coming and it was Nicu Ceausescu, the son of the president, driving one of his Ferrari's in Bucharest, Romania, Communist Romania. Here is the son, the heir apparent defying all this socialist crap and living the life of a rich playboy. I mean a Ferrari in Romania? It was incredible.

Q: He was also renown by his rapes of...

WILLS: That's the other thing I don't know if this was true but I remember when we were trying to flirt with Arafat through Ceausescu. He came to Romania several times and my associates told me that Ceausescu would routinely provide to Arafat on his visits young Romanian boys. The story was that Arafat was a pederast of the first order and Ceausescu being the cynical bastard that he was would accommodate him. Now I don't know if that was my associate defaming Arafat, I note that later, maybe a decade or fifteen years later I think for the public's benefit was married but that could have just been for show but that was another thing. Anyway, that was Romania.

Q: Well tell me, okay, you've got the president coming, President Ford. You are the public affairs officer.

WILLS: The press attaché.

Q: The press attaché, you know when the president travels he does not travel with just one...

WILLS: No, no, no it was the most stunning thing. Here I was...

Q: Let's talk a little bit about how you experienced this.

WILLS: This was the most amazing experience of my life up until that time because he came less than six months after I became the press attaché. Remember I was at this time 24 and there was no assistant press attaché, I was the guy. We were told we got this cable from Washington there will be a separate press plane with 200 and something journalists on it and each event had to be staffed, each site had to be approved by the White House advance team and press risers provided and every single event had to be scripted from beginning to end for the media. Then there were these things called pools that had to be created.

Q: Pools?

WILLS: Because most events couldn't take 200 and something journalists, only four or five. Of course, the Romanians would want to have their four or five even though calling them journalists, as I said earlier, was ludicrous that's the way they were regarded by the government.

So it was an enormously complex. I worked as hard as I'd ever worked in my life up until that time and I did manual labor for a lot of years when I was in high school and summer jobs and stuff. But it managed to work and he was only there 24-hours, maybe 36-hours and I remember I was so proud when he came off the plane and Ambassador Barnes knew how hard I'd worked made a point of bringing the president over to shake my hand. My wife was standing next to me because we had to enlist the help of everybody in the embassy, including spouses. We brought in officers, I had three senior PAOs from other neighboring East European countries come in reporting to me running the press operation because we had to have somebody be the press guy at the palace, somebody at the airport, somebody at the university where the president was going to give a talk. I couldn't be everywhere so Jock Shirley sent in all these senior officers who were way more experienced to help me. Ambassador Barnes was very gracious as he always was, I met the president and the visit went off beautifully. We were all just completely exhausted after. In those days we had the advance team on the ground for two weeks before so for two weeks I was sleeping like one hour or two hours a day and working in the office getting everything organized the rest of the time.

Q: After Romania how did your wife like the Foreign Service?

WILLS: She was not in love with it. She liked Romania, she's a much more talented linguist than I am and she learned Romanian quite well; she picks up languages almost osmotically; she hangs around in a culture and begins to speak the local language. She liked that and unlike me she had traveled a bit. Her parents were prosperous and they had taken her to Europe when she was in high school and again when she was in college. So she was more sophisticated in many ways than I was insofar as travel. She liked that but the Foreign Service at that point just as I got to Romania had eliminated two things from the officer evaluation. One was the rating of the spouse and the other was a section in the report that the rated officer could not see. They both were eliminated in '71 or so and we entered in '72 so Regina wasn't rated but that was the ethos in the Foreign Service and there were several officers in the embassy who clearly wanted to include Gina in estimating my performance. She didn't like that and neither did I. But she was prepared and about half way through my tour, I guess, just as I was taking this information officer job I applied to several law schools back in the U.S. and was accepted. I remember writing the director of admissions at the two I was most serious about. I said, "I'm sorry, I applied thinking I would come but now I'm not so sure. Could you give me another year to make up my mind?" They both were gracious and said, "Yeah, we will hold your acceptance for one year," by which time we would have been in South Africa and I could make up my mind. Because in those days, as you will recall Stuart, I can't remember what the rule was but if you left the Foreign Service too quickly you would have to reimburse the State Department for travel or whatever. We had been three years in and I thought that we could go at least another year part way through an assignment in South Africa before having to make a judgment without having to pay a financial penalty. So anyway even then I was not sure I wanted to stay in it but I decided it would be worth another assignment and Gina, bless her heart, had been able to work part-time in the embassy in various jobs and the presidential visit. She worked as the acting assistant cultural officer, she worked in the visa section that was another exciting moment in my junior officer period that eighteen months. We didn't issue visas to Romanians because they couldn't travel but we had an immigrant visa operation aimed at the Jewish community.

Q: Coming out of Russia weren't they?

WILLS: No, they were Romanians.

Q: Romanians.

WILLS: Romania had a huge Jewish community and this was one of the things that Ceausescu did at our urging frankly, he slowly and grudgingly let Romania's Jews leave, even to come to the U.S., or to go to Israel. I don't know if you recall but by about 1980 or '85 the largest ethnic community in Israel's population was Romanian; it's since been surpassed by Russians first and now many Sephardic Jews from North Africa and other Southwest Asian places, Iraq. But in those days Romanians were quite numerous and I got to work on several immigrant visa cases and again that was another way to improve one's language.

Q: What was your impression I mean how did the Jews survive in Romania during the...?

WILLS: There were fewer pogroms in Romania than in most of the other East European countries but instead of shipping them to Auschwitz or Dachau the Romanian fascists in the Second World War rounded them up and put them in Romanian camps and there were many deaths there. Some were sent out but at the end of the Second World War, as I recall, Romania's Jewish population was the largest in Eastern Europe whereas before the war Poland's was much bigger and I think in what was then Czechoslovakia. But they were decimated by Hitler's evil policies and Romania's population suffered hugely but not as much.

Q: Did you buy food on the market? Were there restaurants?

WILLS: There were a few restaurants. There was a little tourism even then mainly from other European countries, the French had a long-standing relationship with Romania. There were a few state run restaurants, no private run restaurants and some of them were pretty good. I remember we got horribly sick after going to what was said to be Romania's best restaurant, run by the government. There was one international hotel, the Intercontinental, run by the American owned Intercontinental chain then. You could get a cheeseburger there, it was not very good, but you could get it. There were markets where you could get Romania produce but it was a rare thing to find really high-quality food there. There were months that would go by when you would only get one vegetable, let's say. Bread seemed to be the staple that was always available but many times what you would see when you would go to a Romanian market would be a couple of peppers and cabbage and that was it, at the farmers market. I mean it was bad and this is a country that is agriculturally very rich.

Q: Oh absolutely yeah.

WILLS: So anyway that was Romania in the Communist days.

Q: Had the policy developed or maybe it was later where there was quite a scandal that came out after the demise of the Ceausescu's of women almost being forced to have babies and that sort of thing?

WILLS: That wasn't evident when I lived there, the horror of those orphanages. I didn't see that, none of us saw that because we just weren't able to dig too deep into Romanian society. But one could see the conditions were miserable and it wouldn't have been surprising to any of us that these things were going on. One of the reasons why Ceausescu encouraged Romanian births was ethnic politics. Romania had large populations of Hungarians. Transylvania used to belong to Hungary and was given to Romania as reparations after the First World War. Transylvania also had a large German community. Most of them were against Ceausescu and at our and German urging Ceausescu slowly allowed the German minority to immigrate. The Hungarians were not really given much chance to immigrate to Hungary. Instead, Ceausescu encouraged ethnic Romanian births. The people who maybe were the most targeted when we were there were the tigani.

Q: The tigani?

WILLS: The gypsy's, the tigani. They were just treated horribly and they were also treated horribly in the Second World War. They were nearly exterminated unlike the Jew's who were persecuted but they weren't exterminated in Romania as they were elsewhere.

HENRY L. CLARKE
Commercial Attaché
Bucharest (1974-1976)

Ambassador Clarke was born in Georgia in 1941. He attended Dartmouth College and enlisted in the US Army. He later entered Harvard University and then entered the Foreign Service. His career included positions in Germany, Nigeria, Romania, the USSR, and Israel. He was later appointed Ambassador to Uzbekistan. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.

Q: Romania was the darling of the government under Kissinger at that time. Was it because it was not in the Warsaw Pact? Particularly from a Kissingerian point of view, this was a major rift in the pact and basic "real politic."

CLARKE: Right. The Romanians had refused to participate in the invasion of Czechoslovakia in '68. They had been in a rather nervous state because they were afraid that as a result, they might be invaded themselves. They had subsequently, if not before, been very leery about being drawn into Warsaw pact activities, although they were still a member. Our perception was that all the distance they maintained from integration in the Warsaw Pact was in our national interest. I don't think anybody really disagreed if it was Kissinger's idea. I think the idea actually was alive and well in the U.S. Government before Kissinger came to State, but he was already personally engaged in our policies toward Eastern Europe, along with Helmut Sonnenfeldt.

Kissinger did visit Romania during that period. We knew that Romania's performance domestically was very Communist and very much in the Stalinist tradition. We felt that this

really wasn't in our interest to encourage, but we were not in a good position to challenge it if we wanted Romania to keep its distance from the Warsaw Pact.

Q: Who was our ambassador during this time?

CLARKE: Harry Barnes.

Q: How did you find him and how did he operate?

CLARKE: Harry was in many ways an excellent ambassador. He had the unique advantage of having being DCM and Chargé in Romania some years before. It was widely believed – you'll have to ask him if it's true – it was widely believed that he got the ambassadorship partly because the White House under Nixon had thought he'd done a good job when he was there as DCM. He then subsequently had several jobs in the Department including in the executive secretariat I think. I don't know how he got the job but that was the rumor; that although he was a career Foreign Service officer; nevertheless he was well connected as a result of his service there.

He also knew Romania inside out and better than anybody else in the embassy. So he was particularly impressive in asking us the right questions about where to go to do this and do that. He was, I would say, active to the point of hyperactive. There were times when I felt we were leaving no stone unturned, even though we knew there was nothing under the stones. We were turning them over just so we could tell Harry Barnes we'd done it.

He was a good Romanian speaker. Unfortunately he had a tendency to speak rather softly at meetings. He liked to take a large group from the embassy to many of his meetings. The junior guy would be responsible for the note taking. The notetaker would sit way down on the end of the table where he couldn't hear either Harry or the minister or whoever was on the other side of the table, because they could speak softly to one another. It's possible, too, that Harry mumbled a few of his word-endings if he wasn't really sure of them. He had a good vocabulary. He was fast and he had a lot of very good sayings or cliches or whatever you would call it. I don't mean to be negative at all. In a very positive sense he would use these in conversation and just delight the Romanian on the other side of the table. That didn't mean the guy taking the notes, who was fresh out of FSI, knew what the heck this nuance was.

Q: To me as a language officer, that sounds like a horror.

CLARKE: It was a horror. You could never hope to speak Romanian as well as your boss. He maintained a lot of good healthy professional pressure on his staff. Occasionally he overdid it. There were too many people who left Bucharest and got a divorce shortly thereafter. I don't blame him for that because I think he was just simply trying to maximize the effectiveness of a small embassy in a hostile environment.

Q: When you arrived in Romania, Bucharest obviously was a small embassy so you could get a real feel for where you were going. What was the attitude of the embassy toward the Ceaurescu government, and the political situation in Romania at that time?

CLARKE: I think we had a general perception of Romania that is somewhat along the lines I've already described plus a sense that yes, it was a government very hard on its own people. One example comes to mind from that period. There was a hike in world sugar prices and so the Romanians, who never had enough sugar to go around anyway, began exporting some of theirs in order to profit from the world market. There were even reports of some unrest on the docks where people were loading sugar for export when people couldn't buy it in the stores.

Human rights issues were not my bailiwick during my first tour in Romania, so I'm not the best source on that. But we were all aware that people disappeared. Very harsh things had been done in the past and presumably still would be. If we ever get to my second tour in Romania, there will be some interesting contrasts but I would say on the whole – Romanians may remember it differently and they deserve priority – but my perception was there was a lot of criticism of Elena Ceausescu in the population already. Some of it was simply catty, but some was well founded.

Yet there was a little reserve about criticizing President Ceausescu. There was a sense that he had offered at least a degree of nationalist spirit by his standing up to the Soviet Union. To the degree that he was developing the American relationship, it was very popular. When President Ford visited, I believe it was 1975 – he came to Romania shortly after signing the Helsinki Final Act, and we considered the Romanians to have been helpful in the negotiations for the Helsinki Final Act.

I was responsible for the airport ceremonies, and I rode with a group of people from the embassy that I had taken out to the airport arrival ceremony. We came back in a bus that was marked "American Embassy" on the side, so that our staff would know this was what they were supposed to get on. We were way behind the motorcade. As we came in, all the people that had lined up to cheer the president, when they saw our bus, started cheering us. That hasn't happened to me in any other country I've served in, and it was not the sort of thing that the Ceausescus would have welcomed. Coming out to cheer President Ford was fine. He wasn't ever going to come back. This was a one-time thing, and it was really a way of cheering Ceausescu at the same time. Cheering the American embassy, that was strictly voluntary and not especially welcome. The government was trying to keep us isolated.

This popular attitude though, was very positive. You asked, "What was the opinion of the people in the embassy?" With encouragement from Harry and others, we did try to travel a lot in Romania. We did try to get around and talk to all sorts of people and this basically pro-American attitude, if often naively so, we found almost everywhere we went. Sometimes it was quite subtle. Sometimes it was very, very clear. Despite the hardship conditions we were to some extent living under, that was an encouraging aspect of the job.

Q: I always like to get a little comment on presidential visits. How did the Ford visit go?

CLARKE: Some of my favorite anecdotes from it have nothing to do with bilateral relations. The Romanians handled it with remarkable skill. We sent out an advance team which took up the entire hotel that we were going to use for the main party. There were literally hundreds of people

with the advance party who were supposed to plan the visit. They sat up all night long and all day long planning and planning and planning and then trying to talk to the Romanians and get some sort of confirmation on what was going to happen. The Romanians would never finally agree to anything.

As I recall, Ford was supposed to arrive on a Saturday morning and leave on a Sunday or something like that. Early Saturday morning, a little Romanian truck drove up to the front of the hotel. By that time, the advance team was out of their minds because they had cabled hundreds of scenarios, with instructions to turn this way and turn that way and three steps forward and all this other stuff which was totally theoretical because none of it had ever been agreed to by the Romanian side. Although major points on the visit had been agreed in principal, this little truck showed up early in the morning on Saturday and backed up to the Intercontinental Hotel. They unloaded the programs for the visit and gave them to our advance staff. We had had literally hundreds of people there working on this the preceding week to 10 days to no use whatsoever.

Then of course the planes started arriving with all the communications gear and all the cars and everything. The Secretary was with Ford so we had the whole nine yards. I came away with a healthy hope that I would be involved in as few presidential visits abroad as I possibly could for the rest of my career. In the end of course it's just a set piece. There may be presidential visits that result in something not planned. This was not one of them, and it wasn't really intended to be one of them. The Romanians' plans were as good as anybody else's. It's just that they didn't fit our format and they drove our people wild.

Another anecdote was at the expense of the Secret Service. I was working with them only because I was responsible for the airport ceremonies on behalf of the embassy. I remember in one of the hotel rooms discussing this whole problem with several people including the Secret Service. We knew with absolute certainty that the Intercontinental Hotel was bugged, at least in the upper rooms that were available for these guys. They kept complaining that this visit was not being done the way it was done in Cincinnati and the way it ought to be done was the way it was done in Cincinnati. I was just as sure that every time they said that, it delayed still further the Romanians agreeing to anything. Then they said, "Well, I know this is going to be a mess."

Finally they had some agreements on security issues. The Secret Service guy said, "Well, but it's going to be like in Poland. We had agreements on security but then when the actual visit took place, they all fell apart."

I ventured a meek suggestion that Romania was a long way from Poland, and the Secret Service didn't believe it. Of course the Romanians did not relax the security the least bit during the visit. We had hundreds, maybe even thousands of people mobilized purely for security. Many in plain clothes. Many armed and in uniform, but everybody in place well before every event. There were no gaps. I had an agreement that any Americans that arrived without proper identification at the airport to greet the President, and that I could personally recognize would be let in. I had to do that or they would not have gotten in. Of course some Americans showed up with their kids and no identification and I had to do that. They actually held me to that.

Q: What about personal contacts and social life with the Romanians?

CLARKE: Very limited. Very limited. I was favored by the fact that the commercial relationship was one which required contact. I had a fair number of social functions for trade missions and for various different commercial exchanges that the Romanians had agreed to. They would also agree to a certain amount of limited social activity. They would entertain a little bit and we would entertain. So I stayed busy with these social contacts. But they were not very personal. I could not visit these people in their homes. We used our homes for entertaining because the hotels were so abysmal and so expensive that we could never afford to entertain there. So we tried to do it as much as possible in our apartments and houses. When they entertained, it was in hotels or in official facilities.

Q: You mentioned the sugar. Were we showing any concern about the Ceausescu regime milking its populous for economic gain which went into whatever Ceausescu wanted to do like building palaces? Was this a concern of ours at that time?

CLARKE: His palace building really began later. If it didn't begin later, at least it was not very evident at that stage. For instance, during my first tour you could visit the palace that had belonged to the King in Sinaia because it was a museum. It was later closed because he wanted to use it for himself and he did build an addition and used it for himself during my later tour. The first tour I was able to go inside as a tourist and see it.

But as for milking the population, Ceausescu had no conception of cost analysis in his investment decisions, and he made the investment decisions. For example, they were very proud of their economic development. They were very proud that they had an aluminum industry. When I went with Ambassador Barnes to visit one of the bauxite processing plants in Western Romania, after he finished asking his questions, I asked some that could reveal the cost of production. Basically I got answers that they were operating at very, very high temperatures and under very difficult conditions because of the nature of the ore. They did not want to answer a lot of questions on that. But they answered enough so that it was apparent that it was a plant that could only operate because it was not subject to market competition. At the very basic level of processing bauxite, the Romanians started losing money.

Subsequently they were building other plants, requiring a lot of electricity to process the ore into aluminum. They wanted to build aircraft factories and their own commercial aircraft. Throughout this entire chain, just to give you this one example, it was not obvious that they had any relative advantage commercially. Nevertheless they would conclude contracts. They would buy equipment in order to pursue these projects essentially because Ceausescu felt that's what the country should do. It was a very Stalinist approach.

Q: What about American products? What was our market there?

CLARKE: Our market was basically low to medium technology manufacturing equipment and some raw materials. We could not sell consumer goods there because Ceausescu's plans did not include providing much for the consumer. For instance, we sold coking coal to Romania because its own supplies were insufficient for the size steel industry that they wanted to have. They even considered investing in an American coal mine in Virginia, something they would not allow

foreigners to do in Romania, so they would get a permanent source of coking coal. Ultimately they decided to do it under a long term contract. We sold coal there all during this period and even later. They bought other chemicals and whatnot from the United States, but their main interest was in importing machinery. There we faced very tough competition with all the European producers and the Japanese and we won a modest share of that. We did get a series of sales of Boeing aircraft, and that was a major item in our bilateral trade.

While I was there, we negotiated an agreement, based on the Jackson-Vanik Amendment to the Trade Act of 1974, that allowed most-favored-nation treatment for Romanian products. This made it possible for the Romanians to produce consumer goods for the United States and that process was only beginning when I was there on my first tour. The effects of that were much more evident when I came back for the second tour in the 1980s. They sold shirts and sneakers and a whole range of products to the United States after that agreement was reached.

Q: Wines?

CLARKE: Yes.

Q: Were we pushing American business to go in there and do things in order to develop ties or pushing people to buy Romanian products because we wanted to drive this wedge into Eastern Europe?

CLARKE: Oh, absolutely. First of all, we wanted to give Romania options. We thought that dealing with us economically would help to shift some of their trade away from the Warsaw Pact Countries and toward the West, which is what they were also trying to do. It was working to some extent. By a closer relationship with the United States commercially, as well as in other areas, we wanted them to become more dependent on good relations with us, to establish not so much a wedge, as giving them something to lose in the bilateral relationship.

Q: What about Romania and the whole Jewish question? The Jackson-Vanik amendment had to do with whether a communist country would allow Jews to migrate. How did that work during the '74 to '76 period?

CLARKE: You'll recall that the Jackson-Vanik amendment had been primarily aimed at the Soviet Union where there were literally millions of Jews. There was a feeling in the United States Congress, and the Executive Branch to a lesser extent, that we could use access to the American market to get them to allow Jews to emigrate. It passed with overwhelming support in the Senate, but shortly after it became law, the Soviet Union denounced it and said they would not negotiate an agreement on that basis. So that leverage was pretty much frozen.

The other Warsaw Pact countries went along with the Soviet Union, with the exception of Romania. So this was another area that I was involved in, where they differentiated their policy from the Soviets and we reached agreement. It wasn't quite clear, to the public at least, what exactly Romanians had agreed to do on Jewish emigration, but it was clear that they were willing to allow emigration to continue. Since it was already occurring, the thought that it would continue and perhaps increase made this extremely attractive, especially to Jackson and Vanik,

because without the Romanians, their law would have been a dead letter. It was very counterproductive on the whole, but in the case of the Romanians, they had reason to hope this was going to be a successful policy and that maybe other countries would come around in due course.

We developed a close relationship with the Jewish community in Romania, just to see how they were getting along and how many folks were being allowed to leave. At the same time, the Germans were interested in accepting ethnic Germans from Romania, and there was a steady flow to Germany as well. So we had two sorts of streams of emigration, based on ethnic considerations, because the Germans were prepared to give German citizenship to anyone who could prove German heritage, just as the Israelis were prepared to give Israeli citizenship to anybody who could prove Jewish heritage. That process did continue.

The Congress later took a different view, of course, as often happens with laws. They would hold hearings every year to see if continuation of MFN was warranted.

Q: Most favored nation treatment.

CLARKE: Right. What would happen is everybody who had a human rights complaint in Romania would try to get on the agenda of these hearings. There was almost never a complaint relating directly to emigration, although there were a few examples of priests or other people who had been locked up – and obviously they were in jail and not allowed to emigrate. That public hearing process gradually began to change the perception of Romania as a useful country for America's interests to one that was somewhat reprehensible. Each year, Jackson would have to come down...

Q: Senator Henry Jackson of Washington? Scoop Jackson?

CLARKE: Right. Senator Jackson of Washington would have to come down to Vanik's committee in the House, or hold his own hearing if he was still the chairman. I don't remember. But in the House, Vanik held the hearing. He would come down to Vanik's hearing and reiterate his support for the continuation of MFN. He didn't argue that, if we close it down for the Romanians, then our law is a dead letter. He didn't quite put it that way. But he would come down and argue that the Romanians deserved it because of the outflow of Jewish immigrants, in particular, and he would throw in some of the foreign policy arguments as well. So would we from State. We in the administration would have to do this every year.

Q: Did you at the embassy find yourself in the position of feeling that the praise of Romania that sometimes came out of the administration was a bit more fulsome than it should have been? You were seeing a lot of warts and all? Was this a problem?

CLARKE: Not during that period. Later when I was back in Washington, there was an embarrassing visit by Ceausescu during the Carter administration in which some awfully positive things were said about Ceausescu. He would then publish them every year thereafter on his birthday or another appropriate occasion to show that Jimmy Carter thought he was the greatest guy on earth. It was taken out of context. Of course a lot of things get said in toasts and on

presidential visits that wouldn't bear close examination. But no. While I was actually there? No. I don't think there was a problem. We praised them for things that were useful and positive from our point of view. We were at worst silent on the others.

Q: How about newspaper coverage? Did you have somebody, say from the New York Times or The Washington Post, like Michael Duhops or the equivalent there of David Binder, somebody coming through and doing fairly good reporting?

CLARKE: I don't remember very much from that period and that probably means that we got either little or reasonably accurate reporting because if that had been a scandal, I think I would remember it. I also didn't see these folks very much. I know Harry Barnes and Dick Viets who was DCM had good contacts with the press. These guys would drop by and see them and learn all they needed to know. I was just not in the loop on that.

Q: Again on the economics side, was there at that point the push towards having more kids or was that later? It became quite a scandal at the time of the fall of Ceausescu in '89; orphanages were full of children, women having had too many children to take care of them. Were you looking at that demography and its results?

CLARKE: I don't remember that as being anything that I specifically worked on. On these domestic issues, the differentiation among the Eastern European countries was probably a little less in the '70s than it became later as Poland and Hungary and to some extent the Czech Republic. Especially Hungary later began drifting further and further away from the USSR on domestic policies. Then when Russia, the home of the Soviet Union, began to change, it left the Romanians behind, but that was all a process that took place in the '80s.

In the '70s, all these countries were pretty tough so it was not unusual that there were arbitrary arrests, that religion was not allowed to flourish, or that they had a bad human rights record. The difference in Romania was also exaggerated I think by the fact that there was this public forum every year. Everybody was comparing Romania with the Soviet Union during these hearings. These were Romanian-Americans or religious groups who had a case against Romania, often a very good case, but there was no context out there because the other countries were not examined.

Later I was involved with the Hungarian MFN negotiations. The Hungarians simply had a better record. They went into this at a later stage and after our relationship began improving there on different grounds.

Q: In contrast, we don't want to get into your second tour in Romania, but was there a concern that Ceausescu and his wife were almost teetering on the brink of megalomania or was that a later period?

CLARKE: Even during the earlier period the ritualistic praises and socialists' cult of personality were all there. It's just they did not seem quite so gross at that time. I think that's because the Ceausescus got worse. It's also because other countries got better, so they began to stand out more.

Q: Were there any other aspects of what you were doing that stand out of this particular '74 to '76 period?

CLARKE: I remember one interesting thing. I would give briefings, not only to businessmen but anybody interested in the economic situation if my boss wasn't there. I remember some consultants were talking with me, and they lured me outside of the embassy. Maybe they thought I would be more frank or something outside of the embassy, which was not true, because basically the Romanians were able to pick up conversations all around outside of the embassy, probably even better than inside the embassy. It didn't matter. I didn't consider these briefings very sensitive. Finally somebody asked me the sort of bottom line question. In none of the other briefings had it ever come up. "What do you think about the next five or 10 years? Is Romania going to be able to make it economically?"

I said, "I don't know. I don't see enough evidence that it will. They are sure trying a lot of things, but they are trying a lot of things the wrong way.

That was useful to me because we hadn't really been asking that question. We'd been dealing with each situation as it came up. Obviously, if a fellow had the chance to sell machine tools that otherwise were going to be sold by the Japanese or the Swiss or somebody, it did not matter to the US. It's clear that they were not really shopping a lot for weapons at that stage. Already at that stage, they were selling food to U.S. troops in Germany and wanted to sell military equipment to us just to make money. So they were looking for economic growth. On my level, the commercial activity there was a role for us to play that did not require a terribly long perspective. But after seeing so many inefficient industries being built, in all honesty I could not say that I thought they were going to make it.

That being said, I was reluctant for policy reasons to tell these guys, "Take your money and go elsewhere." That would not have gone over with my boss at all. I was very glad that question didn't get asked too often.

THOMAS P.H. DUNLOP
Romania Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1974-1976)

Mr. Dunlop was born in Washington, D.C. and raised in North Carolina. He was educated at Yale University and the University of Berlin. After serving in the US Air Force, he entered the Foreign Service in 1960. His foreign assignments took him to Saigon and Seoul in the Far East and to Belgrade and Zagreb in Eastern Europe. In Washington, he also dealt primarily with matters concerning Romania and Korea. Mr. Dunlop was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1996.

Q: Today is August 23, 1996. Harry, you were country desk officer for Romania from when to when?

DUNLOP: For two years, from the summer of 1974 to the summer of 1976.

Q: Obviously, you'd been away from Eastern European affairs for some time. When you arrived on the Romanian desk and read and talked yourself into the job, how did you see the situation? What were you getting from what other people reported on the situation in Romania and American relations with Romania?

DUNLOP: This was an interesting time to be dealing with Romania, because Romania was high on the list of priorities in Eastern Europe of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and of President Nixon. This was the time when President Nixon and Secretary Kissinger had proclaimed the policy of "differentiation." This meant treating each of the Eastern European "satellites" of the Soviet Union, not simply as a function of their being "satellites" but in terms of their behavior regarding specific policies and situations.

Very early on, in our dealings with the Eastern European countries, our relations with Poland, for example, had assumed a separate character. I understand that that was due, at least to some extent, to the very active participation and activity of the Polish community in the United States. The Polish community in the United States was extremely well organized. It was apparently not split into factions, as were so many of other immigrant communities in the United States. The Polish community had a lot of representation in Congress. Their view had always been that Poland should not be treated as just an extension of the Soviet Union, however bad Poland's government was and however miserably it had treated its people. They felt that Poland was still Poland, and the United States should look at it as such.

For a variety of reasons, I think most of them good reasons, we had done that. However, for the rest of the Eastern European bloc, and here, of course, we're talking about East Germany [the German Democratic Republic], Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria. Albania was a special case, almost from the beginning. Until President Nixon assumed office, we had tended to treat these Eastern European countries as members of the Warsaw Pact and as countries in which Soviet influence was predominant. We looked at them through that perspective only.

President Nixon and Secretary Kissinger had a different view of these Eastern European countries. They were looking for ways to exploit what they believed must be differences between these countries and the Soviet Union. They found that opportunity in Romania. So, after Poland, Romania was sort of a "show case" of "differentiation." That made the Romanian desk an interesting assignment.

Q: Later on things fell apart in Romania and were put back together on a different basis. However, during your time on the Romanian desk President Ceausescu, the dictator of Romania, was certainly portrayed as a pretty nasty and evil person. When you arrived on the Romanian desk, what kind of reporting were you getting about him?

DUNLOP: Ceausescu was a thoroughly miserable human being. His wife and his son were just as bad. It was a terrible family despotism. Ceausescu was extremely autocratic and suspicious. He treated his subordinates in much the same way that Stalin did. He watched them like a hawk.

Any time that anyone showed signs of having an independent power base, he would bring them down. The Romanian secret police, called the "Securitate," was as ever-present and obnoxious as the secret police anywhere else in the Soviet orbit. I think that these were all things that were clearly understood in Washington. However, it was Ceausescu's behavior in the foreign policy field which distinguished him from other Eastern European leaders. For example, Ceausescu never allowed Soviet soldiers to be stationed in Romania. This was not because the Soviets were happy not to have them there. They would have preferred to have Soviet forces in Romania, at least to secure lines of communication to their forces in Hungary. However, Ceausescu argued that Romanian national sovereignty and national interest would not permit allowing Soviet forces to be stationed in Romania. He also did not allow Romanian soldiers to participate in Warsaw Pact exercises outside of Romania. This created a situation in which, seen from the purely military balance of power, Romania was, perhaps, more of a "minus" factor for the Soviet Union's military presence in Central Europe than a "plus." That was something that we wanted to promote.

Ceausescu also recognized Israel early on, the only Eastern European state to do so. Ceausescu adopted a relatively favorable policy toward Jewish emigration, which occupied a lot of our time and attention. Romanian policy in this regard was very selfish and self-centered. Basically, Ceausescu "sold" Jewish people to Israel, as he "sold" German nationals or people with a German, ethnic background to the West Germans. However, he at least allowed them to leave Romania. This made our relationship with Romania very high on the list of priorities for the leadership of the Jewish community in the United States.

We had a "waiver" under the Jackson-Vanik Amendment for Romania alone, I think, among the other Eastern European countries. On further reflection, I guess that Poland had the same waiver. We used to refer to it as the "Jackson" amendment more than anything else, as I recall it. The waiver of Romania under the Jackson-Vanik Amendment made it possible to pass legislation extending "Most Favored Nation" [MFN] trading status to Romania. This waiver made it possible for us to certify that there was an improvement taking place in Romania's treatment of emigration. Every year we had to do a "body count," if you will, or a "head count" of emigration. Charts were kept. We were continually making representations to the Romanians that, if they wanted to keep their "MFN" status, we would have to certify by June 30, under this law, if I'm not mistaken, that Romania continued to make progress on emigration. We told them that we were looking at the statistics on emigration. If they weren't good enough, we would urge them to be more flexible.

So we had this policy of "differentiation." I was just a cog in all of that, but I had an interesting place to observe it.

Q: Was the idea implicit that we didn't want to jeopardize Romanian behavior by offering military assistance, or anything like that?

DUNLOP: I don't think that we ever seriously considered developing any kind of surreptitious military relationship with Romania or intelligence exchange, although I'll talk about one thing that happened. It didn't go quite that far, although it was in that general area. We didn't go into any kind of strategic planning with Romania. We didn't try to make them a "closet" member of

NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization]. I don't think that we felt we could do that without the Soviets knowing about it. I was of the opinion, anyway, that Ceausescu was sufficiently obnoxious to the Russians that they must have been keeping a "black book" on him and some day, if they got around to it or if they saw the opportunity, he would pay the price for his behavior toward Moscow. I don't think that we wanted to push that situation further than it would allow.

However, in such things as cultural and scientific exchanges we managed to reach an agreement with the Romanians, although I'm not sure that it was ever implemented, that would have permitted Westinghouse to build a nuclear power plant in Romania as an example of peaceful uses of nuclear power. We were very interested in that. We helped the Romanians in some other scientific ways that we felt were not necessarily going to contribute to their military power. We tried to help them get coal from the US

Just before I had arrived on the Romanian desk in 1974, Romania had had a very bad series of floods. I guess that they were due to an early melt of the snows in the mountains, or something like that. When I came to the Romanian desk, we had just started discussing a relatively sophisticated flood warning system with the Romanians. I don't think that it would really have been all of that sophisticated, but we had an idea of setting up some kind of computerized and automated water level monitoring system.

The one area where we engaged in some security cooperation with Romania involved one of the less agreeable things that I did as a country desk officer. This involved airline safety, and particularly security measures aimed at preventing hijackings of aircraft. The 1970's were a period of very frequent hijackings. The Romanians had a national airline called "TAROM" [Romanian Air Transportation Company]. I don't remember ever hearing about a Romanian airliner being hijacked, although aircraft of other countries, including American aircraft, were hijacked. The Romanians wanted to send a group of airline and airport security people to the United States to consult with us and pick up whatever they could to help them. We agreed to consult with them.

I remember arranging the program for these Romanian officials. There were four or five people involved in this group, including a couple of generals. We got in touch with the US Secret Service in making these arrangements. The Secret Service was helpful in arranging for some time to brief the Romanians in an UNCLASSIFIED way about some of the things that we were doing regarding "high tech" detection of bombs and so forth. Also, we dealt with the FAA [Federal Aviation Administration] and the US Marshals program. At that time armed, US marshals were riding in civilian clothes on a random basis on American airlines. Their task was to deter hijacking. They had developed a variety of pistol ammunition which was more like a little shotgun shell than anything else. If it was fired inside an airplane at somebody, it would certainly be very discouraging to them but was not supposed to go through the frame of the aircraft and be destructive. So we showed the Romanians that kind of equipment.

What I didn't like about this was that the security officers who came off the Romanian aircraft were all "knuckle draggers." They were all real thugs. It was personally distasteful to me to deal with them. However, I did, and, I suppose, there was an American interest served in doing so. I

learned one thing. If you want to put a bomb in a locker at Washington National Airport, don't put it at ground level. Put it in an upper level locker, because the "sniffer" dogs will not climb ladders and sniff the upper level lockers. [Laughter]

Q: Henry Kissinger was Secretary of State at this time. This was one of the areas where he was following his grand, global scheme of exploiting weaknesses in the Soviet Bloc. Were all of you under pressure to come up with "positive actions" to make the Romanians happy with our relationship with them?

DUNLOP: The answer is "Yes." However, on the other side of that coin the Ambassador to Romania at that time was Harry Barnes. He was, perhaps, one of the most distinguished career Ambassadors that we have had. Harry Barnes was a whole library of ideas and energy, although, clearly, the people on the Seventh Floor [where the offices of the Secretary of State and of his principal assistants were located] who were looking out for Secretary Kissinger's policies on Romania would also have been looking for a lot of things to consider. In any case, Harry Barnes provided lots of ideas.

As I look back on it, I didn't disagree with this policy of "differentiation" toward the countries of Eastern Europe. I think that this was the right policy, although we had to swallow some of our gorge in dealing with these thugs. However, we also pushed the door of our relationship with Romania unnaturally wide open. There were things going on which were uncomfortable to us, to the degree that, after Kissinger left office as Secretary of State, the door swung partly closed, at least to some extent. While I don't think that we ever totally abandoned the policy of "differentiation" with regard to Romania, I don't think that it received the same emphasis or policy priority after Kissinger left office as Secretary of State.

Kissinger made Helmut Sonnenfeldt, an old associate of his from the NSC [National Security Council], the Counselor of the Department of State during this period of time. He then told Helmut Sonnenfeldt to be his watchdog for "differentiation." That was one of Sonnenfeldt's specially assigned tasks. What that meant for us was that we had to deal with another layer in the bureaucracy up above us. I always had to clear everything with Sonnenfeldt's office. This, of course, would not have been a natural way of doing business for a country desk officer in the Office of Eastern European Affairs.

This worked very much to the detriment of the influence of the DAS, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, who was at least nominally in charge of Eastern European Affairs and who should, in fact, have been our immediate, operational boss. Instead, the DAS found himself bypassed frequently, which made him unhappy. Perhaps it was not appropriate, bureaucratically. There was another channel of authority, the "real" channel of authority, which was not what it looked like on paper, and that ran from Sonnenfeldt's office to mine. Usually, this is not a good idea, although in this case I think that this system worked pretty well. I tried to ease the EUR front office irritation and insecurity where I could. I don't think that policy implementation was particularly hampered by it, but it was an irritant and one of the many reasons why Kissinger's stewardship of the Department of State was so deeply resented by so many people. This was just a small part of it, but it was one which I observed.

I was always able to deal pretty well with Sonnenfeldt's office because the guy in his office who was concerned with Romanian affairs was a good friend of mine, and we just worked things out. However, it didn't make my bosses in EE [Office of Eastern European Affairs] or the DAS for EE very happy. I had no choice. I would get a call from Sonnenfeldt's office and would be told to come up and talk about something. I couldn't say "No."

Q: What were you getting in the way of reporting from the Embassy in Romania?

DUNLOP: Well, Harry Barnes was a very effective Ambassador, in many ways. Among other things, he was a great motivator of his staff. He had a DCM named Dick Viets, who was also high on my list of capable and effective officers. He was also a very nice person to deal with. I think that the Embassy in Bucharest did a lot of good reporting. As I say, there were no illusions about how nasty the Ceausescu Government was. There was no attempt made to dilute the reporting on the Romanian Government's worst aspects or somehow to compartmentalize it. I remember on one occasion that black students at the University of Bucharest rioted. The Romanian police came in and just beat the hell out of about 50 of them. Four or five of them died as a consequence. This was generally applauded, all over Bucharest, because these students were very unpopular. It was a terribly nasty mess. These students had no redress whatsoever. Their Embassy representatives, the Nigerians or whoever it was, could go in and complain to the Romanians but they would just be shoved out the door without even a shot of "svica," which is, I think, the Romanian equivalent of "slivovitz" [plum brandy], the typical Serbian firewater..

We got good reporting out of the Embassy in Bucharest. One other thing happened at that time. I don't know how common it was elsewhere, but the practice of reporting via "Official-Informal" telegrams between the country officer in the Department and the DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission] was introduced at that time. It was a marvelous way of communicating between the Department and the Embassy without having to clear messages and go through that very elaborate process. It was clearly understood that whatever I said to the DCM, the DCM in no way would take as an instruction from the Department. Anything that the DCM said to me in one of these telegrams would in no way substitute for the Embassy's reporting in the official channel. These exchanges were very helpful, and they became frequent, on an almost twice-weekly basis. At times these messages involved nothing more than sending along corridor gossip, that is, things that were not offensive to the system but which helped the Embassy to understand how things were going in Washington.

Q: This was institutionalized?

DUNLOP: Yes, it was in EE. As I say, I can't say whether this procedure was all of that new or all that widely utilized elsewhere. However, we used it a lot. Dick Viets made very clear to me how useful he thought it was. Of course, all of this reporting was seen by my immediate boss, Nick Andrews. In fact, S/S [the Executive Secretariat of the Department] saw these telegrams too. S/S could take these messages anywhere in the Department that they wanted to. This was always a source of some irritation at the desk level. We didn't see why S/S--theoretically a non-policy office--should be reading our Official-Informal mail. However, I saw no problem with Nick Andrews reading it. In fact, these messages sometimes were a way of telling Nick Andrews what I wanted him to know in a way that he would have to pay a little attention to. It wasn't all of

that one-sided in terms of giving the Embassy information. It allowed me to say things that I really believed. Not that I wouldn't have said them elsewhere, but now he knew that the Embassy knew this, too.

Q: Did you have any high level visits while you were on the desk?

DUNLOP: Well, we had some. That was one of the things that Ambassador Harry Barnes was always pushing. He always wanted to have senior Romanian officials go to the United States. However, there was a down side to that. We didn't have American officials to reciprocate for these visits, for one thing. Visits like these are always very high profile matters, particularly for the press in those countries, which report everything that is said and every bite of food and drink that such official visitors consume. On the desk we tended not to be too happy about these visits, but Harry Barnes was always coming up with bright ideas about these visits.

Almost the last thing that I did on the Romanian desk was in this connection. There was a man called Stefan Andrei, who at various times had been Romanian Foreign Minister and Director of Foreign Affairs of the Romanian Communist Party. That wasn't his title, although that is what he was, in fact. On two or three occasions he had been a kind of "Special Privy Counselor" to President Ceausescu. He was a much admired man for his intelligence. He was very outspoken at times, even in public, about the Soviets. He obviously detested them and thought that he did himself some good with Ceausescu to dump on the Soviets occasionally. He let us know, I'm sure also for his own, self-serving reasons, how much he detested the Soviets.

Ambassador Harry Barnes wanted to have him invited to the United States, but who would be his "counterpart" [host]? At the time this was done, Andrei was in the Communist Party side of the government apparatus. He didn't have a "state" function. There was much "to-ing" and "fro-ing" to see who was going to be his host in the United States. Incidentally, his host was going to be reimbursed from representational funds for the "hosting" part of the visit.

Helmut Sonnenfeldt, the Counselor of the Department of State, was eventually stuck with the job of being Andrei's official host in the United States. The position of Counselor of the Department of State was not like that of an Assistant Secretary of State, but this issue could be "fudged" a little bit. So Sonnenfeldt did this job. He called me up to his office to discuss the schedule. He had various suggestions for the schedule. He told me that the visit had to go absolutely correctly, or I might find myself assigned to "Lower Slobbovia" [a mythical, backward country from the comic strip, "Li'l Abner"]. Sonnenfeldt could be curt and intimidating at times, as on this occasion. Generally, I got on well with him. So I worked very hard on preparing the schedule, although I probably would have worked very hard on it anyway.

One of the things that Andrei's people said that he wanted to do was to become acquainted with "folk culture" in the United States. Well, in Eastern Europe "folk culture" is a big thing. It really exists, and you knew where to go to see it. There would be dance groups available and people in costumes to meet the visitor's planes. But what is "folk culture" in the United States? We're kind of a multicultural society. I scurried around and looked at all of the different performances that were going to be going on in Washington, DC, during the period of Andrei's visit. There was a "country and Western" singer. I always forget his name, but he was a very popular man, he was a

fixture on "Hee Haw" and later in his life did car TV commercials. He was going to be appearing at Wolf Trap [a cultural center West of Washington, near Dulles Airport]. I hope that I can recall his name. The name of Roy Acuff comes to mind, but that was not the name of this man.

Anyway, we got Mrs. Shouse at Wolf Trap involved. Some of those who read or listen to this interview may recognize her name. She is--or was--the great, moving spirit behind Wolf Trap. She agreed to host a little event during the intermission of the program there which Andrei would attend. This was a mini-coup of sorts for me, or so I thought. We laid all of this on. We kept telling Sonnenfeldt's office what we were doing. I was very proud of having found something like this. So the program was all "locked in," and Andrei's plane was virtually in the air. Then I got a phone call from Sonnenfeldt who said, "God damn it, Dunlop, what have you gotten me into? I hate country music." [Laughter] I told him, "Mr. Sonnenfeldt, I can't change anything at this point." So he went. He sounds like a very grumpy and mean person, but he really isn't. I always got along with him pretty well. He would let you know if he was unhappy. He just didn't look forward to an evening of country music.

Q: This sounds like something that happened when I was Consul General in Naples. The Political Officer there lined up a luncheon at an eel raising farm that he thought would be great! Eels are not my favorite food.

DUNLOP: Well, the things we have to do for our country. Anyway, the Andrei visit went off well. We had another official visit which absolutely terrified the Embassy in Bucharest. "Niki" Ceausescu was the son of President Ceausescu...

Q: And a really nasty person.

DUNLOP: He was a terrible man. Later on, he was accused of having raped and sexually tormented, in a masochistic way, a lovely, young Romanian gymnast, who had won everybody's hearts here in the United States. Later on she defected from Romania and became an American citizen. Her name was Nadia Comenici.

Q: She was an actress, not a ballerina.

DUNLOP: This all came out later on, after she defected. She was very graphic about how Niki Ceausescu burned her with cigarettes and things like that. It was terrible. One thing that made my life a little easier on the desk was that we had a very, very competent Romanian Ambassador to work with. His name was Corneliu Bogdan, and he had been Ambassador to the United States for a long time. He went on to have an interesting life after he had been Romanian Ambassador here in Washington. He never became Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, but he was a very senior man. I think that he had his picture on the cover of "Newsweek" magazine, or something like that. He was considered a "good" Eastern European Ambassador. He was a very able man who had a terrible job to do, representing a terrible government. He did this job very well.

The one time that I saw Boydan flustered was when he came in to see the Assistant Secretary for European Affairs. I was there, taking notes. He told us that Niki Ceausescu was coming to the United States. He didn't have to plead with us for help because we were all prepared to do what

we could. He filled us in on some of the details of what Niki liked to do at night, which was to go out, get drunk, and get laid. He had a terrible temper and beat up on people when drunk, which was a lot of the time. Keeping Niki Ceausescu out of jail threatened to be a major proposition here. However, we worked with SY [Office of Security in the Department of State] on Niki Ceausescu's program. SY would notify the police in the various cities Niki would be visiting. The Ambassador knew he was coming to the US to do nothing but "play around" with American prostitutes. He wanted to go to Las Vegas, Nevada, and places like that.

We managed to get the Office of Diplomatic Security in the State Department involved in setting up the program. Our people in this office usually did not provide any kind of escort for a family member of a prominent foreign personality like that, in this case the son of a chief of state. However, they made an exception in this case. So far as I know, and I'm sure that I would have known, Niki Ceausescu got through the visit and out of the US without any particular trouble. This was a very perilous time for Ambassador Bogdan. Had anything gone seriously wrong with this visit, the Ambassador would have suffered for it in a major way.

Q: We mentioned "cultural exchanges." Could people get out of Romania?

DUNLOP: They sent their "folk dance" groups, of which they were justifiably proud, to various countries. I'm sure that they came to the US I don't think that Romania has been a bastion or fount of great cultural achievement throughout its history. They are very proud of their "folk culture," which is colorful and noteworthy.

Q: There's a wonderful "folk museum" in Bucharest, at which all of the different types of housing that they have are on display.

DUNLOP: They have that and they also have a number of beautiful and quite interesting monasteries up in the mountains. I visited some of them during my one trip to Bucharest. They are something like what the Serbs have in Yugoslavia, down in Kosovo and the Sanjak areas. However, I can't think of any outstanding cultural groups like those the Russians have, classical ballet and so forth.

Q: Was there anyone in Congress or in one of the exile groups outside of Congress, sort of "beating up" on the State Department for having a "close relationship" with this nasty regime?

DUNLOP: Well, one of the groups that could have given us a hard time would have been anyone belonging to or subject to the influence of the Jewish community in the United States. Romania had a long history of violent anti-Semitism, just like Poland, Slovakia, the Ukraine, and Russia itself. The Romanian Orthodox Church doesn't have a very good record in that regard. However, because of the way that we were dealing with Romania, people from groups like the Council of Presidents of Jewish Organizations, whose head was then Hyman Bookbinder, a very distinguished American, kept an eagle eye on the Department of State, but they didn't have much to criticize.

They thought, and they were right, that we were trying hard to create conditions to keep emigration levels up. The Romanians were letting enough people out, particularly Jews, to keep

us satisfied but holding enough people back so that we would have to "pay" some kind of price for it. We both understood the "rules of that game."

We instituted a new system while I was there, one that I was very proud of. I thought that this system made sense, both from a bureaucratic and a human rights point of view. I say, "We instituted this system." I mean that I was in the Department at the time and encouraged this. The INS [Immigration and Naturalization Service of the Department of Justice in the US] agreed to let the Embassy in Bucharest issue what, in effect, was a "temporary" immigration visa, which the Romanians would recognize. It would be valid only for travel, in this case, to Rome, where the INS Office there would "reprocess" the person. This was called "Third Country Processing." INS had to give up some of its "sovereignty" to do this. You can understand how hard it was for the INS to do that. The Romanians also had to accept a kind of immigration examination in their own country, which most countries never like, and not just the Romanians.

This arrangement was negotiated by a lot of people. I had only a very minor role in it, although I certainly applauded and pushed it and was very happy when it was implemented. It was in place for about the last year of my two years on the Romanian desk. The time it took to process someone whom the Romanians were willing to let out of Romania and that we were willing to let into the United States took something like six to nine months under this arrangement, rather than the more normal 18 to 30 months. So the processing operation mechanically improved, and that was reflected in the figures of Romanians moving to the United States.

The criticism of our policy toward Romania always came from people like Amnesty International. They were never satisfied. Of course, they never should be satisfied. I am not making a critical remark about them. However, when you consider a government like that of Romania under Ceausescu, Amnesty International had no trouble finding things to criticize. They had no trouble finding it possible to tell the United States Government that it wasn't doing enough about human rights abuses in Romania.

Q: What was your impression of the work of our Embassy in Bucharest? Could the officers assigned get out and around the country?

DUNLOP: They were very constrained. Foreign Service National [locally-hired, foreign national] employees of the Embassy were under particular pressure. This was one of the things that really got to Ambassador Harry Barnes when he was in Romania. This applied to other members of the Embassy staff as well. When you work with people and get to know them, but realize that in their daily lives their association with you is a big risk and danger for them, as the case was in Romania for a long time and was the case also in Belgrade and up to the very end in some Eastern European countries, it was a strain. Ambassador Barnes tried to figure out all kinds of ways to get the police to lift a little of that pressure on our Foreign Service National employees. However, I don't think that he ever succeeded in this connection.

Our Embassy people could travel in Romania, with permission from the Romanian government. There were no "closed areas" where they could not travel, as was the case in the Soviet Union. I think that in the Soviet Union our Embassy staff was confined to an area within a 25 mile radius of Moscow unless special permission was requested and granted. In the case of Romania,

Embassy officers had to get permission to travel from the Office of Protocol in the Romanian Foreign Ministry, and there was a lot of surveillance while they traveled. Romania is a beautiful country. We had no other post in Romania but Bucharest. Personnel assigned there were always encouraged to travel by our Embassy. They did. There was a little house up in the hills North of Bucharest which the Embassy had rented and which Embassy officers could visit on a reservation basis. This made it possible for them to get out of Bucharest. During the years between World Wars I and II Bucharest was described as the "Paris of the Balkans." However, it was certainly a depressing place during my one visit there.

Q: Perhaps we should go back into your period on the Romanian desk in the State Department [1974-1976] and talk a little about that.

DUNLOP: There were two things which I did not mention before and will now. I spoke of Ambassador Harry Barnes with admiration and even affection, although we didn't spend that much time together. Ambassador Barnes went on to have a brilliant career as Ambassador to Chile and India. He was also Director General of the Foreign Service. I don't think that I've ever heard anyone say anything bad about him, except that he exhausts you and wears you out by the energy that he exudes. In fact, he thinks that everybody else is thinking, talking, and doing things as fast as he does. We mere mortals may not be capable of this.

Ambassador Barnes suffered a personal tragedy when he was in Romania. His wife was seduced by a Romanian security agent who was placed on the Embassy staff as a driver. I say "seduced." In fact, I don't know who "seduced" whom and I don't care. However, this clandestine relationship evolved. She was having an affair with an agent of a hostile security service. I don't know what the particular consequences of this matter were for Harry Barnes, personally. However, it ruined his marriage when it became known. I don't believe that any prosecution was ever instituted against Mrs. Barnes. However, it was a tragic and sad thing.

This is another commentary on security services like those of Romania. Perhaps they felt that they could somehow profit enormously out of this kind of relationship. I guess that this is what clandestine intelligence services, by their very nature, think that they can do. It might have been to their benefit, although I do not know. What it meant was to make an eternal enemy of Ambassador Harry Barnes, a man who was trying to be a friend of Romania.

Q: You referred also to the Romanian Ambassador in Washington during the time that you were on the Romanian desk.

DUNLOP: Yes. However, first, let me mention one other thing as an illustration of the intensity of the surveillance of our Embassy in Bucharest by the Romanian security people. President Ceausescu's security people also managed to get hold of one of Ambassador Barnes' cordovan leather shoes. They put a transmitter into the heel of the shoe. That particular shoe is on display at the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] museum of "dirty tricks." I've seen it out there.

I mentioned that the Romanian Ambassador in Washington was an effective person. His name, as I said, was Corneliu Bogdan. He had been in the United States about six years when I came onto the Romanian desk, and he was still there when I left that job. That meant that he had spent seven to nine years as Ambassador to the United States by the time I left Washington.

Ambassador Bogdan had made a good impression in Washington. Perhaps he didn't have a very difficult act to follow, because I suspect that his predecessors had been pretty much nonentities or perhaps worse. Bogdan was personable, interested in the United States, and presented a difficult case as well as any lawyer could do. The difficult case was representing his country which was under a man like President Ceausescu. Bogdan had an attractive daughter, whom I met, who was a student at George Washington University in Washington. She met and fell in love with a young American there, and her feelings were reciprocated. I don't need to imagine what consternation this caused for Ambassador Bogdan and his wife, when they realized that their daughter was contemplating or asserting her intention to marry an American, as well as what this might mean personally for Ambassador Bogdan's career and, perhaps, even worse than that. I don't need to imagine that anguish because he told us about it.

Normally, we wouldn't have heard of anything like this, but the young man came to the Department of State to say that he thought that his fiancée, or the person he wanted to marry, might be forcibly taken back to Romania. She was afraid of being forcibly drugged or something like that, perhaps even by her own father or mother, I guess. He wanted us to "stop that." He said that he was going to go to the American press and to Congress. In fact, he first went to see a Congressman, who then called us. The Congressman very sensibly told us, "Look, I don't think that this young man ought to be making all of this public fuss about this." He asked us what we thought. We agreed with the Congressman. The Romanians were likely to put her on the plane that much sooner, if that is what they intended to do. We said, "Let us talk to this young man."

So we talked to him quietly, not in public, and promised him what help we could. He turned out to be very intelligent. He was just angry and afraid for the woman he loved. One day I received a request from Ambassador Bogdan through one of his Embassy officers, to meet him at a restaurant. This was very unusual, because of our respective levels. I was not the person he usually dealt with in the State Department, although he knew me well.

However, I met him at a restaurant. He said that he knew that the American student at George Washington University had told the Ambassador's daughter, who, in turn, had told her father that the young man had been to the State Department. He knew that we were aware of this situation and he said that he would like to share with us some of his thinking on this matter. Ambassador Bogdan told me, "I don't need to pretend to you or to try and hide from you how much of a blow this has been to me and my wife, and particularly my wife. My wife is in a real panic. She thinks that this means the end of my career and maybe that I'll wind up in jail in Romania. I don't think that it's quite like that, but who knows? This is a very serious matter. My wife is even more upset about this than I am. We've both talked to our daughter, and she seems determined to go through with this, even though she is aware of the possible consequences for her mother and father."

Ambassador Bogdan continued, "Her mother wants her to go back to Romania as soon as we can arrange it. This would be a final separation for the two young people, and the young man would never get a visa to go to Romania. She would never be allowed to leave Romania. That's my

wife's solution. That's not my solution. Here is what I have proposed. I persuaded my wife and my daughter to accept this and I just wanted you to know about it. We persuaded our daughter to return to Romania and stay there for a year. She can write to this young man and talk to him on the telephone but she is not to see him for a year. If, after a year, she still wants to marry him, she will have my blessing and support. I don't expect you to do anything about this. I don't think that there will be any trouble. She's agreed to return to Romania. What I would like you to do is to persuade the young man that I am acting in good faith, because I can't persuade him of this. The young man doesn't believe me."

My reaction to these comments by Ambassador Bogdan, as I think would be the reaction of any other human being, was great admiration for his having handled the matter this way. He was doing this totally out of channels, he was doing it out of his Embassy where he might be bugged, and through me personally rather than officially where I might feel obliged to write a memorandum of conversation which large numbers of State Department officers might read. He was appealing to me in a very dignified way for help in a most excruciatingly difficult situation. It seemed to me that he was handling this matter as well as he possibly could.

So I talked to the young man. First of all, I talked to him on the phone. Then I saw him personally. I said that nobody could guarantee the future. I said that one of the things that could very well happen is that she could fall out of love with him. That happens, at times, after a year's separation. That was probably what the young woman's mother and father were hoping would happen. I said that I believed that Ambassador Bogdan was sincere in what he told me, because as a human being, I had sat across the table from him and listened to him speak.

So the young man basically agreed to this suggestion. After a year, he went to Bucharest. They saw each other and decided that they were still in love with each other. He brought her back to the United States, they were married, and, I hope, they'll live happily ever after. Not many marriages in the 1970's are that way, but I hope that one was. I thought that that was a good story and so I told it. Also, Ambassador Bogdan is now dead.

To finish the story of Ambassador Bogdan, he went back to Romania as Director for American Affairs in the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This was not as senior a job as he might have expected to have had probably because of this incident involving his daughter. I think that in those European bureaucracies, and even in ours, something better would have been offered to him, with broader implications than even the very important position of Director for American Affairs in the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In any case he returned to Romania in about 1978 or 1979, served for two or three years in the Foreign Ministry, and then retired, apparently with no adverse consequences to himself from this incident, apart from not getting promotions. However, later, when President Ceausescu was pushed from power and then shot [in 1989], the new Romanian Government in that confused and very difficult and dangerous time called Bogdan back in to be, in effect, their acting Foreign Minister. I had heard this story but not the rest of it, which I do not know. He had been living in some comfort somewhere outside of Bucharest. He came into Bucharest, took a room in one of the big hotels there, and worked out of the hotel in the midst of all of that chaos. He subsequently died, apparently of a heart attack. At least it was announced that he had died of a heart attack. In Romania, who knows what the real truth was?

I remember reading about it in the Washington press. It made the headlines here because Corneliu Bogdan had been Ambassador. Everybody was reading about events in Romania, which were of interest, but here was this man who had been Romanian Ambassador in Washington and was called back to serve as Foreign Minister. And now he was reported dead. I was very sorry to hear that.

Q: Harry, before we come to Tito's death, there are two dramatic or traumatic things that happened in late 1979. First, could we discuss the overthrow of the Shah in Iran in December, 1979, which didn't have all that much of an impact on Yugoslavia. However, in the United States we were terribly concerned because we had some 54 Embassy hostages taken in Tehran. We were making representations almost everywhere about this. I assume that you received instructions to make representations in Belgrade also. How did that work out?

DUNLOP: I have some recollection of that. I think that you're right in the sense that the Yugoslav-Iranian connection was not all of that close. Certainly, it had not been when the Shah was in power in Iran. I remember what we wanted to do and I talked about this and how we would go about doing this in a bureaucratic way. For example, how could we determine whether the new, Iranian Government, whatever that was, had any meaningful relationship or communications with the Yugoslav Government? If there were any such relationship, we would have made whatever kind of appeals we might have thought effective to the Yugoslavs to intercede on our behalf. I'm sure that we did the same thing with many other governments. What we found out was that the Yugoslavs had nobody who could effectively present their own views in Tehran, let alone ours. So Belgrade was not a channel for attempting to reach the Ayatollah Khomeini, the leading power figure in Iran.

When I was in Belgrade, the first Yugoslav Ambassador to Tehran was appointed. His name was Dizdarevic. There were about five Dizdarevic brothers in a clan which had joined Tito's "partisans." They were Muslims who fought for the partisans in Bosnia. They thereby ensured themselves of various lucrative jobs as commissars and other officials of the "partizan" regime after it took power in Bosnia. I think that the Yugoslav Ambassador to Iran was named Rafiz Dizdarevic. The Yugoslav Government had picked him because of his Muslim background. I remember a couple of Yugoslavs "dying" with laughter, saying, "Boy, somebody thinks that he's really being clever, sending a man named Rafiz Dizdarevic to Tehran because he had a Muslim father. In fact, Rafiz Dizdarevic ordered his Muslim father to be shot! [Laughter] Jesu Christus Maria [the equivalent of the aspiration, 'Jesus, Mary, and Joseph,' among American Catholics]! I don't know whether that's true or not, but that was the street talk in Belgrade. Plenty of partisans ordered members of their families to be shot in 1945 and the following years.

Milovan Djilas [former Vice President of Yugoslavia who later had a "falling out" with Tito] wrote very frankly about this in his famous memoirs. Anyway, the Yugoslavs were just trying to get somebody into Tehran, and they decided to send Rafiz Dizdarevic there. However, by the time that Dizdarevic had settled down in Tehran and was in touch with the new, revolutionary Iranian Government, the US hostages had been released.

Q: Well, the other event that happened close to the same time, as you said before, around Christmas time, 1979, was that the Soviets invaded Afghanistan. The Soviets essentially overthrew a "Soviet type" government that was in trouble and installed a new one instead. This was a kind of implementation of the "Brezhnev Doctrine" [i. e., the Soviets would take action to prevent any change in orientation of a government once it was clearly favorable to the Soviets].

DUNLOP: Yes.

Q: I was thinking of the Yugoslav Government looking at this invasion of Afghanistan. Yugoslavia had a leader [Tito] who was pretty much on his way out of authority [due to age and various infirmities]. How did the Yugoslavs look upon the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan?

DUNLOP: I think that the Yugoslavs were very, very concerned, for precisely those reasons. Of course, they weren't going to say much about that in public, but we heard enough of it in private and from other people, so that we were fairly sure that they were concerned because of this precedent. Of course, there was the Czech precedent before that [the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968] and the Hungarian precedent [the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956] even before that.

However, at the same time this Yugoslav concern was coupled with a sort of contemptuous attitude toward the Soviets, at least in the military and outer space areas. By now [1979] the US had pretty much overtaken the Soviets in terms of outer space research, and the Yugoslavs accepted that we had done that by this time. We had caught up with the Soviets and passed them. That made an impact on the Yugoslavs. They didn't look at the Soviet Union any longer as the "wave of the future" in terms of technology and military affairs. Nevertheless, the Yugoslavs were worried about the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. I'll tell you an anecdote which is worth telling, which illustrates the Yugoslav reaction to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and is a direct consequence of it. It affected my own personal life.

Every year since Tito took office as President of Yugoslavia, and including the fall of 1979, Tito gave a reception for the Diplomatic Corps accredited to Belgrade. It was called the "Diplomatski Lov"; "Diplomatic Hunt". This annual event had acquired a certain amount of notoriety. One year, when I was not in Belgrade, the Austrian Ambassador shot and killed the French Ambassador, or vice versa, in an accident which occurred during the hunt organized for the Diplomatic Corps.

Q: Hunting was not necessarily a sport which a lot of Ambassadors indulged in any more. In the old days the nobility, from whose ranks many Ambassadors were drawn, all knew how to handle guns. Now you had people who, for virtually the first time, were handling guns!

DUNLOP: I don't have any personal experience of this, but I was told that in the "old days" [presumably before World War I] and before this incident involving the French and Austrian Ambassadors, it was really expected that all of the diplomats at these hunts would carry a gun. Whether you wanted to do it or not, that involved getting up early enough in the morning and going to some pre-selected spot where these helpless flocks of geese, pigs, or other game would be driven in front of the diplomats, who were supposed to mow them down. Actually, this was

pretty much a command performance. All of the Chiefs of Mission from the various countries accredited to the Yugoslav Government were supposed to be present for the hunt. By 1979--and after that tragic accident--the Chiefs of Mission were given a choice. They had a choice. They virtually had to attend, but they could either hunt or not.

For my sins I was Chargé d'Affaires at the time that the "Diplomatski Lov" was held. I was duly invited and was asked to mark on a form application whether I would or would not hunt. I checked "will not hunt" and got another communication telling me what I was supposed to do. This involved getting up a little bit later in the morning and joining others to "view the hunt." That is, "Tito's kill," the pile of steaming dead animals allegedly shot by Tito himself. God! Then we were invited to attend a huge breakfast. I must admit that I was looking forward to that! I would also meet Tito. I had been in his presence. For example, I had been at the "White Palace" [presidential residence in Belgrade] for a couple of state receptions but I never really met Tito.

So I went and did all of those things that I was expected to do. On the way back to Belgrade we were on a train. The Yugoslav protocol officers sat various diplomats next to each other. They just made seat assignments in little compartments on a European type train. They would say, for example, "You are in Car 3, Seat 15." I was seated next to the Afghan Chargé d'Affaires, whom I had never met. I had seen him but never said a word to him previously. This was just prior to the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviets, when the Afghan Government which the Soviets overthrew was not a very "liberal" government, either. We were not on such happy terms with the Afghans. I had known Adolph "Spike" Dubs, who had been Political Counselor during an earlier assignment in Belgrade and who was killed in Afghanistan, with the collusion, if not instigation of the Afghan Government and so forth. So I was not enthusiastic about anybody with any particularly close ties to the Afghan Government. However, I was stuck for several hours in the railroad compartment with the Afghan Chargé. I didn't feel like being particularly friendly toward him. I felt like taking a nap, actually, which I may even have done. The Afghan Chargé turned out to be quite pleasant and, even though we didn't talk one word about politics, "Spike" Dubs, or anything about the then current, pro-communist, Afghan Government, he had a deck of cards. He asked if I wanted to play cards. I said, "No, thanks." Then he said, "Can I show you some card tricks?" What could I say? I said, "Yes," and he showed me about 40 card tricks. He knew a real array of card tricks.

Well, I got off the train, collected my two pheasants, which were a kind of "gift" to me from the hunt, took them home, and tried them out. I thought no more about it until about two days after Christmas, [1979], after the coup d'etat had taken place in Kabul, Afghanistan. My door bell rang, and who appeared on my doorstep but the Afghan Chargé d'Affaires! It was on a Saturday or Sunday, it was snowing, there was some snow on the ground, and here was this man all bundled up. He was undoubtedly the Afghan Chargé. I invited him to come into my house. He shook his finger negatively and gestured to me to come out of the house. He made it clear that he didn't want to go into my house. I thought, "Oh, oh, here we go!" He said, very politely, "I'm going to impose something on you but you may say at any time that you do not wish to continue this conversation. I will never tell anybody about it, will go away, and you'll never see me again or hear anything about it."

The Afghan Chargé said, "My name is So-and-so. You remember me from the train. I'm the man with the card tricks. Well, I want to 'pull off' another magic trick. I want to go to the United States and fight the communists. I'm asking for your help." Well, I wasn't quite prepared for this. However, it had happened, and there I was, wondering what would happen next. I think that I said, "Do you mind if I go inside my house and put on my boots," or something inane like that, since we were standing out in the snow.

Anyway, we started a conversation, and I was quickly convinced of his bona fides. He had a story to tell which was, roughly, as follows. He had joined the Afghan Foreign Service as one of its very first, professional officers, for the Afghan Government under the King of Afghanistan, even before the Soviets overthrew the government and seized power. It was the government of Babrak Kamal, or something like that. He said that he had served in the Afghan Foreign Service for 10 years, no matter what the political complexion of the government. He said that he thought that it was important to set a standard of professional skill in the diplomatic service which would eventually be of great use to his country. However, he could not stomach what had just happened in Afghanistan, the blatant Soviet intervention. He wanted to find a way to fight against the communists in Afghanistan. He said that he thought that the Americans were the best people to turn to and so was turning to me. The reason that he was concerned was that he had also been told that two "goons" [Afghan Government security thugs] would come to Belgrade in the next month. He had received a letter of recall and had about four weeks left in Yugoslavia. He didn't call these people "goons," but he was sure that they would inventory the Afghan Embassy's funds and so forth, find them wanting, and send him back to be prosecuted and maybe shot, because he was clearly politically unacceptable to the new Afghan Government.

He said that he had a limited time during which he had to get out of Belgrade. He had a wife and small child. He said that she was terrified of having alleged financial irregularities in the handling of Embassy funds "discovered" and being kidnapped.

My first suggestion was, "Why don't you go to the Yugoslav Government with this story, tell them that you have been ordered back to Afghanistan, and that this is the reason that you are leaving your government's service." I suggested that he should then go to an American Embassy in either Vienna or Rome to process his visa to go to the United States. I would make sure that they knew that he was coming. I said, "Why ask me for help here?" He answered, "My wife is terrified. She thinks that the Yugoslavs are all communists, and all communists will work together." I said, "Well, you don't have to tell the Yugoslavs anything. Just go to the Austrian Embassy and get a visa." He said, "There will be a Yugoslav employee of the Austrian Embassy in charge of issuing visas, right?" I said, "Probably." He said, "Well, my wife is terrified of that. So I can't get an Austrian visa. How can I get across the border into Austria? I don't have an Austrian visa in my passport. I would be going with my wife and child, and some luggage. How should I best do that?"

Of course, I had no expertise in such matters as how to cross international borders under false pretenses. However, I felt that this was a worthy cause. So, without going into details, we did work out a way by which he could get to Vienna. From Vienna he got to Rome, where he was "processed" by the INS [US Immigration and Naturalization Service] office in the American Embassy there. The last time I heard from him was when I received a card from him when he got

to somewhere in Kansas. His sponsor was a Presbyterian Church in some small town like Fort Something-or-Other in Kansas. Perhaps I should have tried harder to keep in touch with him, as I developed a real affection for him after a while. He was a very decent man. He wrote me a letter, very carefully spelled out in English, saying that everybody there had been so nice and gentle to himself and his family. He thanked me for my assistance. I suspect all he found in Kansas that was familiar for him was snow and wind.

So that's a little anecdote about the Afghan invasion. We also knew that the Yugoslavs were very unhappy at the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. They regarded this as a sign of Soviet willingness to use their military forces in an act of blatant aggression.

Q: Even in the confines of the Embassy secure "conference room," was anybody at the Embassy talking about what would happen if the Soviets moved against Yugoslavia? I'm not talking about "war plans." I'm talking about what you, the Ambassador, and other senior members of the Embassy thought that we could do in such a case.

DUNLOP: We had three areas of concern. One was the obvious and always present "Emergency Evacuation" [E&E] plan. This plan is always supposed to be high up on an Ambassador's priority list and usually, I think, is. We had a very interesting kind of commentary from the US military in Europe on the E&E plan. To me this was the first time that our military had ever done this. Let me explain this a bit.

The commander of US forces in Europe wears at least two "hats." He is the commander of SHAPE [Supreme Headquarters, Allied Powers, Europe] as the NATO Supreme Commander, SACEUR. He is a four-star general. Gen Al Haig held this position, among others, and Gen Galvin has just completed his tour of duty in this position. He sits in Brussels with his NATO "hat" on and is Supreme Commander, Allied Forces, Europe [SACEUR]. He is also commander of all American forces in Europe as Commander in Chief of US Forces in Europe [CINCEUR]. In that latter capacity he has "US only" responsibilities. For example, he and his staff assist in making arrangements for the emergency evacuation of Embassy personnel and other US nationals whenever necessary and wherever his authority runs. His authority includes Yugoslavia, in his capacity as CINCEUR.

At this time the POLAD [Political Adviser] to CINCEUR was a Foreign Service Officer named Al Francis, whom I had met, liked, and respected very much in Vietnam. Al wanted CINCEUR's responsibility for emergency escape and evacuation in his area of responsibility to be reflected in some detailed operational planning and some particularly useful, personal contacts. So Al Francis toured all of the posts for which CINCEUR had emergency escape and evacuation responsibilities. He didn't get to all of these posts, because CINCEUR's authority went all the way to South Africa and South Asia. However, Al visited all of our Balkan posts, including Yugoslavia.

He brought with him a standard form, which we filled out, containing our own E&E plan but also things which we went out and surveyed, like the closest helicopter landing pad to the American School in Belgrade. I thought that it was a very good idea to think seriously in those

terms. Incidentally, there was no helicopter landing pad near the American School! [Laughter] But we did that kind of planning, anyway.

Plans of that kind always receive additional attention when tensions in the area increase. However, they were already receiving added attention, to some degree, because of Al Francis' interest on behalf of CINCEUR.

Then there was actual "war planning." The Embassy in Belgrade had little to do with that. However, under Ambassador Eagleburger we instituted something which the Yugoslavs had resisted. We arranged to increase the number of US Navy ship visits to Yugoslav ports. The US Navy never has enough ports for such visits to allow its crews to get off their ships. That is, to escape the confines of their ships and have a run ashore. The Navy is always looking for ports to make ship calls. The sailors know that, if they misbehave ashore on their first visit, they're not going to be able to go ashore again while assigned to the Mediterranean area. The Navy really puts a lot of effort into making sure that these port visits are agreeable for the people being visited, as well as for the crews of the ships involved. The Navy does a superb job in handling these visits. I have no criticism of these arrangements. You can't keep every sailor's pants zipped, but my goodness, the Navy does a good job of handling these visits.

We knew that if, for example, we had a US Navy cruiser visiting the port of Split, Yugoslavia, the people of that town would just swarm onto it and love it. The sailors would behave themselves, would have money to spend, and it would be a good thing. So we increased US Navy port visits.

The Yugoslavs had made an agreement with the Soviets which we didn't like much, to overhaul a couple of old, combatant vessels down at one of the underused, Yugoslav shipyards. I think that it was Kotor [a port in Montenegro]. We didn't like that because we didn't think that it fit in with the idea of non-alignment, which Yugoslavia proclaimed so stridently. We saw a difference between recreational visit for American sailors and logistical support for the Soviet Navy. Ambassador Eagleburger said, "Well, if you're going to do that, so are we." After much pushing and tugging the Yugoslavs said, "All right, where are your old minesweepers?" The US Navy didn't want any part of this! We didn't have any old minesweepers, although the Navy saw the utility of the principle, allowing ships repaired in Yugoslavia.

However, we increased our "presence" in Yugoslav ports to some degree through more ship visits. We also had an unfortunate overflight of Yugoslav territory by US fighter aircraft by error, but that was all handled all right.

From the political point of view I don't think that we ever felt that the temperature had risen to the point where the Yugoslavs must have felt that it had, say, in 1956, at the time of the Hungarian uprising or the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact nations in 1968.

Q: You're talking about the suppression of the Hungarian uprising or the invasion of Czechoslovakia under the "Brezhnev Doctrine" to put an end to the "Prague Spring" in 1968.

DUNLOP: I think that one of the most important things for which we were responsible was making sure that we had the right lines of communications at the "right" levels into the Yugoslav Government. If the situation began to look as if a Soviet military move was under way in Yugoslavia, we would have had to try to figure out how to communicate with the Yugoslav military people. The way you do that is to tell the political authorities that you think that that time has come. You don't let the US military attaché go over to the Protocol Office and say that it's time for a four-star general to visit Yugoslavia and talk to the Yugoslavs about arranging to supply Yugoslav with 155 mm howitzers. We never came close to that point at that time.

I remember, though, trying to figure out, and I think that we did figure out, to what degree the Yugoslavs were in touch with the new, revolutionary government in Tehran. It turned out that they were no more in contact with the new Iranian authorities than anybody else.

RICHARD N. VIETS
Deputy Chief of Mission
Bucharest (1974-1976)

Ambassador Richard N. Viets was born in 1930 in Vermont. He served in the U.S. Army and attended Georgetown University and Harvard University. He joined USIA in 1955 and served in Afghanistan, Tunisia and after a break reentered the Foreign Service in 1962 serving in Japan, India, Romania, Israel and was ambassador to Tanzania and Jordan. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy 1990-1992.

Q: And then what happened?

VIETS: At the conclusion of the four month course I went immediately to Bucharest.

Q: What was the situation in Bucharest? You were there from 1974-77. This is midstream Ceausescu.

VIETS: We had in place a most remarkable Ambassador, Harry Barnes, who had some three years earlier himself been the Deputy Chief of Mission there. He had come back to the Department for a couple of years and then had been nominated as our Ambassador and not long after he got there, I arrived. Harry knew the country as well or better than perhaps any American diplomat who ever served there. He was essentially bilingual in Romanian. A fantastic linguistic competence.

Even though Romania was a very carefully controlled...I started to stay a closed society, but they hadn't totally slammed the door at that point...it was still possible with a lot of work and care to develop relationships with private Romanian citizens. And Harry succeeded in that better than anybody on his staff, or perhaps all the rest of his staff put together. He felt that Ceausescu was still redeemable in certain areas in the sense that if we were clever enough and worked hard enough at it we could maneuver Ceausescu into doing certain things that were in both Romania's

interest, which was an element in Harry's approach to his job, as well as in US interests. His major effort was to weave as many strands of ties, economic, cultural, political, with the United States as he could.

We initiated all kinds of programs. We had an extremely active cultural exchange program: student exchange, professors, researchers, etc. We negotiated an MFN agreement with the Romanians. We negotiated a trade agreement with the Romanians. We worked terribly hard at family reunification cases. We did vastly more than the Israeli Embassy and the Israeli government to insure that Romanian Jews were permitted to leave Romania.

It was again a kind of a whirling dervish type of job working for Harry who had inexhaustible energies and a very fertile mind. He had all kinds of new ideas every morning. He would come in and reel them off.

Q: Well, Romania was really sort of the star in the Eastern European firmament as far as our foreign policy was concerned. It served in the way that in the fifties Yugoslavia served. This was sort of a friend in the other camp.

VIETS: I think one can overdo this. We were under no illusions that the Ceausescu regime in internal affairs was the most oppressive in Eastern Europe even in the mid-seventies when I was there. But externally, of course, Ceausescu had managed to carve out a fair amount of freedom to maneuver. It was in that arena that Kissinger and his successors dealt most effectively. Harry Barnes concerns went beyond the external side. He tried to loosen up some of the internal political dynamics and up to a point succeeded, I think.

Q: In this period, human rights was really not in the front of our priority list in foreign affairs. That came later during the Carter administration.

VIETS: I am happy to have you ask that question because as you know I have recently been back to Romania a couple of times in connection with the elections and I have had the mitigated pleasure of having to sit in a number of conversations with revisionist historians and others who were lecturing me about "how could you possibly have permitted the United States government to deal with this dreadful tyrant, Ceausescu? There were all these civil rights that were being abused and you people never did anything about it. You just gave them MFN, etc."

Well, I would take issue with you on one level. You are quite correct that under Henry Kissinger, human rights would never be writ large in the foreign policy charter of the United States government because that would get in the way of doing things that he thought were perhaps more important. But by golly for those of us who were there, human rights were terribly important. As I said a moment ago, we spent hours and hours every week cajoling, arguing, prodding, pushing, probing for ways to get (a) Romanians who were divided from their families out of the country, and (b) making life easier for those who couldn't get out...rapping knuckles when people were thrown in jail, etc. They were important to us and we did a hell of a lot.

The difference is that we didn't have a human rights bureaucracy in this country, both in the non-governmental sector as well as in the bureaucracy itself. So there wasn't a great deal of publicity generated by this. It was just very quietly done.

Q: I want to add this as a historical note that your actions were following events almost a hundred years before when President Grant had sent an American Jew to Romania, Benjamin Behoto [ph], for strictly the purpose for trying to help the Jewish community. This was done at the behest of the Jewish-American community. He was paid actually from volunteer funds from various Jewish groups including some from the Rothschild family.

VIETS: I had no idea of that.

Q: In a way for somebody who is looking at the Foreign Service and all or the State Department apparatus, an awful lot is done in the field that is not part of an official telegram that goes out. If you see something that can be done it depends really on the ambassador in a way.

VIETS: Yes, you do it. There still are people in this profession who don't need to seek credit for things that they do and therefore never reported it, or only casually, informally would make reference to it. I think that is the difference between the professional and whatever.

Q: How did Harry tell the Romanians that they had to let more Jews go to Israel or other things that were not our immediate concern?

VIETS: Well, this was the carrot and stick. I mentioned a moment ago, for example, that we had negotiated an MFN treaty. We negotiated it in a fashion that required frequent reviews of performance in various areas including the numbers of family reunification, the numbers of Jews that were allowed out, etc. The Romanians were terribly anxious to get a trade agreement with us. Once again we tied to that understandings, some explicit, some implicit, but we knew and they knew what we were expecting.

Q: How did you deal with the Romanian government? Was everything under Ceausescu?

VIETS: By the definition of the apparatus which he set up you could do nothing without channeling it through him. By the same token, as with any other society you worked very hard at developing relationships with people who could help make things happen. You won their trust or made yourself needed by them and proceeded a pace.

Q: Were the British, French and Germans involved as much in what we would call the human rights field?

VIETS: No. The Germans were more than anybody else because of the large German community...roughly 300,000-400,000 Germans up in the Transylvania area. These people were trying to get to the Federal Republic as the Jews were trying to get to Israel. So they more than any other embassy were involved in similar efforts. But we were way out ahead of all other missions across the board in our interest in the human rights arena.

And I was saddened when I most recently was in Romania a month ago to discover that when a group of lawyers I was with wanted to discuss the human rights situation, everywhere we would turn we were told it was the Dutch Ambassador who was the man who was the most active and knew the most people, etc., not the American Embassy. So we went and had a session with the Dutch Ambassador and sure enough he turned out to be vastly better informed than our own Embassy did.

Q: It is personality...who is there and who wants to take on things. How did Harry Barnes use you as his deputy?

VIETS: Well, Harry started the relationship with the time honored assurances that I was to be his alter ego and I think perhaps more than anybody I ever worked with he stuck to that. There was nothing he did or nothing he knew that he didn't share. He was very good at delegating the daily operation of the Embassy. At the same time his shadow loomed over everything we did. He loved to travel and spent a lot of time out of Bucharest and in the countryside so that also left one ample opportunity to...and he was frequently in Washington pushing his agenda.

Q: Did we find Bucharest a good "listening post" compared with other places? It had strained relations with the Soviet Union and some of the other Warsaw Pact countries.

VIETS: I think the answer has to be yes. It was a particularly useful listening post for the rest of Eastern Europe and the third world because it was the anchorage for all kinds of revolutionary groups and individuals who used Romania as their training ground or safe harbor. There was a great deal going on in that country of interest to us.

Q: You mention revolutionary groups, were these terrorist organizations?

VIETS: Well, the PLO, for example, was very active there, as were other Palestinian organizations. Various African liberation groups were also there.

Q: What was your brief at the Embassy as far as contact was concerned?

VIETS: You mean my personal brief?

Q: Well, your brief and also the Embassy's.

VIETS: Obviously we had to live within whatever rules of the road that were laid down by the Department on dealing with groups such as the PLO, but if one was seated next to someone at a dinner table who was "black-listed" you found ways of being polite and also productive. But there were plenty of other people who were able to deal with these people and those clearly would become contacts of yours. You would carry on dialogues through them.

Q: What about relations with other Eastern European countries, particularly the bordering countries? Was there concern that an awful lot was being swept under the rug by the tight controls...nationality problems, etc.?

VIETS: I think the sense was there that in the future there were going to be immense problems because of the overlapping of nationalities. I think that none of us had the foresight to predict that Eastern Europe would crumble as rapidly as it did. There was no love lost between the Romanians and their fraternal brothers in Eastern Europe.

I remember particularly the Yugoslavs were terribly disdainful of the Romanians and they shared a long border and a lot of other common economic interests. Ceausescu was detested by other Eastern European leaders. I think they were embarrassed by his cult of personality, etc. So again another interesting way to get insights into those people were through discussions of what was going on in Romania.

One of my most fruitful contacts was my Yugoslav counterpart who had been in Romania for a number of years and was the best informed person in the country so far as I was concerned of what was happening behind the scenes.

Q: Was there a feeling that there was another life behind the Ceausescu facade?

VIETS: Well there surely was another life and that was a Sybaritic life of nothing but the best for Ceausescu and his family and immediate hangers-on. But I am not sure what you mean by the question.

Q: Well, were you able to sample what the Army was thinking, or the peasants were thinking, etc.?

VIETS: We tried but everybody was so scared the instant you began to raise subjects such as this. People would look at the ceiling or put their finger to their lips or roll their eyes, etc. It was very tough to do, but we were constantly traveling. As I said, the Ambassador spent an awful lot of his time out of town, but the rest of us also traveled a great deal. It was the most traveling Embassy I have ever served at, which was helpful. In consequence we were far and away the best informed foreign mission in Romanian.

Q: I traveled a lot when I was in Yugoslavia. I added it up once and discovered I had spent 42 nights in different places in Yugoslavia. This was very typical of the Embassy. Before we leave Romania, were there any major problems or situations that you experienced?

VIETS: We had a Presidential visit. Mr. Ford came to see us. Kissinger came a couple of times. I think one of my most vivid memories in a very personal sense of a job that I doubt very many Foreign Service officers have had to shoulder was to take Ceausescu's most senior adviser aside at a music recital in the Ambassador's residence and warn him against the imminent assassination of somebody in the United States. I will always recall that particular evening and the aftermath of that conversation. That is the sort of message that one doesn't pass very often.

Q: Can I ask more about it?

VIETS: Well, I probably shouldn't go beyond that, but it was a very dicey period. I am happy to say that the individual who was the target, so far as I am aware, is still thriving. The assassination team was called off at the last moment but only after a lot of huffing and puffing.

Q: Did you get the impression that the Romanians thought they had a sort of special relation with the United States?

VIETS: Oh, very much so. And as is their cultural heritage, they pushed it to the limit and beyond. I think that by the late seventies and early eighties as Ceausescu's paranoia became more and more evident, that markedly changed. My good friend Roger Kirk, who was our Ambassador in Bucharest until about ten months ago, spent a very tough three years there. The relationship dribbled off into open antagonism and he had a tough time.

AURELIUS "AURY" FERNANDEZ
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Bucharest (1974-1976)

Aurelius Fernandez was born in 1931 in Niagara Falls, New York. He first attended a small teacher's college in Fredonia, NY but then went on to Bowling Green State University in Ohio where he completed his BA and graduated in 1953. That same year he started a master's degree in English Literature but was drafted in November 1953 served in the military for three years. Upon being discharged in 1956 he attended the Columbia school of international affairs and concentrated on German affairs. He joined the Foreign Service and his career took him to Chile, Germany, Romania, Austria, England, and France. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1997.

Q: What about Romania? Ceausescu had been in now since 1965, and so he was well in place. In later years he came in for considerable criticism for being too tolerant of that regime. How did we feel about it during 1972 to 1974?

FERNANDEZ: You see, right there is one the momentum was in full force. In the summer or fall of 1963 Romania became a member of the IMF and the IVIU. I remember the ceremony only too well at the State Department and seeing the documents that were signed after World War II....the accession to the IMF which included signatures from Czechoslovakia and from Poland. Then, of course the Russians said "No show," and all. At any rate, as part of this opening of relations with Romania and giving them a chance, although we knew their internal system was rotten and totalitarian and a police state, and a state of goons, it was in our interests to have this state flourish as best it could, certainly on the international field as part of bringing it out of the communist yoke, if you want to put it in those simplistic terms.

So Romania got a lot of attention and Romania was responsive in a lot of different areas if only superficially. For example, with Romania we had a cultural exchanges agreement. It was kind of a long-range scientific, technical, educational, sports, museums exchanges agreement, the whole

Balkan litany of types of relations. Now this particular agreement, which I think was first negotiated in 1972 - I'm not entirely certain of the year - enabled the United States to establish a library outside the premises of the embassy in Bucharest. About two and a half, three blocks away, they got a building and set up this library. So it was the only Warsaw Pact country with an off-premises library, although we had a rather sizable library in our embassy in Poland. We also had a small one in Hungary that I remember seeing.

At any rate, this is what was going on with Romania at the time. This exchange agreement tended to be at the heart of everything that we were trying to do with the Romanians at the time. I went there to Romania then in the summer of 1974 and was there until the summer of 1976. The exchanges agreement tended to be the focus of our activities with the Romanians and it was all so bureaucratized. It was also run by the Ministry of Interior. We would meet, for example, Harry Barnes will certainly have this in his thoughts with you and I'm sure [our then DCM] Dick Viets must have mentioned it in his. But we had within that agreement, for example, provisions for the exchanges that they would want or they should facilitate.

For example, the Iowa writers' workshop. There was always a position there. Well, I don't know how many times in the first months I was there I met up with the deputy foreign minister and then another office they had for cultural and scientific relations which was not the Ministry of Education, trying to get a visa for this one person to go as a writer to the Iowa writers' workshop. "Nicodata," as the Romanians say, "Never." They wouldn't give this man a visa. But man, would they ever like to send somebody over here to study mathematics or physics, or chemistry, or any of the hard sciences. So this is what we were fighting with them all the time, trying to do more on the softer side to the social sciences.

Some people came in, to be sure, in the years I was there, from IREX, there was a person, Mary Ellen Fisher, who did a very competent biography of Ceausescu for her Ph.D. at Harvard. There was an exchange couple that we had. Not an exchange, really, but someone who came there really on his own with his wife and family, John Vok, V-O-K. We just spent time with in Vermont with him and one of his sons and his wife. He was studying land use. John Vok was responsible for all the legal work for the Boston Harbor. They let him in. He was around, he got in here and in there, but it was a lot of shuffling. Very, very difficult to crack into any of these areas that didn't deal with the hard sciences. That's where they really wanted to have all of the exchanges. Social sciences, I'd say, they'd want to leave that behind.

Q: When you were in our embassy in Bucharest, from 1974 to 1976, what was the situation as you saw it there during that period in Romania?

FERNANDEZ: You know, looking back on it, several years later, people said these were really halcyon times. There was a lot more freedom, you could get more food or it always seemed that way. Actually, it was very oppressive. It was, just from the start. I had been to Romania once, earlier, escorting a congressman there, while I was a desk officer. Joel Wagner of Plainviewing, Louisiana. I had to take him to Bucharest, I think it was in November of '71 or '72.

When I arrived there in July of 1974 there was a world population conference on. Casper Weinberger, I remember at the time, was Secretary of HEW, as it was then called. I was just

overwhelmed by what I encountered on the ground in terms of making arrangements for the Secretary's visit, what would go on and where meetings would be and everything. It was my first real movement around Bucharest and in Romania around groups of people. I remember coming back to the first country team meeting and saying to Ambassador Harry Barnes, "You know, this is the most goon-infested society I've ever been in." I mean, you just can spot it all over the place. I did the first time I was in the East in 1971 and went to the Soviet Union. You could see goons around you all over the place. I guess maybe some of the training I had in intelligence when I was in the Army and I'd surveillance and you'd sort of pick 'em out. But there was no attempt to hide any of this.

What sorts of things would they do? Well, [for example], they would take hold of all of the Arab students and they'd take them all out of town when a [particular foreign] visitor [came to Bucharest]. It was just a very, very suppressed society. It was impossible to initiate a contact with somebody who was not cleared by the security police. The example I have, and this exchanges agreement that I mentioned, we had negotiations here in Washington about that agreement. [break in tape]

So that reference to Casper Weinberger that really was during the...

Q: ... '70s, when he was working...he was *HEW Secretary in the Nixon Administration*.

FERNANDEZ: In 1974. We were on the point about how that event dramatized for me how thoroughly infested and suppressive and totalitarian a police state, the society was. In 1974, I think it was in the spring of 1974, we had negotiations here for the exchanges agreement. I met a man, I remember his name was Demechu Tranza, T-R-A-N-Z-A who was sort of their Librarian of Congress. A lovely man, and I just enjoyed him so much when we were working here and we had dinner in my home and such. I got to Romania and I asked to see him. I sent him one note after the other to come and join some theater reception or come to a dinner or to meet some people or call on him in his office.

It never worked out, until I left two years later that I got to see this man. The reason was that in order to have this type of contact the person would have to be approved in their office by the security, the Securitate, person. This was very, very pervasive. It didn't mean, for example, that I couldn't keep up other contacts and make them on my own. I think this always probably always kept under suspicion a university professor and later a manager of an editorial or a publishing house, Dan Arigorescu, who was the first director of the Romanian library in New York which was the counterpart to our library in Bucharest. Dan lived very close by in my neighborhood and he and his wife and his two children were the age of my children, we used to get together and walk on Sundays. Or they used to come over and have dinner with us. He wouldn't clear it with anybody, or [apparently] at least he was allowed to do it. To this day we are great friends. But he is really the only, almost the only contact of that type that I had, you know, somebody who was a friend.

Now I knew another person, pursuing again this idea of what possibilities were there for contacts with people there. There was another person by the name of Anna Baldur, B-A-L-D-U-R, who was a poet. She had come [to the U.S.] on what we called Leader Grantees [program] back in

those days. Now they're International Visitors. While she was here, in the summer of 1973 I guess it was, I had helped her. I was the desk officer so I went around and helped her. We got a crew from the USIA film service and we went to the top of the Washington Monument. At any rate, we all became very great friends and my wife was a great friend of her's too. Her husband happened to be a member of the central committee. He was very open to the West and to the embassy and spoke absolutely fluent English. He headed the Academy of Political and Social Sciences. He was sort of exiled there from the inner circles of the Ceausescu government and was not wholly trusted. He died about a year ago. He was always very available to meet foreign visitors. So, if you had a professor or any kind of [government] specialist [visiting Bucharest], we could always get in to see this man. That was all very easy.

Strangely enough, the only [person] I knew in the embassy at that time, there might have been others, but Janet and I were invited to dinner with Anna and Mihnea Gheorghiu, G-H-E-O-R-G-H-I-U, the head of the Academy of Political and Social Sciences. We went there and were invited to dinner to their home which was just down the street from us, and it was a fantastic experience. There had just been some border incidents between Romania and Hungary down on the border. I would put this time approximately sometime in 1975. We were talking about this whole thing and their young daughter got up and said, "Wait a minute. Let's put this pillow on the telephone." It was that open. In the home of a member of the Central Committee. Well, those are just examples of the difficulty one had in trying to develop and maintain contacts and to carry out our exchanges program with the Romanian in those years.

Q: Harry Barnes was the ambassador during the time you were there?

FERNANDEZ: That's right. I arrived about the same time he did.

Q: How did he run the embassy?

FERNANDEZ: Well, vigorously, vigorously. It was not just running the embassy, as I always used to tease Harry about this, there was also the matter of what I used to call "Barnes-storming." We used to go out to the countryside, and Harry was dead right about this, we would go out to the countryside. He would take his political counselor, he would take the public affairs officer, he would take his science counselor, he would take his economic counselor, or one of their people, and their wives, and their kids, and their dogs and their chickens, as we used to exaggerate, and we would go out to the countryside. In any of the major cities, we would meet with the top party and government officials. This was Harry's idea of how to get out there and do it, and I couldn't have been more enthusiastic about it. We met with church officials, university officials, political and government officials; that was a big thrust of Harry's stuff.

Now, there was also during this period the push to do the trade agreement. The trade agreement the MFN, Most Favored Nation. This was another big project of Harry's, in addition to this constant, incessant probing of trying to expand exchanges and contacts. With individuals going on to programs to universities, or with the Sister City committee, trying to develop with some Sister City committee organization in Romania. I suspect the Romanians laughed up their sleeve at this. We know they did. "Those guys are crazy, what are you trying to do? That's not the way this place works." But Harry insisted on doing this, and he was right, and that's the way those

societies were opened up, and I think that made the contribution to the element of implosion that some of them met, because Romania imploded entirely, [though] too many of the old characteristics remain there. But that's the way Harry pushed it, and very, very vigorously. I never worked so hard in my life.

Q: You mentioned contacts with church officials. How did we perceive the role of the church at that time in Romania?

FERNANDEZ: Well, with the Jackson-Vanik [Amendment on trade agreements] we had the one problem.

Q: Would you explain what the Jackson-Vanik was?

FERNANDEZ: Jackson-Vanik amendment had to do primarily with the ability of Jews in Eastern Europe to, and Russia, to emigrate. According to this amendment, we had to do very regular reporting on it. So this also then included... [Congressman] Vanik once came to Romania, and I remember hosting and talking about this...the way this affected us on the church side in answer to your question, was the embassy also needed to report on what the state of play was in terms of this emigration. I remember these trips up in Iradia and in Sibiu. In Iradia we met with a Hungarian bishop, I recall.

Q: A Hungarian bishop?

FERNANDEZ: A Hungarian bishop, because there was a [huge Hungarian] minority there. We were [asking], you know, "Can you publish your literature, can you have your services as you will, do you have complete religious freedom?" Well, of course, they would sit there and tell you, "Yes." But I remember in Sibiu, S-I-B-I-U, on one of our barnstorming trips, we went to visit the German... they were Lutherans... and it turned out that this particular bishop had lived in the same sort of house and dormitory where my wife had lived in Tubingham. So we went to see him. I said we wanted to get him away from all these people, "Could we come to see you and your wife?"

He invited us over. The purpose of that, to find out what the hell was really going on. I speak German, and so does my wife, so we thought we could go in and find out something we weren't hearing from these guys around the table. Well, don't bet on it. We really didn't pick up anything. That sort of thing pertained in other settings where I went into areas where they spoke German. I'd match myself up with somebody who spoke German and ask about their newspaper, because there was a German-language newspaper, "How much freedom do you have to do all these things?" You'd never learn a thing beyond what you already knew. There was always on their part this [position that], you know, made you think, "Well, listen, don't worry about all this." So that's how we got involved with the churches, also the newspapers in other parts [of the country]...with minorities.

Q: The country team meetings and discussions among the officers in your experience and others. What was the reading on Ceausescu and his wife at that time?

FERNANDEZ: They were firmly in power for one thing. He would circulate his elites. He went to Korea and to China at one point in the early 1970s, I guess and was very much taken by Mao. He managed with a very iron hand to rule that country and made sure nobody would get into a position where they would become a threat to him. There were...we have the case of Illiescu the man who had succeeded him, reputed to be a great dissident as such. Well, up to a certain point, you know. It is true he was exiled and his political career was curtailed considerably by Ceausescu, but the general reading was that this man held onto everything. And he was half nuts. I always remember, speaking of the late Anna Baldur, may her soul rest in peace, I remember her saying to me once, she said, "Nebun," "He's crazy." You know, the stories. You get a raised eyebrow or a nod or some other [facial expression], but nobody would come out and say, "You know that crazy guy is doing this or that." There was just too much fear of doing that sort of thing. But I think there was the general feeling that you had on your hands a man who was just a psychopath.

Q: Was there concern on the part of the people in the embassy that the Nixon/Ford administration was so intrigued with the idea that here is a dissident place that we were getting too close to the psychopath and his government? Was this a problem?

FERNANDEZ: I'm sure it must have been because it was kind of hard to not see some of this. I mean, this is what kind of a man...the moral situation it creates, people. I'm sure there was a concern, but you know, you have to have some interests, right? It was in U.S. interests at the time, with this differentiation, to work with this maverick country, this country that was a thorn in the side of the Soviet Union. We took a lot of flak for it. I was one who met a lot with the [American] press when they would come to town. It was constant criticism. I remember [one journalist] just raking me over the coals once for the policy we were following of giving Romania MFN and just having quite normal and open relations with them when we knew that the country was very oppressive and totalitarian.

Q: How did you respond when somebody would challenge you? You know, you're the official spokesman.

FERNANDEZ: Not very [well], I'm afraid. I'd say, "Well, you know, the United States..." You know, you'd sort of end up fluttering a little bit, right? This was one hell of a regime you're working in and with. But you'd say, well "The United States' long range interest is to open up the country." The first thing I think, at those times I would say is, that "This effort is to open up Romania to freedom, so that people can know what's going on outside the country and that they could hopefully, at some point, develop [into an open society]. Ceausescu's not going to be there forever." If you look at the press at the time, there was not a very successful attempt on our part to put a good face on U.S. policy. I think we took a lot, a lot of flak for it at the time. I remember the CSCE final act in 1975 signed in Helsinki.

Q: Would you explain what the CSCE is?

FERNANDEZ: Well, the CSCE is the Council on European Security and Cooperation. It's related to something we're going to be talking about later, too. The Mutual Imbalance Forces Action talks, that I worked on in Vienna. But the CSCE came into being...the preparatory talks

began in 1972, it must have been, when they had [what were called the] three major baskets, issues dealing with, security, economic, and then sort of cultural and informational. It was basket three that was of course of interest to me and my work. I remember working on the first draft of that even when I was the Romanian and Hungarian desk officer in USIA.

After long, long negotiations the Council on European Security and Cooperation signed what was called the Final Act in Helsinki. I think it was in July of 1975. President Ford, as you said, at the time, [Romania] was the first country that was visited by a U.S. president after the signing of the Final Act. Henry Kissinger was with him and [Helmut] Sonnenfeldt and [there was] all this business [about promoting] open societies. In a way, this CSCE was sort of remotely envisioned by some as settling the borders between East and West and Germany and its neighbors for all time. The CSCE did not run at its own line. The MBFR, I think, which has conventional arms control, we'll talk about later, was related to this. At any rate, the Final Act was to set the tone for things. Now, one of the things about the Final Act is that commitments were declaratory. They really weren't contractual and codified in that sense. Nonetheless, they opened up- (end of tape)

-commitments that were declaratory and that contractual, in the sense of the treaty, but they opened up a wide. This is the whole thing about U.S. policy, where it succeeded, in that it started to open up these societies and loosen up the Soviet Union and lead to the implosion that then occurred with the collapse of the Berlin Wall. Well, on Romania, I'll get into more details on the security side of that, when we talk about MBFR.

But on the basket three side, I don't think there was really any great change in the way the Romanian government and the Securitate handled the whole matter of facilitating contacts between people. I have mentioned the basket three was supposed to be the free flow of ideas and people, something along those lines. Romania didn't make any measurable contributions to that objective after the signing of the final act.

Q: Hal Sonnenfeldt was what?

FERNANDEZ: He was the counselor of the State Department for Henry Kissinger. Now Hal's statement really threw the Romanians into a tizzy. "What is this organic relationship part? We are an independent country...we don't interfere in the foreign affairs of other countries, we don't want them interfering in ours. We're not..." You know, well, back and forth. I could remember our getting our talking points together but "organic," you know, it's like gardening, you really never have [a clear idea of its meaning. But] it was interpreted as another Yalta. That's just as...turning down...not giving Romania membership now in NATO is looked upon by the Romanians to go more into your heart and soul and psyche, as Yalta all over again, you see? So, during this period we had this one issue, I remember with this organic relationship business, but then on the other hand, we had the trade agreement that was reached, and had a goal, it seemed to me, by 1980 we were to have a billion-dollars worth of two-way trade.

All of this was to open up, not just for Romania, but...I haven't used the word "demonstrative" much of what we were doing in Romania had to be looked upon as being demonstrative for other countries, what kind of openness we would seek to make out of those societies. Now that trade

agreement was signed...I think we signed that at Sinaia, S-I-N-A-I-A where president Ford and Ceausescu met. I can remember how cynically we were going over this. We had a Sunday morning meeting to determine where should the two meet, and just throwing out the..."Well, why don't we go to Sinaia?" one of the guys, "I can hear it now, the spirit of Sinaia." This is a Hohenzollern castle that Ceausescu was taking over. At any rate, it was a very important time in our moving forward our relations and our interests, and that whole thread that leads to the state we're in today where all these countries have opened up and they're seeking to join our military alliances and our expanding economic and cultural and other relations with us.

Q: *Just for the record, 1989 was when the whole Eastern Europe came unraveled.*

FERNANDEZ: Right, in November of 1989 is the real metaphor to pick a time when the Berlin Wall came down. Well, I'm looking here to see if there's anything else. Kissinger had made another visit before the Ford meeting in July of 1975. I know at that time it was again the whole agenda of economic and cultural and relations and everything. Then, of course, there's always a lot going on that's probably still hidden in the books that not all of us that knew about. I was only working on the public affairs side. Certainly, I knew a great deal what our CIA station...you, know, was very small but they certainly had activities going on, and I had absolutely no idea... and [there] were defections at the time, including somebody from my section, I remember him very well, that caused a great stir in the whole nature of our relations. Every day I would go in and try to push our exchange agreement to realize more of what we had meant to do. Things like that didn't help [our efforts].

Q: *What about relations with the Romanian press?*

FERNANDEZ: They were open with certain people. Sure, I could go up and see the editor of *Scintea*, the "Spark." Same name as Lenin gave his newspaper.

Q: *Iskra, in Russian is "Iskra."*

FERNANDEZ: Well, you know, they had very open relations, in a sense, in that if I wanted to go see one of these guys, or bring a journalist to them, or bring an editor, I could get an appointment. I could go sit right in that front office and drink that *svica*, that little plum brandy, and coffee, and their sour orange juice and everything, and I we have all of these big chats about what we were trying to do in Romania and such. So they were accessible. As to the people we would see, there were... someone on the *Romania Libre*, a man designated as our contact. He was the only guy that you would see. You would see him all the time. You wouldn't have to go through any great rigamarole to see him and he would come to your parties and receptions and everything. Same thing with *Scintea* and the radio people, they were always just certain people. You had television. You always met with the same people, but a very limited number of people. They had very little to say. You didn't have open chats with them about all this. Those people had their information from RFE and they would tell you outright things you hadn't yet [heard].

Q: *RFE was Radio Free Europe.*

FERNANDEZ: Or they would have a very limited circulation press clips from the West that this small group of people would see. You had a long list of journalists' names, but you weren't really seeing them the way we're used to seeing them in other countries. Nor was it all open. They were people trusted by the Ceausescu government. Interestingly, I went back to Romania after we put up [a mess] foundation in 1990. I met some of these same people. Speaking on entirely different lines. An apostasy that could only occur in the Balkans. There were a couple of cases of the same people, if I give it some deep thought their names would come back to me because I was just flabbergasted to see these people now in a situation where we're talking about freedom and open press. So, there's not much we could do with journalists. We didn't place many articles. We read all of the newspapers.

There was one young journalist, just to give you a sense of the flavor of the media in that country and Ceausescu. There wasn't any reporting about Watergate. That just wasn't, wasn't. When it occurred there then came out in one of the weekly magazines, a brilliant article, accurate as can be about the whole nine yards about what happened. It was written by a young journalist that all of us knew, and seemed to be a very open guy and interesting to talk to. He went off and had a very hot and heavy affair, I don't want to make this sound salacious, with Ceausescu's daughter. Then we never saw him again. At any rate, this chap did know, he was up on things, very, very bright man and was able to explain to all these people who weren't listening about it or were listening to it and didn't know all the nuances of it, or reading these press clips. Some wanted to make a nice summary of things. [They] did a very, very, good job of that. Now, that sort of censorship, both self and official just pervaded the whole mood there. There was another point that was coming to my mind, it will come back later in this connection about the press and radio and television in that era.

Q: You might then move to about '76...by the way, was there a problem there being followed, attempts to compromise you, or anything like that?

FERNANDEZ: Well, there was never any attempt to compromise me that I can recall except remotely. This was a case where a Romanian musician was going abroad, she was a violinist. She came into my office before we left and asked if I would exchange some money for her. This really smelled a mile away. That may have been the only time. Otherwise there was no other effort to compromise me. Follow you around? All the time. We knew the phones were tapped. Phones worked beautifully in Romania, they were very, very efficient phone system. They were tapping every one of these and keeping track of everybody. Thousands of people, tens of thousands engaged in that, but the feeling that you knew you were always being looked after was... when we went out there...they always knew where you were because they figured it out on the phone, telling other people.

Now, this business of surveillance of the society had a very direct impact on what we did in our library. I mentioned the library, two and a half blocks away from the embassy. Now there was a [photographer] who was available to take pictures of everybody. We knew that these were being shared with the Securitate. It bothered me. I think it deterred a lot of people from coming there. They had police out in front of this [place], had a great big iron gate and we knew they were watching everybody going in and out. It was very, very sad. Everything I said is sort of negative about the Romanians but this is about the government, this is not about the Romanians. Because

the Romanians could be the Bracusia and Liuiu Ciulei up in New York University and director of the plays here at the Arena Stage, and is very creative society in that sense. We haven't mentioned very Frenchified. They like their contact with France and prize it very much. Always have. I guess in the 1920s it really became particularly intense. I was always amazed by my service in Paris to confirm this. The French too, had a great affection for the Romanians. There's a kinship there that is quite unique. Almost like maybe Spain and some Latin American countries.

HARRY G. BARNES, JR.
Ambassador
Romania (1974-1977)

Ambassador Barnes was born in Minnesota and raised in Minnesota and New York. He was educated at Amherst College and Columbia University. After service in the US Army in World War II, he joined the Foreign Service and was posted in 1950 to Bombay, India. His other foreign posts include Prague, Moscow, Kathmandu and Bucharest. He served as United States Ambassador to Romania (1974-1977; India (1981-1985) and Chile (1985-1996) in addition to having several senior level assignments at the State Department in Washington. Ambassador Barnes was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.

Q: Then in '74, what happened?

BARNES: In the fall, about the time Kissinger was designated Secretary of State, it was a couple of months before Kissinger moved to State, I went around to see the then Director General whose name was Bill (William O.) Hall and expressed my interest in an ambassadorship to Bucharest because Len Meeker was about to leave and Bill said, "Sorry, it has already been decided who's going to go to Bucharest." So I said, "I'm sorry too".

When Bill Rogers was replaced by Kissinger all ambassadorships were put on hold, all appointments were put on hold and there was only toward the beginning of 1973 that, sorry '74, that Kissinger began to pay some attention to ambassadorial assignments.

One day I went to see his special assistant who was Larry Eagleburger and told him why I thought I would be a good candidate for the embassy in Bucharest and he was kind enough to agree and so within another month or two my nomination went forward for it.

Q: Do you think the fact that you had come to the attention of President Nixon had any bearing?

BARNES: Probably, because I was at least a known quantity to Nixon from the Ceausescu visits. I don't know how much Nixon had to do with the actual decision.

Q: Romania is always known as one of those “iffy” countries, vis a-vis whether a career officer or a political appointee should be named. Was that considered at that time more a career type job?

BARNES: Actually, of my several predecessors by the time I got to Bucharest, Len was the only one who was non-career. On the other hand, he was a State Department career employee as legal advisor, but not a Foreign Service Officer. I’m not sure what side you would put him in. Dick Davis before that was career, Bill Crawford before that was career, so more recently, yes. But at that time Eastern Europe positions tended more toward career appointments.

Q: Did you have any problem getting confirmation?

BARNES: No.

Q: You presented your credentials on March 14, 1974 and left post on November 7, 1977, so you served about three and a half years. How were you received as ambassador?

BARNES: Very well. In terms of the government, just about everybody who was running government in ’77 had been around in some capacity in ’74 when I left. We had a broad enough acquaintance with other parts of society that was tolerated at that point, I’m thinking in terms of universities, the arts and so on, and a certain number of people who didn’t fit in a particular category. It was a little bit like going home. The whole family had command of the language. Our son, for example on our first tour had gone to a Romanian school for two years, the first foreigner to do that, first diplomatic foreigner to do that and one of our daughters had gone to an art school, so it was definitely something we looked forward to.

The main focus, as I mentioned earlier was the most favored nation (MFN). That was a ’75 negotiation. The legislation, the Jackson-Vanik Bill, had been passed in November, I think of ’74 and there were other negotiations as well; a general economic framework, cultural negotiations. President Ford came from Helsinki in late ’75 and we organized a trip by train from Bucharest up to one of the presidential palaces in Carpathians. Kissinger came separately by himself in ’76, I think. It would have been a special occasion. He told me at that point that he thought I should get out of the interpreting business. He said, “Hire an interpreter and find somebody. You shouldn’t have to worry about that.” I had sort of mixed feelings. I enjoyed it up to a point, but it was an awful lot of pressure, in part, because the notes I kept, because of the nature of my handwriting, were hardly legible to myself, so I had to do memorandum of conversation, I had to struggle with my own notes.

Major event, not so much in terms of American-Romanian relations which went along fairly, I would say smoothly within the framework I described earlier of Romania being somewhat of a maverick country, good terms with Israel, for example, good terms with China, and with us. But in terms of impact on the people there was an earthquake of 6.2 magnitude earthquake in Bucharest in March of 1977.

Q: What happened and how did we respond?

BARNES: There had been previous earthquakes in Bucharest, the last major one had been about 1940.

This one leveled a number of buildings, many of which had been damaged in the earlier earthquake but not repaired at the time for whatever reason. The epicenter wasn't quite in Bucharest but it wasn't that far away. Ceausescu was out of the country on a trip to Western Africa, came back in about a day, as quick as he could get back and decided the country's priority was recovering and stop worrying about whether there was anybody buried under any debris. Sort of sweep everything up and get on with the country's urgent economic tasks.

We sent some people from the U.S., earthquake specialists and they provided some advice to their Romanian counterparts.

I decided it was important that the embassy staff, including the Romanian staff of the embassy have as much information as I had from our experts about what the possibilities were of aftershocks and that sort of thing. So I organized a meeting in the courtyard of the embassy and shared that information. I had a calling down from the foreign minister; I think it was, a day or so later for spreading panic in the city by providing that information.

Later that year, roughly summer, I had a visit from one of our friends who is an historian who wrote primarily on the Balkans and had the reputation as a serious scholar on Eastern European history in the U.S. A number of American historians coming to Romania were always seeking him out. He came by our house one evening and brought with him part of a manuscript on which he on which he had been working which had to do with the history of the Communist Party of Romania and asked if I would take a look at it and I said I would as a friend, not in my official capacity. I put it aside to read it a couple of days later.

Before I got a chance to read it, I got word from the embassy that the embassy perimeter had been surrounded by a phalanx of Romanian troops which was unusual. So I went down to see for myself and it was quite clear. I could get in and out; the American staff could get in and out. The Romanian staff and visitors, nobody else was allowed in. So I tried to reach my usual contacts at the Foreign Ministry and couldn't get through. I kept being told in effect, not available, not available.

This went on for about two or three days until none of could figure out why so we reported this to Washington which raised this question with the Romanian Ambassador was in Washington who said he didn't know what this was all about. Then on third day I had called from a Romanian diplomat who had been the Romanian Ambassador to the U.N whom I knew, but not well, said he wanted to come around and see me. I said, "Fine. Nobody else seems to want to see me. I want to see you." He said, "Well, you may wonder why these special precautions. He went on to explain, it has to do with the fact that you were given the manuscript by, I don't think he used the word dissident, but that is the sense of the accusation. "These precautionary measures which we have taken will drop immediately. All you've got to do is to give us the manuscript." I said I would report his information to Washington, but my own position - subject to confirmation from Washington - was that the manuscript was given to me by a friend to look at and I would be glad to give it back to the friend but I couldn't give it to somebody else without his permission.

Washington fortunately said that's OK. We alerted some of the American historians' community and they began to send telegrams to their contacts in Bucharest with questions about this.

A couple of days later it went away. I was, if not persona grata, I was not quite as grata as I had been earlier, but so resumed status quo ante.

Q: Did you get any feeling that this might have been an operation on the part of the security apparatus? The KGB all the time has been doing things to screw up relations. Was this a Ceausescu type thing?

BARNES: My guess, and I never knew for sure, was that given the nature of the relationship with the United States, that is it was too important a relationship to have it disturbed over anything involving the U.S. Ambassador, without Ceausescu's agreement. I think I mentioned when we were talking about Ceausescu earlier, there is a certain impulsiveness about him and my sense is that he said to himself that that's going too far; we need to do something. But I think it was clear within a week that or so it wasn't achieving his purpose or the purpose of whoever proposed it. There were things that were more important.

My friend was held another month or so, showed up at our door with a nice prison haircut. I gave him back his manuscript.

Q: Was the security apparatus getting, over the time you were there and by the time you were ambassador, was it getting more intense or was it about the same level, did you feel?

BARNES: I mentioned earlier Ceausescu had paid a visit to China and to North Korea and on his return he began to introduce various measures or approaches which involved a tightening up of organizational structures, changes in priorities and a growing sense of pressure but that didn't seem to detract on the whole from a certain tolerance of foreigners within Romania or visitors to Romania. But after the Helsinki Accords with the emphasis on Basket Three - educational, cultural, scientific exchanges with other people - there was a certain inhibitory effect there to try to act like a civilized country. This is all before he decided and that decision came, I think, in the early '80s that somehow Romania could not afford to be dependent on anybody from the outside, not just the Soviet Union but to others including the U.S., if it meant giving up what Ceausescu considered to be the adequate control of this his society and you need to shape it in the direction you thought was required, for example.

He was not bothered by the fact that there were shortages of heating oil and Romanian winters can get quite cold, but Romanian oil to him was more valuable as an export product which would earn foreign currency for whatever grandiose project he might have in mind at the time. If people had to suffer and oil shortage; if hospitals were inadequately supplied, well, it's too bad. Old people die so what difference does a year or two or something of that sort make?

So when I went back briefly in '82, coming or going to India, and then again in '89 it turned out to be right before the Revolution, the atmosphere was terribly grim, particularly grim in December of '89 because December is a grim month anyway, but even the summer month I was

there, '82, was grim. So there is a certain contradiction that things were closing in but there was still some room.

Q: Was there a sense of he's got a different set of priorities than a good humanitarian might have or was there a sense of megalomania?

BARNES: Megalomania began while we were there, particularly in the second period. This had to do with whatever the superlatives were marking the glorification of Ceausescu's wisdom and Ceausescu's accomplishments. The status of Romania was painted as if the whole world paying court to its great leader, Ceausescu. This is a period when Mrs. Ceausescu began to be given more attention and so very often it was two of them who were being celebrated, not just Ceausescu himself. You got this more and more, both tragic and almost crazy, stupid, in the glorification in this make believe world that Romania became, at least as described in the regime's publications.

Q: Did you get involved in any of the famous hunts, the boor hunts and all that?

BARNES: No, as I recall, well, I don't recall being invited. I probably wouldn't have gone since I am not a hunter. In fact, they may have known I was not a hunter and therefore no invitation was forthcoming.

Q: One hears stories about how they went out and found tame bears and drugged the boors and all that.

BARNES: You get a sort of sycophant mentality in that environment, whether Ceausescu said I want five drugged boar or whatever, somebody figured it out and provided the necessary.

Q: President Ford came at one point.

BARNES: Ford came in connection with the CSCE meeting at Helsinki after that.

Q: Did you feel, or your colleagues conclude, that maybe these Helsinki Accords really were going to be a good thing? The Accords, particularly the Third Basket, turned out to be pretty important. But at the time some American pundits felt that we were giving things away to the Soviets.

BARNES: In the case of Romania we already had that earlier experience after 1968 when the rapprochement, if you call it that, was beginning. By the time you got to Helsinki there was already a fair amount more being done with the media and the (indistinct), of course was the less visible side. But various types of exchanges,...so we were already prepared to think these were good things and were worth doing.

Q: You were there during the Watergate thing, weren't you?

BARNES: I got there in March and Watergate was already in bloom at that period.

Q: How did Watergate play in Romania?

BARNES: Well, obviously with the controlled media, it was fairly straight reporting, that is White House announcement, Congressional whatever the Congress did and so on. You would get from the unofficial people mixtures of reactions; on the one hand, sort of marveling that the sitting president could be forced out of office. Obviously, that was not the danger that Ceausescu seemed likely to face at that point. Amazement in that sense, and I think they had a certain amount of admiration that American society was capable and willing to take that sort of step or see that sort of process through. Probably a third category would be the people who said, "Our society has been known for its heights of corruption that can reach for a long time going back to the Ottoman Empire and so you have a president who broke some laws. Is that uncommon or not?" They would shrug it off, at least in the sense, "Well, it may be fine for you to be able to do that sort of thing, nothing we can do about it."

Q: Did the collapse of South Vietnam have much play?

BARNES: Again mixed. From an official standpoint, this was something that should have happened a long time ago and the U.S. should have left Vietnam. From the standpoint of those who were basically admirers of the U.S. recognition that this must have been a difficult settlement set of decisions to reach, in fact to admit defeat. The Romania attitude was, it's not relevant, doesn't affect us.

Q: What was Israel's influence or lack thereof in Romania when you were there as ambassador?

BARNES: Certainly at one level a privileged position because Ceausescu prided himself on the fact that he had good relations with both the Arab States in the region and with Israel. And thought it was important to appear to treat Israel as an equal or a country valid in its own right. Privileged in another sense that the regime was prepared to permit the exodus, the emigration of Romanians of Jewish faith in exchange for a certain amount of ransom money and I never found out just what was paid. But it was pretty clear that if you were Jewish and could eventually, and eventually might be a year, or it could be shorter than that.

There was a symbolic aspect as well, in that from time to time the chief rabbi would appear on ceremonial occasions like the opening of the national assembly. He might be at the airport when a foreign president arrived or something like that to sort of demonstrate the fact that the Jewish faith could be practiced in Romania.

There were lots of restrictions even so, but some tolerated openness.

Q: What was the role of the Romanian Orthodox Church?

BARNES: Essentially, traditional, traditional in the sense of recognizing the primacy of the state and therefore, ceremonies, yes. You could talk about Easter and again state occasions the patriarch might appear. Theological schools were allowed to continue operating but on a reduced

level and the religious holidays were, like Easter were tolerated, in fact sort of recognized. Nobody tried to stop that sort of thing.

In terms of any significant influence, no. The advantage of the Orthodox Church probably was that it was so clearly Romanian and in that sense reinforced the nationalist efforts of Ceausescu. Less desirable were the Protestants, largely Protestant, but some Catholic, Hungarians in Transylvania who tended to see themselves as Hungarians first, second Romanians. But still there was a toleration aspect there in terms of the churches being able to function. Some property had been seized at an earlier stage and turned over to the Orthodox Church.

Q: Is there anything else we should talk about in this time you were in Romania?

BARNES: No, I don't think so. I think I would summarize it, ... it was a society that put the two periods together, which had evolved considerably in terms of openings for citizens, especially against the background of practically no evolution earlier. It was a society which, in that period, you could characterize as open, as Polish or Hungarian societies were. But still in the Romanian context, you would have to call it open with limits or limited openness and so from the standpoint of service there, both individually and professionally, there was a lot that could be done and you really felt we had some insights, if not inroads, to Romanian society broadly speaking.

FREDERICK A. BECKER
Rotation Officer
Bucharest (1975-1977)

Frederick A. Becker was born in Missouri. He graduated from Washington College in St. Louis, and Berkeley and Claremont Graduate Schools. After entering the Foreign Service in 1975, his postings abroad included Bucharest, Brasilia, Quito, Panama City, and Managua. He was interviewed in 2004 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: You were in Romania from when to when?

BECKER: '75 to '77. It was a remarkable period.

Q: Let's talk about, when you went there, what was Romania like? I mean what was the situation in Romania both internally and with the United States?

BECKER: My wife, daughter (age 3) and I arrived in Romania in September '75. My wife and I had never really traveled outside the United States until we got on a plane to fly to Romania. We decided that when we hit Europe we would take the train and see some sights en route. My wife found out just before we were about to embark that she was pregnant with our second child. She had had her State Department physical exam and gotten the required immunizations to serve overseas. We discovered that half of these inoculations were not recommended for pregnant

women, and the Department medical personnel were anything but sympathetic to our concerns. So we had this cloud hanging over our heads when we embarked and, indeed, throughout the nine months until my wife gave birth to another healthy baby. We took the train from Frankfurt down through Salzburg and Vienna and then flew into Bucharest. We were pretty tired after this trek. Our first impression of Romania, arriving on Pan Am or TWA, was looking out the window and noticing that the whole plane was surrounded by soldiers, heavily armed, uniformed, serious looking Romanian soldiers. This was apparently how they greeted all international air travelers, and it was our first introduction to the totalitarian state ruled with an iron fist by Nicolai Ceausescu. All of the briefings and everything we had received at the State Department could not have prepared us for this visual experience.

The embassy gave us a standard security briefing. Don't talk except in a secure environment. Don't have family arguments where you might be overheard. Don't display any kind of weakness; it will be picked up and exploited by your hosts. A certain climate of fear and intimidation was inevitable. Even though the security message is much more sophisticated nowadays, it probably produces much the same effect. Even if you are hamstrung in doing your job, be sure to protect yourself at all times. However, we learned to function in that environment. If we had an issue, we employed the euphemism "let's take a walk in the park." It may have been the dead of winter, there may have been a blizzard outside, but if you needed to talk or let off steam, you learned to use it to your advantage. If the heat in your building went off, you cursed at the chandelier and somehow it got fixed. If your telephone went out you would talk to the radiator and muse, "You know, if they want to listen in to what we say, they'll get the telephone fixed." Somehow the telephone got fixed fairly quickly. If you were riding out in the countryside and your car had mechanical problems, you could count on some Good Samaritan coming along in about five or ten minutes to help you fix it, because they were tailing you.

You also learned not to play games with the local security professionals. I had a JO colleague who thought he could get cute by shaking his tail when he was wandering around town. Two days later he got sideswiped by a vehicle in the dark, enough to bruise him and remind him that state security was always present and didn't take kindly to games. Every now and then, they'd come into your house and muss things up. We were not in a compound, but were housed in a Romanian apartment building. I think there was one other American family in that building. It was within walking distance to the embassy, if you could stand to breathe the vehicular exhaust and soft coal inducing atmospheric pollution of central Bucharest at that time. It was a "quaint" posting -- people referred to Bucharest as the "Paris of the Balkans." We kept looking for a resemblance but didn't find it because it was pretty gray and grim. Ceausescu did not allow Romanians to speak to foreigners unless they were specifically authorized to do so. This meant that your neighbors couldn't talk to you and you could get them in trouble by talking to them. You were reminded that a very large percentage of the adult population was actually in the employ of the *securitate*, or state security. So everybody was a potential informant on everybody else, and nobody was quite sure who was and who wasn't. The doorman of your apartment building could be an informant, or any of your neighbors. We had some very interesting neighbors. The head of the family across the hall from us was an ethnic Hungarian who headed the Hungarian language television and radio service. The Hungarians were a beleaguered minority in Romania, but the regime broadcast the official word to the Hungarian speaking population over the Romanian state radio and TV.

My wife found that she could fairly safely engage the neighbors in interchange simply by casually talking about child rearing practices or cooking. We had very different child rearing practices than the Romanians. They tended to swaddle their children, like Eskimos or Russians, keeping them all wrapped up in layers and layers of wool. We let our children run around loose, experiment with new things, and maybe get a few bruises and bumps. When my wife baked cookies, somehow people showed up at our door and wondered what that strange smell was. Within those confines we managed to establish some kind of a presence in the building and got on fairly well in a very superficial way with our neighbors. Officially Romania was very structured. You requested an appointment with a government or party official, and then waited for the government to respond with the time and place. Or you invited Romanians to a representational event, and they would all arrive at the same time. They would make their way en masse to the buffet table. When the buffet table was empty, they would leave. Probably the only square meal they got that week. They were as furtive and watchful of each other as they were of us. Our security officers constantly lectured us on the dangers of fraternization, getting to know Romanians too well. If any Romanian allowed such proximity, that was obviously suspect. This was especially true of our household help. We were told before we went to Romania that we ought to hire a Hungarian housekeeper because Hungarians cooked so well. Romanian cuisine was something to be left on the side of the road, but the Hungarians cooked marvelously. So we hired a Hungarian woman who spoke Romanian about as well as we did. She was from Transylvania in the northern part of the country, and she had two teenage girls.

Q: You were saying her cooking?

BECKER: It was superb. We could supply all of the necessary raw ingredients and she had the skills to make use of them and to show us the ropes. With two small children to care for, Teresa became indispensable part of the household. She was in her late '40s, maybe early '50s at that time, a jovial woman normally, given the severity of life in communist Romania, but every week or so she would arrive at work very depressed. We found out that after leaving work the previous day she had been summoned to the *securitate* office and was interrogated about our family behavior, quirks and possible points of exploitation. She would come to work the next day very shaken and depressed.

Q: What about the embassy? In the first place who was the ambassador and what were you doing?

BECKER: The ambassador was Harry Barnes, Jr., later director general of the Foreign Service. This was his first ambassadorial appointment. Since he had been DCM in Bucharest at an earlier stage, this was his second tour in Romania. He knew the Romanians intimately. He spoke 5/5 Romanian. He was quite a linguist. He had a lot of high profile, difficult posts. He later went on to be ambassador to Chile under Pinochet and India during a rough period in our bilateral relations. In Bucharest at that time, he was a youngish man in his late '40s, very vigorous and very outgoing. I arrived at the embassy on my first day and was told to pay my respects to the ambassador. This tall, casual-looking fellow came up, looking like just one of the staff, and I said, "My name's Rick Becker, and I'm the new JO." He said, "My name's Harry." It dawned on me that this was the ambassador, deserving of the title in public, but I soon learned he was

always Harry in private or casual settings. I was one of only two State Department JOs at the post -- USIA also had two -- and somehow I think I was chosen for the favored assignments. Since the ambassador didn't have a staff assistant, I was the one who more often was selected to travel with him. He really believed in getting out and seeing the country, and he set an ambitious example for others in the embassy. We took a lot of overnight trains. His wife Betsy nursed me through several cases of "Vlad's Revenge," the Eastern European version of Montezuma's Revenge. Ambassador and Mrs. Barnes kept this young officer healthy, well fed and stimulated. They were great people. It was a young embassy that reflected the ambassador's youth. There was no post schooling beyond the 8th grade, so many Foreign Service officers avoided serving there if they had had children of high school age. The DCM and his wife and one senior USIA couple were in their mid-50s, but by and large, the staff was composed of young people like us. Everyone had more overseas experience than we did, and I got to know everybody in the embassy because I was on a rotational assignment. All the section chiefs were my bosses at one time or another. I was under the direct tutelage of the DCM, in charge of the post's JO program.

Q: Who was the DCM?

BECKER: Dick Viets, later DCM in Tel Aviv and ambassador to Jordan. Two very different people, Harry Barnes and Dick Viets, but together they made a nearly ideal team. Harry was easygoing in his manner, very private and unassuming in his personal tastes. He and his wife did not like the constant scrutiny that a U.S. ambassador had to put up with and always tried to find ways of escaping from the goldfish bowl from time to time. Dick Viets and his wife Marina had a bunch of children, five or six kids, and really loved the social life that accompanied international diplomacy. Marina was a Polish aristocrat who had suffered a lot during and after World War II.

Q: She had a distinguished career I think in the resistance, hadn't she?

BECKER: Yes, she had been in the resistance. She had been a political prisoner under the Nazis, and perhaps under the Russians as well.

Q: Pretty much a persona on her own.

BECKER: Yes. The DCM and his wife sort of fit the Foreign Service image I had at the time -- they were very outgoing, self-assured in all situations, and worldly wise. As a DCM, Dick Viets was very meticulous and a bit imperious at times. The ambassador and DCM had very different philosophies with respect to the Foreign Service personnel system. It was just at the advent of the open assignments policy. Harry believed very fervently in the equity and transparency that went along with open assignments. He believed in equal opportunity for all officers. You should be fully informed about the selection process and available assignments, and the system should operate objectively and rationally in matching officers with assignments. By contrast, Dick believed very much in the so-called old-boy network, in which connections and corridor reputations were all-important. He himself was paternalistic toward younger officers, and mentored those he felt were worthy. It was unfortunate that he could be judgmental as well -- if he liked you, there was nothing he wouldn't do to open doors and provide career opportunities, but he took an instant dislike to other officers who I thought were quite able. He wouldn't give

them the time of day. Years later he helped me get assignments that I might not otherwise have gotten, simply by his personal intervention. In Bucharest, he would every now and then give me a special assignment, sometimes after-hours, that went beyond the requirements of my particular job description. He saw each of these as a step toward my professional development and as a measure of his own confidence in me. When a huge earthquake measuring 7.6 on the Richter scale struck Romania in March 1977, embassy real estate was as hard hit as the rest of the city. I was by chance the duty officer that week. The DCM placed a great deal of personal confidence in me as a JO to help manage major elements of the embassy's emergency response, including oversight of the evacuation of most embassy dependents to Germany.

Q: How bad was the embassy hit?

BECKER: The embassy itself, located in the center of town, was hit pretty hard but was still habitable. Most of the residences were damaged to varying degrees. It was extremely difficult to maintain embassy operations as such because everybody was living in very precarious circumstances. We had moderate damage in our residence. Growing up in California, I knew what earthquakes were and when the tremors began on that Friday night, March 5th, 1977 -- I remember these details, much like the "duck and cover" drills from the '50s.

Q: Oh, yes.

BECKER: I had a four-year-old and a baby of less than one year. The first thing I screamed to my wife was, "Oh, shit, it's an earthquake and it's a big one. You get the baby and I'll get Michele (our older child)." I pulled Michele out of her bed just as a huge chandelier fell down right where she had been lying. The entire embassy staff evacuated to the chancery. I mean there were bodies all over the streets. Utter chaos. The building across the street had lost its entire face. You could see inside all the apartments. There was destruction and rubble all over the place. We had to organize ourselves. People who lived in the newer buildings were worse off than people like us, who lived in pre-World War II construction. While we had largely superficial damage (as we later discovered), a lot of buildings were rendered totally uninhabitable. For the several days we were shuttled around from residence to residence where there was space and where it was thought to be structurally secure. There were no major hotels in town where we could be housed except one, the Intercontinental, and it was booked to the ceilings.

The ambassador, I believe in retrospect, made one major error of judgment at that time. He prided himself on his access to and relationship with Romanian authorities based upon his years of service. He hesitated to order a drawdown of personnel and evacuation of dependents, even though living conditions were precarious and staff morale was shaken. He was more concerned that such an order would show lack of confidence in Romanian authorities than he was for the welfare of his embassy staff. Finally, under staff pressure, he requested -- and the Department authorized -- voluntary departures. We were in a honeymoon period with the Romanians. In 1975 President Ford and Henry Kissinger visited Romania. I think it was the first time in the Cold War that a U.S. president and secretary of state had visited a communist country.

Q: Well, no I think Nixon went there in.

BECKER: I don't believe so. The Romanians thought very highly of Nixon because it was under his administration that there was an opening towards Eastern Europe and China. It was under Ford that most-favored-nation (MFN) trade legislation was extended to a Soviet bloc country, albeit with the Jackson-Vanik amendment that required the recipient to allow free emigration. The Romanians deftly played the U.S. by allowing a stream of Jewish emigration but kept the door shut for most other groups. The U.S. opening to Romania rewarded Ceausescu for his policy of independence and at least rhetorical antagonism towards the Soviet Union. The Romanian ruler refused to integrate his economy into the COMECON trading bloc and refused to participate in Warsaw Pact military integration and cooperation. Every year there seemed to be a carefully orchestrated war scare, resurrecting the specter of a Soviet military intervention – a la Hungary in 1956 – to re-impose order on the renegade Romanians. It was this independence rather than Ceausescu's very repressive domestic policies that U.S. policy sought to reward.

Q: Well, during this time, did you see where Ceausescu, you know, you say had this very repressive regime, were we so you might say tolerant of the excesses of the regime within Romania because of the politics of having Ceausescu sticking his thumb in the eye of the Soviets from time to time?

BECKER: There was a very orthodox and strategic view coming out of Washington. As a JO, I didn't have a very clear picture of Washington policy. It sort of filtered down to me. My world was the embassy. We had an ambassador who was very much liked and we had a great deal of access to Romanians of all kinds. Embassy personnel traveled a lot, we were well received, and it was a policy that on a superficial level seemed to work. American culture was slowly penetrating Romanian society, especially through TV and movies. There was a feeling that supporting Romania's independence against monolithic Soviet rule through trade, good relations and incentives would gradually open the door to political and economic liberalization. We wanted to believe that Jackson-Vanik and other conditional legislation would prod the Ceausescu government to stiffen its resistance to the USSR and take small steps to reduce internal brutality and move toward greater openness, with a low risk of an armed Soviet response a la 1956 or 1968. There was also a sense that there was very little we could do to make fundamental internal reform take place in the short term – economic and cultural penetration would undermine communism, but only in the longer term. In sum, Washington firmly believed we were frustrating Soviet consolidation, Soviet expansion and monolithic communism through a policy of rewarding independence in foreign and military affairs.

Q: Did you have any often it happens in embassies there's the big picture of we had a strategic reason for having sort of a benign policy towards Romania, but often the junior officers are the younger ones that are often out there looking around and they're hearing about the horrible things that are happening and want to do something right now. Is this a dynamic that was going on at the time?

BECKER: This was a dynamic. It didn't really separate the senior from the more junior officers. I took my turn in the consular section and my wife also worked in the consular section as well as a PIT, later known as American Family Member employment, where we had the opportunity to interact with Romanians from all walks of life.

Q: Part time.

BECKER: The ambassador instructed his consular officers to spend a minimum of 20 minutes with the client, unheard of in consular work. The purpose of lengthy interviews was not to establish visa eligibility but to pump the client for every bit of information about conditions in Romania. These people came from all over the country. They visited the embassy for both immigration and non-immigrant visas. Many of them had legitimate stories to tell. Some had contrived stories, but you would listen and write them down. It was the best environment for a budding political officer, much more so than the rather artificial and controlled access that we had when we put on our political officer hats and went on an official call. Harry Barnes recognized this and turned his consular section into a listening post, even though every Romanian who visited the consular section was being photographed as they entered the premises. There were still long lines and this is one of the things that MFN's link to immigration did -- it stimulated a lot of people to take a certain risk to try and contact the embassy and investigate the possibility of leaving the country. So the consular section was an important point of contact with the local population and with Romanian reality.

I spent a good deal of time there learning about and reporting on the experiences of hundreds of Romanians from northern Hungarian towns, from the eastern borderlands with the USSR, from the Danube delta where there were reports of slave labor camps, and from the mining areas where we learned that there was a miners' revolt in 1977. When food products suddenly disappeared from Bucharest markets -- I mean they were normally pretty meager -- we pieced together the story from people who were coming in from the mining region, the Jiu Valley, that there was a sudden flood of food products into that area that these people had never seen before. Ceausescu's economic policy had been to export nearly every product of value in order to gain foreign exchange for investment in domestic industry and luxuries for senior party members, leaving his own people lacking in most basic necessities. So when consumer goods flowed into the Jiu Valley, it was one of a number of attempts to placate and disarm what appeared to be -- because none of us were first-hand observers -- a large-scale miners' revolt in a critical production sector. Shortly before then, we had had a change in political counselors. The new counselor came in, very reluctantly, from a long series of postings in Latin America. Rather than taking the usual monolithic view of Romanian society, he looked the situation from a Latin Americanist perspective and advised that trade union protests should be taken seriously. Even East bloc workers could attempt to organize and try to be a political force. Three years before the Solidarity movement emerged as a major force in Poland, this counselor led the embassy to take a new and fresh view of what was going on in a part of the country where we had no access. We also reported on slave labor being used to build a canal in the Danube delta, because a few people who had actually worked on this project as political prisoners visited the consulate. They were the fortunate ones -- an untold number died constructing that canal.

There was a great deal of interest in immigration to the United States, due in part to the Jackson-Vanik amendment to the MFN legislation. A wave of people from all over the country came to the consulate seeking immigration to the United States. We found out that a fair number of them actually had a claim to U.S. citizenship. Either they or their parents had been born in the United States before World War I to Romanian immigrants, who had returned home after the war without thinking of their children's right to U.S. citizenship. We spent long hours interviewing

these claimants and then trying to convince Washington that in fact the U.S. government had an legal obligation to assist them. This meant petitioning the Romanian government to grant exit permission. We had a very aggressive consular section chief

Q: Who was that?

BECKER: His name was Tony Perkins. He served most of his career in Latin America and Italy.

Q: Who was the economic counselor?

BECKER: Dick Scissors was the economic counselor.

Q: Dick Scissors?

BECKER: Yes, he's retired now, and has been working with AFSA for many years. We had a very good mission. People did not go to Bucharest unless they really wanted to serve there, except for JOs, who were sent to their first overseas posts without genuine consultation.

Q: Well, one of the things that you said is sort of the other side of the coin that when Kissinger a couple of years earlier had insisted when the secretary of state on the so called GLOP program, the global outlook program, which was essentially kicked off by finding too many Latin Americanists, chiefs of mission had no feel for Europe or elsewhere and wanted to mix to get the mix going, but it was mainly focused on Latin America, but the fact that somebody from Latin America could come to Eastern Europe and take a look and say, hey, something's going on here. We seem to have not been reflected so much in the thinking of sort of the old Cold War hands dealing with Eastern Europe.

BECKER: I think that's precisely true. It took a fresh look by a new officer coming in to bring out some things that were lurking under the surface, which were largely being ignored. I think until he came, one of the few valid pieces of political reporting that we produced in Bucharest was a compendium of jokes, humorous vignettes on the harsh realities of daily life that circulated among the people. I hate to say that because I was there for a year and a half before this new counselor arrived, and we reported a lot out of the consulate and a little out of the political section on what was going on, often in the form of trip reports with some political analysis. But it was pretty superficial, as I look back on it. The semi-annual joke-grams were very well received in Washington, although I never had any indication how policymakers reacted to the truths that were revealed.

I mentioned Ceausescu's squeezing his economy, squeezing the people in order to build national wealth and to feed his regime. There was a Romanian popular folk character, a little boy by the name of Bodo, who figured in many of these stories. Bodo was in school one day and his teacher says, "Bodo, come up to the board and draw a pig." So Bodo comes up to the board very confidently. He outlines the snout and two ears and four feet and a tail and goes back to his seat. His teacher was incredulous. "I said, come up and draw a pig and you only gave me these appendages." Bodo replied, "You didn't say you wanted an export pig." Those Romanians never saw the other parts of the pig in their market basket. There was economic humor and there was a

lot of anti-Soviet humor. Very anti-Russian, anti-Soviet humor. The Romanians pride themselves on being an island of Latin culture and Latin values in a sea of Slavic crudeness and repression.

Q: How did Yugoslavia play when you were there? Was that of interest or not?

BECKER: There was some interest to the extent that the Iron Curtain in effect ran between Yugoslavia and Romania. After the massive 1977 earthquake, we brought in teams of Yugoslav construction workers to rebuild and repair our embassy housing as well as the chancery itself, which was an old 1890s building. It's still there, in the same downtown location. I visited it last spring. The Yugoslavs came in and we queried the Yugoslavs as best we could on the differences between Yugoslavia and Romania. The Yugoslav simply said, "We live in a free country and Romania is just another Russian dictatorship." The Yugoslavs certainly believed that they themselves were different and distinct and superior to those who lived behind the Iron Curtain. The Romanians didn't draw too much distinction from the way they lived and the way they thought others lived. Most Romanians we talked to were really obsessed with day-to-day survival issues.

Q: Did you get involved at all in this program that you alluded to before and that was Jews coming out of the Soviet Union. I thought some of them supposedly were heading for Israel or something would go through Romania or something like that. Was there any of that?

BECKER: There was a great deal of attention paid to Jewish immigration. It was the foundation of Jackson-Vanik, and Jewish immigration numbers seemed to be given more weight in both Washington and Bucharest than those of other groups. Romania had a fairly large Jewish population. Although they lost half of it during World War II, it was not decimated in the way that it had been in other countries. Part of Romanian mythology is that they had protected the Jews, who were well integrated into society. That was not exactly the case, but be that as it may, there was a large and very vibrant Jewish community although dwindling in numbers. In fact, what Ceausescu did was to make Jewish immigration into a political tool. Many Jews did not want to go to Israel, but they saw this as a way out of severe hardship. A number of Romanians ended up marrying African students. They emigrated with their African spouses; many of them came back with real horror stories about how they were treated. Romanian Jews, although they were very much concerned about the unsettled circumstances in the Middle East during that period of time, were willing to take any chance to get out of Romania. In fact, one of our housekeeper's daughters, born into a Catholic family, ended up marrying an Israeli student. Romania was the only Eastern European state to maintain diplomatic and trade relations with Israel after the 1967 Middle East war. The U.S. saw this as one more point in Romania's favor. Whenever Israeli oranges appeared on the market, as they did two or three times a year, we jokingly concluded that another group of Romanian Jews had left the country. Although it has yet to be documented, there were clearly under-the-table arrangements between Israel and Romania to basically buy Romanian Jews.

A lot of would-be Romanian emigrants tried to find their way to the United States, or at least to the West, through the intermediation of the U.S. embassy, whose policy toward Romania was built in part on the principle of open borders. Ceausescu had a particularly vicious policy that whenever a Romanian applied to emigrate, the applicant would immediately be fired from his

job and stripped of his state benefits, including education, as a condition of receiving a passport and exit visa. The family would be left hanging in permanent limbo if they couldn't get an entry visa to go anywhere. Family reunification didn't mean much to the Romanian regime. It was intent on intimidating and punishing anybody who applied for a passport. Many of these people, labeled dissenters and even traitors by the regime, found themselves on the doorstep of the U.S. embassy.

Q: Quite a bit of pressure on those of you who were issuing visas knowing that these people were desperate is sort of a modest term for how they must have felt. I would think that this would be a consular officer's taking a pretty relaxed view about visa regulations.

BECKER: On the one hand, we were very rigorous in analyzing a person's right to enter the United States as an immigrant. We were probably more lenient in terms of allowing applicants who showed up with exit visas, because Romania exercised real control over visitors to the United States, whether official or non-official, who left most of their family behind a la Cuba. It was a fairly effective guarantee that people would return, but some Romanians would make the break in the hope that their family could eventually follow them. The families of non-returnees were brutally treated when their relatives defected. We ended up developing a secondary and informal -- and according to U.S. law, probably illegal -- procedure called third country processing" (TCP) which involved issuing a letter to that somebody could show at the border. The letter would state that if this Romanian, who has a passport and exit visa, can reach a third country, he would be able to apply for legal entry into the United States. We knew very well that any Romanian who got out had good grounds to apply to the U.S. embassy for parole or asylum. The embassy letter had no legal validity whatsoever, but it was a vehicle that Romanian border and immigration authorities frequently acknowledged as having some legal standing.

Indeed, a growing stream of Romanians showed up at our embassies in Vienna and Rome, two favorite stop-over points. We ended up establishing major processing centers for Romanian immigrants or asylum seekers to the United States outside of these cities. If you recall, Vienna was the route used by Nadia Comaneci when she defected.

Q: Olympic.

BECKER: Yes. Although I don't think she availed herself of our TCP letter, but knew very well that the embassy in Vienna was a way station to get to the United States. By the way, I later served on the Romania desk and became her welcoming officer. I had to go to Kennedy Airport to see her arrive and interview her. This system was probably criticized by later State Department inspectors and maybe even more loudly criticized by risk-averse consular rules makers in Washington, but it was a way of skirting some of the rigidities of U.S. law, and was consistent I think with the philosophy of the administration to encourage a freer flow of people out of communist countries. More than that, we sought to ease the plight of thousands of Romanians who were caught in the middle. Common people translated Romania's MFN treatment and the Jackson-Vanik amendment as including the right to enter the U.S. People who came to the embassy genuinely believed that if they had the right exit documents, they could go to the United States. I don't think any U.S. spokesman really had the backbone to stand up and say they didn't have an automatic right. So without really acknowledging the expectations that

we had raised by some of our rhetoric, we developed a mechanism that really skirted the formalities of the law, and in many ways alleviated a huge human rights problem.

Q: As a long time consular officer, this is what you do. You work out these deals to get to make sure that we're doing right rather than necessary the rigid qualifications of the law. What about Ceausescu and Madame Ceausescu? What was the feeling that you were getting about them?

BECKER: Well, I think we characterized the regime as probably more Byzantine than communist. It was basically a family regime, a dynasty hiding behind a totalitarian communist state apparatus. That apparatus was designed to consolidate Ceausescu's personal power and that of his wife. His wife Elena was a chemist by training and professed to have broad knowledge and authority throughout the sciences. The Romanian state came out with textbooks and tracts asserting that a diet of potatoes, carrots and cabbage, not to mention other roots that you could find around, was much healthier than meat, fresh vegetables and fruit, all of which were not available. Romania was a very pro-natalist country. Statistics now show that the rate of abortion was probably the highest in Europe because family planning was discouraged, birth control technology was prohibited, and reproductive rights were nonexistent. The most effective form of birth control proved to be overcrowded apartments, because housing was at a premium, which militated against increase in the number of children. In many and numerous ways the regime was seen as a personal regime at the service of the Ceausescus.

The VOA and Radio Free Europe were probably more popular in Romania than in any other bloc country because Romania was completely surrounded by communist states. Even Yugoslavia acted as a buffer that filtered information flow; it was almost as effective as having a wall between East and Western Germany. The kind of interchange of ideas and people that might have developed across the border just didn't occur in Romania. Romanians by and large didn't travel. Romania hosted very few major international conferences or cultural events. The Romanian émigré community was not politically active. There was not a lot of contact between émigrés and would-be activists at home. There was a group in France and there were a growing number of Romanians in the United States and Israel, but by and large the number of Romanians who emigrated was probably much smaller than from other countries, even though the level of repression was greater.

Q: This is tape three, side one with Rick Becker. You were saying there was great effort to show Romania was more enlightened than it really was?

BECKER: Yes, and I don't know to what extent it convinced U.S. policymakers that it was true. I think there was a certain feeling in the United States that because we had a favorable policy towards Romania vis-à-vis East Germany or Czechoslovakia, Romanian policies must be more liberal and humane, but in fact quite the opposite was true. We were rewarding Romania for other than its domestic policies, which were much worse. Conditions were much more repressive and there was a great deal more deprivation, including infant mortality and other public health indicators. The embassy had contact with the Romanian medical community. We evacuated people to Germany for very minimally necessary medical reasons because the quality of basic care was so poor. There was no anesthetic to go around, even local anesthetic. We didn't have an embassy nurse or doctor. The regional medical officer visited quarterly from Belgrade. We had a

contract nurse, a British lady, but by and large there were no basic necessities to be had on the local economy. We imported 90% of our consumables from Germany. We had a contract buyer with access to the military PXs and commissaries in Germany. The embassy closed shop for a day every month or six weeks when the U.S. Air Force plane arrived. We spent the entire day distributing consumables ordered by embassy families.. Cases of toilet paper, chewing gum and cigarettes, as well as bushels of bananas and other fresh fruits and vegetables, came in on these flights. There was a great deal of barter among embassy families, as the case lots were far too large for a single family to consume. Everybody bought cigarettes because they were the accepted medium of exchange in Romania. The local currency had no value, but Western cigarettes, particularly Kent 100s, were used by Romanians to get in front of the food line while there were still supplies, to get into a doctor's office on an emergency basis, to gain any kind of consideration or favor, that and working the black market which a lot of other embassies did directly. As far as we could tell, the British, Canadian and American embassies may have been the only embassies to adhere to the established exchange rate and rules against selling our consumables to the local population. The ambassador made it clear he would severely penalize anybody who used other than the embassy accommodation exchange, because the *securitate* was eager to entrap diplomats on the streets who were involved in illegal currency exchange.

Q: Were we there as the embassy were there attempts to suborn Americans, you know, one hears of the Soviet Union how they had honey traps, girls making themselves available and then pictures taken or handing over supposed documents and pictures. I mean things of that nature, was that happening much?

BECKER: There were always probes and our security officers tried very hard to get on top of these. Interestingly enough, Ambassador Barnes gained a certain notoriety when, as DCM in Romania a few years earlier, he was involved in a security breach. I guess the incident was recounted in one of the books on the CIA that was later published, perhaps Philip Agee's book or another spy exposé.

Q: Well, there was a Who's Who.

BECKER: It was Harry Barnes' shoe that was fitted with a listening device. When the staff went into the secure conference room, those discussions were reportedly recorded by the Romanians. It seems that the housekeeper who was found responsible for fitting that shoe continued to work years later in the diplomat community, perhaps even the U.S. community I heard. The joke was that good household help was hard to find. Clearly there were efforts to suborn Americans. One of the most difficult U.S. policies to enforce, and one that really made an impact on recruitment, was the non-fraternization policy. One of our young single officers-- he was in fact the first single officer who was allowed to serve in Romania-- found a Romanian girlfriend, got her pregnant, and then petitioned the embassy to arrange for marriage and an immigrant visa. This officer had flagrantly broken the policy. He could have, should have had the book thrown at him immediately, but only got a few pages tossed in his direction. He stayed in the Foreign Service for a while, even though he left the service early. He was supposedly a fast riser, but really had his career tainted by this experience. There was always the potential for security compromise.

Q: What about the Roma or the gypsies? Were we looking at, you know, one thinks of Romania as being full of gypsies. What was happening?

BECKER: Romania had a high percentage of gypsies, but no reliable statistics bore out this fact. They were everywhere one looked, but were invisible as far as the embassy was concerned. They were discriminated against openly by all other ethnic groups. They were really the bottom of the social scale, the country's untouchables. They had no status whatsoever, not with the Romanian state and not with the U.S. embassy. We had no policy or mechanism for dealing with them. We dealt with the established groups, whether Hungarians, the Germans, the Jewish population, but the numerous gypsy population was basically shunned, avoided, distrusted and ignored as far as policy was concerned.

Q: What about the Soviets, the Soviet embassy and all? Did we have any contact with them?

BECKER: We had contact with the Soviets. The Soviets would complain to us that they were under literally house arrest by the Romanians. The Romanians vigorously pursued a policy of reciprocity vis-à-vis the Soviets and in fact treated them worse than almost any other diplomatic mission. They couldn't travel outside of Bucharest without getting permission from the government, just the way the Soviets treated the Romanian diplomats in the USSR, whereas we could travel all over the country without prior notification. There was a great deal of freedom for Americans and indeed the Romanians liked to show favor to U.S. diplomats just to stick it to the Soviets. The Soviets were a very frustrated bunch. They were probably the number one target of the Romanian security service, which constantly sought to suborn, intimidate and otherwise restrict them. The Romanians were really less concerned about our influence in Romania than they were about the Soviets. Every now and then, Romanians were arrested and show trials would take place against officials who were accused of having sold out national interests to the Russians.

As I mentioned, every now and then there was a war scare that involved a Russian invasion scenario. During one of these manufactured crises, the DCM from our embassy in Moscow was visiting Romania. Tom Simons was actually being considered for the ambassadorship in Bucharest. He and his wife on an orientation visit, and I was assigned as his control officer, guide and travel companion. . He was traveling with his U.S. diplomatic passport, but the visit was low-key and unofficial, as his appointment had not yet been announced by Washington and nobody wanted to feed the rumor mill about Ambassador Harry Barnes' replacement. As we passed through Iasi, in the eastern part of the country, he and his wife were subjected to a near strip search in the airport, since he had a lot of Russian language documents on his person. Anything of a Russian nature was being scrutinized much more closely during this period. As their escort officer, I protested and said I was going to take this diplomatic breach up with the authorities in Bucharest – but to little effect. I was pushed through the line and they were taken off to secondary for a search. He eventually did become ambassador to Romania, apparently not intimidated nor overly exercised by that experience.

Q: I would think that the French would have been riding high in there. I mean de Gaulle is planning this, this goes way back and how about the French Embassy?

BECKER: The French embassy, as I recall, did try and play up the traditional cultural connection with Romania. Unfortunately, that connection virtually died in World War II. There was an older generation of Romanians who were thoroughly Frenchified. They even spoke their own native language with a French accent, including a number of people in the diplomatic service, but at that time France had nothing to offer and indeed these people were discredited as part of an older, pre-communist generation. The French never really had a great deal of influence. Third-world countries were very well represented in the Bucharest diplomatic community, which was quite large. Romania had relations not only with Israel, but with everybody else. It was seen as a kind of international protection against possible Soviet pressures. Arab and African countries were very conspicuous in the diplomatic community. It was hard to see how the housing system and the other services to diplomats could be sustained. We met Yasser Arafat for the first time at the diplomatic club – the PLO was accorded full diplomatic status by the Ceausescu regime. A friend of ours, actually the wife of our consular section chief, had an encounter with Mrs. Arafat. Both had brought their dogs to the diplomatic club for an outing, which was permitted. Mrs. Arafat apparently complained that so-and-so ought to keep her dog on a leash. So this embassy wife replied without hesitation, “Mrs. Arafat, you ought to keep your husband on a leash.” Arafat was an occasional visitor to Romania, as were most Middle Eastern leaders. Romania was no longer a major oil producer, but it was a major oil refining center and there was a great deal of trade with the Middle East oil producing countries. This was the mid ‘70s, and Romania re-exported a lot of its refined production to the West.

Q: What about Israel? How did the Israeli embassy work there?

BECKER: The Israeli Embassy was a fortified mission, but it was an embassy that functioned very effectively. It functioned effectively on a diplomatic level, but it also was a cultural and political conduit to the Romanian Jewish community and the Grand Rabbi of Romania, Moses Rosen, was very well received in Israel. He was treated with a great deal of respect and consideration. Rabbi Rosen was also an old friend of Larry Eagleburger, and every time he came to Washington while I was on the Romania desk, I had a chance to renew acquaintances. He was in his ‘70s when I knew him in Romania and he was in his ‘80s by the time I was on the Romanian desk a dozen years later. Rabbi Rosen faced this dilemma of a dwindling number of Romanian Jews due to emigration and the inability to adequately support those who remained in his country. He could not get the Israeli Jewish leadership to send rabbis and others to sustain the faithful in Romania – the Israelis really didn’t think it was worthwhile. The Israelis thought only of continuing the outward flow of Romanian Jews until none remained. The only people who refused to leave the country for Israel or elsewhere were the elderly, as well as some of their younger relatives and caretakers, who simply were too old to travel or change lifestyles. There was a Jewish cultural and historical tradition that the Israeli Embassy and government supported in a sort of superficial way, but without wanting to antagonize the Romanian Orthodox Church among other xenophobic influences in the country.

Q: Just as a historical note, in 1875 ’76, President Ulysses Grant sent a gentleman named Benjamin Pieotto, I’m not sure P-I-E-O-T-T-O, or something, his lawyer from San Francisco to go with, made him consul in Bucharest and he was sent there for the specific purpose of helping the Jewish community, the Mambas, the Jewish (?). He went there and made some reports on

that. It's an interesting historical note of why we sent somebody there. He was apparently fairly effective.

BECKER: When Ceausescu finally decided around 1980 he was going to build his grand palace, the old Jewish ghetto in Bucharest was one of several historic neighborhoods that were razed to the ground; one of the last physical vestiges of a Jewish cultural life. I still have photographs of my travels around Romania and visits to Jewish cemeteries and other vestiges of a once-thriving Jewish community. In the post-Holocaust/post-World War II period, it was a mere shadow of what the Jewish population had been and the influence that it had had before the war.

INTS M. SILINS
Romania Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1976-1978)

Ambassador Silins was born in Latvia and raised in Latvia and Maryland. He was educated at Princeton and Harvard Universities. He entered the Foreign Service in 1969 and served abroad in Saigon, Duc Thanh (Vietnam), Bucharest, Stockholm, Port au Prince, Leningrad and Strasbourg. In 1990 he was appointed United States Representative to the Baltic States, resident in Riga, Latvia, and from 1992 to 1995, he served as United States Ambassador to Latvia. He also had several tours of duty at the Department of State in Washington, D.C. Ambassador Silins was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.

Q: He was doing it all, you had such an interim president, too. Well, you went to the Romanian desk, you were there from '76 until ...?

SILINS: Let's see. It would have been '76-'78.

Q: This is your first sort of non-staff job in the State Department. How did you find being a desk officer?

SILINS: I found it not what I had expected, in part because of very specific things happening with respect to Romania at that time. The emigration issue had begun to snowball and was generating endless amounts of congressional correspondence and dozens of daily phone calls that I was expected to deal with. I'm just not very good at that sort of thing, just ginning out, you know, dozens of pro forma responses. Some days I got close to a hundred phone calls about individual cases. I got backed up on that.

More seriously, what happened is that I was becoming more disillusioned about U.S. policy toward Romania. I had begun to move toward the conviction I now hold that we grossly exaggerated the importance of Ceausescu's foreign policy credentials and had not given enough importance to his really restrictive internal policies. That was becoming more clear to me, and I thought that we were now really overdoing things. During my period on the desk Ceausescu was invited to visit the U.S. Ceausescu was a horrible visitor. He's very demanding. His people, you

know, spent lots of money and they were a giant pain in the ass. This is well documented by every place that he's ever been.

Q: What about the emigration side? What type of emigration was this?

SILINS: Well, the main interest from the U.S. side was in Jewish emigration. There was a sizeable not very happy Jewish community in Romania and many of these people really wanted out of there. There was also some other emigration, other people interested in leaving, but U.S. interest in that wasn't as intense. Mostly it was Jewish emigration that generated lots and lots of lists of people, letters to the Congress, letters from the Congress to the State Department, and communication with the Romanian government. In short a lot of busy work, but with a net payoff, that is, a steady stream of people being allowed to leave, which is a good thing. I don't begrudge the amount of time I put into that. I do think, though, that the focus on emigration as a human rights issue skewed our vision of what really needed to be done in Romania. They needed a lot more than just a freer emigration policy, they needed a whole new approach to running the country.

Q: Well, do you think there was any prospect if we'd played our cards differently to changing anything in Romania?

SILINS: A fair question. It's hard to say. You could argue that because, as I believe, Ceausescu was not really all there mentally, that perhaps he would not have responded rationally even to severe pressure. I'm not sure that's true, though. The fact is, we didn't really try it, and so I feel we didn't explore all the options. And it's not just that we didn't explore the options but that the policy we pursued was wrong even if it had turned out to be true that we couldn't make him more liberal. Because we, as I said, were trying to hold him up as an example to other East Europeans, and that was wrong. I mean, it was bound to fail because he was not a useable example.

Q: Were there any other issues in '76-'78 that came up with Romania?

SILINS: The main argument was about how much we should do for Romania in terms of trade access and, specifically, access to U.S. high technology that might have military applications. That was a running debate. What category should we put the country in? Should we give them special privileges because they had this sort of independent foreign policy? My view by the end of all this was that we were really hoist on our own petard here, we had just put too much enthusiasm into the project. And here, although I have tremendous respect for Harry Barnes, I hold him somewhat to blame for this because he took that hobbyhorse and rode it for all it was worth, of Ceausescu as a special case. I think this was the time for what I consider more traditional diplomacy, a much more relaxed, hands-off, more analytical approach. Let's see what's really in the U.S. interest here instead of getting carried away. So I had a difference of view with the mission on how much we should be doing for Ceausescu, certainly toward the end of my tenure on the desk.

RUDOLPH AGGREY
Ambassador
Romania (1977-1981)

Ambassador Rudolph Aggrey, whose father immigrated to the United States from Ghana in the early 1900s, entered the USIA in 1951 after receiving a Bachelor's degree from Hampton Institute in 1946 and a Master's from Syracuse University in 1948.. His career included positions in Nigeria, France, Zaire, and ambassadorships to Senegal, the Gambia, and Romania. Ambassador Aggrey was interviewed by Jack O'Brien in 1990.

Q: Well, then comes an assignment which must have come to you out of the blue. And the more we read these days about Romania, the more questions I have about what it was like when you were assigned there as ambassador. That would have been in 1977?

AGGREY: Yes. Well, I've found, in my experience, that nothing is wasted, if you do it well. And that one thing can lead to, or prepare you for, another. And sometimes people who are impatient and wonder why they should do this particular job--that it ought to be short-circuited--find out later that they're very happy they did.

My learning French, after having thought that I had been given a raw deal on my exam, but going back and learning it, allowed me to be assigned to France and to have wonderful assignments and wonderful experiences. Having those experiences in Paris gave me a wide knowledge of Francophone African leaders, including the president of Senegal, and many other places. And when I went to Senegal, I was able to be efficient and I had many contacts that enabled me to do my job.

While I was working as director for West African affairs, my French was sufficient for me to do some interpreting at the White House. Among the persons I interpreted for was the president of Upper Volta, [Sangoulé] Lamizana. I sat on a jump seat behind him, and he sat between Mrs. Warren Burger and Mrs. William Rogers, respectively, the wives of the Chief Justice and Secretary of State. To the right of Mrs. William Rogers, was Nicolae Ceausescu, the president, then, of the Social Republic of Romania. And Ceausescu's interpreter, a Romanian he brought with him, was seated next to him.

At the end of the dinner, as we were getting ready to leave and I was escorting President Lamizana, President Ceausescu came up and introduced himself. We spoke and I interpreted and I met his interpreter.

I mention all of that to describe my first important encounter with Romania and the Romanians, and that later I was to be accredited to a country where the person I had met at the White House dinner was President Ceausescu. And after his regime was toppled and, in fact, he was executed, one of the foreign ministers of the successor regime was the man who was his interpreter that evening.

Q: Oh, really? Is that so?

AGGREY: So I say that certain things are often connected in interesting ways. One of the first films we did, when I was program manager for motion pictures and television in USIA, was a cooperative film on President Nixon's visit to Romania. So I met the Romanian television team. I saw the images of the country. And I said to myself, "This is a place where I wouldn't mind serving."

Now, at one point, speaking to the director general of the Foreign Service about where I might like to serve after I left Senegal, the question of Eastern Europe came up. And I said, "Well, I don't know that there's any place where I would really be especially effective. You have so many East European specialists. But if I had a change, perhaps Romania."

And when the time came for me to leave Senegal, several new missions were mentioned. For many reasons I was not nominated for certain posts. I would not be assigned anywhere else in Africa because Secretary Kissinger had a policy of moving people out of the region of their specialization. It was felt that I had earned another embassy on the basis of my work, but just where it would be outside Africa was a big question.

Several missions came up which would have pleased me. I won't mention them. But they didn't come about, for various reasons. And finally Romania was discussed, and the secretary of state decided that I should go to Romania. There were some people in the Department who felt strongly that I should not, as there always are, particularly when the move is from one region to another.

But I did go to Romania and I spent almost four years there. Everything that I had learned previously helped me there, and I wasn't as lost in that world as many people thought I would be. My French gave me access--not facility, but access--to learning Romanian, which I had to do. I was more than fifty at that time, and learning a foreign language, at that age, is not as easy as it is when you are in your twenties. But I learned it well because I needed it.

Also, Ceausescu had visited Senegal while I was there. President Senghor had introduced me to him. And President Ceausescu said that he had a special representative in Washington at that very moment. Pictures were taken of the three of us, which were part of the news coverage of Ceausescu's visit. So that I'm sure that when the Romanians began to say, "Who is this Aggrey that as ambassador they're proposing?" somebody would say, "Oh, maybe he was that black ambassador that we met in Senegal, who Senghor said so much about." So I wasn't an unknown quantity.

So I think that I had two wonderful opportunities in serving in Senegal and The Gambia, and in Romania. And I feel fortunate to have had each post--overseas post--that I had. There were some others that I would have liked to have had, that I didn't get, like nearly everybody in the Service. But I think I had a very rewarding array of posts and assignments.

G. JONATHAN GREENWALD

**Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs,
Washington, DC (1978-1981)**

Born and raised in Pennsylvania, Mr. Greenwald earned degrees for Princeton University and Harvard Law School. His first government assignment was General Counsel in the Department of the Air Force. He later transferred to the Department of State, where he served as legal advisor as well as Political Officer, both in Washington and in various assignments abroad. His foreign posts include Germany (East and West Berlin), Yugoslavia, Hungary and Belgium. He also had assignments concerning anti-terrorism.

Q: Okay, this is the third tape with Jonathan Greenwald under the Foreign Affairs Oral History Program. I'm Raymond Ewing, and it's the 24th of March 1998. Jon, I think we were just talking as we finished the other tape about the idea of human rights roundtables under the CSCE process.

GREENWALD: Our hope was to find partners to talk with quietly, privately and constructively about human rights. As luck would have it, ironically the only partner we found was Romania. Of course, one should remember that in 1980 the Romanian reputation in the West was different than it was by the end of the Ceausescu regime. We all tended to overlook a lot of what Ceausescu did domestically, because we were entranced with his relative openness and relative independence in a number of foreign policy areas from the rest of the Warsaw Pact. In fact, they were the only Eastern European country to agree to try this concept with us, so we arranged to send a delegation to Bucharest in the middle of winter in 1980. The delegation included myself; Harry Gilmore, who was the Director of the Office of Eastern European Affairs at the time, Deputy Director, I think actually; and two very prominent private members, distinguished lawyers in each case, John Cary and Wildo Shell from New York, who joined us. We flew off to Bucharest and arrived in miserable weather in February with brown coal being burned furiously throughout the city to keep people warm. At the same time, of course, it didn't do very much for the quality of the air. The impression that we all had from that week was extreme depression from the winter weather and also from the difficulty in having a meaningful dialogue. We did have discussions about human rights and substantial talk about economic human rights versus political human rights, but I don't think any of us felt that we had really made a conceptual breakthrough in the way the issue of human rights would have to be dealt within the CSCE. We hoped that we had at least made a breakthrough in starting to use this new mechanism and that it might get a life of its own and develop into something. In fact, it turned out it was the only roundtable of its sort that was arranged. Before too much longer the Madrid meeting was upon us and we were all taken up with what became the substantial polemics of that meeting.

Q: This meeting in Bucharest was a bilateral meeting, U.S. and Romania?

GREENWALD: Yes.

Q: And was there anyone representing the CSCE Commission?

GREENWALD: Yes, I'm sorry. I forgot to add that there was also a member of the staff who came with this delegation.

STEPHEN T. JOHNSON
Political Officer
Bucharest (1979-1982)

Stephen T. Johnson was born in Tokyo, Japan in 1936. After serving in the US Army from 1956-1957 he received his bachelor's degree from Occidental College in 1960. He entered his Foreign Service in 1961 and his career included positions in Canada, Paris, Vietnam, Laos, Romania, and Kenya. Mr. Johnson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in January 1997.

JOHNSON: We didn't arrive in Romania until March of 1979. Were there until June of 1982 or July of 1982.

Q: When you arrived in 1979, what was the situation in Romania?

JOHNSON: Well, we didn't realize it at the time, but it was as good as it was going to get. Obviously it was a satellite of the Soviet Union in a sense, but it was the most independent of all the European satellites of the Soviet Union. It was ruled, unlike most other communist countries at the time, which had oligarchies and politburo in most communist countries, by the late 1970s were kind of a group of people ran the country. Obviously there was one person who was most important but it was kind of a group thing. Romania was an old fashioned kind of monarchical communism.

Nicolae Ceausescu was the [leader] of the republic and secretary general of the party ran things completely with his wife who was a member of the politburo. They didn't call it the politburo. They called it the political executive committee. His wife, who was a member of the political executive committee and a vice premier in the government, was the second most important in the country. But it was internally a very closed society. The Ceausescus called all the shots. You never had printed in the paper addresses, say, by the prime minister. You didn't have an account in the paper about, say, the minister of agriculture going to visit "X" collective farms.

All the attention was concentrated on Ceausescu and Mrs. Ceausescu to such a degree that it was hard to know who some of the ministers were. I mean, you knew their names, but when their pictures appeared in the papers or in the television, the only people identified were the Ceausescu's and you had to kind of know that the fellow lurking in the back was the agriculture minister. Lots of basic information about the country was unavailable. It was illegal for a normal Romanian, without official permission, to deal with a foreigner. It would have been illegal for him to come and have lunch with you or talk to you on the telephone, which was very restraining.

The political atmosphere, as I say, was very close. I remember when former President Nixon visited later on in my time there, Sam Fry, who was the chargé d'affaires, was invited to an official dinner in which Ceausescu and basically the politburo were going to be present. Sam rejoiced in the idea that finally he was going to be able to actually talk to some of these politburo members. It was very hard to know anything about them except for rumors. When he got there, basically none of the other members of the politburo did anything but grunt at various times. Ceausescu completely dominated the conversation - Ceausescu and Nixon - and so he came out of it no wiser than when he went in about any of the politburo.

Q: Well, what did you do as a political officer if you couldn't talk to people and there was nobody in power except for this pair of people, the Ceausescus. What did you do?

JOHNSON: Well, you could meet people in an official capacity. It was always very formal, but you could go and say talk to the fellow in the secretariat of the party who dealt with the United States. You could arrange a provincial tour and go and see various officials or church people. I did a lot of contacts with the various churches. There were 14 approved churches in the country. The vast majority of the people were Orthodox Christians.

There were dissidents around. It wasn't so oppressive that they didn't allow any dissidents; they were kind of the intellectual dissidents, a relatively small group in Bucharest that you'd see who for one reason or another were kind of immune to arrest. Then there were the kind of lower class dissidents, you know, the fellow from the country who usually, because of his religion, had gotten himself in trouble, and would speak out. Most of those people would get arrested, would do about six months in jail, and be allowed to leave the country. So it was a rather rough way of emigrating if you wanted to.

There was the newspaper, the television, the radio. The story in the newspaper, the story on the television, the story in the magazine, and the story on the radio would all be exactly word for word, the same. So reading the press, the first thing you did in the morning, was always pretty easy. The party paper I mean, a lot of it was froth you didn't have to bother with.

But you didn't have to read the same story in the other paper because it was word for word the same. Your problem was that it was written in the most tedious, what the French called "langue de bois," boiler-type run-on sentences, just jargon kind of stuff. It was kind of hard to stay awake sometimes reading it. Political reporting was difficult, but it could be done within the strictures that we had. There were, of course, rumors, all the time.

[For example], my Egyptian colleague would come and see me and say, "One of my colleagues fell down yesterday and broke his wrist. So we were in the emergency hospital last night at 9:30 and while we were there, 150 or so men were brought in who looked like they had been burnt and knocked about. It looked like there had been a great explosion or something." There would be nothing in the paper about this, but then maybe you would hear that there was an explosion at some factory or some disaster but which might or not be... Sometimes you would hear nothing more. That would be it. It was just this mysterious event with nothing before it and nothing after it.

Q: This is the end of the Carter administration. Let's talk a bit about that. I can think of two major things that happened by the time you arrived in Bucharest. One was the hostage crisis in Iran. The other was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Did these have any influence or anything on you?

JOHNSON: Not too much. The reason that we were interested in Romania perhaps a bit more than the other satellite, each of the Eastern European countries as we called them then had its own character and it was always bad and incorrect to lump them all together. There was a certain interest in Hungary, a certain interest in East Germany obviously and perhaps even in Bulgaria.

The reason we were interested in Romania was that it of all the Eastern European countries pursued the most independent foreign policy. Its troops were not integrated into the Warsaw Pact military organization. It had diplomatic relations with Israel right through. When the Soviets went into Czechoslovakia in 1968, the Romanians refused to go along. East Germans and the Poles and others had minor contingencies but nevertheless backed the Soviets. The Romanians didn't and mobilized their army facing the Soviet world. President Ceausescu had played a useful role in our first contact with China and in other diplomatic areas.

By the time I got there that role was less useful to us. We were basically making those contacts directly for the most part. But the interest lingered on. Ceausescu took foreign policy very seriously, and he had a good foreign ministry. They tried to play as big a role as they could and tried to act as important as they could; they had lots of visitors and the like there.

But in the case of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan well, Romania criticized it. The Romanians, the most consistent aspect of their foreign policy was that they were always against any country invading another country. Obviously what they had to worry about most, under almost any pretext. Obviously the Soviet pretext about going into Afghanistan was pretty thin as it was. They were unequivocally against it.

In the case of Iran, they had pretty good relations with Iran, and sold it agricultural products. There had [also] been some oil cooperation. But they had excellent relations with the Shah. I think the Shah and Ceausescu had been [allies], and my impression was that they were a little bit mystified by the new authorities there. But nevertheless tried to get along. I think they were generally sympathetic to our plight in the embassy in Tehran, but it didn't really amount to much more than that.

Q: Did you get involved in human rights dissidents and that sort of thing?

JOHNSON: Yes, we did. I should say, one of the results of Ceausescu's, I don't know if it was his policy, but at least of his practice of having the kind of "non-intellectual," the "non-famous" dissidents basically do about six months of jail time and then to allow them to emigrate that after a while there was a significant number of ex-Romanian dissidents in the United States who were related to people in Romania. After a while, whenever a dissident was beat up or somehow or another incident took place up in Transylvania, they would be on the telephone to their cousin who was now living in Cleveland, Ohio, who was then on the telephone to their congressman,

who was then on the telephone to the Department of State, who then sent a rocket out to Embassy Bucharest to have a look into it.

So we were involved in those kind of cases trying to do what we could for people- a job owning the government. There were some particular cases of priests... [There was the case of] one priest I remember, Father Coucher, who was in jail all the time I was there - in which we would make representations every now and again to the foreign ministry, you know, for our desire to see him freed. One of my colleagues went to see Mrs. Cuchue. The American diplomat was a lady and was detained for 45 minutes or an hour by the police authorities. This was regarded as great provocation. She had the kind of human rights portfolio and so after a while some of the dissidents would cut out the middle man and call her directly from the States when they were informed of this.

So the ambassador was actually called in by the foreign minister to complain about the tenor of these conversations of which they said they had the tapes. She wasn't furthering a Romanian-American relations. Well, we did what we could for dissidents. It was basically an oppressive state, which I should say, didn't allow dissidents. Obviously, it allowed a little bit. But it wasn't going to change its character fundamentally. We could only kind of nibble away on the margins. We tried our best to do that.

The country was very poor, and the economy was ill-run. They had a lot of these big, kind of dinosaur industrial projects that produced goods at a tremendous number of man hours compared to the West and polluted everything around. Just a very poor country. You kind of wondered why the people took it, the political oppression and the economic stagnation. But they did all the time I was there. Obviously in 1989 that changed.

All the time I was there we really thought you couldn't change things fundamentally until the Soviet Union made plain that it wouldn't back up authority, that it would allow change to take place, and that is what happened in the end. The Ceausescus were kind of strange in a way because, of all the communist countries of the world, I think, they did the most for, I shouldn't say, women at the lower levels, but women in positions of authority.

Because of Mrs. Ceausescu's influence, there were several women in the politburo which didn't happen in any other communist country. The ministers, there were women province governors - they were called "judets," and many more women than I would say is the case in the Vietnamese communist party that I followed before and certainly the Soviets in other places. But there was this odd bit of progressiveness about the regime which was kind of strange, given all of its other troglodyte tendencies.

Q: What about congressional relations during this time?

JOHNSON: We had congressional visits, and we always thought that the Congressman's motto was: "Let's spend the weekend in Bucharest," because they always seemed to be there during the weekend between the Venice-NATO parliamentarians and the Paris Air Show. We had some serious groups as well. There were a considerable amount of congressional visits. The

Romanians were always very professional at taking care of them. Every congressional visitor saw President Ceausescu whether he wanted to or not.

We had one group that obviously just wanted a quiet weekend, and we said, "They really don't want to bother the President." The Romanians said that if they don't see the President, then everybody will think that that is a political statement, so they have to see the President. So they dutifully did. With Congress, obviously, there were individual human rights questions that came up.

The biggest question usually was over the treatment of the Hungarian minority. Congressman Lantos, who actually is a Hungarian in Congress, was always active. The Romanians would always complain about that. I would tell them that Romanian-American [involvement] there might be a counter tide but it never was. Questions of their treatment of the Hungarian minority came up a lot with congressional interest.

There was also the question of renewing the most favored nation trade status which the Romanians had. Some of the Congressmen grumbled each time. At least during the time I was there, it was always renewed. I think two-way trade was about a billion dollars, which was a relatively significant sum at that time, and we were trying to get a contract having to do with steam turbines at the Canadian-built nuclear power station, which was going to be a very big contract. I think General Electric finally did win it. My wife was very heavily involved in that process.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you were there?

JOHNSON: Well, when I first got there it was Rudolph Agree, who was a career officer who had started at USIA and had been previous ambassador to Senegal. Then after the Reagan administration came in, our ambassador was David Thunderburke who had been in Romania as a student. I don't think a Fulbrighter but as a student - and had a little bit of Romanian. He was a backer of Senator Helms of North Carolina, and when President Reagan won the presidency, I think Senator Helms wanted a lot of his associates given positions and the one that I know who did get a position was Mr. Thunderburke in Bucharest.

Q: He was a rather controversial figure. What was your impression of him as ambassador?

JOHNSON: Well, it is difficult to say. We were there, I think, around one year with him. I always got the impression that he was very suspicious of the Foreign Service. But during the time, that I was there he had no ideas of his own. He didn't have a different analysis of what we should be doing. He saw every telegram that went out of the embassy, certainly all from my political section and even all the administrative telegrams and signed off on them. During my time there, he never changed a comma in any of the reporting we did. He didn't contribute very much to [reporting] and he never wrote anything himself.

When he was called in by the foreign ministry or had perhaps a chance encounter with somebody at an event, he certainly didn't try to keep secret from you what had happened. But it didn't seem to occur to him that he should write it up or perhaps bring you in and dictate it to you and have

you write it up. You would have to go in and see him and say, "Well you saw the prime minister and what did he have to say?" He was perfectly willing to tell you what he had to say. Then you wrote it up and sent it in. He didn't have any much policy impact.

Q: Steve, Thunderburke later wrote a book that was very critical of the embassy...

JOHNSON: "Pins, Stripes and Reds."

Q: He later ran for Congress. But from what you are saying, at least for the first year, he wasn't particularly engaged.

JOHNSON: I think that he was; he didn't know what to do really. Being an ambassador was obviously a completely new thing for him. He did fire several local employees who had apparently not shown proper respect for him years before when he was a student, one of them unfortunately a telephone operator and one of the only people who could get through the difficulties of the Romanian telephone system.

He just was suspicious. He kept firing his secretary because I think he saw that he really wasn't doing anything. He was reading. He kept busy, I guess, reading the political telegrams and all the paperwork that the administrative section produces and those kind of things. He did go to Baptist churches. He was a Baptist. That was kind of different for an American ambassador.

I might say about the Baptists in Romania that the Romanian idea of a church was that there was a chief, and then a kind of descending hierarchy, like a government hierarchy. You gave orders to that chief whose election you had approved. Then that went down to the lower ranks. Well, that of course is not how the Baptists are organized anywhere. There weren't theological problems, but there was just the fact that Baptists don't operate that way. They just kind of open their own churches. Pastor So and So was having a problem with Pastor So and So and they would split and start giving orders to the top man.

That didn't work with the Baptists. I don't think the Baptists really wanted to be the kind of leading dissidents. They were almost propelled into that role. So the ambassador's relationship with some of the Baptist churches was significant and helpful to them in showing American interest in freedom of religion. He did that, but otherwise he just didn't know what an ambassador did.

My successor as head of the political section had a different idea about Romania. The kind of conventional wisdom that I subscribed to put Ceausescu really, more or less, independent of Moscow. Obviously there were limits to what he could do, but his continuing relations with Israel, his stance on the Czechoslovakian and Afghanistan invasions and all those things was real. That is what he was doing. My successor took the view that this was all a complete sham, that whatever was done was at the behest of Moscow, that Ceausescu was just a puppet in Moscow's hands.

So the analysis changed. I think that Ambassador Thunderburke found that a much more congenial kind of analysis because I guess that meant that whatever interest we did have in

Romania for putting up with some of the grosser human rights violations of the Romanians didn't have any basis. So that kind of changed it. I wasn't involved in Romanian affairs anymore when this was going on, but it did then bring him more into conflict with the Department than during my time when he never sent in anything, and therefore I assume the Department [previously] found him rather congenial.

Q: What Romania at that time being used as a place for Israeli dissidents - Israeli Soviet Jews - to come through?

JOHNSON: They didn't do that. They went to Vienna for the most part. The Jewish question was very big, and that was one reason why we had so many congressional visitors. The Romanians - well, these are kind of crude numbers - but as I understand it, Romania had gone into the Second World War with about 800,000 Jewish people. At the end of the war, there were about 400,000. The Romanians congratulated themselves on preserving as large a number as were able to survive the war. There are some questions about the various things that happened, but part of Romania, as you may remember, under the Dictate of Vienna was hived off to Hungary in the war.

Generally speaking the Jewish people in that part of the country didn't survive as well as in the Romanian part of the country. The Jewish population had dwindled after the war. People had been allowed to emigrate. They were the one group that could emigrate. This apparently was partly motivated by payments that the Israeli government paid to the Romanian government. So the question of how many Jews left every year was always an important one. We had to do reports on that.

When I was there, the [Jewish] population had dwindled to about 30,000 and become very elderly. The community was really kind of drying up. There was only, I think, one full-time rabbi, the chief rabbi Moses Rosen. But on the other hand, because of assistance mostly from American Jews, if you were an old person in Romania it was best to be a Jew. There were nursing homes and old folks homes that were maintained by the Jewish community that, grim as they were, were leaps ahead of anything you were likely to get from the Romanian state.

There was evidence of anti-Semitism within the Romanian establishment, but on an official level they went out of their way to be correct about the Jewish people. That was one reason why the Congress would put pressure on them but never really cut them off or eliminate the most favored nation trading status. They were doing just enough in terms of Jewish emigration to keep Congress sweet. But we had major contact all the time.

The DCM was the lead fellow usually on the Jewish question. Moses Rosen, the chief rabbi, and other leaders of the Jewish community there were people that he knew very well. That was one of the problems. When we had congressional delegations managed to get there one weekend. [They found] that the rabbi during the Sabbath couldn't drive or be driven. He had to walk. You had to kind of factor that in if you were doing any event. Mr. Rosen had to get there on foot.

The Jews had been very important in rural areas up in northeast Moldova. There were villages that you could visit up there that had been historically Jewish, with synagogues and other Jewish

establishments. That was all disappearing when I was there because of emigration. I don't know what the population is now, but it looked to me at the time that another 10 years, there would be some people left in the old folk's homes but that would be about it.

Q: Were some of the nastier manifestations of the Ceausescu regime showing up while you were there? I am thinking of making families have lots of babies; also brutality of the secret police and things like that.

JOHNSON: The secret police certainly were brutal. The pro-natalist policy hadn't gotten as bad as it was later on when I think it went so far as to give women pregnancy checks every month. If you showed up positive but then later on didn't have a baby you had to explain. Obviously abortion was very important there. But they had a very strong pro-natalist policy which was having no effect on the [population]. It was so hard to be a Romanian woman - to have a job and to have to stand in the lines to get provisions to maintain yourself - that the Romanians were just not willing to have more children than two or less than two. So the government's huffing and puffing wasn't having much effect during the time I was there.

But the police were quite brutal. We had dissidents who came to the embassy and would leave and get beaten up by the police on the outside. Usually, if we anticipated that, we would try to get some sort of agreement from the police who were there that they wouldn't do that. Of course, when a fellow got home, things could happen to him. If we really had a great interest in somebody, they usually wouldn't beat him up. That was kind of a more casual thing. But bad things would happen to him - his job and his problems if he had made himself a pest to the authorities.

Q: What sort of social life did you have?

JOHNSON: Well, it was mostly sort of intra-diplomatic corps social life. There were lots of national days and dinners and things. I used to say when I was there that one of the big differences between living in Bucharest and living in Washington at that time at least, in Washington everybody always talked about real estate. In Bucharest we always talked about food, because even in our very privileged situation, organizing yourself to get food on the table was very difficult. When you went to somebody's house and they had chicken, for instance, you would always question them as to where it came from and what arrangements they had made. Some cousin lived on a farm someplace and they had done this and that or whatever it was. It was always a subject of conversation.

We had intra-diplomatic corps things. We had events to which Romanians came. The ambassador would have them. We ourselves had dinners and things where we would invite official Romanians, foreign ministry, and the like, that we would have contact with. You always had to do that well in advance because they would have to get permission. So it was very formal. You just couldn't say, "Come over and let's have dinner."

One of the problems with the whole system was that whenever you did run into somebody, say on a train or any kind of informal situation, who wanted to chat and was quite free and easy you always had in back of your mind or perhaps in the front of your mind, is this person a secret

police spy because otherwise why is this person being so friendly and open with me? So even when they weren't present, the government kind of put this barrier of suspicion between you and anybody you contacted because a normal Romanian thinking about his self-interest, after determining who it was he was encountering, should have left you alone because that was the rational thing for him to do. If they persisted, they were obviously brave or naive or a secret police spy of some sort. There was always this kind of pressure on you worrying about what is really going on here if you did encounter someone in an informal setting.

Q: You mentioned food as being such a problem when actually isn't Romania one of the most fertile areas of Europe, isn't it?

JOHNSON: It is. They produce a lot of food, which they export because it is a big foreign currency earner for them. One of the many little ironies of the Cold War was that the U.S. army in Europe bought mainly pork in Romania. There were two, I guess, enlisted veterinary technicians - those who were out in two different provincial towns who were inspectors of this pork and ham and stuff that they bought. It was kind of strange because we, the embassy, were never able to get into that. We would basically have to get from the consulate commissary in Frankfurt the same ham that was produced 50 miles outside of town. That was going on all the time.

It was not all beer and skittles being one of these veterinary technicians because the Romanian slaughterhouses apparently left a lot to [desire]. I never visited, but [they] apparently left a lot to be desired. But these were the best in the country. They would slip from whatever standard the army had established from time to time. But when that happened and our inspectors refused shipments, that was a disaster for the slaughterhouse. So threats and other means of inducements were laid on these fellows who were out there. I mean, you really were alone if you were living in one of those provincial Romanian towns at the time. It was a difficult, difficult job for them.

SAMUEL E. FRY, JR.
Deputy Chief of Mission
Bucharest (1981-1983)

Samuel E. Fry, Jr. was born in December 1934 and raised in Illinois, New York, and Massachusetts. He received a bachelor's degree from Dartmouth College in 1956 and then attended the University of Edinburgh on a Dartmouth fellowship. While attending Edinburgh, Mr. Fry was drafted into the U.S. military. Upon completion of his military service, he received a master's degree from the University of Massachusetts. He entered the Foreign Service in 1961. Mr. Fry's career included positions in Moscow, Oslo, Helsinki, and Bucharest. This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy on January 26, 1993.

Q: You left Finland in 1981 and you went to Bucharest which was in a way, somewhat the same Soviet border situation, but in a way a whole different scene.

FRY: That's right. In the Foreign Service I started out on the Iron Curtain in Trieste. In the army I was on the Czech border with an atomic canon. If I wasn't in the Soviet Union I was on its borders. I was told that the Department was interested in someone with an Eastern-European background to interview with a political appointee, David Funderburk from North Carolina. He was highly touted by the conservatives not only as a conservative, because he had worked briefly in Romania as a USIA guide. Senator Jesse Helms supported him. He was Helms' candidate for Romania.

I interviewed with him to be DCM. Basically, he said; "Do you have any feeling about political appointee ambassadors?" And I said; "I've worked under political appointee ambassadors. It is not a question of dealing with political appointees or career officers, you deal with the Chief of Mission." I said; "I feel that way very strongly." The regulations notwithstanding about being an alter ego, you fit into the ambassador's game plan in so far as it's consonant with US policy and the ambassador's instructions. So I said that wouldn't be a problem for me. I said; "I don't speak Romanian, I speak Italian and Russian," and they tell me Romanian is a blend between the two of them. I don't really believe that about any language, but I thought I could learn it. Funderburk spoke Romanian. He had been there as a USIA guide years before and his Ph.D. was on some aspect of the Romanian/British relations in the 19th century. Anyway, he picked me. I did have some Romanian language training to get a start on how the language was constructed. I already read about Romania quite a bit, I mean I knew a lot about the Eastern European countries. I went to Bucharest in October 1981, and was there until selected for the Senior Seminar in 1983. So I was there just under two years.

Q: We have taken Funderburk's oral history. He's now a congressman.

FRY: Yes, he was elected in the 1994 conservative sweep into Congress.

Q: He came out more than almost any other political appointee as someone extremely suspicious of the Foreign Service, at least this is my impression, and somebody who felt essentially that our policy towards Romania was too lenient. He didn't agree with what our policy was. That's what I gather.

FRY: You gather correctly. He had three positions: first, he believed that the US policy for Romania was the State Department's position, not the President's and that the brainwashing of President after President to approve the "most favored nation" status for Romania was tantamount to treason. We were propping up a dictator, we were causing suffering in Romania, and we had no business doing this. We ought to put our cards on the table and tell the world what Romania was and stop all this nonsense about Nicolae Ceausescu being the first communist to recognize West Germany, the only communist leader to have relations with Israel, and so on. You could make a list of 30 or 40 things, some of which I'll mention later, things that they had done to appear maverick in the Soviet system. Funderburk violently disagreed with that analysis.

His was not a unique position incidentally, a lot of people felt this way. Also, he believed that a conservative in government, no matter who appointed him, would always be under suspicion by the system. He had deep and grave reservations about the State Department system; just the State Department as the State Department it didn't matter who was running it, whether it was Secretary

George Shultz or anybody else. He was very paranoid about whether people were going behind his back, were embassy officers going behind his back to try to do things. In my naivete I tried to explain that that's not the way embassies work. I mean, embassy officers like myself do not send telegrams that the ambassador doesn't see. He was not the representative from the State Department, as he had learned in his preparation course. He was the representative of the President. At any time, day or night, that he wanted to talk to the President of the United States - I mean in theory - although smart ambassadors wouldn't do that more than once, he could go to the President. He could certainly send in a first-person message and slug it through the White House and info Secretary Shultz or whatever.

As I said, the idea that you're surrounded by hostile people, and so on, I don't think holds water, but then again I didn't realize how deeply paranoid he was. I also didn't realize what a true dyed-in-the-wool deep religious, far right conservative is all about. I subsequently have learned in American politics what that's all about and so have a lot of Americans. The book which emerged from his stay in Bucharest, as we all knew was being written, was called: "Between the Pinstripes and the Communists". That shows you that we were equally balanced as far as Funderburk was concerned. I considered that that was the kind of mentality a strongly narcissistic personality would develop, in which only your position is right and every one else is seen as an enemy - whether an enemy or a hit list of Nixon or whatever.

Ambassador Funderburk really disliked Nixon. When Nixon came to Romania he even left the country. I took the Nixon visit and had dinner with Nixon and Ceausescu. Funderburk would not be seen with Nixon and Ceausescu. The reason, of course, was that all of this time he was planning to run for high office and he did not want photographs appearing later on of a Funderburk sitting with Ceausescu and Nixon. This would have been death to his position and that's why he actually left Romania when Nixon came. He played his cards that way all the way through his term. On his tour there everything was geared to what would eventually be grist for the book, prior to his run for Congress.

When he did leave Romania, the first thing he did was to hold a press conference in Vienna which bashed US policy before he even got back to the United States. That was all played up in the press. After he left the State Department he subsequently ran for US Senator in North Carolina and was trounced. FSOs like Larry Eagleburger said; "This isn't the kind of man you want as your senator" - I don't know but it is what he says in his book - how much they did say I don't know. I didn't pay any attention to his campaign and was not involved either way. In fact, I was still in the Foreign Service and when I was called up by reporters about his campaign, I said that there's one thing that I hold sacred in the Foreign Service. That is the relationship between the Deputy Chief of Mission, who had served as Charge on frequent occasions, and an ambassador - while either one is still in the Service. This relationship should be inviolate, and I would not break any confidences for whatever reason. And that was the end of that, I never made any comments on his politics.

But going back to Romania, it's interesting that in Funderburk's book, all of the bad guys are in Washington. He was fairly balanced with his staff and the staff comes in for no derogatory mention whatsoever in any way in the book. I think this was because it would have been a little untoward for the people who were drafting your messages or were giving you the information

that you wanted to do messages to be pilloried. Near the end of my tour, the Romanians instituted a penalty for leaving Romania. I won't go into the whole Romanian visa story, which is an oral history in itself -- Romanians selling people to go to Israel, and selling people to go to the United States, and selling people to go to Germany, which is the whole thread of how Ceausescu treated his people. He had a special tax on emigrants with an education. If they were getting an American visa, they would have to pay \$25,000 in dollars, which means the American people who were sponsoring these people would have to ransom them out. We, at the embassy, went crazy over this and said to the Department; this is a time to really come out against this policy. The State Department didn't see it that way. Larry Eagleburger came out and tried to smooth things over. Ceausescu never really gave in. What happened was that he sort of said; "We won't enforce it yet" and until he was shot it was still on the books but it wasn't enforced. In the end, we got what we wanted, and he got what he wanted and it worked out, but it was pretty bloody in the meantime, because the embassy was then seen as being sort of hyperbolic about the State Department's position.

In the end what the American business community wanted and what Congress seemed to want was, in the absence of any horror stories beyond which we were dredging up, that Romania would continue to get MFN. When Ambassador Funderburk went to DC and they were talking about this around the table -- well he told me this himself and Larry Eagleburger mentioned it later and Shultz's staff aide told me later -- they all went around how they were going to go and how they were going to present this to the President. Eagleburger gave a note to Funderburk which said; "Do you agree with this? Do you want to make a dissent?" Funderburk said, in fact; "Yes, OKAY, I'm not going to make waves."

Later he would say, "What could I do against this juggernaut;" what could he do as one man fighting the pinstripes while being squashed by the communists. But he never, in all of his time in Romania, ever sent a first-person message, never sent any message to the State Department which explicitly said; "You must not under any circumstances continue MFN. He went to Washington as ambassador and managed to have a meeting with the President which was arranged by Faith Whittlesey, another right-winger and later ambassador to Switzerland.

Q: This is Ronald Reagan?

FRY: Yes, a meeting with President Ronald Reagan. Jim Baker and Ed Meese were there. What he said in effect was; "Mr. President, you don't know what's happening out in Romania. The State Department is keeping it from you," and so on. Meese and Baker were absolutely astonished as I later learned since they didn't know what the meeting was about Funderburk had just said he wanted to meet with the President. Shultz was not invited, nor had Funderburk told Shultz or anybody in the State Department that he was going to do this.

When Shultz heard about it from Baker, Funderburk had just gone back to North Carolina. Shultz brought him back immediately to Washington. In Funderburk's book he wears this as a badge of honor that he was brought back and put on the carpet. He was the only person who would stand up for what was right and honorable in foreign policy as it dealt with Eastern Europe and with Romania. Shultz just saw it as a complete stab in the back and betrayal according to what his aides later told me, because he simply said; "If anyone has ever been open

to any position it has been myself, anyone can come to me, any ambassador. They have said we are not doing it right we ought to change it. Funderburk never came to me, never even sent me a message saying that he was concerned." So that's the relationship. There were times when I felt that he was very unfair with members of the embassy.

For example, the incident with the son of Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson, who had one of the longer and most distinguished diplomatic careers. His son, Steve, was a political officer. As Steve and his wife were leaving the post, in the final staff meeting in the secure room, as we were saying goodbye, Ambassador Funderburk said something to the effect of: "Well, all I can see since I have been here is that you appear to be working for Securitate," that is the Romanian Service. "In presentations you've tried to do the Romanians favors," and things like that. I had never before or since heard of a chief of mission make such a statement in public to a subordinate.

I would do a telegram based on a meeting with Grand Rabbi Moishe Rosen, who would pass me a written note to avoid electronic surveillance. The Grand Rabbi was not a person that Funderburk trusted or liked--and I would have to tell you that it was reciprocated, although not publicly. The Jewish Romanian leadership worked with the Israelis and with the Romanians to get more Jews out of Romania to Israel. Funderburk thought Rosen was a fraud. Anyway, if I came back and sent a telegram that said I was called in by the Grand Rabbi and this is what he said, and then I put our twist on it at the end that would be in the comment, so whatever the comment was. I would say to Funderburk this is what I would suggest as a comment--"It's a self-serving statement and he's coming to the States and he's getting ready to go, you know, it's the usual from the Chief Rabbi of Romania." But Funderburk might say; "Yes, but you really believe him don't you, he's really convinced you hasn't he." In other words, I was sucked in by his propaganda in my reporting and I really felt that we should be nice to the Romanians because they were good people. Funderburk never understood that when you report exactly what the other side says, as a matter of historical record, that you were not promoting their position. He was an historian who did not want verbatim history reported.

I never felt that way at all. I carried out American policy. When Secretary Alexander Haig wanted to come to Romania he said in a message; "Tell me why I can come" so we did. Funderburk was dying a thousand deaths, because he didn't want Haig to come but he approved all of the messages. I said; "Well, look he wants to come here, he wants to be a Secretary of State who's going into a communist country, why don't we use it for our advantage? If we are going to say no, you, the Ambassador must put in a first-person-message. The post can't say that the embassy feels it would not be a good thing." You can't do that with a Secretary. You've got to be the ambassador saying no. He wasn't willing to do that. I said; "Why don't we put a spin on it? Tell the Romanians that Haig is completing a long trip--three countries--he's coming from Morocco and several other places and will hold a press conference for the western press and anybody who wants to come. He is going to answer any questions he wants the way he wants to do it whether it's about Romania or not. He's going to have a western-style press conference." That is exactly what happened and what Haig did. I can't remember now about remarks concerning Romania, but in any case he had a full western-style press conference. Frank Carlucci, who was then the Deputy Defense Secretary came to Romania and Eagleburger came.

After I left George Bush came as Vice-President--I don't know what all the circumstances were on that, but Funderburk decided to leave and come back to the United States, where he set up his pins by having a press conference in Vienna.

I had cordial personal relations with him, certainly with Mrs. Funderburk and the family, and I worked very, very hard. My performance reports were okay and, as a family, they always treated me well. But I know he didn't trust me, and that's where I more or less left it when I left.

Q: How did you view and maybe talk about the embassy aside from the ambassador? What was your view Romania in this 1981-'83 period, Ceausescu and all?

FRY: I believed that Ceausescu had gotten away with one of the greatest Cold War ploys, which was appearing one way to the West and yet maintaining in his own country probably the worst cult of personality dictatorship and abusive human rights that had existed since Stalin. He was a master at juggling this. He had stood up to the Soviet Union in the Warsaw Pact invasion of Prague, which was his great strength in the West. That is the reason that President Richard Nixon visited Romania in 1969. Nixon wanted to be the first president to visit a communist country. He thought it would aid in a split ala Yugoslav-style in the 50's, to sort of reward Ceausescu for not being in the group that invaded in the "Prague spring." That gave Ceausescu a lot of ideas on what he could get away with.

Of course everybody knew, I mean who worked with Romania, that the conditions the country itself lived in, and the cult of personality, was just so out of control that it evened out Stalined, Stalin. Everything in the paper was Ceausescu. It was almost sickening to live there and have to see this. I refused to stand up at a meeting, which wasn't a government one - Ceausescu wasn't there as President, but communist party head - and the Chief of Protocol came over and told me I better well start standing up and down as the audience jumped up and down. I said; "I'm sorry I was invited as a representative of the United States to see this Communist Party meeting, it is not a meeting of the government to which I'm accredited." And that was that. That was about my only public display.

Other times I had to shake hands or something like that. But on the other hand, what were you going to do? What were the alternatives? We were getting two to three thousand Romanians a year who were joining families in the United States. 11,000 were going to Germany. 3 or 4,000 a year were going to Israel, and others were emigrating, although it was very hard for them to do so. There was a semblance of a USIA exchange program, that we didn't have with other communist countries. Were we to simply stop diplomatic relations? In which case what would be the grounds; that cult of personality? What do you do then about the Congo? What do you do about Nicaragua? Talk about cult of personalities and things like that! I'm not comparing the social systems obviously, but I mean if you're talking about not liking the head of state or the governor... So the point was how do you juggle it?

For most of the businessmen, when the crunch came for deciding about MFN treatment, there was a point where we had a billion dollar trade with Romania heavily in our favor to the tune of some \$600 million balance of payments in favor of the United States. For these businessmen and for our agricultural surpluses, things were flowing to Romania. We had our NATO ship visits

through the Bosphorus every year. Destroyers would play radar tag with the Russian navy and drive the Russians bananas in the Black Sea. We did have a window on the Warsaw Pact from a Warsaw Pact country that wasn't participating in Warsaw Pact maneuvers. Any change in that, any blip on the radar screen, would show how Romania was actually dealing. We did find some things where they said they weren't helping the Russians at all in the Warsaw Pact, but may have been in small ways, not in major ways. Their command and control for air defense remained in Warsaw Pact control. So, there were a lot of variables and like anything in diplomacy, perhaps in life, but certainly in international affairs, it wasn't all black and white. Day in day out we went with lists of why is this person in jail, why can't he leave? We were just insistent. They finally would get very annoyed at us at the Foreign Ministry even though they were more or less all on our side. There are guys who - after Ceausescu was shot - came right to the fore and ran things at the ministry.

Romania is a very complex country that never had democracy. Anyway, it wasn't a matter that if we snubbed Ceausescu some good guy would show up. I mean, he was going to stay until he got a bullet; that was pretty clear and probably his son would come in then. No it wasn't a hard one to call the shots unless you were willing to say no most favored nation treatment. Near the end, Ceausescu said; "I don't need your MFN". And when it finally went away he said; "I can do without it, you can't use that as anything against me". And that's exactly what happened. So other than MFN, what would have been your leverage to stop them? Stop reuniting the families, stop agricultural trade, stop the naval visits? We had to swallow a very, very bad dictator, who was very cruel to his people and caused a lot of suffering and hardship. But have we done that in the interest of peace somewhere else? I think we have, often.

Q: Did you ever have this type of conversation with Funderburk?

FRY: Oh Yes, we talked about... I mean he was a guy of heavy mood swings and there were times when he said; "yes I understand" or something but he didn't really. He wanted to be where he is today. He wanted to be in the Senate or the House of Representatives. He had a plan and he was going to write that book and so on. So, full credit. He has managed to ride the wave right to where he wanted. When he came out he used all his pull with Romanian groups all around the country. And human rights groups. He's got awards -- bushel baskets full. He played his cards exactly as he wanted and he's got what he wants. So, that's what Americans do, that's the way successful careers are made, regardless of a person's real inner qualities.

Q: What about the staff? I mean part of the thing with the embassy is the DCM is not only the "alter ego" of the ambassador, but when you have an ambassador who obviously is not willing to go along with the Foreign Service professionally, you would have the other role of trying to keep up the morale and all without undercutting the ambassador.

FRY: Well, yes I see what you're saying and it didn't work, because it wasn't that kind of a relationship. He had three secretaries while I was there, including one that was non-career who was sent out by Senator Jesse Helms. He felt they were all betraying him and that they were all undercutting him and stealing his secrets. He couldn't hold a secretary there. He didn't like some people in the embassy and when they left, as I mentioned, he said; "'Well good riddance.'" On the other hand there were people in the embassy he did like, who were very fine officers and

good analysts. The business of trying to soften his cruel remarks, I never did and never would consider. If someone had been hurt by his comments or something, I would not say "Well I'm sure he really didn't mean it". I never said it. I thought to myself, "what the ambassador says to people is the ambassador's business and I'm not going to fuzz it or do anything else." I didn't talk to people like that and so that was my style.

He was not liked by the diplomatic community for a lot of reasons. He didn't like them and considered their dislike a badge of honor. He didn't like the German ambassador so he snubbed him at a big evening. The German ambassador came to me and said, "What's going on in your embassy?" He didn't like to go to the NATO meetings at the other embassies or have it at ours and they didn't think they got a very good briefing from him. So when I went they would say things like, "oh boy now we have a professional!" I would tell them, "I will not accept that comment, I do not appreciate it and I do not like my ambassador thought of in those terms" and I meant it very sincerely. I didn't want to say; "Yes isn't it a horrible life" or something, because it wasn't. I felt they were wrong in making an allusion like that. I told the German ambassador and I told the Italian ambassador on occasion and several others that if they thought that they could talk about an ambassador that I was working for, about him behind his back to me, they were dead wrong. That's the way I played it, and no one could ever deny that I can tell you.

Q: What was morale like at the embassy?

FRY: Well I think the morale--I mean it was a difficult post in the sense of very little Romanian cooperation on everyday requests. But I don't think the ambassador hurt morale. He may have intellectually for some people, but not for everybody if you think of the embassy as a whole. He was behind us building a lunchroom and an after-hours place. He had movies every Saturday night and he invited as many Romanians as he could. He cultivated a lot of Romanians and got them together with our people. He used the residence very, very well. He constantly tried to get marginal shades of Romanians in. He had huge 4th of July receptions and invited dissidents. He went up country and talked to priests. He went to churches and he used to report on the Baptists. He was doing some positive things. Don't get the idea that he was sitting back because he didn't like the policy. He was pursuing his own policy in the sense of having as much outreach as he could.

Q: How did the timing work out? Was he still there when you went to the Senior Seminar?

FRY: Oh yes. I would have probably left--the DCM assignments in Eastern Europe generally were two years, the ambassadorial assignments weren't much more than that. I believe that he stayed until early 1985. Frank Corey, a fine officer, good analyst and good communist scholar, who had been head of the political section, was made DCM. The ambassador didn't want to bring in a new person. So Frank moved up, and a person came in for the political section and that worked out fine. They had a good relationship. Funderburk's views never changed on the State Department and I'm sure they never will. He was fixed on that from the time that he was a USIA guide. There was a story told, later documented, that when he was a USIA guide in Romania he complained to his congressman even then about embassy treatment. He felt he wasn't getting a fair shot from the embassy. I think David Funderburk, with all the qualities he had, including

some things I liked about him, had it in for the State Department and nothing and no one ever would have changed that.

DAVID E. FUNDERBURK
Ambassador
Romania (1981-1985)

Ambassador Funderburk was born at Langley Field, Virginia and raised in North Carolina. After receiving degrees from Wake Forest University and the University of North Carolina he taught at several Universities in the US. In 1961 he was appointed US Ambassador to Romania, where he served until 1965. He later became active in Republican Party politics and was elected to Congress in 1994. Ambassador Funderburk was interviewed by Dr. Henry E. Mattox in 1989.

Q: You make that point abundantly clear in your book, which is interesting reading. I'm trying to get to your mind set in 1981, when you first went out. Did you see it then, the need to get tougher with Romania as a number-one policy issue that faced you upon arrival at post?

FUNDERBURK: Well, I wouldn't say I saw it the first day, but I would certainly say that as time went along, in the post, evidence increased, through intelligence and every means of collection, that showed how bad the situation was becoming. Not only that, but how bad the people were in terms of food availability, in terms of housing conditions, in terms of heating and so forth. But it wasn't something that just, "bang!" slapped me the moment I got off the airplane. I had been there before. I had heard from other people. I had seen how some families lived. And I knew that things were getting worse and worse and worse. But in terms of there being any hope that we might be able to reason with this individual in charge of Romania, or with the leadership there, this we tried. I tried everything that I could through the system, initially.

Q: Is it not the fact--I'm just saying this for argument sake anyway--is it not the fact that the human rights situation was poor and the morale of the people was bad, more a reflection of the system there and in other various and sundry other countries than any particular repressive policies of the moment on the part of Ceausescu?

FUNDERBURK: No. I think it was really due to a deliberate, planned policy of the Ceausescu clan to totally control and dominate and make the people in that country totally dependent, let's say, on the state itself, totally dependent on Ceausescu. Ceausescu came to consider himself as a God, in effect, in the eyes of the people, in his own eyes. He really thought that he was. He thinks that he is. And so he felt the people were not working hard enough. They weren't producing enough. They were getting paid too much. They had too much, even though they were getting worse and worse off. Because he was thinking, in his mind, of the '30s and the hard times that he had, let's say, whatever they were. So it was a plan for him to industrialize Romania in Stalinistic fashion, to bring about heavy industry there, regardless of what he had, these big elephantine projects that are really anachronistic. You know, a hydroelectric plant that's not productive, a canal that takes twenty years to build that's not going to have any business on it

when it gets completed. These type of grandiose projects were things that he had designed for greatness for Romania, so he would be the Tito of the Balkans, the great statesman worldwide. And he considered himself to be--and this was his little fiefdom, the people in Romania. They wanted to breed these people so there would be more people for factories and cannon fodder for the military. And the atmosphere became one of total fear, intimidation, paranoia among the population. Everybody believed, whether it was true or not, they were convinced that every third person worked for the Secret Police. Everybody looked over their shoulders. Everybody lived a lie. Everyone had two faces, one for the public and one for one or two trusted friends in private. This was an atmosphere that, after a while, just became heavier and heavier, more depressing, to the point that mentally and psychologically and spiritually people were basically just beaten into submission, and felt that they had given up everything that was real as a part of their humanity. And that, as I state in the book, that they had to sell their soul, in effect, in order to survive physically. Just to get a crumb of bread, just to be able to survive, they had to kiss people throughout society and bribe and cheat and steal as a way of life. And this is what, not only the system in place--and I would argue that that's a major factor--and the communist system, in my view, does this everywhere, even in the most advanced and reformed areas such as Poland.

Q: As we can see this illustrated by the movement toward reform.

FUNDERBURK: Right. So the system is certainly an element in it. There's no question about it. It's just that Ceausescu was, in my view, a logical result of the worst that can happen in that system. In other words, the Kim Il-Sungs, the Pol Pots, the Stalins, and the Ceausescu are in a similar bag of extremes that can very logically happen in a communist system, but not necessarily in some other systems. They happen in a system where the party has virtually total control through means of a secret police and the military. And so it was something that the man's own insanity and paranoia and ego contributed to distorting, I would say.

Q: Give me, and give the scholar who may be reading these words some day a word picture of Ceausescu, the man.

FUNDERBURK: Well, the man who thinks that he's God doesn't want to hear criticism. So an American official, Secretary of State, Vice President, whoever, comes over and visits Ceausescu, they are being advised by the State Department, obviously, to bring good news to this man and to congratulate this man and praise him, because that's what he wants to hear. No one wants to be the bearer of ill will or bad tidings to Nicolae Ceausescu, because if you are, if you even try to subtly slip in some criticism of this guy and the way he's running his fiefdom, he goes virtually berserk right before your eyes.

Q: Give me an example. I mean give me an instance. You've been in his presence any number of times. Give me an instance of when he goes off the deep end.

FUNDERBURK: Well, I would say where you have a, let's say, an Alexander Haig as Secretary of State, who is meeting with Ceausescu, and he tries to slip in there that, "Look, we're different. We have to deal with the US Congress who reflect the views of the people. They're concerned about human rights, religion, things like this. So if they see that these things are happening over here, you know, you could do better and you could help your case, get more money, more trade,

more favored treatment and so forth if you play the game right. In other words, if you lay off on these things, and you show a better projection of your human rights treatment." Ceausescu takes this personally, and offensively.

Q: In the meeting that you had, you and Haig and Ceausescu, who else was there? That was in '81? '82?

FUNDERBURK: '82, right.

Q: Who else was there?

FUNDERBURK: Well, probably the DCM from the embassy and whoever was in Al Haig's entourage.

Q: Well, all right. How many were there then?

FUNDERBURK: I would say there were about six people, probably.

Q: Okay.

FUNDERBURK: Although we had a luncheon, at which there were a similar number. There was Ceausescu and Al Haig and myself, and with him probably the Vice President of Romania. Their Foreign Minister was there.

Q: Was the conversation in Romanian or English?

FUNDERBURK: The conversations were in both languages.

Q: Did you use professional translators, interpreters?

FUNDERBURK: The Romanians provided the translators, that's right.

Q: But you were able to check on the translation?

FUNDERBURK: Right. That's right.

Q: Anybody else on the staff speak Romanian fluently?

FUNDERBURK: Most people on our staff who had been there for a while had made an effort to try to learn the language. So they knew something of the language.

Q: Well, a little knowledge can be very dangerous. Were there other members of the staff who spoke it fluently enough to be relied on to check a translation of something extremely important of that sort?

FUNDERBURK: From time to time we would have someone whose skills were sufficient to be able to check this. You know, either from the political or USIS branch of the embassy. Let's say, particularly there because they would stay longer than most people. And I would point out that in a conversation like this, where something was said that was of slightly a critical nature of Ceausescu, or suggesting improvement, that often the Romanian translator, interpreter, would leave out this part. That was very obvious to us. [laughter]

Q: Did you point this out at the time, when sitting there?

FUNDERBURK: No, I didn't.

Q: No, of course, it wouldn't be diplomatic courtesy.

FUNDERBURK: It wouldn't be, no. [chuckles]

Q: When you were sitting there with Haig and Ceausescu, and he became very annoyed at what Haig was saying, assuming the translator gave him, at least, some of it . . .

FUNDERBURK: Right.

Q: How did he react exactly?

FUNDERBURK: He reacted by stuttering and clicking his teeth, and by flailing his arms around, basically Nixon-like gestures.

Q: Do you mean he became obviously angry?

FUNDERBURK: Right. Obviously, overtly angry and animated, turning red, let's say. If he did such a thing I can't recall, but certainly he would turn red with anger.

Q: We all know what his picture looks like, but how tall a fellow is he? What kind of physical impression did he make on you?

FUNDERBURK: He makes the impression of a very ordinary person, very short. Probably, I noticed a picture of him yesterday, as a matter of fact, with the other Warsaw Pact leaders. He was the shortest of them. He's probably 5'5", or something like that. Perhaps as a Napoleonic complex, because of how short he is. So he's very ordinary in that sense, probably even bordering on ugly, I think I've described him. A very stern face, very serious demeanor. Otherwise, nothing really very distinctive about him, except his mannerisms, I would say, in terms of him in the population.

Q: Well, there must be something there, though. He's shrewd? Intelligent? What?

FUNDERBURK: Oh, there are a lot of characteristics that certainly led to him being in the position he's been in. I mean, he was one of the, probably, 400 native, indigenous communists of the Communist Party in Romania prior to World War II. When there were almost no communists

of Romanian origin in Romania, he was one of the handful. He was also very astute in terms of grabbing and maintaining power, which is something communists excel at. They go through a process of purges and killing off enemies or opposition within the party, and then by the time they've made it to the top leadership, they're in pretty good shape for wielding power and manipulating people. And there's no question that Ceausescu instills fear in people. He is shrewd. He is intelligent in a lot of ways. He is a power monger, and one who certainly knows how to, I would say, psychologically punch the buttons of people that he is dealing with and talking with. He does, or at least his aides, do their research in terms of whoever they're dealing with, far greater than I think our people do. So that when he's sitting down with Al Haig, he knows far more about Al Haig than Haig knows about him. He knows what button to push to get the support or the sympathy or empathy of Al Haig. And so in this sense, he's very shrewd, very astute. He also kind of has--the Romanians laugh at him on the one hand. They're very fearful. They're very intimidated. But at the same time, they say, "Well, he's a graduate of the third grade. He's virtually illiterate. He's stutters when he speaks. He can't pronounce Romanian properly." And so they kind of laugh behind his back about this. But at the same time he's overcome whatever problems he had in that regard, in terms of his ability to maintain power. Maybe because of his background, he's always been anti-intellectual. And so he's purged and been very tough on the cultural element and the intellectual people inside Romania.

Q: Does he have public speaking ability?

FUNDERBURK: I would say that it's very poor. And I think most Romanians would say that. Now, a communist leader doesn't really have to have public speaking ability. I mean, maybe Castro has the ability to sway people through the power of his speech. Ceausescu does not have this ability, a Stalin's ability, a Lenin's ability, or a Castro's. Ceausescu doesn't have it at all, to really influence or persuade anyone just on the basis of the power and charisma of what he has to say and what he projects; not at all. It's more a cynical resentment, a seething resentment on the part of the people when they hear him speak. And they kind of laugh, mockingly, I would say. Having said that, there still seems to be a measure of force and power in what the guy says.

Q: On the radio or on television?

FUNDERBURK: Right. Right. I mean, you know that he's the authority. And so, let's say, he speaks with authority, even if he doesn't speak correctly, you know, to the satisfaction of everybody.

Q: What language does he speak if he doesn't pronounce Romanian correctly?

FUNDERBURK: [chuckles] Well, they would probably say gypsy, but this is what the Romanians say, generally, in terms of how they denigrate in society, and they look down on gypsies, and they would say a corrupted form of Romanian. He doesn't speak any other languages well, that anyone knows of, except Russian. And he, apparently, learned some Russian during two years of working with the KGB inside the Soviet Union, which he has tried to hide, or obscure, you know, through history. So there are a few blank spots in earlier history that, at least for public consumption, no one knows where the guy was. Our records show that he was inside the Soviet Union.

Q: What two years were those?

FUNDERBURK: I'm not sure the exact years, but I think they were in the . . .

Q: During the "40s?

FUNDERBURK: Late "40s, under the post-war communist rulers there. I would say '49 to '51, but I'm not exactly sure.

Q: Now, of course, an ambassador abroad often deals more with the Foreign Minister than he will with the head of state. Who was the Foreign Minister there with whom you had most contact? Who was Foreign Minister while you were there?

FUNDERBURK: Stefan Andrei was the Foreign Minister during virtually all the time that I was there. And he was a younger man than Ceausescu. He was a ladies man. He was a guy who, much more obviously than most, would dare inside of communist Romania, who like to flaunt and flash Western trappings of capitalism, such as, you know, let's say a Rolex-type watch, or rings or diamond-studded cigarette lighters, this type of thing. In Romania, tobacco was king. Kent cigarettes is currency. And he always had some fancy cigarettes and fancy cases and cigarette lighters and so forth, bracelets and other type things. He had a very young wife, as well, who was an actress, who wore low-cut dresses, very well endowed. And this made Ceausescu's wife very unhappy because she was envious. She wanted to be the queen of Romania, Elena Ceausescu, and she didn't want competition from this other broad, Mrs. Andrei.

Q: A N D R E I?

FUNDERBURK: Right.

Q: Yes.

FUNDERBURK: And Andrei was very, I would say, far more intelligent, far more sophisticated, in terms of dealing with the West and Western types, than Ceausescu himself.

Q: Had he served abroad?

FUNDERBURK: I don't think so. I mean, it's a possibility.

Q: Had he come up through the Foreign Office?

FUNDERBURK: Right.

Q: So he had served some pledgeships somewhere or another?

FUNDERBURK: Right. And he knew, I think if memory serves me correctly, Andrei knew French pretty well, which is rather common for the educated elite in Bucharest.

Q: Is it true what I've always heard, that Romanian is fairly close to French?

FUNDERBURK: Right. It is. It does have a similarity. The Romanian people have considered themselves Francophiles, and Bucharest has been considered the Paris of the Balkans, Paris of the East. The boulevards in Bucharest are patterned after Paris. There is Arc de Triumph in Bucharest that looks like the one in Paris. People, especially 19th Century and into the 20th Century pre-war generation of intellectuals in Romania, all spoke French.

Q: No. I meant the two languages.

FUNDERBURK: Right. The two languages have quite a similarity. I was leading to that, in part, because the Romanians actually took, lock, stock and barrel, a lot of words right out of French and just stuck them in the Romanian language. But the Romanian language is Latin-based. But it's kind of a Romanized Latin, they say, from the Roman colonists, who were in Dacia, there right after the 200s. So that there are some Slavic words in the language, maybe up to 25% percent, but it's a Latin language that is spoken more like Italian, but if you're reading it, it has quite a bit in common with French. So you're absolutely right.

Q: Well, Andrei, the Foreign Minister, was he a useful contact? Was he an efficient contact? Could you get things done through him when you were instructed to do so by the Department?

FUNDERBURK: Well, that's a very good question. You could to some degree. I think there were actually other people in the Foreign Ministry who were more helpful than Andrei, because you didn't normally get Andrei with a minor problem. You only went to him with something very major. He was afraid to do anything that would veer off the reservation from his boss, his mentor, Ceausescu. So in this sense, no real favors from Andrei other than words, but no deeds. So it would be underlings under him in the North American Bureau of the Foreign Ministry there who would be more amenable to everyday discussions with us about a human rights case, an immigration case, a problem irritant in the relationship.

Q: How did you decide who you were going to send from the embassy to call on the Foreign Ministry or whether you were going to call on someone in the Foreign Ministry yourself? Did you decide simply on ad hoc basis, or did you have a set of issues that you delegated to somebody else? How did you work that in your embassy?

FUNDERBURK: We normally took the DCM. That is, I would go to the Foreign Ministry for a major issue with the DCM because the DCM had been a political officer, and he had also been a political officer in Romania. So that this made him the ideal, logical person there. On occasion, in his absence, or even when he was there, a top political officer would go. Or if the issue was simply trade-related, then a top economic officer would go. But ordinarily, it would be the DCM or the chief political officer.

Q: Who was your DCM?

FUNDERBURK: Frank Corry. Actually, there were two. Sam Frye was there initially. And then Frank Corry, for most of the time.

Q: What kind of problem would you delegate yourself to go to the Foreign Ministry?

FUNDERBURK: You mean to see the Foreign Minister or just to see anybody?

Q: To the Foreign Ministry, anybody in the Foreign Ministry. I understand that for you to see the Foreign Minister, himself, it would have to be a fairly high-level question of some sort.

FUNDERBURK: Right.

Q: Below that, though, how did you decide whether you would have someone call or to get you an appointment yourself? It takes a lot of time. It takes driving over there and all that sort of thing.

FUNDERBURK: Right. Well, nine times out of ten, my visits to the Foreign Ministry would be in response to a call from the Foreign Ministry itself, summoning me to send a message to Washington urgently on . . .

Q: Now, that's interesting. That high a proportion.

FUNDERBURK: But the percentage of time that we went over there, it would be to register a complaint or to inform the Foreign Ministry, from our government, from Washington, of an upcoming visit or an upcoming issue that we were concerned about.

Q: Especially the U.N.?

FUNDERBURK: Sometimes it had to do with votes in the United Nations, and we were interested in Romania abstaining or, at least, being sympathetic with our position, not voting against us on it. So we would feel them out on that.

Q: What did they call you over for? You say this was more frequent.

FUNDERBURK: Well, again, the Romanians liked to travel, from Andrei to everybody in the Foreign Ministry, the Foreign Trade Ministry, and other ministries inside Romania, would be sending people to the United States, and each one would want to get an audience with the President. Or, in lieu of that, the Vice President or the Secretary of State. Or every time that there was a trip to the United States they would call us in and say, "Do your best. We've got to get in there to see the President, because we've got this urgent letter from Ceausescu." What they really meant was the letter we've seen before. But, you see, personally I need to get in there because it enhances my status back home for Old Nici to know that I can get in. So they would always play this game with us. But we would be called in for visits, or if there was some problem with our relationship that they had picked up. For example, an incident of one of our military attachés was apprehended by the Romanian military, and I was summoned to the Foreign Ministry. They complained about this to me.

Q: Because he was doing his job?

FUNDERBURK: Right. [chuckles]

Q: The prime issue that you saw in US-Romanian relations, at least after a while that you had been there, was the--what's the name of the policy differentiation?

FUNDERBURK: Right. That's the name of it.

Q: Romania gets special treatment, in certain respects, as did Yugoslavia, in certain respects, in comparison with Poland and Hungary and so on.

FUNDERBURK: Well, now, Poland and Hungary were in the same boat with Romania inside the Pact, except for the stretch of time when Poland was under martial law. But Poland had MFN. Hungary has it. And Romania had it. So those three were the Warsaw Pact countries with it, except for a time for Poland there. The ones, of course, Bulgaria, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, were the ones who didn't have it in Eastern Europe.

Q: A scholar can familiarize himself with your views, in detail, on this policy in your book, Pinstripes in Red. However, let me ask you here now, how is it that you came to be convinced that the United States really had sufficient leverage to cause Romania to change its internal policies, repressive as they became? How would the United States really have been able to do anything, one way or another, about the repressive regime of Ceausescu?

FUNDERBURK: Well, it's ironic the way you phrase that, because the State Department's argument through the years, the argument of the Foreign Service for rewarding this monster named Ceausescu, that virtually the whole world realizes now--Newsweek said this week "the last great Stalinist"--their whole argument through the years for differentiation toward Romania was that it provided leverage for the United States to help bring about a better way of life for the people, in terms of human rights, to help in terms of immigration of Jews and Germans and Romanians from Romania. This was their argument. But I would say, sure, the United States has a limited ability to affect the internal affairs of any country, and certainly Romania. The US has less influence over internal developments in Romania than any other country. But to answer your question in as much as I can in the way it's phrased, how did I come to believe that we had the ability to impact, or have leverage on internal affairs there, well, from the simple fact that Ceausescu and Romania need, desperately, hard currency, which is what Poland needs today. And Hungary needs it today. And the United States is a major provider of hard currency, or dollars. And they get that by having Most Favored Nation Treaty status, meaning, if they didn't have it, it would be the equivalent of some . . .

Q: Now, to back up. I think I lost some of that on tape. We were talking about the ability of the United States to effect change in other countries around the world, let's say, other than Canada or something of that sort.

FUNDERBURK: Right.

Q: And you were saying that the MFN is worth, more or less to Romania, how much?

FUNDERBURK: Anywhere from \$300 to \$600 million a year, in terms of trade subsidies and hard currency.

Q: A substantial amount. Is that the highest figure in hard currency that Romania gains from trade with any other country?

FUNDERBURK: Actually, I think they probably get more from West Germany. So I think we follow West Germany, but we're tied in together, in a sense. That is, if the Germans and the French and the British look on Romania favorably, then Americans tend to more so, and vice versa. So that if two of those countries break off relations, it's going to be very difficult for the other two to maintain them with Romania, usually. I would agree with your premise that the United States really doesn't have that much ability to influence internal events in other countries, but we do have some. I would call it marginal. And I would say that our influence in a place like Romania is more psychological and moral than it would be in other ways.

In other words, if the United States puts down a marker for human rights, and it states this through Radio Free Europe or Voice of America, it says it deplores the human rights conditions inside Romania, immigration is not free, we dislike the destruction of churches and the murder of pastors and priests, and that that will be a factor in our relationship, which helps determine MFN, then I think that this, symbolically, in playing futures and playing people, has an impact on what the people in that country think. And they certainly consider us to be living up to our ideals as the bastion of freedom and democracy, if we take such stands. So morally, we have an influence, and it would impact to some degree on the communist ruler. But what really impacts on him is money, obviously. And so the State Department has argued that we have the leverage of helping get people out when we have MFN, but my argument, increasingly during my stay there and subsequent to the stay, was that MFN simply sent money into the coffers of this Stalinist, who used it to further repress the people, and it really didn't go to benefit the people. So we should withdraw MFN from that regime, and not give money and not be seen to be giving assistance to any regime that treats its people the way that one does.

Q: Well, just a question. We won't get off from this very much, but what about Poland? Do you think that a policy of differentiation has led to some of the loosening up of the regime there? Poland is just a different case or something?

FUNDERBURK: I don't think that America's policy, vis à vis Poland, has really been the major factor in bringing about the developments that are taking place in Poland or in Hungary. I think our policy has been a minor factor, but not a major factor. I think the major factor is that Gorbachev and his cohorts, when they came in, decided that, through PR and through Madison Avenue policy, projection, they needed to get American money. They needed to get American technology to help advance the Soviet Union into the 20th Century and to be competitive to some degree; that the system was in dire straits, in Poland, in the Soviet Union, throughout. And they needed to project to the West that things were changing. They had done this periodically in Soviet communist history. Khrushchev did it to some degree. You had peaceful coexistence. You

had detente. You even had Lenin's NEP, New Economic Policy, in which they project a different face and say, "We're not Brezhnev. We're not thugs. We're not the invaders of Afghanistan and so forth. We're nice guys. We want your money. We want your technology."

And so I think what's happening in Poland is more a result of the fact that Gorbachev and the leaders of the Soviet Union need to get our money and, therefore, have allowed a little bit of play room for the people inside Poland. I don't think for a moment that it means that there will be, in reality, a non-communist government inside of Poland. The limits that any communist would have to lay down would be that Poland and Romania remain a member of the Warsaw Pact; that the Communist Party really be the power, whether it's behind the scenes or whether it's up front. The communists would have to control the organs of propaganda, secret police, the military, the defense and foreign policy of the country. I don't think there's any question about this. So if we got a token, titular leader named Lech Walesa--that's the head of Poland right now--it would not mean, at all, that you would really have a non-communist government in Poland, in my view.

Q: Well, I think he's got to be a little bit more than titular, and I think it is going to be quite startling, but . . .

FUNDERBURK: They've used him before and I think they're very well prepared to use him again, because he's made commitments to them already that he would not withdraw from the Warsaw Pact; that he wouldn't handle foreign and defense matters, pretty much, but yet he would help them get money from the west. And that's what they need. They don't want to kill the goose that laid the golden egg. And right now the goose is the Gorbachev image in the West, of reform and change, so they can get money, and so they can get technology. And he's doing very well. And we're, as always, very good suckers for this. [chuckles]

Q: When you were there, the US projected an image that was favorable to, at least, many Romanians in the streets. They looked to the United States as an example of democracy or freedom or something of the sort. Were there other countries that had an equally good image in Romania, such as France, for example, Great Britain?

FUNDERBURK: The United States had the ultimate image of freedom, democracy and salvation, for them. But they always have a fondness in their heart for the French. And so they do look to France, secondarily; less so to the British, the Italians, the West Germans. But despite the fact that the United States had officially wrapped itself around this tyrant, Ceausescu, who was repressing the people; despite the fact that they knew we had pulled the rug out from under the Hungarians in 1956, and that we pull the rug out from under them periodically, through our broadcast and other ways, they still look to us. So, yes, I would say there is a reservoir of good will toward the United States that hasn't been destroyed by virtually every asinine policy we could come up with.

Q: What about the French? Have they pursued policies that you would have disagreed with if you had been French ambassador?

FUNDERBURK: I would say that the French, even to a greater extent than the United States, have let economics dictate their foreign policy with regard to Romania, playing on the fact that

there is a cultural and linguistic affinity between the two peoples. But they have used this to advance their own ability to trade and do business with Romania. At the same time, on occasion, you would find the French, perhaps, taking a little tougher stand in terms of criticizing something going on in Romania they disliked, or something that was anathema to French interest. In other words, what I observed was that virtually every other major Western power would come down strongly on the side of looking out for their own interest, to a greater extent than the United States would. The State Department, the career diplomats, for the most part, in the formulation of their policy, vis à vis, whatever country in the world, but certainly in that part where I have experience, were fearful and afraid to step on anybody's toes, even if it meant not looking out for your own interest. So that you wouldn't antagonize this guy who didn't want to be antagonized, you say nothing and you let your interest go to hell. So in other words, inside the embassy--let's talk about something petty, okay, but still important psychologically to the well being of American diplomats abroad--if the heat was cut off in the winter, if you were having trouble with mail shipments being broken into by this government, if you couldn't get help that you needed for plumbing and other things, the United States would do nothing to bring these matters up or do as little as possible to bring these matters up, for fear of antagonizing the Romanian Communist Government. But the French would not dare let such a thing happen to their people, you see.

Q: You have personal experience, then, of such petty harassment that went unprotested?

FUNDERBURK: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely.

Q: You were not able, as chief of mission, to take some of these things up?

FUNDERBURK: Well, I would go back and forth with the State Department about it, and they would say, "We don't want to bring this up at this time because it will just increase the irritation of the ones that are really favorite to us, and we want to save our markers for bigger issues," something like that.

Q: And it couldn't be handled informally? If your heat is cut off, you couldn't send the GSO over to . . .

FUNDERBURK: We did those things, right. But living for the Foreign Service in a country like Romania is hard enough, and the regime would try to make it as difficult as possible for you so that you would be preoccupied with that problem and you wouldn't really have time to get after them on bigger things. In the same way that people inside communist Romania or communist Poland or the Soviet Union spend half their time, or a great deal of their time, standing in long lines trying to get food, beef, and meat and other types of food. And this, in a way, is a deliberate policy of the government to preoccupy these people with this subsistence, rather than the political problems they have. [chuckles]

Q: Well, also it's a result of inefficiency?

FUNDERBURK: It's a function of inefficiency, as well. You're absolutely right.

Q: One little issue that seemed to raise its head occasionally while you were there was something about unfair trade practices, a complaint by US Steel. What was that about? Do you remember that?

FUNDERBURK: Well, we had several cases. Yes, I do. I mean, there were several cases in which the Romanians were dumping steel on the American market, undercutting American steel producers. They would sell roll steel, for example, they called it, cheaper than they were supposed to by the trade agreements that we had. And in the same way, they would go over their quotas of textile products, and there would be protests from textile producers in the United States. And then what would happen, instead of the United States looking out for the interests of US steel and the interest of the textile industry, here was Romania breaking the agreements that we had, okay, by shipping more than they were allowed to, by undercutting us, going over the quotas. We wouldn't do anything to help our own companies and factories because of fear of harming the political relationship with that country. So basically, in the final analysis, we would sit down and say, "Okay, we'll extend this agreement. We'll expand it. We'll let you go over quota this year." And this is what happened year after year. The Romanians would push everything beyond the limit. Then we would sit down and talk and negotiate about it. And, other than maybe in a Congressional Record it being condemned as a footnote somewhere, that Romania was condemned and warned not to do this again, you know, there was really nothing that ever impacted on them. I mean, we didn't come down with penalties.

Q: Did commerce recommend that some kind of penalties be imposed?

FUNDERBURK: Very infrequently. Once or twice they did. But normally, commerce was there to try to promote trade and not to antagonize the Romanian Foreign Trade Ministry and foreign trade operatives. So they would have to be under tremendous pressure.

Q: No, I don't mean commerce in Bucharest; the commerce in Washington.

FUNDERBURK: The Department of Commerce, right. Well, I'm thinking of them via the commerce . . .

Q: Well, that raises a question. Reading your book and talking with you here today, a question is raised in my mind as to where you, as a practitioner in the field and a theoretician in the field, think policy should be made, abroad or at home? And I'm posing it so that it's really easy to shoot down the question.

FUNDERBURK: [chuckles] Right.

Q: But you do make a large number of comments that indicate to me that you think the cutting edge of policy really should be made by the people who are on the scene, the ambassador and his staff, in the country involved. The opposite, of course, is normally the argument. The opposite is normally the view of most anyone you can think of; policy should be made, or is made, should be made back in London, back in Washington, back in wherever the home office is.

FUNDERBURK: Well, the fact of the matter is policy is made in Washington, and very seldom is any type of policy made in the field, that I know of, or at least in the context where I was working. So that if I said that, what I would state, how I would restate it or rephrase it would be that I certainly would think that policy, as made in Washington, should factor in, and include, the views of the people in the field, whether they are an ambassador, the economic officer, the political officer. Being there first hand and working day to day with the people, they certainly ought to have a greater first-hand knowledge of what is going on, and this ought to be factored in. I'm just saying that usually it's not. So you come down to the question after a while, if people in the field are essentially ignored, why have them there for the purposes of policy? Sure, you can have them there to collect information, which is what they're there for. Obviously, they're there to help further US interest, to meet with people, to go to cocktail parties, to look out for American citizens abroad, to help in immigration and other things, but why do you need as big an embassy with a policy pretention, if actually all they're doing is just carrying a message, which, in effect, is what it is? So my problem was the fact that Washington policy was made without taking into consideration, information from the field.

Q: Well, or despite information.

FUNDERBURK: Or despite information in the field, right.

Q: You argue, at some length, against Eagleburger and several other officers that you cite, as being "concessionary diplomats," and on several points in the book, you make the statement that, "There is a strange convergence of interest between the US Foreign Service elite and the Romanian communists." Isn't that rather a harsh thing to say about your colleagues and fellow Americans?

FUNDERBURK: Well, if it weren't true as I had observed, it would be pretty harsh. But the guys that I observed there had a very cozy relationship with their communist counterparts, and they seemed to be much more interested in trying to please them and trying to ingratiate themselves to them than they were looking out for American interest. I mean, there were no two ways about it, from my point of view. But, obviously, you know, I'm one person. There were some others who agreed with that, too. I would point out that it was a source of no little satisfaction to me that in the last year and a half, Most Favored Nation status was removed from Romania. So somebody, obviously, in the United States, some of the people, some of the congressmen, some of the religious figures, must have come to the conclusion that Funderburk wasn't totally wrong in saying that this is a monster we're dealing with. He's destroying his country's history and heritage. The people have no free immigration; human rights is terrible. And we shouldn't be rewarding and giving favored treatment to such a character. And yet, it was your Larry Eagleburger, it was your Mark Palmer, it was the other great career diplomats, who have all knowledge, who were saying that this was a great man and we needed him, regardless of what he was doing to anybody. So he could pull a Tiananmen Square every month, and we would still send the money over there to Ceausescu, because the Foreign Service people know best. But what is the problem now? I mean, obviously, the word got out about this guy. It didn't just get out from David Funderburk.

Q: There is a problem, of course, in the Foreign Service--we all recognize it--of clientitis. But the number of times that you refer to the Foreign Service elite and the pinstripes and so forth in your book, lead me to think that you're implying that there is a measure of disloyalty in the Foreign Service, a measure of attachment to un-American ideas. I get that implication from the way you write about and ask these questions. And if I had been involved in that policy, right or wrong, I would be outraged, if you had implied that I was less loyal to the United States than you.

FUNDERBURK: Right. Well, I certainly . . .

Q: Is that the way you really think about some of those people, like Eagleburger?

FUNDERBURK: Some of those who worked with regard to Eastern Europe certainly fit that category. And clientitis, I can't attribute motives to people, okay? But I can certainly look at results and see what has happened. And so whether people are operating from motives that they think are patriotic or not, I mean, this is different to different people, I realize. But, to them, to some of the people, whether they're Harry Barnes..., the golden boy of the Foreign Service, who wouldn't let me, or virtually any other scholar, into the embassy to get our mail, which we should have gotten by American law. But certainly favored the foreign national employees there who were all reporting to the Romanian KGB. He thought that, like Hartman in Moscow, that you just run an open embassy in a communist country, because you want to project to them that we are different, and we are open, and we have no secrets. And so, as you see, we don't have any now because a lot have been taken.

But I would say that clientitis was rampant in the east European Bureau of the State Department, to the extent that the way up the ladder, to get rewarded in the Foreign Service, in East Europe, East European Bureau, for Mark Palmer and Larry Eagleburger and John Davis, who's in Poland, that I dealt with quite a bit, and Scanlan and all the rest, was for them to figure out a way to reward the communists that they were dealing with in Eastern Europe. And so they devised these projects and these plans. They had fun sitting with these guys. They winked. They told jokes. They were like their brother or sister. In my view, they lost track of where they were from and what country they were representing, and what the views of most American people are. And many of these people, not all, because I can't make a blanket generalization, many of them were very good friends and allies of mine, and helped me get the message out of what was really happening there. I didn't have the expertise bureaucratically to report everything that was going on, crafted in a State Department style, to have affect. And I had people in the embassy, who saw things the way I did, or at least said that they did, and who assisted me in this process. And they're people that I admire, appreciate, I consider very patriotic Americans.

So I don't make a blanket generalization, but there were many, the ones who seem to be in charge of our policy, who almost made it incumbent upon people who wanted to rise up in the Foreign Service, to not look out for American interest, and not put them first, but put the interest of that client's state first. And this is what I witnessed, and it was very despicable to me. And in the years since that--and I'm outraged by this, by the way--I'm outraged by the fact that I get calls every day of my life from ethnic Romanians and Hungarians and Germans who say that, "We tried to go through the American Embassy and the American Embassy told us to go to hell,"

because there were KGB agents working throughout the American Embassy. The Romanian national employees all work for the KGB. Everybody knows that. Ask the CIA, the DIA. I looked at it. I saw it. I know it's true. So when these people go in our embassy to get treatment, in the past, Harry Barnes said, "Will you deal with this person over here, this Monica somebody?" So you go to Monica and Monica tells him, "Go to hell." Is that representing the best interest of the United States Government? I wouldn't say so. And that person remembers that the rest of their life, that here is America, the symbol of freedom, and we walk in there, and they've got one of Ceausescu's thugs in there, working at the gate, telling me where I can go. This is the way our embassies operated in Eastern Europe. And it's gotten us into great difficulty in the minds and hearts of the people. And I resent that as an American concerned about our image abroad. I have an entirely different perspective on how we should project that image.

I don't say we close it off and we have fortress America, at all. I'm just as much for open America as anybody. I traveled through the country as often as I could to see people, to show the flag, to show them that America is different. But at the same time, we have to look out for our security interest and our national interest. And I don't think most of these guys, in the department that we were dealing with, did that, and they're the ones running the show today. And so I deeply resent that as an American concerned about the future of freedom.

When I go over there to Eastern Europe and I'm arguing to those people that, "Look, human dignity is important to Americans, and we care about freedom. We care about free immigration. We care about human rights. We care about religious freedom. We're a nation with faith. And we're a nation that believes in the human spirit, and not control over people's minds and bodies by some tyrannical system." When I say that, it's kind of hard to look them in the eyes and say it when we've got officials in Washington, and in the State Department, who are more concerned about doing a good deed for Ceausescu than they are looking out for America's interest. So, yes, it's a very deep concern for me, and I know it outrages many people in the State Department, but to me it's factual. I'm going to spend the rest of the days of my life trying to get this message out, because I know what I lived and saw there was real. And I have to say that subsequent to my stay there, the two largest Romanian organizations outside of Romania that constitute a million people, elected me the honorary president of each one, and they consider me one who has understood Romanian history and the Romanian reality better than anyone else in our government. So that's a sad thing, but the people that we have running our policy toward that government, right now, don't understand what's going on.

Q: People who are running our policy toward that government right now, the Eastern European people, Eagleburger on down, do not need me to defend them. And I can't defend them anyway because I don't know that much about Eastern Europe. What I would suggest to you, though . . .

FUNDERBURK: They need somebody . . .

Q: Bear in mind that there are differences of opinion, and there's clientitis, and then there's yet, in a whole different ball park, disloyalty.

FUNDERBURK: Right. I didn't say that their intentions were to aid the enemy. And I haven't stated that anywhere, because I don't know what their motives are.

Q: But the implication is there, and that's why I wanted to raise it.

FUNDERBURK: Okay, well, where I state it and what I thought I say very clearly in there, is that the result of what they are doing has the effect of assisting our adversaries, and does not have the effect of looking out for our best interest. So that is very strong, but it's not the same as saying that they have sat down and conspired to work with the enemy against the best interests of the United States, even though some, like Felix Block, may have done that.

EDWARD C. MCBRIDE
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Bucharest (1982-1985)

Mr. Edward C. McBride joined USIA in 1964. His career postings included France, Senegal, Yugoslavia, Romania, Spain, and England. Mr. McBride was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.

MCBRIDE: So that suited me, and I was very happy to go to Bucharest which I did. I guess the important thing to note for the record is I was in Bucharest from '82 to '85. Bucharest was in those days, at the time that I arrived also like Yugoslavia in a way, the maverick Ceausescu was very much admired, because he was in his way standing up to his eastern masters, and he was also a little bit more receptive to what came his way from the United States than other leaders of Eastern Europe were. We had more or less developed a pretty strong program in Romania. My job was to go out there and to reinforce that and to be sure that we kept the dialogue going with the Romanians essentially we wanted to charge and use our programs and our presence there to broaden more freedom and to broader participation of the Romanians in western activities, and to expose Romania more to the west. We were going to do that primarily through expanding trade and commerce with them. We were going to do it by using the programs that we had to bring more Romanians to the USA- (end of tape)

In Bucharest I arrived with a lot of expectations, and Arts America had unwittingly feathered my own nest because I had no idea when I was beginning a project in Arts America that I would be the recipient of it in Bucharest. But there was a wonderful exhibition about American impressionist painting. It ultimately came to Bucharest very soon after my arrival there, and I was obviously delighted and pleased because I had been intimately involved in putting the show together before. It had a huge success in Bucharest and opened up the eyes of many Romanians to a school of painting that was more associated with the French than with the Americans, and which was taken to a very different level by American artists. The show was very popular and had a big impact in Romania. It was very good for me. It also acquainted me with the views of the political ambassador who was on Bucharest in those days named David Funderburk. He was the protégé of Jesse Helms, and who had been sent there because as a Fulbright scholar, he had been a student in Bucharest and had begun a long and abiding relationship with Romania. He was also put in that position because he had very strong views on human rights as well, an issue that in those days we felt could be improved with respect to the way Romanians ran things. So

that was my first encounter with the ambassador, who I don't think was very concerned about the cultural program, but who was passionately concerned and committed to improving the human rights situation in Romania. So I begin the assignment there with almost an adversarial relationship in a way because the ambassador was determined to see that everything we did in Romania basically had a dimension that reflected our concern for the rather bad track record Romanians had in human rights, particularly religious freedom. So, much of the time in Bucharest was spent y working that side of the street because that is what the ambassador decided we were going to do. My position on the issue was while this was a critically important piece in our relationship, I didn't think it ought to be allowed to influence everything else we did. That was not a view that was shared by the ambassador. Thus, working in Bucharest was not very pleasant. I did manage to keep things going which was our mission, and we kept a Fulbright program going which surprised me in the end. Also, the ambassador also increasingly unpopular with the Romanian government because he kept pressing this one issue all the time. So much that we had take for granted that we were able to do was eventually and gradually sort of reigned in because the Romanians were very unhappy with the way the ambassador was pressing the human rights issue there. In the end we all felt this pressure because after awhile the Fulbright program became far more difficult to negotiate. We didn't have a binational agreement, but we had a very active program. Increasingly the Romanians were hostile. They didn't want Americans coming. They particularly didn't want Americans who were going to talk about things like the social sciences or they didn't want to expose the Romanian public to Americans with these radical views about things like human rights and so on. So the program in my view, suffered in Romania. In the end we did quite a lot and the program moved along on kind of a momentum of its own. I felt for most of the time rather uncomfortable in Romania. I was just not philosophically attuned to the way the ambassador felt that our relationship ought to go. But I also felt that I had an obligation to be a good soldier because he was calling that shot, not me. I had every opportunity at staff meetings to make my point or to say why I felt we ought to do something else, but I think it was also important to close ranks and do what your leader decided you are going to do. If you don't like it, you go.

Q: Did you find that the public affairs side, I am particularly thinking of press relations and all that began to absorb more of your time?

MCBRIDE: They did in a way because the Romanians almost wanted it to. They did it because what happened in essence was that much of the sort of nastiness in the relationship played itself out publicly in the press in Romania, which was totally controlled by the government. As a result you had to pay attention to the press because, in effect, what we were dealing with was the image of the United States, the public perceptions of the United States. That said, there was a very small and almost invisible group of people there who were strong and who were aware of the fact that Ceausescu was a lunatic, and that he was taking his country to hell in a basket. But they were too small and too intimidated by the state to be very effective. We obviously maintained some relationship with those people because they really were able to convey to us the true feelings of the country and the sentiment in spite of the propaganda in the papers and so on. But the press became increasingly a bigger piece of the job because we had to deal with the accusations in the press about America, the distortion of facts about us. And we had to deal with the government who chose often to make its point through the press rather than directly to us. So, the press part to my surprise, became very time consuming and became in the end the biggest

piece of the job because you had to deal with that before you could deal with anything else. There was no audience, no receptivity, no official permission. We came closer in Romania to losing touch with everybody but for one issue that I had been on the wrong side of for many years and it turned out in the end to be the one way that we were able to make any inroads in Romania at all. We had never as a government been very big on signing cultural exchange agreements with other governments, which was very popular as you know, with the eastern Europeans and the Soviet Union in those days. But we did have an agreement with the Romanians, and it was under that agreement that the American impressionist exhibition came. It was the one vehicle we had to bring American events to Romania because there was a signed bilateral agreement. So, whether the Romanians liked it or not, we had by this agreement the permission to bring two or three big exhibitions. The Fulbright program came under this agreement. Other cultural activities in general were possible, and it was the only way they were possible. So we had very tedious discussions about what the agreement really meant. If it said you can bring two violinists, don't you dare try to send a cellist or a pianist because it says you have got to bring two violinists and that is what you are going to do. So they were very literal in interpreting the regulation. Nonetheless, we took it as a mandate to reach out to the Romanian public because the events were normal and very popular. The exhibitions were designed to reflect themes of American life that were conspicuously absent in Romania. Whether it was about the American home or whether it was about the theater in America or whatever, there was a message in the exhibition that was aimed at people who were deprived of whatever the theme was. As a result, the Romanian government was really very unhappy at the enormous turnout we would get at these exhibitions. Usually the agreement stipulated two or three venues in the country, so we would not only take it to Bucharest, which is where they all had to begin, but we would go out to the other big population centers, to Cluj which was particularly important because the Romanians were beating up on the local Hungarian minority. That was a very big issue. We often had a way to communicate through an exhibition, support for the minority rights or whatever the issue was. So we were very keen to see that these agreements were scrupulously respected by the Romanians. We then were able to bring the exhibition, the concert, the whatever. They were the lifeline in a way, because that is almost all we were able to do. The whole embassy suffered as a result of this because the commercial contacts were very limited except to the extent that the Romanians saw the vital need for the hard currency that came in as a result of the commercial contacts. So they were slightly more receptive to that than to others, but the political relationship was almost dead in the water. Certainly the human rights thing as the ambassador chose to play it was like waving a red flag in front of a bull, and we did not have a very good relationship with Romania the whole time I was there basically.

Q: Was there an intellectual class you could deal with?

MCBRIDE: Yes, but they were scared to death because the system in terms of rewards and punishments was so pervasive. Neighbors were ratting on neighbors if they burned lights too long because you were only allowed 20 minutes or whatever it was a day. If you see a forbidden light coming on, your neighbor ratted on you and got an extra kilo of sugar because of that. So the whole climate was so repressive that it was very difficult for people with whom you did have any reasonable relationship even to see you let alone talk to you. I had made contacts that I would meet in huge public areas, markets or stuff where there would just be thousands of people going about all the time. And I would talk about a whole range of issues and learn a lot from the

Romanians I had contact with about what was really going on, and as a result I became an important source of information for the reporting from the embassy about what the situation was really like. So it was a tough time, and I think it was made more complicated by the position the embassy took through the very outspoken position of the ambassador who tended to interpret almost every aspect of the relationship through the human rights prism. So it was not a very pleasant time to be in Romania. In the end, I left before the fall of Ceausescu. I left in '82, excuse me, I left in '85. I arrived in '82. The fall when it came, was entirely predictable. He was the most widely hated man in the country, and the people that you talk to when you finally did break through the barrier, and they weren't afraid to tell you that he was loathed at almost every level. Everybody who claimed any connection to the intellectual community was horrified at what he was doing to the country and to the society and to the future of people. They and their country were all mortgaged because of this obsessive man.

Q: When you went to Cluj or something, what would you put on there; what was its effect?

MCBRIDE: Well one of the things I remember about Cluj was the big impact of a show on the American theater. We used the theater as a means of communicating because the exhibition showed you about the techniques of presenting plays and writing and directing and all sorts of things. There was a visual dimension to it, but there was also a real theater in the exhibition. The theater had regularly scheduled performances. The company that was performing was the Actor's Theater of Louisville, which is a wonderful theater company. They chose plays that had very relevant messages to contemporary Romanian society about freedom, about choice, about democracy, about man and his place in society. These were obviously very popular with the Romanians, and also a real thorn in the side of the Romanian government since they didn't like what was going on because the message was antithetical to everything the government stood for. But it was a wonderful way for us to reach out and to keep alive any semblance of contacts, not only with the common people in Romania, but also with the intellectual community, with the academic community, with the professional community, the theater community in this case. Therefore Cluj was maybe, I don't remember statistics, but I think the popular attendance was higher in Cluj than any other city in Romania because it was particularly relevant in terms of the Hungarian minority in there. Those exhibitions represented a very important breakthroughs for the embassy in general.

Q: What about the Fulbright program? I would imagine you wouldn't find people eager to return from their Fulbright program.

MCBRIDE: That was a big problem. There were a lot of defections, and we felt that was a two edged sword in a way because the point of the Fulbright program is that people come back to their countries as you know. To participate was a very difficult personal decision. But we did find that after defections, the pipeline would just dry up. The Romanians would refuse to accept any other than the very narrowly defined parts of the bilateral agreement that focused on the educational exchange program. They would be very critical of the attempt to bring anybody in who wasn't a technical person who would deal with issues that had no social or political dimension but who were engineers or that kind of thing. We were, of course, interested in the exact opposite. So we had a lot of difficulty. I was summoned very frequently to the ministry of foreign affairs All this was run through the foreign office, so I would be summoned and be read a

lecture about how we are trying to evade the principal in this bilateral agreement, and that the Romanian government was not going to approve any substitutes. Further, this was going to jeopardize not only the program but the bilateral relationship, the usual litany. But it became so routine that after awhile I would just go and I would listen and say thank you very much and go away. They know I would do nothing about it, but I would just go back and report that I was summoned yet again to the foreign office, and this is what they said. But it was tough.

JONATHAN B. RICKERT
Romania Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1982-1985)

Jonathan Rickert was born and raised in Washington, DC and educated at Princeton and Yale Universities. After service in the US Army, he joined the Foreign Service in 1963, serving tours in both Washington and abroad. His foreign posts include London, Moscow, Port au Spain, Sofia and Bucharest, where he served as Deputy Chief of Mission. In his Washington assignments Mr. Rickert dealt primarily with Eastern and Central European Affairs. Mr. Rickert was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

RICKERT: That's right. During 1982 I moved from the Trinidad desk to the Romania desk. John Davis was the director at the time, and Bill Farrand was his deputy. And Bill and I had served in Moscow together, and I think it was largely through Bill that I got the job. I've maintained an interest in Romania...

Q: ...since having served there and having the Romanian language.

RICKERT: ...and also, while I was working Caribbean affairs, I finished my Master's degree – my Master's thesis – for the grade of GW. The topic was “Romanian Government Policies Towards Ethnic Minorities During Post World War II Period.” So, I was very pleased to go back. I'd had a long-standing interest in Eastern Europe, and I was delighted to be working with Bill whom I knew. John Davis, whom I didn't know, but whom I came to know and eventually served as DCM under in Romania some years later, so that was the beginning of a good relationship. I didn't know John very well during that time. 95% of his time was spent on Poland because it was martial law. John was one of the foreign service's biggest Poland experts and went from that job to become chargé there and stayed there from '83 to '90 approximately.

Q: That was ambassador.

RICKERT: He was first chargé and then ambassador. He ended up with 13 years service in Poland which is a lot. So I really didn't get to know him that well. Jack Scanlon was the desk officer when I arrived there, and then Mark Palmer took over shortly thereafter. Jack was supposed to go to Poland as ambassador. Because of Polish dissatisfaction with our policy, they refused to give agrément, and he waited and waited. Eventually he gave up and went to Yugoslavia instead. And that was when John Davis went to Warsaw as chargé until the Poles

saw sense. That was expected to be three to six months, but it ended up being a lot longer than that.

Q: What was going on with U. S.-Romania relations during that period?

RICKERT: Well, one doesn't want to leave the impression that personalities are essential factor in all this, but you have to recall that the U. S. ambassador to Bucharest at that time was David B. Funderburk who, by some accounts, was one of the least appropriate political appointees in living memory. I could go one for a tape and a half on David Funderburk, which I won't do, but he was hell's protégé. He knew the language, he knew a lot about the country...

Q: But he hadn't been in Bucharest.

RICKERT: He'd been in Romania. So, from that point of view it was not at all a bad assignment, but he had a deep and abiding – “distrust” is too kind of a term – for the Foreign Service, and it made it very difficult to work effectively with him. He considered the Foreign Service to be pink and soft on communism and unwilling to tackle difficult dictators, etc., etc., etc. And it was not easy working with him. His first DCM was Sam Frye who I had worked with in Moscow and was friendly with personally. I mean, we weren't close friends, but we were colleagues in Moscow and had known each other. That was the saving grace there, but Sam didn't last that long, and we had real problems trying to find somebody to go out to work for Funderburk. So, in the end it was decided, I think correctly, I recommended and ended up happening, that the political consular and career guy, a fine person with a good professional credentials but who happened also to be personally of a very Right Wing orientation. Frank Corey ended up being the DCM, and that worked perfectly OK because Funderburk didn't consider him to be a spy or worse. The two main issues that I can think of in U. S.-Romanian relations during my two years on the desk, were: one, the annual review of most favored nation status which, of course, stemmed from the Helsinki Accords in 1975. This became an annual exercise. As many people remember and many people have forgotten, the whole idea of linking Most Favored Nation (MFN) trade to this process had to do with emigration from the Soviet Union. It was broadened to include Eastern Europe subsequently. Then, by extension, interest groups of various sorts did something that I personally didn't think was correct but was entirely understandable. This involved extending the emigration aspect to cover all human rights problems. Anyone who had problems with the human rights practices of Romania and any other countries covered by the Jackson-Vanik Amendment used the annual hearings on renewal of MFN as a means to beat the country about the head and shoulders. I never was an apologist for Romania's human rights record or its treatment of its citizens. I did have some problems about using a law that speaks about emigration as an omnibus pretext to try to block MFN for Romania for purposes that had nothing to do with the stated purpose of the law. Interestingly, the Assistant Secretary for Human Rights at that time was Elliott Abrams. He had worked with Senator Henry “Scoop” Jackson as a staffer. I went on a trip at one point with Abrams to Romania. I spoke to him on this issue on several occasions. And Abrams was certainly not soft on Commies or human rights violators. I remember him saying very clearly, “Jackson-Vanik is emigration. Jackson knew he couldn't buy more than emigration with this piece of legislation; it wasn't attractive enough to be able to carry a heavier human rights agenda.” So emigration was selected as the issue where we could really make a difference and possibly get it to work. Of course, it didn't work with the Soviet Union as

it turned out. It did work for some years with Romania, and emigration numbers were higher, I'm convinced, than otherwise.

Q: This was Jewish emigration to Israel?

RICKERT: No. The language of the law was...

Q: ...in the case of Romania...

RICKERT: ...for Romania was freedom for emigration, and the impetus was Jewish emigration to Israel. But it wasn't framed as a "Jews Only" law, and it was...the Jewish organizations in this country, of course, kept very careful track of the number of Romanian Jews who were allowed to emigrate to Israel or to the United States for that matter. They used their relative success and relative failure as their yardstick. They used this as a means of putting pressure on the Romanians to perform better, but that wasn't the determining factor. That was part of the mix. In fact, the majority of the emigrants were not Jews. The biggest single group during those years was Germans to Germany. Now, the sordid part of all this, as is well known today, is that both the Jews going to Israel and the Germans going to Germany were in effect bought out by the receiving governments. The exact arrangements, I don't know what they were. There were payments made. So, although Romania lost skilled people, educated people, they did get something in return.

Q: Okay, and most favored nation status for Romania was subject to annual..

RICKERT: ...annual review...

Q: ...and that was conducted at the hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee or what?

RICKERT: The senate took a lesser interest in the MFN. I won't say took no interest, but it followed the lead of the Foreign Operations...no, it was the sub-committee of the House Ways and Means committee that was...

Q: They're responsible for trade legislation.

RICKERT: That's right.

Q: Who would be the State Department witness, the Assistant Secretary of...

RICKERT: There was a letter from the President recommending it. We prepared a packet of statements that included documents from other U. S. government figures. It was usually, as I recall, it was the DAS who would actually do the testifying.

Q: That's for European...

RICKERT: That's right. It would have been Mark Palmer or Jack Scanlon. I don't recall for certain on that. A document goes to the Hill with the President's name on it, and it shows that it's

serious in this case. Interestingly, when John Davis was office director, he knew that David Funderburk did not agree with the idea of MFN for Romania due to human rights concerns. So he always sent a whole packet to David in both years. The whole packet went to embassy Bucharest, and Funderburk reviewed it. He may have ground his teeth and snarled and everything else, but he didn't object to it in writing.

Q: Was the package sent after the fact?

RICKERT: No. It was before it went to the Congress. To me this has always been interesting. He wrote a book after he left Bucharest called Pinstripes and Reds in which he implies that he opposed MFN but the State Department people somehow convinced the President to go along with it. And it's carefully worded because he can't say that he opposed it, he had chances to oppose it in writing, and he may even – I don't recall – he may even have made small textural suggestions, edits, and so forth, to the package, but he did not object. I think his biggest mistake was his failure to realize that the ambassador, as representative of the President, has free reign to say what he thinks should happen and should not happen. He may well be overruled, but he would have had on record that, "I think this is a mistake because boom, boom, boom, boom, boom." But he never did it. He would mumble and groan and carp and cavil, but not put forth a reasoned series of arguments as to why the policy direction was misguided or wrong in some way.

Q: Okay. Why don't we stop at this point, Jonathan, and we'll pick up on your service's remaining desk officer and finish that on our next opportunity.

RICKERT: Okay. Sounds...

Q: Today is the 15th of December 2003, and we're continuing our conversation with Jonathan Rickert about his experience from 1982 to '84 as Desk Officer for Romania in the Office of Eastern European and Yugoslav Affairs. Jonathan, you had been talking before about some of the interaction you had and some problems you had with Ambassador David Funderburk, and I think you were to talk about a major U. S.-Romanian bilateral issue of the period.

RICKERT: Yes. The '80s was a period of decline in the internal situation in Romania and, consequently, also a decline in U. S.-Romanian relations. Ceausescu, the dictator of Rumania, decided in the early '80s to repay all of the country's foreign debts because he felt, apparently, that being indebted to foreign countries was a form of dependency that he was unwilling to accept for the longer time. So there was a Draconian drive to try to increase exports, minimize imports, and pay off the outstanding debts to various countries and the international financial institutions as quickly as possible. This, of course, had a very serious effect on the standard of life of the ordinary Romanians as well as being a hindrance to Romania's economic development because the factories didn't get updated technology. They weren't even able to get parts in some cases for the equipment they had. Libraries couldn't bring in books or periodicals from abroad, so fields like medicine and science were hindered in their development. It was a dark period for Romania in general. At the same time there was a crackdown on human rights and against religious believers of various sorts, and the Ceausescu regime also had a very strongly pro-natalist policy of trying to increase the population by banning abortion and punishing those who

had abortions or performed abortions. So, all in all, it was not one of the best periods in our relations. In the midst of all this, the government decreed that those who had applied for emigration and who had received higher education in Romania, had to repay the state at a certain rate for the education they had received. The repayment had to be in hard currency, and Romanians were not allowed to hold hard currency. The decree was named, if I recall "Number 409" which was the number of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment. So it was really a kind of a counter-pressure to the pressure that we were putting on with Jackson-Vanik. Under Jackson-Vanik, if any country were to place more than minimal fees for emigration, we were required to suspend MFN. The leadership of the Department, principally Lawrence Eagleburger and others, felt this was not a good thing to do, that MFN was useful in our relationship. It still provided a certain amount of leverage over the Romanian government. It enabled a number of people to emigrate who otherwise would not have been able to, so the decision was made to try to find a way to maintain MFN which meant getting rid of Decree 409. That meant extensive negotiations largely between Mark Palmer who was the DAS at the time, and the Romanian ambassador who was Mircea Malita. He was a very interesting man and a scholar, a former minister of education, a former advisor to Ceausescu, a very educated and cultured man, not confrontational, and not ideological, but obviously there to serve the interests of his government and state. Mark and Malita met on a number of occasions, and through the discussions they were eventually able to come up with a solution that the Romanians bought when they saw that we were serious about pulling MFN if they didn't somehow neutralize this Decree 409. They decided that those who were leaving would not have to pay, but there were a few who had already paid and gotten out – money had been brought in from abroad. This caused certain problems as well because then they wanted their money back when the deal was struck. We would continue to support Romania and have the administration work for MFN. There was an understanding that we would try to encourage, to take certain steps with the Congress to increase trade to Romania which was something that they wanted. On the Romanian side, they did not null the decree. They simply suspended it. So, the end result was that MFN was continued, emigration resumed, and an embarrassing chapter was over. It was interesting to watch Mark and Malita work on this very important issue and to see the give and take with two people seeing the importance of maintaining *status quo* over MFN but not quite sure how to go about it. Malita, of course, was subject to the whims of his dictator at home, but fortunately I think the end result was satisfactory for all concerned.

Q: One of the things that seemed to characterize U. S.-Romanian relations in this period and the earlier period is that Romania was rather unique in Eastern Europe, more SALT-PAC country in its foreign policy and orientation, especially in the Middle East, I think, and reform did some things or took some positions that we appreciated. Do you want to comment at all? Is that correct and if so, is that one of the reasons why we started MFN for Romania in the first place and made efforts to continue it over the years?

RICKERT: Let's go back a little bit in history. In 1965 the first long-service dictator in Romania, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej died. He was succeeded by Ceausescu who was not really considered to be one of the top heavyweights in the party. He was uneducated, he was not very socially adept, he was definitely from a working class, but he was smarter and tougher than those who were better educated and had better credentials. He out-manuevered them and became the dictator. That was in '65. Then, of course, in '68 was in effect the defining moment for

Romanian relations with the Soviet Union and with the West, and that was the invasion of Czechoslovakia in August. And Romania alone of the Warsaw Pact countries did not participate or support that event. That was a sign of independence that was very welcome to the United States. It was rewarded in any number of ways: first of all by Richard Nixon's visit in 1969, the first Eastern European country that he visited after becoming president and subsequently by a great deal of attention in a lot of different areas including efforts to increase trade, loans, support in becoming a member in the World Bank and other international financial institutions. Romania did a number of things that were ahead of the rest of the Warsaw Pact, and that the U. S. government obviously saw as being helpful and, possibly, opening up the way for fissures within the pact itself. And they recognized the Federal Republic of Germany, the first country to do so back in...I have to check the date...the late '60s I believe that was. Alone among Eastern European countries, in the '67 War between Israel and the Arabs, they didn't break relations. They maintained relations with Israel throughout this whole period. I mentioned Czechoslovakia. Later they were to condemn the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. So they took a number of helpful steps. And they participated in the '84 Olympics in Los Angeles. They were the only Warsaw Pact country to do so. There were a number of things they did that were welcome to the U. S. government. And my impression always was that we were trying to use this realm of independence as a means of possibly prying, not maybe prying loose, but weakening the bonds within the Warsaw Pact. In the Middle East, because they had relations with both the Arabs and Israel, they played a useful go-between role, and they were always seeking mediator roles in Viet Nam and in various other places. Sometimes they ended up being able to be helpful, sometimes it didn't amount to anything, but they clearly were trying to stake out a place for themselves that was not typical of the Bulgarias or the Czechoslovakias of their time. My own view is that we stuck with them a bit too long because it became evident from the mid to late '80s that the harm that was being done internally through a very rigid and repressive regime outweighed the benefits – the possible benefits – of a somewhat independent foreign policy. That conclusion was come to in due course and acted upon. Ceausescu himself declined to seek the extension of MFN because of the humiliations he saw at the annual hearings in order to get the renewal of MFN and all the criticism and heavy abuse from his perspective that resulted from those hearings.

Q: Okay. We'll talk some more about U. S.-Romanian relations in the early '90s when you were DCM in Bucharest. Is there anything else we ought to say about this period as the desk officer at all?

RICKERT: There are a few things I might mention, a few oddities. As desk officer, I spent most of my time dealing with...I won't say most, but a great deal of my time answering Congressional letters on human rights and also on emigration cases. That was almost a full-time job. I don't remember how many I did a week, but it was 20 to 30 Congressionals a week in many cases. Once a young American of Russian extraction came to my office wanting help with the Romanians to get a visa to go to Romania. It turned out he was American as I said of Russian extraction but was an Old Believer. He lived in Alaska, and he wanted to study to be an Old Believer priest. One of the few Old Believer congregations extant in the world was in the Danube Delta. He sought it and eventually received a visa to go and do on-the-job training to become the head of the "flock" in Alaska which struck me as being a bit unusual.

Q: You were talking about your relations with the Romanians in Washington and the two DCM's that they have.

RICKERT: That's right. One was for internal use who was usually the highest ranking person in Securitate in the Embassy, the state security. The other, whatever his other affiliations might be, was for dealing with the outside world. The DCM that I got was a man named Boris Rhongetz who was perfectly decent and pleasant to deal with. We had one interesting incident. The Romanians stopped a U. S. pouch that was coming in, claiming it was U. S. firearms, and we refused to open it. We told them that it didn't contain firearms, but we refused to open it because that would be contrary to international law, and they refused to accept it. The only way they could have known what was in it was by X-raying it which was illegal. But to make a long story short, Boris and I negotiated a solution. We promised that there wasn't a firearm in it which was true. What there was in the pouch was something that's called a ramset which is used in construction. Its a pistol-like device which you put against a wall and fire the charge which fastens a nail to the wall. Its used to fasten conduit to concrete walls and things like that. There was apparently construction work going on in the embassy, and one of these was being pouched in. But it couldn't be used to shoot at anyone. It had to be pressed against a surface before the charge could be discharged. We gave assurances that – absolute assurances – that there were no firearms in the pouch, and the Romanians eventually agreed to allow it in on that basis. What struck me was that even though relations were getting worse, and it was a difficult issue at a low level, there was an effort to find a solution, to be cooperative, to get around the difficulties which had been thrown up, in this case by their bureaucracy. I don't remember if I mentioned Nicu Ceausescu's visit to the State Department.

Q: I don't think so.

RICKERT: Nicu Ceausescu was the younger son. Ceausescu had two sons and a daughter. Valentin is the oldest and Zoia was the daughter, and then Nicu was the youngest. The older two apparently were not interested in politics, so Nicu became kind of the Crown Prince, the Heir Apparent. An unfortunate choice because he was a notorious playboy, and very heavy drinker who eventually died of cirrhosis of the liver. But he was sent on an official visit to Washington, and Quavering, Romanian embassy officer, came in and said, "Can you please set up some high level meetings for Nicu?" obviously meaning that if we didn't, his job and others were perhaps on the line. So we sent a routine meeting request up to Eagleburger thinking...

Q: ...who was deputy secretary...

RICKERT: ...deputy secretary. No, excuse me. He at that time he was undersecretary for political affairs, and he did see most of the high level Eastern Europeans who came through. I honestly thought he would just say politely, "No, I don't have time", but we got the memo back saying, "Yes, you can set up the meeting." Of course, the Romanians were delighted. And this was shortly after the incident in which the Korean Airlines plane was shot down in the Far East. It was very interesting and instructional for me to see what Eagleburger did with this meeting. He used it in order to get across our view on the KAL incident and what had happened and what it meant and so forth. Even if Nicu didn't pick up on it, he had an interpreter, and he had a couple of other embassy people there, and he had a report that would go back. He spent about 45

minutes with Nicu Ceausescu which most people would have considered to be a waste of time but used it to very good effects under those circumstances. He also used it to get other messages across from his level. Whether they did any good or not is another matter, but that's what diplomacy's all about: letting the other side know what you're up to.

Q: Okay. Anything else about the desk officer job? If not, where did you go next?

HENRY L. CLARKE
Deputy Chief of Mission
Bucharest (1985-1989)

Ambassador Clarke was born in Georgia in 1941. He attended Dartmouth College and enlisted in the US Army. He later entered Harvard University and then entered the Foreign Service. His career included positions in Germany, Nigeria, Romania, the USSR, and Israel. He was later appointed Ambassador to Uzbekistan. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.

Q: And you were DCM in Bucharest from when to when?

CLARKE: For four years from '85 to '89.

Q: I want to concentrate on that because that's a very important period.

CLARKE: It didn't change that much in Romania. You can ask me about Chernobyl, too. I want to comment on the effect of the huge release of radiation from the Chernobyl nuclear power reactor on the U.S. Embassy situation in Romania. I think it has not been recorded elsewhere, and it shows the state of Romania's relations with the USSR and the USA at that time. It also shows something of the dynamics of managing an Embassy during a crisis, or at least what we perceived as a crisis.

You will recall that the initial release of radioactive clouds from Chernobyl was not announced by the USSR, and it passed over the Republic of Byelorussia, and Poland, before being detected (I believe in Sweden). U.S. Embassy Warsaw began an evacuation of a large part of its dependents and staff. Ambassador Kirk was in the northern part of Romania, with his wife, visiting local governments and a folk festival. So I was not Chargé d'affairs, but I was in charge of the Embassy staff.

Winds then shifted, and the radioactive plume from Chernobyl turned in the direction of Romania. The first I heard of the wind shift was an urgent call from the Romanian authorities that I should come to a meeting at the Council of Ministers. They asked me, on an urgent basis, if the United States could provide an expert team to assess the danger to Romania from this development and provide recommendations. They had received information from the Soviets which they did not accept at face value. I said I would do my best.

We sent a cable to Washington and got an immediate, positive response to the Romanian request. An accident-response team began collecting itself and heading for airports, mostly in the western part of the U.S. In the meantime, we had a holiday, and the Romanians announced that everyone should stay indoors and bring their domestic animals under shelter – despite the beautiful spring weather. I called Ambassador Kirk, who said that at his age (mid-fifties), a little radiation was not likely to affect his life expectancy, so he would finish his trip before returning to Bucharest.

A few members of the staff called me about the possibilities of evacuation, aware of the shock and panic that had occurred in Northern Europe. I told them to stay indoors and sit tight, that we had experts on the way who could judge the risks. Our Administrative Counselor, Jim Robertson, wisely began figuring out how to buy a lot of bottled water from western Europe. (In Bucharest, we boiled, filtered, and decanted our filthy water, before drinking it, but it was not clear that this would be useful for removing radiation contamination.) A Canadian diplomat's wife, a friend of ours, departed with her children.

The experts arrived in good order, and began comparing notes with Romanian experts. By the next working day, a Monday I believe, they briefed our staff at the Embassy. They were so blase, or perhaps jaded, that at least some of the staff were skeptical. They assessed the danger from radiation as being the equivalent of a long airline flight at high altitude, or living in Denver for two years. They found the Romanians' assessments to be accurate, and so informed the Romanian authorities.

We talked about water and food, which seemed to deserve some caution. At least one staff member thought the bottled water should be supplied for free by the Embassy. I replied that free goods tended to be wasted. We were importing water for drinking, not for washing cars or animals. I agreed that the Embassy would pay for the air transportation from Germany, and each family would pay for the actual cost of the water. I believe that most of the staff was satisfied with the decision not to evacuate, and that they could handle the situation. Afterward, I heard that the State Department had been pleased that we remained cool. In my opinion, the responsiveness of the Department and other agencies in getting the experts out to us so quickly was the key element – both in showing the Romanian Government our good will, and in reassuring the American Embassy staff.

Q: Today is the 20th of December, 1999. You are DCM in Bucharest from '85 to '89. Who is our ambassador and how did you get the job?

CLARKE: I got the job through the process they had at the time which depended a good deal on the person they had planned to be ambassador. David Funderburk had been appointed by President Reagan as ambassador to Romania and served there for four years, until 1985. I was fortunate enough to be chosen by Roger Kirk who was scheduled to go out as ambassador in '85. He was the principal deputy in IO (International Organizations Bureau), and they lost their assistant secretary, so there was a delay in officially naming him. Then, because it was late in the congressional season, there was a long wait for his hearing. In the meantime I went out there and replaced the chargé because Funderburk had already left.

Q: Who was chargé?

CLARKE: I remember his face very well, but now I suddenly can't say his name. He had been assigned to Bucharest as political counselor. He was a former Marine. When Funderburk fired the DCM, he chose this fellow as his DCM. Before I went out to post, I was warned by people in the department that the post was in considerable disarray and that all the traditional State Department functions of the post were in bad shape. The reporting was down practically to nil and very slanted. If anything came out at all, it was very much that Romania was part of the Soviet empire, all other indications to the contrary notwithstanding. There was practically no economic reporting going on that was of use to the policy process. The consular section was functioning, but there was a consular agreement that was in the process of being negotiated which required front office involvement. Since I was going to be the only one in the front office for awhile, that meant me. The whole administrative setup was in bad shape through mismanagement.

Q: Looking back, Funderburk was a very controversial political appointee.

CLARKE: Indeed. He was a protégé of Senator Helms and shared his ideology, not only with respect to foreign countries, but also toward the State Department.

Q: Funderburk came from South Carolina or North Carolina?

CLARKE: Eastern North Carolina.

Q: Coming out of a very anti-communist sort of fundamentalist side, he had served in Romania in the Peace Corp, I believe?

CLARKE: He had been a Fulbright. Again that's probably in his CV somewhere.

Q: So there had been a connection there and he took a very dim view of everything that our policy and the Foreign Service was doing.

CLARKE: That's right. And the seventh floor of the State Department was particularly annoyed because they felt he was not executing their instructions. Even when they tried to be tough on the Romanians, he tended not to do it. I'm now very vague on the details of what happened before I went there, because I got them only second hand to begin with. I quickly agreed with Roger Kirk that our main objective in Bucharest was to forget about what had gone on before and create what we thought was a good embassy and not worry too much about who was to blame for what went on before.

Q: While you're getting yourself ready to go, Bucharest, Romania, was not a place you thought about much, was it?

CLARKE: No. I'd served there before.

Q: From the department were you getting any sort of ideas of where Romania stood, because one school of thought was Romania is a dictatorship, it's communist, it's all awful. You were saying the embassy was quite small.

CLARKE: Right. Therefore even though my first tour was as commercial officer, I remember very well the assumptions and directions of our policy at that time which was, the period of Henry Kissinger. It was to encourage every possible deviation that Romania might be considering from its Warsaw Pact and CEMA obligations. They were deviating in a lot of ways. We did indeed encourage that and we tried to build up a bilateral relationship truly based on their foreign policy and without having anything good to say about their dictatorship or the fact they were very, very Communist. Indeed, Ceausescu was Communist in even less pragmatic ways than some others. He had some very hard radical ideological views, especially on economic matters and especially on what you do with your opponents.

By the 1980s of course, people were more interested in what Poland was doing or what Hungary was doing and the amount of foreign policy deviation by Romania hadn't really changed much. So people focused more and more on what was undoubtedly a deteriorating domestic political civilization. It was a different world, and we concentrated on different things. We focused much more on the domestic side, on human rights, on protecting religious groups from repression and that sort of thing. But I had been able to track what was going on in Romania in between because I had served in Romania, then in East-West Trade in Washington, then one year out of the loop in EUR and then a tour in Moscow. I was very interested in the economic relations among the Communist countries. I'm still trying to follow the overall political situation. So I thought I knew the place and I knew what I was asking for by going back to what was a relatively unpopular post in Europe. But I had found my time there the first time very challenging and interesting, and so I was quite happy to be going back to a place where I knew the language and could expect to do well. It was even more fun to arrive there and take over the post as Chargé, which lasted four or five months, and see how relatively easy it was to correct some of the things that were wrong.

Q: What did you do to put things right in reporting, administration, etc?

CLARKE: The first good news was that people were glad to see me. They didn't know me from Adam, but they were glad to have a change. They began submitting draft reports to me that had been not sent under my DCM predecessor, as well as Funderburk, some months earlier. I remember in particular the first one I got from one political officer. It was a long, involved, but very rich report with a lot of sources. He had obviously consulted a lot of Romanians in putting this together. I found it not terribly well written so I made a number of major suggestions in organization and drafting. When I returned it, I apologized that it had taken me a period of three days or so to get through this.

He laughed and he said, "This thing has been lying around for months. Three days is light-speed compared to the way it was treated in the past." And he was pleased with the changes. He was glad to have them. I was just doing what I knew from previous assignments needed to be done and that was in many cases all it took to restore good working relationships in the embassy. Give people a chance to do their job right and sure enough, they appreciate it.

Q: Let's talk about the Consular operation to begin with. The consular treaty and all that, how did that work out?

CLARKE: If I remember correctly, the idea was to make some arrangements so as to facilitate the exit from Romania of all those who were entitled to some sort of immigrant status in the United States through relatives or through refugee status. I confess I haven't looked at that in all these many years and I don't remember the details or the sticking points particularly. I just remember that we had to have a number of sessions with the consular section of the foreign ministry; it was thought not to be a very diplomatic institution but rather more of an intelligence institution. It was housed in a different building in a different part of town than the foreign ministry. We went there and negotiated and negotiated and negotiated over a period of many months and were ultimately successful. I was the spokesman during this negotiation, but the consul general was the one who prepared our paperwork at each stage, and then we would discuss how we wanted to proceed and what our best chances were. It was actually a very civilized process with the Romanians. Not as speedy as we would have liked but methodical and professional, as I remember.

Q: When you arrived there, was this a government where everything went to the top or were there people, say in the Foreign Ministry, who could make decisions?

CLARKE: Basically everything went to the top that was either important or that people were afraid the President might think was important, including a wide range of minor stuff. It was very difficult to get anyone to make a decision unless the President had given sufficient guidance and the decision was within that scope. Even that was unusual. Most of the things that we needed tended to be decided at the top. This is also partly in retrospect, looking back and actually talking to some of the people who were there on the other side then. Look at Roger Kirk's book, which he wrote with one of our opposite numbers in the Foreign Ministry. It was about as good as you can get as far as seeing two sides of the same dialogue. Those who were most effective in the Foreign Ministry were effective because they were able to get decisions from Ceausescu. It was not because they were making the decisions themselves.

Q: What was your impression, and also of the other officers, of Ceausescu, particularly at the beginning and did this change over the four years you were there?

CLARKE: Yes it changed. My perception at least changed over the four years. When I came, I had the impression from my previous background following Romania that here was a very bright and skillful dealer in foreign affairs who had some serious constraints within which he had to operate, but that he was a real master of pressing them to the limit. Whether it was with us or with the Russians or whether it arose from his desire to become involved in the Middle East peace process or a whole range of other considerations, he seemed to have something of a knack for that. By the time I left, I was convinced he was losing that knack. He was slipping. This would be impossible for me to prove, because it might just be that there were fewer and fewer of these effective people in between and there was more and more slippage in the communications to and from him. But I don't think so, because there were things that he did very personally. One example comes to mind.

It was not in the first couple of years that I was there so it must have been in one of the last couple of New Year's Day receptions for diplomatic corps. I always went to them, because Roger was never in country on New Year's – at Christmas and New Years he was always in the States with his extended family. That was fine with me because I had little kids in the family and I didn't really want to go anywhere at that time of year. I went to this reception and here comes this incredible statement, basically supporting the idea of chemical weapons as a small country's answer to countries that had nuclear weapons. Who this was supposed to favorably impress, damned if I know. It was certainly not something the Romanian people wanted to hear. It was certainly nothing that Moscow wanted to hear from such an unreliable fellow traveler, if he could even be said to be on the same path. For us it was just one further nail in the coffin of some kind of working relationship with Ceausescu's regime.

That's the first thing that comes to mind, but there were others. When you reach a point with a regime as basically static or stable as that one, the key people in the embassy can pretty much write the speech for the next public occasion for the president, simply by rearranging the paragraphs of all the other speeches they'd ever read by him. If then he starts doing things that we can be sure will not work, you conclude that he's losing it.

Q: Did you have the feeling that this was megalomania? One hears that later, based on his building big palaces and his hunting parties and so on.

CLARKE: Megalomania, a preference for having people around him who said yes and flattered him, an increasing tendency to get furious with anyone who told him the truth or questioned his statements. I can give you examples of foreigners who ran into his fury. With foreigners we had a closer read out of what was going on. For example, when the Canadians told him that there was no way his nuclear power plant was going to be built on the schedule that he had announced publicly, they had the impression that no one had told him the truth about this project. We were never sure, because often Ceausescu did things for effect. Getting mad at the Canadians because it was behind schedule and trying to blame them rather than his own side, which was really to blame, was perfectly natural in his bargaining framework. But in this case, they really had the feeling that he just didn't know what was going on and nobody in his government was about to tell him. So there is this problem of dictators who are so feared, they become so isolated that they really can't run the country anymore, and in a way that's what finally did him in, I think.

Q: What about Madam Ceausescu? What was the reading on her?

CLARKE: It was widely believed in Romania, and I don't think anybody in the embassy would have denied it, that she was a worse case than Ceausescu in terms of megalomania, totally self-centered. She was inclined to cause gratuitous harm to others. I had the opportunity either to accompany Roger or visitors to meetings with Ceausescu. I only met with Ceausescu once or twice totally by myself, but I often accompanied high-ranking Americans in or out of the government, especially when the ambassador was not there, and so I saw this guy face-to-face quite a lot in four years time. I came to the conclusion, proof to my satisfaction, that it was possible for a person to be evil and that he was sustained in this by his wife who shared it.

Q: They had a son, too, didn't they?

CLARKE: They had several. And a daughter. Some were more favorably treated than others. One son went into the sciences and did his best to stay out of Bucharest and out of the family orbit. Another was all playboy and didn't do anything official. Another was a deputy minister of defense. There were a number of children. And a daughter who was supposed to be a mathematician.

Q: How did one deal with this situation? Did we have to run every decision up to him or treat it with kid gloves, try to avoid him or what?

CLARKE: Our day to day business was done with the Foreign Ministry and occasionally other ministries that were particularly appropriate. We had access to most of those ministries directly, and we would pose questions at the level that would be reasonable for a government to have. We still knew that we couldn't do a deal ourselves right there at the table but that we were going through the right channel. We would take things up directly with Ceausescu whenever we had high level American visitors, but governmental visitors declined over this period. There was less and less enthusiasm on the part of our senior officials for spending a couple hours debating Ceausescu. There was more and more a feeling that we should avoid that. One of the most extreme cases was the Secretary of Commerce who was supposed to be the counterpart of the Minister of Foreign Trade in a bilateral economic commission. The Romanians would do everything possible to get this commission held there, and our Secretary would do everything to stay out of it because he had spent three or four hours with Ceausescu on a previous visit and he just did not want to go back. He intended putting it off until after the end of his time in public service.

So those were hard to handle. We knew what was going on back in Washington and understood why, and yet we were still trying to maintain a bilateral relationship with Romania that gave us some avenues into the country, including trade, that were of benefit to the United States. We also figured Ceausescu would not last forever, and we wanted to have something in place in the relationship that we could keep it for the transition.

Q: There were stories about babies being warehoused and all sorts of things about the security. Could you talk about what we were observing and what we were reporting that was developing in Romania during this time?

CLARKE: The babies thing shocked me, and I didn't think there was any shocking left to be done after serving there for four years – basically four of the last four and a half years of Ceausescu's life. What happened when we were there was the process of adopting Romanian babies by foreigners was stopped. We spent a lot of time, we and the Europeans – the Western Europeans were adopting more babies than we were – arguing over not so much the principle of stopping adoptions, but the fact that there were so many cases in process. Families and even the children, in some cases, were aware they were supposed to be adopted and the whole thing was brought to a halt. We tried to resolve those cases in a humanitarian way. We understood that Elena Ceausescu was behind that decision. She thought they shouldn't be losing these people to Romania, and we knew her really weird views on demography and abortion and all, and just assumed this was another arbitrary step. It could also be that people at a lower level were aware

of the deteriorating situation in the orphanages and just didn't want any more foreigners around. There may now be a lot of material out there about what happened and some of the people involved in it. There may be people who just didn't want to talk about it. I don't know the situation now.

Q: What were we doing on the baby situation? What could you do?

CLARKE: We didn't know that the babies were all developing HIV. That was not evident. It was not being reported on those adoptions that were successful. I think the adoptions that did occur were occurring from model orphanages and not from the ones where all the horrors were found. There was a rumor that Ceausescu liked to have transfusions of blood. We thought this was a rerun of Vampires in Transylvania and had a hard time believing it, although we knew he had some fetishes that were pretty weird. That was one that would have required a bit of evidence before we would have believed it. In any case, they didn't get the HIV from transfusions with Ceausescu or Ceausescu would have had HIV, and that was not the story. I assumed this was just bad medical practices somehow.

We did tell people never to be injected in Romania. Our medical unit was willing to provide disposable needles for people if they were traveling up country and thought they might have an accident or something. It was not considered bad form to have disposable needles in your family first aid kit. Everyone knew the Romanians reused needles.

Q: What did we tell the prospective parents? Did we have a policy?

CLARKE: We were pretty realistic on this. Basically we were prepared to provide the normal assistance we would, in divided family cases, when the child had been adopted according to Romanian law. The problem was figuring out what Romanian law was and helping those families go through it. I'm sure that our consular officers were – I wasn't in any of these interviews – but I'm sure that they cautioned that this was a risky proposition and that the government could change its mind in any stage of the process. But people who want to adopt a baby tend to be very determined folks, and I don't think they are easily talked out of it on the basis of a theoretical briefing, particularly the ones that made it all the way to Romania.

Q: What were we reporting on conditions inside Romania? Human rights had been on the agenda since the Carter administration. So we're into the Reagan administration but Congress has mandated human rights.

CLARKE: That was the one part of the Funderburk portfolio which we continued. I think we did a better more objective job of it. But we inherited from that period a relationship with American religious groups that were trying to support a religious revival among the Protestants in Romania. These were growing churches and lots of them were growing underground, trying not to cause too much trouble, but getting into trouble in the end. They needed premises, and they were trying to expand churches and to turn houses into churches. They needed building permits which they couldn't get.

I was reminded of this when I later served in Israel and they were bulldozing buildings without permits. In Romania we were more aggressive than we were in the West Bank. We actually sent officers to the scene so that we saw some bulldozings and could talk to some people there and find out what exactly were the circumstances. The more evangelical Protestants, Baptists, a number of others, Pentecostalist, Seventh Day Adventists, and a number of other churches were growing. People were turning to them as an answer to their miserable lives, and these people had established contacts with American religious groups. Bibles and all kinds of things were being smuggled in to further this religious revival. We in the government were trying to hold the Romanians to the standards of the Helsinki Final Act and modifications made subsequently, right down the line. Every time we heard about something that wasn't in accord with that, we would go in and make our objections known at the Foreign Ministry and report the facts.

We had a slew of cases. The Human Rights officer was a junior political job, but it was not only a full time job, it was an overtime job, weekends and nights. One young woman said one of the hardest things for her was when she visited one of the dissident contacts who was on a hunger strike. When she arrived, she found out it was his birthday; they had baked a cake, but he wasn't going to eat it, he was on the hunger strike. She had to eat the cake sitting there talking with him about the hunger strike. That was routine duty there.

Q: Did you feel that we were able to make any headway?

CLARKE: Headway is not the word I would use. Ceausescu's personal ruthlessness goes back to before he was president. There may have been some moderating in the late '60s and early '70s. I don't know. But probably not much. It was probably just that we didn't concentrate at that time on domestic matters as much as we did later. It was getting worse, if anything. People disappeared and were believed to have been killed or put in political prison in Arad where they were very likely to starve or freeze to death. There was no making excuses for Romania. What we had to do every year though, was explain to the Congress why we wished to continue so called Most Favored Nation trading status. That meant that Romania would have the same trading status as almost all the other countries in the world with the exception of a handful of Communist countries. This was a status which had subsequently been given to Hungary, which Poland already had and Yugoslavia had never lost since the nineteenth century. So we felt that relationship was worth maintaining. The question was, could we squeeze concessions out of Ceausescu every year to keep that in place.

Ultimately we were not able to do so. Instead Ceausescu got mad at our demands and himself suspended Most Favored Nation trading status. From our point of view, that was not a bad outcome. One of the reasons we had not wanted just to go in one year and say no further MFN was our fear that he would retaliate against democratic dissidents, against religious groups, against American government installations such as the large cultural center we had in Bucharest, and the USIS library that was practically unique. If he had taken that away from us, we would have lost a real asset. I also felt that the closer trading relationship, which gave jobs to Americans and Romanians, was worth maintaining as long as we could. I felt it helped prepare both sides for the post-Ceausescu period. So there were things we felt could be worse than giving MFN, and we were therefore not eager to be the ones to cut this off. When Ceausescu ended MFN, there was no reason to retaliate.

Others I think blamed us for that – those who view MFN as some sort of sign of good conduct on the part of a country. We weren't arguing that Romania was conducting itself well. But emigration was one of the things the Jackson-Vanik amendment required. It doesn't say anything about human rights at all. If emigration is being permitted, and by that it was understood primarily Jewish emigration, then it was possible to obtain Most Favored Nation trading status and the emigration continued. The consular agreement helped to facilitate it to the United States. But Jewish emigration to Israel continued through this period and similarly emigration of Germans to Germany continued as well.

Q: Could you explain Jewish emigration? What was its impact during the time you were there? Where was it coming from? Where was it going?

CLARKE: Different parts of Romania had suffered differently from the holocaust, going back that far. Parts of Romania that had been incorporated into Hungary were nearly stripped of Jews who were sent off to Auschwitz. There were pogroms, and awful things happened in other parts of the country. But Romania ended World War II with hundreds of thousands of Jews and many of them, with the coming of the Communists, managed to get out of the country, either to Israel or to other countries in the west. After it became no longer possible to leave legally, through some unusually skillful diplomacy, Rabbi Rosen, the leader of the Romanian Jewish community, worked out a de facto understanding with the communist leaders that he could somehow maintain a community, continue to practice the Jewish religion, teach Hebrew which was not allowed in most Communist countries, and facilitate a certain amount of emigration.

When we came along with the Jackson-Vanik amendment, Russia having rejected it, we found that Ceausescu felt that he had already allowed a certain amount of emigration and was prepared to allow some more. So we struck a deal. This deal was struck during my first tour in Romania, and I participated in the negotiations on it. In Washington one of my duties was to supervise how we would use Jackson-Vanik with the other Communist countries. We had negotiations with Hungary and China during the time my office was working on that. So I was extremely well filled in on Jackson-Vanik and the congressional connection by the time I went back to Romania the second time. By then, however, the game was no longer just Jackson-Vanik. Jackson was gone. Vanik was not so sure this was a useful amendment any longer and what was being articulated in congress, other than a latent interest in emigration, was a demand for better observance of human rights in general. The standard had broadened de facto. So any report then covered not only the status of Jewish immigration, but human rights. By the time I was there the second time, a steady flow of Jewish immigration was continuing, but the Jewish community had shrunk to some 20,000, many of them elderly and with no plans to leave. Still, the younger ones who were planning to leave had their own Hebrew schools, and I understand that they integrated speedily once they got to Israel, partly because of their language preparation.

Q: Romania was not a stopover on Russian Jewish migration, was it?

CLARKE: No.

Q: That went to Austria.

CLARKE: Right. There was a train to Vienna. Most of the Jewish emigration from Romania did not go to the States. We were accepting refugees, but on a non-discriminatory basis, and they had to establish refugee status as being at hazard in Romania, and we also assisted divided families. Lots of them.

Q: What were relations with the Soviet Union at that time? We're talking about Gorbachev who was the new phenomena during this period of time. Were we watching that closely?

CLARKE: Sure. Especially since Roger and I and others in the embassy had a different view on this than Funderburk had had. We felt that relations between Romania and Moscow had been pretty poor all along, considering they were supposed to be allies. But the defense relationship was especially weak and that was very much in the American interest because that accounted for a certain number of divisions that probably would not fight against us. They didn't participate in Warsaw Pact exercises, and they were very reluctant to allow more than limited transit of Romania by Russian troops. They were very careful about how those transits were done. We had a defense attaché shop whose leading interest was the relationship with the Russians, as well as what the Romanian military was like.

Gorbachev had just assumed power when I left Moscow and was a new phenomenon for the Romanians, but because the Romanians wanted no part of glasnost, let alone perestroika, there was no chance Romania would follow his lead. The relationship simply continued to deteriorate. I think what Gorbachev would have liked is a renewal of the Communist world and that would have meant a strengthening through reform. Romania had never wanted tight relationships in which Romania would be subject to control by Moscow. Secondly, they certainly didn't want any kind of reform, so this gap became greater and greater.

Q: How about the Bessarabia situation, the part of Romania that had been taken over by the Soviet Union? Was that a nagging thing?

CLARKE: It was something that Romanians would complain about as a historical injustice. It was, in practical terms, of no real significance. I did visit the part of Ukraine and Moldova that had been Romanian while I was DCM in Bucharest, and it was interesting to see the degree of Romanian-ness of these areas, but it was not a practical matter. Nobody in Romania thought that as long as the Soviet Union existed there was any hope of getting those territories back. There were all kinds of theories about how the U.S. was to blame for Romania's becoming Communist, but this was, as far as I can tell, just sheer nonsense, not really worth a lot of time.

Q: Most small countries had figured out how to blame us. A little earlier on, I was in Greece, and we were absolutely to blame for the Colonels taking over there. What about relations with the other countries, Yugoslavia, Hungary, and Bulgaria?

CLARKE: They weren't the greatest. There too, Ceausescu wanted his turf to be his turf and nobody else's. If that meant he had to limit his cooperation with his neighbors, that's what he did. The relationship with Hungary was difficult at best. Ceausescu's regime, like most Communist regimes, oscillated slightly between discouraging nationalist feeling and encouraging

nationalist feelings, depending on how they thought the politics would favor central control. The relationship between the Hungarians and Romanians was bad but was papered over through Communist ideology. As in the Soviet Union and in Yugoslavia, so long as the police were maintaining the structure, the structure connecting the ethnic groups stood, but it was not healing itself in the process.

Q: My understanding was that nobody really got to invite Mr. and Mrs. Ceausescu to come over as house guests to any other country. Stories were raging of how they would go and pluck the guest house of other countries clean. This may be a story, but it meant that you weren't having the normal get-togethers of chiefs of state. Was this a fact?

CLARKE: I don't remember about Elena traveling, except there were great stories about her trip to the States, which were probably pretty well documented. I was not on that trip so I'm not your source for that. I do know that the Ceausescus expected, even demanded, all sorts of phoney honorary degrees and other symbols of greatness and legitimacy. But as far as meetings of Communist Chiefs of State, Ceausescu had to go to some of those. Those were bottom line, are-you-still-Communist-or-aren't-you kinds of things. Not to go would have had consequences for him.

Q: What about life in Romania? One hears about the security people. What are they called?

CLARKE: Securitate.

Q: Were we reporting on that and how difficult was it, would you say during this time?

CLARKE: It was worse than during my first tour, but I was also more conscious of it because I was watching the political scene more. I had been commercial attaché the first time and had been quite busy with the commercial relationship. The second time I was supervising political and economic reporting and was much more in to that side of the situation in Romania. It was really bad. I think it was arguably the worst in Eastern Europe with the possible exception of Albania. I don't know if anybody's done a real good comparison because the two were really different cases. But it was awful. It broke down the society. It made it much more difficult for Romania to move out of the Communist period. A basic lack of trust, an inability to organize openly, corruption, all these things which existed in all the Communist countries were worse in Romania.

So when Poland or Czechoslovakia or Hungary showed greater capacity for adapting to the West, this should really have come as no surprise to us. More damage had been done to the Romanian body politic, to people's ability to relate to one another through this constant spying and ratting on one another and because so many Romanians really felt that the only hope was to escape. They'd come to the conclusion by the time the Ceausescus were killed that the only hope for leading a normal life was to leave Romania. The Ceausescus really destroyed the national spirit. I don't think any of the countries, certainly not the countries that have been recently admitted to NATO, ever reached that low a level of social breakdown.

Q: There are stories about food shortages, that Ceausescu was selling off the national food for hard currency and the people were in bad straits. Was this true?

CLARKE: That was absolutely true and was common knowledge and a source of great pain. I think the best way is to tell you the Romanian joke of the period about the school boy who was asked to draw a picture of a pig and he drew a tail and hooves and stomach, various other miscellaneous parts without meat, and the teacher said, "But that's not a pig, that's just pieces of a pig."

He says, "You didn't ask me to draw you a picture of an export pig."

And that was true. Even back in my first tour, one of the riots that I remember occurred at the port, a spontaneous riot, that I believe was caused by the fact that they were loading sugar for export that Romanians made but could not buy. It could have been caused by a number of things, and we never really found out. But I believe it was caused by the fact that during a period of sugar shortage in the world, sugar prices had risen and the Romanians were exporting their short supply of beet sugar, in competition with cane sugar. The difference in cost of production is outrageous. They were getting very poor money, even at the high inflated world prices of sugar in those days. They exported aluminum even though they made it at much higher cost than probably any other producer. The total loss to the economy was appalling. And it was the same with agricultural products, whether it was wheat or something else.

When I first arrived on my second tour, I heard so many Romanians complaining about the food situation that I toured the market. I thought things were really not a whole lot worse than I remembered them before. They hadn't been good. There was a big line at the fish store. I got in line to see what it was people were getting because the presence of a line was a good sign. It meant there was something worth waiting for. I got up to the front and realized they were getting heads and tails of carp. They were not getting export carp that were raised at fish farms in Romania, but they had the basis for a soup and that was worth standing in line for. There were certain staples that were generally available, but lots of things were in very short supply. I think it was true, and we reported this as well even though we couldn't prove it, that a lot of people in the cities survived because they still had ties to the countryside and were getting food in the trunks of cars or in knapsacks that could not be supplied through the markets.

Q: When one looks at Romania and realizes this is one of these breadbasket countries, it should be a pretty good food producer.

CLARKE: It should indeed.

Q: What was behind all this? Was the money going into Swiss banks or was it being misspent or what?

CLARKE: Some of it was going into Swiss banks, but in most cases, Romania just lost its money and resources. Consider for example my aluminum case. If it cost you 10 times as much to make the aluminum as you can get in imports – I'm trying to get away from questions of exchange rates — if your return value on the export of that aluminum is only one tenth of the resources you put into it, you can't do that for a whole lot of years without forcing your country into poverty. One industry can do it for 10 years. But this was generally true for the economy. It

wasn't just the final stage of aluminum production. They produced bauxite, and it required extremely high temperatures to process and was therefore a very heavy energy consumer and they just simply decided – the president decided – they were going to produce aluminum and so they had to do it. Then they sold it at a ruinous loss.

They bought the last of the BAC 111 aircraft in the world. The British Aircraft Corporation had been unable to sell them, and they bought the technology to build BAC 111s when there was nobody in the world who wanted that aircraft any more. That was Ceausescu's approach – that Romania was to become a commercial aircraft manufacturer. I remember very clearly, again from my first tour, telling Bill Casey when he was chairman of EXIM Bank, that by 1980 Romania's steel production would outpace that of the UK. Casey couldn't believe his ears and he said, "Well, why would they do that? They're cutting theirs back."

There was no comprehension on the other side of the table there. They didn't dare comprehend because it would be reported badly back to Ceausescu. So this was a country hell bent on economic self destruction.

Q: During the time you were there, were there any equivalent presidential or vice presidential visits?

CLARKE: No, not during my second tour, 1985-89. We were constantly being asked for high level visits one way or the other because the Romanians had reached the point where that was about the only thing they could think of to maintain their prestige on the world scene. It was fortunate that I'm not a great fan of high profile visits in general. So when it was pretty clear that our folks didn't want to do them, that didn't cause me any grief, at least not in Bucharest. But for example, we had the Secretary visit not long after Roger arrived and this would have been very late fall of 1985.

Q: Shultz.

CLARKE: Shultz. Six hours. No overnight. So we had to plan that down to every last minute. It was deliberately less than an overnight because it was not intended to be a warm, fuzzy visit at all. It was intended to talk straight to Ceausescu.

After that, the Romanian relationship within the department was delegated to Deputy Secretary Whitehead who wanted to have a functional role in the State Department in addition to being deputy. Eastern Europe apparently fell to him. So he toured Eastern Europe a number of times and then became our Washington level spokesman for policy. It was his tough talk in early '89, which led Ceausescu to back off. He decided he wasn't going to get MFN any longer and he would rather take it back himself than lose it another way. I think that was again a mistake on Ceausescu's part, because then he had no means to retaliate against us. Nevertheless, that's what he did. Then there were allegations of American spying, the Foreign Ministry was turned inside out, and Romanian-American relations reached their lowest point.

Q: Were we acting as a monitor for the Helsinki Accords or were other parts of European embassies taking on that?

CLARKE: When I first arrived and was chargé in '85, we had regular meetings with the NATO ambassadors in secure rooms. The general view was that the American position on human rights was quite Quixotic, and totally out of place in Romania, that it was really a hopeless quest. By the time I left, most of the other ambassadors of major NATO countries were into the act. The ambassadors themselves, not to mention members of their staff. There had always been somebody to talk to in the German embassy or somebody to talk to in the British embassy about human rights, but no interest in '85 at high levels. By '89, the British ambassador was up country trying to get to see a famous dissident. We had no trouble if we wanted to cover a trial or something, of getting somebody from another embassy to accompany our officer. Quite an interesting change. I think partly they all mistrusted Ambassador Funderburk and that was part of the problem.

Q: But did it reflect their governments attitudes as well?

CLARKE: Sure. Interestingly enough, one of the things that seemed to bother people in Western Europe more than it did in the United States, was Ceausescu's policy of leveling big sections of towns or even villages and reconstructing them in a ghastly modern fashion. In the case of some of the villages, it was just tearing down houses, plowing up the ground, and planting something. Some of this was related to his palace building, but it was a larger megalomania – that he would ultimately plan all of Romania down to the last detail according to his standards of not only efficiency but aesthetics as well. This really bothered people in Western Europe, apparently more than it did in the United States, where it all seemed kind of distant, I guess. We were much more into the religious or freedom of speech questions.

Q: Was there any real freedom of speech?

CLARKE: Virtually none. What would happen though, is occasionally a dissident would talk to a reporter from outside the country. The reporter would get out and relate what he'd been told. Sometimes there were interviews for radio. I don't think TV was very likely because that's hard to do on that level of contact. But you're right to ask the question, because in many cases, nobody would be willing to speak because they didn't want to risk their lives. The people who did were often putting themselves in a position where they were absolutely counting on outside support to prevent being "disappeared." The list of examples out of four years would be quite long. In many cases, we did come through and eventually establish their refugee status and bargain with Ceausescu and maybe as part of the deal for next year's MFN, get the guy out of the country. I remember some very able people, a couple of them lawyers, who chose to fight a case like real lawyers in a Romanian court, involving religious freedom and quoting things like the Helsinki Final Act. One guy got put in jail. We had witnesses there who heard him, officers from the embassy, and we got him out of jail. We ultimately resettled him in Texas. But that was the state of freedom in those days.

Q: What about the international media and particularly the American media? Did they come in from time to time and report on what was happening?

CLARKE: Yes, they did, but no one was based there, so it was fairly superficial coverage. Some of the better reporting, I would say, was BBC. During the actual revolution, when I was no longer there – I was in Israel – BBC had phenomenal coverage. They had people in Bucharest and Timisoara during the events, able to witness them and report them on the radio live. It was really a superb caliber of reporting.

Q: Did you note increased nervousness as Gorbachev instituted his reforms, which included perestroika, openness, and glasnost, reform? Was this reflected at all? Were countermeasures taken in Romania or did this happen over the horizon?

CLARKE: The level of control in Romania was such that it was largely over the horizon. It's just that newspapers like Pravda which nobody would have paid a dime for before, suddenly became as much contraband as The Herald Tribune. So as glasnost increased in Russia, it meant that there was more shielding that was necessary. There aren't that many people in Romania who like reading Russian and so it wasn't hard for the authorities to shield them.

I would say though, they were pressed from all sides. The route for people wishing to escape the country was generally to swim the Danube to Yugoslavia, and then evade the Yugoslav patrols for enough miles 'til they could get to Belgrade and report to the UN Commissioner for Refugees and establish their refugee status. That's the way most people got out. Some were killed in the process and others were returned to Romania by the Serbs and others were caught on the Romanian side. The Romanian government was always a little worried about leakage to Yugoslavia, because it was an example of a more Western country. All the rest of the borders were of course with Warsaw Pact allies and Romania got cooperation in policing them. But as Hungary took advantage of the Gorbachev period, lots of Hungarians were in Romania with good contacts in Hungary, and were able to bring in the news of what was going on. Germans tended to be pretty aware of what was going on outside the country. So the pressures built. The fact that the revolution really started in Timisoara reflected the fact that it was a city composed of three ethnic groups – Hungarians, Germans and Romanians – who, more than in some other places, got along with each other. So when they got annoyed with the authorities, it wasn't one ethnic group against the authorities, it was all three.

Q: You left there in '89, in what, the summer?

CLARKE: The summer of '89.

Q: Because 89 was a critical year?

CLARKE: Yes. And I missed the best six months, which would have been fascinating.

Q: As you left, how were you reading the tea leaves?

CLARKE: We had a debate for at least two years, the last two years out of the four, as to whether there would be a violent revolution in Romania to throw Ceausescu out. We didn't have any scenario we could imagine of Ceausescu stepping down because he was feeling old or anything like that. We assumed he would stay there until he died in bed unless somebody threw

him out. We could not see that his controls were so weak that the military would throw him out. The securitate seemed to be totally loyal to him, working for no one else. Would the common people do it? We had what we had always had in Romania every so often, riots or street demonstrations or something when people blew a fuse. I remember having a good dialogue with the political counselor, because he felt that everybody had their limit and the Romanians must have their limit somewhere, even though the Romanians had been crushed down more than most and had put up with it more than most, and yet there must be a limit. I agreed with him: yes, somewhere, but don't count on it being effective.

He was absolutely right. That's pretty much what happened. People reached a point where they were willing to risk their lives, which took a while. Romanians are not Hungarians or Poles on that score, but they did reach that point. In Timisoara and Bucharest, they risked (and lost) their lives. That was the first element. Secondly, I don't think that would have even succeeded, but Ceausescu lost the army at a key moment in Bucharest and that was the other element that we could not predict. Much as we knew it was theoretically possible, we could not see how that fissure would develop. But a point was reached in Romania, as elsewhere, when the army decided it was not going to shoot people anymore. If they were going to shoot anybody, they were going to shoot the securitate. When that happened, Ceausescu really was doomed, and he knew it. He tried to flee and was caught and executed.

ROGER KIRK
Ambassador
Romania (1985-1989)

Ambassador Roger Kirk grew up in a Navy family, and first became interested in foreign service when his father was sent to London in 1939 as a Naval Attaché. Ambassador Kirk's career in the Foreign Service included positions in Italy, the Soviet Union, Vietnam, Somalia, Austria, and an ambassadorship to Romania. Ambassador Kirk was interviewed by Horace G. Torbert in 1991.

Q: I had a regional bureau bias. Well, eventually you got out of this again, and got to Romania. Was that something you handpicked yourself?

KIRK: No, there's a little story behind that, I suppose. The Bureau of Personnel, and the Under Secretary for Administration, were the people whom you had to look to to take care of the people who were not in regional bureaus for Chief of Mission posts, or DCM posts. In other words, if you weren't on the team of one bureau or the other the only one that's going to recommend you for an ambassador was the system, if you will. I got a call saying that I was the Department's nominee for Portugal, which was quite exciting, but they cryptically added, not to get worried about it. It was going to go to a White House person, they knew who it was. So I was what was termed the burnt offering on Portugal. But then the other thing that apparently happened is once a Foreign Service officer was turned down by the White House, for a White House appointee, the next post that he or she was put up for would--within reason, if it wasn't too obviously a political one--would be given to him or her rather than have it go to another political appointee. So after

the burnt offering came a phone call. You're not given a whole lot of time to decide on these things, as you know Tully. On the phone they said, "You have been turned down for Portugal, but we're nominating you for Romania." "Okay," said I.

(machine turned off)

Q: When we broke off slightly there you had just precipitously accepted Romania. Were you as enthusiastic after you got there, as you were, and hearing that you had a job abroad at all?

KIRK: Well, of course, I knew that Romania was one of the most repressive of the East European regimes, and that our relations with Romania were quite difficult. But Romania was also of some interest because of its attempt to be relatively independent of the Soviets. I had frankly had enough of IO by that time, so that I was glad to be moving out.

Q: That's a wear-out job, it really is. I had one too.

KIRK: Yes, its frustrating.

Q: Its like Congressional relations job I had. A lot of fun but it kills you.

KIRK: Yes, that's right. I was really quite glad to move on from that. Basically what we were trying to do with Romania was to encourage their somewhat independent stance with the Soviets. That is to say, Ceausescu took as independent a position as he really could given his geographic location, and his relatively weak power compared to that of the Soviets. He did not allow Warsaw Pact ground forces maneuver on his soil. He had no Russian troops on his soil. He differed from the Soviets on a number of UN issues. He maintained diplomatic relations with Israel throughout the time that the Soviets broke them off. He was relatively nice to the small Jewish community in Romania, some 25,000 as compared to the way he treated the rest of the population, and as compared to the way Jews were treated in most of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union at that time. On the other hand, his internal policies were very distasteful to us. The big issue between the United States and Romania, and within the U.S. Government, was whether to continue to extend Most Favored Nation tariff treatment to Romania. It was renewed on an annual basis. The essential argument for it was the relative independence of foreign policy and the belief--I think sound belief--that extending MFN enabled us to help a few human rights cases and was the thing which persuaded, or compelled, Ceausescu to let about 2,000 to 2,500 Romanians emigrate to the United States each year. Those opposing extension of MFN argued that it was a sign of our approval for the regime, or at least it was portrayed by the regime as such, and we had no business giving that kind of approval to a regime of that kind. Both sides of the argument, it seemed to me, have a sound, perfectly justifiable, basis. I, for a number of years, came out on the side of continuing to extend MFN. I remember talking to Roz Ridgway about it. She was the one who had to testify as Secretary for European Affairs. She said that from her point of view, it was worthwhile to get the 2,000 or 2,500 people out of Romania each year. If it were cut off those people would no longer be able to leave.

Q: That's a pretty powerful argument on the Hill because they've all got constituents who have a cousin there. Not so many in Romania as you would...

KIRK: Not so many in Romania. The principal argument on the Hill was one not made by the administration as such, although we did make it. It was the concern of those interested in the welfare of the Jewish community, that turning off MFN would lead to a marked deterioration of the condition of that community.

Q: Were they, the Romanians, still selling visas to the Jews which they were doing back in the late '40s and early '50s?

KIRK: The Romanians enjoyed a certain amount of economic benefits, loans and this kind of thing, from Israel. A number of tourists came from Israel, and, of course, they got MFN. I think all these were very much in their mind. I'm not myself sure that there was actually a cash payment per head, the way there was with Germans going out to Germany. Between 12,000 and 14,000 ethnic Germans went out to Germany each year from Romania, and it was a very definite commercial, in effect, payment.

Q: I think there were some back in the earlier days.

KIRK: Some people said that. I'm really in no position to say whether it was right or not. Certainly they let the Jews out of Romania because they thought it was in their, the Romanians, interest for a variety of reasons. It was not for humanitarian reasons. Ceausescu had power to do what he wanted.

Q: You must have found it quite a bearable place because you were there a good deal longer than people usually are.

KIRK: Yes. Most of those Iron Curtain posts, what were then Iron Curtain posts, had the common three year tour by that time. Three years would have had me leaving in November of '88, which of course makes no sense because that's exactly the time of a Presidential election. It would have been quite difficult to appoint an ambassador to replace me, or anyone else, in the last months of an administration, and not so easy to do it in the first month or two of an administration. I, and a number of other people in that same category were kept on for six months or so extra. U.S. ambassadors live reasonably well everywhere. Certainly, though the health facilities were not very good, they were better than they were in Somalia, and much quicker access to...

Q: And you were in real civilization too. That makes it an interesting place.

KIRK: And Romania is a beautiful country, and the people, to the extent they were allowed to see us, were quite friendly. They were not allowed to see us very much but they were quite friendly. We were able to...there were no travel restrictions in Romania, so we were able to travel around the country and visit a number of towns. United States was looked on with great favor by the Romania people. We sort of symbolized for them democracy, freedom and prosperity, and they tended, when they could...

Q: Some of each.

KIRK: Yes, exactly. They would sort of express enthusiasm for us as a country, and as individuals, wherever we went. Our contacts with Ceausescu were quite limited. They really were mainly on quite formal occasions, usually when a visitor would come to Romania. In the first couple of years, that is in '86 and part of '87, almost every month or two--let's say every two months--a fairly prominent American Jewish leader would come to talk with Ceausescu, again urging him to continue to treat the Jewish population of the country in a decent way, and not to destroy some Jewish buildings. And I would often, not always, but often be asked by them to accompany them to meet the President so I sat in on a number of these conversations. Ceausescu had a habit, which he claimed was a traditional Romanian habit--and I have no reason not to believe that--of allowing the guests to speak first after he would say, "I'm so glad you've come." Then he would say, "As our guests, I'd liked to hear what you have to say." And I always, after the first time or two, advised the visitors to say everything that they wanted to say at that moment because they might not get another chance. And, if they took my advice, they would sometimes speak for 15 or 20 minutes. Ceausescu would then respond to each of the points that they had made. He had a very good memory in that sense. He wouldn't take any note, but he would meet each point that they had made--in his own way, of course, giving his own point of view. He was quite good in that kind of situation. His ideas were at considerable variance from ours of course, but he was certainly very sharp. He was not well educated, but he was intelligent without question, and civil. These conversations often lasted for two or three hours. I would be the note taker because there were just the two of us in the room. I must say taking notes for two or three hours and then having to reproduce it was a great trial. Something ambassadors aren't supposed to have to do.

Q: What language did Ceausescu speak?

KIRK: Ceausescu would speak in Romanian, and it would then be interpreted.

Q: Oh, I see, so there was an interpreter.

KIRK: I could understand the Romanian but the practice with Ceausescu was always to speak in one's own language, except the occasional word of greeting. Sometimes Ceausescu would say something in Romanian, or I would. I never heard him use a foreign word.

Q: How much Romanian did you manage to learn by that time when you were there?

KIRK: Before I went out I told the people in the Department that I thought it would be a good idea if I had some time to learn Romanian, and could take a class or have a private tutor. They said it would be fine for me to have a private tutor at FSI and just please do my regular job at the same time. So I took a couple hours off about three days a week. Romanian is a language that is quite similar to Italian or French.

Q: I've heard some, but I've never...

KIRK: With a certain amount of Russian words so speaking all three it was relatively easy for me. I was pretty fluent by the time I got there.

Q: I worked pretty hard on Bulgarian, but I can't say that I ever got...

KIRK: That's a much tougher language.

Q: ...very far. I mean, I could ask a question, and ask my junior officer what the answer was.

KIRK: I took lessons while I was there, and then I really did most of my business in Romanian. In the Foreign Ministry I would have them speak in Romanian, and I would speak in English. I think if each person speaks in their native language you have a much better exchange than having that person speaking in your language, or trying to use an interpreter.

Q: That's very true, indeed.

KIRK: So, what was the job in Romania? It was essentially to try and maintain contact with all levels of society, while not appearing to embrace the government, something that is difficult to do if the government controls access to all elements of society. We had an American library that was quite well attended. We had a variety of USIA programs which were squeezed out as time went on, but some continued up until the very end. I myself did a lot of traveling around, saw a lot of people, visited factories and theaters and all the kinds of organizations to try to remind people that the United States was still there. I would do statements or readings for the VOA that would then be broadcast into Romania. I was not allowed to broadcast on the local TV, but more people listened to VOA than listened to the local Romanian broadcast anyway. That was essentially what we were trying to do, plus of course keeping up the staff morale, and keeping reports going back to Washington, and following the human rights developments and abuses in Romania. Keeping contact with dissidents, keeping the staff active in doing that but not so active that they got themselves thrown out. In that way it was quite interesting.

Q: I always figured that one job for an ambassador in those small curtain countries was to take care of some of the western diplomatic corps. There were always a few Latinos around who were maybe by themselves, or one thing and another, and if you could pay a little extra attention to them that maybe would be worthwhile. I don't know. An ambassador is a pretty expensive appointment for that, just to do that but I still felt this was carrying out our mission in a sense. I don't know what experience you had with that.

KIRK: I think that's right. Bucharest had a large diplomatic corps. The Romanians were very active in their relations with the Third World, and in some cases even paid the expenses of Africa countries. So there were about 60 or 70 missions in Bucharest. Getting around to all of them was not exactly easy but there were the receptions and things that one went to. We had good relations with most of those people. We had about four people in the political section and two or three in the economic section, and they managed to get around.

Q: That's a pretty good sized staff. Of course, Romania has twice the population of Bulgaria.

KIRK: In all we had about sixty or seventy Americans.

Q: Oh, that's much bigger than what we had.

KIRK: That includes the Marine Guards. Still that was about the size. So we had a good sized operation going, and we had the school which, of course, is very important to our fellow diplomats.

Q: We had a small school, too.

KIRK: As you know in those situations, security concerns are an important element--security in the sense of technical security, not your own personal security which was no problem.

Q: Oh, yes, anywhere in the world, personal security...

KIRK: Here we found that talking with academics, having visitors coming in under the USIA program, just keeping on working was essentially an act of faith on our part that eventually something would pay off. Though I was not there during the revolution, I visited again a few months after it, and was pleased to see that a number of the people that we had maintained contact with, either myself or members of the embassy staff, had turned up in important positions, and were grateful for the attention that we had shown them, and for our continuing concern for them. It has now to some extent paid off, even though the regime is still a difficult one from our point of view. There are a number of people in it who benefitted from our attentions.

Q: I've a little bit lost track of Romania. Is it still a regimenting regime pretty much in control?

KIRK: Yes, the people who are running it now are people who were communists, who were prominent communist leaders under Ceausescu and fell out of favor with him for a variety of reasons. They now realize the need for economic reform. They grudgingly permit the existence of an opposition even though they don't like it much and tend to strike out against it if the going gets at all difficult.

VIRGINIA CARSON YOUNG
Consular Officer
Bucharest (1987-1991)

Virginia Carson-Young was born in the state of Washington. She obtained a B.A. from the University of Washington. She was the spouse of a Foreign Service officer until she became an officer in her own right after the death of her husband in 1972. She served in consular affairs in New Delhi, Hong Kong, Merida, Bucharest, and Lima. She was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on July 29, 1991.

Q: Then you left Merida and went to Bucharest. You served in Bucharest from when to when?

CARSON-YOUNG: From 1987-91, four years again.

Q: During probably the most interesting period in Romanian history.

CARSON-YOUNG: Well, my first two years in Romania were probably the worst of the Ceausescu years. He was, of course, the dictator and communist leader of Romania until the revolution in 1989. Then two years afterward, I was there to see a nation that had been under this very strict, brutal terrorist rule for 40 years, struggle to become democratic and maybe not so democratic. It was an interesting time.

Q: When you went there how were you prepared for this?

CARSON-YOUNG: This is also a story I am a little embarrassed about. You notice I move from continent to continent, bureau to bureau in my career. So after I had gone from NEA to EA to ARA, I thought I would like to go back to Europe. I had been in Germany with my former husband, and I did not think I could handle returning there. But my present husband, who was an immigration officer in Hong Kong and had married in Mexico, had never been to Europe. So, during that last year, when I was thinking of bidding on assignments, I had Europe in mind. They called from the Department and said, "Do we have a job for you." Well, that should tell you...when they call you. My whole idea of Eastern Europe was of terrible languages, gray countries, lace curtains at the window. I was not interested in Eastern Europe at all. They said, "Oh no, it is a Romance language. [which of course, Romanian is, it is based on Latin]. We need someone who is sensitive to the political situation," they said.

Q: That is known as the hard sell.

CARSON-YOUNG: To my shame I went home...I knew so little about that area...and said, "Don, they want me to go to Bucharest. I think that is where the good guy is." You know, Ceausescu had gotten a very good press when it appeared he resisted Soviet authority, and had sent a delegation to the '84 Olympics. All that had registered with me was that maybe he wasn't so bad. So on that firm knowledge, I said, "We'll go."

Q: Ceausescu turned out to be one of the real monsters.

CARSON-YOUNG: I think he was right up there with Stalin.

Q: How did you find the situation when you arrived there?

CARSON-YOUNG: Very repressive society. Actually, in the consular section we had the one area that was open to the Romanians. Some of them were so desperate that they would defy the security police to come in and beg for some kind of refugee consideration. We were processing people who qualified for a unique refugee program that had been established just in Romania, I believe in 1975 at the time that we were trying to encourage Ceausescu to be independent from the Soviet Union.

Q: Nixon was making a big push towards Romania, wasn't he?

CARSON-YOUNG: Most Favored Nation status was granted to Romania during the Nixon administration, or was in the process of being granted. But then came the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, which stated that a country to be eligible for MFN must permit free immigration. So Ceausescu then said, "Okay, here are the people, they are free to go." What our Congress and officials in this country never said, (and we are seeing the results of that in the Soviet Union now) was that they wanted people free to emigrate, but only the people that we can accept under our law would be admitted into the U.S. Romanians had not traditionally been immigrants to the United States, so we did not have the family relationships established, with a pull factor from this country that would bring in relatives. Virtually none of the people allowed to depart Romania qualified under our immigration laws. Because we wanted to grant MFN status, to make a point, we created third-country refugee processing (which was a misnomer. To qualify as a refugee, one would normally have to be in a third country and establish that you have a well-founded fear of persecution, if you were obliged to return to your own country).

Q: The meaning of a third country. You are in Romania as a consular officer and the person from a third country would have to be from some place that was not America or Romania. That is what the third country means.

CARSON-YOUNG: Until the Refugee Act of 1980, to qualify as a refugee, all you had to do was to flee communism. So, a Romanian who could get to Germany, Italy, etc. would have automatically qualified as a refugee. But, of course, most of them couldn't get out. They were not granted exit papers and there were security police along the border. People were shot trying to swim the Danube to get to Yugoslavia. So creating this special "refugee" program was used by both sides, because we used it as well as Ceausescu, in the political public relations wars.

In any case, the program started in the seventies, when it was sort of the golden time in Romania, with people somewhat optimistic about a loosening up and reform in the country. People could just come in the consulate and sign up for the TCP program. I must say, the consulate's processing...we apparently had very few guidelines. This was a very unique program. So there apparently were no qualifications, other than just come in and sign your name. The records at the time were rather haphazardly kept, it seemed to me. Of course, I came in many years later and I don't really know.

By the time I got there, the Refugee Act of 1980 had established that maybe these people didn't automatically qualify as refugees any more, because after 1980 you not only had to be fleeing from communism, but you had to establish that you feared persecution or had been persecuted on the basis of political belief, ethnic background, race, creed, sex, etc. So they reduced, and then eliminated the TCP program.

At the time I got there in 1987, the TCP program was being phased out. As of 1983-84, the U.S. government said "All of those presently registered with us, if they can get passports to leave, they will be processed, but we are taking no new names." However, there was so much pressure that dates sort of crept up, the deadline was extended. By the time I got there, if you had registered before January 1, 1986, you could still be processed. Well, there were still several thousand people who could be processed but who couldn't get passports to leave the country. At

the same time, there were probably three thousand people to whom Ceausescu had given passports but who weren't registered with us and didn't qualify under even our generous refugee policy. They did not meet usual immigration requirements.

So it was a constant battle. I would go to the Foreign Office every month with my list and say, "Let these people go." Then they would present me with their list and say, "Why won't you take these other people; it is their human right to go?" They would try to bash us on human rights because we weren't taking the people that they were allowing to go.

Q: Who were the people they wanted to go?

CARSON-YOUNG: There was some discussion that they were trying to push off their criminals, the insane and useless, in a "little Mariel" operation similar to what the Cubans had done. But actually when I compared statistics between their list and our list, it appeared to be simply arbitrary, a ploy on their part. There really wasn't much of a pattern to the refugees from Romania. The difference between people who got passports, and those who didn't, was so much of it personal. Did somebody in your village have a grudge against you? Okay, you didn't get a passport, no matter what. Did the passport official have a brother-in-law who bought your cheese and gave you eggs under the table, etc. and therefore owed you something? Then you did get a passport. There was so much personal and local politics involved. In my opinion, there were no mass movements for anybody in particular. I started making studies of the people who qualified as refugees, including those who came in to see us at the consulate. There was a high percentage of people who were not the well-educated, but were skilled laborers, the plumbers and electricians. Truck drivers managed to get across the border and then quite often defected.

Q: It was relatively easy wasn't it?

CARSON-YOUNG: Yes.

Q: Who was the Ambassador there?

CARSON-YOUNG: Roger Kirk was the Ambassador when I first arrived. He had been there for two years before I came, and stayed another two years while I was there. Then he was replaced by a political appointee, Alan Green, Jr. from Oregon, my home state.

Q: What was your impression of our attitude when you first arrived, obviously things changed, but what were we after and how did we deal with the Ceausescu government?

CARSON-YOUNG: To be honest, during pre-revolution times I think there was a certain element of apology. Yes, Ceausescu was a terrible person and there was terrible repression, but Romania did follow our lead in some aspects. I can't put my finger on an example, but there was, it seems to me, a tendency to say, "Well, it is bad, they don't do things right, but on some of our foreign policy programs they are with us."

Q: He is a son of a bitch, but our son of a bitch. This has been an accusation that has been made. This one sort of bubbled up and became quite prominent. But during the Cold War we would

tend to look upon people who were sort of being nasty or at least not overly friendly to the Soviets and say, "No matter what." We saw things in this way. There was a reason for this.

Did you see a split in the Embassy between the Ambassador and others who followed the stated policy and, perhaps junior officers and others who had more contact with the local scene?

CARSON-YOUNG: I had one rather major difference of opinion because I reported to the DCM. The DCM also was completing four years in Romania, and had served there before. He had negotiated a verbal, gentleman's agreement with the Ceausescu government in regard to these refugees, these TCPs. The idea was that when they qualified, when they signed up to be a potential refugee, then applied for a passport, their benefits in Romania were gone. In fact, if it were known that they had a relative in the West they lost jobs, housing, were banished off to some remote area. Passport applications normally took from two to five years to be processed. So this left people and families just in limbo.

So the DCM had negotiated with the Romanians, and there had been people from the Department go out and discuss this, to establish that Romania would not deny its citizens the privilege of holding a job or receiving housing until the passport was actually issued. My boss, the DCM, believed Romania was living up to that agreement. Well, it was his (the DCM's) agreement, so he had a personal stake in it. I arrived there and said, "You know, they are not. They aren't issuing the passports until the very end, that is true. But they are denying the privileges at the time that Romanians make the application."

At one point I even had about 50 people who were willing to stand up and be counted, would openly acknowledge their situation. Most of them, when they came in to say they had lost their job and all benefits, I asked if I could report this to the front office as an example, and they would say no, in fear of worse things being done to them by their government. They didn't want their names used. But in my second year, I had enough people who figured they had already lost so much that they couldn't lose much more, and I could use the names. With front office concurrence, I turned in the list to the Foreign Ministry. A particularly obnoxious person I had to deal with in the Foreign Ministry, the Consular Affairs Director, then said that he wanted 30 days to check the list. Then he called me and the DCM into his office. He was really quite insulting. He said that I was an emotional female who naturally would be taken in by these stories, but his government had checked each case and the individuals' statements were untrue. My boss indicated that he believed this.

Q: Who was your boss?

CARSON-YOUNG: His name was Henry Clark. After being DCM in Bucharest he became the economic counselor in Tel Aviv. He is now ambassador to Uzbekistan. I believe that my statements were vindicated, after the revolution. It was quite clear that the Romanian government had indeed persecuted people who were interested in immigration.

I kept pushing to include in the TCP program, as it wound down, the people who had been cut off by the 1986 date. Anyone who had qualified during the period of time between 1986 and the revolution in 1989 should still qualify as a refugee. I remember, I went to Henry Clark in 1988

and said, "I believe they are still refugees and they have suffered, etc." He said, "No." He was a very strict constructionist as far as refugee status was concerned. He said, "No, they aren't really politically motivated." He sort of implied that I was being taken in by those sad stories, too. Finally I said, "Well, I guess they are just miserable." Well, the name stuck, and "the miserales" became a group of about 3,000 people that I lobbied for, and eventually in 1991 established a special program and processed more than half as refugees to this country.

My biggest battle was with my own front office. Henry and Roger were somewhat sympathetic, but did not agree on widening the TCP program. When Punch Green came, he and Larry Napper, the DCM who followed Henry Clark, were more sympathetic. Punch Green, to his credit, lent his authority to my request for numbers, a specified number not to exceed 3,000 people. INS fought it. They were not happy at having any more refugees. But with enough pressure, they agreed that they would send in INS officers to interview these people in Bucharest. So that is the way it worked out. We had about a 70-80 percent approval rate from INS, so I feel that that was one of my accomplishments... maybe for good or ill, I don't know. My understanding is that Romanians do not necessarily adapt well to life in the United States. But, at least, I know that because I believed it was right and was tenacious, I gave these people the opportunity out.

Q: How did the events of the revolution impact on you?

CARSON-YOUNG: I remember the day of the Ceausescu speech that was the beginning of the end. The square where he spoke was very near the consulate. The consulate was in a separate building from the Chancery, but in the same block. We were closest to the Intercontinental Hotel and the square where he was speaking. I remember that morning, we saw people going toward the square with the usual banners. There had already been news that there had been disturbances in the city of Timisoara on the 16th of December. By this day, it was the 21st of December. I remember commenting to my staff, questioning them how these people could go and chant and raise their pro-Ceausescu signs as they always had, considering what had happened in the extreme Western part of the country.

Q: There had been highly exaggerated reports about thousands being killed.

CARSON-YOUNG: Not as many casualties as reported at first, but in effect it was the first overt opposition. There had been a strike in Brasov in November of 1987, but basically the events in Timisoara were the first time that anyone had really openly defied the regime. It was reported on VOA and RFE, which surprisedly were not jammed coming into Romania, so people were fairly well informed, even though there was nothing on local radio or television. In fact, all of the Tiananmen Square events in China might as well not have happened, if you were depending on Romanian news or television. They just didn't cover it.

Then on December 21, in Bucharest, we saw the crowd surging back in the other direction and we heard some explosions from the square. The embassy security officer ordered the consulate closed and doors locked. I had about a dozen visa applicants who were still in the waiting room. There were maybe 8 or 10 Romanian employees, and I think two other Americans, and myself still in the building. We just didn't know what was happening. The Romanians, of course, were quite tense and fearful. We had a consulate Christmas tree that we had not decorated, so in order

to pass the time and keep people calm I said, "Let's decorate the tree." I was talking to a friend afterwards and said, "In the movie of my life, this is the time I am going to be played by Ingrid Bergman."

We went home that night, but came in the next morning to hear that there had been many deaths in the square during the night. Troops had used tanks to run people down. Nobody was sure what was happening, but the common wisdom was convinced there would be massive repression. It was the next day that Ceausescu tried to escape by helicopter from the Party Headquarters Building. He reached his summer home; took off by car and after that was apprehended. The revolution was under way.

The Embassy evacuated volunteer officers and their dependents. Then they made departure mandatory and cut the embassy to what was supposed to be a bare bones operation. That meant that my husband was evacuated. In fact, there were three women whose jobs were considered essential and whose husbands were sent home. Don, my husband spent the remainder of the revolution in Southern California and I spent it sleeping on the floor at the Chancery. We who were left remained in the building. We were lucky, in that there was a small commissary that was supplied through a support flight from Frankfurt once every second month. We had just had a support flight early in December, so we did have food and water right there on the compound. There were about 20 of us who stayed.

As things became calmer, the Ambassador used his armored car to send us home to have showers, change clothes and just get away from it all for a couple of hours, and then return. I have a couple of bullet shells that were lobbed into my terrace door. Our house was near the television station which was the scene of some very hard fighting, that first night after Ceausescu had left. Nobody knew where he was. The thought was that he was regrouping and coming back. There were all kinds of rumors. He had security forces that they said included orphans that had been taken as children and trained as an attack force; they said that he had Arab students who had been studying in Romania, but were really terrorists. People were very suspicious and fearful, especially when they observed dark, Arab-looking men.

Q: These stories were prevalent everywhere.

CARSON-YOUNG: Yes.

Q: Well, what were you doing? The Embassy was down to a hard core, but what were you doing?

CARSON-YOUNG: We were on the phone to Washington a lot of the time. My particular job was locating American citizens and reporting back to their families that they were all right, or not all right. We did not think we had very many Americans in Bucharest or in Romania on any given date prior to the revolution. Americans certainly did not come there readily as tourists. There was a geriatric specialist, a woman, who was quite well known in Europe. She had developed a special anti-aging treatment. There were some elderly Americans who still came to see her and were resident at a hotel in a compound which she operated. There would be the occasional American citizen passing through. We didn't realize that even in the Ceausescu days,

Romanian-Americans still went back to visit families. We would have thought not, that they would have been too afraid, and many were, but there were many more who came than we expected. Then, of course, with the revolution, journalists came pouring in, and other interested bystanders. We had people come almost immediately to do surveys for possible food aid, etc.

My most dramatic story from the revolution concerns the highest ranking security officer in the Ceausescu government, whose name was Pacepa. He had defected eleven years earlier. He left a wife and a daughter behind in Romania. In 1989 the daughter was a young woman 33 or 34 years old, and married. We knew that she worked for a film animation studio, both she and her husband. Her father became quite close to Congressman Frank Wolf of Virginia and Congressman Chris Smith of New Jersey. They had been pushing us to communicate with Dana Damiceanu, the daughter. We tried but the apartment where we believed she lived was surrounded by security officers. I would go over and just walk past every few weeks and report by cable that I thought I had seen her (judging from a photograph), and that the police were still there. I had, just before the revolution, finally called the film studio and asked for her and spoke to her on the phone, which was amazing. Her father kept saying that we had to get her out. We said that she hadn't even indicated that she wanted out. We believed there were many ways she could have gotten a message to us, but hadn't. On the phone, she said that she would like to leave but she wanted to do it legitimately, whatever that meant. She would never have gotten exit permission from the Romanian government under Ceausescu. We thought it was a moot subject and we were afraid that our attention would just make matters worse for her.

Well, came the revolution. It was four or five days after Ceausescu was assassinated, the week between Christmas and New Years in 1989. It had begun to snow. The vice consul and I walked over to the apartment where Dana was living. When we got there, there were no security police. There was an unlocked abandoned car in the courtyard. We looked inside it and saw security police jackets with typical insignia that had been abandoned. Obviously, her guards had just fled. We opened the glove compartment and there was a photograph of me, my passport picture, with my vital statistics written on the other side. They had obviously been watching out for me as I came strolling by.

We went into the building. The vice consul was Gordon Helwig, who at that time had a beard and a mustache. Another couple that was sort of maintaining watch on Dana's behalf was very suspicious. There were all these stories of Arabs loose in the country. They decided we were okay and we went inside. We went up the back stairs into a very warm apartment, one that was quite adequately furnished. Dana's parents-in-law were there. In a few moments, a young woman burst out of her room, came and threw her arms around me and said, "I have been waiting eleven years for this time."

So, then we made arrangements for her to talk to her father. The next day we went over to pick her up, walked over in the snow, brought her into the Chancery and placed a long distance call to her father. I have photographs of this gathering. I was aware it was a moment in history. I was prepared for some made-for-TV emotional moments. To my surprise it was, "Daddy, you have to do this and this for me, and you know Chelac, who is now the Foreign Minister, he is your old friend, so he can help." It was a real nuts-and-bolts conversation. No tears, no overt sentiment expressed.

Congressmen Wolf and Smith were the embassy's first Congressional visitors after the revolution. They came the 2nd or 3rd of January. We managed to work with the new provisional government and persuaded them to issue passports to all four members of Pacepa's family--his daughter, her husband and parents-in-law. I was the control officer for the Congressmen and took them over to meet the family. The family and the Congressmen left Romania together, two days later. There was a moment at the airport when, after all of this time, the daughter was finally going to join her father in the United States. As she was leaving for the runway, she came running back to me and said, "Take care of my mother," and then left. I thought, "Oh, my goodness, am I going to have to go through this all over again?" But the mother never contacted us. Actually the father had remarried in the United States and had divorced the mother. So I never heard anything further from any of them.

Q: What happened visa-wise in your next two years?

CARSON-YOUNG: One word: adoptions.

Q: Could you explain what the context was?

CARSON-YOUNG: We had four pending adoption cases at the time of the Romanian revolution. Ceausescu had allowed foreign adoptions in Romania but the numbers were few. In early 1987, he terminated all foreign adoptions. So, we had people who had identified children prior to 1987. One couple in particular came back every year to visit their child. To my astonishment, the Romanians allowed the child to be with the adoptive parents for a couple of weeks in Romania, but wouldn't let the child leave the country. By now the child was over four years old. It was really a very emotional time. I had met with the parents on two different occasions, by the time the revolution came. Of course the parents were on the first plane to Romania. We issued an immigrant visa immediately. It was a very warm and touching scene. Actually it was filmed by 20/20.

Q: Which is a weekly news program...

CARSON-YOUNG: A weekly news program that had very high viewer ratings and I think probably it was that film that touched off the first interest in Romanian adoptions. Well, that and a documentary that also showed the deplorable conditions in Romanian orphanages. I don't think anyone in the outside world, and most people in Romania, had any idea that there were thousands of children that had literally been warehoused in Romania. They were orphanages in name only. Under the Ceausescu regime, any kind of family planning (birth control) was illegal. Couples were not only encouraged, but almost forced to have at least four or five children. Pregnant women working in factories were examined to make sure a pregnancy had not been terminated. As a result, there were many unwanted children born in Romania.

Q: What was the rationale behind this?

CARSON-YOUNG: A wish to increase the population, although why, I am not quite sure. It seems irrational. The nutrition for most of the nation was terrible. There were very poor sanitary

conditions in the orphanages and no trained staff. Nobody really cared about these poor little children. Another aspect of it was the fact that there was a high rate of the HIV virus found in these institutionalized children. Romanians believed, and I think in some areas still practice, the theory that an infant who is weak or small will benefit from a blood transfusion. My understanding is that this is a total old world, old wives' tale and has no validity. But, particularly in the Constanta area, which is the port city, where the HIV virus was brought in...

Q: HIV refers to the virus that leads to what we call acquired immune deficiency syndrome or AIDS which is deadly.

CARSON-YOUNG: As high as 40 percent of children in institutions in that area were found to be HIV positive. Almost never was it because of an infected mother. It was because of the blood transfusion. They had no disposable needles, they had no child-size vials, so if they had a contaminated vial, it might be used on four or five different children. The virus spread rapidly.

In any case, the first televised view of Romanian adoptions for the western world was initially that of parents coming...such happy, glad scenes...to pick up the children they had been unable to take out, but had tried to adopt prior to the revolution. Except for the four cases I mentioned, they were French, Swiss, Italian citizens. They were not Americans. But the scenes were on worldwide television, and that sparked enormous interest. And, as I have since learned, adopting parents are absolutely determined, single minded. If a child is available, they will spare nothing in order to adopt him and give him a loving home, a better life.

So, the American television programs about the first couple and the happy ending to their story, and then the pitiable scenes of children in orphanages, brought people to Romania by the dozen, wishing to adopt. At that point, they were not showing the ill and infected children on TV, just poor little waifs with no family.

It turned out that a lot of these children were not literally orphans. The mothers and parents of these children had been forced to bear them, but had no means to look after them. They had placed them in an orphanage. Some intended to pick them up, later.

There was a high percentage of gypsy children in the orphanages and among those offered directly, later, to parents for "private" adoptions. The gypsy population of Romania is interesting, in itself. They are probably the only group that successfully "worked the system" under Ceausescu. They would stand in line for food and then charge double for the item. I heard Romanians complain that this was a terrible thing, refusing to understand that one pays for service. Gypsy children would be left in an institution until they were 12, 13 or 14, old enough to help earn a living, and then parents would claim them again.

The understanding in the United States and Western Europe was that there were thousands of children in orphanages of Romania just waiting for the right family to come and choose them.

In early 1990, people began coming in quite large numbers to Romania. At one point, they were allowed entry into virtually any orphanage. They could just roam through and say, "I like that one and that one." Then there began to be some really awful stories of almost auctions, bidding

wars. Nationality was pitted against nationality and couple against couple. But, for the most part, there were plenty of children and adoptions proceeded relatively quickly.

At the Embassy, we processed them quickly as well. Under U.S. immigration law, it is the Justice Department that has the bottom line on an orphan petition. A petition must be filed and approved before the visa can be issued. The petition is normally an INS responsibility, but authority has been delegated to the consular officer, but only if the petition is "clearly approvable." If we have any doubts, it goes back to an INS officer for final adjudication.

Well, in our case, in Bucharest the INS regional officer in Vienna, Austria, was the authority we turned to on adoption matters. I had never dealt with adoptions before. I think a lot of consular officers never do. My husband, a retired INS officer, had handled probably thousands of them in Hong Kong. Americans were adopting children from Taiwan and Korea. But, I also know other INS officers who have never dealt with adoptions.

Anyway Bob Looney, the INS officer in Vienna, was a wonderful, thoughtful and very sympathetic person. He wanted to follow the rules, wanted to do it right, and also wanted to be generous and helpful if he could be. We worked very closely, consulting by phone and cable. He sent instructions and INS regulations and precedent cases to me. As the process went on, we began to wonder if some of these children actually qualified as orphans. Under U.S. law, a child must be literally an orphan to be adopted and brought into the United States, or the child of a sole or surviving parent who is unable to look after the child and relinquishes unequivocally, or, if there are two known parents, they must have abandoned the child prior to the adoption. INS does not have a definition of abandonment. All they have is the law that says, "Must be abandoned" and INS Board of Inquiry decisions that say what abandonment is not. Birth parents simply releasing a child to adoptive parents doesn't constitute abandonment.

We approached, more and more, a situation where a small percentage of the adoptions were not "readily approvable." Even one adoption case that the Embassy doesn't approve, just like that, has enormous repercussions. We would say, "We are not saying no, but we have to refer the case to the INS in Vienna and they have to make the decision, because it does not appear that this child was truly abandoned. There are two parents. They are still living together with several other children. It looks like sort of, a deal." We are the only country that has this "orphan" requirement. The Canadians, the British, the French, none of the major adopting nationalities in Bucharest, were running up against this particular requirement. If the Romanian authorities processed the adoption, then it was a simple procedure to come into an embassy and obtain a visa. We were the only ones who had the additional requirement. We became the bad guys.

Well, we found and INS Vienna found, that if the adopting parents had good connections in the United States...high-level Congressional or Administration contacts, etc....they would appeal to the INS Central Office and the children would be paroled into the United States. Now, there are no requirements under the U.S. Immigration Act concerning parole. The INS Central Office can decide that for humanitarian reasons, anybody can be paroled into the United States. Noriega, I understand, was paroled into the United States in order to...

Q: The dictator of Panama.

CARSON-YOUNG: But it seemed to me that these little children, infants for the most part, were the most unwanted children, even if they came from a so-called two-parent family, and that the parents were willingly giving them up. The children would not have any future in Romania. A high percentage of them were gypsies. People would say that you should give the Romanians first chance to adopt them. Well, Romanians would not adopt a gypsy. They have very strong feelings about that.

I came back to Washington in April, 1991. By then, our volume of adoptions was increasing twofold, threefold, fivefold, and the small percentage that was being referred back to the INS was causing us lots of grief. The press was interested, the adopting parents were furious and we were getting a lot of Congressional mail on the subject.

I thought that I was coming back to talk to INS about a quick and easy way to just apply for humanitarian parole, right away, in these cases. I went to a meeting at INS. John Adams from the Visa Office went with me, but he had another appointment, and he left. So I was the only State Department person there. I have always had very good relations with INS. My husband is a 30-year veteran and distinguished INS officer. I have always felt we (State and INS) represented two halves of the whole immigration process. So, at this meeting, INS officers questioned me about whether these children had two parents and how many of them we would find were possibly not actual orphans under the law, if we knew the truth. Our denial or referral rate was running about 3 percent. I said, "Well, half of them are still coming out of orphanages and, I believe, really meet the orphan definition. About a third of the remainder comes from a single parent, and thus meet the definition. So, it is a very small percentage of those at the present time that I think have two parents and don't really meet our definition." Someone said, "Well, if you knew the truth in all these cases, how many do you think you would be referring or denying?" I said, "Oh, probably about 30 percent, if we really knew."

And, Stu, I really meant it in the context of discussing mutual problems with a colleague. If we knew the truth about our NIV applicants, we would probably refuse a lot more. If we knew the actual facts in an immigrant visa interview...whether the guy really had the job experience, or whether this marriage is really bona fide...it would perhaps be an additional 30 percent denial. So, that was the context of my remark.

Well, it turned out that the INS people were not interested in processing a quick and easy parole. Quite the opposite. They were facing hearings in a Congressional Judicial Subcommittee on adoptions. Just before my visit to Washington, another big television show, 60 Minutes, which is the CBS news magazine that is the most popular news show going, had done an adoption segment. I was interviewed by Leslie Stahl in my office. The whole thrust of that program was baby buying, baby selling. The commentator had gone in a black wig posing as an adopting mother into a village and actually negotiated for a child on camera. Of course, everyone in the segment discussed the idea of selling children. Obviously it was happening, although I believe it is not surprising that birth parents begin to extract something in return for giving up their children. It is reprehensible, but I don't think it was the rampant baby market that they made it out to be.

In any case, the American parents already had these children in their custody. They were legally adopted in Romania. The birth parents were not going to take them back, so why not use the parole facility?. Well, INS suspended parole. So I went back to Romania, and we had 200 American couples with babies in their arms, and the babies did not meet the initial requirements of the law. Parents had applied for parole but it was not being granted. At one point, they picketed the consulate. In fact, on one given day I had a band of my "miserables" that INS was delaying a decision on, and American parents, both demonstrating against the consulate. In both cases, it seemed to me, it was INS' fault, not ours.

The upshot of it was that INS, at a cost of thousands and thousands of dollars, sent investigators into Romania, so that any of these cases that were deferred, instead of going on a quick basis to INS in Vienna, received a personal investigation in the country. INS sent out 7 officers, none of whom spoke Romanian, none of whom had been in the country before. They hired interpreters, rented cars and went whizzing off into different parts of the country to interview the birth mother of a given child.

Well, that didn't really prove anything very much. Even if they found that the birth mother was living with the birth father, in no case was parole ultimately denied. Over 200 cases of parole were finally approved, but after thousands of dollars, weeks of anguish and lots of bad publicity for the consulate. INS didn't get the bad publicity; by and large, it was us. In this particular case, I didn't get the support I needed and deserved from the Department and from CA.

Q: How did this lack of support manifest itself?

CARSON-YOUNG: Well, the waiting room was so crowded and I said we had to have some more space. They sent a CAT team out...

Q: CAT team meaning?

CARSON-YOUNG: Consular Affairs Team. The team stayed about a day and a half and just recommended that we cut things up a little differently in the space we had. This, then, came to the fore when these American adopting parents were claiming that they had to wait outside in the rain, they couldn't get into the consulate. I asked that part of another floor in the building, that was occupied by USIS, be given to us so that we could get all the Americans inside. But I didn't get any support from my front office or the Department on that.

When there was the discussion about parole and whether these people qualified or not, and whether we were interpreting the rules correctly, the Department's Consular Affairs people were more sympathetic. The people in the Visa Office...there were some hardliners there who also took the INS point of view, that people are selling babies and we don't want to be a part of that. I said it was not against the law, for one thing. The law does not say anything about an exchange of goods for the child. It is morally wrong, but it is not illegal. In fact, I said that on 60 Minutes, which probably didn't endear me to anybody.

I think the final point of my frustration was reflected in the Congressional hearing. The senior Deputy Assistant Secretary represented the Assistant Secretary at the hearings. It was Jim Ward,

who is a friend of mine. I have known him for years. But I really had the feeling when I saw the transcript of his remarks and the questions that were asked, that he was somewhat equivocal, and gave a "Well, I will sure look into that" kind of response. We at the embassy were not given the opportunity to provide information, except for what we volunteered. We weren't told that they might ask such and such, what information can you give? So, the hearings were really disappointing and dispiriting.

Right after that, Jim Ward came out to Bucharest with the INS "number two." They were very concerned about the situation. They lent their weight to my concern about space. Then, all of a sudden, the front office decided that the cafeteria on the ground floor would have to be evacuated, and we could use it for interview space. We were doing, during the July and August period of 1991, between 40 and 50 adoption cases every day.

I also had no additional help. I had been asking, and the DCM said, "Well, maybe we can get some volunteers, some spouses, to come in and help you." I said, "That isn't what I need. I need three contract employees to do the clerical work." But he said there wasn't any money. Well, when it hit the papers and when it was a Congressional hearing, they found the money for three contracts, and they found money to send Peter Murphy out for 90 days to help with the interviewing. So, you can tell I have some bitter feelings.

Q: And rightly so. Well, what about the medical problem with the HIV business? My understanding is that at least with the medical knowledge as it stands today, there is essentially no cure for somebody who has this HIV in their blood and it eventually leads to a rather long, debilitating death.

CARSON-YOUNG: And, of course, under our present law, HIV would make the child excludable. Even if the individual parent wishes to bring in an HIV-infected child, it is forbidden. I know of one case where an HIV infected child was brought in, under parole. As I say, there are no rules for parole, so anyone who can persuade the INS Central Office that this is of humanitarian interest, they can do it. I know of only one child. I was surprised that it happened. One of the things that would preclude bringing in an HIV infected child, is that you would have to either have medical insurance or a huge amount of money, because my understanding is that the average cost for treating an HIV infected person is upwards from \$100,000. And, under the law, a person--even a child--is ineligible to immigrate if it appears he or she will become a public charge.

At the time I left Romania (I don't know what finally happened), a woman who had come as a volunteer to help out in the orphanages wanted to adopt four children that she had been looking after. They were in an institution for HIV-positive children. To my surprise, her insurance company, Blue Cross, Blue Shield, wrote me a letter saying they would cover expenses, even for that. So I said we could ask for parole in this case, but asked her why, really do you want to do this? These were children 2, 3 years old and they weren't expected to live beyond age 4, at the most. She said, "Well, it would give them maybe one more year of loving care," as opposed to what they might find in the institution after she left. And, of course, they are ever-hopeful that some new discovery will come along that will prevent these children from dying. As I say, I don't know what finally happened.

Q: You left when?

CARSON-YOUNG: I left in August, 1991.

FREDERICK A BECKER
Romanian Desk Officer
Washington DC (1988-1990)

Frederick A. Becker was born in Missouri. He graduated from Washington College in St. Louis, and Berkeley and Claremont Graduate Schools. After entering the Foreign Service in 1975, his postings abroad included Bucharest, Brasilia, Quito, Panama City, and Managua. He was interviewed in 2004 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

BECKER: So in August of 1988 I reported to my new job as the desk officer for Romania in the office of East European Affairs, flanked by the Hungarian desk officer on one side and the Bulgarian desk officer on the other, with the Polish, Czech and Yugoslav desk officers across the corridor. It was cozy little corner of the Department.

Q: Did you have any geographic disputes, we'll come to that next time. So, we'll pick this up in 1988 when you're back as the Romanian desk officer. I do want to ask one question, how did you and you can answer when we next get together, how did your kids adjust to school back in the States? It's been my experience and the experience of many, kids have a rough time going back to an American school mainly because they didn't find themselves as much a part of the community as they had been. We'll talk about this. Great.

Today is the 21st of January, 2005. Rick, we're going to pick it up when you were the Romanian desk officer and you were doing that from when to when?

BECKER: From the summer of '88 to the summer of '90 I was the Romania desk officer.

Q: What were the issues you were having to deal with?

BECKER: It was a period of considerable ferment in Eastern Europe, as everybody knows. In nearly all of the countries, but especially in Poland and Hungary, there were movements afoot to try to liberalize, to gradually create an environment that provided greater economic and political liberty. The lesson, I suppose, was that gradualism was just as dangerous as opening the floodgates, because the pressures to embrace the culture of western freedom and democracy had been increasing for years. With modern means of communications, most of the communist governments could not keep them out. U.S. trade unions had been in the forefront of breaching the Iron Curtain and had worked for a decade by 1988 supporting the Solidarity movement in Poland by providing little tools of great significance, like copiers, typewriters and of course access to Western media. One of the first trips one took as a desk officer for a communist

country was to Munich to visit Radio Free Europe, to talk with the management and the broadcasters to get their sense of what was going on. There was a steady stream of émigrés through Munich from all the countries of Eastern Europe. Voice of America, the official voice of the United States government, did not penetrate the region nearly as much and was not nearly as influential. People in those countries wanted to hear less about the United States and more about what was going on in their own countries, and Radio Free Europe helped to create an atmosphere of solidarity and hope as well as familiarity.

It was pretty clear that there was a great deal of tension within the Soviet empire and for the Soviet Union to maintain control it needed to maintain monolithic authority. We had a desk in Eastern European Affairs that particularly focused on ethnic and national issues relating to Eastern Europe. This desk worked very closely with the much larger Soviet Affairs office. Even though the Reagan administration talked very much about flexing our military might, building a 600-ship navy, outspending the Soviets in the military sphere, most of us understood that internal dynamics would determine the pace and direction of change in the communist world. I'm not sure any of us could have predicted what would happen when the Berlin Wall ultimately fell. When the Wall finally fell in November 1989, it was not a starting point, since Poland and Czechoslovakia ended up opening up their doors. Hungary, excuse me, Poland and Hungary opened up their doors. The Polish and Hungarian governments, as I recall, dropped or rescinded all of their border restrictions with Germany to permit their citizens to travel. Hungarians could suddenly travel fairly freely to the west, and in effect the elimination of border restrictions within the Soviet bloc created a great sucking sound as Poles, Czechs, Bulgarians and others would travel to Hungary because that was the best location to then pass through a relatively open border.

Q: Through Austria.

BECKER: Yes, through Austria and ultimately Germany. What happened was that East Germany, which was surrounded by Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, could not maintain strict Stalinist controls while everything was falling apart around them. The Wall could not hold in East German who could escape through Hungary. The Soviet Union under Brezhnev was unable to stem this tide.

Q: Gorbachev.

BECKER: Yes, Gorbachev. The Soviet leader was increasingly concerned with, first of all, survival of the USSR as a political unit and, secondly, with gradual liberalization that would permit communism to sustain itself. This was the purpose of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. So, the leadership, the direction and indeed the muscle that traditionally had maintained Soviet control over the East bloc was not there to apply. It certainly wasn't perceived as being there, and the Soviet Union seemed to be preoccupied with its own internal problems, many of which were ethnic and national as well as economic. There was effort by the parts of the Soviet empire to spin off. The Baltics were obvious candidates, but also some of the Central Asian and Caucasian countries were already starting to flex their muscles and this took a lot of attention and a lot of energy by the Soviet leaders.

Q: What about, let's go up to October and November of '89, prior to that, what were you seeing in Romania? I mean was Ceausescu sniffing the winds and making adjustments or trying to or what was happening there?

BECKER: Virtually no change. Virtually no change. Ceausescu had built an empire on his own. The internal Stalinist dynamic if you will did not depend upon Soviet might. The secret police were an ever-present glue that kept Romanian society in place. Ceausescu who had never bowed to events that had gone on in the rest of the bloc was not about to do so again. I visited Romania on an orientation trip in November of 1988, having just come onto the desk, and found it if anything a great deal bleaker than it had been when I had served there in the '70s. Bucharest was always bleak. They burn a lot of soft coal and in the wintertime the environment was sooty and murky 24 hours a day. The fact is that the Ceausescu regime deprived the population of all of the basic comforts, heat and light in the dark days of winter and certainly any kind of quality food products on the shelves. I remember inspecting the shops at that time. I saw Chinese canned sardines and cabbage and very little sign of meat, fresh fruit or vegetables. It was a terribly depressing environment. I remember thinking to myself that these people have virtually reached rock bottom and judging by what ferment is going on elsewhere, it's a matter of time before something significant will happen here. But nobody at that time, not even the Romanian desk officer, could predict that Romania any time soon was going to go the same route as the neighboring countries. Again, Ceausescu had built up his own system of repression and control which was not dependent on the winds of change in the rest of the East Bloc, and those controls were remarkably effective. There was no visible magnet for opposition and the population appeared to be thoroughly beaten down by their circumstances.

Q: Well, was there a significant number of escapees from the system who were coming out, I mean was there a Romanian community in exile of any importance?

BECKER: There was a Romanian community in exile, but not of any significant importance. The largest number of the Romanians who made it into exile were Jews who went to Israel. A lesser number came to the United States, having detoured from their declared destination of Israel, which was a war zone. There was a Romanian community in Paris, mainly the intellectuals. Leaders of the Hungarian community in Romania, one of whom had been my neighbor in the '70s, the head of the Hungarian language television and radio service, had managed to immigrate to Hungary in the '80s. Many of the Hungarian intellectual elite in Romania had gone to Budapest. There was a much smaller group of Germans, who had settled Romania in the 16th and 17th centuries, who had managed to get out to Germany. But for all practical purposes, there was no united or even linked voice of the Romanian community in exile that was trying to beat down the doors, nor did they have the economic means through remittances and other means of influencing to maintain any effective contact with the people inside. In fact Ceausescu had done a very effective job of eliminating any opposition, either inside or outside the communist party.

Q: What was the role of Madame Ceausescu in your estimate?

BECKER: It needs to be emphasized that Romanian communism had morphed at some point in time from a communist totalitarian dictatorship on the Soviet model to a family or Byzantine

imperial dynasty. Romania was in fact the Ceausescu family plantation. The people of Romania were slaves to the family and to their excess consumption, personality cult, all the trappings of royalty in which the Ceausescus wrapped themselves. Ceausescu's son Nicu used to drive through the streets of Bucharest at high speeds in his Italian sports car. He was notorious for womanizing. Rumors of alcoholism and drug use abounded in the family. Elena Ceausescu, the "first lady," was a full partner in crime with her husband. She had some academic training as a chemist and became the regime's scientific guru, a kind of ideological point person. Once she and her pseudo-scientific cohorts came up with a new nutritional pyramid in which the few products that were available on the Romanian economy – cabbage, beets, carrots, corn, processed canned goods -- were put at the top of the pyramid as the most nutritious, while condemning all fresh meats and fish, fruits, green vegetables which Romanians could not obtain in any event as unhealthy. In other words, she propounded a total distortion of scientific truth, substituting an ideological if not a theological overlay for the regime's policies.

The regime also perpetuated one of the most rigid and unremitting pro-natalist policies in all of East Europe. All birth control had been banned for many years. Romanians were exhorted to produce more children for the state. However, economic and health conditions were so poor that the result was a not a larger but a smaller birth rate. Abortion was rampant. Despite regime falsification of demographic and health data, the number of abortions was by all accounts off the map. After the regime fell, investigators found huge numbers of children of all ages abandoned by their parents, many to state orphanages. HIV- and AIDS-stricken babies were only a small proportion of the total of human cost of a regime that provided neither health care nor subsistence nor information on child bearing or child rearing. Young Romanians simply were not given the tools needed to survive. Of course, with two or three generations living in cramped, one or two bedroom apartments, this probably was one of the best forms of birth control. It was truly a dismal environment.

Q: Do we have any policy interests or what were we doing with it during the Ceausescu regime?

BECKER: Well, I think the Reagan administration had laid on a fairly full court press in an effort to exacerbate the internal contradictions and stresses in communist societies, and cultivation of Ceausescu as a communist independent dissipated during the '80s. It was very hard to find any reason to warm up to a regime like his. We didn't have a policy specifically geared to Ceausescu and his regime, but one that was more or less undifferentiated and, if anything, focused on Moscow. Our policies toward the USSR tended to filter through to those countries that were under Moscow's control or sphere of influence, of which Romania was sort of on the edge. Keeping in mind that Romania did not have a common border with any democratic country, the escape valves were very limited. The ability to flee to Yugoslavia, Hungary or Bulgaria did not represent much of a gain for most Romanians. Our embassy had pretty much hunkered down because we no longer were seeking to entice Romania away from the Soviet bloc. The Romanians had done achieved a degree of separation on their own, but yet it had not produced the kind of liberalization that we had hoped to foster in the 1970s when I served there. It was sort of a stand-fast, watch-and-wait, see what happens. To the extent that you could look at an Eastern Europe communist regime succumbing to outside pressures and to their own internal inconsistencies, Romania still seemed to be pretty much impervious to all that. So the

communist regimes in Hungary fell, Poland fell, Czechoslovakia fell. Even Bulgaria drifted. Only Romania and Albania, also an independent Stalinist regime, seemed to resist the trend.

Q: Did you feel yourself kind of on the desk. I mean everyone who is on a desk is tainted with their own country and particularly in this case were you sort of the odd man out or did people lunch with you or not?

BECKER: I don't know whether it would have been better to have shunned me and put me at a table by myself or as it turned out keep me around as the butt of all of the cruel jokes, but I had a lot of colleagues commiserating with me. I was riding a dead horse. We held informal pools as to when such and such a country would go under. We tried to establish some levity, because we were all working extraordinarily long hours to keep on top of events, to support our embassies, to not be reactive but try to be creative and help our embassies seize opportunities. I found myself sitting there and the odds were always very much against my country joining the crowd of defections. Everybody in the office agreed that Romania wasn't going anywhere, no matter what was happening elsewhere in the Bloc, and that view prevailed up until almost the very end.

Q: You're talking about December '89?

BECKER: Well, the first fissures began to show in September or November of '89, I'm trying to remember the exact date. Romania was celebrating its national day in the great plaza in Bucharest, where Ceausescu gave his annual harangue a la Fidel Castro, expounding on what a great harvest Romania had had and what tremendous relations Romania had with the rest of the world and how they were going to defy the retrograde trends that were infecting and infesting other countries and all the glowing developments that had virtually no relevance and certainly rang very false to the Romanian people. What happened was a groundswell of protest, quite spontaneous, in which Ceausescu was shouted down by the hundreds of thousands of people who had been summoned, bused in as they always were to these events to be the passive witnesses to this repetitive call to national unity and follow-the-leader. He was in fact shouted down. He ended up retreating back from the balcony, while the police and security forces stepped in and quelled an incipient civil protest for the first time in anybody's memory. This happened about six or eight weeks before the roof ultimately collapsed in December.

Q: When this happened did you send up alert signals from the embassy and from you know?

BECKER: The events elsewhere in Eastern Europe kept all of us, in Washington and at our embassies, on the highest alert. We who were responsible for Romania did so even though our embassy was an island where we did not have anything that even approached semi-normal contact with the Romanian authorities, not with people within the party, not with people on the streets. Everybody was closely watched. There was a certain amount of intimidation of embassy reporting officers who stepped over the bounds. The embassy had been led until the summer of '89 by a very experienced team headed by Ambassador Roger Kirk and political counselor Mike Parmly. What happened on that national day had to be treated as something clearly out of the ordinary, even if the prevailing view was that one could not expect the Romanians to deviate from their ingrained passivity and fear of an unyielding police state. The national day protest was the first indication that Romanians were starting to feel that they had very little to lose by

speaking out and venting their accumulated frustrations, as was happening with some effect in other communist countries. In fact, Ceausescu was unable to employ his traditional repressive methods to shut out radio and even word-of-mouth from the outside world.

Q: This is tape seven, side one with Rick Becker. Yes?

BECKER: The embassy redoubled its efforts to try to get out and gauge the extent and the depth of what might be a genuine protest movement in the making and even a movement for regime change. The spark, when it occurred, was totally unexpected. When it happened, Roger Kirk had already transferred out and we sent in a new ambassador.

Q: Who was that?

BECKER: His name was "Punch" Green. I'm trying to remember his first name.

Q: Yes, I know him as Punch Green.

BECKER: He was a Republican Party campaign and party chairman from the state of Oregon. He was coming out of retirement himself to do his friends Jim Baker and George Bush, Sr. a favor. I don't know if it was punishment for Oregon having gone to the Democrats in '88, but he was given Romania as his "reward." As desk officer, I did the best I could to get him ready for this assignment, talking to him about the limited possibilities of cozying up to a regime like Ceausescu's because almost every ambassador wants to go out and build a relationship. The anomaly was that he was going out with instructions that were 180 degrees from that -- not to build a relationship but to stand fast for U.S. policy, which was in all cases reform if not regime change. By the time he went out to post, the ways of reform were well advanced in the other countries and he was told to stand fast in Romania. So he bore the brunt of the surprises that took place during the late fall and winter of '89.

Q: Well, just to get a feel. I mean here is a man who has made a mark, a significant mark in politics and in business in Oregon going out there. How did he, was he saying, why me or saying boy I can really do something?

BECKER: As I recollect, I think he went out with the idea that, even with these constraining instructions and policy directives from the White House and from the Secretary of State, he in fact could accomplish something. He thought he could reach out, that he could serve as a beacon, as a linkage between the U.S. and Romania, Americans and Romanians, but not surprisingly the few initiatives he took were rebuffed. We had entered into a truly adversarial relationship with the Romanians. The Romanian regime preferred to stand on its own even though they found they could not have the official support in the United States that they might have two, five or ten years earlier. The ambassador's hands were tied. After this national day surprise, the embassy started to gear itself up for what could be more of the same. There emerged a general consensus on the desk, in the analytical community and from embassy reporting that unlike the rest of Eastern Europe, if anything happened in Romania it would not be evolutionary or nonviolent because it was no basis for an evolutionary, nonviolent transition in the Romanian context. It was

either going to be more of the same, and we were still betting that it was going to be more of the same, or it was going to be violent and nobody was prepared to predict how that might turn out.

When there was a protest, and the details escape me, it started out in Timisoara, which was the far western provincial capital, a multi-ethnic part of Romania near the Yugoslav border. There were a lot of Hungarians, a lot of Serbs, Germans as well as ethnic Romanians. Ethnic Romanians tended to stick with Ceausescu more than the other nationalities because as time wore on, Ceausescu and his family tended to play the Romanian card as had many previous Romanian rulers. He blamed the minority nationalities for all the country's problems. The minorities, who had resided side by side with the Romanian majority for centuries, were portrayed as alien and indeed hostile to Romanian sovereignty, national unity, and cultural purity. When things got tough, it was the ethnic minorities who bore a lot of the brunt. In Timisoara, there was a clash between local security forces and elements of the local populace. I seem to think there had been a spontaneous demonstration, a march to a cemetery to pay homage to some citizens who had fallen victim to security police excesses. The march was repressed violently. This time the whole province blew up and indeed it spread to other provinces. In a matter of days, and it was very difficult to get news out on what was going on, the entire country was literally up in arms – of 40 provinces, well over 30 of them were engulfed in popular revolt. The word of one uprising spread from region to region, and people shed their fear of the authorities and rose up. The Ceausescu regime took its usual take-no-prisoners and give-no-ground approach to these uprisings and ordered the security forces to do whatever damage they could to break the will of this incipient uprising. Blood flowed.

We found ourselves in Washington dealing with a major bilateral crisis that would become a major international crisis. You not only had the prospect of widespread violence within Romania that conceivably could spread to other countries where ethnic ties were strong, but you also had a sizeable U.S. and international community in Romania that was very much threatened by being the domestic violence. Nobody was pointing a finger at the Americans for having provoked any of this, but in fact we were there and we were very visible. Although there had been some discussion of voluntary embassy draw downs and departures, I cannot recall whether or not any concrete steps had been taken in the late fall or in the early winter prior to the Christmas season. It was actually thought that the unrest would die down because it was Christmas season. Things would not explode over Christmas. The regime might indeed survive this threat because who is going to provoke a revolution over Christmas? That the regime didn't recognize Christmas or any of the traditional religious holidays, and had suppressed the churches. It was in league with the Romanian Orthodox church in seeking to maintain a degree of calm and submission. In fact, the churches and religion did not play a major role in influencing public policy in Romania, as the Catholic church did in Poland and as both Catholics and Protestants did in Hungary. This being the harsh winter season, with little food on the shelves, conditions didn't seem promising for sustained civil unrest, and perhaps everything would blow over by January -- but it didn't.

In the course of less than a week, we had to deal with a large-scale, violent national outburst against the Ceausescu dictatorship, a true revolutionary transformation. CNN was on top of it. The best reporting we got were visuals from CNN in Romania. We were suddenly faced with evacuating a good-sized embassy in the midst of a violent conflagration. It couldn't be done through military airlift, as the airports were closed. We were in no condition to fly troops into in

this landlocked communist nation and help our embassy. So, the Department painstakingly organized a vehicle convoy from Bucharest to the Bulgarian border and their reception by Bulgarian and U.S. officials at the border. It was a harrowing enterprise, moving embassy employees and dependents to safety over 100 miles of territory thought to be swarming with Romanian army and security units as well as armed insurgents intent on seeking out the security forces and doing damage. We had an evacuation agreement with Britain, but we took it upon ourselves to accept into this convoy any member of what remained of the international community who wished to travel with us. There were some embassy vehicles, but most were private vehicles. We hoped that since we were not the targets of violence by either side we could get our people to the border. I seem to think that it was a two-to- four hour trip. Obviously a large convoy, containing a couple of hundred people if not more, would move much slower than one or two vehicles. One the vehicles got under way, the Department's Romania crisis task force, assembled in the 7th floor Operations Center, could only look on and listen. There were actually two crisis task forces running on the 7th floor at the same time. Operation Just Cause in Panama had been launched on the 19th or 20th of December, and the Department immediately set up a task force. The dramatic events in Romania began on December 17, I believe, and our task force was established at almost the same time. Since I was as the desk officer, I was designated deputy coordinator of the Romania task force. I think the East European Affairs office director was the coordinator.

We sat there and monitored the situation on a minute-by-minute basis. I recall there was a lot to monitor, but there was relatively little we could do. We watched the drama on CNN as Ceausescu disappeared from the presidential palace, I think, about the 23rd of December and nobody knew where he or his immediate family was. He and his wife were apparently identified and picked up apparently by Romanian army units which, unlike the state security forces, had by and large had refused orders to fire on the civilian population. The army basically broke ranks, stood aside and indeed there were reports of clashes between the army and the *securitate*, the professional state security force. The army caught the Ceausescus and lined the two of them against a wall and executed them.

Q: I remember watching it on TV.

BECKER: Yes. The army unit filmed the execution and broadcast it on state TV.

Q: Had we thought about just prior to this one of the things we often tried to do is if a regime is collapsing under pressure and all to ease the civil unrest is to offer asylum or get the leader out to another country and be gone and we've arranged for you to end up in Uganda or some other place like that. Had we thought about that at all?

BECKER: No. Our relations with the Romanian regime and with the Ceausescus had become formal, correct, but when events unfolded, they happened very rapidly and there was never an instruction, not even a suggestion, that we might intervene diplomatically. I don't recall ever discussing the scenario in any of our staff meetings that we might try to persuade some other country to take the dictator and his family, a la Haiti, and allow Romania to pick up the pieces without that impediment. To the very end, and despite the National Day rebuff in the streets, Ceausescu was supremely confident in his ability to maintain control. Had we raised the issue, he

probably would have laughed at us. It was not raised and there was never any instruction. Part of it may have been that the tumultuous events in Romania were upon us without any real prediction or warning, and the myriad of other events, largely positive and evolutionary, taking place elsewhere in Eastern Europe were consuming our attention. Romania was certainly not seen as an environment that was propitious to our influence or our change.

Q: Was there any contact prior to the execution of the Ceausescus of forces within Romania coming to the embassy and saying, hey we represent the national liberation front or something like that or was it or were we out of it?

BECKER: When the Ceausescu disappeared from sight, they had issued orders to the state security people, do your worst, but they dropped out of sight like cowards and nobody knew where they were. Most Romanians were quite accustomed to an environment in which standing up and saying we represent an independent movement was quite alien behavior. Under Ceausescu's rule, there was no evidence of coup plotting or organizing an independent political or civic movement. Anytime somebody stood up to express a dissenting view, they were ruthlessly repressed, imprisoned, killed or pushed into exile. It was only after Ceausescu disappeared, and more so after it was clear that he and his wife had been executed, that these sorts of things started to happen. Even then, nothing of a popular or mass nature emerged, but rather small groups of party leaders stepped forward to claim the Ceausescu mantle or at least to have succeeded him.

Interestingly enough, it was one of those individuals who had been pushed aside by Ceausescu, exiled if you will to a provincial party post after being a member of the central committee a some years earlier. Ion Iliescu was not given a great deal of weight in the days before Ceausescu was clearly and truly dead and buried. Nobody wanted to put their heads up. Almost overnight Iliescu, who had been a fairly prominent party leader during much of the '80s, came forth and claimed the loyalty of the army and of most party leaders. Nobody really quite knew what to make of it. He clearly spoke for the party leadership. Before he made contact with the embassy, as far as I can recall, he appeared in public with a very small group of party leaders, most of whom had been shunned or demoted by Ceausescu. The group stood up on the same balcony where Ceausescu had appeared on National Day and declared itself to be a government of succession, reconciliation and reform. It very much appeared that this group was simply going to do away with or at least push aside the other leaders who had remained close to Ceausescu to the very end. Nobody knew what the character of this new leadership group. There had been no visible evidence that the party leadership was divided between reformers and traditionalists. From the outside, the party seemed quite monolithic and undifferentiated, except for those individuals who had once held power but had lost favor and position. Did having lost favor with Ceausescu make Iliescu a reformer, now that he was standing up and declaring himself to be the leader of a national reconciliation government? We were not too sure.

Q: You must have been sort of scurrying around trying to look at old files to find out what we had on him and the other one.

BECKER: That's right, because he had sort of dropped off the scope. He was not seen as a great light for reform. Nobody was. While you were in Ceausescu's good graces, you were

undistinguishable from dozens of other party leaders in his favor and your policies were undistinguishable from his policies. Iliescu had a reputation for being an effective provincial administrator; and for not being overly heavy-handed. Aside from that, we knew relatively little about him. What was his true character, what was his true nature? At the moment, we were first of all heavily occupied with making sure that there were no American casualties, and secondly on the alert for just this kind of development, that is, the coalescence of a successor government. There were no tears shed and no regrets when Ceausescu left the scene, but we were concerned at the possibility of a huge vacuum because Ceausescu had created conditions whereby his removal and that of his wife and a small coterie of leaders who stuck with him to the bitter end would be quite likely to result in a huge power vacuum at the top. We were in a watch-and-wait mode with regard to a successor government. One did not want to be too quick to bless just anybody who stood up and said he was Romania's new leader. Our levers of influence over Romania were very limited at that moment. Ceausescu had made that very clear that his goal was national self-sufficiency. He had no foreign debt. He had liquidated Romania's through Draconian economic policies over a period of 10 years. He wasn't going to be dependent upon any foreign government for aid or support. He was trying to follow a North Korean model of autarchic development, which may have been part of his undoing.

Q: Were we at this point we've more or less figured that the Soviet Union is too preoccupied with its own internal things and the things were falling apart, that the Soviet Union posed no particular threat to moving into Romania or anything like that. Was that the calculation?

BECKER: That was the calculation. In fact, they had raised virtually no opposition, and made no effort to provoke counterrevolutionary activities in much softer targets like Poland and Hungary and even Czechoslovakia, where they had presumably more levers of control and support.

Q: And lots of troops.

BECKER: And indeed troops. So nobody really expected they would use their resources and devote their attention to try and influence the course of events. There were abundant rumors that the Russians were actively stirring things up to bring the confrontation with Ceausescu to a head, and that certain Romanian party leaders would emerge in the next few days as a successor government and swear allegiance to Moscow and the Warsaw Pact. These proved to be empty of substance. There were several contacts between the Soviet embassy and our own embassy in Bucharest. The Soviets expressed a high degree of concern that they would be targets of violence, because anti-Russian feeling was always high in Romania and the Soviets knew they would be blamed for whatever went sour. There was never any sympathy for the Russians, and any serious suggestion of Soviet meddling might have sparked an attack on the Russian Embassy, which didn't occur.

Q: What about a higher command. Secretary of State Baker, President Bush, was there much interest? This of course was a great drama to see for a couple of days on TV with CNN showing some of the quite gory details actually, but did you find that you were getting orders from above or briefing people from above or was this just something off to one side?

BECKER: No, it became center stage. Each country, as it moved from the communist to the at least post-communist stage, received an inordinate level of attention. Washington seized on every change and embraced the successor governments, one by one. No attention was paid to Romania until the very dramatic events of December 1989 appeared on all of our screens, and then due attention -- a great deal of attention -- was paid to Romania. Deputy Secretary of State Larry Eagleburger had a lot of experience in the region and was a personal friend of any number of Romanian exiles, for example the grand rabbi of Romania, Moses Rosen, who used to travel in the West, to Israel and to the United States a couple of times a year. I had known Rabbi Rosen during the '70s when I was a junior officer in Bucharest, and I became his escort officer whenever he came to Washington. He always called on Deputy Secretary Eagleburger when he came to the Department, because they were friends from years back. Rabbi Rosen always brought little tidbits of information on the status of the Jewish community, which had always been of interest both on the Hill and in the White House. Most certainly he did not make a pilgrimage to Washington during that period, but he had visited early in the fall of '89, and had reported on the worsening conditions and the need to keep pressure on the Romanians to continue to allow emigration to Israel of the last of the Romanian Jewry, at that time down to about 20,000 from a post-war high of 400,000. Maybe there had been a total of 100,000 when I served in Romania in the '70s. That had dwindled down to a few thousand older folks, who were physically or psychologically not prepared to make the move to Israel. We had little leverage on the situation, since these remnants were not even applying for exit permits. There was always interest by the U.S. and international Jewish communities in the status of Jews in Romania and in ensuring that the doors remained open for émigrés.

Q: Were you preparing things whither Romania all the time, trying to come up with stuff?

BECKER: We were always preparing contingency papers, more info papers than action memos.

Q: Yes, well, I think this is probably a good place to stop and we'll pick this up the next time. We're still talking about the events of really December '89 and early January of '90. Is there anything else we should cover on that immediate period?

BECKER: I would simply add that conditions and policies were beginning to be developed for U.S. support to post-communist governments and societies, and legislation had been passed already to assist the successor regimes in the other countries to facilitate democratic electoral processes, bureaucratic reforms and socio-economic support. I think this all came together in 1989-90 in a package called the SEED legislation. I can't tell you what SEED stood for, but in fact it was very much organized with Poland and Hungary in mind. It was relatively easy to add new recipients to the package, which included electoral support, introduction of the Peace Corps, and large-scale human exchanges at all levels in Eastern Europe. The framework of a post-communist policy in the administration was already beginning to take shape at the time, not with Romania in mind but with some of the more advanced countries. There was a great deal of discussion about this. When the regime fell, the critical period of violence passed, and the new leadership took shape in the first months of 1990, we found we had a number of tools to draw up on, and it was simply incumbent on us to apply those tools in the best and most creative way possible. We recognized that the situation in Romania was far worse in terms of what needed to be done to effect a turnaround in the country's political and economic development. Romania

needed to reconstruct an economy in shambles and reverse a decade of self-isolation by re-establishing effective international linkages, more than any other country in Eastern Europe.

Q: Okay, well, then we'll pick this up the next time of how Romania what you were doing with Romania as to get it integrated into the rest of the Eastern European situation as far as what relief and change and all that. Great.

Q: Okay, today is the 18th of February, 2005. Rick, just to put me back in the thing, you were on the Romanian desk when to when?

BECKER: From the summer of '88 to the summer of '90.

Q: Just to reprise a bit, what was the situation in '88 when you took over the Romanian desk?

BECKER: It was a mixed picture. On the one hand, the Romanian landscape itself was particularly bleak. The '80s were a very bad decade for Romanians. Human rights, social and economic conditions and indeed relations between Romania and all of its neighbors and with the United States had deteriorated from the halcyon days of the '70s, when Romania achieved a major opening with the West and gained most favored nation trade status with the United States. All of the promise that this was going to open up and liberalize Romanian society due to the attention we were lavishing on Romania had not come to pass.

Q: Now, it's coming back to me. I think we covered the fall of Ceausescu.

BECKER: We did, and we were talking about the aftermath. We had just covered the activities of the Romania crisis task force, of which I was the operating deputy, which was in existence over Christmas '89. The task force was concerned as much with the successful and safe evacuation of the U.S. mission and foreign nationals from a very unstable and uncertain situation in Romania as it was with trying to get on top of the political circumstances and monitoring how they would play out.

Q: I guess where we want to start is you know, you're looking, this is sort of after the fall situation and you're trying to, our policy was to bring Romania back into the system. How was that working for you?

BECKER: Well, there were structures in place. Congress had responded particularly to the liberalization and the fall of communism in Poland and Hungary in a very forthcoming way. As frequently occurs in these situations, the U.S. was expending huge amounts of money with little thought as to whether the recipients could absorb that much in short periods of time. The SEED program was designed to provide massive amounts of political, economic and humanitarian assistance to these countries, both as an incentive to genuine reform and as a way of furthering the disintegration of communism. The problem with Romania was that it was virtually the last country in Europe to fall, and a lot of the funds and attention that accompanied the congressional mandate had been committed to other countries. It was our job to fashion a set of priorities and programs for what arguably was the worst off of all the ex-communist countries, not counting

Albania, and not punish it for simply being the last on the list to fall into the democratic or at least the post-communist camp.

We were a little hesitant to call what happened in Romania a democratic revolution. It was certainly a popular revolution. It was a violent overthrow which had not occurred in any of the other countries and we were not certain how deep and how far this transformation would go. Would it simply be a communist successor regime by another name, and would it be a source of long-term instability that we would have to live with? Nobody yet anticipated the kind of chaos that occurred in Yugoslavia later in the '90s as a result of the death of Tito and the disintegration of the Yugoslav Republic, but Romania may have been a foretaste of the dark side, the worst side of what was a major political reconfiguration. This was of course also before the Soviet Union, which was in the midst of some episodic and quixotic reform efforts, actually came to its end.

Q: Well, I would imagine that you would be looking very closely at the security forces. What were they called?

BECKER: The *Securitate*.

Q: The Securitate and the armed forces. This is after the fall. What was happening and what were we getting from our embassy?

BECKER: Well, to this extent the embassy did a really stellar job of reporting, even though they were primarily concerned with security of U.S. citizens at the time. The outbreak of violence came in such a way as to prevent the orderly departure of mission dependents and non-essential personnel. When the revolution occurred, airports were closed and there was no way to anticipate the need to evacuate large numbers of citizens. That certainly hadn't occurred in the fall of communism elsewhere. This kind of instability and insecurity had not occurred. Yes, the security of the mission was everyone's first concern. Beyond that, the embassy did an excellent job of reporting, monitoring, interviewing people from the provinces that touched base with us and reported first-hand on what was going on. People actually came to the embassy to tell us what was happening in the far corners of the country.

Q: Were they opening up to the embassy? Did they want, did the army want to let us know what was going on?

BECKER: No. The army may have feared retribution from whoever succeeded Ceausescu. It may have seen an opportunity to strike back at a regime and a security apparatus that possibly frustrated professionalism and even humanitarian sentiments that existed within an institution whose rank-and-file had been conscripted from the general population. The army, like all Romanian institutions, had been infiltrated by and subordinated to the security forces and the political commissars. The security forces were considered a dark force. Their membership and methods were the topics of folklore, like Romanian vampire legends. Nobody knew how extensive their network was. State security fostered an environment of fear. As we later learned, and as most people suspected during the Ceausescu years, everybody was informing on everybody else, just as they later found out in East Germany and the other countries. You didn't

know if your neighbor was working for state security and people were intimidated by the utter lack of trust at a very basic level. There were some atrocities, actual massacres of civilians that took place in the days following the outbreak of the revolution, which everybody attributed to either revenge-taking or a ploy by the security forces to maintain a climate of insecurity and fear. Members of the *securitate* probably were in fear of their own lives now that their sponsor and protector Ceausescu was no longer around. People dressed in army uniforms or in paramilitary garb were marauding, running around the country targeting individuals and groups and then using the media or the ever-present rumor mill to blame it on this group or that group. This is the way the security apparatus had always worked. So, it was very difficult to tell truth from fiction from rumor, and there was a sense of panic that the system that had become total anarchy and that all semblance of personal security had disappeared, regardless of how people felt about communism. There was a kind of security in knowing who your master was and what was expected of you. This was no longer the case.

Q: Well, the American embassy, let's say even if you've got funds, was there any there to go to? Were you seeing a while you were on the desk a collection of authority that was gathering together or what was happening?

BECKER: What happened within about a week, actually before the New Year, was the emergence of a group of semi-senior and formerly senior party officials who proclaimed themselves a provisional government, a government of national unity or a successor government. They tried to reassure the population that there was continuity of government and that the country was not falling into anarchy, but at the same time tried to convince the citizenry that they did not represent the entire Ceausescu regime. The new leaders were already setting themselves apart from the institutions they had been either loyal to and subordinated to prior to December of '89. Every one of those leaders had a certain stature as a senior communist party member at one time or another. It was very difficult to tell how much change, how much forward movement, and how much linkage with the past would take place. There was no Romanian Vaclav Havel who could epitomize and inspire a democratic opposition to communist rule.

Q: You're talking about the leader of the Czech revolution.

BECKER: The Czech revolution, yes. And there was certainly no Lech Walesa.

Q: Poland.

BECKER: Romanian communities in exile were more or less fragmented and there were very few individuals, intellectuals or others, who stood up and spoke out on behalf of the large, disenfranchised Romanian population. Ceausescu's dictatorship was that effective. What Romanians were presented with was a successor of undetermined loyalty, intention and indeed credentials for putting together what we hoped would be a democratic beginning for the country. Our goals were the same in Romania as they were in the rest of Eastern Europe. Our primary objective once there was some reasonable establishment of order, even though there still were isolated instances of violence attributed to paramilitary actions against citizen groups and public officials. We made it very clear that we wanted to see a democratic transition and we were prepared to put resources and political clout behind an early call for national elections. That was

one of the main efforts in which I was involved in the last six months of my desk tour, from January to my departure in the summer of '90. Keep in mind that AID had a lot of experience in other parts of the world with elections, but had no experience in Eastern Europe. AID didn't even have a European bureau, and certainly no experts on transitions from failed communism to successful democracy. That mission came with the legislation that lavished all kinds of resources on Eastern Europe. Many of those newly legislated resources went to other agencies besides State. One of the major Senate architects was Robert Dole, and his wife just happened to be Secretary of Labor, so there was a large labor component to the SEED legislation. We also were ramping up the Peace Corps to teach English in Hungary and other parts, basically to put a U.S. stamp on the transition in Eastern Europe. We needed to play catch-up with Romania.

Q: Were there sort of hurdles that Romania had to do that we were explaining before this money and aid would come in, if they got too communist you don't get this or something like that?

BECKER: I don't recall a lot of the details, but it was clear at the time that many in Washington were somewhat hesitant to throw too many marbles into the Romanian basket. We were prepared to provide incentives for change, but wanted to see results in short order to justify further support. In the winter of '89-90, our immediate goal was to provide PL-480 food aid, and I believe we did make unconditional food and humanitarian aid grants to Romania, as well as other countries, to provide for victims of winter famine or victims of the unrest. But here were other elements of aid that couldn't flow until some preconditions were met. We had an initial problem that there were no real recognizable structures, either in the government or in civil society, with which to engage to help mobilize and carry out effective and sustainable reforms. Our first instinct was to send in massive numbers of advisors, and the Romanians appeared to accept all of them with a lot of good grace, curiosity and an understandable degree of suspicion. Clearly we expressed our hope and expectation that the heavy-handed state apparatus, the virtual total state control over the economy and society, would be dismantled over time. We were prepared to provide expertise to assist in the destatification and decentralization of the economy. First and foremost, we saw early scheduling of democratic elections as perhaps more important in Romania than in any of the other countries, because it would be considered a litmus test of how we would be able to pursue some of our other goals with the new leadership, whose democratic bonafides we couldn't genuinely assess at that moment.

We tried to focus attention and resources on holding the first democratic elections in all of Eastern Europe in Romania, before Poland or Hungary, which all had interim post-communist governments with popular if not constitutional legitimacy. We wanted to see a constitutional, elected Romanian government that could lay claim to popular legitimacy.

Q: Well, was there a constitution that allowed this? I mean a lot of these, at one time I think the Soviet Union had one of the most liberal constitutions in the world, but it didn't mean anything. Did Romania have a constitution that would provide for the elections?

BECKER: No. I must say you highlighted an important part of the process that I simply can't recall. Clearly we did not want to delay mounting an electoral process with a perhaps more involved process of reforming Romania's constitution. This was not a lesson we learned well in subsequent transitions, because sometimes the constitutional changes that were enacted early on

were quite hasty and ill-conceived and had to be corrected. In any event, I remember trying to mobilize U.S. organizations like IFES, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, one of many NGOs that had experience in organizing voters and elections in Third World countries.

Q: This was before the OSCE had developed its apparatus, which was used quite often particularly in ____.

BECKER: Right. The OSCE was still called the CSCE in those days.

Q: Yes and it didn't have the apparatus that later was used in Bosnia for example and Kosovo.

BECKER: No, and that apparatus was developed out of experiences such as those in Romania and other post-communist systems on how to put together an electoral process. We were not coordinating well at this stage with the Europeans and we did not see the CSCE, which if you recall still had the Soviet Union as a major player. Shortly before I left the desk, the CSCE held a major conference in Paris on human rights issues which had a very curious attendance. There was the still communist Soviet Union, and then there were a lot of former communist countries for the first time participating in a review of human rights, constitutionalism and human dignity issues. I have a framed poster at home from this month-long conference on human rights issues that clearly focused on the transition then taking place in Eastern Europe. It was still not a very responsive organization, because the Soviet Union sat at the table and its role vis-à-vis the successor governments were still a little unclear. There may have been new leaders with a different, Western oriented complexion, but all of these countries still bordered on the Soviet Union. We were still never sure how far the Soviet tolerance for dissent and independence would go. We were not fully aware of the turmoil that was going on within the Soviet Union. As we later learned, The Soviets were at this stage probably totally incapable of responding outside their own borders to independence movements, but clearly they continued to put up the same front that they had put up before in international fora.

Q: Now, Ceausescu had had this regime which essentially was starving the people in order to build up a large pile of money or something. I mean what happened to all the sacrifices of all the Romanians? Was it in a Swiss bank account? Was it somewhere that it could be used or what?

BECKER: My recollection was that we did some cursory investigations with our friends and allies in the West, in Switzerland particularly, to see if there were any secret bank accounts. What happened didn't turn up anything of major proportions, not billions and billions of dollars. We were looking for petrodollars in particular, since Romania was a net importer of petroleum and an exporter of refined product. Romania exported raw materials, agricultural products and even shoddy manufactured goods, which produced foreign exchange that was used to purchase capital goods from other countries. All available resources were plowed back into further industrialization for the purpose of building a totally independent economic and political base at the service of the Ceausescus. It was our estimation that one-third to 40% of all public expenditures was devoted to recapitalization, especially investment in heavy industry, which was a tremendously high percentage by global standards.

Q: I would think I mean this thing happening in the middle of the winter meant that you couldn't tap into the agriculture resources or richness of Romania which had been used to starve the people and get money for the industrial buildup. You couldn't turn that on right away?

BECKER: No, certainly and it was very difficult to find out what agricultural resources were available. There didn't seem to be large stockpiles. Apparently, the Romanian state sold everything of value abroad for hard currency so that they could buy machinery and technological processes. They had a fairly efficient military for the period, but both the military and security forces consumed a fairly high proportion of the national budget. Ceausescu's intent throughout the '80s was to liberate Romania from any kind of dependence on the outside world, a little lesson he learned after he visited North Korea in '79. His best hope for survival was not to be dependent economically and certainly politically on anybody else. He didn't want to be dependent any more on conditionalities from international lending institutions than on the Soviet-controlled bloc. He basically squeezed the pip until it was dry.

Q: What about all this outflow of people mainly for academic institutions and émigré groups and all flooding to Eastern Europe full of advice, some of it must have been really out of this world, not based on reality, but whatever the latest economic scheme of Michigan State University's faculty or development or something like that. Did you have problems with that?

BECKER: One of the early decisions by the successor government in Romania was not to risk further disruption, further chaos and further uncertainty by adopting a drastic economic reform model. They explicitly rejected the "shock" approach to economic change and growth adopted by Poland, which ended up exacerbating unemployment and economic dislocation in the short term. They were also a little averse to turning over the keys to their industries to foreign investors. Most of the Romanian exiled community had been effectively cut off from contact with their homeland. It wasn't simply a matter of exploiting those ties, but of trying to move the government to make some initial adjustments, some small market openings, with the promise that there would be more reform down the road once that government was legitimized. The provisional government, and indeed the government that was later elected would not risk its own survival by closing factories and turning people out in the streets. There was virtually no private sector that could provide alternate employment. This was a sort of pie-in-the-sky goal as far as most Romanians were concerned.

The Romanians turned out to be the slowest of all the Eastern Europeans to institute fundamental reform. To paraphrase Lenin, they took two steps forward and one step back every time the pressures for economic liberalization got to the point that they couldn't ignore them. Ultimately, the successor leadership was communist and bureaucratic heart and the populace placed personal and economic security above even democracy and the free market.

Q: You're saying that the Romanian economy and all was very much a slow change.

BECKER: Yes. The communist regime had made it a ritual of reporting wildly inaccurate economic performance data to international financial institutions, and finally cut itself off from the institutions themselves. Nobody could find any accurate statistical records on what the economy was producing. We surmised that the Romanians produced at least two sets of books,

one realistic set that accurately reflected the economic performance of the country, which in fact was a state secret because the performance was so poor. The other set was presented to the world, showing all of the planned targets being exceeded by a significant amount. The falsified data were produced not only to impress foreign governments and international financial agencies, but they were probably produced as a survival mechanism by plant managers and economic planners to save their jobs if not their lives by convincing Ceausescu that the plan was being overachieved. Romania awoke after the revolution to an economy that seemed to be virtually at a standstill. One of the jokes we used to hear frequently in the '70s, when I was serving in Romania, was the workers' plight about the worthlessness of the Romanian currency and the corruption and subterfuge that went on in the factories. The workers would say, "They pretend to pay us and we pretend to work." This was merely one pretense out of many that underlay the communist economy.

Q: Yes. Well, now.

BECKER: That corruption, worker and managerial cynicism, and the utter lack of concern for economic performance and efficiency certainly did not stop with the fall of Ceausescu. These were attitudes that were deeply ingrained in the society.

Q: During the time you were on the desk, did the election take place?

BECKER: The elections did take place in the spring, and they legitimized the government headed by Ion Iliescu. His sudden emergence with a group of so-called reformers after the revolution and his leadership of the interim government apparently won him sufficient popular support in the national election. Romanians were looking for security and they were used to looking up to leaders. Iliescu was the incumbent. His electoral competitors were candidates who either had little name recognition, who represented ethnic minorities or fringe ideological groups, or whose claim to truly democratic convictions could not be assessed in the course of a short campaign. Of course, Iliescu's campaign was based on distancing himself as much as possible from Ceausescu's brand of communism and on embracing the West whenever he had the opportunity. In order to present Iliescu's Social Democratic Party as a viable alternative to the communists, the provisional government banned the Communist Party, but many communists found a new home under Iliescu's political umbrella.

There was a Hungarian national party representing the interests of the Hungarian minority, a significant minority primarily located in Transylvania that had some separatist and extremist tendencies. There was also an extreme Romanian nationalist party that preached ethnic purity and wanted to recreate monarchy in some form, even wanted to bring back the king who was living in exile on the French Riviera or some other comfortable spot in Western Europe. King Michael had been deposed in 1947 and he was an old man and out of touch with all things Romanian.

Q: What about the security forces by the spring of 1990, had they been pretty well been absorbed? Where did they stand?

BECKER: They were formally disestablished. I seem to recall that there was some effort by the new government to try and convict some of their leaders as well as others who remained close and indeed strangely loyal to Ceausescu's memory even after the worm had turned. Several members of the Ceausescu family were also tried and convicted, including his son who was captured in the wake of the execution of his parents. All were imprisoned for crimes against the state, treason, corruption and diversion of public funds and resources. As for the *securitate*, it just sort of disappeared into the woodwork and its leaders and other perpetrators of violent atrocities and gross human rights abuses – with few exceptions -- apparently escaped to other countries. Many Romanians knew who they were, and their sordid record legitimately put them in fear for their lives. There was a genuine effort by the country's new leadership to bring the security apparatus under effective and accountable state control, so that it wouldn't be a personal tool by a successor leadership against its political enemies.

However, some Romanians questioned whether or not Iliescu and his leadership group maintained the core of the *securitate* intact and continued to use them as weapons against their political opposition. This view persisted throughout the '90s. The climate of fear didn't go away for years and years and years.

Q: Was there any effort on the part of the Eastern Europeans including the Romanians to get together and say, gee a new world is dawning, let's share experiences and that sort of thing or was each country on its own or was Romania just plain odd man out?

BECKER: I saw no indication during my tenure in the region of a collective approach by the Eastern Europeans to reinforce their new democratic credentials. Each country was consumed in its own way with domestic problems and issues, which varied from country to country. East Germany, always a harsh communist regime, was in the process of slowly positioning itself for unification and being absorbed by West Germany. The Czech regime was one of the harsher ones, but once liberated from Soviet control, quickly moved into the democratic camp under Havel's sage presidency, and then had to deal with its own separation between Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Yugoslavia of course completely disintegrated, which had little to do with what was going on in Eastern Europe, but much more to do with the disappearance of Tito and the communist party as a unifying force. Romania was treated with suspicion by all for a good while, because nobody was really certain about the bonafides of their new leadership.

Q: When you left there I guess the summer of '90?

BECKER: Yes.

Q: What did you think about Romania? Where was it going?

BECKER: I was upbeat. I thought we had made tremendous progress from an extremely low point in 1989. Clearly the country needed much more transformation on all fronts than could be achieved in a relatively short period of time. The poverty went deep into the population. We're not simply talking about the lack of consumer goods. In fact, consumer goods flooded the country as soon as the gates opened, producing rampant inflation as well as all kinds of crazy, unbridled, get-rich-quick schemes. There were *ponzi* schemes perpetrated by a number of

émigrés as well as some homegrown Romanians who got rich almost overnight. Other Romanians, including some former communists, became millionaires by manipulating the divestiture of state enterprises. Other problems centered on the lack of modern educational and public health infrastructures, which were chronically ignored under Ceausescu. The widespread publicity given to the plight of the AIDS babies in Romanian orphanages was just one telling indictment of the social welfare and health care systems.

Q: This sort of parallels what happened in the Soviet Union?

BECKER: Yes, on a smaller scale it certainly happened in Romania and was one of those conditions that persisted, and indeed to some degree still persists, in the country, which continues to get low marks on the corruption-accountability scale.

ALAN GREEN JR.
Ambassador
Romania (1989-1992)

Mr. Green was born and raised in Oregon. He was educated at Stanford University and the University of Oregon. After service in the US Army in World War II and work in the private sector, Mr. Green became involved in Republican politics and national affairs. He participated in the Port Equalization Agreement of 1974 and from 1981 to 1985 served as Chairman of the Federal Maritime Commission. In 1989 he was named US Ambassador to Romania, where he served until 1992. Ambassador Green was interviewed by Jim Strassmaier in 1999.

Q: Did you talk at that point about what you were going to do next?

GREEN: No. As a matter of fact, I didn't. I was just so thrilled that he'd called me. Then I went down to the desert, and some people had called me and said, "You'd better work on the transition team to protect yourself."

I said, "I don't think I need that sort of thing with this guy. And I'm frankly tired, and I just don't want to do it."

So I didn't hear anything, and I thought, "Well, maybe -" you know. But then I knew the head of presidential personnel, Chase Untermeyer and called him up, and I got right through to him. So I knew that my name was still good there.

And I said, "You know, I've got to kind of plan my future a little bit, and I want to know whether you're going to want me back there or want me somewhere or not. And we were talking about being an ambassador to some country."

He said, "My God, I'm sorry, Punch. It just slipped through the -" you know.

And so he told the President, and I am told that the President didn't go ballistic, but he got pretty excited - and Chase Untermeyer called me back and he said, "By God, we've got to get you something." He said, "I've got a very mad President on my hands."

Then he called me up about a week later, and he said, "I've got three spots: one, Romania, two, something in Africa, I didn't know what it was, and three is -" it used to be Ceylon -

Q: Sri Lanka?

GREEN: Sri Lanka. I thought I was going to Sweden.

Q: Why did you think Sweden?

GREEN: I'd just heard it, just on the street. But anyway, I was a little disappointed with the choices, but I wanted to go to Europe. And Joanie and I got out an atlas and found out where - I tell you, the African country is where Victoria Falls is. Chase was one of these fellows that if he wanted you to go to Iceland would tell you about the Red October type the thing submarine base and all that, you know. He tried to make everything glamorous. And I said, "Stop it, Chase."

So Joanie looked at this one spot in Africa, and it said tsetse flies or something like that, and she flipped that one over fast. I said, "I don't blame you; I'm not very enthusiastic about that." And I said, "Sri Lanka's got some attractions to it, but it's..."

And so we settled on Romania, behind the Curtain and all of that. And I said, "Things are happening there, Joan. Look at what's happening there." This was 1989, you know, and - 1989, when history is written of this century, is going to be one of the big years. It has to be. It's when the Berlin Wall fell. And Romania was the last to go, in December of '89. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

But anyway, so I called Chase back, and I told him that Romania was our choice on this thing, and I never regretted it. I think it was a very lucky choice. I broke the news - I used Gerry Frank because of his vast knowledge, on a private basis, to talk to him about this thing, what would be the best appointment. And he said, "You know, I'd like to break the story" on his column. And I said, "Well..."

He said, "Punch, you know you'll get a good write-up from me."

And I said, "Well, you've got a good point."

So he wrote the story. It was a good story.

Q: So it was certain by this point?

GREEN: Well, it would take a long time.

Q: You responded to Untermeyer and said, "I will take the appointment?"

GREEN: Oh, yes, and then the President calls you. Well, that's another thing. You're all set, and then - now, mind you, there's a big difference between a career and a non-career, particularly back there. There are some bad non-careers, I guess there are. I didn't meet many of them, but I had my own problems with my assigned country. There were a couple of career ambassadors who weren't the greatest things in the world, either.

The call came in, and I was back in Portland, and it was the President. I'd been giving this thing some thought, and I said to him, "Mr. President, I know why you're calling me, but I'm non-career so I'm going to break a rule here, just on your friendship, and let me just say something to you. Don't you think that with what is happening in Eastern Europe you might be a little better served if a career ambassador was appointed?"

He said, "No, Punch. I don't think so because I've seen you act under stress and under fire and in conditions that are not exactly the easiest, and I've liked your reactions."

I've never told anybody this.

And I said, "Well, okay. Go ahead and ask me the question, then." And he asked me to be his ambassador to the Socialist Republic of Romania. And that's what it says; I've got the certificate down South, as a matter of fact.

And I said yes, and I said, "I will make you one promise, and one promise only." I said, "I will do the best job I can."

And that was the end of the conversation.

Q: So was it decided by the President that you would take Romania?

GREEN: It was decided by me what I would take. I could have had any of the three.

Q: You gave him your input and said...

GREEN: I gave it to Chase Untermeyer. But because things were happening, I wanted him to - after all, I'm a pimple on a dimple when you come right down to it; I mean all these other things going on in the world, how much of the President's time do you have? It's important to you, but it's not important to Jim Baker, for example, or all that.

Q: Well, you put him in the position of making it his decision, in effect.

GREEN: Well, yes, it was his decision. I gave him a chance to get out of offering me anything. I mean, I could just, you know, stay in civilian life and use the excuse that we didn't carry the state so therefore he didn't - some television commentator in Portland when we lost by two percent made the comment, "Well, that's the end of Punch Green." Said it on the air.

Q: That's kind of arbitrary.

GREEN: Yes. Well, it's all right.

Q: So what was the process after this phone call?

GREEN: Well, there's a time, and then they send you some stuff. And then of course you get all of this. They investigate you. And I tried to tell them, I said, "The FBI's gone through up to 1985 has gone up to then; why don't you take it from there and save yourself a lot of time?" But they wouldn't do it. They redid the whole thing.

So all that takes a long time, and you've got to get your lawyer to get all your stuff, you've got to get your accountant to put all your stuff together. And then I got - I'll never forget Ron Schmidt, he's the only one that did it free of charge for me. He wrote my résumé.

I said, "What do I owe you?" and he said, "Nothing. I thank you for doing it."

Those are things you remember. I do, at least.

Q: Pretty routine, no problems run into in doing that?

GREEN: No, they didn't. I got a call from the State Department fellow, who actually lives here in Lake Oswego, I think, and he said, "You know, you didn't have to tell me about the liquor, about being arrested on July 3rd, 1962." And I said, "Why is that?"

He said, "Well, the Hillsboro Police Department has expunged their records."

I said, "Yes, well, reporters haven't expunged their records." I said it in FMC; I think it ought to be there - because it's about the only thing I can think of, frankly. I'm proud of it.

Q: So I'm trying to think of the time lapse between these...

GREEN: Then there's a lot of training. You have to realize there's a lot of training. Once you - and you have to realize going through Senate confirmation again, and this time I had it in front of the Pell Committee, and Paul Sarbanes, who is a great Senator, a Democrat, from Maryland, and was Ken Lewis. He was Ken Lewis' roommate at Princeton.

And he didn't like non-career appointments. But I had gotten to know him a little bit when I was Chairman of FMC. And there were some maritime things; that's a big harbor, Baltimore. And he said, "Well, I guess you know how to find the bathroom." I think that was his expression. And I said, "Yes, I can figure that one out."

Anyway, we kind of became friends. So he didn't hold me up, and he was holding some others up. Afterwards, after my confirmation by the Senate, Ken Lewis sent me a letter that he had written to Paul Sarbanes. He didn't want to let me know what he'd said before, which was quite proper, but after confirmation he sent it to me.

Jesse Helms, of course, had some questions and that sort of thing, but there were no problems there. Actually, they were questions for later, and by that time I was in Bucharest when they were answered.

Q: Did they ask you anything about policy?

GREEN: Not particularly. I remember two of the Romanians were sitting in the back. And I remember Sarbanes, one thing he said to me - and I had both Packwood and Hatfield there, both of them were advocating me. That impressed a lot of people, I can tell you.

Sarbanes said to me, "Well, you might have to be a little nasty. Do you know how to be nasty?"

And I made a mistake, because I should have done this a little bit better. I said, "Yes, Senator, I know how to be nasty." I think that's about what I said. But that's what got back to Ceausescu fast. And you can imagine, you know. And when I called on the ambassador, Joanie and I, before I went over to Bucharest, you see, he didn't speak English, but he had an interpreter, I had a letter with me which had the State Department okay, and I said, "Would you see that your president receives this prior to my giving him my authorization, my papers?"

And it was kind - it wasn't flattering; I wasn't going to flatter this guy in any way, shape or form, but it also showed that I wasn't there to be a nasty person, I was there to try to improve the relationship between the two countries.

Q: So did it refer directly to that statement?

GREEN: No. It didn't do any good, either, and it didn't have time to do any good because I got there on December the 1st and they shot him on December the 25th.

Q: So the Senator set you up with language?

GREEN: Well, he was just making a side comment, but everything's recorded. The *Oregonian* was there.

I'd like you to spend a little time, if you could, on those black books. The *Oregonian* was very fair to me when I was away, and I always would talk to the *Oregonian*, or I'd talk to anybody from Oregon, and I'd let my press people handle the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and that sort of thing - because I felt this was where I was going to live, and the Oregon Press wanted to know things because I was a native Oregonian, which is a little bit different. So it worked out well.

Q: Did any of your questioners in the hearings have any concern about someone who might be too hawkish?

GREEN: No.

Q: Too anti-communist?

GREEN: No. No. There wasn't any of that. I am very anti-communist - very anti-socialist, as a matter of fact. I think it's awfully dumb.

You know, I did meet one interesting person before I went overseas. Perhaps it would be appropriate to mention him now. It's Ambassador Ed Perkins. He's an African-American, and I bring this up because - and he at the time was chief of the State Department Foreign Service, and that's a very big job. I bring it up because he was from Portland, Oregon, and his mother lives in Portland - I don't know if she still does.

So I went in to see him. He incidentally has been Ambassador to Australia and I think South Africa, too, so he's really been quite a star. He may be retired now. But I said to him, I said, "Well, I'm from Portland, too." He said, "I see that." He said, "Where did you live?" And it kind of reminded me of *NYPD Blue* last night; I don't know if you watched it or not.

But anyway, I said, "I live in Portland Heights. Where did you live, Mr. Ambassador?"

"Williams Avenue."

And you could see the difference, and I tried to reach out to him, but it wasn't there. He was very nice, very courteous, don't get me wrong. But it was, "You're non-career; okay, prove yourself, buddy. You've had it easy all your life."

I wasn't going to tell him about some of my earlier struggles and didn't compare to his anyway and. I mean, it wasn't appropriate. But I want to tell you something, another reason why this award means so much to me, I think I'm the first non-career ambassador to ever receive the distinguished honor award; that's according to Larry Eagleburger. Now, they've given it a couple of times since, is my understanding, but I think I was the first one.

So I gave a party at the Sulgrave Club when I was leaving and getting ready to come to Portland. And the reason I bring this up is Ed Perkins came to the party. And I took him aside and took him over to the corner, and I told him that his presence there meant more to me, I think, than anybody there - and there were some awfully "big" people there. Well, the President wasn't there, but I mean there were some - you know, a lot of people there.

But what had happened is, at least it said to me I'd proven myself a man in his judgment. And that was a good feeling. I've earned it.

Q: It really completes the story. What was his relationship to you?

GREEN: I never saw him after that.

Q: He wasn't part of the operation of preparing you or anything?

GREEN: No. No, but you should make these rounds. At the time he was what I described, and that's head of all the - you know, I should meet him, and he should know me.

Q: Tell me about the preparation that they did for you as a non-career ambassador.

GREEN: Well, they gave me some books. I'm trying to think of the one book, which was pretty good - well, I can't think of it right now. I'll think of it sometime.

We went to the Foreign Service Institute, and we spent some hours there. I tried to learn the language somewhat. Joanie was totally hopeless on the thing. I think it's appropriate now to tell you, because it would be after the revolution I was on my way down to Constanta, and I stopped by a nuclear power plant in Romania which was under the course of construction, of which that is the - everything in the socialist world is under the course of construction, they don't finish anything. But the reason I stopped by to see it was because it had some Westinghouse equipment in there, and I thought I could at least see with my own eyes whether it had been destroyed or something of that type because nobody was getting in, you see, to see any of this stuff.

But I saw a man before I left who was a Romanian nuclear scientist, and he spoke the King's English, better than any of us. Just Oxfordian tones. And he said, "Mr. Ambassador, you're the first American Ambassador to come to my country that doesn't speak my language."

And I said, "Well, let me tell you something, Professor. You're right, I'm embarrassed by that. But I'm going to give you a choice. I've been here about a month, a month-and-a-half, and you know how busy I've been. Now, I can become fluent in your language, or I can try to get something done. What do you want? You can't have them both."

He said, "You're doing the right thing."

And I said, "I know it."

And I got excellent people that would immediately interpret for me. And a lot of people, of course, spoke English anyway. But it is an interesting thing about this language thing, through Voice of America and Radio Free Europe, hundreds of thousands of tapes were smuggled to these countries behind the Curtain, and the people would listen, and they'd listen to Radio Free Europe or they'd listen to Voice of America, and it was in English, a lot of it. They'd listen to the music, and they'd see the movies. And that's how they got to know America.

Under Ceausescu the people in Bucharest were so desperate on their television sets they were tuning in Bulgarian television for entertainment. Bulgarian television, imagine. Because all Romanian television was of Ceausescu opening a plant or making a speech. That's all there was. It was terrible. Just terrible.

But we had - it was an interesting time. I was worried about the language a little bit until the President had me over before I left - matter of fact he had our class over before I left, and he told me that - I just reminded him, I said, "You said you wanted to see me before I left."

And he's a man of his word, and he was dog tired. I said, "Why didn't you tell me you were this tired? You didn't have to see me."

But anyway, he said, "Are you learning the language?"

I said, "No, not really. I'm trying."

He said, "Well, I got along with the Chinese all right. Don't worry about it."

That's kind of helpful.

They took our class down to - there were about 10 or 12 of us ambassadors, career and non-career, both in the same class, lectures and things like that, and here we were - they put us on the spot how we'd handle a press conference and that sort of thing. Actually, it was very helpful.

They flew us in a small plane down to an island in Florida, and as we were flying to the island, a guy jumps out of the john with a submachine gun under his arm, you know, taking over the plane, and makes us all put our heads under our knees. Women included.

Q: Did you believe this?

GREEN: Well, no. But by the same token, the guy was pretty serious about it. No, I didn't believe it, you didn't kid around about it because the guy was real into it.

When we were down there it was interesting, I didn't know it, but we were being televised and listened to all the time.

[Interruption]

Anyway, we were there about three or four days. Wives weren't with us.

Q: Why do you think they pulled this gunman...

GREEN: Oh, just to give us an experience, what could happen when you go into some of these places.

We were at all times under surveillance when we were down there. Didn't know it until the last day they showed us pictures of ourselves when we didn't think we were being photographed.

Then we learned how to drive an automobile and make a J turn on the sands of the beach and that sort of thing, if you were in pursuit by the terrorists and all that sort of thing. It was interesting. I don't think I could make a J turn now, but -.

Q: They were trying to prepare you psychologically?

GREEN: Yes. That's right.

Q: They were trying to scare people off...

GREEN: I don't think they were trying to scare anybody. No, none of us were scared. I mean, we'd all been through it. But we knew some of us were going into some pretty tough spots, and I

think probably mine was the toughest. And some of these African places are tough. I mean, Beirut or all that. That guy wasn't there.

But yes, when we got through we knew that we were - we had a feeling that this is a possibility. We were shooting guns and things. I remember bringing back the target. I'd never shot a gun in my life, I didn't know anything about it, but they taught me how to do this with a revolver and how to hold it, and I hit the target. And I said, "Let me have that target." Not exactly a bull's eye, but I had hit it.

Q: Didn't you have any rifle range when you were in the service?

GREEN: Yes, in the service. Yes, when I was 18 years of age. Yes, I did do that. I was a buck private, too, you know.

Q: Were you in residence now all this time for several months or how long a period?

GREEN: You mean in Washington?

Q: Yes.

GREEN: No. We lived at the Sulgrave Club.

Q: Okay. You're living there for a period of - is it months?

GREEN: Yes, I'd say we were there for six, eight weeks, yes.

Then the big day comes, of course, and you go in to see the President, and he gives me my - I don't have it with me, but that tie clasp. (End of tape)

Here you can see us together here. It's taken at that time.

Q: So individually, not as a group?

GREEN: Oh, no. Individually. And Brent Scowcroft was always there, at least with me. I admired him a lot. I told him once, I said, "You know, you've got about the same hairline I've got, but I kind of like seeing you next to my president when I see the world pictures. I know he's getting the right advice."

So anyway, Brent was there. And then the President and I talked. And then I repeated my promise that I'd do the best job that I could and then got out of there. You don't want to take too much of the President's time on anything.

I remember walking out of the office, the oval office, with Brent Scowcroft, and Brent says to me, "Punch, I'll be out seeing you."

I said, "No, you won't."

He said, "What do you mean, I won't?" You know, a little startled. I mean, after all, he's number one to the President.

I said, "I don't want anybody of rank out seeing me as long as Ceausescu's there. The only person of any rank from the United States ought to be me. Then when we get rid of him, then I need all the help I can get."

Q: Now, I don't understand why you said that.

GREEN: Because I didn't want Ceausescu in any way to get the idea that he's approved by the United States. I wanted to cold shoulder that guy as much as I could. I didn't have to do it, fortunately.

As a matter of fact, I'll tell you why I went out December the first. You will notice that I got a letter from Larry Napper, when he was over there and he was the *chargé*. He was just letting me know the conditions. I was supposed to go over there about two months earlier, and then they asked me to stay until after Thanksgiving, which was fine because I had a chance to have an extra Thanksgiving with my family.

But they were praising Ceausescu for his new four-year plan, and I would have had to attend all the events as Ambassador from the United States. All Ambassadors had to. Larry went. He was the *chargé*; and he had the power of the Ambassador when the Ambassador is out of the country.

So I waited until the four-year celebration was over, and then they said it was all right to go. So we went December 1st.

Q: Let's have some sort of an appreciation of the prepping that you'd had on the subject of Romania and the instructions that you had, policy instructions on how to handle things.

GREEN: I didn't get that much as you might think. I think it's mostly common sense on how you do it. You will see in the statement that Larry Eagleburger makes when he hands me the award that usually non-careers are sent to places where the conditions are so great between the countries nothing could happen, or the conditions are so bad between the countries that nothing can - that you can't make it worse. And I was kind of caught in the middle there. We had conditions bad that all of a sudden they became "we've got to get them better."

But as I've said, that is kind of my specialty, this turn-around situation, and working with the people and working with the people I had which were excellent. Before going to post, I was sitting in the White House waiting to see somebody, and Jim Baker came bouncing by, and he'd say to me, he'd say, "Punch, we're going to get that guy during your term." I said, "Good." You know, that was about it.

Q: Before you went over he said that?

GREEN: Yes. And I'll tell you another thing I said to the President, and this just came back to me, I said to him, "Mr. President, I'm going out there as a non-career, and it's not exactly friendly territory with Ceausescu. The biggest thing I have going for me is my friendship with the

President of the United States. If you in some way could signal that to Bucharest, in some meaningful way, I think that would be of extreme help to me."

And of course Brent heard every word I said, and we had a meeting of the NATO ambassadors stationed in Bucharest. Yes, we were having a NATO ambassadors' meeting.

Q: Brussels, was it?

GREEN: No, this wasn't Brussels. This group met once a month in Bucharest. Just the ambassadors. And I was sitting in my first meeting, and Larry Napper comes busting into the room - it was in the German embassy. It was one of the quiet rooms. And I kind of looked at him and thought, "What's going on?" And it was a direct order from the President of the United States of America to NATO ambassadors asking their full cooperation to me and things like that. And of course it was...

Q: Very early on? Before...

GREEN: Well, I was in Bucharest.

Q: Before the events?

GREEN: Oh, yes. Well, I think so. I think so. Yes, it was before the events.

Q: Why did Jim Baker say, "We're going to get this guy?"

GREEN: Oh, just the way he is.

Q: Something he knew that you didn't know?

GREEN: No, I don't think so. We all had the feeling, but you know Jim was a friend of mine, and we just - back and forth. Don't attach a lot of significance. He was right. He was the first guy to call it right.

But that was a good way to start with President Bush's directive to NATO. As far as other instructions go, oh, a lot of things they give you are - always trying to sell you - I had a tuxedo, so they said, "Don't you want some white tie and tails?" And I said, "I don't think you need it for Bucharest," but I said, "I'll get them if I need them." But I never did, of course. Did need a tuxedo.

A lot of times the NATO ambassadors would meet - and this was more under Ceausescu - would meet in tuxedos just to put a tuxedo on. And later just for the wives', I think, for morale more than anything else.

And then that at night after I'd seen the President and saw also General Scowcroft, Joanie and I left DC.

Q: Now, Joanie's going over, was that any question that she thought of not going over or...

GREEN: She was going to come over later on. I was going to go over I thought in October, and then she was going to come over about December 1st, when we did. But it worked out where she and I could go together, which made it a lot nicer for me, I can tell you. I needed all the nerve I could get, don't kid yourself.

I wasn't afraid, I was never afraid, but apprehensive, yes.

Q: Well, let's get into the arrival. You must have some memories of what it was like.

GREEN: I do. One of the nice things about being an ambassador, they fly you out with your wife first class and fly you back with your wife first class, and they'll pay for it. One of the nice things about being ambassador - United was just putting in the service to - no, I went out Pan Am, by God. It was Pan Am. And if they know the ambassador has purchased a tourist ticket, they'll put you immediately in first class. That was a very nice perk, when I'd go back and forth.

Joanie and I got on the plane about eight o'clock at night. I didn't know it, but one of my security guards was on the plane, too. Nobody told me. It was Pam Am, I think it was Pan Am, and then we transferred in Frankfurt and flew in, and I looked down, and here was a city of two million people, very few lights. Eleven, twelve o'clock at night.

And as we were gliding in, I looked out and saw guards at all the posts and things. And I said, "Boy, I'm behind the Curtain now."

And they gave us a chocolate cake. The airline did that. They gave us a chocolate cake, which we left on the plane, damn it. I've always kind of regretted that. But anyway, so we went down, and there was the car with the American flag on it, waiting at the bottom of the steps with all the staff there and the Romanian minister for America; I've forgotten what his name was.

So we drove to - oh, the reason I know that there was a U.S. guard on it, I happened to just look up, and I saw a pistol being handed to this guy that got off the plane with me by the guy who subsequently was head of my security. So I just said, "They're watching out for us, not telling me."

So anyway, so we went in and I had a press conference, welcome to Romania type of thing.

Q: What time of day was it?

GREEN: It was about 12:00 at night, but it was run in the day. But the equipment is like a crystal set. It's the darnedest thing you've ever seen. I've got a picture in there, I think, with me with this thing with a picture of George Bush behind me talking on Christmas Day to the Romanian people. It's unbelievable, it's simply unbelievable.

But anyway, so then they drove us to the residence. They had sent me - in America they'd sent me a tape of the residence and all of the amenities and the people, and they were all lined up, upstairs, downstairs maid and butler and cooks, you got the works. I mean, it was something

else. It was *Upstairs, Downstairs* a couple of times. Gardeners, furnace watchers. And they were all members of the Securitat, of course, at that time. But they all were out to greet us.

It sounds a little worse than it is. You just point to the ceiling like this when you start talking if you don't want to say anything. You just write it out. This was during the first 25 days or so.

Q: You pointed up, you gesture upward...

GREEN: Yes, just how you get - unless you were in the bubble. In the bubble you talked.

Q: And that means in case there's a wire...

GREEN: Yes, in case there's a wire. And I don't think there's as much wiring - maybe there was, but you know, it gets pretty confining.

But anyway, so I met all of them. Then Joanie and I went to bed, and they left us alone until I woke up, which was - I don't know when it was.

Q: What was the place like?

GREEN: The residence?

Q: Yes.

GREEN: Oh, it was beautiful. Gorgeous. It used to be the prime minister's home. It's not owned by the United States; it's rented. We usually own them, but this is a rent. It's owned by the government, I think, and we had problems with that. Every once in a while, they wanted to kick us out, and I said, "That's fine. I can think of a few programs you're not going to get, too." And that shut them up in a hurry, you know; I mean, the game goes on all the time.

But it had an inside swimming pool, heated. Sauna. And I'll tell you what it had, it had large gardens, all walled in. It was a huge house.

What I did was after I'd been there a while and after the revolution and things - we can go into that in a little while, but the use of the house, and this isn't a bad time for it - where were my off-duty Marines going to go and play? Where were the Americans with their families going to go and safely play with their families? There's no place to go.

Q: There wasn't a compound?

GREEN: No. They had parks. They have beautiful parks in Bucharest.

So what I did was I opened the residence up, and there were guards all around, all Romanian guards. And then they had little things made up to let them know that they were okay to go through. And they'd stay out in the yard. I'd look out the window sometimes, and they'd be having picnics with the families out there and all that.

So it was a good spot for them. You see, these Marines, they couldn't be married, except the top, the guy that's the staff sergeant, he could be married. But there was also a non-fraternization in effect in Romania, and some of those Romanian women are absolutely beautiful women. So we had a few little problems, but nothing that couldn't be handled. And it was handled.

But I felt much more comfortable that the Americans had a safe place to go. And of course it kind of built a community around us. I mean, they were grateful to us because I don't think previous ambassadors had done that. Maybe some of them had, I don't know. Because you see you get new people every two years. That's how long they are in what they call these kind of stress areas.

Q: You know, Eagleburger in his speech at the award said that it's common for a non-career ambassador to have a lot of trouble with his professional staff, his career staff. Had you heard about that before you took off? Did you have an awareness of that?

GREEN: Yes.

Q: So were you considering that as you arranged...

GREEN: Always considering it. I was thinking about it all the time.

I will tell you something, and we'll have to jump a little bit, but the ambassador in one of these books - and incidentally, I thought it was a good omen, I was reading in a book they sent me about Romania, the opening paragraph, "Romania in size should be compared to the state of Oregon." I thought that was kind of interesting. I said, "Well, that's a pretty good omen."

But you get to choose - this is a good time to bring Dot into this thing - you get to choose your secretary, and you get to choose your DCM, that's the Deputy Chief of Mission, the *chargé* when you're not there. And because of this hurry all of a sudden, not wanting me to go out there but not having an ambassador there, they wanted at least the *chargé* there. And they called me up, and they said they had this fellow Larry Napper in mind, "You'll like him very much," and all. I said, "Hold it. I haven't met him, haven't talked to him. I've got to live with this guy. He's going to make me or break me. Huh-uh. I want to know him."

"Well, we don't have time."

I said, "Well, get him on an airplane tonight, have him stay at my house, go out to Washington tomorrow."

"Well, we can't afford that."

I said, "I can. Put him on an airplane first class, if you want. I don't care. I want him out here. I'm going to spend some time with him."

Smartest thing I ever did because Larry - he came out, I liked him immediately, and we talked. We talked into the night in Portland in the den, and we had a complete understanding. For your information, an embassy is the whole complex, that's everything; the chancellery is where the ambassador's office is. But an embassy will work very well if the ambassador and the DCM get along well and see eye-to-eye on things, and Larry and I never had a real argument. We had one, and I had to overrule him on one thing. It was tough, but it was all right. I've forgotten what it was. Couldn't have been too important because I can't remember it. I remember it was rather tough on me because - but I thought he was wrong on that particular item.

So he came out to Portland, and then he left. And I called them and said, "I couldn't be more delighted," and they were delighted. And incidentally, they did pay for the airline ticket, the State Department. You're not here to talk about the State Department budget, but I can tell you one thing, the State Department is - it's ridiculous. The State Department does a lot of good for a lot less money than one of these damn bombs that's going over, and the State Department is always, always hard up for money because it has no constituency behind it. It's kind of like getting the Shipping Act passed.

Q: Also in FMC you gained sort of an inside impression of what budget problems are.

GREEN: Oh, yes, I was used to it. And the funny thing about it is everybody tells me how broke we are and everything else, and then just the day before - or the month before the fiscal ends, arriving in a warehouse, in one of our warehouses, one of the embassy warehouses, is some office furniture that nobody had ordered. Got to get it out. And I didn't take it; it was for the ambassador's office. I didn't want it. I said, "Let the next ambassador have it. You can leave it right where it is. I'm staying with the stuff that got me through the revolution." I felt at home with it.

But it's interesting kind of - and I'm going to use a dirty word here, if that's all right, because it's the only way you can do it. The selection of the secretary I felt was terribly important, I've always felt, from Mabel Bishop to Dee Bedgood to Marguerite Woods, and now this one. And I had about three or four applications, and it surprised me. You've heard there have been - it's not talked about much, but there have been problems between secretaries and ambassadors, as you can imagine. And I didn't want any of that. I felt my mind was going to be full enough that I didn't need any of that.

So I was looking for some one person in particular, a type. And this one - and two of the women were in Europe, and all I could do was read their résumé, but I couldn't talk to them. And I'm a person that wants to talk to somebody. I want to see what they look like and how they react.

So anyway, this nice lady comes in, and her name is Dot Evans. And I will give you her telephone number; you certainly want to talk to her. I'll give you Larry Napper's and the others, too. But anyway, she's about probably four or five years younger than I am. And what really appealed to me was she had been through very tough posts in Panama and some other spots, you can ask her - and she didn't like the U.S. Panamanian ambassador at all. But anyway, I said to her, I said, "You know, I think you and I can get along pretty well on this thing." And she looked at me, and she said, "Mr. Green, I want you to know something."

And I said, "All right. What?"

She said, "I am a lady."

I said, "Okay. I want you to know something. I am a gentleman." Then I hesitated. And I said, "However, Dot, we're going to be going into a situation where I think daily I'm going to have some very tough situations happening, and I cannot get through a situation like that without using the word 'shit.' Does that bother you?"

"No, it doesn't at all."

I said, "If I have your permission to use that, including in front of you, I appreciate it."

And I mean it, too. It's a great reliever to me, that word.

So we became very good friends. She was loyal, just totally loyal.

Q: Let's get more of an idea of Larry Napper, what Larry is like in terms of personality and characteristics and behaviors.

GREEN: He worked very hard. He ended up ambassador to Latvia, which is very good. After having meetings, he'd always go back and dictate a cable immediately, no matter what. I'd say, "Larry, it can wait till morning; nothing was settled."

He was a strenuous runner. He jogged a lot. It worried me a little bit, jogging around Bucharest, but it was okay. He has a wonderful wife named Mary Napper and two sons.

We kind of formed a team where I said, "You know, I was chairman of the board of a couple of companies when I was in the private sector, and I had CEO's. Why don't we work it that way? I'm comfortable with that. What about you being - I'll be chairman of the board, and you be CEO and that sort of thing?"

And another thing I said, "I want to make a deal with you right at the start. I don't want you to do anything without telling me what it's about and things like that, and I will promise you that I will never do anything knowingly that you don't know about, so that if anything happens to one of us, the other will be fully informed of what is going on, what's happening."

And we did that. We kept that going. There was never any doubt.

And he spoke the language fluently, I might add. He's a real pro.

Q: What else did his acting as CEO mean?

GREEN: Well, he ran the embassy. You know, a lot of the people didn't want to maybe talk to a non-career ambassador, this is right at the start, they'd rather go - Consul General, for example,

Ginny Young, who was as a matter of fact a girl from Portland, Oregon - I don't know where she is now, but she never did get used to the fact that I was non-career and an ambassador. I don't think she ever liked it.

But we've got quite a story to tell you about later on about Ginny Young and "The Miserables." Don't let me forget "The Miserables."

Q: We'll pick that up. I've got it in my notes.

GREEN: Yes. That's a key thing that happened.

Larry told me that he was only going to be there two years, and that was about a year-and-a-half - he'd had about six months' service. So then Jonathan Rickert, I chose him the same way I chose Larry. But I did that on the telephone. I went to Vienna. You don't want to hear about that right now; I'm jumping ahead of myself.

What more do you want to know about Larry?

Q: Well, I don't know. We'll see Larry in action as we go along.

But almost immediately you had a meeting with Ceausescu.

GREEN: Well, we had a meeting with a minister first, some minister. And I learned very soon, always have an empty bladder when you go into one of those things. You don't think about that, but that I learned. Every diplomat should learn that. That should be in every book.

And then, yes, the day came. I had to choose four people. I was allowed to choose four people to go from the embassy, and of course a lot of people wanted to go. And Larry was, of course, number one.

Q: This was to meet Ceausescu?

GREEN: Yes, for the presentation of my credentials. I chose Larry, of course. And I wanted a woman, so I chose Ginny Young, my Consul General. Then I chose my military attaché Bronco Marankovich, wonderful guy. And I said, "Bronco, I want you to look so good, I want you fully dressed with every medal you can borrow." And then I had my political guy there. A lot of other people wanted to go, but I had to make a choice, so those were my choices. And I think they were the right choices.

So we went. And I could see at the other end of the room this milling around and all this. And there was Ceausescu, I could see him. He looked up, looked at me with, I think, disdain.

So the time came for me to go forward, and they handed me - just as I was going forward, they handed me another envelope and said, "This is the former Ambassador's papers. Would you mind handing those to Ceausescu?"

"Any key words I'm supposed to say?"

"No."

So I drummed up something when I gave it to him. He spoke no English, Ceausescu. And so then I gave him mine - there are certain key words you're supposed to say, and I got those key words out. Every ambassador around the world, when he presents credentials has these key words you've got say. I don't remember what they are.

So then we went, and my people sat over there in the corner - this was in early December of 1989 - and I sat here. The interpreter was here, and Ceausescu was there.

He was about my size, and he had a tic, like this, particularly when he'd get nervous.

Q: His head twitched?

GREEN: Yes, a twitch. And I tried to get that in a cable.

Also his fingers were thick, like he'd been taking a medicine, which I reported to the CIA.

But we started off, and I had with me notes - because you've got to realize, Jim, I had no regard for this man whatsoever. I mean, I really don't like those people. But I was representing my country, which meant a lot to me, and I didn't want to disgrace it, and I was non-career, so I therefore had notes right there, and I didn't try to hide it. So I started out very nicely, and then I went into a few things, human rights was one thing, and he just went through the roof. As his voice went up, his interpreter's voice would go up. And I'd just sit there and listen to what he said, and then I'd look down at my next note and go on. But there was a time when the interpreter was talking, and Ceausescu was looking at me, staring, just like I'm doing now. So I said, "To hell with it" to myself. So I started staring back. And I give you my word of honor, he looked away first, and I felt totally triumphant, and we stared for a good minute or so.

And during that time that I was staring at this dictator's face, I thought of my family, my wife, I thought of Pioneer Square, and I thought of the Christmas tree in Portland, Oregon, if you can believe it. It was just about being lit about this time, I think, about December the 4th, 5th or something like that. They took me very fast when I got to Romania because they wanted recognition fast.

And so when I left Ceausescu, I shook hands briefly with him, and his hand was wet, and the United States Ambassador's hand was dry. And I tell you, I felt good about that, too. And then of course the rest of it's history.

Q: When he went through the roof, what behavior was that?

GREEN: Well, he'd just shout. You could see all his people, there were about, you know, 50 or so lieutenants around just like this, you know.

Q: Stiffening up.

GREEN: Sure. They could be shot right there.

Q: What had you heard about him before you went in in your prepping?

GREEN: Well, in my office there's a history of him. But that was given to me by the British Ambassador, when I think about it. Not much. I mean, I knew that he was - what do you hear about those people? I knew that he and his wife were very close. I knew that Elena Ceausescu was a very tough woman. I asked once, after I'd accepted, if there was a golf course in Romania - have I told you this story?

Q: No.

GREEN: - and the desk officer said, "I don't know." I was still in Portland, as a matter of fact. I said, "Would you find out for me? My wife plays golf."

He called me back in about an hour, and he said, "Well, it's about an hour outside of Bucharest."

And I said, "Well, that's not too bad."

He said, "Well, it's an hour by air. It's in Belgrade."

Q: Did Joanie ever make it to the golf course in Belgrade?

GREEN: Sure. We both did once. It was a golf course in Belgrade. God, that was a beautiful city when we saw it. They took me all through it, the American Ambassador.

Q: After this first encounter with Ceausescu, what did your staff, what did Larry tell you...

GREEN: Well, I had a funny thing. I went back to my office - and this only happened to me once, and it never happened again. I just felt empty. And I went to see Brian Flora, my political officer - he was a lot of help to me. But anyway, I said, "You know, I'm just not used to this environment."

He said, "Mr. Ambassador, come on, you knew it was coming. Get with it. We're all for you. We're going to pull this thing through now. Forget about it."

And I said, "You're right." And it never happened to me again. But I just had this slump - boy!

Q: Slump?

GREEN: Yes. It only lasted about five minutes, but it was there. I've never had that feeling before. I just felt very, very lonely. But the right guy was there at the right time.

I went to a meeting of their senate. I sat with the British ambassador way, way up high, and behind us were Securitat people, you know, seeing our reaction. And it's a funny thing, you get into this thing - maybe I've read enough of these spy novels, but nothing surprised me much.

We listened to the people praising Ceausescu, and he and his wife would sit there and write. And then one would get up and walk out, and the other would stay, and vice versa. And this thing would go on and on and on. And all the church dignitaries were there, all the generals were there, and all of the admirals - they had a pretty good fleet, as a matter of fact.

And then I left, Joanie and I left that afternoon for Brussels for a meeting of the American ambassadors in Europe, and we were there three or four days. That's where Shirley Temple Black and I became very good friends. And I was the only one at that time who still - the dictator hadn't fallen, you see. And they were kidding me, saying, "You'd better get back there and do it" and all that sort of stuff.

So anyway, that was a lot of fun, to meet your fellow European Ambassadors.

Q: You said you were impressed even by - that's the language you used - by Shirley Temple Black. I wonder why you said "even."

GREEN: Oh, no. I didn't mean it that way. That's when she and I started to become good friends. You know, she's non-career, and she's done a great deal for this country. Everybody's kind of hanging back from Shirley Temple Black because she's Shirley Temple Black. You know, I did, too. But she kind of liked some of my saucy comments I'd make in the meetings, and so she laughed.

Q: Can you give an illustration of some of the saucy comments you made?

GREEN: Yes, I can. I can give you one. We were at a meeting, and it was cold, very cold. I knew they weren't going to spend five minutes on Romania, or five minutes on Bulgaria - the Bulgarian ambassador was there, too. American. And I raised my hand to one of the key guys, and he said, "Yes, Mr. Ambassador?"

I said, "I don't want to take any time away from Romania, but I have a request."

He said, "Yes, Mr. Ambassador?"

"Would you please shut the windows? I'm freezing to death."

Everybody clapped. So she kind of liked that and all that sort of thing. It kind of broke the ice.

Q: What was the business of the Brussels meeting?

GREEN: Just for all of us to get on the same page. It was an interesting thing to do.

Joanie I felt very sorry for because she had a flu bug that just wouldn't stop.

Then we flew back, and...

Q: Were you meeting the other missions, the British ambassador was new and...

GREEN: Yes, in the NATO.

Q: I'm thinking of back in Bucharest, these different embassies, what were you getting from them? What sort of input?

GREEN: Well, one of the key things you had to do as a new ambassador is that you have to make calls on - you're the one that has to make the calls: for example, on the Russian ambassador. As seniority, really, is what you're supposed to do.

So I got around to about half of them before all hell broke loose. Then forgot about it.

Q: Well, I'm kind of wondering if they gave you a different picture of the situation in Romania from what you had been prepared to understand about the country?

GREEN: No. I don't think they gave me anything. I think I got just about what I expected to get. Matter of fact, I'd get a little surprised if I'd see a different type of streetcars and things like that.

Everything's dirty. They've got these construction cranes everywhere, and not one of them worked. Not one of them in the 26 months I was there moved, with the exception of the one for the museum, which got bombed out in the revolution. They did repair that - thanks I think largely to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. They came over. They were awful snobs, I thought, and they'd only speak in French, but by God, they did what they said they were going to do, so I haven't complained too much about them. I said, "Would you speak to the American ambassador, please, in English? I'd appreciate that."

He was all right. The Romanians really would rather - French used to be their second language, but they'd rather speak English, anyway; that's what they were used to talking now.

Q: So at a certain point things began - how sudden was it when things changed?

GREEN: Well, I'll tell you, it's kind of interesting. It was December the 17th in Timisoara, which is on the Hungarian border, this priest was ordered to leave his church. You'll find it in the notes. And he refused, and the people formed a circle around the church, the people. Securitat went there, the security police. The security police in Romania were as tough as anything you had anywhere in the world, I think. They were real thugs. And they started just popping people. But instead of them all spreading and running, they just got closer together. Incredible courage. And anyway, the priest didn't leave. They stopped them.

And that reached us, of course - it reached us before others. We had awfully good communication. The United States is a very well-equipped country overseas. And a lot of that I

don't want to talk about because I don't think I should. I mean, it's ten years ago, but why should I?

Then I remember that we got a call from the little Anglican Church. It was approaching Christmas, and they wanted me to read something out of the Bible Christmas Eve. And I've never read anything out loud out of the Bible in my life. And the British ambassador had the same problem, but he was more used to it; he was career and he had performed three functions before. He was a wonderful man, incidentally. I'll tell you about him later.

So I went up to meet, about December the 20th, the 19th, went up to meet with the minister to see where I was supposed to stand and what I was supposed to read, and it wasn't very long. Then we left, with the American flag on the car.

And there were a lot of people all around, all milling around. I thought, "This is peculiar." And then as I was leaving people would see the American flag on the car, and they'd give me the V sign and then hide it. I'd give them the V sign back, you know. I said, "Something is happening."

And I said, "Paneit," who I think was Securitat, but he was a good Securitat, he was on my side.

Q: He was with you.

GREEN: You bet. Became a very close friend.

Anyway, so I went back to the chancellery, and needless to say I never returned there for that Christmas Eve service.

But about December - I'd say around the 20th or so, 20th or 21st, Ceausescu - and that's in one of those tapes - gave a speech. And the university square was jammed, and he was up on this balcony - and he started talking, and television was right on him, and I was watching him from the embassy TV.

Then all of a sudden you heard these voices from the rear, and Ceausescu looked up, didn't pay any attention and went on with his speech. And they started going through the crowd, the voices, and what they were saying was "Down with Ceausescu," or "Kill Ceausescu," or something like that. It was unheard of.

And Ceausescu looked up, and he hesitated, and then the people started running around. And he panicked then. And the next day he tried to do it again, and they didn't let him even open his mouth.

Then he got on a roof in a helicopter with too many people in it and left, and he got away from there, and they captured him.

Q: It had too many people and so it landed?

GREEN: It landed farther up-country, yes. But they captured him, put him in a tank, he and his wife in a tank. He's reported to have had a wristwatch that was in contact with the Securitat that he could beam where he was at all times. They put him in a tank; they couldn't get him.

Then he was tried, and his wife was tried - and that's in the tape, it's dramatic pictures - and taken out and shot.

You know, here's a story on this thing. I knew that he and his wife had been shot, and I fully approved of it. Cutting off the head of the snake is what you're doing. And they immediately passed a law against capital punishment after they'd done that. But they had to get rid of those two.

But I went down in the bowels of the chancellery building. I'll have to go back to this to do it, but we had gotten the convoy with the people out, and I should tell you about that at some time, but this will fill in at this time- because it's so typically Balkan. You could call it that. They had on Romanian television immediately these little cartoons, Looney Tunes and things. I mean, you can imagine what the people thought - they were just going crazy seeing things like that on television after 50 years of this other stuff. This was Christmas, and I remember I said to the Marines, "Have they shown the bodies of Ceausescu and Elena yet?"

"No."

So I started shouting at the T.V. - show the bodies!!!.

Let me try to give you a feeling of what I think for me was the most dramatic night of the revolution - December 24, 1989 - To my immense relief the convoy had arrived safely in Ruse, Bulgaria. The convoy consisted of non-essential Embassy personnel, a few U.S. citizens still in Romania, Canadians, Jewish and Japanese Embassy staffers - Joan and Mary Napper made the trip to Bulgaria.

This day the terrorists trashed the British Ambassador's home - Michael and Veronica Atkinson with their two teenagers ("home" for Christmas) and the other British Nationals and staffers arrived at the U.S. Chancery - Veronica Atkinson had a narrow escape through the basement window with the help of a German Embassy lady who lived next door. Veronica was shook up - we gave her a sleeping pill and made her comfortable in Larry Napper's office.

We established an open telephone line between my office and the White House situation room - no easy task in 1989. One of my people constantly manned the phone and every three minutes or so would say "Bucharest calling Washington." They would reply - we, therefore, knew the line was open. I was trying to get some rest in my office when I heard my guy say "Washington calling Bucharest." He'd been on duty too long - we shortened the telephone working hours.

I was called to the phone twice: 1) Defense Department told me the Defense Department was paying for the phone hook-up - not out of our State Department budget - I thanked the friendly voice. 2) The President of the United States called me. He started off "Punch - if I'd known you were going to act this fast, I would have sent you out sooner." - We chuckled together. I asked

President Bush to speak to Larry Napper. Larry had never spoken to a President before. I then told President Bush that Ambassador Atkinson was standing near me and I had offered the British safety in the Chancery - I asked the President if this was okay - he said "Of course." I am told the President had a big grin on his face when he turned the phone over to an aide.

Q: Today is June 4, 1999. Let's pick up the subject you were pointing out that we did jump over, and that's how you set things up for leaving.

GREEN: Yes, I'd like to do that because it was important to me that my affairs, personal and financial, I could be at ease with that while I wrestled with the problems of, as far as I was concerned, living behind the Iron Curtain.

So special mention has to be made of my daughter Kelsey Grout, who did with loving care those scrapbooks over there that you haven't looked at yet, but they're - I mean, it's got everything; it's just amazing. And also she took care of the binders and all that, presented that at Christmas to me, and watched the house and things like that. And Lord knows nobody loves their daughters more than I do, and I've got a wonderful pillow that they presented to me that "Anybody can be a father, but very few people can be a Dad." And I'm not trying to single one out, but one lived in Chicago and one lived in Minneapolis, so Kelsey was the one in Portland. And also her husband John Grout has the ability as a contractor, small contractor, to do a lot of these things and look out for things. So that was a great comfort level.

And there was one person, from a personal standpoint, who I just took my papers to - and my affairs, not to be too specific - but I was in a very liquid form. I mean, I don't have any businesses anymore. It's either stocks, bonds or cash, really, and with no debt.

But it had to be watched. And I have some professionals which I will mention briefly, but there was one guy in particular that I went to and laid it all out and asked him just to spend a little time each month on it for me, and that was Roger Meier, who is my lifelong friend. And he did it for me, and I felt very comfortable with his surveillance - I've never been able to - I've tried to think of some way I could really thank him - some present or something I could give him, but it's not necessary. The friendship's that close.

I had the pleasure and honor of sponsoring him for Waverley Country Club, and I think he appreciated that as much as anything.

But anyway, when you've got a guy that's handling the Oregon investments, I guess he could handle my stuff all right.

And then of course at the First National Bank there was a fellow named Grant Stebner. Now, there's an 11-hour time difference between Bucharest and Portland, Oregon, and I'm the type of person that sometimes I'd get reports, regular reports from Grant, they'd finally make it over to me, and I'd usually look at them on a Saturday or a Sunday, and I would try to figure out the right time to call him, but invariably I wouldn't because I was in a hurry to do something else.

So at Grant's retirement party, I was back in Portland and had retired from the State Department - and his wife Susan came up to me and she said, "Well, Punch, at least we knew one thing: when the phone rang at three o'clock in the morning it wasn't a death in the family." Which I thought was a wonderful remark on her part.

And then of course we had Norb Wellman of Ferguson Wellman - well, Ferguson Wellman, and others, they were handling it, and also Price Waterhouse were there. So they were all there for me, and so I was very comfortable that my affairs were under control with talented people.

But I wanted to mention that because it was important to me and - you know, a lot of people don't think of things of this type but you have to think of that.

Q: Did you have a conflict of interest concerns in setting things up like that?

GREEN: Yes, I did. And the FMC, I thought I did. I had a small investment in the Global Marine, they call it. Apparently they build these huge oil things that go out in the gulf and suck the oil out of the ocean, and they were questioning that a little bit, and I said, "Forget it, sell it." And I sold it, and there wasn't very much of it. Matter of fact, I'm glad I did; it went down quite a bit since I sold it.

But no, I never really did because I was mainly in - you know, I mean, it was Comp Care and things, and then I had a lot of municipal bonds and - because I just don't want to go back to work, and I think that municipal bonds are a good safe investment. Then of course the others are mainly as a result of I've been back 10 years and I've accumulated a lot - some of it Joanie had, but there wasn't any real conflict when you're in Bucharest.

Q: [Indiscernible]?

GREEN: No. But you've got to look at it. Boy, the U.S. authorities look at it awful closely.

Q: The FMC was a different matter?

GREEN: The FMC was a little different matter, yes. But I didn't really have a conflict.

Q: Rusty Johnson mentioned Port of Portland bonds.

GREEN: Yes, I had to pass that up. He's right, I had them in my portfolio, Port of Portland bonds, and I had to call up Norb Wellman and tell him to get rid of my Port of Portland bonds. I'd forgotten that. I said, "Sell those; I can't own them.

Q: Well, getting back to the revolution, I wonder if you could comment on the importance of the Romanian public seeing the dead bodies?

GREEN: As I said, I went up from the chancellery cellar after I finally saw the bodies on television, when I was with the off-duty Marines way down in the bowels of the chancellery, I

went upstairs because I wanted to see if there was a reaction by the public - because I knew this was the first the public, the Romanian public, had seen of this dead tyrant and his wife.

As I say, I looked outside my window and these armed Marines were right there, and they said - I'd like to have a nickel for every time one of the Marines said, "Mr. Ambassador, would you please stand away from the window, Sir."

But anyway, I peeked out as much as I could, and the people were celebrating very, very much - I mean, it was just wild. As I mentioned, the guy across the street, I didn't even know that there was an apartment over there, but it was kind of eye-level to where I was, and you could see this guy comes out in his undershirt and things like that with a bottle of vodka, and he's been drinking it pretty heavily. But there was a real general celebration.

Then in the days following and things like that there was a government grocery store that was a little bit away from us, and they were issuing the stuff out to the people, and you'd see them go by with a dozen loaves of bread. And they were buying not for themselves only; I mean, they were buying for the whole family. You'd see people walk by with eggs, four or five dozen eggs. You'd think, "Boy, I hope he doesn't trip," type of thing and all of that sort of thing.

I saw a little girl walk by with a proverbial orange, and it's true, she'd never seen an orange before, I guess. You hear that story, but I actually did see it happen.

And they brought - on the night of - well, the 17th to the 20th, in that area, Securitat came out at night. Came out of the tunnels underneath the city; that's where a lot of them lived - very nicely, but it doesn't sound like it. Sounds like a submarine or something, but it's not. I mean, they had all sorts of things in the tunnel, and they came out, and apparently they had AK's, loaded AK's with shopping bags over the barrels they came out, and then they just shot into the crowds wantonly.

A couple of days later the people were outside the embassy, and they wanted the ambassador. And there was a dead body of a young man there. And it was fairly safe with people around me for me to go out, and I decided I should go. I hate to see dead bodies.

But anyway, so I went. But I remember an interesting young man who spoke English, he said, "Now it's the United States' turn to do something for Romania."

And I turned to him, and I don't know why I thought of it at the time, but I turned to him, and I said, "We will help you, but you'll have to help yourselves. It won't help if you just think we're going to do it. It's not like that. We can't afford to do it anymore." And I said, "We'll help you get to a free market economy if you want to get to a free market economy. But it's up to you; it's not up to me."

Q: You used the term "free market economy?"

GREEN: Yes, I did. And I used it all throughout after that. It just started to come to me, and I thought it was a good term to use, and I liked it.

And then I got off the hearse, so to speak, truck, and then they went on.

Q: Oh, they had stopped there with the...

GREEN: Yes. They stopped in front and demanded that I come out.

Q: This was a victim of the...

GREEN: Of the shooting of that night. As I understand it.

Q: What happened to the Securitat?

GREEN: The Securitat? Now, I'll tell you something. Before the revolution, before the - well, say before the 25th or 24th of December, you'd see these little Jeep-type cars all over Bucharest, and they all said *Securitat* on them, and there were Securitat people inside.

The next day, it was amazing, they all disappeared. Nobody can tell me they can't operate fast when they have to. They appeared the next day, even, with *Policia* substituted for the dreaded word *Securitat*, which I thought was an interesting thing.

Q: So they actually adopted [indiscernible]?

GREEN: Oh, yes. It was the same people. They just used that word instead of Securitat.

Q: Was there [indiscernible]?

GREEN: I thought there would be. Yes, there was some, but not much, no. Not much. Everybody was pretty stunned, I think, by it. There was a lot of things to put together. A lot of people were looking at their own role in this thing.

You've got to realize that everybody in Romania was a registered Communist or whatever you want if they wanted to live.

I wonder if this is a time I could bring up the Broadway play *Les Miserables*? It happened later on, but the reason I bring it up at this time...

Q: Yes, do that now.

GREEN: Yes. At this time Ginny Young came to see me, and she said - this is probably - and Ginny was, as I say, I'm not sure how much on a personal basis she particularly liked me, but that's all right, she was a professional. And she came to see the ambassador. She knew I was close to George Bush. She said, "This is kind of the last shot I've got. We've got about 1600, 1700" - let's settle on 1663 because it was an odd number; I'm not sure exactly what it was, but I think it's in there somewhere - but anyway, " - of people we call "The Miserables." They have one crime they had committed under the Ceausescu regime."

And I said, "What was that?"

"They wanted to be Americans. They were willing to give up everything." And these were professors; there were some peasants, but they were mainly professors, doctors, and the type of people who any country would be lucky to get.

And I said, "Well, Ginny, I don't know."

I think this is the thing I'm the most proud of having participated in, and frankly I don't think it would have happened if I hadn't been there.

And so I said, "Ginny, I tell you what you do. Why don't you get - have you got a board there of these people, of maybe leaders of these people, who can meet with me?" I said, "If they'll meet with me, and if they speak English, I could get this thing started." And we did.

To make a long story short, we met in the annex, talked about it. And I said, "Well, I can't, you know, promise anything, I wouldn't have any idea, but I'll keep trying."

And I met with them again because Ginny kept on me because I kept their spirit up. There's nothing like keeping hope and spirit up in people - that's what people live for.

So I was recalled to Washington, DC because Ion Iliescu, who was the president of the country, had gone down and thanked the miners for coming to town after they'd trashed the town, and that made all of the world news, and you know, our government was mad about it. I was mad about it. He'd been elected, but he hadn't been inaugurated yet.

And so I went back to Washington, DC in protest. They recalled me in protest to the leadership. They didn't like the way the election had gone. Actually, I think Washington was wrong, the election had gone rather well, I mean considering it was the first election they'd ever had. But they - Washington itself hadn't had much experience with these elections behind the curtain. Romania, really, when you think about it, it was the first free election they'd had, one of the first.

So anyway, so I went back and I let the President know I was in town, and he wanted to have dinner on Sunday night with me, as I recall. And I told Dot Evans, my secretary, to get a hold of Joan who was out of country. I couldn't even - you know, I had no chance to get a hold of anybody. And Joanie at that time was in Paris and on her way to visit the Irish ambassador, and you might be interesting to talk to Ester Jantzen Moore. Richard Moore was the Ambassador to Ireland.

So anyway, I told Jim Baker, or I told the people, Ray Sykes, I think, mainly, who went on to become Ambassador to Great Britain, the Court of St. James, I said to him what I wanted to do. I said, "I want to get 'The Miserables' to the attention of the President."

And they okayed it. What I wanted to do was I wanted to bring to the attention of the President the plight of these 1683 people, and was there anything he could do about it, or should I just drop it. But I thought it would be something that would appeal to President Bush.

But this, you see, involves not only the State Department, it involves the Treasury Department, and they have a branch in Rome, and they had to come up to Bucharest - four or five of them had to come up and check and set up a thing in our consulate where we had the passports and all that. It was quite an operation. Doesn't happen very often in government.

Q: You mean they sent an officer?

GREEN: They sent about four or five officers to Bucharest.

But anyway, so what I did was, the morning of that meeting with Bush, that dinner, I sat down with hotel stationery and wrote the whole thing out. And then I went down and made a copy of it, and I think I've got it in there somewhere. I hope so.

I then went to see him, and I had warned that I wanted to talk to him personally. So there were a bunch of people. We saw a movie. It was a lousy movie. And then he said, "I won't talk to you now. I'm going to see you later on."

I said, "Fine, Mr. President."

So we went upstairs, and there again was Brent Scowcroft. He's on the right side, and the President's on the left side of me, and they take me over to this chair, both of them. And I bring out this hotel stationery with my notes, and I go over briefly with him what the problem is, and I said, "It would be a fantastic thing to do, and this country would be blessed if these people became citizens - they want to be Americans, that's all." And I went through this whole litany.

And I handed my written stuff to the President. The President went like this, Jim: He nodded his head. That's all he did, to Brent Scowcroft, and then he handed the papers that I had given him to Brent Scowcroft.

And then we had dinner, and nothing else further was said about it. But the next day I went in to see somebody, and somebody from CIA was there, and they brought out my notes. And I said, "Is this thing going to be possible?"

They said, "Well, you got the nod from the right guy."

So I just felt great.

Q: What was the President doing - he didn't want to commit himself?

GREEN: No, he didn't want to commit himself. He nodded to his right-hand man. He said, "I want this done." I mean, a President can do it, if he wants to. And people will do it, if they want to.

But anyway, so I went back to Bucharest and we went through all of this stuff. And then, to make a long story short, Treasury came to Bucharest, and these people were - and not all of them were taken, but 95 percent of them were. Some of them were phonies, and you know, they heard about it and tried to cheat

So they did a good job. So the "miserable Board" came by to see me, and I don't know why I said this, at the end we were talking and they were, you know, crying and - you know, tears in their eyes. And I said to them, I said, "You know, America's a tough country. This is a tough country, but America's a tough country. You're going in there, we have gangs, we have as many pistols and firearms as you've got over here." And I said, "Play the buddy system. One person's out of a job, help that person out till they get a job. Just stay together as best you can. Get a buddy and work a buddy system." And I said, "My ancestors I'm sure did that, and that's how America was established."

But I said, "There's one thing I want you to know." And all these people, they didn't have any money, you know. And I said, "I'm a businessman, and I don't do anything free." Just dead silence. And one of them said, "What do you mean, Mr. Ambassador?"

I said, "Well, I've got a price for all of this that I've done for you."

And they said to me, "What is it?"

And I said, "That you be good Americans." And their reaction was amazing.

Two days later - we always had a demonstration every day in front of the chancellery and my car was always parked there, and the demonstrators were across the street. And they'd have signs up and things like that. And Paneit was driving me to the residence where I'd get a little rest, and he looked across the street and he said, "Mr. Ambassador, look at that."

And I looked across the street, and there was this big sign in English, "Mr. Ambassador, we will be good Americans." And there was about 50 of them, I guess.

And then I went out to see them off, too, at the airport, and the place was just jammed. I got way up and wished them "Noroc" Romanian for luck -

But I've often thought, I said, "If I do nothing else in my life, that has to be the most significant action colloquial in which I have ever participated."

Q: These people had suffered?

GREEN: They had lost everything. They were living with relatives. They'd lost their coupons to buy food. They'd lost everything. They couldn't hold a job. Only because of one thing, they wanted to be American and that was their whole crime. That was everything. And Ceausescu considered them traitors.

Q: Seems like they made a mistake. Did they suddenly all get caught doing it...?

GREEN: No, it continued. No, it wasn't like that at all. This was before my time. Ginny Young would be able to tell you.

Q: Did you hear from these people afterwards?

GREEN: No, I didn't. And I'll tell you, if you look up my number in the phone book, you'll find my name but no address, and I'm hard to find. There's no Punch; it's Alan or A. Green or something. I was getting a lot of screwy phone calls when I got home, and I just thought, "Okay, I've done my bit now." (End of tape)

When I was awarded Distinguished Honor Award, I wanted very much for President Bush to give me the Distinguished Honor award, for him to actually present it to me. So I wrote him a note, and he wrote me back suggesting - well, actually it's not that high of an award, I don't think, for a President to give. I didn't know at the time - but he suggested that either Jim Baker or Larry Eagleburger give it when I came home. I wanted to do it when I came home rather than do it in Bucharest because most of the people who had helped me had gone out on rotation and new people had come in.

So I got a call from somebody in the State Department, one of the guys on the seventh floor that made calls like this, and he said, "Mr. Ambassador, what we'd like to do is - congratulations on receiving, et cetera, et cetera - what we'd like to do is we'd like to have this presentation in Bucharest."

And I said, "Well, there won't be many people here in Bucharest that participated with me while it happened."

And he said, "Well, we decided we'd like to do it in Bucharest."

I said, "Well, that's interesting. I've got a letter here from the President of the United States suggesting that Jim Baker or Larry Eagleburger present it to me."

"Well, forget it, Sir. We'll be happy to do it in Washington, DC." And he hung up. That shows the power of the Presidency. It's incredible.

Q: I wonder if we could get back to Iliescu. All of a sudden you're dealing with...?

GREEN: I'm dealing with Ion Iliescu.

Q: What history do you have with Ion Iliescu?

GREEN: None. He was - but I knew one thing, he had the guts to stand up to Ceausescu, and he was high in the government. And instead of being put in prison or something of that type he was the- [Interruption]

My understanding is that he stood up to Ceausescu, and because he would disagree with him, he was - he wasn't sent to prison, but he was sent to a very minor post in - oh, I don't know, a printing plant or something like that, communications, something like that, in Bucharest, but it was very minor. And then when it happened, the various skills kind of got together, "Here, you know something about money, you're the Treasurer," you know. Everything was appointed.

I think Iliescu did a fine job in bringing everything together. They had a lot of other minority parties, but the National Salvation Front, they were the ones who were united enough to form a political party in Romania right after the revolution. All it took to officially form a political party was about 200 people, and hell, you can find that in a family.

So it was ridiculous. So that's why the Front won such a large majority. But Iliescu at the time - I remember going over to see him in overcoats we'd had at the time because it was very cold - in the winter of '89-90 there had been a terrific blizzard, and it helped the revolution a lot because it made it very difficult for the Securitat to get around.

I remember going to see him late at night, and we'd sit there drinking this coffee, and everybody had their overcoats on and hats and things like that in these conferences. And I remember saying to him once, with Larry Napper; I always had people with me - I remember saying to him, I said, "Mr. President, you know, I've never -" and he understood English, incidentally, but he had an interpreter there with him at all times, which was helpful. But I said, "You know, I've never met anybody that had a chance to do more good than you have now. To me it's just awe inspiring. If there's anything I can do to help you, I want to do it."

And he got mad - which surprised me. I wasn't expecting that reaction at all. And he simply misunderstood what I'd said in some way. He thought I was being critical of him or something I'd said about him, which, of course, was totally untrue. - He spoke good English.

But over time we became quite close. When I came back from my recall - and I may have these events a little bit misconstrued, and I apologize to you if I do because it all happened fast. But when I came back I was the only ambassador who did not go to his inauguration, and that had them very upset. But I was upset with them, too, and Jim Baker and the President, the administration was upset because of this manner in which it was conceived that they had reacted toward rewarding the destructive miners.

And so I remember being over to - going over to the fellow in television, I forget who he was - I know one thing, he had a television set on behind him, and it had the damndest nude dirty movie on I'd ever seen, and it was very difficult for me to concentrate on what I was saying to him. He let it run throughout the whole interview.

Q: Why?

GREEN: I don't know. Maybe he liked it, and maybe it was to see what my reaction would be. I have no idea. I didn't give him the pleasure of that. I just - I watched it when he was talking and I didn't understand what he was saying. I said nothing to him. I wasn't going to play into his deal.

But anyway, I do remember that. He got a call from Iliescu. He put the phone down after he got through and said, "Do you know who that was?" And I said, "No." He was speaking Romanian on the phone. He said, "That was the President. He'd like very much to see you. Is that possible?"

I said, "I think it's possible."

So what I did was I sat down with Larry Napper, and we outlined a statement - we didn't outline a statement, we wrote exactly what I was going to say, and then I made a copy of it, and when we went over and got together with President Iliescu - it was a very ticklish meeting. It was the first time the United States met with Romania, you know, since the inauguration - I mean, with the President. We'd met before, but I mean since the inauguration, let's put it that way, his inauguration.

And I read it to him. I said, "I'm doing it this way so that there isn't any misunderstanding, and if I go along and I don't - and I want to add something to it, I'll say, 'I'm adding to this, Mr. President, if that's all right with you.'" And it was fine with him. So we went through that exercise, and it worked out very well.

Q: What was the message?

GREEN: Oh, the message was we want to get together, I suppose, and yes, we want to help you, and we don't like this that happened, this is the reason we didn't like you going down to see the miners at the railroad station, it looked like you were congratulating the miners for all this damage that was done, and things of that sort.

Q: Let's go back and pick up that story of the problem of approaching the election and what were the issues there and how they were responding and how well they were listening to you and so forth. In dealing with them and talking to them about the upcoming elections, what were you saying to them?

GREEN: Well, you know, number one, "Yes, we're the United States of America, yes, we're important to the future of any of these countries, but it's their country. So you can only say so much without them misinterpreting, looking like you're being heavy on them."

I remember receiving an absentee ballot from Oregon, and I took it over to the foreign minister, and I said, "This may help you with your coming election. I think it's illegal for me to do this, but I want to do it anyway just so you can see how we work it in the United States for the people who are out of the country, or in the Merchant Marine or Navy or something like that, so they can vote if they're not home."

I don't know if they used it or not, but it gave them an idea. And apparently I was forgiven by the government of the state of Oregon. I never heard from them on this matter.

Anyway, I remember there were people from the United States constantly coming in looking for troubles. "It can't be the way you're saying it is," that sort of thing. I'm the type of person that looks optimistically at something; I don't look pessimistically at things. And I suppose that really

I was wrong in a few things, but not in the important stuff. They were making a sincere effort to have a free and fair election. That was the whole - those were the key words, "a free and fair election."

So there was tremendous preparation for it, and I had a governor - I think from New Mexico - who came over who was the President's personal observer. The polls were supposed to close at 8:00 at night. We started at about 5:00 in the morning and went way out in the country, you know, looked at things. We even got inside an army post, if you can believe it. I demanded - because I was supposed to have free access to anything to see if it was being done fairly, freely and fairly. And I said, "Let's try that." And it took us about half an hour to get inside, but we got inside. I don't know, maybe they prepared a few things and put up a few posters during that half hour, I don't know. But the fact is - it doesn't make much difference - the fact is we got inside. I mean, to me that was terrific, and the governor agreed.

But everybody - it was a hot day. It was May, I think, and everybody was dressed in their best suit and best dress. And at eight o'clock at night when we were at the official closing hour - a lot of churches were their polling places. - You know, and there was no way these people were going to be deprived of their vote. They'd never voted before, most of them.

So they left it open, and I think wisely. And I think they voted all night. And then it was overwhelmingly Iliescu was elected. He was just appointed, first. I mean, I don't know who appointed him; maybe this group that came up after the revolution. Those things just kind of grow like Topsy, you know. But I think they were lucky to have him. They have replaced him. He's not there as we talk.

They had some marvelous people. You'll see them there. You'll see Adrian Nastase, for example. He's the foreign minister. And there was a wonderful guy in there whose wife was the TV commentator on Romanian television. I liked him a lot. He had an American sense of humor. Romanescu, I think. Might have been. But anyway, he's identified in there.

Q: So you were pretty sure that the elections were really free and fair?

GREEN: Oh, sure. Of course, I got chewed out by Jim Baker. I never could figure it out. Someday I'm going to ask him. But apparently he'd got word that, "Gee, that's a nice guy you've got out in Bucharest, but he's too nice a guy; you need somebody tougher." You know. And I - you know, the medal and all of that defies that, but that was before all of that was given.

Q: Someone said that...

GREEN: In State, on the seventh floor, some people don't like non-career people. I mean, and here I was right in the middle of this thing, and I wasn't one of them. They would have sent a career guy if they'd had any idea. Jim Baker was laughing when he said, "We're going to get him in good time," but you know. There wasn't any research behind that.

So I think there was a lot of that involved there. But anyway, Jim probably tested me out a lot. Because Ray Sykes, who I mentioned earlier, went on to the Court of St. James, he was a witness to this chewing out I was getting from Jim.

Q: [indiscernible]?

GREEN: Well, he was kind of tough. He said, "What do you think a free and fair election is?" And I said, "I think you just saw one." I said, "I don't know, 58-42? Is that a free and fair election? I don't know. I can't tell you what a free and fair election is."

And then I made a mistake. I said, "I'll tell you one thing, it's a hell of a lot better than the Landside Lyndon thing you had in Texas not long ago, and this is the first election they've ever had."

And he said, "I'm not talking about that." He knocked that one off fast. And he was kind of the boss, you know. But anyway, he got rid of saying it, and I answered him as best I could. I almost offered to resign at the time, as a matter of fact. I thought about it, and I said, "Well, if they're not satisfied" - and then I said, "I've got a lot of work involved in this thing, and I am doing a good job. I'm going to stay. They're going to have to ask me." And they never did.

Q: What else did he say to you?

GREEN: Well, it was mainly a discussion of a free and fair election because I think it was one of the first, and I think he was upset with it. I don't think he thought it was. And he didn't like Iliescu. Now, I'll tell you an interesting thing. After the Bush people were out of office and I'm in the desert, I'm at this party with Jim Baker, and Jim Baker said, "Guess who I had dinner with a month ago?" And I said, "Who?"

"Ion Iliescu. He's an awfully nice guy, isn't he?"

And he was out of office and all that. I mean, it was interesting. I said, "Well, I tried to tell you that, you know, when I was ambassador, but you said you wouldn't have any part of it at that time."

And he said, "Yes." He didn't make any apology, and he shouldn't. He was a magnificent Secretary of State, and Larry Eagleburger was. The combination of George Bush, Jim Baker and Larry Eagleburger, it's hard to duplicate.

Q: One of the things that shows up in your letters home is the point of access to television. Were those the kinds of points that they were making when they were talking about free elections?

GREEN: Yes, that was one of the things. It was one of the troubles in the other countries. But they had one national television that was run by the government. The government was the front. And I agreed with our government, we should get - the lesser parties should have access to television, also. It's difficult to get that concept into these people who have lived entirely differently. A free market economy were words to them, didn't mean anything to them.

So but we did, we made some breakthroughs in that. But it can't be done immediately, now they've got television, I think. They've got an independent television, and you've got all sorts of things over there. But it takes time. This thing is done within six months of the revolution. You can't do - you can't redo 50 years in six months. It's going to be generations before these people really understand what a great thing they've got.

Q: Also, the other parties, opposition parties, I noticed again and again that every time you did something public which connected you with the government, you visited the opposition party.

GREEN: Immediately. Yes.

Q: Can you tell me what the plan was?

GREEN: Well, it just said that we didn't show preference towards any one person, any one party. And we weren't. I mean - and that's the main reason you did these things.

When you're the United States, you've got to be careful. You're the leader. You go to a cocktail party, for example, you're talking to some leader of one of the minority parties, and you go and you leave, and somebody comes very quickly over from another party, wants exactly the equal time with the United States ambassador. I mean, I don't want to mention other countries, but if you're some other countries, it doesn't make that much difference. But anything you say you know is going to make their cable that night. And it's kind of - it's wonderful in a way, but it's scary, too. You have to be careful.

I remember once there was a little fellow at a cocktail party, I liked him very much. I didn't know who he was. And then they eased me away from him. I said, "Why are you doing that?"

"He's the ambassador from Albania. We don't recognize Albania."

I said, "Oh."

And then the fellow approached me another night, and I said, "I can't talk to you. We don't recognize you." And I thought he was going to cry. I said, "I'm awful sorry, but those are the rules, and you know it." It was too much.

Q: National Salvation Front...

GREEN: They had none - because they had a lot of egos involved. They wanted to head up their party. I said, "Don't do it that way. Pick one person and then combine, have one party. Then you've got a chance to get things elected."

And Jim Baker said exactly the same thing when he finally visited - when he came to Bucharest. And he said to the minority parties, we had them all sitting around the dining room table at the residence, and he said exactly the same thing to them, "Combine, combine, get everything together, join together and have your political party as the Republicans do, different Republicans,

and Democrats do." You've just got a mess when you've got a third party. Look what Ross Perot did. Here you've got 20 parties, and one - the National Salvation Front, which, you know, is going to get 85 percent of the vote. And they do, they control the television. Every once in a while you'll get a little in T.V. But later on it worked out with more equal coverage.

Q: Well, is this strategy out of the State Department that an ambassador like you is instructed to work with minority parties like this?

GREEN: Yes. Sure. But instructions - I don't remember ever receiving those instructions. It was something you naturally did, and when you'd talk to them on the telephone and things of that sort, you'd kind of discuss it, and they'd say, "Yes, we're doing that." And we just automatically did it. It wasn't, "You do this, and if you don't do this you are in trouble." There's very little of that.

One thing I will say about - and this is government, I guess - this is during the Gulf War, but we ought to talk about the Gulf War, too; that's a big item over there, and the adoptions and all of that. But maybe that has to be for a later date, if you don't mind.

But anyway, you'd get these cables, and you'd read them - and I actually agreed with the cables I was receiving, but I noticed, and I would chuckle, as a matter of fact, at the end of the cable was kind of a disclaimer: "If it doesn't work out, it's your problem." [laughs] But that's okay. That's okay. You're out there. I mean, you should know. I mean, the disclaimer really makes a lot of sense because you're the one that's on the scene, you ought to know; somebody sitting in Washington, DC really doesn't know. I mean, he's not there. I didn't mind it.

Q: These parties: Peasant Party, Liberal Party, Social Democrat...

GREEN: Right. Social Democrat. Farmers. They had long histories; some of them had long histories. You've got to remember, Romania between the wars had a monarchy. It had a middle class, it had a parliament, it had these things. Russia never did. They went right from the Tsar to Communism. But Romanians had - some of the older people remembered some of these institutions, and the Labor Party or the Peasant Party or something like that had a long history going back, and they were very proud of it, and they'd bring out some of these old people that were involved in it, and you had to listen with respect to them. You knew who was going to win, but you had to listen to them. And the changes. And then they had this young guy, Roman, who I liked a lot. He was probably too fashionable and things. He always dressed very well.

Q: Was he politically connected to the National Salvation?

GREEN: Not to them.

Q: I think it would be good to have a narrative of the events of the - just after the election. The mid-June events of the miners and so forth.

GREEN: Well, just after the elections the miners came to town, and that's what caused my being recalled to Washington. But the miners came to town, and it was - they trashed one of the

candidate's homes, and just generally - well, their conditions were awful in the mine. Can you imagine being a miner in Romania, coal miner in Romania under Ceausescu? I mean, it's not going to change much because Ceausescu's not going to change... (End of tape)

And it got a lot of press coverage around the world, the trashing of Bucharest.

Q: Did Iliescu encourage them?

GREEN: Well, that wasn't apparent at the time, but I guess he did. This is after the election - because he thought he wasn't going to be allowed to take office, I guess. There was still all this paranoia going on, you know, from Ceausescu days; the Russians are coming back and everything else. It wasn't exactly stable times.

So what really kicked it was when the miners finally left Bucharest by train, and Iliescu went down and thanked them. And that of course made headlines around the world, and that's what caused my recall in protest. Iliescu never admitted he made a mistake doing that.

They finally got some people around Iliescu who had been outside Romania, finally got some advisors. And one of them - I can't think of his name, he was a big, tall guy, and he'd been outside Romania and spent quite a bit of time. He'd been a water polo player, superb water polo player. But he'd been outside Romania. He knew what Paris looked like, he knew what New York looked like. These other people didn't have any idea, and you couldn't blame them, if you didn't have that experience.

Q: You actually tried to tell Iliescu - give him some examples of... Did he catch on to what you were trying to tell him?

GREEN: Oh, I think he probably did, but I think eventually he came over to our thinking. I'd kind of forgotten that. You're right, I did say those things to him. But I don't know whether he did or not. He was not reelected, but I don't think the miner incident had anything to do with it. It was just that people expected more. They expected the United States to do more, the Marshall Plan, they thought everything was going to be done. And I said, "We can't do it anymore. We can't afford it." And I think their expectations were so high after the revolution that everything was going to open up and it was going to be just a golden - the hope was that gold would be coming down from the skies. It doesn't work that way, as you know, as everybody knows. But reality finally set in.

Q: [indiscernible]?

GREEN: Well, that young man with the dead body and the man turning to me, the young man saying - and then my response to him.

I remember the first party - after Joanie had come back the first party we gave at the residence. You can imagine - it being the United States, not the fact that I was giving the party, everybody in Bucharest wanted to be there. So we had to be very careful about the invitations and all that.

But the talk at that time, and it was probably six, eight weeks after the revolution, you know, wasn't realistic. I kept saying that, "It's not realistic. You've got to put out your fires - you've got to do it yourselves. And then we'll help."

But I remember one man coming up to me, and he said, "Mr. Ambassador, do you have a family?"

And I said, "Yes, I have a wife, right over there, we've been married about 40-some-odd years, and three daughters, three sons-in-law and eight grandchildren."

And he said to me, "You're a very wealthy man."

And you know, that's - I've never forgotten that. That's true. People think of wealth, they think of money. It's not - that's not the case. If you don't have the other, money doesn't mean anything.

Have I described the revolution as much as...

Q: Oh, yes.

GREEN: Is there anything that...

Q: I guess I just have a lingering question. When you talk about paranoia in the country, your feelings about and concerns about where you were and where you were going, were there times when you thought, "This is really kind of bad to be traveling..."

GREEN: Well, there was one time where I really was worried. It was when - I never saw such terror - or fear, I should say, in the eyes of our Foreign Service Nationals - and I would judge a lot of this by the nationals, the foreign service nationals that were - that are with the embassy. They're the bureaucracy, and I should have mentioned them because they're wonderful people, and they're employees of the United States government. As a matter of fact, let me just go fly the flag. Why am I so favorably remembered by them; they think I got them a big raise. Well, I had a girl there, Anita Booth, she suggested it to me. She stayed during the revolution; I had to send her husband, Don, out.

And she said, "You know" - and they were being paid maybe \$200, \$250 a month, American. That's a lot of money over there, don't kid yourself. And the maids and butler there, they were \$150 a month and that sort of thing. I would bonus them at Christmas from my personal funds.

So anyway, Anita suggested to me it wouldn't cost the United States government a dime more money if we'd pay them in dollars and not give it to them in the official exchange. And I said, "You're absolutely right. I wish I'd thought of that."

But anyway, we got it through like that. It didn't cost the taxpayer of my country any more money, but they got it, you see, and they could - what everybody else was doing, they took it out to the airport or elsewhere and got the real exchange, instead of the official rate. That was a tremendous help to them.

So I was getting people - I could get anybody I wanted in the country ready to work for me - I mean, as far as talent goes, and that was - I wasn't too popular with some of the other Embassies because we did this.

Q: What would be the problem with the other Embassies?

GREEN: Well, just - the dollar, the dollar was what everybody wanted.

But I wanted to tell you about this. When Gorbachev came back from the Crimea, the Romanians thought there was going to be a revolution in Russia and they thought the Communists were coming back into power, my Foreign Service nationals, and therefore the Romanian people felt this. They thought the Russians were coming again, and you never saw such terror in people's eyes. You couldn't blame them. And you'd say, "No, I don't think it will happen." What can I say, my living safely in Portland, Oregon in the immediate past.

Q: I think it was the last October that you were there you were writing that you were really concerned about - you had a fear of violence coming - which kind of surprised me.

GREEN: Let me - this is an interesting anecdote.

A lot of times things happen, and you get it settled without a conflict. Therefore, nobody knows about it.

When this happened it was about a year after the revolution, December of '90?

Q: Yes.

GREEN: Okay. So I never liked particularly the leaders of the Romanian Orthodox Church because they were with Ceausescu the whole time, they got his favors and things like that, and they were soft. And they never really represented - helped the people.

But I will tell you the work after the revolution. I thought the Notre Dame football team had arrived in Romania. I happen to be an Episcopalian. But these priests that came in were big, tough looking guys, and they were taking over the Catholic Churches, which were allowed of course to go to ruin, some had been taken over by the Romanian Orthodox Church and that sort of thing. And these guys were really something.

Q: Where did they come from?

GREEN: All over the world. Mostly Italy, I suppose. But they were big guys.

Q: Roman Catholic?

GREEN: Roman Catholics, yes. And the people were flocking to them. They have - a Papal Nuncio, they call it, and that's their equivalent of the ambassador. He - I can't think of his name,

but I'm sure it's in the papers. There was a problem. He hadn't called on me yet; he was new. But we got a very strong rumor that there was going to be a demonstration with injuries and things like that and a few heads being knocked together on the anniversary of the revolution, the first year anniversary.

And so we needed - from the State Department I needed a statement prior to this - December 17th, I think was the date - prior to this date I needed a statement that Romania was making good progress towards a free market economy, something of that type from my State Department. And I got it. It was tough to get, too. It wasn't easy at all. But we got it.

And I went over to see the Papal Nuncio. I broke the rules; I went to see him. And he spoke English because he'd taken his training in New Jersey. And I said to him what I thought may occur - what our intelligence had told us. And I said, "Let's see if we can stop this thing. And you could have a lot to do with it, if you'll instruct your priests to mount the pulpits the Sunday before the 17th, whatever it is, and tell them to have their demonstration, don't take that away from them, but have a peaceful demonstration."

And he said, "I'll do it." And they did it. And we had demonstrations, and they were peaceful.

Q: What was the issue they were demonstrating over?

GREEN: Oh, just - I don't know. It never occurred to me. You don't need an issue. I mean, they weren't "down with this" or "down with that." It was just, you know, "Down with the Communists" or something, I suppose. But there were people that - there are always people that don't - that aren't - you know, that can get a frenzy going, and that's what happens.

So I was very pleased with that because I said to the Papal Nuncio later on, I said, "You know, we didn't make any headlines, but we won that one."

Q: You know, in the award statement that was treated seriously as a real threat. Did you really have that feeling at the time that some real violence could occur?

GREEN: Oh, yes. And that's the reason I went to all this trouble. You bet.

Q: It wasn't localized; it was nationwide?

GREEN: It was probably localized. Most of that stuff is localized. The revolution, basically - a lot of it, they didn't see much. Constanta didn't see much. It was in Timisoara and Bucharest, really.

Q: Also at the time of the - just before the miners came in a lot of students demonstrated?

GREEN: Oh, all the time. All the time. Always - yes, I had to go to meetings sometimes with the government. They'd let me through because of the American flag and all of that, and they'd shake the car and drive Panait crazy because he was afraid they were going to snatch the flag. They

never did. And I'd get out and wade through the crowd and go up to these things. I could have been elected president, I think, if I wanted to.

And then I'd look out the windows. Once, I'll never forget it, it was just a sea of people. And somebody said, "Mr. Ambassador, you should come over and look at this."

There was a couple in a carriage that had just gotten married; she was in a bridal gown. And they had this carriage up on their shoulders. They were passing it on to the end of the crowd so the married couple could go on. I mean, it was a wonderful sight.

I mean, it was really - it was a demonstration, but it was also a party.

Q: [indiscernible]?

GREEN: Sure. I mean, after a while, you know, things can get very tough.

Q: I found the note that I was looking for. You left in '91 - no, you left in '92?

GREEN: In '92. January of '92.

Q: Okay. This was October of '91. You're saying there are rumors of trouble and miners are...

GREEN: The miners came to town again.

Q: ...and the odds seem to be shifting. That's why I was thinking...

GREEN: Yes. Well...

Q: ...how volatile this all was.

GREEN: Oh, I'll tell you, it was always there. I mean history has proven - it's been ten years now that they're not communist.

Q: What was your public image?

GREEN: I think it was good. I think it was very good. I was on Romanian television a lot. They wanted the American ambassador on, and I'd grin as much as I could for them because I think that's always helpful when you do it that way, particularly when I'm not talking in their language.

I mentioned the Minister's wife; she had interviewed me, and she could speak English, and then they would interpret it, and we had a banter back and forth. So it was within the country - because I'd go out of Bucharest, of course, quite a bit, and I'd always have a great feeling of the people - you know, V signs shown and they wanted to talk to the American ambassador. The American ambassador. That's what it's all about.

Q: Does that bother anybody at the embassy?

GREEN: No, not to my knowledge.

Q: At the other embassies?

GREEN: Might have, a little. I don't think so. We were all kind of working this thing together. I never bragged about it, I can tell you that. I mean, I never said anything to anybody else, and they weren't with me, really. And they got print, too. I was concerned about the Jews, and then we got over that. We let them know that the United States would be extremely upset if anything happened to that particular minority.

Q: I wonder if you can tell me more about dealing with the Jewish question.

GREEN: Well, it wasn't as big as Rabbi Rosen made it to be. He was an old man. He worried me a little bit. As I said, on about the third day of the revolution, and the bullets were still going, I went over to see him and had my picture taken for their Jewish newspaper, on the front page with Rabbi Rosen.

And he was always worried about - which I couldn't blame the Jews; under Ceausescu, of course, he sent a lot of Jews to Israel, about \$20,000 a person or something like that. That's where all the money went. The money went to - a lot of people don't know this, Ceausescu had a brother who lived in Vienna, and apparently the money went through him. These millions and millions of dollars went through the brother. And about two days after Ceausescu and his wife had been eliminated, the brother went down in his basement and hung himself. There wasn't much made of that, but I don't think anybody's ever found out whatever happened to all that money.

But we had Elie Wiesel visit, and I attended the ceremony at the synagogue. And Wiesel came up to me and thanked me for the support I'd given to the Jewish community. And I said it was my pleasure.

I'd offered sanctuary in the residence to Rabbi Rosen if he felt threatened, and he never had to use it. So I was glad about it, but nevertheless the invitation was there.

Q: So a real persecution didn't materialize?

GREEN: No. It didn't materialize. But I can't blame them for being afraid. I can't blame anybody for being afraid with that background.

Q: So how was Joanie doing through all of this?

GREEN: Hell, she was just doing fine. Joanie and I had never gone to church much - she would get flowers from the garden every Saturday, and she'd bring them into the church, the little Anglican Church, and she'd decorate the church. We'd been fortunate in life, we saw that a new heater and a new roof and things had been put on the church that Joanie and I paid for, personally - it was a small building, but it was needed - and that sort of thing, and saw that the - I'm trying

to think of the minister's name, but I can't think of his name - that his quarters were made a little nicer. It sounds like we were being terribly generous, but really it didn't cost much more than a few thousand dollars spread over time.

You know, the ambassador gets paid; you the taxpayer pay an ambassador. At that time you were paying me \$125,300 a year, which comes to about, after withholding, about \$3300 every two weeks, I think. And I was having it put in my account at the First Interstate Bank that Grant Stebner watched. And we couldn't spend any money over there. So this thing was accumulating, and then other things, of course, that I'd done before were doing very well, too. And so I found myself with a lot of money in my checking account that I never intended to have. So I didn't hesitate to do things like that for the church and for the college - I mean, not college, but American School of Bucharest.

As a matter of fact, when I went back there I went to the American School of Bucharest, and the principal was a person who was there when I was at post, and he said, "I want you to see a room." And I went in, and there was a plaque in the room that said "Punch Green Room." It's for computers; I had given them enough money to get computers.

And I must say also that Larry Napper, he gave some money, too, and on a relative basis he was more generous than I was, which I thought was a tremendous thing on his part.

Q: Were the two of you from time to time getting to feel hemmed in, or what we'd call cabin fever?

GREEN: No. We'd get out. We'd get out.

Really, you didn't get cabin fever. I get cabin fever now because it's cold and I can't do anything. But you never had cabin fever over there because there's no time.

I remember once I said to Larry, I said, "Larry, I'm going to take Sundays off. I can't do this thing every day." And you know, I'm the ambassador. He said, "Okay, we'll make that do."

I did that once, and I felt so guilty I said, "Forget it. Give it everything you've got as long as you're going to be here and then leave." So I just stopped that Sunday off stuff.

Q: Taking Sunday off was getting out of town or...

GREEN: No, just staying around and reading a book and getting away from all of this, but it didn't work. It didn't work for me.

You know, I've never taken Martin Luther King Day off. I mean, Christmas or something, you know, I take that off.

Q: You had lots of visitors...

GREEN: Oh, yes.

Q: ...and one of the first ones sounded like an interesting one, a Congressman by the name of - well, tell me about visitors. I mean, there was a great variety of visitors, but some of them may really stand out more than others. What did that mean for the embassy to have visitors arrive? Frank Wolfe was the Congressman's name.

GREEN: Some of them are quite frankly a pain in the ass. You're so busy, and you've got to spend time with them. And you've got to keep them on your side because you've got to go to them for the budget, and they can just - they can raise hell with you. I don't know whether I'll leave this in my statement or not. Because a lot of them do a lot of good; a lot of them are wonderful. And Frank Wolfe was all right, as a matter of fact.

I gave him one of the Romanian flags with a hole in it. I've got one down here. I'll show it to you. Right off the streets, and real life television was playing these flags with the hole in it; that's where the Communist symbol was cut out, and that's what they were using for a long time.

Frank Wolfe he was delighted with it and used it when he got to Washington, showing everybody, including the President. And that's what a lot of these people want, you know.

Q: So it's kind of a public relations thing...

GREEN: Oh, yes, it's a big public relations thing, and it seems to me they'd always come in when you were right at the height of something and they made demands. And sometimes their wives come with them, and they're - some of them are wonderful, and Joanie was wonderful with them. That's where she was just great. I'd ask occasionally, "How are you getting along with that one?" She'd say, "That's a load." But you know, you just went along with it.

One thing you knew, you knew the thing was going to end. This wasn't your life. And I knew when I was leaving was January of 1992 because that's when Romanians went off the Security Council of the United Nations, and that's another story because that deals with the Gulf War.

And then we'd get away, too. Joanie and I spent 13 heavenly days in Salzburg, just the two of us. We just had a marvelous time. Salzburg was good. I could get back from Salzburg if there was trouble; I could get back within four hours - just go to Vienna and fly out, so it was a good place for me to be. And yet it had - we went and saw a lot of the country that I'd never seen and she'd never seen before. And they treated us just terrific.

Q: And Senator Dole came, too?

GREEN: Oh, yes. He was wonderful.

Q: Sounds like you're quite an important [figure]?

GREEN: Oh, it's a terribly important thing.

Q: What was the purpose of that?

GREEN: Oh, I don't know what the - fact finding. Everything's fact finding.

They'd all come over to see me, and this isn't just Dole, they'd all come over to see me first, and then they'd go up to see Shirley Temple Black in Czechoslovakia. And I kept saying, "Now, don't forget Romania," you know. But that was the glamour thing; when they'd get through with seeing Bulgaria or Romania - most of them came to Romania - and then they'd go to see Shirley. That was the glamour end of it. That's what the wives wanted to do, too, you know.

She got so - Shirley got so that she was giving people - she got so many visitors she gave them 15 minutes apiece. She had to get things done herself, you know. But she was wonderful. She was absolutely terrific. This country owes quite a bit to that lady.

But anyway, Bob Dole came over with four or five other Senators, all Republican Senators. And the Romanians wanted to greet Bob Dole at the airport and take him into the city, and I didn't want that. I wanted him to go in with me in an armored car.

So his plane landed, and I ran up the stairs before anybody, just when they opened the door, and Dole was just kind of waking up. And I told him, I said, "I'm the Ambassador. When they ask you to come, you come with me. Don't go with them."

"Okay. Okay. Okay."

And I ran down the stairs. Then I greeted Dole formally when he came down.

He's a very funny man. I remember going up to see him - we were going up to the Palace, and he said, "This is where the president lives?" And I said, "Yes. You're going to see him."

And he said, "Well, I can't get elected in our country, maybe I could be elected president here." He said, "It looks pretty good..."

I said, "Yes, they treat him pretty well."

But Dole was a very nice man. But he worked very hard. A lot of these people don't. A lot of them pose with the rabbi and go upstairs and go to sleep at the residence. But not Dole. Dole saw everybody. He saw the minority groups - minority parties, I guess you'd call them - is that what we call them?

Q: Yes.

GREEN: Yes. And then of course he spent time with Iliescu. And they had good representation there. I can't remember all of the names. Connie Mack was there, Senator from Florida. The guy out of New York just defeated...

Q: D'Amato.

GREEN: D'Amato, yes. We, Nick named him the bomb thrower. I was sitting next to him once at a meeting, and they were having some problems or something like that, and D'Amato said under his breath, he said, "Phone the miners." I just broke up.

It was a good group of people. We gave them a luncheon, it was kind of interesting, this was Joanie's idea, of hotdogs and American flags, and it was going to be a kind of a picnic. It was near the Fourth of July; but it wasn't the Fourth of July. The Fourth of July, we should talk about that, too, at sometime because the Fourth of July celebration is all over the world. My first Fourth of July was something else.

But anyway, I sat next to Jake Garn the Senator from Utah. He's not in the Senate now.

I asked him about the Mormon church. So he spent two hours telling me about the Mormon church, which I found fascinating.

But the hotdogs and things, we couldn't find any hotdogs. We had to get them out of Sweden, and they came in tins, and they were little tiny things. But we had them, anyway. Put two hotdogs in between two Romanian Buns. But anyway, we had a lot of fun.

Joanie's always been able to do that. When things go wrong at a party, she makes a joke out of it and presses on with it, and then everybody else relaxes, too.

We had an interesting visitor who was, I think she was a Kennedy, but I'm not sure. I know I'm throwing names out, but Joanie, like anybody else she kind of wants to meet these people, too. And this was a visit - she was with a committee or something. But she said to Joan - and I don't know, this may sound awful snobbish; I don't know how to put it, but she said, "You're non-career, aren't you?" And Joanie said, "Yes. How did you know?" And she said, "Well, I just knew." We were at ease talking with any of these people. Some people have a tougher time; they're not used to it. Joan and I have thankfully gotten over being impressed with this type of person. However, don't misunderstand me, we are respectful. I didn't let it bother me. It could be a problem, but I felt comfortable in my role as Ambassador and everybody knew I was a friend of the President of the United States.

I think some of the other Ambassadors might have had a tough time. They probably might have had a tough time any place. This is not a quiet post, like Sweden or something like that.

I want to tell you something; I should bring this up right now. You know, nobody knew me particularly, and this thing happened fast. I mean, I'd been over there a short time and now they were satisfied that they could live with me for the two-year stint, and I was sure of that. We had to make the hard decisions, get Americans out of the country and that sort of thing. And then how did I react when there were about 16 of us left in the chancellery and how did I react on this thing and things like that, and that would spread through the Embassy. And I realized that it would spread through the Embassy, and come back pretty fast.

So we got along very well. I gave them a big New Year's Eve party in 1990, when we finally had moved out of the chancellery - just an all-nighter. As a matter of fact, I knew I was getting along with them pretty well because they short-sheeted my bed.

I'll tell you another thing I did. I cleaned the toilets. I'll tell you why I cleaned the toilets: Everybody else was very busy doing their professional things, extremely busy. They needed the Ambassador to, they needed the ambassador to handle a lot of things, to make a lot of the decisions and things like that, but I had time. And I was a buck private in the United States Army. I outranked anybody in Bucharest, including any Admiral that visited, but I was a buck private in the United States Army, and I had cleaned a lot of toilets. And we couldn't have any Romanians coming into the chancery. We couldn't allow anybody but Americans in there. There weren't any visitors during the revolution. And the toilets were getting to be kind of a mess. So I said, "Where is the stuff?"

They said, "Oh, you can't do that."

And I said, "Why can't I? You're busy. I'll do it."

Well, that was helpful when they came back. That got around that this guy, do you know what he did? You know, that sort of thing. So that was - I could tell, I could tell by the reaction of the people.

Q: Did you hear stories from any of the other non-career ambassadors about [indiscernible]?

GREEN: No, not particularly because I don't think - one I ran into - well, I won't say what country - and I stayed with him, and he was - if I had been like him, they would have hated me. He was insufferable. He was terribly stuck on himself. So was his wife. It was okay in the post he was in, but it wouldn't have been right for Bucharest.

Q: [indiscernible]?

GREEN: [indiscernible] and form their own conclusions, and it's going to take a long time to bring this thing around. People think it's going to happen fast. People over here thought it was going to happen fast. They had free elections, there. What about our first free elections? We still have problems here.

Q: I was thinking of raising the most favored nation issue, but you know, perhaps in the order of events we should go through Iraq first.

GREEN: A most favored nation - and I was criticized, I understand, for leaving Romania when I did because they did not have most favored nation, or they thought that I could get it for them. What they didn't know was that we had to get something that nobody knows about first, a Jackson-Vanick amendment, lifted or recognized. Jackson-Vanick meant simply that you could cross borders freely, I think, something like that.

Ceausescu about one week before the Senate and the House lifted most favored nation for Romania gave most favored nation up - I mean, as far as the United States - he did it first. So I had to start all over again with this thing. Most favored nation is great words, and it sounds good - like excess profits tax does; there isn't such a thing, really, but it sounds good.

And some of the thieves like Iraq that have most favored nation. But it was essential to get this country M.F.N., the only thing they could sell in the United States competitively was wine, really. Good wine, they tell me, but I don't know that personally. I'm told by my wife it's good wine. I want to make that very plain to you, Jim.

But anyway, we got Jackson-Vanick, and we got it - as a matter of fact, Marlin Fitzwater helped. It did not require going through the congress, just be done by the administration - and they called me to tell me I had Jackson-Vanick, it was okay, it was lifted, don't worry about it.

And I said, "I've got to have something in writing." I said, "I can't just do that. You've got to give me something."

So Marlin Fitzwater, who was the President's public relations man, a wonderful guy, funny man, he wrote it on the back of an envelope and gave it to this man at State, and so they cabled it to me. So I had something.

So then with that we could progress and start getting them most favored nation. And I wasn't worried about Romania getting most favored nation when I left. If I'd worried about it, I would have stayed, but I wasn't worried about it because I knew what progress was being made. And actually I could do more for them in Washington than I could in Bucharest. But I was criticized by some newspapers for leaving before that was done, but they got it, so I haven't worried much.

Q: Did you find [indiscernible]?

GREEN: Yes. Sure. Well, it is.

Q: What was [indiscernible]?

GREEN: Well, I think it was perseverance. Tension. I mean, in order to get things through the Congress of the United States and to the attention of the President of the United States, or the administration, I should say, you've really got to have some people behind it. You've got to have votes behind it. There aren't a lot of Romanian votes. There are more Romanian votes in Oregon than people think, but there's not a big constituency, like the Irish vote and this sort of thing. You've got to really get people when they're feeling like they want to do something good.

Q: So this was something you would try to sell to visitors...

GREEN: Sure. Oh, yes. That was one of the things, and that's one reason why you spent so much time with them. I mean, it was always in the back of my mind, but it was most favored nation and that sort of thing.

Q: And what about the State Department? What role does the State Department play?

GREEN: Well, I had good support. When everybody thinks of the State Department, they think of the Secretary of State. Well, there are an awful lot of people in the State Department on the seventh floor. That's where all the power is. I mean, quote, unquote, power.

But my desk officer is very important to me. There's a fellow there now that I talk to occasionally, the desk officer, and he helps me with certain things. And they change every two years. They change too frequently, because I'd get one friend, and another would go off, but it is great training for them.

But they would steer you to who we should see and who we should not see and who I should contact and who not contact. Who's mad at us and who isn't, that sort of thing. And it's a good system, I might add.

Q: Did the State Department need to be persuaded of the virtue of most favored nation status?

GREEN: No.

Q: They were sold on it.

GREEN: Not particularly. Yes, there were; there were some people that didn't like Romania. Like the guy that I think lit Jim Baker's fuse. I mean, he didn't like any ex- communist country. I don't know who the guy was. I do know, but I can't think of his name. Matter of fact, I saw him in the hall once when I was back. I knew who he was, and I knew he knew who I was, and I quickened my step. He went in this room, and I was going to follow him in and sit down and have a little friendly discussion, and then the door shut and was locked.

Q: Who was that?

GREEN: I don't know who it was. I can't tell you who it was. I'd tell you if I knew.

Q: There were some adverse stories, and this gets into our next subject, but anyway, someone was spreading the story that Romania and Cuba were violating the sanctions against Iraq, and you said, "I think I know who the source of that is."

GREEN: It was probably that guy, yes.

Q: So in other words, there was something [indiscernible]?

GREEN: There were a few people, yes.

Q: - with an ax to grind or...

GREEN: Yes. You get it in General Motors. You get it in Microsoft. I mean, it's not limited to government.

Q: On the subject of Romania [indiscernible]...

GREEN: I don't think it was particularly against me, no. I never took it that way.

The thing is when you're so busy you don't have time to be petty like that. You don't have that time. It comes out later, and look at how it did work out. I mean, you know, maybe I'm making too much of the award, etc. I don't know. But it means a lot to me.

Q: Well, let's get into the subject of the Gulf War. Iraq, these problems with Iraq, and Romania's part in that story.

GREEN: Well, all right. An interesting thing, with all of this going on, is that - you know how the United Nations Security Council is formed and has what they call a permanent five membership - that's China, the United States, Britain, France and - well, anyway. And then there's about six other - or seven other nations that are selected to go on the Security Council for two years.

During the Gulf War, the Romanians had just been put on the Security Council. If you check your history, which I'm sure you do, Jim, I think I'm right on this, in August of 1990, Iraq attacked Kuwait. The President of the Security Council for one month, and they attacked it early in the month, early August, was the Romanian representative.

Iraq did everything they could, offered Romanians free oil, free this, money, and they never wavered. I was constantly - if ever you got your money's worth out of an ambassador, you got it during this time because I was constantly day and night - because ambassadors had to do this if they were in the country - delivering *demarches* to the president or the foreign minister - a *demarche* is a demand - well, it was the United Nations, but it was the United States who was the principal player.

They never turned me down. They didn't say yes right away; I'd have to argue a little bit sometimes, and they'd tell me - as I think was smart of them - what Iraq was offering them occasionally. And I said, "I'll report that back, but you know in the long run who's going to win this war, and you know in the long run who your friend's going to be. And who do you want on your side? Just always think of that."

But anyway, every *demarche* was answered favorably. I'm very proud of that.

The Gulf War was probably, for me at least, more dangerous than any of the other times, and I was worried about Joan more than I was about anything else because if anything happened to her, I mean, I'd never forgive myself. And she didn't have the protection that I had. We got her out of the country for a little while, and she visited some spots.

But there was a sanction, I guess you'd call it, out on the British ambassador and the American ambassador. And they got a hold of it, and so I was - I had a person from the State Department

traveling with me with a gun, and then I had Romanians, and they'd get me out of the car, and they'd duck my head down, and look up, not down. I found that interesting.

We were always trying to figure out how to get out of the embassy and that sort of thing, how to leave so that we wouldn't be in a set pattern so somebody could - it was an armored car, but you know, if they wanted to launch a rocket at it or - it's not going to stand up to it.

I'll never forget, the follow car was right like that behind us with about four of these Romanians, fully armed, and then this fellow sitting next to me with a revolver right on his lap, you know. Paneit was marvelous about it.

Two interesting things with the Iraqis: I went to a New Year's party at the palace, and this is before we had actually attacked. The ground war had not started, but everything else was going on. And we lined up, because Iliescu was there, we lined up as we had given our credentials to the president, and lo and behold, on the left-hand side of me is Michael Atkinson, my very close friend, the British ambassador. On the right-hand side of me is the Iraqi ambassador, a very, very well-dressed, smooth individual.

Well, they took a picture of it, and it's kind of interesting there was this one spot where there's quite a bit of room between the two, and that's the Iraqi ambassador and myself.

But I said to him - I think this was New Year's - I said to him, I said, "Mr. Ambassador, I wonder if I could speak just briefly to you right here, sir?"

He said, "Yes, I'd like that."

I said to the Iraqi Ambassador, "I wish you a peaceful New Year," and he very nicely said to me, "And I wish you a peaceful New Year, Mr. Ambassador." He went on to say, "According to the television I've been watching, there will not be any fighting." I said, "Well, I'm not a liberty to talk about it." I said, "I think our conversation should end now." (End of tape)

Did I mention the Iraqis also lived right opposite me? They did. Their residence was - beautiful residence - right opposite me. I never saw them; they were never outside.

But we had Romanian police very thick around our residence, and then the Iraqi had Romanian police very thick around his residence. And the war was about over - it was obvious that we'd won this thing and that they were going to sign things. At that time we were getting CNN. And so we were trying to figure out how to leave the residence. There were two or three ways you could leave and confuse people if they were going to do something.

So I said, "Aw, let's go out the front door. What the hell. This thing's over." So we got in the car, and we went out the front door, turned right, and I happened to look at the Romanians guarding the embassy. Now, mind you, we're in a black Cadillac in Romania, with an American flag on it, going slowly down the street. I look over there, and all of the Romanian guards of the Iraqi embassy had turned and were presenting arms to the American ambassador as he rode by.

And I said, "Paneit, we've won the war."

"How do you know?"

I said, "Take your eyes off the road and look to your left." And he did. It was quite a sight. Quite a feeling.

Q: Why did the Romanian government, on the Security Council, why did they side with the Americans?

GREEN: It was to their advantage. And they wanted to be - they wanted a free market economy. They didn't want to go back to Communism. They know that this guy's a thug that's governing the Iraqi. It didn't mean anything. It was just - it wasn't to their advantage. That's what most people - whether they like it or not, that really is the way most people are.

Gregg Peterson, my son-in-law in Minnesota, wanted an explanation of how we got some Romanian twins out for adoption - he said, "There is a story behind this, and the grandmother of these twins wants to know it." And I said, "Well, okay, I'll do it." And I sat down and I dictated the enclosed to him and received a very nice letter in return from Gregg.

Remember, at one time I mentioned in preparation going to school at the foreign service institute across the river in Virginia, and one of the subjects that was brought up - of course this was all of us sitting around going to various countries - was adoptions and things like that. And they gave it a very short shuffle, and they said, "Well, don't you worry about it. That's the Consul General" - that's Ginny Young - "the Consul General's problem, not the ambassador's problem."

Well, that wasn't right as far as I was concerned. It became very much of a problem for me because it's a small country and adoptions were huge - became a huge problem. Abortion was illegal in Romania, so therefore you'd see a lot of abortions that were done very poorly, and then the injured human beings. And also these people would have babies but would abandon these babies. And they put them in these orphanages, and when Ceausescu was overthrown, it was a terrible mess.

And the British came in with their nurses, some male, and I was terribly impressed by them. And the Americans were wonderful, too. And we adopted, I think, probably more than others, and Ginny Young set up as best she could a list of people who were legitimate for the Americans to see to find a child for them type of thing.

But it just soon ran amok, and people weren't getting quite what they needed, and the conditions in the orphanages were deteriorating. The only conditions that were worse were under the Ceausescu regime, and later on, because they can't fix everything overnight, the conditions for people like you and myself, the older people, the ones that didn't have much tread left on them. I mean, the old people's homes in Romania weren't anything. They were terrible.

But anyway you had to put your priority on the youth. And so I would get these calls from Congressmen and Senators that had been over to visit. They'd call the ambassador, and I'd, you know, do the best I could and look into it.

And then *Sixty Minutes* came over with Leslie Stahl, and I was spending way too much time on this matter. And she put a black wig on, and she literally bought a child for adoption on the most watched television program in America. That's illegal. You can't do that.

So I got these phone calls from the Congress. It just lit up the switchboard. And this one fellow I was talking to, it was a Senator, and I said, "Senator, let me tell you something. I'm not a career; I'm a non-career. But these are career people working with it. I am not going to ask my career people to break a law that you people write. I'm not going to ask them to break a law of the United States and end up going to jail or being fined or something like that. I'm going to bend them. Don't worry, I'll bend it as much as I can. But I'm not going to ask anybody to break the law. I'm thinking of their lives, not only the children's lives, but I'm thinking of their careers."

Q: I don't understand. The law that they wanted...

GREEN: Well, they've got laws in this country about adoptions and all of this sort of thing that are specific. If you bring them in from a foreign land and all that sort of stuff, and people were just desperate. I will tell you something about an adoption before we get through with this, - and this one Senator. He said, "Mr. Ambassador, you've got to save us from ourselves." I said, "Senator, it's too late."

Q: What did he mean by that?

GREEN: Well, the laws are there. I can't get them fixed. Just do it, you know. We've done it; now you fix it. I mean that's what he wanted done.

Q: So in other words expedite, get the adoption through?

GREEN: Sure. Do what you can, but - get us out of it. He's hearing from his constituents, you see.

So anyway, the Romanians became quite alarmed by this. And so they put a very - the word isn't "tough," a very fair, tough woman in charge of the Romanian adoption program and passed laws themselves limiting or stopping any further adoptions because they were losing the flower of their youth, and they worried about it. The smart people there - and there were plenty of smart people there - were worrying about, "Who are we going to have to carry on after we're gone?"

And that letter that I gave you is an example because we had everything cleared up but three, and it's self-explanatory that we got it done.

I don't think now there's too much adoption going on, and I think the conditions also were so appalling that not only this country but other countries have stepped in, and the orphanages are in much better shape.

I remember the first Christmas the orphans came to sing us Christmas carols, the revolution was still going on. It was going on outside. December 23rd or something, 1989. And you know, we felt awfully sorry for them.

The next year, and I asked that that same orphanage send children the next year - they were going to send children to sing songs sent from that orphanage, and it was like night and day.

I remember another thing, too - this is a CIA story. I got along with the CIA pretty well. I was telling them this story as we rode in the car, you see, and I said, "Do you see that school?" I said, "You hear the laughter and all of that, kids at play?" I said, "Last year at this time if we'd gone by there would have been dead silence."

The CIA fellow turned to me - he was a visiting one - and he said, "Why didn't you tell us that?" I said, "Well, I never thought of it." But it's true. It would have been of interest.

I had a CIA station chief from Portland, Oregon who went south, but he did it all after he'd left us, so I didn't want to include it in this, but I want to acknowledge the fact that he apparently went and sold things to the Russians when he [was] stationed elsewhere. I've got his whole file down there. It didn't happen while we were there. Matter of fact, one of the tapes has got it.

Are you going to look at some of those tapes?

Q: Yes. There was one adoption case you mentioned a moment ago that was really a dramatic one?

GREEN: The Minnesota twins. And one in Washington, DC.

I want to tell you something, we were fortunate to have our own children.

But never have I seen anything like the fight that mothers would go through to get their babies out of that country. It was a - the fathers usually were in the U.S. working - they'd come over, then they'd leave, go back to the United States because they had to make enough money to keep the mothers over there. But it was amazing. The power of a mother is something to see.

Q: How far would they go?

GREEN: I think they'd go any distance.

Q: Were they pretty difficult for you to handle at times?

GREEN: Some of them were very difficult. This Minnesota twins mother was very nice. I never saw her much because I didn't want to because I had a daughter living there, and she just found out about my connection after I came back.

But there was one very difficult woman from Washington, DC who was just impossible. Oh, she threatened me and called me every name in the book and that I wasn't doing anything, I was placating her and all that. We got her child out, too. That was the other child, incidentally.

Her brother wrote me a letter apologizing. He said, "My sister's very difficult."

Q: So you essentially, would you say, got that situation pretty much cleared up for your successor?

GREEN: Yes. We - yes because then they had their own law, which was - you know, now I notice some people are adopting Chinese children.

I know one thing. I've often thought about it. If I had to adopt, and I was over there, I think I would have adopted about a five- or six-year-old child. You could see how they were coming along, and they were old enough to be grateful. And I saw - a couple of the military over there adopted five- or six-year-olds. One adopted twins. Boy, they were cute. Two girls. And of course they were going into the military life, I guess, but they loved their dad, and they loved their mom. And they were over there; they had the mother and father over there because they were in the military. But I've often thought, boy, that's the way I'd do it.

Q: Would you have adopted a boy or a girl?

GREEN: Girl.

Q: You like girls?

GREEN: I love daughters.

Q: You know a real interesting phenomenon which is a later thing, I think, is the Romanians who have ended up over here and getting into elder care. Do you have any insight into how that happened?

GREEN: Well, you're right. There is quite a bit of that. I've talked to people who said that their parents are being cared for very well by Romanians in this elder care program. You're right. I don't know why. It might have started with "The Miserables", and they found a niche that they were good at, and "Here, this works pretty well," and they brought in some other Romanians that they knew and trusted, and it could have spread from there. I don't know. It never occurred to me till your question.

Q: I'd like to pick up a number of points that will probably lead to other things.

You mentioned your first Fourth of July, and that's in '90, probably?

GREEN: July 4th, 1990, and they'd had the election, and I'd come back and I hadn't gone to the inauguration of the president. He did not attend our July 4th celebration - but they did send a military band, and a few ministers did show. But everybody in Bucharest tried to go to the

Fourth of July party. The Fourth of July the world over is - every American embassy is open for a party. And that's where a lot of your money goes that you're allotted is the Fourth of July party, and that's when you start doling out your own dough to take care of a few of these things.

But anyway, it was more successful than I thought it was going to be in spite of the absence of President Iliescu, and I understood why he wouldn't be there. I called personally, and they said, "Well, what do you think, Mr. Ambassador?" And I said, "No. I understand, but I want you to know that he would be welcome." But anyway, he didn't show, and I don't think I would have in his case, either.

But anyway, so it was a lot of fun. It was a hot day, and there was the Romanian military band playing in these - of course they didn't have summer uniforms; they just had uniforms, and they were hot uniforms. So I said to the band instructor, I said, "How much beer do you think they'll drink?"

He says, "How much you got?"

I said, "I understand."

So I went over, and I talked to Eugene, my cook - or the butler, I guess I talked to him. I said, "Get these guys as much beer - that's all they want; they won't let me pay them anything - get them as much beer as they want."

And it was a marvelous party. Everybody had a good time including the band, of course. But it was also the first time for many Romanians that they'd been inside the American residence.

I think it was the next year was the - the next year was the - we had the Fourth of July party, and that was when the Gulf was going pretty strong. And I had standing right behind me this fellow that became a pretty good friend of mine who came out from Washington, the guy with the gun who was with me all the time. I asked him once, I said - anybody coming up, you know, I was shaking hands with everybody who came up - I said, "What would you do if you saw something? Would you shoot them or what?"

He said, "No, I'd just throw you to the ground and throw myself on top of you."

Q: You identified something called "Green's law."

GREEN: Oh, yes. Green's law. [laughs] That's Alan Docal was the one to put that in the award write up.

It's always irritated me that things from countries - I'm not talking about individuals; a gift from an individual, that's up to them to see that it gets to the right place. But it seems to me that to get goods - from the taxpayers of one country as a taxpayer to the people of the other country, what's the purpose of that gift? Where should it go?

And what alerted me to it, I was in the - I guess in the airport, the airport or the railroad station, but I was waiting for something, and so I wandered around, and I wandered into this room. And there was all this stuff piled high from other countries. I said, "How long has this been here?"

"Oh, I don't know."

"Where's it going to go?"

"We don't know where it's going."

I said, "That's not going to happen to United States stuff." I said, "You're going have Green's law involved in this thing." I said, "If a given item is for example due to be given to a library in [a particular city], those books are going to that library, and we're going to have somebody ride herd on it and actually see that they get there."

And that's what we did; we established Green's law. And I don't think anything went astray. I really don't.

Q: So somebody from the embassy actually checking...

GREEN: Yes. See that it didn't get taken off the docks and go on the black market.

Q: Do you think it had an effect...

GREEN: I know it had an effect.

Q: ...on other national...

GREEN: I don't know. I didn't worry about that. I think if you get worried about that sort of thing, you're starting to be God. I mean, I've got my problems, you've got yours. You solve your problems, I'll solve mine.

But Green's law was - and it was kind of a gag, too. I said, "Come on; it's Green's law. Work it."

That was Alan Docal picked that up. He was a wonderful guy.

Q: The American ambassador, you in particular, assumed a leadership role among the foreign missions in Bucharest?

GREEN: I think so. It was a while before I did because being a non-career and these people being career. But the United States ambassador naturally assumes a leadership role. They have to listen to you. You listen to the German ambassador, you listen to the French, you listen to the British, the Canadian.

Q: And that means that actually they'd kind of look to you...

GREEN: That's right.

Q: ...for direction?

GREEN: That's right. "What are you going to do?" You know, you have to be very careful. And sometimes you don't know what you're going to do. And tell them, I think that's the smartest thing to do is say, "I don't know what I'm going to do yet. If you really want to know, I'll tell you later on what I'm going to do, what I have done. I'm not trying to keep a secret; I just don't know. There are a lot of things to think about here." But I'd always get back to them.

Q: Also, in sort of that role you took the lead in resisting harassment by the government; what was that about?

GREEN: Well, yes. The government was harassing us on a lot of small things. One was the Diplomatic Club that they had there. I never went to the darn thing. Under Ceausescu it was just turned into nothing. There used to be a golf course there, and Elena Ceausescu thought it was too bourgeoisie, so she had it torn up and it was farm land, which it was never farm land, it was just overgrown swamp, really, when they got through with it.

So we tried to get the Diplomatic Club as being a nice place for people to go. I mean, they were entitled to that. And they'd harassed us on that and things like that.

And then they'd harass us on rents for our residence, for my residence. It was a funny thing; I mentioned what you paid me, \$125,500 I think I said. Five percent of that would go to the rental of the residence, so that was also taken out from my check along with Social Security and withholding, etc. I didn't care. You don't go into those things for money, I'll tell you that. So yes, they'd get petty. You've got to realize that when you have a new government, you don't get rid of a lot of the petty ones that were there before. They had their jobs - a lot of it's not very popular with a lot of those people because they had something going. The population was miserable, but the bureaucracy kind of liked it the way it was. They had all the little privileges and perks, and things like that, and you had to break that down, and when that fell, I mean their old habits would surface pretty easily. And you knock them down. And we had the power to do it. We'd go to people in the government and tell them, and they'd see to it was all right.

Q: The harassment sounds kind of without serious purpose?

GREEN: I think so. Just to show, "I've got a little power left" type of thing. You know, power's - well, you said it.

Q: Corrupting.

GREEN: Yes.

Q: And Joanie actually was organizing diplomatic wives?

GREEN: Yes. She was very much involved in that, in organizing the NATO wives and other wives. Joanie loves bridge, so we'd have bridge parties. And we'd have some people coming to the American residence of countries - to play bridge, of countries we didn't recognize. And I said, "Joan, we've got to do something about this. They can't come in here."

Well, we just let it happen and then nobody said anything, and they kind of went away. They realized it afterwards, so we didn't make anything of it. But it was really funny.

I remember once, the first Christmas - no, second Christmas, 1990, I said to Joan, "Joan, let's get out of here. Let's just take a walk."

And I didn't say anything to anybody. We just dressed in normal kind of clothing - looked like a couple of casual people, and walked out the gate. The guard kind of looked at me with a question - and we just walked out.

And it was an interesting walk. We walked around this lake, and then walking back to the house I looked up and there was this cart, with a horse, and the thinnest Santa Claus I've ever seen. I said, "Joan, look at that. Don't tell me we're not making progress. What we've got to do is get a fat Santa Claus one of these days."

I've never forgotten that. That was symbolic, I thought. That was 1990. That's the sort of thing I hope you get into this thing because I think it's interesting. I should have told the CIA.

Q: In addition to representing the U.S. and handling the problems that are before you, you are also being a kind of an advocate for the country of Romania?

GREEN: You become that. That's covered in your instructions. It's not uncommon.

It's an interesting point that you bring up. When I think about it, maybe the fellow that I - this mystery man, people back in Washington, DC, maybe they thought I was representing Romania more than I was the United States. It wasn't true, I don't think. I just thought these people needed help and that we could help them. But I always put U.S. interests first.

But you do, you want to help them. But you want them to help themselves. You don't want to go out and give them a thousand dollars and say, "Here." You want them to earn a thousand dollars, and then they know what it's all about.

Q: So that's understood to be part of your work?

GREEN: Oh, yes. I mean - at least I made it part of my work. A lot of things come naturally. I've always prided myself on people; I mean, I say I'm a lousy fisherman and golfer, but I do pride myself on people. I just can get along with them. I like people - most people; some I dislike, as I hope I've shown in this thing, too.

But I think that - I want to see Romania progress, but I want to see it progress the right way, so it becomes an ally of the United States.

I'll give you an example. Boeing would come out. People would come to me. The ministers would come to me occasionally on foreign trade and things like that, and I'd go over and I'd talk to them.

"Well, how was this done? How did you do this?"

I said, "Listen, I can give you all the advice you want." Because they knew I was an entrepreneur. That's basically what it amounts to, I suppose. And I said, "But I represent American interests. I don't represent Air Bus or any of that stuff. I represent American interests. I can sell a Westinghouse product or a John Deere product over here, I'd love to do it. I help those people. But don't ask me how that's done and then go buy something from Sweden. Get the Swedish to give you the advice."

And I remember Boeing coming in. They were hot after a couple of planes for the local - Taron, that was the name of the airline, T-a-r-o-m. And they had a couple of openings in their schedule. So I went with them to sell two airplanes, and that was a fascinating thing to do. I don't know whether Boeing ever got the order, but it was fascinating to listen to them sell an airplane because it was kind of back selling, and that's [what] I do best.

But yes, you can get too much in love with your country; there's no question about it. You don't help them too much. You don't get in love with a country, you just want to help them. And then you get a little frustrated because they don't - they're not doing things in what seems so obvious to you the right way to do it.

Q: In your prepping, in your briefing and that sort of thing on this matter, how was it expressed? In other words, how did they tell you you should act in the best interest of your country?

GREEN: They just put it in the book. It was right there. That's the main purpose of the ambassador. It's true. They didn't write the book for a revolution, a guy going into a revolution going from a communist country to a free market economy. That book hasn't been written yet. That book was written for going from Washington to Stockholm or something. I mean, you know, it wasn't Washington to Bucharest. You can't write a book on that sort of thing. You've got to just go by the seat of your pants, and you've got to have a feel for these things. And because I'd faced turn-around business situations in the past. I really didn't see much difference. And I add I just had the right people that I trusted for their advice - including, I might add, including the people in Washington, DC.

Q: I was very interested in seeing how you were helping to prepare [indiscernible] for his trip to Washington, DC.

GREEN: Adrian Nastasi.

Q: Adrian Nastasi, right. I wonder if you could recount that experience.

GREEN: I don't remember it particularly. I mean, you know, he spoke beautiful English. I remember when Joanie first met him. He was the foreign minister at that time. Joanie's about five feet, and he's about six feet three, and he's a good looking guy. Joanie said, "God, you're handsome!" But that was what he wanted to hear. It's what any man wants to hear. He had a beautiful wife. They made a fine hit in Washington, DC. They were just exactly the type of people that Romania should send-

Q: He was there from fairly early on?

GREEN: Yes.

Q: In one of your letters home you noted they were setting up a number of new people [indiscernible] and younger and so forth. Were they doing this purposely...

GREEN: Sure.

Q: ...to improve relations with the United States?

GREEN: With the West. With the West. Not just the United States, the West. But Serge Celac, C-e-l-a-c. Nice guy. Tough guy. First foreign minister - still their Ambassador to London. I think he's still over there. I should have seen him when I was over there, but I didn't have a chance. But he was tough. He got a little insulted because he hadn't had an important visitor over there, like Jim Baker. "You get me Baker, and I'll know you're doing something." Baker did come, finally, and that satisfied him.

They have a lot of pride, these people. A great deal of pride. But Adrian was much easier to deal with. He was far more worldly and things like that. I liked him a lot better.

Q: And then there was the moment when you were helping to prep the - a trade mission from Romania in Vienna.

GREEN: Oh, boy. Yes. The American ambassador to Austria - a very wealthy Texan; I'm trying to think of his name. And I got to be a little - he looked like John Wayne. Roy Huffington, that's it.

But I called him up because they invited all these people - all these nations, but Romania wasn't there, on the Danube - it was the Danube, as I recall, a Danube conference. And I said to Roy, "The mouth of the Danube is in Romania; it's at Constanta."

He said, "You're right. I'm sorry."

So anyway, they invited us, but there wasn't - then there wasn't room on the main floor - so we were put in a sub level. So I had these two ministers, one the banker, and one I think a foreign official - anyway, they both spoke good English, and they had a pretty good feel for a free market economy and how to talk. So I just - yes, I went over to their offices and prepped them a little bit in what Americans would want to hear and that sort of thing. You know, "Sell them on

their country. Be proud of their country and sell them on it." You've got agriculture, you've got all these things, you've gone through tough times, and you've got beautiful places to ski and all these things you love.

But I remember in particular going to Commerce Secretary Robert Mosbacher in Vienna. Anyway, they found a spot for us at the conference, and so I introduced them and they got up, but I'll never forget the U.S. ambassador to Austria, Roy Huffington, came down to listen to us, which I felt was a terrifically nice thing for him to do - because it's all face. These people are proud, you know.

And then I said to Bob Mosbacher, who I'd known in the Bush campaign pretty well, I said, "Bob, can you spend ten minutes with my two people from Romania after the program tonight?" I said, "You've got no idea what it would mean to them to be able to talk to the Commerce Secretary of the United States."

He said, "Okay." And he did. And they went back to Bucharest walking on air. It was just what I wanted.

Q: So telling these people that, "When you get there you need to - don't stay in the back..."

GREEN: Yes, don't stay in the back. Get out and shake hands. That's another thing we were doing. I said, "Work the room. Do you know what 'work the room' means?" No, they didn't know what work the room - I said, "This is what I learned when I sold insurance when I was 16 years old, you work the room. Go on, shake hands, 'My name is such-and-such,' look them in the eye, give them a firm handshake." Like I'm talking to kids, you know. And say who you are, where you're from, what you do.

Q: They needed that?

GREEN: Sure.

Q: And did they do that?

GREEN: Oh, they were a little reluctant to start, and I'd push them. "Come on." "Hey, Joe, come here. I want you to meet..." You know, you have to be that way. It was fun. It was fun. They were shy, you know. That's why I became fond of them, and I think they became fond of me because they knew I was trying to help them.

Q: So a lot of these things came out - I thought that the report at the awards ceremony was very encompassing. And you say that this is put together, what, in the last month or two while you were over there or...

GREEN: No, it was put together before the Gulf started. Well, I guess - I don't know when. What's the date on it? I remember Eagleburger - it was June of '91, and he gave it to me in January of '92, so it had all of that in it.

All of these guys, Alan Docal, Larry Napper, Brian Flora, Anita and Don Booth - but you know, they were all apparently meeting on this award justification. And Larry was the one that was doing it - because I was working on Larry's, and I was working on all the others to see that they got something. And one of them said, "What about you," and I said, "Oh, forget about me. Being ambassador's good enough for me. Don't worry about it. Let's get you; this is good for your career" type of thing.

And then, I'll never forget, the last ceremony I presented it to them over there, and a voice from the back of the room said, "You're next, Mr. Ambassador," and I knew something was up, but I didn't react. I was thrilled, but I didn't want to say it.

Q: This was where?

GREEN: In Romania. After I had presented - and I said, "I think I've got everybody covered. Have I got everybody covered?" And that's when the voice came up. "Just you, Mr. Ambassador. We've got to get you."

And I remember the award I got, this Distinguished Honor award, Larry Napper was - he got one, too, and he should have. And it was kind of an in-State Department award, I think. That's the reason no non-career had ever received it. And he was disappointed I got this award. He wanted me to get one a little higher, which is - I don't know what it is.

Q: A different title?

GREEN: Well, yes. You know, I imagine the recent Ambassador in China might have gotten it or something. I mean, you know, I don't know what it is. If you look at the thing, when they write it up you'll see there is one more that's higher, and they're not about ready to give that to me, but I was thrilled with this, anyway. Larry was disappointed.

Q: So the award was first given over there...

GREEN: Not to me. The award was given to me in Washington, DC by Deputy Secretary of State Larry Eagleburger in the Treaty Room on the seventh floor of the State Department.

Q: And what was the event back in Romania?

GREEN: I was giving awards, other awards, we had a lot of other awards, to my people - to the staff. I had a series of little ceremonies.

Q: And then someone in the back of the room...

GREEN: Yes, when I was all through, and I thought I had gotten everybody, and I said, "Well, I think I've got everybody - is there anybody I've missed?" You know, kind of a joke. And "Just you, Mr. Ambassador. You're next." And then I knew that something was going on. Larry was about ready to kill the person because he wanted it to be a total surprise. I'd see these people disappear into the bubble - the quiet room or whatever.

Q: So they let you knew that something was coming?

GREEN: Well, that voice did. But they never - because, and Larry explained it later, he said because it was - he wasn't sure I was going to get it because I was non-career.

I think Bob Strauss of Russia got one, and I think a fellow that went to Italy, Peter Seccia got one, but I think it was after mine. It was after I was given it. And I'm not sure I'm correct when I say that I am the only non-career. That is what Larry Eagleburger said to me. He said, "I think you're the only non-career that I'm aware of that's ever received this award.

Q: One of the great lines in the award was there isn't anybody on the staff here who wouldn't walk through a brick wall for you.

GREEN: Yes, that was wonderful. I remember that. Well, we did get a closeness.

I had an advantage, Jim; I had an advantage in the fact that the revolution happened, and everybody got to know me under the most raw of circumstances. It wasn't a gradual getting to know a person. You were thrown together. Cleaning the toilets as ambassador of the United States, no ambassador from the United States cleaned a toilet. I did. Not that I'm any different. I'm sure the other ambassadors would have - Shirley Temple Black would have done the same thing under the circumstances - but there are also people that don't deign to do that. I can think of this one guy, he wouldn't ever think of doing something like that. He'd get a Marine to do it, off-duty Marine to do it.

Q: This is a continuation of the oral history with Punch Green, and this is the 21st of July, 1999.

So we were talking about the flag with a hole in it.

GREEN: Oh, yes. On July 11th of this year, 1999 - which if we can believe it is about ten years since the revolution in Romania, and I got over there on December 1st, 1989 - but I gave a speech to the National Association of Romanian children at the Doubletree Inn in Portland, people from all over the country with a lot of children there. And ABC was covering it on 20/20, and they will send me a tape.

I don't know, but what I highlighted, it seems to me, was that I presented them with the flag - I had two flags, one clean, and one was given me by a freedom fighter right off the street, with all the dirt of Romania of the revolution on it, and I'm keeping that one. But I gave them the one that the government of Romania, gave me for the children, and things like that; I thought it was an appropriate place for it to be. So we'll see it maybe on ABC, 20/20 around December of 1999. I don't know. But it was a very moving time, and people were crying and things. I didn't particularly intend that; that's not my style. But it was emotional.

Q: People knew you at this event?

GREEN: No, but they knew of the conditions, they knew of the things - yes, there were a few people that did know me, and there were a few people that I'd helped. I mean, that's nice, but -

Q: It would be good to put into words your connection with the country of Romania.

GREEN: Well, it will always be a big part of my life. I believe in going forward; I don't believe in going backwards, Jim. We can kind of do a little wrap-up on this thing today. I've made some notes.

But it had a tremendous effect on me, the job and the conditions and my respect for the Romanian people. I would suppose if I'd been to Bulgaria or Czechoslovakia or Poland, it would have been similar. But this one is the one that had the real revolution, had a bloody - it was a bloody time, and I - you know, I would like to talk to Ambassador Sasser sometime, what he recently went through in Beijing. I mean, they didn't attack our building, but he (Sasser) - you know, he has to have similar feelings.

And it does change your life. It changes the way you think about a lot of things because it makes you really realize how wonderful it is to be an American. I will never forget - and I think I've said this; if I haven't, I want to make it an emphasis - that in Bucharest there were probably more embassies in Bucharest than there were in any city in the world because they've got China, and you've got two of them, Red China and Taiwan. You had Albania. We weren't speaking to Albania at that time. And all of these - Cuba, they were all there because - you know, and they were all represented, I mean, people that we did recognize plus all the others.

But there's only one embassy, where there's a constant line-up outside our consul's office to get to be citizens of this country. Nobody else. Germany for a while because they were taking all the Germans they could back, but that was just Germans. This was everybody. And I think I've gone through "The Miserables" story.

Q: Yes.

GREEN: We did that one. And that's the thing I think I'm most proud of, and that's one I want my - particularly my eldest grandchild, Laddie Peterson, who's about 20 years old - to read about, to know about - and that should be included in this tape. That is a purposeful comment. The others I want to know, but Laddie's seemed more interested.

Q: So you developed a concern for the whole country?

GREEN: Yes, I've got a concern for the whole country, the area and everything, yes. But it's - you know, for a lot of time I was trying to educate the government, people in the government, they became friends of mine, what America, what the free market economy, what a democracy and everything, and all of a sudden we're getting CNN finally in the country, and I'm getting it in the embassy, and I - that was my present to the embassy and to the residence. There's a funny story involved there, but - well, we've got time.

I spent a lot of money on a German thing that didn't work, and this guy for 500 bucks said, Romanian said, "I'll put it up." And they put a rickety thing up, and he said, "Don't pay me if it doesn't work." And I said, "Okay, try it first at the chancellor," the little cafeteria at the chancellor, and it worked fine. I went out and gave him \$500 bucks. And the next ambassador, it's something I'm very embarrassed about, sent me - got the money back and sent me - and I've never thanked him - sent me the check for quite a bit of money for what I had spent and it didn't work. I should have thanked him; I just got busy. Anyway, I'm thanking him now. Maybe he'll read this some day.

But anyway, the Clarence Thomas - and what was her name, the girl's name?

Q: Hill, Anita Hill.

GREEN: Anita Hill. And that was on television. When I'd come home from these various functions I had to go to at night, about 10:00 or 11:00, because it's about a 10-hour difference between Washington and Bucharest - we're ahead of them. And I'd sit there in the den just to relax and watch CNN, but I'd watch this thing, and they were covering this thing. And I couldn't believe it. I said, "This trash is going all over the world."

So after about three days of this stuff, I went in to see the foreign minister, Adrian Nastasi. And I said, "Mr. Minister" - I'd got an appointment with him, and I want to come over and see him, and he's always was kind to make time for me - he's a young guy, much younger than I am. And I said, "You know, I'm watching CNN, and I'm sure you are, and I'm in here talking to you people about my country and how great my country is and everything else, and I know what you're watching on CNN. Don't get the wrong idea. We're not like that. I've never seen anything like that myself on television."

I don't know who's right between the two. I'm not going to make a judgment there because I can't, and I'll never know. But I think Clarence Thomas has gone on to be a pretty good judge, from what I hear, but I'm not going to make a case - that's not my field.

But anyway, I'll never forget, he looked at me, and he said, "Mr. Ambassador, we know that." And I was relieved because I was embarrassed.

Q: Can you tell me your thoughts about the idea that your personal connection with this country was part of your success? Can you imagine another person, another ambassador not playing it that way and as a result not having the same success?

GREEN: That's a tough question, Jim. I mean, I'm myself. You'd have to ask - I tell you what you'd have to do, you'd have to ask Jonathan Rickert or Larry Napper or Dot Evans that question. You can't ask me that question. They're all pros, they're professionals.

I've got a personal opinion, yes. I think it was the right time for me. I think I was - I think all my experience in making sick businesses well and things like that - one reason I'm a little late in seeing you is that I was - went over about this hat, and I saw some glaziers outside, one of them had a Benson hat on, and that's the company, one of the companies in which I was involved. And

I talked to the glaziers, and they were kind of excited to talk to Punch Green. They remembered me.

Yes. I felt very comfortable at all times, let's put it that way. I did not feel uncomfortable. And I felt that I'd gone through it before and I'd been trained for this particular time. Somebody up there was just trying to say, "Punch, you're going to be tested one more time" type of thing.

But I had wonderful people. You're only as good as your people. That's why if you want an opinion, I think you should talk to Dot Evans - I mean, I really do. Particularly of all of them. Do you have her phone number?

Q: Yes.

GREEN: I've given it to you, I think. I'll give it to you. Or Larry Napper or Jonathan Rickert. She's got the numbers of all of those people.

But obviously they're on my side - and obviously I probably know what their answer's going to be, but for me to say anything, it sounds awfully braggadocious. I mean, they wrote the thing for the Distinguished Honor Award. They're the ones that wrote it. I didn't write it. I mean, I didn't even know it was going on. And so I know pretty much what they're going to say to you. I mean, that's the reason it means so much to me because the professional staff at the Embassy wrote it.

Q: I'm kind of imagining counsel from somebody, maybe stern counsel, "You're getting too close to these people. You have to stay removed from them..."

GREEN: That's a good question. Jim Baker chewed me out once - it was right after the revolution, and Iliescu was President, and the miners had come to town, and the State Department recalled me, and I was mad about Iliescu going down and thanking the miners for coming to town. I think we covered this in a previous interview.

This was right after the first election, and I think they had one of the first free elections, and I think it was free. And I went in - Jim Baker asked me to go into his private office. And Ray Sykes, who was a career guy, a wonderful man, was in there; he was kind of a witness to it. And he subsequently became ambassador to Great Britain. You don't see many career people do that, make that to that post there because it's an expensive thing to do.

But anyway, Jim kind of chewed me out - didn't kind of really did. And I think he was saying that to me, I think it was going around State Department, "He's a nice guy, he's doing his best, but he's not tough enough." I think that was kind of an attitude of some career people. The thing is, I've always thought I was tough, but I'm tough when I have to be. I don't think you gain much by being tough. I've never felt that. And it could be a weakness, I don't know, but I can tell you one thing, it sure has worked well for me.

The idea is to increase the - to have better relations between the two countries, and our relations were zero when we went in there. And we could have lorded it over them, we're the United

States. I mean, it's the biggest, but I mean my feeling was if we help them, look what we'll do for the world, for these people, if we can help them to help themselves.

That's what I kept telling them; I said, "We can't do it anymore. It's not the Marshall Plan anymore. We can't afford it. But you can - if you do something, we'll try to do something in return." That's how the free market economy works, and I wouldn't want it any other way. It's worked in business, and it worked at the Federal Maritime Commission, it worked at the Port of Portland, and my attitude worked over there. So I can tell you, I'm not about ready to change my personality. I'll be tough. I fire people, and I've done a lot of that stuff. And I hate it, but I'll do it, and I'll be very tough.

But you know, I think you can catch a lot more with honey than you can with anything else.

Q: So afterward you also serve on the Board of the Council of American Ambassadors.

GREEN: Yes. We can go into my life after. Let me see if I've got anything particular that - because this we can wrap up pretty fast.

There are one of two things. Did we talk about the Peace Corps at all?

Q: Yes.

GREEN: Okay. The T-shirts and all that? I got them some T-shirts because they were doing things and nobody knew they were from America, and I got sick of this, and so I bought them myself personally.

Q: We didn't talk about the T-shirts.

GREEN: Well, I bought them some good thick T-shirts and paid for it myself. That T-shirt had a Romanian and American flag - you know. So they gave me a T-shirt. I have it down at the beach; I wear it occasionally. The name of the Romanian currency is *Leu*; L-e-u [singular], or L-e-i [plural]. So they put on the back of the T-shirt, "Another day, another *Leu*," [pronounced Lay] which I thought was kind of cute. The Peace Corps did a very good job.

And you know, I ought to bring this up because the tension never ceased. When I left Bucharest, I let it be known that I was leaving. This may sound a little dramatic, but it's true. And my security officer came to see me - I think I was scheduled to leave about January the 11th, we'll say, of 1992. And he said, "We've had a threat which I consider - serious - against you."

I said, "Well, we've had those before," and I didn't think too much of it. But he would come out with Paneit, my driver, and pick me up every morning and things like that. So finally I got thinking about it, and I said - and this was after - of course long after the Lockerbie incident in Scotland involving that awful bomb, and I got thinking, other people are going back with me, too, including my wife.

So I called him up and asked him to come to my office. I said, "Why did this particular thing bother you? Others you don't tell me about."

And he says, "Because this voice was a well-educated voice."

Q: It was actually a telephone threat?

GREEN: Oh, yes. It was a telephone threat. But he'd gotten those on me, but he said -. And yet on the Gulf War, there was the - you know, the British ambassador and I were under threat we had some stuff and the India Ambassador had been shot over there.

So I said, "Well, I think you should let" - at that time it was Delta had come - "the airlines know that I'm going home and warn Delta- about these threats."

And it was incredible. Joanie and I, I was very complimented, we left very early in the morning, seven o'clock, - a lot of the embassy people and all of the ambassadors from NATO were out there to see Joanie and me off. We were the last to board.

We flew to Vienna, and we parked the plane between two tanks, if you can believe it. Then we flew to Frankfurt, and they hustled us off the plane, right into a secure room where they obviously put heads of state; you don't go through anything. You just sit in that nice plush room until the plane's ready to leave, and then you board the plane and you know there are people on the plane that are ready to protect you.

And then we flew to Dulles Airport, and they said, "I think, Mr. Ambassador, you're safe now," this guy who I hadn't known was on the plane came up to me.

And I said, "Yes. We're safe here. Thank you very much."

And that was the end of it, but that was - it was the last of it, but it was part of it.

Since I retired - is that about what we want to - we've covered the life pretty well, haven't we, up to retirement?

Q: That's essentially the point that we've gotten to. Right. Before we get into that, there are some other points that I want to clarify about Romania.

GREEN: Okay.

Q: Were you involved with helping Nadia Comaneci, the gymnast, gain asylum?

GREEN: No. I never met her. I know one thing, she escaped from Ceausescu, and the revolution happened a short time later or something, after she went over.

Q: You secured video equipment to open clubs and for the Ministry of Tourism.

GREEN: We were always doing things like that. That was Alan Docal's job in the library and that sort of thing because we were trying to get as much information to the populace as we could about America and about companies and things like that.

Q: In the video there is a sign, a "Green machine" sign. What did that refer to?

GREEN: Well, what it was was I was at the airport or railroad station, and we had to wait for something, and I went into one of these rooms, and I saw the stuff with dust gathered on it the population needed badly. It was from another country, and it was just sitting there. So I said the Green - Green's law, that was it, that anything that this embassy knows about that comes from the taxpayers of the United States or privately gifted, but we know about it coming in - I can't do anything about someone just doing something, and there's a lot of that done. But I said, "I want to see that we see that it gets to where it's supposed to go and doesn't get to the black market." And we followed that stuff up very closely, and most of it did get through to where it was supposed to go.

There was a lot of stuff stolen and got on the black market. It didn't happen too much to us. I suppose some.

Q: That's right. I remember your talking about that. There was a relief effort, a check for \$33,000 came in from the Chapel family. Does that ring a bell?

GREEN: No.

Q: The IMF stepping in and setting up conditions in a country; I think they were behind the release of price controls.

GREEN: That was after me. All of that stuff was. They were starting that sort of thing, but it was - you know, the revolution was in December of '89, and I left January of '92. There's two years in there where you're just getting things going.

Q: Before that, in April of '91, the government doubled food prices.

GREEN: Yes, they probably did.

Q: It must have been a hardship.

GREEN: Terrible. But what are you going to do, that's their government. You can tell them it's too much but you see, we had a great advantage in the foreign service nationals that worked for the embassy. Every embassy all over the world has got them. They're the bureaucracy. No matter who the ambassador is, they're staying. Most of us come in for two or three years, the career people come in for two or three years, and they go on to other posts. But the foreign service nationals stay. It's like that in Washington or anything else.

And we made this - it wasn't my idea, but I think I mentioned this, Anita Booth, she was working, and she said, "Why don't we pay our foreign service nationals in American dollars?"

And we did that. We changed. And they would take it, instead of the official rate. They would take it out to the airport and get unofficial exchange. But they made out very well, and that's what was important and I got the best people. That was very important to me.

But people, you know, they say - there's a lot of bartering and trading and things where money isn't involved. It can't be. It doesn't mean anything. It's paper that isn't worth anything.

Q: Very fluctuating market, I would imagine.

GREEN: Oh, terrible. Terrible. Very, yes.

RUTH E. HANSEN
Romanian Desk Officer,
Washington DC (1990-1993)

Ruth E. Hansen was born on February 18, 1946 in Illinois. She received her BA from Wheaton College in 1968 and her MSFS from Georgetown University in 1970. Her career has included positions in the Dominican Republic, Poland, Panama, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria. Ms. Hansen was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on June 21, 2004.

Q: Where were you assigned after Belgrade?

HANSEN: We returned to Washington, where I had an assignment as the Country Affairs Officer for Romania, the Romania desk officer. I was the desk officer from summer 1990 to summer 1992. Just before leaving Belgrade, I had a chance to make a quick visit to Bucharest. I caught a ride with the naval attaché in Belgrade, who also covered Bulgaria and Romania. He and his wife were going to Sofia by car, so I rode with them. It seemed like a terribly dismal place compared to Belgrade. We spent the night there and then drove up to Bucharest, which was just as dismal.

Ceausescu was gone, but the situation was very tenuous. Obviously, in Romania the transition away from the communist system proved far more difficult than in any other country of the Warsaw Pact. When I went to Bucharest for that short visit in early June of 1990, the student protest blocking part of the downtown area was underway. They had set up a sort of camp at one of the major intersections and were protesting the course of the so-called democratic revolution thus far. It was not going well. Just getting rid of Ceausescu had not completed the job by any means.

Ion Iliescu and the National Salvation Front came to power that spring, after Ceausescu was killed, with Iliescu elected president in May 1990. Iliescu, a former communist himself, was not the democratic leader that many Romanians, and certainly not the U.S., had hoped to see emerge in Romania. The students carrying out the demonstration were agitating for further and better democratic reform. Shortly after I visited Bucharest, the demonstration was broken up by the

famous miners incident, in which Iliescu's cohorts arranged to have miners come into Bucharest from the Jiu Valley and disrupt the demonstration. It was a needlessly violent event, and it overshadowed American-Romanian relations for several years thereafter. There was a reprise of this scenario in 1991, when miners were again used to storm Bucharest. So the democratic revolution in Romania was very much an unfinished process when I came on to the desk. Deposing Ceausescu had really been more of a palace coup than anything else, and it took a long time for more genuinely committed democratic reformers to come to the fore.

These were huge developments for our very small embassy in Bucharest to follow and deal with. While I was on the desk, I would sometimes hear complaints around the State Department – why isn't the embassy reporting on this or that? Why isn't there better coverage of one issue or another? But it was quite a small embassy for such a large and complex country. Romania was a country of 23 million people, about as many as Yugoslavia. Yet the number of American embassy and consulate officers in Yugoslavia was easily twice the number in Romania. In Yugoslavia, we had offices throughout the country, while in Romania we were stationed only in Bucharest. The embassy was very thoroughly engaged in following developments in the country and pressing for progress on human rights and democratization, as well as other issues, but it was a lot to cover.

When I first started working on Romania, the ambassador was a political appointee, Ambassador Alan Green. It must have been a very difficult time for him. I don't believe he'd had international experience to speak of. The upheaval in Romania would certainly not have been something he could have anticipated in taking the ambassadorship. Later, it was Ambassador John Davies, who had lots of East European experience and knowledge of how Washington worked.

During the whole time that I was on the desk, though there was some limited progress, Romania did not really come to terms with the democratic process the way other countries in the Northern Tier did. Romania was starting from much more difficult circumstances compared to, say, Poland or then-Czechoslovakia. The Ceausescu regime had been sickeningly repressive and had driven the economy into the ground. Its economic recovery had to start from an extremely low base, with seriously deteriorated infrastructure and widespread poverty. Romanians had very little experience in dealing with the West through trade, business, or tourism, since it had been such a closed society. It did not have a community of expatriate countryman, like Polish-Americans, to take a special interest in the country and help it along the way.

During the Ceausescu regime, we did have a kind of special relationship with Romania for a while, because Romania had been willing to stand up to Moscow to some degree. Romania did not participate in the military operations to put down the Prague Spring, for example. But then Ceausescu became so repressive and turned the country into such a miserable place that obviously that special relationship couldn't continue. It was a very repressive regime at the end and did horrible things to its own people. So, when Ceausescu was gone, everybody was thrilled by that, but those who came into power at first were not of the same caliber and the same ilk as we saw elsewhere in Eastern Europe.

Working on Romania in Washington was very trying and often very frustrating. When I originally applied for the job, the Deputy Director of then-EUR/EEY told me, in the winter of 1989 just before the revolution took place, that change was likely in Romania, as elsewhere in Eastern Europe. When it came, he said, there is a good chance it will be violent change, but ultimately Romania had the potential for a very rich relationship with the United States. Certainly he was right on the potential for violence. That turned out to be the case. But the “rich relationship” took a good ten years in coming. While I was on the desk, the relationship was at a very low point because of the unfinished nature of the democratic revolution, the people in office in Romania, the agonizing “most-favored nation” trade issue, the adoptions question, ethnic tensions between Romanians and the ethnic Hungarian population of Romania, etc. Iliescu and people around him were, understandably, viewed with great suspicion in Washington. Washington just did not want to deal with him.

At the same time, we had a steady stream of Romanian officials and political figures coming to Washington during those two years, and they were received in Washington. We kept telling the Romanians what they had to do to improve their standing in Washington, but the reforms in question were difficult and, even if their intentions had been the best, progress would have been slow. Many Romanian officials seemed to think that if they just explained their situation to Washington, Washington would eventually be persuaded. They seemed to think it was a public relations issue, rather than a substantive issue.

Eventually, Romania managed to get approval for a visit by the Prime Minister. I think he was supposed to meet with the Secretary of State, but at the very last minute the Secretary couldn't take the meeting and it was going to have to be with the Deputy Secretary instead, which was not really the appropriate level for a Prime Minister. But it was the best we could do. (Actually, I don't recall the specifics; it could be that the meeting was originally to be with the Vice President and then passed to the Secretary of State.) The Romanian ambassador called me up and asked, “Ruth, what do you think I should do?” I recommended that they proceed with the meeting because it really was the best we could offer, and so they did that.

Romanian officials came often to beseech us and press their case. Deputy Secretary Eagleburger and other State Department officials were very generous with their time and met with government officials, opposition political leaders, just about anyone who wanted to see him. Eagleburger met several times with the chief rabbi of Romania. But it was evident that some officials and their staff were uncomfortable dealing with the Romanians, who seemed untrustworthy to them. The relationship was thin, and U.S. assistance was limited to humanitarian assistance and assistance to promote democracy and human rights, though that was quite broadly interpreted, given the needs in the country. Nevertheless, the workload was heavy, and it was a difficult two years.

Q: Did you feel almost like a pariah within the Eastern Europe office?

HANSEN: Well, I think some people felt sorry for me because I had to deal with Romania and these difficult Romanians, though over time I developed a certain fondness for the Romanians at the Romanian Embassy and elsewhere with whom I dealt regularly. During this period, there was almost a sort of competition between Bulgaria and Romania as to who was doing well on

democratization and so forth, since those two countries were viewed in something of a different class compared to Poland, Hungary, and then-Czechoslovakia. In 1990-1992, Bulgaria was ahead. Later on, the tables were turned a few times.

Q: Did adoptions cross your desk at all?

HANSEN: Yes, adoptions were very much an issue and were related to the horrible conditions in Romanian orphanages at the time. Right after the overthrow of Ceausescu, the terrible situation of the orphanages and the AIDS babies came to light. The stories were just sickening.

This set of issues was part of the legacy of the Ceausescu period when government institutions just did not meet the needs of the people and in fact imposed exceptional hardships on them. Ceausescu wanted to keep the population of the country growing, so he imposed a ban on abortions. Abortion was otherwise, unfortunately, a rather widespread birth control method in Eastern Europe. According to Ceausescu, Romanian women were supposed to have lots of babies, but the deteriorating health care system was not equipped to deal with pregnancies, birth, and small children. With deteriorating economic conditions generally, families were not equipped to support their children in many cases.

I remember hearing a statistic from Dr. John Lampe, during the Balkan area studies course I'd taken before going to Yugoslavia, about the childbirth conditions in Bucharest. He reported that, at one point in the mid-1980s, of the babies born in Bucharest hospitals, only 10% *survived*. That's how miserable the situation was in terms of health conditions. One of the steps that Romanian doctors supposedly took to treat newborn infants was to give them blood transfusions. Somehow it was thought that blood transfusions were going to help survival rates. Of course they didn't have appropriate sanitary conditions for doing the blood transfusions. Among other practices, they re-used needles. Romania ended up with a lot of AIDS babies that we learned about after the Ceausescu regime was overthrown. They and many other children were placed in orphanages by families who didn't want them and/or couldn't care for them. The orphanages themselves were not supported at all adequately, and so those miserable conditions developed and finally came to light after Ceausescu's overthrow.

One way of dealing with the problem of these institutionalized kids was to open Romania to international adoptions. All kinds of legal and other problems arose because of questionable practices in selecting children for adoption and in approval of adoptive parents, plus continuing problems in management of the children's institutions.

Q: How did this impact the desk?

HANSEN: Fortunately, the adoptions issue was a shared burden because the Consular Affairs Bureau was involved in directly assisting American citizens in the actual adoptions process. They really bore the bulk of that burden. But the issue was always there and was always a topic in official meetings of any kind. Some of the American assistance flowing to Romania through USAID and other U.S. agencies was targeted at the orphanage problem. When the Peace Corps started operating in Eastern Europe, some of the early volunteers served in Romania orphanages.

Q: What was the Romanian government like, and what were some of the developments and issues during the two years you dealt with Romania?

HANSEN: Among the main figures was President Ion Iliescu. In May 1990, he was elected President with 85% of the vote in Romania's first fumbling attempt at free elections, and he was re-elected with 61% of the vote in the fall of 1992, in elections generally endorsed by international observers. He had been a member of the communist party in Romania, had fallen out with Ceausescu at one point, and became sort of a dissident communist. Petre Roman was Prime Minister for a good part of the time, and then a technocrat, the former Finance Minister Theodor Stolojan, who was somewhat better thought of in Washington, became Prime Minister when Roman was ousted in that second miners incident. The miners incidents very much colored the way Romania was viewed in Washington, understandably enough and rightly so. Iliescu of course denied that he orchestrated anything but he could hardly escape ultimate responsibility. The first event in June 1990, in particular, was seen as a very brutal method of repression and he was held accountable for it. For a couple of years afterward, officials in Washington couldn't even think of Romania without thinking of the miners coming into Bucharest. It happened again on a slightly smaller scale in September 1991, with the ouster of Roman as Prime Minister, which of course only reinforced the problem. The Iliescu regime was just seen as a regime that Washington could not work with.

The political opposition was very fragmented and ineffective. One of the best organized opposition groups was the ethnic Hungarian party, but it was viewed with suspicion by its Romanian counterparts. A major issue the American Embassy had to deal with was how to get the democratic opposition to work in unity, to be coherent enough to present a reasonable alternative to the forces in power, and to function effectively in a democratic system. The other side of that coin was the need to convince the government to foster democratic conditions of governance.

On this score, the United States was full of advice and help, though with some restraints on our assistance. Just before I joined the desk, the State Department developed a set of "benchmarks" that Romania would need to reach for normalization of bilateral relations, implicitly including reinstatement of "most favored nation" (MFN) status. The benchmarks encompassed free and fair elections, independent media, civilian control over security services, and respect for human rights, including the rights of ethnic minorities – i.e., ethnic Hungarians and Roma. U.S. assistance was targeted to helping Romania make progress on these benchmarks.

The issues of ethnic relations were important in Romania and in U.S.-Romanian relations. The ethnic Hungarians of Romania lived mainly in the Transylvania area and generally were very critical of the Romanian majority and the Romanian authorities. They seemed not to feel comfortable as a minority in Romania, with some good reason. There was always tension in Romania as to what the status of the Hungarians should be. Did they have aspirations to break off part of Romania and patch it to Hungary? What were Hungary's intentions in Romania? Hungary and the ethnic Hungarians in Romania had a very effective propaganda machine and were always able to get very sympathetic hearing in Washington, and the Romanians often suffered by comparison.

The status of the Roma was also an important human rights issue in Romania, as in other East European countries. The Roma were certainly on the very lowest rung of the ladder. Throughout the region at that time, there were sporadic outbreaks of violence against gypsy communities. Somebody in the gypsy community would be accused of stealing something or some other crime and the local Romanian or Czech or Hungarian population would torch a gypsy house or camp or something like that. The authorities would not take action to prevent it or prosecute the perpetrators. These issues were raised regularly in our bilateral relations with Romania and other countries and were included in the annual human rights reports. This was certainly an unresolved question for that part of the world.

Romania was not deemed eligible for the full panoply of U.S. assistance because we were so uncomfortable with the Iliescu regime, but a lot of assistance was provided in democratization. A lot of it came down to how to help the opposition, the so-called democratic opposition. Obviously we weren't supposed to be taking sides in any respect with one political group or another, but as a practical matter I'd say that we did. We were very straightforward and up-front about wanting to see a democratic system in place and see the democratically-oriented parties able to operate freely. The American Bar Association through its Central and East European Law Initiative (CEELI) was very much involved, plus the National Endowment for Democracy and the American political party institutes, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI); the latter had a slightly different name at the time. The Human Rights Bureau in the State Department took a particular interest in Romania. Ambassador Richard Schifter headed the bureau at the time and seemed to take a special interest in Romania. He was the one really sympathetic figure among senior officials in Washington, sympathetic towards Romania. In fact there was quite a lot of tension between the Human Rights Bureau and the Policy Planning staff. They had diametrically opposed views of how to deal with Romania, so there was constant tension there, and the EUR Bureau was often caught in the middle.

Q: What about MFN?

HANSEN: "Most Favored Nation" status, which erroneously implies preferential treatment in regard to import tariffs, was the somewhat anachronistic term used up until a few years ago to describe nondiscriminatory tariff treatment. In many ways, this was the defining issue in U.S.-Romanian relations, because Romanians interpreted the granting of MFN as a U.S. "seal of approval" and because U.S. officials – in Congress and in the Executive Branch – used the MFN issue to press broadly for improved human rights conditions. As a result, the MFN issue carried an emotional charge and political value far out of proportion to its objective utility in potentially promoting business and trade between the United States and Romania.

Post-1989, many Romanians professed not to understand how the United States could have accorded MFN to the notorious dictator Ceausescu yet deny it the "new" Romania. By way of background, Romania was accorded MFN status in 1975, mainly due to Ceausescu's independent foreign policy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. Romania constituted a chink in the Soviet armor and for that reason was valued by the West in the Cold War context. As Ceausescu's repression of his own people intensified, however, the United States threatened to cut off MFN. By 1988, with the writing on the wall, Ceausescu pre-empted a U.S. move to drop MFN by

renouncing it himself in February 1988. In July 1988, Romania's MFN status was formally suspended by mutual agreement of the two governments.

After the fall of Ceausescu, the United States hung on to the MFN issue, knowing of its appeal to Romania. With little other leverage over Romania, it was a very useful tool for the United States to use to press Romania for genuine democratic reform and improved human rights conditions. Romania's problems in these areas festered. In late 1991-early 1992, finally things began to take a turn for the better. The new technocratic prime minister was in place, and in December 1991 a new constitution was adopted by the Romanian people in an orderly referendum. Under these more promising circumstances, the United States focused on electoral processes as the indicators by which MFN could move forward, and we pressed hard for free and fair local, presidential, and parliamentary elections.

After successful local elections in February 1992, the State Department announced U.S. readiness to sign a new bilateral trade agreement providing MFN, subject to requisite Congressional approval and with an eye out for presidential/parliamentary elections then anticipated in the spring or early summer of 1992. The trade agreement was signed in April. Romanian authorities ultimately postponed national elections until September, however. This maneuver aroused suspicions in Washington and among the political opposition in Romania that President Iliescu was playing for time in order to enhance his electoral prospects and that, for partisan purposes, Iliescu would try to claim credit for winning MFN from the United States.

Given these atmospherics, the timing of U.S. Congressional action on the bilateral trade agreement became awkward. First, an early fall Congressional recess, due to coming U.S. elections, threatened to leave the MFN issue by the wayside and to put it off well into 1993, thus diminishing its utility as leverage for Romanian reform. Second, the Bush administration simultaneously had other, heavier issues to manage with a Democratic Congress – namely, MFN for China – and had little or not political capital or energy to spare for a fight over Romanian MFN, if it came to that.

Nevertheless, the President notified Congress on June 3, 1992, that he had determined to waive the restrictions of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment for Romania and on June 22 submitted the newly-signed trade agreement for congressional approval, arguing that it would be good for the American economy and help reinforce political and economic reform in Romania. The House of Representatives took up the trade agreement, with its MFN provision, on September 24. However, at the urging of Rep. Lantos, who actively lobbied against MFN for Romania, partly because of the issue of the status of ethnic Hungarians in Romania, the House postponed a vote until after Romania's September 27 elections.

In the event, even without the political boost of MFN, Iliescu came close to winning re-election in the first round of voting on September 27. On September 30, without further debate, the House rejected the Romania MFN measure 88-283, ending the issue for 1992. Shortly thereafter, Iliescu went on to win the run-off presidential election on October 11.

By then, I had left the Romania desk, finishing that assignment in the summer of 1992. President Clinton submitted the bilateral trade agreement to Congress anew in July 1993, by which time

Romania was the only East European country lacking MFN, grouped uncomfortably with a string of pariah states. I understand that Congress approved MFN for Romania on a provisional basis in October of that year, after the State Department acceded to Rep. Lantos' urging to open a branch office in Cluj, Romania, in Transylvania where the ethnic Hungarian population is concentrated. The bill was signed by President Clinton and came into effect in November 1993. The Cluj office opened in January 1994. In subsequent periods, President Clinton submitted reports to Congress affirming Romania's continued compliance with Jackson-Vanik conditions, and its MFN status continued unchallenged. There is more to the denouement of this story, but basically in July 1996 the Congress approved legislation allowing for permanent MFN status for Romania, and it came into effect in August. The issue continued to resonate in Romania in Presidential elections there in the fall of 1996.

To sum it up, the democratic revolution in Romania was an exceptionally difficult one in the East European experience. That Romania has come as far as it has today, now a NATO member and bumping up against EU membership, is remarkable, to say the least. It's a testament to the people of Romania and to the commitment of the United States and our partners in supporting and promoting democratic change in the region.

Q: Was Moldova an issue?

HANSEN: To a degree. I think that some Romanians harbored the notion that they might be able to get some territory that Romania had lost to Moldova after the war, but it never was a live issue, at least from my perspective on the Romania desk. I had the impression that, as miserable as Moldova was economically, even people in Moldova of Romanian background wouldn't have seen a particular attraction in Romania under Iliescu.

Q: Was there an active Romanian-American community in the United States? Did they play the role that some ethnic communities do in terms of U.S. relations with the old country?.

HANSEN: Yes, there was something of an organization, but it was not nearly as effective as those of other communities, like the Polish or the Hungarian. The ethnic Hungarian lobby was very active and effective, and the ethnic Romanians, if you will, suffered by comparison.

RICHARD A. VIRDEN
Counselor for Public Affairs, USIS
Bucharest (1990-1993)

Mr. Virden was born and raised in Minnesota and educated at St. John's College in Collegeville, Minnesota. He joined the Foreign Service of the United States Information Service (USIA) IN 1963 and served variously as Information, Press and Public Affairs Officer, attaining the rank of Deputy Chief of Mission in Brasilia. His foreign posts include Bangkok, Phitsanulik and Chiang Mai in Thailand; Saigon, Vietnam; Belo Horizonte, Sao Paulo and Brasilia in Brazil; and Warsaw, Poland, where he served twice. Mr. Virden also had several senior

assignments at USIA Headquarters in Washington, DC. Mr. Virden was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2011.

VIRDEN: We left Lisbon in the spring of 1990. My next assignment was to Bucharest, so I was sent back to Washington briefly to cram in a little Romanian language study. I went home I think it was like April or so and then studied Romanian until the summer.

And of course Romania was in turmoil at this time. About the same time I got the assignment, in December of 1989, we watched on Portuguese television as the Romanian dictator, Nicolai Ceausescu, and his wife were executed.

Q: and his wife, yeah.

VIRDEN: On Christmas Day, 1989. Linda and I got there a half year later, in the summer of 1990. Bucharest was in chaos. Power was literally still up for grabs in the streets of the capital. There were constant demonstrations still at this time in the central University Square. Protestors called that site a "communist-free zone."

That's where the students would come to protest. Sometimes the miners came in from the coal mines also to demonstrate there. And this kept on. Romania's was the one violent revolution among all of those that took place at this time.

It was an ongoing fight over who would gain power and what the future of the country would look like. One of the big underlying questions was whether the old communists who'd reinvented themselves would still control things, or whether new leaders and a true democratic system would emerge.

A few years later, when I was in Warsaw again, the new president of Romania, Emil Constantinescu -- a university rector, genuine democrat and long-time friend of USIS -- came through on a state visit to Poland. One of his assistants recognized me in a receiving line and exclaimed, "We did it! We did it!" They had won an election.

One event I remember well from my time in Bucharest was our celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the American library. Under an agreement between President Nixon and Ceausescu, Romania got to open a facility in New York and we were able to open an American library/cultural center in Bucharest.

I can't tell you how many Romanians pulled me and other USIS officers aside the night of the anniversary celebration to tell us how much that library had meant to them during the dark ages. We heard a torrent of unsolicited testimony about how that center kept the lights of freedom and democracy flickering for them. It was all very heartwarming to hear -- and a clear indication of what role institutions like that could play in closed societies.

Unfortunately, most of those USIS libraries are closed now, a casualty of misguided budget cuts.

Q: Well, when you arrived there, things, as you say, were in turmoil. Did we have a policy?

VIRDEN: Well, yes we did. In very basic terms, we were trying to promote a democratic outcome. We were doing everything we could to support a responsible democratic movement and put a brake on some of the more totalitarian remnants that were still around then.

Remember that the Securitate, the security organ under Ceausescu, had been everywhere and penetrated throughout the country and into families and so forth. The security forces were a very strong continuing presence there. They didn't just disappear come the revolution. In fact, one of the tasks I took on was to go out periodically to a still-sinister-feeling old Securitate installation on the outskirts of Bucharest to pick up microfiche copies of archives to mail to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. Museum representatives told me the microfiche were an invaluable addition to the historical record of the Holocaust in Romania. I assume Romania was being paid in some fashion for providing these documents, but I was not party to that.

Anyway, the security people were still there, as were many of the politicians identified with them. There was constant tension between people like that and some of the strong opposition, young people fighting for democracy, of the very type that you saw this spring in the streets of Cairo.

So we were very clearly trying to help those who we thought were working for the right things. We gave them political support, economic help, and used whatever leverage we had to push for reforms.

One focus was a battle on a high policy level over whether Romania would get most favored nation trade treatment. They wanted that desperately to lift economic prospects, so that was a lever we could and did use to get them to do such things as open up access to broadcasting and to allow freedom of the press.

Television, in particular, had been an important instrument for maintaining Communist Party control. It was a monopoly. It was a main means of communication with much of the public. To me, based on what I saw in Romania and earlier in Poland, television not religion was the true opiate of the people. Someone could find a doctoral thesis in how totalitarian regimes used television, I'm convinced.

In my particular part of the embassy, we spent a lot of time, pushing, encouraging and otherwise supporting Romanians who were trying to set up independent broadcasting. We also asked the ambassador and Washington to lean on Romania's political leaders to loosen their grip. The story was similar with newspapers.

Q: Well, did you get anywhere?

VIRDEN: Yes, we did. It did gradually open up. For example, there was an independent newspaper called Romania Libera that was really out there in its challenge to the old school hard-liners. Through a foundation set up with U.S. government money, the International Media Fund, we gave them a printing press and printing supplies and got all that stuff admitted into the country. That took an intensive team effort.

Television was even harder, because it requires more equipment and other resources; in this case it also required a change in Romanian law, which made broadcasting a state monopoly. Here again, our mission worked at various levels to get reform legislation drafted and passed into law. Eventually we did succeed in that, partly because we made it one of the conditions for granting most favored nation trade status. The resulting end to the state monopoly on broadcasting was an important part of the democratic opening.

I also took satisfaction in convincing Romanian Ministry of Communication officials to lease time on state transmitters for Voice of America broadcasts into the disintegrating Yugoslavia. VOA gave me an award for that bit of jiu jitsu.

Q: Who was our ambassador when you arrived?

VIRDEN: A political appointee named Arthur “Punch” Green, from Oregon.

Q: How was he?

VIRDEN: He was a good man. He was kind of in over his head at first as a political appointee who had not had previous contact with that region of the world, in a country that turned out to be in turmoil and under fire. He seemed a surprising, maybe unwise choice at first blush, but he did fine.

There was a story told about him before I got there, the time of the revolution itself. The embassy was preparing to evacuate Americans around Christmas of 1989, because of the continuing violence, and so his DCM got everybody lined up for a motorcade south to Bulgaria. The motorcade was all lined up, ready to go, when the ambassador started to get into his. The DCM had to pull him aside and say, “No, Mr. Ambassador, you stay!”

The story may or may not be true. He’d just barely gotten there. During my time with him, I liked him. He was a very open man who tried to do the right things and listened to his professional staff. I thought he did a good job, under tough conditions.

His tour ended after my first year there, and he was replaced, by John R. Davis, who was a highly respected career professional; he’d already been ambassador in Poland during the rise of Solidarity, so he knew that part of the world and that kind of political phenomenon.

Q: The whole of Eastern Europe was going through turmoil. Bulgaria was changing. There’s very little contact with Bulgaria, isn’t there, or not?

VIRDEN: Well, Romania and Bulgaria are in the same neighborhood and tend to get lumped together, in terms of their prospects. Both countries got rid of their communist system about the same time, although remnants were still around and still fighting for power.

And the countries were paired in terms of their aspirations to get into the main clubs in the West, to get into NATO and the European Union. And so they were always on the same track. There was always a certain rivalry, but they also had common interests.

And eventually they both made it, a somewhat surprising result looked at from the perspective of my time, when gaining admittance to NATO and the EU seemed like an almost impossible dream. Yet it came about.

Q: Yeah, it's been remarkable how things have developed.

VIRDEN: I'd like to mention one thing we did at this time that I believe was important. Americans, who had watched on television as the National Library in Bucharest burned to the ground during the violence of December '89, responded with a spontaneous book donation drive.

Allen Docal, the director of our cultural center, and his library staff did an incredible job managing this effort, with of course the help of volunteers all over the United States. We ended up delivering -- I can't give you an exact number, but it may have been as many as a million volumes -- boatloads of books over that we then sorted and distributed throughout Romania during this period.

The logistics of getting those books shipped, sorted and distributed were very very complicated. We turned our center's auditorium over to this campaign for the duration, which lasted more than a year. Once we got the books through customs, we separated them into categories and identified the organizations we thought could put them to the best use: libraries and schools, churches, public facilities all around the country.

Q: Well, had there been a significant English teaching program prior to the collapse of the Ceausescu regime?

VIRDEN: Some, but this had not been a major focus there, unlike in many other countries.

Q: Well, did we beef that up, as far as whatever we could do?

VIRDEN: Yes, we did. We started doing more for English-teaching and American Studies programs, and we also created a Fulbright Commission. We'd had a modest Fulbright program, run out of our cultural section at the embassy. We decided the time was right to negotiate a formal agreement to set up a bilateral Fulbright Commission and found a sympathetic senior official in the foreign ministry.

The Romanian government gave us wonderful office space, a former museum, and we were able to put the Fulbright program on sound footing. I hear it's still going strong.

Q: Looking at it, professionally, this must have been a hell of a lot of fun.

VIRDEN: Yes, well, Romania had a bad image in those days. People didn't want to go there; conditions were rugged, even for diplomats (embassy families used to draw lots for grapes and bananas when the occasional military support flight brought such luxuries).

But it was indeed an exciting and stimulating time. We found the Romanian people very appealing as they dealt with a critical moment in their history. They were digging out from under a rock, reinventing their country before our eyes. They didn't get a great deal of help – could only look with envy at the billions in Deutschmarks East Germans received to aid their transition – but they made it.

How it is today I don't know, but in the early 90s you felt something good was happening and that we were on the right side, we, as a country. Our policy, I believe, was enlightened; we were doing what we could to move events in a positive direction. Romania turned out to be a very rewarding experience.

Q: Did you get involved in the orphan business, or adoption business? I've interviewed Ginny Carson Young, who are an old friend of mine, about her involvement, around that time. And it became quite an issue, didn't it?

VIRDEN: It certainly did, and I remember Ginny very well. We worked together on this. In fact, I remember she got interviewed about it on Sixty Minutes, by Leslie Stahl, about this whole adoption thing and some of the chicanery that was going on. And there was a lot of it. Americans to their credit were responding to the crisis by trying to be helpful, but sometimes under very dicey, shaky, dubious arrangements: babies were being sold under the table and children were being made available who were not actually orphans. So our consular officers had a lot to do there.

One of those years, it must have been '91, Americans adopted more children from Romania than from any other country. I think the number was something like 2,000 that year. We were a small, crowded embassy, and our consular waiting area had to do double duty as a baby changing room for a spell. It was a frantic, chaotic time.

It was a lot of work for Ginny and her section and the rest of us, too, trying to protect Americans -- who were reacting out of humanitarian concern – from being victimized.

Q: Yes, this is the thing. People were letting their kids go, claiming they were orphans and then would come back later on and say it really wasn't an orphan and that sort of thing.

VIRDEN: Yes, some of these babies were unwanted children that had been placed in orphanages; their parents couldn't or wouldn't deal with them. The health conditions were often miserable, and there was a lot of AIDS, because of reuse of needles and things like that.

So, again, embassy officers really needed to play a role here, to protect Americans and make sure they knew what they were getting into.

Q: I've been interviewing people who served in Russia and other parts of the Russian empire after its collapse, when things were going through tremendous change and one of the problems that occurred there was that they had an awful lot of American volunteers, or people from various nonprofit organizations and all and churches and all just going over there and feeling they could do anything. Many of them were, I won't say they were criminal, but they were just all kind of dubious, or really didn't know what they were doing. Did you have that problem?

VIRDEN: Absolutely. That's exactly what I'm trying to talk about there. So we tried to encourage Americans, yes, this is great, you want to do good here and we want to try to help you, but work with responsible organizations that have experience, who do due diligence; don't deal with the fly-by-night operators on the street, because you could really get burned.

And some did get hurt. I think there've been some follow up studies about some of the adoptions that took place that turned out to be tragedies for the families involved. Talk about no good deed going unpunished. In other cases, people just got fleeced of their money.

So, again, we worked very hard to try to protect Americans and get out reliable information, but it was kind of an overwhelming situation. It was just such a wonderful humanitarian instinct on the part of these American families who wanted to try to help; we did our utmost to channel that so that the results would really be good for the American families and for the children being adopted, rather than a tragic development.

Q: Once Ceausescu had left, was there still an entrepreneurial impulse or not, or had long years of dictatorship really hurt them?

VIRDEN: I don't think there was any lack of entrepreneurial impulses. What was more of a concern was an authoritarian tendency. There had been a ruling class, they had the largest security force, proportionately, I think, any of those countries had and the Securitate were everywhere.

These were people who did not want to give up power, and neither did the politicians who were affiliated with them, particularly when privatization of state industries was getting started.

There was obvious tremendous potential for huge profits there, and the people who had been part of the ruling establishment were in the best position to profit from it. This was not a phenomenon limited to Romania; it existed throughout Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union – the whole, crumbling communist world.

Billions of dollars were siphoned off during privatization by people who had been in power and knew how to use the advantages they enjoyed, including contacts within the country and outside it.

I don't know if any one country was more successful than others at controlling the privatization of state assets. But certainly, with all the turmoil and reinvention and shifting from a command to a market economy, a great deal was stolen in the process executed.

JONATHAN B. RICKERT
Deputy Chief of Mission
Bucharest (1991-1995)

Jonathan Rickert was born and raised in Washington, DC and educated at Princeton and Yale Universities. After service in the US Army, he joined the Foreign Service in 1963, serving tours in both Washington and abroad. His foreign posts include London, Moscow, Port au Spain, Sofia and Bucharest, where he served as Deputy Chief of Mission. In his Washington assignments Mr. Rickert dealt primarily with Eastern and Central European Affairs. Mr. Rickert was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

Q: OK. You're continuing about your bridge assignment to Senator Packwood's office in '90 and '91.

RICKERT: Right. I think the bill was one that he didn't see any reason to oppose. There was no resistance to it back in his home state, so he went along with it. One of the things I learned was that there are a lot of bills that are irrelevant to a particular senator or representative where they can go along with their party or not, as they choose, and with very little fallout or difficulty. And then there are key votes where they really have to stand up and be counted, and those are the ones that they agonize over particularly if they have personal qualms or doubts.

One of the positive experiences that related to my next assignment in Romania, incidentally, was a friend of mine who works for an NGO in Washington was kind of hosting King Michael I of Romania and his wife, Queen Anne and Princess Margareta and a couple of others. My friend called up and asked if there would be any possibility of my getting into the Senate dining room for lunch. I talked to senior staffers, and there is a form that you go through and fill out a letter where the senator's signature is forged onto. There were, by the way, three authorized forgers in his office who sign. The signatures were done with a broad tip felt pen, and they had it down. So each one was individual, and none of them was done by the senator, at least of the correspondence and the routine stuff. They happily signed, and King Michael and his family were able to have bean soup in the dining room and, incidentally, ran into the then-Czech foreign minister who was there for another purpose and had a nice chat with him in the dining room. That was very pleasant.

Q: Where was the king and his family living at the time?

RICKERT: He was living for many, many years outside of Lausanne in Switzerland. He had been active in dealing with Romanian immigrant groups of one sort or another, and was even more so in the early '90s. He came to the States and gave talks and did other things, raised money and other very un-kingly types of activities. A very nice man, and it was a pleasure to meet him. He didn't want to speak Romanian, by the way. He spoke

English with me. Whenever there was a question on a foreign policy issue usually on the phone, it usually got sent to me. Often letters as well. I answered correspondence. I remember one person calling from Oregon who was irate about some issue and said, "You youngsters up there on the Hill, you don't know anything. You have no experience at all." I said to him, "Wait a minute. I'm sitting here in a room with six people, and I'm over 50 myself, and the lady here is 55, and another lady is early 50's." There was a man in his early 40's, and there was one young woman who in her mid 20's, but out of six, there was only one under 40. He had the good grace to laugh when I gave him the ages of the people who were in the one room there. That was fairly standard for that staff. They weren't a lot of young kids. Maybe on the House side there are more very young people, but it was a fairly seasoned staff. Romanians knew that I was going to be going there as DCM, and I remember they included me on a breakfast with some Hill staffers at the Romanian embassy. The ambassador was a man named Virgil Constantinescu whom I've known slightly during my first tour. He was America's desk officer at that time. He hosted Adrian Severin who was deputy prime minister and Ujenne Dizhmaresky who was another minister. He was minister of economy at one of the economic posts. There were a number of Hill staffers. I was fairly quiet, but they were very skeptical of Romania's changes since the Communist regime had fallen. I remember one of them asking Severin, who later became a good friend of mine, "I understand that there's still a lot of influence of the *secura parte*, the Secret Police, the old, not as a living organization, but as people who had been part of that organization, were prominent in the new government. What can you say to that?" Instead of giving the expected Romanian line of, "Oh, its exaggerated, its not really the case," and so forth and so on, he said, "Yes, it is a problem, but we're trying to deal with it, but here's no easy solution to it." I thought, "Hmmm, I think I am going back to a Romania that would be somewhat different from the one that I left because any admission of a shortcoming or failure was unthinkable at earlier times." You mentioned that I was probably working on my Romanian. Actually, FSI was still in Rosslyn at the time, and I had an arrangement whereby I would go to Rosslyn for an hour each morning before classes started, and Carmen Tudrah, who was still teaching Romanian here and Ninja Falaty who was retired would take turns trying to bring me up to speed in an hour. Then I'd get on the Metro and go over to the Hill. They were extremely helpful in expunging the Bulgarian which was still uppermost in my mind at that time. I had been away from Romania nearly 20 years and had learned some other languages in between. Although the Romanian had been well established when I left, it needed some resuscitation which they were very helpful in providing. I think those were the main things that came out of that period. It was a very useful and worthwhile experience. A little historical footnote is, as everyone knows, Senator Packwood came to grief subsequently over behavior that he allegedly had been engaged in with female staffers and others. I'm not, of course, saying that it didn't happen, but there was no evidence whatsoever of any hanky panky going on during my time there. I think that very often when one goes into an office, one can sense that there's kind of an atmosphere that things weren't quite right, and that was not the case. It was a happy, productive office, and the staff was very loyal. They were, I'd say, about 85% female, but it wasn't a load of Fanny Foxes or other beautiful bimbos who were just there because of their appearance. Everyone that I knew on the staff was serious and substantive, and it was an

ordinary mix of ages and sizes and shapes. Whatever happened later, there was nothing that I saw or experienced that led me to believe that there was something amiss.

Q: Were most of the staff members other than yourself from Oregon?

RICKERT: Most of them had an Oregon connection of some sort or another. The other foreign policy guy with whom I became very friendly was from Washington State, so he was an honorary Oregonian. I was taught on my first day that the proper pronunciation of the state is "Or'-eh-gun", and that was important in being able to answer the phone and deal with the folks from the state.

Q: You probably learned the proper pronunciation of the main river that goes down the valley? The "Mul-am'et," because that also is subject to various pronunciations.

RICKERT: Yes! That came up less often than the state name, but still it was a good experience and one that I was happy to have at that time that needed to be filled in as useful and productive a way as possible. I did call on a number of the staffers on the committees who had an interest in Romania and made some contacts that were useful in that way. It wasn't only working with Packwood but that, of course, was the main purpose for being there.

Q: Were there any senators or members of the House who had a particular interest or concern about Romania?

RICKERT: Yes. Of course, Tom Lantos has for many years had a broad interest in the whole region and, as I mentioned earlier, he came twice to Bulgaria while I was DCM. He and his chief staffer, Bob King, who in an earlier life worked for Radio Free Europe, actually wrote a history of the Romanian Communist party. He was a Romanian specialist. Bob and his wife Kay Atkinson were both very interested as was Tom. Then there was a mixed bag of others for various reasons. There was a congresswoman from Connecticut – I think her first name was Barbara Kennelly who for reasons that weren't immediately apparent, was very interested in Romania. When you got to know the situation you found that her daughter was married to a Romanian, and she took a lot of interest.

Q: She came to Cyprus while I was there with Barbara Mikulski and the former vice-presidential candidate...Ferraro...

RICKERT: Geraldine Ferraro.

Q: Ferraro. I was certainly impressed with her sort of broad approach and interest in the Cyprus issue, but in international affairs more generally. Kennelly's father was John Bailey, a leader of the Democratic National Committee at one point and a very active democratic politician for many years.

RICKERT: I don't know how many years she was in the House, but eventually she ran for the Senate and did not win. I haven't seen her name since then, so I don't know what she's been up to. I found her interesting and interested where Romania is concerned

Q: OK. So you went to Bucharest in the summer of 1991. As you said, you'd been away for 20 years, lots of things had changed. Why don't you remind us again of who the ambassador was and maybe talk a little bit about the setting when you arrived and however else you want to approach it.

RICKERT: I arrived in July, and Alan Punch Green was the ambassador at the time, a very interesting and fun person. He was a Republican from Oregon, one of the reasons I decided to take the job with Packwood.

Q: Had he been close to Packwood?

RICKERT: Not close, but they'd known each other. Actually, he had been closer to the other senator...

Q: Hatfield.

RICKERT: Hatfield. But he knew Packwood, of course. He had been head of the Republican party in Oregon and had been in charge of the Oregon for Bush campaign when George Bush ran the first time.

Q: In '88.

RICKERT: In '88. Right. One never knows with Punch whether his stories were entirely right or slightly apocryphal, but he claimed that he had been promised a very nice embassy after the election and mentioned Stockholm as one of the possibilities. Then Oregon was one of the states that didn't go for George Bush, Sr. When he came to talk about embassies, the White House operatives mentioned places in Africa that he hadn't heard of before, and Romania was the only place in Europe. It was, of course, a dreadful place in 1988, but he knew where it was and what continent it was on, so he took it and, of course, he ended up being there for the revolution.

Q: So he had been there approximately two years?

RICKERT: Yes. He presented his credentials in December '89, so about two weeks before Ceausescu bit the dust. Larry Napper who was my immediate predecessor had arrived in the summer of '89 and had been chargé for several months, and Ambassador Green came, and all of a sudden it "hit the fan" as they say. They had a very difficult and challenging time which the ambassador and especially Larry and the embassy came through with flying colors. He was a very honest sort of person. He didn't pretend to know what he didn't know, and for a political ambassador – he was the first political ambassador that I'd worked closely with – he had very great admiration for the career foreign service. I remember when I arrived and we had our first chat. he said, "You have

one duty: the same as Larry Napper had.” And he said words to the effect that “When I leave this post, I want to leave with my head held high knowing I’ve done nothing to harm the interests of the United States and everything possible that I could to advance the interests of the United States. Your job is to make it happen, and the rest doesn’t matter.” I thought well, there’s a man that has his priorities right! He was, if the truth be known, not a terribly effective ambassador, but he was a wonderful supporter of the embassy staff. He did everything that he possibly could. He took advice, he did the best that he could and gave credit to everyone possible for the things that happened. We were only together for about six months because I arrived in July and then he left in January. I developed a very good working relationship with him and a great deal of affection for him as a human being. He’s passed away since, but it was a good experience. I remember there was a delegation headed by Congressman Gibbons... What was his name...

Q: Florida.

RICKERT: Yes. he was the Chairman of the Trade Sub-committee in the House Ways and Means Committee. Sam Gibbons. He was, from what I could see, I met him as desk officer and didn’t know him well, but he seemed to me to be a fine person. he was a D-Day vet, and he was traveling around in Eastern Europe with a delegation from his sub-committee, a large delegation, and they all took a rather dim view of Romania. Perhaps I should go back very briefly to mention what the problem was at the time, and that was that Romania had its revolution in December ’89, and then their elections were in May of ’90, and they were free but not fair. Former Communist group gained control, and when opposition to that group developed in the month of June and there were street demonstrations and so forth, a large number of coal miners from the Zhu Valley appeared in town and knocked heads and trashed opposition parties and so forth and so on. At that point, the U. S. quite rightly put relations with Romania, which had been developing fairly positively, on hold. Punch Green did not have much to do with the president particularly who was seen as the person who had instigated this, Yanney Yoyescu. It was, of course, noticed by the Romanians and it caused not any open friction, but there was some tension in the air. The Hill was very much aware of these problems, and they had no particular desire to come to Romania under the circumstances. But one of their stops got cancelled, so we had a telegram saying, “CODEL Gibbons is arriving tomorrow with 30 people including spouses and hangers-on. We want to meet with this, this and this.” We were able to do everything, and it was a successful visit. Gibbons was very nice to deal with on this. Ambassador Green gave a good briefing for them in the living room of his residence. Afterwards and after they had gone he said, “Jonathan, how did I do?” I said, “Mr. Ambassador, it was a very, very good briefing.” He said, “No, please tell me. I want you to be honest. How did I do?” I said, “Well, it was good. You covered all the points.” He said, “Jonathan. I want you to tell me how I did.” I said, “Well, it was a little bit too long.” “Too long!” The honest answer isn’t always the best one. He did go on a little bit too long in my view, but ever after, he was very kind to me, and he never did anything nasty at all, but occasionally when he’d give a speech he’d say, “Jon, was that too long?” Thereafter. When we had him to dinner just before he left and I gave a toast, I remember saying that after having given him advice to keep things short, I had to follow my own advice and keep my own toast short which I did. A couple of other little things

about Punch Green. This is not meant in any way to disparage my predecessor for whom I have the highest regard, but after I'd been there about a month, I'd go into his office in the afternoons, and he wasn't terribly occupied. Occasionally, we'd sit down and we'd just talk, and he'd tell stories about Oregon and politics and other things. I did this about once a week. I remember he said, "Jonathan, you know I have the highest possible regard for Larry Napper. He is a prince among men and an outstanding diplomat, but in the two years we were together, he never once came in for a chat." Larry was all business. I think Ambassador Green needed someone to come in for a chat once in a while. Whether I sensed that or not, I did, and I think he appreciated it. We had a number of issues while he was there but not much that was resolved in view of the relatively short time we were together. The adoption issue which is still current today as we speak was still very much in the forefront. The Romanians had a corrupt system which involved money and babies essentially being bought. Then under pressure from us and the Europeans, they put a halt to all adoptions. Then a lot of people were caught who were part way through the process and were not able to complete the proceedings. They were unhappy, and they'd spent money. I was called by at least one U. S. senator at home about a case, Senator Dodd of Connecticut who was completely proper. He didn't say anything that he shouldn't have said, but getting a call at home from a U. S. senator is a message in itself even if the words were entirely unexceptional. Mary Ryan called me about cases. I spent time. One week I met three times with the foreign minister and once with the president and once with the justice minister on adoptions. It was the only issue that anyone seemed to care about in the United States at that time which to my mind was disappointing and unfortunate because it was important, but we did have bigger fish to fry. When Punch Green left... I never called him Punch. I always called him Mr. Ambassador, and he said when he left, "Now you can call me Punch." I never tried before, but he was known as "Punch" by everybody outside of the embassy. He met with Iliescu for a farewell call which was polite but a little bit...I wouldn't say "frosty" but...

Q: You went with him?

RICKERT: I went with him. A little bit stiff. He talked about his tour there and what he'd experienced. He said one of his regrets was that he hadn't had a chance to learn Romanian. He said he really had a choice between trying to master Romanian and doing the best he could to build up U. S.-Romanian relations and he hoped the president agreed that he spent his time wisely on the latter and not the former. Iliescu politely agreed. Then he told a little joke, and he said regarding languages. He said, "There's a little joke I want to tell you." He said, "What is somebody who speaks three languages? The answer is trilingual. What is someone who speaks two languages? Bilingual. What is someone who speaks one language? American!" He told that one himself in a very nice, self-deprecating manner. One of the things I neglected to mention was in September of '91 we had another visit from the coal miners. It was their fourth. The last time they actually got to Bucharest. They tried another time and were stopped before they got to town. It was, as the previous ones had been, very carefully orchestrated. They knew exactly where they were going and exactly what they were doing. They were led by a firebrand gentleman named Miron Cozma who was a rabble rouser and a slime ball at the same time, in whose pay he was, and all the rest. There's a lot of speculation and not much proof, but it was

fortunate in a way. This happened just after we'd had one of those embassy Crisis Management Exercises, literally within a month after that we had the events in Moscow in August where it looked like a lot worse was going to happen than actually did, and then in September the coal miners in Bucharest where a couple of people were killed. A lot of property was destroyed, and so forth. They hit the main government building, the parliament, and a TV station, not by chance. They knew where to go. There were Molotov cocktails and gunfire and a lot of other things.

Q: American embassy, too?

RICKERT: No. No. American embassy was not a target in any of these events including the revolution. I would say – this is a selective judgment – I don't think there is any nationality in Eastern Europe that is more pro-American than the Romanians. The Poles are way up there obviously, but the Romanians had a great admiration and respect for the United States even though they claim that through the Yalta agreement we abandoned them to the Soviets; but that is another story. They say, "We've been waiting 50 years for the Americans." Shortly after this had transpired, Cozma asked to meet with Ambassador Green. We arranged for him to meet at the residence, so it wasn't a secret meeting, but at least it wasn't a public meeting. I was there as interpreter because he didn't want an FSN doing the interpreting for that occasion, and a political officer and a few others were there. Cozma had one of his – I was going to say "henchmen", but maybe "associates" would be more neutral – with him. He had a terrible cold as did the other fellow, and Ambassador Green was a pill freak. Not controlled substances but any over-the-counter medicine that could be had, he had. During this meeting he ran upstairs and he came down with Tylenol Plus or something which he gave to the coal miner. It was surreal interview. It was very difficult to figure out what they wanted or why they wanted it. I did my best to interpret, but I did not understand what he was saying. It was a real mix of fantasy and all sorts of strange things. I don't think much came out of it, but it showed that the American ambassador was ready to listen to all sides.

When Ambassador Green left, he was...I might add that he was a millionaire, and he wasn't a person who was very interested in material things, and we tried to... Interestingly, he was interested in money as a barometer of how he was doing, but he wasn't interested in money particularly for buying things. He didn't collect antiques. He didn't collect art. He wasn't out looking to find ways to show off the money, but the embassy wanted to give him a present when he left. In the end, there was a painter who sold a number of paintings to the people at the embassy, and he did very nice things at a very reasonable price. Alan Duckall who was head of the American library there who knew him well, arranged to have him do a painting of the chancery and with the Cadillac which Ambassador Green was very proud of with a flag on it. It had taken a bullet sometime in the revolution, and he never, he refused to ever have the bullet hole repaired. So the painting had the Chancery and the Cadillac in the driveway there, and the flag on the front fender, and the bullet hole. He was very pleased with his farewell gift which was well under whatever limit there was for gifts at that time.

Green left, and there was a hiatus for three or four months, and then John Davis came. John, of course, was a career diplomat and spent many years in Poland, three tours in all, thirteen years, and most recently had been an ambassador there. It was his last post, and he and his wife Helen were delightful people to work with and for, and it was very much a professional high point of my career to spend that time with him. He knew Eastern Europe, and he knew transition from Communism having been through it in Poland although there were significant differences. He made Romanians feel that he was on their side even when he was telling them things that they didn't want to hear necessarily. He just did a terrific job. He was an ideal choice at that time. Unfortunately, his tour was cut short by illness, so he wasn't there as long as I would have liked, but he did an excellent job. Helen was a very professional, traditional foreign service spouse of the best sort. Not only did we get on very well professionally, but both I and my wife really enjoyed their company. We spent a lot of time with them "off duty," so to speak. In the end they got two dogs from a litter that was from the dog owned by the Swedish ambassador, and we got the last of the littler. So there are three of those dogs now in the United States. Cocker Spaniels.

John arrived just after the first local elections took place in Romania in the spring of '92. Then there was a new prime minister. The coal miners resulted in the ousting of Prime Minister Petre Roman and Theodor Stolojan. Stolojan was a caretaker prime minister to help prepare the country for national elections which he did. It took longer than it should have, but he was a former finance minister and subsequently worked at the World Bank for several years so he was a very well qualified person. John had excellent relations with all of top leadership including with Iliescu. He was able to speak to them in a way that wasn't talking down but which was straightforward and giving them in a sense fatherly advice on how they might help their cause which was very interesting to see.

I might mention a couple of things about Romania as it was when I got there. It was still very much in the summer of '91 not that far away from the revolution. There were lots of signs around Bucharest. There wasn't heavy artillery or anything, but there were burned buildings and bullet holes. The DCM's residence had a number of bullet holes in it. An indoor balcony in the living room had a bullet dent in it. One of the things I did there was to get a little brass plaque to put there because two DCM's come and go and nobody knows anything, and it wasn't painted over, it was something that had happened. We found that the antennae for the television in our house in the residence there had been shot by sharpshooters and had been severed in two places by bullets. That wasn't accidental when the house was not near other buildings... It was near other buildings but not that would have been used by snipers, so somebody had presumably assumed that the antennae was being used for nefarious purposes and had cut it down with rifle fire during oppressive shooting. There were a number of buildings that Ceausescu had started by weren't finished. These hulks of semi-finished buildings all over town including the famous Palace of the People, *Casa Republicii* or "House of the People" literally which was about 80% done and is reputed to be the largest office building in the world, larger than the Pentagon. It was there in all of its garish glory. People didn't know what to do with it. There was talk about tearing it down, but it was so huge, and so much had gone

into it that that was not really feasible. So they finished it up, and now it's being used for parliament and a number of other purposes.

It was a country where suspicion was still widespread. Nobody knew who was behind the miners. The opposition was paranoid. They thought that everything the government was doing was designed to marginalize them and to drive them out of public life. A lot of the opposition leaders had left Romania at one time or another and had come back. The head of the Peasant Party, one of the two main "historical parties" as they call them, was a man named Copulescu who spent 18 years in Communist prisons. There was a great deal of bitterness on the part of people who had suffered and didn't see things getting better quickly. Issues of property restitution were still unresolved. People who had been informers were still in or were active in state security in high places, and there was a lot of disappointment that things weren't moving faster. One of the leaders of post-revolutionary government, a man named Silviu Brucan, who had been a big Communist who had been ambassador to the UN and to Washington. He said in the spring of '90 that it would take ten years for Romania to become a normal country. He was roundly criticized by right, left, and center as being almost anti-Romanian to say it would take that long. Of course, he was being overly optimistic.

I recall having some friends to lunch one day, all former or present FSN's who we knew from our previous tour, and they were all supporters of the opposition. And they came to lunch on Saturday, and they complained and complained and complained, "Nothing has changed. The Commies are still running it. It's the same." Finally, I'd heard enough, and I said to them politely, "Wait a minute. You came in here through the front door without any fear. You're sitting at the table of the American DCM. You're speaking openly about your dissatisfaction with all of the things and people you don't like in this country. You have no fear that anything is going to happen to you because you've done this. And you say nothing's changed?" They said, "Yes, of course you're right, but we expected so much more." I think that was really it. I used to liken Romania at that time to a man who had been suffering from a slow growing tumor year after year after year, and as it grew he became weaker and weaker. But suddenly he woke up one morning, and the tumor was gone. He said, "Ah, I'm no longer it. I can go back to the way I was before I developed this tumor." But of course, the tumor had done its damage on his body, and this man in my little example was unwilling to accept the fact that he had to rebuild his strength to get back to where he was. I use this often with Romanians because many very intelligent and otherwise intelligent people believe the problem was communism and once you got rid of Ceausescu and communism, Romania could become a normal Western European country in two to five years. They failed to take into account the damage that had been done by 40 years of communism. There was a lot of frustration and unhappiness.

Q: You've talked some about U. S.-Romanian relations and some of the issues: adoption and so on. You might want to talk some more about that, or I'm also interested to what extent you and the ambassador and the embassy were involved in the neighborhood, the region, the issues that Romania had with some of its neighbors. I don't know whether

NATO entry and entry into the European community was under discussion then. That came later.

RICKERT: Those are good questions. Actually, during the time that I was there, the partnership for PFP – Partnership for Peace – was launched, and Romania was the first country in the region to sign on because they rightly calculated that that was the gate through which they would have to pass to have a chance for NATO membership. Indeed, Madeleine Albright came out and was the one who gave the pitch on Partnership for Peace.

Q: When she was at the United Nations?

RICKERT: Yes. The biggest issue in the region overtly during the first part of my time there was sanctions against Serbia. The upheaval was going on in the former Yugoslavia, and sanctions had been imposed on Serbia. Romania was trying, on the one hand, to observe the sanctions and get in our good graces for that and on the other hand to make as much money out of the situation as possible at least on the personal level if not on the government level. With a border with Serbia and the Danube River there was plenty of opportunity at money making. indeed, there was an arrangement we had with many of the countries in the region where we sent customs people for what we called SAMS – Sanctions Assistance Missions – and there was one in Bucharest. There was one in Bulgaria. There was one in Hungary. Those were the ones I knew most closely. There were others as well. These missions had customs officers who worked with the local customs to try and tighten up the procedures and prevent illegal smuggling.

The U. S. was providing a long-term TDY customs officers to these SAMS or Sanctions Assistance Missions to help the local customs services in Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, and other countries, cut down on smuggling. The idea, of course, was to prevent gasoline and other needed goods from going into Serbia. Incidentally, my wife worked as a PIT (part-time, intermittent, temporary) on the SAM team in Bucharest which put her well out of the chain of command and enabled her, with her fluent Romanian, to provide a very useful service: fluent Romanian and knowledge of the country and how things worked and all the rest. The U. S. customs folks were very professional customs officers, but they were babes in woods when it came to knowing how things work in Romania and did have the wool pulled over their eyes on occasion. Gerd was helpful in avoiding some mistakes but not all of them.

Romania lost a lot of money due to the closing down of the Danube as an artery of transport. They do a lot of transport both from Romania and as a transit. I remember the deputy foreign minister who later became foreign minister talking to me about this and saying they lost so many billions of dollars, and was there anything that the United States could do to compensate them for these losses. I remember telling him that I thought it was very doubtful that we could compensate him, but that he might want to think creatively, and he asked what I meant. I said, “Well, you come to us with these complaints. The Hungarians come to us with these complaints. The Bulgarians come to us with these complaints. I’m not saying that you would get any money out of it, but you

might get people's attention if the three of you came together with the same plea." He was really taken with this idea because its very un-Romanian to do anything in concert with others of this nature. You look after yourself and let others look after themselves. It was a lesson that they subsequently had learned, and I'd like to think I planted one of the early seeds. In any case, it was a new idea, a very competent and career diplomat. They never have gotten anything back as far as I know, but their losses have been recognized in many ways. During the Kosovo conflict, Romania and Bulgaria and Hungary all got UNICEF to help compensate them in that way. It wasn't dollar for dollar, but it was of some help, so I don't think it was completely a lost cause. Hungary was the other issue. Well, there were three issues. The Yugoslav situation. Hungary where traditionally there has been...I wouldn't say hatred, but Hungary was the occupying power in Transylvania and the Banat until 1918 or so. Then, after World War I, Romania got those territories back by referendum. They were majority Romanian, but there were substantial ethnic Hungarian minorities. If the truth be known, a lot of Hungarians were educated and cultured people, and a lot of the Romanians were peasants, so its been difficult politically and psychologically for the Hungarians to accept this loss. The Romanians until recently had always been fearful of some kind of irredentism or some kind of deal to take that territory back. They lost Northern Transylvania in 1940 to the Hungarians through a deal that was made between the Germans and the Russians if I recall correctly, and they lost Bessarabia in Northern Bukovina in the same manner. They're slightly paranoid but not crazy because it has happened. Relations with Hungary were correct, and there were no overt frictions. But there is always a strain because of the fear that somehow Hungary, being more advanced, would get into the West first and would block the Romanians or would demand concessions as a price for letting them into NATO or EU or other organizations.

Fortunately, none of the dire consequences that were foreseen have occurred, but it was something that preoccupied politicians, particularly those Romanians who were born in Transylvania. Its understandable, but its regrettable. The Hungarians in Romania by and large have played a positive and constructive political role, but they do have an agenda which relates to their own ethnic group when it comes to education and bilingual road signs and other cultural and educational and self-government types of issues. The Romanians, unfortunately, until recently have looked at, in effect, any concession to the Hungarians, their own ethnic Hungarians, as being a loss for themselves. One of the things that I tried to do in talking with Romanians during my time there was to say that if you have a minority within your borders that is satisfied with the way its being treated, it will be less troublesome than if it has what it perceives to be a lot of unaddressed issues. Many of the things that the ethnic Hungarians wanted, in fact, to any objective person, did not involve denigration of Romanian power, influence, or authority. I counseled them to look at the things they could do that would cost them the least but make the Hungarians less dissatisfied. They didn't do it during my time, but the present coalition, *de facto* coalition between the Hungarian Party and the Social Democratic Party, is based on that approach where the Social Democratic Party needs them to have a parliamentary majority. The Hungarians are willing to do that as long as they get some of their issues addressed. Interestingly, the Social Democrats who were empowered when I was there under a different name and were rather strongly resistant of doing anything for the

Hungarians now have come around and are taking a much more constructive approach, so all sides are learning. And then the third, of course. I mentioned Serbia, Hungary, and then the third was Moldova. Although that's the most emotional issue for at least some Romanians because it was part of Romania until 1940, and then it was taken away by force.

The second president of Romania, Emil Constantinescu, was born in Moldova. Many prominent Romanian intellectuals and others are from that area or have roots there. They're torn because they recognize that Moldova is an independent country. They were the first country to recognize its independence. They believe that Moldova should have free choice and so forth. Emotionally they also believe that the only sensible thing for Moldova to do is to come back to the motherland, and it shows no sign of doing so which is cause of frustration. The large Russian minority there is part of the problem. It's not a domestic political issue in a direct way any more than the return of the royal family as king is a domestic political issue. But it is one of those things that is there in society. It comes up whenever something bad happens in Moldova. The press is full of it because of the close association, and on the part of some at least, the unrealistic dream that someday the Moldovans will wake up and see that they really belong as part of Romania.

Q: You haven't mentioned either Ukraine or Bulgaria. Those are not particularly concerns.

RICKERT: No. There was one major concern with Ukraine. It is territorial because after World War II a rocky, uninhabited piece of island in the Black Sea, under Soviet pressure became part of the Soviet Union and, therefore, part of Ukraine. The island itself has no value whatsoever, but it is the point against which the maritime boundary is delineated. There is some oil and gas in the Black Sea. Quantities are not known, but where the line is drawn could have a very significant influence on how much oil and gas either Ukraine or Romania is able to extract. That's been the main point. There have been some concerns on the Romanian side about ethnic Romanians who were living in Ukraine, mostly in what used to be known as Bukovina and in, to a lesser extent, in parts of Moldova. The ethnic Romanian minority in Ukraine was a sub-concern, not a main concern. Relations during my time there were correct, but there weren't major problems and, indeed, the Snakes Island issue hadn't really come to a fore. That happened later, but it was in the back of Romanians minds quite clearly. The case of Bulgaria having lived in Bulgaria and Romania, I'm always amazed at how little either knows about the other or cares about the other. They share so much in common, yet they don't hate each other or there are no real issues. Some territory is switched back and forth in Dibroja, but that's not an active issue. The populations moved at the time this happened, so there are very few Bulgarians in Romania and very few Romanians in Bulgaria. Neither one really thinks all that highly of the other, and they don't have issues, but they spend their energy dealing with others. I remember listening to the foreign minister at one time being asked who Romania's best neighbor was. He thought for a while, and I've heard other Romanians say this: He said, "I think it's the Black Sea." They don't really care for any of their neighbors particularly, and I'm sure that feeling is reciprocated although in the last

few years through NATO and other European organizations, they've worked at developing better relations with their neighbors.

Q: Speaking of the Black Sea, is that something that ever engaged the embassy in terms of ship visits or otherwise?

RICKERT: Yes. I've forgotten the name of the exercise, but there was an exercise that we carried out in the Black Sea to show that we regarded it as international water. Once or twice a year a destroyer would go in and sail around the Black Sea and show up at Constanza. It wasn't an issue with Romanians. They were very happy to have us there as I'm sure the Bulgarians were, but it was really aimed at the Soviet Union when there still was one and continued afterwards. We had a number of ship visits and used to go down to Constanza the port which was at least a couple of hours drive from Bucharest. It was always a pleasure in that the Navy officers and their commanders were I always felt in Romania excellent diplomats in showing the flag literally and figuratively at a time when our political relations were not all that great with Romania. Military relations were developing very well, and we had visits from Admiral Owens who was the head of the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean, and his successor Admiral Lopez very well received, very well spoken in Bucharest. They didn't mix in the politics, but they gave Romanians a feel for what they might expect if they got their political act together which is exactly what we wanted them to do. General Joulwan came as the supreme NATO commander which was a personal pleasure for me because he comes from the same relatively small town in Pennsylvania where my father was born and raised and where I used to go as a child: Pottsville, Pennsylvania, the home of Yuengling Beer, the oldest brewery in the United States dating from 1829. General Joulwan told me he had cases of Yuengling because people whenever they came from the States brought him a case knowing that's where he was from! Very nice man, also an excellent diplomat in the sense of helping to give the Romanians a taste of what they could expect, again, if they got their act together which, I think, was exactly what they needed.

Q: Were most of the European countries represented with ambassadors at the embassy level in Bucharest?

RICKERT: Yes. Virtually all of them were. I can't think of any that weren't. Ireland wasn't. All of the significant ones were and had been for years partly as a holdover from the Ceausescu period when he was seen as being a maverick in foreign policy, so a lot of countries set up embassies that might not have had them on the basis of an objective analysis of bilateral business, but it was kind of a symbol of support...

Q: And, of course, you were there fairly soon after that period.

RICKERT: That's right. Yeah. A few of the African embassies and others that were there which you could say were subsidized embassies, they folded and left, but the Europeans had not.

Q: We had talked, I think, before about the Ceausescu period and the particular role that Romania played in the Middle East. Was that continuing at all, special interest in that region?

RICKERT: The sense I had was that Romanians wanted to continue to play that role, but times had passed, and they really didn't any longer have the clout that they had had. I'm no Middle East expert, but at that time, of course, earlier, we had no direct dealings with Arafat. Romanians did. We could communicate with Arafat through Romania but by the '90s, we were dealing with Arafat. There were other cases like that where the intermediary role was no longer as useful or as necessary. But the Romanians maintained their interest until the Russians started coming to Israel in large numbers. Jews of Romanian origin were the largest group of European Jews in Israel, and they're still very substantial. There were a lot of Israeli businessmen. Although the number of Jews remaining in Romania was estimated at around 10,000, still the community was very active. The head of the community was Rabbi Moses Rosen who had been the chief rabbi for decades and was a very prominent figure not, of course, far beyond his own community. The Joy Distribution Committee was very active in providing food and other material for the Jewish community. Jewish restitution was starting to become an issue. Stu Eisenstadt, while he was still ambassador to...head of USAC...

Q: ...became the European union later...

RICKERT: Right. He had from President Clinton kind of a special responsibility to deal with issues of restitution, and I'm happy to say that the third ambassador I served under, Alfred Moses, who is very definitely Jewish, emphasized very strongly to Stu Eisenstadt when he came to Bucharest, "You are responsible for restitution and not just Jewish restitution," because in Romania if it were seen that the United States were taking an exclusive interest in the Jewish aspect, it could have had an unfortunate backlash. Eisenstadt did take that seriously, and there was a lot of other restitutions both sectarian and just ordinary citizens that needed to be attended to, and Eisenstadt did take it on. This is later, toward the end of my time in Romania. There were so many things that happened there, I must say. I might just talk a little bit about the personal side because there were people we had known in the '70s, and you go back to a place, you've known them under one set of circumstances, and then you reestablish contact with them. They were delighted to see us because we represented something, some continuity between the old and the new, and we maintained friendships from a distance on occasion through the difficult periods. These were mostly cultural people that a number of artists and two in particular with whom we had become extremely friendly in the '70s and then resumed friendships in the '90s. One of them, I remember he came to the DCM residence, and he was just delighted to have been able to come as a free person. He sat down on the sofa, and he seemed to grow several inches. Both of these artists unfortunately have passed away since then, but I'm glad he lived to see this. We started talking about things, and it got in a little bit sensitive area – slightly – and he looked around and said, "Are there microphones here?" I said, "Probably so. We don't look for them, but I don't know who's listening nowadays." He kind of looked around and in effect said, "Oh, what the hell!" and then went on with what he was going to say. I thought, "That's a good sign!"

Q: This was in the '90s...

RICKERT: This was in the early '90s.

Q: ...when you came back.

RICKERT: ...when we came back. He apologized for having reported on us to the *securitatay* which we said, "We knew what you had to do." That was the price for being able to have any contact with us. He felt very badly about it because I guess he felt he'd betrayed us as friends. We weren't talking politics with him. We weren't doing anything that was in any way secretive or secret, and we knew that this had to happen. His name was Georgay Spiridon. He was a moderately, a decent artist, not a top artist but a very delightful human being. I still go back to Romania about once a year and always see his widow and one daughter who's living there. It was a delight to resume that contact. The other artist that we saw less of this time because of this age and infirmity was a man named Cornell Yubabba who was probably Romania's leading painter at that time. A very unusual and fascinating man who was in his 90's and had a stroke but was still painting. He lived about a block from our house, and we used to go over. Gerd would go over and see his wife from time to time. Occasionally I would go over. They were wonderful friends, and they appreciated the fact that we stuck by them during the grim period and helped them in little ways to the extent that we could. Again, whenever I'm in Bucharest, I always go and see Costenz Yubabba. She's always very pleased to see somebody who was a friend during the Bad Old Days. And then we made a number of new friends, too. Interesting people. Again, some of them we could deal with political and government people freely without any trouble at all, but it seemed that the cultural people were the ones that we developed the closest contacts with. We were very grateful for that insight into the life of the country that we got through those people rather than just what we could get through the politicians and the government servants.

Q: You had mentioned before that Ambassador John Davis was not there for too long and that he had to leave for health reasons. When was it that he left?

RICKERT: He left in August '9 I was chargé two years in all of the four years that I was there. He'd been away for virtually the whole year for medical treatment. Then Al Moses, Alfred Moses, came in December of '94. He came having just learned that his wife had ovarian cancer, so we were together from December until July '95. He had an arrangement with EUR whereby he spent one week a month in Romania and three weeks in Washington looking after his wife. He worked very hard in the Department on the Hill and elsewhere, but he was not in Bucharest. He was ambassador in name, but he wasn't in country a whole lot.

Q: It must have been tricky for you to have him there for a week, gone for three weeks, back a week. I can see that some things had to be done and you did them, but other things you probably thought, "Well, I'd better wait."

RICKERT: Well, that's true, but he was always reachable in Washington, and he was in touch with the desk all of the time. He ended up writing instructions and things from that end. He was quite close to Holbrooke, and Holbrooke was assistant secretary at the latter part there, so that made it work out easily. I found it more difficult in terms of internal things. If it were your embassy, I think that anyone who's in charge as ambassador or long-term chargé is going to want to rearrange things in certain ways. I didn't feel it was an option because I was very much a caretaker, and it isn't healthy in an organization to have changes and have the new person come in or the person who is really in charge come in and take over and say, "No, I want to do it differently again." You put staff and other people through too many changes, and it's harmful. I kind of left things like they were organizationally and structurally and tried to make it work as well as possible and left it to the ambassador to decide whether or not he wanted to do things differently. Moses did, but nothing radical has happened under his successor, but that's another story.

Q: Somebody else's story.

RICKERT: Yes, it is.

Q: Ambassador Moses was very involved with the Cyprus problem after Romania.

RICKERT: That's right. He was appointed as sort of an unpaid envoy for Cyprus after he finished his tour in Bucharest, so that's a separate matter. There are so many ways in which one would like to express the atmosphere that existed in Romania in the early '90s. Romania is just very different from any of the other countries. It's the Balkan mentality and the extent of the way the whole system was corrupted by the leadership and the way Communism was practiced. As you know, I'm sure, the Communist party in 1945 numbered under 2,000 people, and yet it became the ruling party. This didn't happen by popular demand. It happened through the presence of the Red Army. You had in a sense an illegitimate party running the country. Of the less than 2,000 people, less than half were ethnic Romanians. There were Jews, there were Ukrainians, there were Hungarians, there were others. It was very much a non-Romanian phenomenon from an ethnic point of view. Communism in Romania was highly influenced by you might say "illegitimate" origins. I think a lot of the quirks and foibles of the experience of Romania in the '90s resulted from this very complex history and a party that had to always present itself as the voice of the Romanian people, yet everyone knowing that until it was imposed by the Russian Army – Soviet Army – that it wasn't a voice of anything or anyone. Of course, by the time I was there the first time, it was a party of close to three million people. It was a mass party, and people were encouraged to join in order to Romanianize it from the Romania point of view. They were led to believe there would be personal advantages like the admission to schools and universities and all sorts of other things. So it was not a very highly philosophical or idealistic appeal to get people in, but most everyone it seemed to me was a party member at some time or another.

Q: So, that was the case when you were there in the '90s that they were the former...the party members were still very active in politics and otherwise? ...about the former security, the securitay.

RICKERT: The former party members... You couldn't hold a responsible position in Romania with rare exceptions without being a party member. That's the way it was. It was your union card in a union shop. So a lot of good and decent people were party members. As you know, there was very little dissidence. There was no organized dissidence in Romania. Nothing like *soladar nascurim* chartered 77 or whatever it was in Czech Republic. There was no goulash Communism as there was in Hungary. It was, not too be too cruel, a very large group of opportunists who were making the best of a difficult situation. The *securitate* people were still very much in evidence as elsewhere in Eastern Europe. Various security forces knew where the money was, and they got hold of it, and they quickly became the business people as well as important in government and other areas of life. They are still in influence in Romania even today although less so than they were in the early '90s. One of the things that happened during Ambassador Davis's time and afterward, things started to warm up a bit, and we started to get visits which we hadn't had while neighboring Bulgaria and, of course, Hungary, were awash with visits. I mentioned the military folks that had come, but Ambassador Albright came during the latter part. Former President Bush came with his wife. Former Secretary Baker came. They were invited to give paid speeches but, of course, they met with all the top people in the process. A number of senators and congressmen came. Shelby came just after he switched parties. Dan Coats and Frank Wolf came when Coats was still in the senate. That was in connection with the prayer breakfast. Interestingly, they were inviting the president and other top prime ministers and others to come to the prayer breakfast which they declined to do, and now Romanians are among the eager attendees at the annual prayer breakfast. Tom Lantos came. Bart Gordon of Georgia came. Eagleburger came. He came earlier on when he was still deputy secretary. Frank Wisner came. That was an interesting one. He was under secretary of defense at the time, but his father had been in the OSS in Romania, and Frank was very eager to come because he heard stories. One of the things that he said when he was there there was a picture of his father at Sinaia which is where the summer royal palace was and a photograph taken at the Peleş Palace in Sinaia, and they took a picture of Frank at the same spot which I think was a very satisfying thing for him. The Brzezinski s came as friends of the Davises. Many of the former ambassadors to Romania came back. All but one of the living ambassadors since '62 came back during my time there, and some of them came several times. I don't think there's another country in Europe where that would apply.

Q: Or anywhere else I suspect!

RICKERT: Right! Yeah! I've often said that Romania is a benign but incurable virus: Once infected, one never really gets over it. The fact that all those folks came back: Roger Kirk, Rudy Aggrey, Harry Barnes came several times, Bill Crawford who was ambassador from '62 to '65 came back. Actually I was instrumental in getting him back. His son was the Commerce Department representative there. I've known Bill a number of years. He's since passed away, but he and his first wife founded the American school in Bucharest in the 1960's. I was chairman of the school board as DCM, so I was in touch with Bill and said, "It would be great if you could come while we're here, and your son's here." He had various excuses why he couldn't come. I'm sure he would have, but I

hoped he'd come while my wife and I were still there. His second wife is Swedish, and that's actually how I met him was through her. I worked out a deal with the director of the American school. I think the school was having its 30th anniversary or something like that, and so I asked the director, and he agreed enthusiastically to invite Ambassador Crawford to come and give the commencement address. Then he did come because he felt that, I guess, he couldn't say no to that. He saw a number of older folks he had known, and I think he was very glad that he did it, but he needed a little extra push to get him to do it.

Q: A reason to take the trip.

RICKERT: Yeah. Punch Green after he left came back on a cruise with a group of well-heeled Stanford University grads to the Black Sea and then they had a day in Constanza. He asked me well in advance. he said, "Jonathan, can you see what you can do to get a meeting with the president for this group?" So I talked to his press secretary whom I knew very well and explained the situation, and he said he would see what he could do. Katalaya was his name. He was a career diplomat. He set up a meeting when this group of older and well-heeled and worldly Stanford grads came. It was at the Presidential Palace which is a very impressive building, an old palace which had been added on to by Ceausescu with actually good taste in this case in the same spirit as the original building. Iliescu met with the group in a nice room, and they had chairs, and he stood in front and he made some remarks, and they asked questions. In the end he spent over two hours with them and gave them a tour of the palace himself. They were floored! I think Punch Green was extremely gratified. I hadn't done anything except pass on the request, but they rightly figured this would be a good investment in time after they did it, and that's what happened. One of the things we had during my first tour there was an embassy villa up in the mountains in Soniya, the town where the royal palace was located. By the time we got back, the embassy still had a villa, but it had been moved. Ceausescu kicked them out of Soniya because they were too close to where his villa was or one of his palaces. I think he was concerned about what might be going on in the American embassy and the American embassy villa. The new villa was not far from the railroad tracks, and we went there once and the trains went by regularly, and we really didn't like it, and some other people agreed. So a committee was formed of which my wife was a member to look for a new villa, and lo and behold! they found the old villa which had been nicely fixed up since we were there. So we moved back there and had great pleasure of using it from time to time until the inspectors found this was a frivolous use of U. S. government money for all of the villas, the one in Bulgaria and elsewhere. We were forced to close down, but it was nice while it lasted.

Q: Okay. Anything else?

RICKERT: Another thing. Dealing with the Romanian government. One of the things that was wonderful the second time around was that how open they were. Both as chargé and DCM, I could see anyone in the Romanian government virtually at any time just by picking up the phone. It was not an *entre* that I abused, but it was something that I could do. I did see the foreign minister very regularly. I probably met with the president 30, 35

times in four years, alone occasionally, with the ambassador more times, sometimes with visitors from Washington. We had really an open door there which was great. Shortly after Ambassador Davis arrived, we had a very sensitive issue regarding our FSN's and the *securitate*. All of them, of course, had to report during the Communist period to the *securitate*, but afterwards many of them reported as little as they could get away with and still kept their jobs. But afterwards, people kept calling our people, and we documented this very carefully: who, what, when, where. In one of his early meetings with Iliescu, John Davis raised this and said, "If you really want good relations with the United States, one of the things you will do is call off your *securitate* people who are harassing our FSN's from the embassy. Iliescu seemed genuinely surprised. I don't know if he was or not, but he said, "We'll get to the bottom of this. I know nothing about this." He assigned his top aide for security matters, a man named Talfesch to work with me on this issue. I met several times about this, and I presented him with a paper getting all the information that we had without naming the names of the embassy FSN's, but if they did their homework they could figure out who they were. In the end he responded on the whole list, roughly 30 incidents and people. Some of them he said he tracked down, and the former handlers had been in touch with him, and they had been warned off. In some cases he came up with slightly different information from what we had, and in some cases he claimed that they couldn't identify who the person was or what have you. The response was less than perfect, but to my mind it showed a reasonably good faith effort to deal with the issue which, again, was a change from the earlier time. The incidents didn't disappear, but there was a marked diminution of interference with our FSNs. About the same time a counter-intelligence team arrived from Frankfurt and interviewed our FSN's. They did this throughout Eastern Europe to try and find out who had been doing what to whom to the extent that they could. Interestingly, when they left at the debrief, they said that the remaining FSN's were probably the most forthcoming of any. I'll never forget that one of them allegedly said to the counter intelligence team something along these lines, "You have to remember that everyone who was working in the embassy in 1989 fell into one of three categories." The first category was those who reported as little as possible to the *securitate* just to keep their jobs. Second category, much smaller, who enthusiastically volunteered to report to the *securitate* and dug up and made up whatever they could which would ingratiate them with their handlers. Then a small number of actual *securitate* officers was the third category. Everybody who says that he or she isn't in one of these categories is lying, this one person told the team.

I guess that leads to another thing that is really beyond the immediate scope of this, but our station chief who was announced and was not clandestine was a man named Harold J. Nicholson. We worked together for about a year. He was a liaison between the internal service and external service. After he left he went to Malaysia and was arrested as a Russian spy. He is now doing time someplace in federal prison. He apparently took up his espionage activities after leaving Romania, but I'm still amazed that somebody who was engaged in that kind of activity so soon after a tour in Romania that no one at the embassy in Bucharest except perhaps people from his agency were ever questioned by anybody about his activities, his lifestyle, or anything else. I know for a fact neither the ambassador, DCM or the RSO were questioned by DS, by CIA, by FBI, or by anyone else. With the concerns about Aldrich Ames and about others, it struck me as being

irresponsible, and I have actually raised this matter with friends and colleagues at the agency, and they tut-tutted and said, "That doesn't sound very good." And that's been the end of it. To my mind it was very, very sloppy because Mr. Nicholson had a number of characteristics. His personal situation was such that...not that one would have expected espionage, but there were very serious family problems. It was obvious to people at the embassy, and there were a lot of things going on that were well known that were not according to the rules that existed at the time. That was disappointing, I must say. During the time I was there – the whole time that I was there – Romania was a critical threat for both human and technical intelligence. That meant a strong non-frat policy. We had to report contacts.

Q: Continuing the second time you were there. The '90s.

RICKERT: Yeah. I'm talking about the '90s. In other words, according to the scales that were used, there were four categories: the human, the technical intelligence, terrorism, and crime. The categories were critical, high, medium, and low. If you gave each one of these a number, say low is one, medium is two, high is three, critical is four, and then did a cumulative, which I did, actually, for Romania. Romania and Havana tied as the two worst posts in the world which for somebody living and working in Romania was utterly preposterous, but that's the way it was. The only good that I could see that came out of this was we used this as a means to keep our project differential up because whenever we asked why Romania was given such a high grade, high level on human and technical intelligence, one could only conclude that we didn't have sufficiently high clearance to be told or else there was nothing there. I remember writing up one of those questionnaires and saying that this puts people under great stress to know that we're in the highest category, yet we can't be told why. We kept our high, maybe 20% differential. To show how times change, it dropped down to 15, and now its back up to 20. I saw the cable recently explaining why it is 20% now, and it cited hardships such as "uncertain internet connections." We didn't have telephone connection when I was there. It was 15% under Ceausescu during my first tour there. It is 20% now when it is a completely different situation. The standards obviously changed. Medical was another aspect. Medical care was not up to Western standards, but there are a number of Western doctors. When we were there the first time my wife had some serious medical problems and was told to see Romanian doctors in Romanian hospitals which she did. It didn't help a whole lot, but that's how it was done. So things change. I'm glad for folks there now that they have the 20% differential, but I'm not entirely sure they earned it.

Q: Anything else you wanted...

RICKERT: Let's see. One of the things we did with our Romanian friends was have a Christmas party each year. Interestingly, the first two years we had parties for the embassy community, and they didn't seem to show a whole lot of enthusiasm for this, so we decided to invite Romanians which we did. One of the most moving things that came out of this... We had a big group of Romanians, and the DCM residence is a wonderful house there, and the ceiling is about 24, 25 feet tall in the living room, and we got a Christmas tree each year that went up to the ceiling. This had been a tradition for some

years. At the end of the living room were large windows, very large windows almost up to the ceilings, that look out and a number of Romanians told us that during the dark years that they gained hope by seeing that Christmas tree through the window and to be invited in to be right next to it was a great privilege and pleasure for them. Let's see.

Oh, there are so many things. We did so much. We traveled so much. We had so many friends there. We were able to entertain anybody and everybody which was great. One thing I did as DCM was invite every new person from every agency and even long-term TDY's home for lunch with spouse which, of course, was not representational. This was just in house. There were quite a lot of them, particularly TDYers. It seems people appreciated it because there often wasn't an ambassador there, and otherwise there wouldn't have been any proper introduction to the embassy. I've met people since then who've come up and said, "Oh, I remember coming to lunch at your house." I mean, people who were from other agencies or who were TDYers and said that it meant something to them.

I remember going to Romanians' homes for dinner. Some of our best personal memories were evenings and afternoons spent with Romanian friends. One of them was a very prominent heart doctor whose son, Radu, had been one of the few dissidents, actually, and spent time in jail for putting up Ceausescu fliers. Dr. Filipescu invited us to his villa on Lake Snagov. We had a nice dinner and were sitting around talking, and people just sort of gradually disappeared, and we ended up just with Radu and his wife. It came time to leave, and we left, and we looked in the house, and they were all inside watching Dallas. Dallas was practically a disease, and no guest was too important to miss Dallas for! That was an interesting bit of culture there. One of my duties as chargé was going to National Days, and I remember going to the Mongolian National Day which was held in a museum. It was the Geological Museum. We got in, and the doors were closed, and we were served a drink, and then ushered into a room and shown for two hours a Mongolian film of Mongolian opera with Romanian sub-titles, so at least I could follow what was going on. Then we were let out, and the Mongolian chargé, I don't think he was used to having Americans showing up at his event, so he was very pleased. Every time I saw him afterwards, he just ran across the room to say hello because the American chargé came and spent the whole evening watching the Mongolian opera.

Q: Film.

RICKERT: Film. That's right.

Q: And as he got new ones, he came and told you he had yet another one?

RICKERT: No, no! I think sub-titles meant that it wasn't that easy to get new ones. He had one at least. There were a lot of interesting things. Another one, on a sadder note, we were still and are still today trying to track down former Nazis and so forth. I got a cable one day, a request from the Romanians, the records for the man who had been my Romanian teacher at FSI who I knew had right-wing sympathies. I don't know... He's innocent until proven guilty, and he died before anything came up. They didn't produce

anything, so I don't know what if anything there was in the records, but these were little incidents that occur.

Another one was when Richard Nixon passed away. We had a condolence book, and we took turns. It was at the American Center, formerly the American Library, and we sat there. We took turns being there to greet ambassadors or others who came. An interesting collection of people who came. Old Communists who met Nixon when he visited in 1969 as well as official government people and others. One of the very last people to come was an ambassador. His driver was with him, and his driver had been the driver at the American embassy. He left under scandal, but that's another story. The ambassador was in signing the book, and I saw the driver there whom I'd known in the seventies, and I spoke with him, and we were chatting a little bit, and he was shifting from one foot to another. I said, "Would you like to sign the condolence book?" And he said, "You mean I'm allowed to sign a condolence book?" I said, "Yes, its open to the public. You're welcome to sign." And he practically kissed my hands. He said, "You know, I drove for Nixon when he was here in '69," and something about being invited to come to the States afterwards. He had met Nixon. He talked with Nixon. So he was just absolutely delighted to sign the book. He felt it was his civic duty in a way.

Q: Its 3:00. Why don't we maybe stop here, and we might have a few more things you want to say. Next time, and then we'll go on with your last assignment.

RICKERT: OK. That'll be fine.

Q: Today is the 12th of May, 2004, and we'll continue with the conversation that we had several weeks or months ago about your assignment as deputy chief of mission in Bucharest from 1991 to 1995. I think we pretty much finished it, but I believe you had a couple of more things that you wanted to cover.

RICKERT: Tom Lantos had a long-standing interest in the region. In fact, it was due to his insistence and, although no one would admit this officially, a branch office of the embassy was set up in Cluj in the traditional heart of Transylvania, traditional capitol of Transylvania to try to keep an eye on the ethnic Hungarian situation there.

Q: Why don't you tell me just a little more about this branch office? I think those are kind of curious, not too well known. Was there an American officer? How was it structured?

RICKERT: The idea was to have an American officer there and one or two FSN's. It was decided to make it a branch office rather than a consulate or some other type of office for a number of practical reasons. For one thing, if it was a branch, the mayor of Cluj was and still is as of today a rabid nationalist, anti-Hungarian named Gheorghe Funar about whom I could tell lots of stories but won't at this point. I'll tell one, the public statement he made at one time. It gives you a flavor of how he dealt with minority issues. He said publicly one time – this was, of course in the previous century, the 20th Century – he said, "We Romanians have been in Budapest twice already this century, once after the First World War and once after the Second World War. The next time we shouldn't be in

such a hurry to leave.” The kind of thing that didn’t endear him to the ethnic Hungarian populace which was shrinking and not terribly important numerically, something under 20%, but still very important in the cultural and social and other life of Cluj. He also insisted on raising statues to Romanian heroes and painting all of the park benches in Cluj in Romanian national colors. Some people saw humor in that since Hungarian posteriors were being placed on these tri-colored park benches! In any case, by making it a branch office, the whole deal was the responsibility of the central government and not the county or city of Cluj. The branch office of the embassy...that becomes part of the bilateral relationship between the United States whereas, at least in theory, a consulate should not be set up without some kind of assent from the receiving city or location. They skirted this in that way. Negotiating the opening of this thing was quite difficult because Romanian officials told me that there had been quite a debate within the Romanian government about allowing this. Some of the more modern thinking people said, “If we allow the Americans to have something there on a permanent basis, it will show them in a direct way that a lot of the stories they hear aren’t true, and it will actually improve our image and the American understanding of what we’re all about.” That was the viewpoint that finally won out. I don’t remember the exact date, but we found the premises in the university and opened an office. It was to have an American officer, but we didn’t have anyone assigned for the first at least six months. So we sent people from the embassy up on TDY for a week at a time, sometimes two weeks, mostly officers, mostly pol and econ officers but sometimes consular or USIA or even admin people would go up and man the office. We found a house for the eventual American officer who was assigned there, an admin officer named Nate Bloom. I remember calling Nate one time when we heard there was a riot in the main square. I called him on an open phone line, and he said, “I can see the main square from my window, and there’s certainly no riot there.” So, in small ways it proved its value. The other thing that happened was that the officer in charge had an official car and did a lot of travel all over Transylvania, went to villages and small towns, many of which had never been visited by an American official before. I think, at least, it ended up enabling the embassy to show the flag in a positive way at very small expense because housing and the premises – we got the premises free as I recall from the university.

Q: Did you fly the flag?

RICKERT: We did have a flag, yes, outside the window. It was in part of the Cluj University buildings, was two or three large rooms, a little bit of a public affairs section with some newspapers and other such things, and an office for the officer in charge there, and a couple of desks for the FSN’s. It worked out pretty well.

Q: Would it receive visa applications?

RICKERT: No. The only thing we would do on the visa side was provide information, forms and so forth, that would be helpful to people who still had to go to Bucharest to get their visas. They had in their hands information that they normally would not have received in advance.

Q: Did the State Department consider it a post?

RICKERT: I don't know if it was officially considered a post, but *de facto* it was a post, it functioned as a post. We had a weekly pouch that went out. It functioned in every way as a post. There was a house for the officer in charge that was provided, paid for, by the embassy. I think it was an interesting experiment. It was not something that's been done in many places, at least not in those particular circumstances.

Q: Is it continuing as far as you know?

RICKERT: It is still continuing. Major Funar is still there. One hopes that in the June 5 elections that he will be replaced by someone of a more moderate point of view, but he's still there at the moment. On the other hand, the more serious concerns about the ethnic Hungarian minority that apparently Tom Lantos had in mind when he requested that this office be opened in exchange for his support for giving MFN – Most Favored Nation – treatment to Romania on a permanent basis. That was the trade-off although probably all concerned would deny it, but that's what it was. The real concerns about the Hungarian minority in that region are no longer valid. They themselves did not justify having an office. The Hungarian party – there is one party that represents the Hungarian minority – is a *de facto* part of the government and has been for some time now. Although one can never say that an ethnic minority is ever satisfied with what it gets from the majority, even allegations of ethnic mistreatment are very, very few and far between and, let's face it, sometimes ethnic X doesn't like ethnic Y not because they are of different ethnic groups but because they just don't like each other. That can happen in Romania or any other place. So everything that happens to a Hungarian, bad that happens to a Hungarian, an ethnic Hungarian, to my mind shouldn't automatically be attributed to ethnic tension or strife or hatred of some sort.

Q: The officer in charge of this branch office was sort of responsible for a region?

RICKERT: Yes, that's correct, unofficially. Since it wasn't a consular district, it wasn't an official designation, but we mapped out an area that he was responsible for. Essentially, much of Transylvania, not the whole, because some of Transylvania goes all the way toward the eastern part of the country, but all of western Transylvania and Von Not which is the south western most part of Romania which is nearest to Yugoslavia. As I said, the first incumbent, the only one during my time there, was very active in getting out and about, and he did quite a bit of reporting, and it was unclassified, unsensitive, faxed to us at the embassy, and then we re-transmitted it. He developed a good feel about what was going on in that part of the country, and did things first like having the first Fourth of July reception in Cluj which had ever been held under official American auspices there. It was held on a different day than the one in Bucharest, so it was possible to get some good representation up there from the embassy which added to the flavor of the occasion. I think all of us thought at the time that this was done that it was largely a favor to Tom Lantos in order to get something that the administration wanted. Eventually, I think... Opinions vary. During my time it was considered to be on the whole

a worthwhile office and operation. My successor had different views. I don't know what the current opinion is.

Q: The DCM supervised that office?

RICKERT: Yes. Well, I did during the time I was there, and one of the problems from the officer in charge's point of view was that he was put under the political counselor after I left, and he didn't feel that he had the access to the front office that he had had previously. I think there was a matter of personalities and so forth. But he reported directly to me, and then I did his efficiency report. The ambassador reviewed it, and he got a promotion out of it, so he was pleased. But the political section got everything that he wrote, and they either edited it and sent it in or incorporated it into their regular reporting. They would task him with things saying, "We heard this or that," and "Could you check it out for us?" I think, you'd probably agree, that a major problem with embassies in general is that they become capital centric, and they become very much tied down and tied up with what's going on in the capital. Their viewpoints are perhaps skewed in some cases by what they see and hear and know perhaps very well and very correctly from the capital. But the United States isn't Washington, DC, and the United Kingdom isn't London, and Paris isn't France.

Q: Did any other countries follow our model?

RICKERT: No, none had set up a branch of an embassy, but as I recall at least the French, British and Germans had sort of USIS operations there with library student advising information of that kind. So Nate did have some European colleagues with whom he could consort up there but they were in a slightly different business although our office did do some of that kind of work as well.

Q: I'm interested in this for several reasons. One, I'm interested in the question of Cyprus these days. There is an office in northern Cyprus, but it doesn't fly the flag, isn't called an embassy branch office, and I think that would make sense if it were. But the other is that I've thought for a long time that when you have a consulate general headed by a consul general, you quickly get into the pattern that it has to be kind of a large place: it needs to have visa officers; it has to have an administrative section; probably needs a security officer these days; it probably needs a political economic officer; it may need a deputy, and pretty soon you have a large post, and then it gets expensive and there are other issues. I thought, "If you could only keep it small!" One officer with maybe a few foreign service national employees and a flag pole, then you can do really quite a bit, so I'm glad it worked in Romania. I think it is working in France and a few other places.

RICKERT: That's what I was going to say. A colleague from my present office is in Lyon, and he's doing this there as a one-American operation. I haven't seen him in a while, so I don't know exactly how its working, and its not called a branch as opposed to an embassy. I don't think they have a special nomenclature for these posts in France. I know before he went out he was very enamored of the idea. I think he has a classified fax so that he can send things to Paris if he needs to, but 98% of what he does, I'm sure, is

completely unclassified and open. For a very small price, you've got an American presence in a country like that. He has a very good level of French, he can do all sorts of things not only in the city but around elsewhere. One problem with Nate Bloom was that when he arrived he didn't have Romanian. There was no time to train him. The deal was that he would study Romanian at the university for four hours a day at the beginning and then work at the office for the rest of the day. I'm not sure what level he reached, but by the time I left, he had a good working knowledge of Romanian which was a lot more important in a provincial city like Cluj than it would be in Bucharest. The officers who've been sent since have had the full FSI course, so we presume they have a more than adequate level of Romanian.

Q: OK, anything else we should say about DCM Bucharest?

RICKERT: Lawrence Eagleburger came at one point. There was an interesting nuance or aspect of U. S.-Romanian relations that came out of that visit. The ambassador said, "What we'll do is we will hold a lunch, and we will invite whom we want from the Romanian government but also from other communities, minorities, churches, opposition parties and so forth." Nastasi was the foreign minister at the time. He said, "No, we're the hosts. We'll hold the luncheon, but you can do the list." So, they gave a very nice luncheon for Eagleburger. They invited everyone we asked including the chief rabbi and a lot of opposition people and NGO people and so forth. I thought it was important. It marked a shift in the old thinking that the ruling party controls everything and does what it wants to showing the beginning of the understanding that in a democracy you've got to deal with even those who are opposed to you, who criticize you, who share in different goals and objectives. It worked out fine, and the luncheon was a success.

One of the more interesting though politically unimportant people was a man named Lucien Horowitz. The DCM residence in Bucharest was built 1944 to 1946, and it was built by the parents of Lucien Horowitz who as you might guess were Jewish. Lucien left with his parents – he was about 18 in March 1948 – turned over the keys to the house to an American colonel who was there, fully expecting that they would be back in a relatively short time. Didn't take anything out of the house. His parents settled in Switzerland; he went to London, made a successful career as a commodities broker. According to his wife he built a house very much like the DCM's residence, in countryside outside of London. He had business in Romania and used to come back from time to time. He called up one time and introduced himself, and we invited him over and showed him... He was reluctant. He was a real British gentleman. My wife insisted, and she said, "I want you to see the whole house, attic to basement, garage, the works." It was fascinating going around through the house with him because his parents designed it, and he explained the reasons for different things, the balcony, the living room, because his mother played the piano there for guests on this balcony. The zodiac signs on the ceiling in the what was called the *gasieniera*, sort of a guest room down in the basement, a serving table in the dining room. Italian stone carvers had carved the fireplace. He was eager to get the house back which as far as I know he hasn't. He said if he got it back, he would sell it or rent it to the Americans because they had taken good care of it in all those years. The most moving thing that happened was when we were showing him around the

upstairs. We took him into my son's bedroom. He was there doing his homework. Mr. Horowitz had been very controlled up to that point, and he looked at the floor and saw wall-to-wall carpet as there is in this room here, and he said, "That's a pity because there is a beautiful floor" and mentioned that he had been there when the workmen had put in the last piece in the floor. Then he said, "You know, this was my bedroom when I lived in this house." He really teared up a little bit, and he looked at my son who was not that much younger than he was when he left. In a very Romanian gesture, he reached into his wallet and pulled out a bank note with Romanian king, I don't remember if it was Carol I or Yihad Michael. We introduced him to our son, and he said, "Jonathan, I've been carrying this bank note with me ever since we left Romania, and I want you to have it," and gave it to him which was a very nice gesture. We became very friendly with him, saw him every time he came. He also told stories about how while they were building it, the living room ceiling in that house is about 24' high and how they played volleyball in the living room. They set up a net with his friends and played volleyball.

The difference between Romania in the '70s and Romania in the '90s: In the '70s the embassy had a villa that was paid for by the embassy and could be used for weekend R&R and other purposes of relaxation by embassy staff. It was in the town of Sinaia which is a mountain resort town with the summer royal palace of the Romanian royal family, a place called Peleş is located. It was a nice place. It wasn't particularly modern and had a tiny kitchen, but the air was great, there were a lot of good hikes, and skiing nearby. It was a disappointment to my wife and me when we arrived back in '91 to find that that villa was no longer available. We learned that Ceausescu had forced the embassy out of that villa because it was too close to one that he was occupying, and he just didn't want "foreign spies" around. We had gotten another one that was further up the road near the railroad tracks, and either by design or by accident, the trains which were many going up and down those tracks, always tooted as they went past regardless of the time of day or night. My wife got together with some other people and said, "Why don't we see if we can find a better villa than the new one." So they made a committee, and to make a long story short, they ended up back in the old villa which had become available which was very nice for us. it was nearer, it was nostalgic, it had been upgraded since we were there, and we had a lot of fun. Inspectors subsequently came through and decided the villas in all these posts paid for by the embassy were no longer justified and so they disappeared, but it was fun while it lasted.

I mentioned the 24' ceiling in our living room. One of the things that we did, my wife being Swedish in particular, we always had a Christmas tree of maximum height, right up to the ceiling. The last two years at least, we invited Romanians for a big Christmas party. It was very touching to be told by more than one person – by several people, "You know, during the dark years, we could see the tree in the DCM's residence, and it was always a sign of hope to us. We never imagined that we could actually be here celebrating Christmas around the tree," which was a very moving testament to the efforts of predecessors who had lived in that house. One thing we did, not directly as an embassy, but as the U. S. government while I was there, because of the conflict in Yugoslavia, of course, there were sanctions on exports from Yugoslavia. Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary and a number of other countries had U. S. customs teams that were

called SAMS or Sanctions Assistance Missions that operated, had a base in the embassy but had teams out along the borders trying to assist local customs with interdiction of one sort or another. This was a mixed blessing from an administrative point of view and other points of view because the folks that came out from U. S. customs were professional customs people, but many of them had never been to a place like Romania before. They were a little bit blue-eyed about what they were told and what they saw. They came for short periods. They were TDYers, so you'd just get one group having a real sense of what was going on and why, and then they'd be gone and a new group would come in. Plus there were the usual problems that one can have from time to time with TDYers who are away from family or other inhibitions from their normal daily existence. My wife worked as a PIT for the customs team in Bucharest which avoided the conflict of interest situation because I didn't control the sanctions assistance mission. They have their own. I mean, they reported to the ambassador, but there was a separate operation. I must say that she as a Romanian speaker and one who knew the country extremely well was a huge help to them because she knew how things worked and didn't work and was able to give them advice on some of their hiring. They picked some of the sleaziest people that I've encountered in Romania. It has more than its fair share, and she was able just by knowing the language and knowing the types, was able to help them avoid some problems that they might have had otherwise. The sanctions teams were, I would say, of limited effectiveness, but they were a useful step forward in developing post-Communist cooperation between our two governments in dealing with practical issues. From that point of view, I think they were well worth their while. There were some other things. My last day in Romania, full day, was July 4, 1995, and Alfred Moses was ambassador. He was gone most of the time because his wife had a very serious cancer. So he would spend three weeks in Washington and then a week in Bucharest and then go back to Washington for three weeks. So, for the last three months, I was chargé about three-quarters of the time. He was supposed to be there for July 4, but he didn't make it. My wife and children had left by then, so I had to host that reception to which President Iliescu and many others came. It was a very nice farewell in a lot of respects because it brought together a lot of people who had been close friends and colleagues and whose friendship I valued. At the very end, the foreign minister, Teodor Melescanu, gave me a book, a tourist-type book of Romania and a letter in it in Romanian which was a compliment to me because he said, "I'm writing this in a language I know you understand and love." In part, he thanked me, and I'm quoting, "For exceptional personal contribution to the development and amplification of Romanian-American relations in all areas of common interest." It also cited my many years in the service of friendship, cooperation, and understanding between the Romanian and American peoples and between the authorities and NGO's in both countries. That was a very nice note on which to depart.

Q: Sounds like a very nice tribute. Its sort of unusual to have your last official day be hosting a Fourth of July reception, but I suppose that's happened elsewhere on occasion.

RICKERT: I left the next morning, but before going to bed that night, a local radio station asked to do an interview which I did on the phone from my bedroom at about 10:30 that night in Romanian, and the next morning up and out. So I was on duty right up

to the last minute. Ambassador Moses did get in actually that evening but too late to host the reception. He came for the last part of it.

Q: So you handed over...

RICKERT: I handed over...

Q: ...to him.

RICKERT: Right.

MARY JO FURGAL
Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS
Bucharest (1994-1997)

Ms. Furgal was born and raised in Illinois. She attended a number of colleges and universities in the US and Austria, including the University of Chicago, where she pursued Library Science Studies. She entered the USIA Foreign Service in 1978 and served as Cultural Affairs Officer in Colombo, Madras, Katmandu, Dhaka, Bucharest and Harare as well as in Washington, DC. Her assignments were primarily tandem assignments with her Foreign Service Officer husband. Ms. Furgal was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2008.

Q: So you were in Bucharest from when to when?

FURGAL: Bucharest from summer of '94 to summer of '97.

Q: Oh.

FURGAL: That was our only language post and the only post where we didn't stick out like sore thumbs.

Q: Well, it must have been interesting because this was sort of after- considerable time after the- well, the 1980 or '79, '80 Ceausescu-

FURGAL: '89.

Q: Yes, '89.

FURGAL: We were there barely four and a half years after he was overthrown.

Q: So how did you find things there?

FURGAL: Well, living standards were different. There were no real supermarkets, only one place where foreigners would go to shop. By the time we left in '97 a little bit more was opening up but you still saw the effects. We liked Romania; well, we liked every place we were, basically, but Romania was especially interesting because it was our only reintroduction, if you will, to Western culture. We could go to the symphony every night; we could go to the opera for a dollar. Now, granted, it was still state subsidized; they don't do that as much anymore. The arts there are increasingly funded the way they are here in the U.S. but at that time you could go a couple of times a week if you wanted. These days, people on fixed income, especially the elderly, are having a hard time. If you don't have good English and no computer skills, if you're on a fixed income from the good old days, you're really have a hard time. Under the previous regime, everybody was badly off. Now, some are badly off, a few are okay and there's a struggling middle class.

Q: Well, how did you find your work there?

FURGAL: While we were there, the Marines were allowed to date. There had been a "no-fraternization" law previously. I think we were probably a little bit more careful about what we said because we lived in the community; we didn't live on a compound and we didn't find local people as friendly as they had been in other places. Under Ceausescu, everybody spied on everybody; everybody had to inform. You didn't get to choose your staff; your staff was sent to you by the Romanian foreign ministry and there were some people there who still probably had friends from the old regime. I had a staff member at the Fulbright Commission who told me about the '80s when the population was on limited caloric intake and one 40 watt light bulb a room. This is how people were told to live so that Ceausescu could pay off his foreign debt; he was a big hero to the West because of it but he starved his people. This staff member would put a glass of water by the bed at night so that when she wanted a drink, she didn't have to get out of bed and in the morning there'd be a crust of ice on the top. By the time we got there, living standards had improved a little. The situation is much better now but the current economic crisis will impact them deeply. Romania didn't do as well as Hungary and Poland did; one of the theories floating around was that was because the religion was state controlled. The religion was Romanian Orthodox, and the patriarch was a local church man, as was the custom in all the Eastern European countries that were Orthodox. The countries that did the best in immediately reacting to the lifting of the Iron Curtain were those that had religious compatriots from outside the country, like the Polish Catholics and the Hungarian Lutherans. There were religious and national communities on the outside that supported them through the "Iron Curtain" period, whereas the Romanians didn't have anybody, nor did their neighbors, the Bulgarians.

Q: Did events, the break up of Yugoslavia have any effect?

FURGAL: No, not much that I am aware of. The Embassy political section would have followed this more closely than did USIS.

Q: The Romanian/Yugoslav, they don't really-

FURGAL: The Romanians think of themselves as Latins rather than Slavs but language is influenced by both; it was excruciating because of my age to learn that language.

Q: How did you find the students that you dealt with?

FURGAL: Well, the students that we dealt with were usually those who either wanted to go to the United States to study or took American Studies courses. We sponsored American studies programs there; we donated books and set up a little American studies corner at the University of Bucharest. We also had some rule of law programs. We set up a couple of American studies corners, in universities outside of the capitol. We sponsored one university exchange program at the University of Cluj, which established the first political science department in the country. It was a beautiful country; we'd love to go back.

ALFRED H. MOSES
Ambassador
Romania (1994-1997)

Ambassador Moses was born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland. He was educated at Dartmouth College, Princeton University and the Georgetown University Law School. After service in the US Navy, Mr. Moses joined the Washington, D.C. Law firm Covington and Burling, where he dealt with matters concerning Middle East and Romanian Affairs. Prior to being named Ambassador to Romania in 1994, Mr. Moses served as Special Counsel to President Carter. He subsequently became Special Presidential Envoy for the Cyprus Conflict. Ambassador Moses was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: Well come to the point, how did you become Ambassador to Romania?

MOSES: That is very straightforward. I had been active for some 15 years getting Jews out of Romania. This began in February '76 and continued until Ceausescu was overthrown in 1989. Thereafter I continued to go to Romania once or twice a year to meet with the Jewish community and in particular with then Chief Rabbi Moses Rosen. In the fall of 1993 I had lunch with my friend and deputy when I was in the White House, Marc Grossman, who was Executive Secretary in the State Department. Marc reminded me that I had once thought about being ambassador to Romania. He said now was the time. Our then ambassador, John Davis, planned to retire and there would be an opening. If I was still interested, I should get moving. The opportunity as well as the challenge grabbed me. Then the reality sank in. I knew neither President Clinton nor Vice President Gore; they owed me nothing. How was I going to become ambassador? It would probably go to a foreign service officer or someone close to the Clinton Administration, and I was neither. Marc was not unmoved by my reality check -- "At least make the effort," he said with a big smile. I thought he was telling me that if my candidacy gained traction, State would not push for its career person. At least that is what I inferred from the conversation. I was hooked. That night I mentioned it casually to Carol, my wife, who thought it was a nutty idea, that it wouldn't happen so why not go ahead and try. Next was Barbara, our oldest daughter, who, not knowing the odds, thought it was a great idea. So I started thinking

about people who might help. President Carter was first. I called Jimmy. He immediately said, "Sure, send me a letter so that I know what you have done that is relevant." He promised to call President Clinton. And he did. My friend Lane Kirkland was head of the AFL. Lane was supportive. At the time the Clinton Administration was reaching out to Lane. The AFL opposed NAFTA. The Administration had already won that fight and was looking for ways to re-establish its important relationship with organized labor. I had a friend and client, a lawyer in Arkansas, Lou Ramsey, who had been chairman of the Board of Trustees of the University of Arkansas when Bill Clinton went from Yale to Arkansas to teach law. Lou made a strong pitch for me. Through my position as President of the American Jewish Committee, I also knew people at the White House. Rahm Emanuel was very helpful. I also got a big boost from another friend, Dick Schifter, a Senior Director on the National Security staff at the White House. Unknown to me at the time, Dick sent a strong note to Sandy Berger and Tony Lake. So they endorsed me. I didn't know either Sandy or Tony, but Sandy in particular went out of his way to tell me later that he thought I was "a natural," knowing Romania as I did. At the time, I did not know this had come from Dick. I had also been reasonably prominent as Carter's special counsel, President of the American Jewish Committee, and a partner in Covington & Burling. This background was also a fit for Sandy and Tony. They both became friends, wonderful people. I called a few senators I knew, Joe Lieberman and Paul Simon, whose staff aide had been at State and worked with me on Romanian issues, and one or two other Hill people. It all came together. By early January '94 I was able to tell Chief Rabbi Rosen, when I saw him briefly in Washington, that I would probably be the next American ambassador to Romania. He was delighted. Unfortunately, he died two months later. The President approved my nomination in July, my name went to the Senate a few days later, and I was confirmed in September. It all started in 1976 when I got the first Jews out of Romania. The fact that I knew something about the country certainly helped. I knew Ion Iliescu, Romania's president. I hosted a breakfast for him when he was in Washington for the opening of the Holocaust Memorial Museum in 1993. I knew Romania's Foreign Minister, Adrian Năstase. I hosted a lunch for him in Washington when he visited in 1991. In return he hosted a dinner for me in Bucharest two years later. So I knew my way around. I knew the country, something about its emerging leadership. I looked forward to the chance to be operational on foreign policy issues, always a great love and interest of mine.

Q: You were ambassador to Romania from when to when?

MOSES: From December '94 (I delayed because my wife was operated on for ovarian cancer in November). I didn't go out until the 9th of December. My oldest daughter, Barbara, and I arrived in Bucharest on a snowy Sunday morning in December. My ambassadorship ended September 1, 1997.

Q: Well when you went out there, late '94, what was the state of relations between the United States and Romania?

MOSES: There was a lot of suspicion on the Hill and in parts of the administration concerning Romania's political legitimacy, whether its leaders were truly reformed former communists or persons whose world views still reflected pre-1989 communist doctrines. In other words, had Iliescu, *et al.* just changed labels. Official Washington had not embraced Romania as it had Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland. Romania was still viewed with a great deal of suspicion.

The official relationship was correct, but not warm. The ever-sensitive Romanians felt unloved, a little like an unwanted child acknowledged to exist but not loved. Washington thought of Romania as an out-of-the-way destination of no real importance. True or not, it did not deter official visitors -- the high and mighty and lots of other folk. Dick Holbrooke and his now wife were the first to arrive, giving a big boost to me personally, but also our entire embassy staff. The irrepressible Dick was at his best, a tad less on subsequent visits. President George H.W. Bush and Mrs. Bush were next, spending two days in Romania. They, like the Holbrooke's, stayed with me at the residence. Both were delightful -- President Bush and I swapping stories in the sauna at the end of a busy day and then up the next morning for tennis; he meeting and greeting the embassy staff and others. Having them was truly a treasure. But there were lots of others. Over the next three years we hosted numerous CODELs from both the Senate and the House, CEOs such as Procter & Gamble's John Pepper and Lockheed's Norm Augustine, both of whom were roll-up-the-sleeves guys. Senator Robert Dole spent two days with me in Bucharest, as did Senator Charles Robb, along with numerous other government officials and Hill staffers. There were no major gaffes but lots of uneasy moments. To name only a few, I persuaded the Romanian Government to give Dick Holbrooke a gift after his success at Dayton. This was the post-communist era when medals and the like were verboten. Not to be outdone, President Iliescu's staff at the last minute came up with a gift that most closely resembled the Biblical golden calf. When Dick reached out to touch it, I hurriedly whispered in his ear, "Watch out, the gold paint is still wet." So, too, with some of the CODELs. Long-time Congressman Floyd Spence of South Carolina who had had several heart attacks, traveled with his nurse who had by then also become his wife. He hopped from country to country at a whirlwind pace and was never quite sure where he was. To avoid embarrassment, he always said, "I am delighted to be in your country," whatever its name might be. Not so for Senator Robb. During his visit he was preoccupied with the situation in Bosnia, asking everyone from President Constantinescu on down what the United States should do in Bosnia, never bothering to ask about Romania. The high point for us in the embassy were the visits of First Lady Hillary Clinton and then President William J. Clinton. The visits were a year apart. Hillary came first, arriving in Bucharest on a hot July day, the first stop on a multi-country tour of Central Europe, we thought with an eye toward the ethnic vote in the upcoming November presidential elections. When I went on board the plane to greet her, she was frosty. I was later told that she was upset by a news report that Barbara Streisand had spent the previous night at the White House. We got off to a slow start but as the day progressed, she became more and more open and friendly to the point where, at the end of the day, returning to her hotel, she said, "O.k., Al, let's go schmooze the press." When we approached the gaggle of press people, she opened by saying to them, "You know Ambassador Moses, don't you?" With no prompting from me, the Reuters correspondent replied, "We sure do; he is the best American ambassador anywhere." True or not, Hillary had heard enough. She turned to me and said goodnight.

The real spectacular was the visit of President Clinton. This was a real coup for Romania. No American president had visited since Gerald Ford, more than 20 years before. Romania is pro-American like no other country in Central Europe. Five hundred thousand people turned out to hear the President, up until then the largest crowd he had ever addressed. His speech was masterful, written by his speechwriters with a few strokes from Sandy Berger and me. The crowd loved it and so did Clinton. Afterward the two of us motored around Bucharest, stopping first at a peasant museum where he bought armfuls of Romanian products, charming people every step

of the way. Later he addressed the embassy staff, Peace Corps and other Americans in Bucharest. They loved it, as did I. On the trip together to the airport we talked about personal things. My mother had died two days before, and he was very supportive. We also talked about Chelsea's career path, NATO expansion, Washington politics and you-name-it. I then flew with him in Air Force One back to Washington.

When the President visits a foreign country (officially coded POTUS), it is a drop-in with two 747s loaded with White House staff, cabinet members, press and various others. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott along with National Security Advisor Sandy Berger were in the Presidential entourage. Later when we met with President Constantinescu, I was seated next to the President after which came Albright, Berger and Talbott. In a failed effort at humor, I turned to Madeleine, and said, "We must be seated chronologically." (I was by far the oldest.) Madeline ignored my attempt to lighten up, replying in a straightforward manner, "Oh, no, Alfred, you as the U.S. ambassador in Romania are the President's personal representative in country," something I hardly needed to be told.

Q: This is tape 4 side 1 with Ambassador Moses.

Well with this feeling, what was your impression of the government of Romania? Do you feel that this is in our eyes a legitimate government that was really grabbing control or what?

MOSES: It was already in control. I also concluded it was legitimate. The '92 elections were determined by international election observers to be fair. Certainly, the outcome was not subject to challenge. Iliescu had been elected president, but his party (PDSR) did not have a majority in the parliament. PDSR had a working relationship with PRM, the far right crypto-Fascist Greater Romanian Party, and with PUNR, a Romanian nationalist party based in Transylvania. There was also a former Communist Party, now socialist party (PSM), in the parliament, headed by Adrian Paunescu who had various official positions in the Ceausescu days. He supported the government. The opposition was composed of the Peasant Party (Christian Democrats) and the PD, a left-of-center party, headed by Petre Roman who had been Prime Minister under Iliescu in 1990-91. But Iliescu was clearly the key figure. His prime minister, Nicolae Vacariou, an economist of no great renown, did not speak English and was not a major player. He was something of a hot house plant serving Iliescu. Foreign Minister Teodor Meleşcanu was very suave, sophisticated, spoke multiple languages, and was effective. The Minister of Defense, Gheorghe Tinca, had spent his entire career in the Foreign Ministry, but the governing party, PDSR, was short of competent English speakers to head ministries. Our Secretary of Defense, Bill Perry, liked Tinca. I liked him, too, but he was nothing exceptional. All in all, it was a legitimate government. It made mistakes, especially on economic policy, but by and large was moving in the right direction and desperately wanted a closer relationship with the United States. It was suspicious of most European countries, particularly Germany, that it feared, and France, that it mistrusted. I moved on the bilateral front with considerable success. The Romanian Government did most of the things I suggested. This was without instructions from my government. After I had been ambassador two months or so, I laid down a six-point demarche in a meeting with Iliescu. Iliescu took great umbrage, exclaiming that not even Brezhnev had spoken to the Romanian Government the way I did. To which I responded, "That may be, but I am a better friend of Romania than Brezhnev." Iliescu was silent. It was a pretty tense session.

There were only four of us in the room: Iliescu, Meleşcanu, my DCM Jonathan Rickert and I. Jonathan gulped hard and all but fell off his chair.

Q: Who was the...

MOSES: Jonathan Rickert. He was not used to a free-wheeling Washington lawyer playing diplomat. But it brought results, and, deservedly or not, the first year I was in Romania, I was seen as an enormous hero. I was continuously on radio and television. The Romanians were lapping it up, because I was a real personality. I was out there on the street; I was going to public events throughout the country. I was pushing hard on the issues.

Q: What were they, there were six points you said.

MOSES: The first thing I took up was the role of the extremist parties -- PUNR, PRM and PSM - that had formed a working coalition in the parliament with Iliescu's party, PDSR. I called for an end to the working arrangement. This was done in the fall of 1996. My remarks were repeated publicly and I was attacked in the press and on television by the extremist parties, one on the right (PRM), one on the left (PSM) and one nationalist, anti-Hungarian (PUNR). I next took up the government's dealing with ethnic minorities, primarily Hungarians and Roma (Gypsies). This, too, improved over time. The government entered into a basic treaty with Hungary as a stepping stone for Romania's entry into Euro/Atlantic structures. The treaty was signed the following year. Efforts underway in Romania to rehabilitate Marshall Ion Antonescu, Romania's wartime Fascist president/dictator, were also on the list. I urged Iliescu to take the steps necessary to disassociate himself and his government in words and deeds from all such efforts by the pro-Antonescu cult. This, too, happened. At the time of my meeting with Iliescu the Romanian Government was "purging" elected opposition officials at the prefect (county) and mayor level. I told him this had to stop and it did. Lastly, I pushed for an improved supply of news print and at better prices for Romanian newspapers. The opposition press was screaming that the pro-government press was being favored. This was resolved and at my urging the government approved the license of a privately owned national TV channel. Where I failed was in not persuading Iliescu to speed up genuine privatization and to take concrete steps to facilitate direct foreign investment.

Q: Were you, was the issue of joining NATO and the European Union a major issue while you were there?

MOSES: For Iliescu and Constantinescu, joining NATO was the preoccupation. A preliminary decision had been taken at a meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Sintra, Portugal, in May '97, confirmed at the NATO Summit Meeting in Madrid the second week of July, that Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland would be invited to join NATO, not Romania or Slovenia, the other serious contenders. There was considerable disappointment in Romania. Constantinescu agreed to live with the decision, as did Romania's foreign minister, Adrian Severin, who had gotten into a row with Madeleine Albright at Sintra. At one point Madeleine had said the decision would be made on the merits, whereupon Severin spoke up, saying, "That means Romania will get in." Madeleine was visibly shaken. She felt she had been outfoxed and embarrassed by a "nobody" foreign minister from an unimportant country. But the fact is the United States did not handle the

situation as well as we should have. We should have let the Romanians know much earlier that we were not going to support their candidacy. Other governments, at least nominally, did support Romania's NATO bid. Rather than have it sprawl over to Sintra, we should have stated our position before the foreign ministers' meeting. There were nine countries supporting Romania, two opposed; the other five did not declare one way or the other. The two opposed were the United States and Iceland. Constantinescu immediately called me to ask, "Mr. Ambassador, what did Romania ever do to Iceland?" I thought that was a pretty good line. The obvious answer was "nothing." The French, for their part, gave the appearance of supporting Romania's bid. Germany's chancellor, Helmut Kohl, told the Romanian ambassador in Bonn that Germany would not stand in the way of Romania's joining NATO. He could say this because he knew the United States had already made its decision. It was a free vote for him. Chirac also knew that in the end Romania was not going to get in. He was able to declare support because he knew it was not going to happen. His principal interest was Poland. The same for Kohl. But Chirac wanted to keep faith with a Francophone country, *i.e.*, Romania, so he gave lip service to support; the Romanians understood this. They knew the game even but didn't acknowledge it. Nevertheless, the Romanians pushed very hard. In June '97 Victor Ciorbea, the prime minister, was in Washington. He came back a second time to see Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott. He had seen Madeleine on the first visit and asked to come back a few days later to push again for Romania's NATO bid. It was a mistake on Ciorbea's part. I counseled him against doing this before he left Bucharest for Washington. I met him at the airport and made it clear that whatever the U.S. decision turned out to be, he had to accept it. He could not appeal to the Congress over the head of the Administration. First of all, it wouldn't work, and, second, it would be seen by the Administration for what it was. The decision had already been taken. Basically, he was in over his head. He had no foreign policy experience and behaved in an immature and inexperienced way. He had done nothing in public life before becoming prime minister other than serving a few months as mayor of Bucharest. The fact is that the entire political opposition in Romania pre-1996 had no government experience. Under the Communists there was no opposition. From December '89 to December '96 it was Iliescu all the way. Constantinescu was a professor, Ciorbea a lawyer. They knew little about government. Both proved inept in office. So there were these problems I had to deal with as well.

Q: How about the Jewish question in Romania or was there one?

MOSES: There is always a Jewish question. Even where there are no Jews, there is a Jewish question. It just seems to be part of human existence. When I arrived in Romania, there were 12,000-15,000 Jews left, mainly elderly. There were outbreaks of anti-Semitism from time to time, regularly in the press on the part of the PRM, the Greater Romanian Party and its leader Vadim Tudor. There was a lot of vitriolic anti-Semitism in *Romania Mare*, the PRM newspaper. I was the object of a good deal of that. There were issues regarding restoration of property (community and individual) that had been taken by the Fascists and later by the Communists. We resolved those issues in theory, but nothing actually happened. Meleşcanu and later Severin, successive Romanian foreign ministers, said the right things, as did the respective Romanian presidents, but there was little to show in the way of deliverables. This is still true. There was also the issue of the state archives. The United States Holocaust Museum wanted to look at materials dating from the period leading up to WWII, the war years and beyond. That was very difficult. The Romanian archivists weren't cooperative. I had spoken to Iliescu as had the

Holocaust Museum's representative. Iliescu visited the Holocaust Museum in '95 when he came for the Oval Office visit. He promised cooperation, and I think he tried. His Chief de Cabinet, Traian Chebeleu, and I met with officials at the National Archives. There were promises, but it was always difficult and the results minimal. It was never as full and open as it should have been. There were always reasons, but I think they were excuses, not reasons. So that was a point of concern. The relations between Israel and Romania were generally good. I was not involved in the bilateral discussions. However, I accompanied Iliescu when he flew to Jerusalem for Yitzhak Rabin's funeral in November '95. I do not recall that the Israeli Foreign Minister visited Romania when I was ambassador, and I am quite sure neither the Israeli Prime Minister nor the President did. But there were delegations from Israel's parliament (the Knesset), and I would meet with them at the invitation of the Israeli ambassador. There was no Romanian/Jewish crisis per se during the time I was there. But there were always issues of one sort or another relating to the fate, destiny and well-being of Romanian Jewry. I was sympathetic, and our government was sympathetic. I wasn't introducing something different from what had been U.S. policy during my predecessors' service. It was a continuation of the policy of the U.S. Government to show concern for ill-treated minorities. We had demonstrated the same interest and support for the Roma community (the gypsy community), and there again I was active in trying to improve the lot of the Roma in Romania.

Q: Well is there anything else we should discuss about your time in Romania.

MOSES: It was an exciting time. I firmly believe we accomplished a good deal. I am told even today that I am looked upon as an historic ambassador who brought about a change for the better in the bilateral relationship. It was so perceived in official Washington, and in Bucharest as well. I was extremely active on all fronts, whether it was meeting with the press, the Romanian Government or Americans of all stripes. I was trying to push Romania in the right direction so that it would become a more credible contender to be a NATO member (which it now is), and eventually an EU member. In order for this to happen, Romania had to do certain things. I stated this publicly and in many meetings with Romanian government officials. I met frequently with the Romanian President. The meetings dealt with matters of substance. I met almost daily with Prime Minister Ciorbea, who spoke and understood English. His predecessor, Vacariou, always needed an interpreter. My meetings with foreign ministers were no less frequent. The same for ministers of defense -- Gheorghe Tinca and his successor Victor Babiuc. Much of the credit for whatever success I had in Romania goes to my staff. They were, to a person, magnificent. Usually ambassadors end up canning one or two staff members (my successor fired three secretaries in a row), or reprimanding people. I never did either. I had no reason. The staff supported me and I supported them. My two DCMs, Jonathan Rickert and Michael Einik, were highly experienced in the region and knew Romania. Jonathan spoke Romanian, Mike's wife was born in Romania; her family emigrated to Israel when she was still a girl. Our Public Affairs Officer, Chris Filostrat, was gifted. He was later promoted to career minister, the second highest rank in the foreign service. He steered me through press conferences, advised me on speeches (which, not wisely, I wrote myself) and was our face to the Romanian media. Our two consul generals, Nancy Pelletreau and Susan Jacobs, were both tops. Nancy, who joined the foreign service 40 years before as a secretary, managed to pull herself up by her bootstraps, ending her career as U.S. Consul General in Romania. Susan upheld the standard, later becoming U.S. ambassador to Papua New Guinea. My political counselor, Robert Whitehead, was a true

wordsmith. He was and is one of the Department's most knowledgeable African experts, serving most recently as our chargé in Khartoum. His wife, Agathe, a Rwandan who lost most of her family in the 1994 massacre, was our CLO (Community Liaison Officer), coordinating staff/family activities for the embassy. I was particularly close to Debra Towry, Sarah Solberg and Mihai Carp, all of whom remain close personal friends and have gone on to distinguished careers. There are lots of others I could and should name, including our station chiefs, but the law does not permit it. The embassy staff is always key to an ambassador's success but never more than in my case. My wife, Carol, had intended to accompany me to Bucharest, but a month before I was scheduled to go, she was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. I initially tendered my resignation, but Holbrooke and others at State insisted I go with the understanding that I would return as often as needed to be with Carol. This began a monthly ritual of trips back to Washington for up to ten days, or longer. I tried to make up for my absence by working 14-16 hour days in Romania. By and large, it worked. Carol came to Romania three times in three years, but never felt well enough to stay long.

End of reader