

SERBIA

COUNTRY READER TABLE OF CONTENTS

John A. Baker, Jr.	1951-1952	Voice of America, USIS, Belgrade
Lewis W. Bowden	1952-1956	Vice Consul, Belgrade
Stephen E. Palmer, Jr.	1954-1957 1957-1959	Political Officer, Belgrade Political Officer, Sarajevo
Kenneth P.T. Sullivan	1955-1958	Chief, Consular Section, Belgrade
Douglas S. Martin	1958-1960	Security Officer, Zagreb, Yugoslavia
Nicholas G. Andrews	1958 1959-1961 1962-1965	Economic Officer, Belgrade Consular Officer, Sarajevo Desk Officer for Yugoslavia, Bureau of European Affairs, Washington, DC
William J. Dyess	1961-1963	Consular Officer, Belgrade
James G. Lowenstein	1962-1964	Political Officer, Belgrade
Lawrence S. Eagleburger	1962-1965	Economic Officer, Belgrade
Charles Stuart Kennedy	1962-1967	Consular Officer, Belgrade
Douglas Hartley	1962-1964 1972-1974	Economic/ Political Officer, Belgrade Commercial Attaché, Belgrade
Richard E. Johnson	1962-1963 1974-1978	Political Officer, Belgrade Deputy Chief of Mission, Belgrade
Thomas M. T. Niles	1963-1965	Economic Officer, Belgrade
Robert G. Cleveland	1963-1965	Director, USAID, Belgrade
Thomas P. H. Dunlop	1963-1965	Political/Consular Officer, Belgrade
Russell O. Prickett	1964-1968	Economic Officer, Belgrade

Henry A. Cahill	1965-1968	Economic Officer, Belgrade
Warren Zimmerman	1965-1968 1989-1992	Political Officer, Belgrade Ambassador, Yugoslavia
Dell Pendergrast	1966-1969	USIS Officer, Belgrade
William B. Whitman	1968-1971 1979-1981	Commercial Attaché, Belgrade Economic Counselor, Belgrade
Sidney Friedland	1970-1972	Political Officer, Belgrade
Wallace W. Littell	1970-1974	Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Belgrade
William A. Weingarten	1970-1971 1971-1974	Serbo-Croatian Language Training, Foreign Service Institute, Arlington, VA Economic Officer, Belgrade
Donald C. Tice	1972-1975	Political Counselor, Belgrade
Thomas Hutson	1972-1975	Consular Officer, Belgrade
Lowell Fleischer	1973	Consular Officer, Belgrade
Lawrence P. Taylor	1974-1976	Economic Officer, Belgrade
Sheldon J. Krys	1974-1976	Administrative Counselor, Belgrade
Edward C. McBride	1974-1978	USIS Officer, Belgrade
Terrence Catherman	1974-1980	Country Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Belgrade
Laurance H. Silberman	1975-1977	Ambassador, Yugoslavia
Mark Palmer	1975-1978	Political Counselor, Belgrade
William Primosch	1976-1978	Commercial Officer, Belgrade
Isabel Cumming	1976-1979	USIS Officer, Belgrade
Ellen M. Johnson	1977-1979	Secretary to Deputy Chief of Mission, Belgrade

Robert E. McCarthy	1977-1979 1979-1981	Consular Office, Belgrade USIS Officer, Montenegro
Thomas P. H. Dunlop	1978-1982	Political Counselor, Belgrade
Bernard F. Shinkman	1982-1986	Director, American Center, Belgrade
Paul Good	1985-1986	USIS Officer, Belgrade
Larry I. Plotkin	1986-1990	Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS, Belgrade
William E. Ryerson	1987-1989	Consul General, Belgrade
George Kenney	1992	Yugoslavian Affairs, Bureau of European Affairs, Washington, DC
Victor D. Comras	1998-1999	Serbia Sanctions Program, State Department, Washington, DC
Leon Weintraub	1998-2000	European Affairs Bureau Coordinator, OSCE, State Department, Washington, DC
Alphonse F. La Porta	2000-2003	Political Advisor to Commander of NATO Forces in Southern Region, Naples, Italy

JOHN A. BAKER, JR.
Voice of America, USIS
Belgrade (1951-1952)

John A. Baker, Jr. was born and raised in Connecticut. His career in the Foreign Service included overseas posts in Yugoslavia, Germany, the Soviet Union, Italy, and Czechoslovakia. Mr. Baker was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1992.

BAKER: At that time the training period was about three months and in the last six weeks of that you got the afternoon off to work on whatever language they seemed to be pointing you towards. I volunteered to go to Yugoslavia and although not too many people were going to Communist countries on their first assignment, I had one qualification that they seemed to be interested in and that was that I was unmarried without children. At that time, hardly two years since the Tito/Stalin break, there was some concern as to what might happen in Yugoslavia. There were a lot of incidents on

the frontier. The Soviets, using the satellite armed forces, were provoking a lot of tension there.

Q: This would be mostly Hungarian and Romanian.

BAKER: Yes. So the Department didn't seem to be anxious to put a lot of dependents at risk over there. So I lucked out and got the assignment I was looking for partly on that basis, but also on the basis that I had already had several years training in Russian at Yale and convinced them I could move quickly from there into Serbian.

Q: You got to Yugoslavia in 1951. How did you see Yugoslavia at that time?

BAKER: Well, Yugoslavia at that time, one sensed, was very much an authoritarian Communist state. Initially I was in the Hotel Moskva in the center of Belgrade. Small units of Yugoslav army troops would be periodically marching around and singing in loud voices these "we are for Tito" type songs. One had the sense of a poor, proud, embattled country that was standing up for its nationhood, but not a country that was very democratically run. It was a tight shop politically.

Q: What was your job there?

BAKER: Well, I started out initially as a junior officer in the political section and I began to study the lengthy texts of people like Milovan Djilas who was beginning in a cloudy way to express some of his own ideas, which later, as they emerged, were dissenting ideas. Quite soon it appeared that, with the improvement of US-Yugoslav relations, it was more possible for Yugoslav citizens to leave the country and join their families in the US. So the consular section needed help and I was the replacement cog as the most junior officer in the embassy and was sent to the consular section where I did some citizenship and a lot of visa work for four or five months.

It was a good experience in the sense that I immediately perceived that it was disadvantageous to have to interview these people through an interpreter. It was quite clear that the people being interviewed didn't quite trust the interpreter, who was an employee of the embassy, a local national, and I wasn't quite sure I trusted her either.

Q: Was that Madame Zhukov?

BAKER: Yes.

Q: She died while I was there. Madame Zhukov was the doyenne of the consular section.

BAKER: She was of Russian descent and that was another problem in the sense...

Q: Incidentally, after her death, we found out she had been playing hanky-panky with some of the visa cases.

BAKER: My perception was that the sooner I could get her out of the middle of my discussions, the better off I would be. This gave me quite a stimulus to improve my knowledge of Serbo-Croatian and within about a month I began doing all my interviews myself. That got pretty tricky when the interviewee was Macedonian and a person who spoke a variant of the language isn't always easy to follow. But, anyway, I felt I got a sense of how the country worked from interviewing those people and finding out how they lived and what they did, how they lost their land, or what sort of situation they were up against in their community.

The tricky part of it was, you see, that almost all of them had, for one reason or other, joined some front of the Communist Party. To get your normal access to normal things it was pretty much what you had to do. So, for almost every one of those cases we had to ask for a waiver of the McCarran Act.

Q: A waiver from the Immigration Service because of affiliation to some forbidden organization.

BAKER: The McCarran Act didn't allow into the United States people who were Communists or belonged to front organizations. So one had to be sure that in recommending a person for a visa to join relatives in the United States any connection they had with the Party or front organizations was in a sense involuntary. It wasn't motivated by ideological conviction but by the need to get a ration card, etc.

I thought that that experience in the consular section was quite a formative one for me in beginning to understand how that system worked in the lower levels of society.

In the spring of 1951, I was out of the consular section for about six weeks because, by that time, the United States was delivering food aid to Yugoslavia. This was a controversial program because Yugoslavia was a Communist country, which had not been very friendly to the US, and had shot down a couple of US planes in 1947 without any particular regrets. In 1950, when they had a bad drought, people generally perceived that the consequences of the drought were much worsened by the fact that the Yugoslavia Communist Party had carried out a very Draconian collectivization the year before.

The Titoists apparently were trying to prove to the rest of the world that they were better Communists than the Russians -- pure Marxist-Leninists. In that 1948-49 period, they were not cozying up to the US, they were emphasizing their Marxism-Leninism and they managed to considerably screw up their agriculture and become very vulnerable to the 1950 drought. So by the fall of 1950, it was clear that they would not have enough food to get through to the next harvest.

The Department of State took a proposal to the Congress, with Truman's support, proposing that in order to sustain the Yugoslav heresy vis-a-vis the Communist Headquarters in Moscow, that a food aid program be granted. Congress agreed to that only on condition that a pack of US observers would be allowed into all parts of the

country, with access everywhere, to see where this food was going, who was getting it, whether it was being identified as American food, etc. And that was done.

Most of these people came down from the Marshall Plan office in Paris and were assigned jeeps and interpreters since most of them had no experience in the country. They fanned out over the country. The one who had Macedonia suddenly had a heart attack in April, 1951, and the Embassy felt it was important that Congress be reassured that the whole thing was being tracked. I volunteered when I heard about this to go down to Macedonia and track the food aid. So that took me out of the consular section for a while.

Q: What was your impression of how this food distribution system worked in Macedonia which certainly at that time was a very primitive area?

BAKER: Yes, it was. My impression was that with the system we had set up it was very difficult to do much more than spot check the whole thing. As far as I was concerned, there could have been diversions of some of that food aid into military reserves, etc. and it would have never come to my attention. All I could find out in each town where I was going was: Had they received food? Was it a town that was short of food? Were they getting the flour and was it labeled and identified as American flour? Were people, the man-in-the-street type people, getting it? And in most places I went they were. They didn't always know where it was coming from. A lot of officials down in Macedonia were still very Communist, even Stalinists, and not too happy with the idea that they were on the dole from the USA. So not in every case were they spreading the word that this was American assistance. But it did seem to be getting distributed. Again, I can't say whether it was getting 100 percent distributed.

Q: Were there at that time, because I know ten years later there were, a substantial number of former Yugoslav-American retirees in the area who sort of carried the flag around?

BAKER: Well there were places in Macedonia where you could encounter people who had been in the United States in the twenties and thirties and had returned. These were older men and they sat around the large town square and would reminisce about that a bit. For example, Bitolj, in southern Macedonia, has quite a collection of people with links to the United States that go back to the beginning of the century, long preceding the communization of Yugoslavia. They, of course, left that area while it was part of the Ottoman Empire, or at least their families did. And there were a few other places around Macedonia where you find that kind of community, but for the most part I didn't find that many.

Q: After finishing that, what were you doing at the Embassy?

BAKER: As I recall, I came back and worked some more in the consular section and then in the fall of 1951, a person was sent out who was in the consular corps and I went back and worked in what was a two-man political section. My supervisor, a fellow

named Turner Cameron, was first secretary and head of the political section. He dealt mostly with the international implications of the Yugoslav heresy and the US-Yugoslav relationship and agreements that were being developed. My job was to analyze and report on the internal politics of Yugoslavia.

Q: There were two things going here. One was the Djilas thing, his book, "New Class," which was a book on the whole Communist movement. Were you seeing aspects of that? Were you able to talk to Djilas? Was he still Vice President when you were there?

BAKER: Yes, he was. He was in the leading group. I think it was in the early part of 1952 that he began putting out a series of articles that were theoretical, a bit cloudy, but beginning to show some signs of working away from the standard Communist position. But at the time I was there he was still a member in good standing of the Politburo and considered to be along with Edvard Kardelj, the Foreign Minister, Alexander Rankovic, the Interior Minister, and Tito, himself, sort of the four core leaders of Yugoslavia.

Q: Did you have much contact with the political elements within Yugoslavia?

BAKER: Not a whole lot. They weren't terribly accessible and to the degree that we had dealings with the governmental leadership, that was done mostly by the Ambassador, who was George Allen, at the time, and the Deputy Chief of Mission, Jake Beam. And sometimes Turner Cameron. I occasionally would be taken along as a note taker for some meeting with the assistant secretary of the Foreign Ministry and one time with Kardelj, who was the Foreign Minister, but as a third secretary of the embassy, even in a normal country one wouldn't get a whole lot of access to the top political level.

I was getting my access mostly by getting out into the country. I would go out almost every weekend in an old converted jeep. In the fall, there would be these marvelous wedding feasts in the villages. You would appear in one of these villages and they would say, "Ah, you are an American" and everyone would be happy to see you. You would get a certain amount of contact with the normal Yugoslav citizen, particularly the farmer population, in those circumstances. And, of course, those people were not great admirers of communism or Tito and when they loosened up a bit they would tell you about it. They had not much use for what was being done to Yugoslav agriculture and to their family prospects. So from those kinds of low level exposures, which I had a lot of, I developed a fairly skeptical assessment of the Yugoslav version of communism, even the sort of third world version that they began to develop in 1952.

Q: What about the fissures within that state? As we are speaking today in 1992 there is a full scale war going on between the Serbs, Croats and Bosnians. Did you see the fissures within that society?

BAKER: You certainly ran into it. It was just six or seven years after the war. You would hear, of course, what had happened to Serbs during the war at the hands of the Ustashi in Croatia. That was still a fresh memory. But nobody was organizing to do anything about it because in a Communist state like that you didn't organize. You kept

your head down. So one didn't know what the potential depth or consequence of those feelings might be. I must say now, forty years later, it is kind of depressing to realize that even a generation that didn't experience those things has had that transmitted to it. That is not a very promising sign for the Balkans that memories are unbelievably long and bitter. My own personal experience was mostly in Serbia and the trip to Macedonia, so my familiarity with the culture of the country was primarily familiarity with the Serbian outlook. I occasionally went up to Zagreb and I spent the summer of 1951 in Bled, about a month of it, as bag carrier for the Ambassador who went up to Bled to be near Tito, who spent the summer at his castle up there in Bled. So I got a little exposure to the Slovenes who have a very different culture and are a different kind of people. They are more like what you are used to encountering in the rural parts of Central Europe. A more rational, less passionate type of people.

Q: What about George Allen as Ambassador. At the time how did he operate?

BAKER: I liked George Allen. He had already been Ambassador a couple of other places such as Iran. He was an experienced man and conducted the high level business of the Embassy without much reference to people like myself unless he needed a note taker or somebody to carry his bag for him to some event. Socially, he was quite forthcoming. It was a small embassy. We were invited out to the residence on Saturday afternoons in the summer to play badminton. I had a pleasant social acquaintance with George Allen, but didn't have any day-to-day working contact with him.

Q: How about Jake Beam who later became a distinguished ambassador in a number of places?

BAKER: I saw more of Jake. He was, as usually is the case in an embassy of that kind, the guy who ran the embassy in a management sense. I enjoyed Jake. We had a little picnic group that used to go out on Sundays and I was pleased to be included in that pretty regularly with Jake and with Peg Glasford -- Admiral Glasford's daughter -- who was at that time our USIA officer who subsequently married Jake and went to Moscow with him -- and Turner Cameron and one or two other people. We would go out on Sunday picnics which were memorable. There was always a good conversation and a lot of laughs at those events.

But, again, most of my working contact was with my immediate supervisor who was Turner Cameron and while I was in the consular section with Arnie Hettberg, an experienced career consular officer. I regarded that as sort of normal as a junior officer.

Q: Just to sort of catch the spirit of the times, what was your impression of the Soviet threat in this 1951-52 period?

BAKER: Well, I think we were continually aware of the incidents that took place on the frontiers of Yugoslavia and often one or two people would be killed or wounded in these incidents. They appeared to be designed to pressure and destabilize Yugoslavia as part of what was then the Cominform campaign against the Yugoslav dissidence. I think that, as

long as Stalin lived, he hoped to be able to unseat Tito and put into power people who would be responsive to his leadership. But as time went on in 1951 and into 1952, it seemed to us that this wasn't going to escalate particularly. It was more a harassment and pressure campaign than a prelude to any significant military action. Of course, we knew there was no major mobilization going on in Hungary or Bulgaria. And in early 1952, we moved in the direction of drawing Yugoslavia towards NATO and establishing a military mission there. By staking out that sort of a presence I think it was made clear that we weren't going to be indifferent to what happened to Yugoslavia. Of course, Yugoslavia had no intention of joining NATO, but they did join what was then called the Balkan Pact. That was a Pact with Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey. And Greece and Turkey, being members of NATO, sort of then hooked Yugoslavia into that system. I forget when the Yugoslavs moved out of that Pact. I suppose it was some time after the 1956 Congress when they were reconciling with Khrushchev and when it was clear that the new Soviet leadership was not going to move militarily against them.

But in 1952, you know, it was clear that they were moving tentatively into the American and West European security sphere.

Q: You left Belgrade in 1952 and came back to Washington?

BAKER: Actually I left Belgrade in July, 1952 because I was unfortunate enough to get in the way of a fluoroscope which discovered that I had some kind of spot on my lung. This may have been a consequence of living in that country. I was sent up to Munich and was diagnosed as having tuberculosis. Even though it wasn't a very raging variant, it was a rather stubborn one and I was out of the Service for almost a year and a half because of that. Nowadays, with that kind of spot on one's lung, one could just handle that with certain kinds of medication and keep on doing what you are doing and it would take care of it, but then they didn't have that and the gentle approach of curing the disease was a rather lengthy sanitarium stay.

So I didn't get back into business until early 1954. And that was a rather curious way to reconnect because in 1953, as you may remember, the McCarthy investigations were in full swing going after the Voice of America. That was a nice target for McCarthy and his people because a lot of these people were fairly new American citizens who had come after the war and were broadcasting and writing script for Voice of America. The Voice wanted people fairly fresh out of the area because their language would be more up to date with the listeners, but they were either not yet citizens or new citizens and very vulnerable to and frightened by the kinds of intrigue that developed around the McCarthy investigation.

Not surprisingly, in the case of the Yugoslav Service of the Voice, it was a field day for the Serbs who wanted to denounce Croats and Croats who wanted to denounce Serbs. By the time they were through they had compromised the Service Chief, who as far as I know was in no way a Communist or close to it, and a bunch of other people and the Service was decimated gradually by these investigations and dismissals. So the Voice of America asked the State Department if they could come up with a candidate to run the

Service who had no political history that was worth looking into but who knew Serbo-Croatian and something about the country. Well at that time I was about 26 years old -- not old enough to have any political history -- and I did know Serbo-Croatian because I had been there and was coming back to duty, so the Department asked me if I would take this assignment to the Voice of America to run and restore the broadcasting to Yugoslavia for the Voice of America. I agreed to do that.

It was at that time in New York. I was brought up in Connecticut so it was kind of convenient to go home for weekends and things like that. I started this job and it was sort of a colorful situation. Running the Russian Service was a fantastic guy named Alexander Barmine, who was a former intelligence general in the Soviet Army who defected just before the war. He was a real bear of a man and possessed of definite views. We had a policy meeting every morning on how the events of the day might be interpreted. The US Information Agency was just being formed then and was looking over the process with some anxiety because of the investigations. The policy officer in the Voice of America at that time was Barry Zorthian who later became famous as the public affairs officer in Vietnam. Barry would preside over the policy meeting and Barmine would have at him. I would occasionally look for openings because it was quite clear often that neither policy line that might be appropriate for Western Europe or the policy line that might be appropriate for the Soviet world usually fit my audience. So I was always looking for an opportunity to get a little elbow room so that I could make broadcasts and commentaries and press coverage that would be more relevant to this rather distinct audience that was neither Soviet nor free world. That proved to be an interesting game. I found the Voice an interesting assignment. I worked there directly under two Foreign Service officers in sequence: King, and Jack Armitage, who in turn reported to a witty Viennese, Bob Bever, European Division chief and on up to Gene King, the Program Manager, famous as the voice of the "shadow".

I had a piece of luck in the spring of 1954 because Radio Free Europe was starting up just down the street, on 57th street, in New York. It was the beginning of the Eisenhower Administration and Radio Free Europe was sort of the symbol of the rollback that the 1952 Eisenhower campaign and later John Foster Dulles' initial policy thrust had emphasized.

Q: That is to restore it to democracy.

BAKER: Yes.

Q: They didn't explain how they were going to do it.

BAKER: Well, one of the ways they were going to do it was to create what would be the equivalent to an indigenous radio station and this would not be like the Voice of America, something that would explain America and broadcast regular international news, but a program that would be focused on internal developments of each of those countries. And, of course, Radio Free Europe at that time had other tricks up its sleeves like sending balloons over Eastern Europe with pamphlets. That sort of thing kind of died down after

the initial enthusiasm, but Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, broadcasting to the Soviet Union, got firmly established and created audiences and staffs and began to progress.

Well, at the outset they were thinking of establishing a broadcasting service for Yugoslavia because the initial view was that Yugoslavia was another Communist state and needed a free radio also. Well, once the new administration got into power and began to look at the relationship with Yugoslavia and this rather delicate game we were playing trying to stabilize a non-Soviet Communist state, it was quite quickly concluded that this type of broadcasting would not really serve the purposes of that policy.

Radio Free Europe had gathered a rather experienced nucleus of a Yugoslavia broadcasting service including a guy who had worked for BBC during the war as a commentator, and a guy who had been an editor of a newspaper in Belgrade. So I walked down the street and went into Radio Free Europe and met these guys who were wringing their hands over the fact that they weren't going to have a service for Radio Free Europe. I began to talk to them about coming to work for the Voice of America. I was able to rebuild the Yugoslav Broadcasting Service essentially around that nucleus of talent that the Radio Free Europe people had preassembled and precleared.

Q: Had the Yugoslav Service been pretty well cleaned out because of the internal politics?

BAKER: When I got there the Service chief had already gone and several other people who I never met, and there were investigations in process against two people who were still there. I got acquainted with them and they seemed to me to be respectable people, but I was unable to do anything about the inexorable progress of those investigations and they also were...

Q: Was this everybody accusing everybody else for being a Communist because they didn't agree with them? This is so Balkan.

BAKER: I, of course, was never allowed to see what was in the files, who had charged who with what. That was all supposed to be the business of the all-knowing security officers. All I could do was say, "Look, this guy is a talented person and I have no reason to believe he is not loyal to the United States. I would like to keep him in the Service if at all possible and I would like to have some understanding why that is not possible." Well, I never got any explanation and after a couple of tries it was made pretty clear to me that I was obviously not in the know about all the stuff that was relevant. Well, I was never very convinced that what they had in the files was all that reliable.

Q: You must have had a real problem because obviously we were taking a hard line, anti-Communist stand. This was our main confrontation and yet here you were along with many people which went on for several decades who did not want to destabilize Tito, who was a Communist but because there were fears that if Yugoslavia went it could turn into another one of those Balkan wars that would drag in all the European powers, and with good reason looking at the situation as it is today. How did you work this? You

must have done a lot of cutting and watching to make sure we were not giving the same message we were giving to East Germany to Yugoslavia.

BAKER: I had to really develop as much as possible our own program and a lot of the features that were produced for use throughout the Voice of America I could not use and did not use. So that meant I had to create my own and encourage people in the staff to do that, although they were at first quite fearful because they were afraid that if it was their own work somebody would pillory them with it in some future round of investigation. But these new people I brought in from Radio Free Europe had not been present during this shattering experience of the McCarthy investigations so they had a little more courage and also had more journalistic experience.

One of them, a man named Grga Zlatoper, was a very talented commentator who had broadcast commentary for the BBC into Yugoslavia throughout the war. I gradually convinced the managers of the Voice that he should go on the air as a named commentator under his own name. That meant that I had to go over each time before he went on the air what he had in his script. He would take some of the house material on the issues of the day and work some of his own ideas and some commentary from the American press and create, in my mind, a much more appropriate commentary for our audience. He, I think, really built the audience for our Service. Eventually he became Service chief.

Q: How did you present divisions within our country -- Democrat, Republican, Pro and Anti-McCarthy, etc.?

BAKER: One way we did that was by broadcasting press reviews. We would have a couple times a week a program in which we would excerpt editorials from the American press around different themes, so we could show the different opinions that were coming out in the country through the voice of the different American newspapers. That way we were able to illustrate relevant views of American opinion leaders without taking an official stand on them. We let the press speak through us on certain issues.

I also had members of the staff who wanted directly or indirectly to address internal issues in Yugoslavia. We always had to do this rather obliquely. One of the people was a clever writer and he developed a weekly program about a party leader in a small district. It was a series of rather amusing incidents and gaffs that bedeviled the life of this party leader. It was never clear whether we were talking about a party leader of the Soviet Union, or Bulgaria or where. This particular story didn't have a fixed locus, so in that way it made it difficult for anybody from the Yugoslav government to complain about it because if they did one could say, "Is that shoe fitting your foot? We didn't realize that it was necessarily your people that were depicted."

We fooled around a little bit with stuff like that to stimulate listener interest. One thing that stimulates them to this day, I think, was that every Saturday night we broadcast a little jazz program by Willis Conover. Willis Conover became a well known name throughout Eastern Europe for his recorded jazz program.

Q: Did you get any feedback from Yugoslavia?

BAKER: Rather little. I guess people were hesitant still to identify themselves as listeners through mail which they had reason to believe would be censored. But at the end of my service at the Voice of America, in the summer of 1956, on my way to my next assignment, I did a five or six week listener survey in Yugoslavia. I went there and drove around the country and talked to people in government, the press and in the street about Voice of America broadcasts, whether they listened and what they liked. I made a full report of those findings to the Voice by mail from my next assignment.

Q: What was the impression that you got from your conversations?

BAKER: I would say that in terms of getting to them international news that was relevant and timely and well presented, we probably never caught up to the BBC. But because we were broadcasting from America, because America in the fifties was where it was at in terms of power and influence, people wanted to hear from Washington. So we had an audience that was built on that and strengthened I think significantly by Grga Zlatoper, whose commentaries were very much respected and listened to. I got very favorable playback on the commentaries and press reviews and things that he did daily on the Service at that time.

Q: Why did the BBC have a stronger listener appeal for the news? I know when I was overseas I would tend to turn to the BBC rather than the Voice of America.

BAKER: I don't know. I think they just do a very good job. As you say, I often listened to BBC. If you were in Europe it often seemed that BBC had a more sensitive ear as to what news stories in Europe were most relevant to where you were and presented often more insights on them than you got in the American news items. They have a long tradition of professionalism in news broadcasting. At that time the Voice of America probably hadn't caught up to it yet.

LEWIS W. BOWDEN
Vice Consul
Belgrade (1952-1956)

After serving in the U.S. Navy in World War II, Lewis W. Bowden joined the Foreign Service in 1952. In addition to Yugoslavia, he served in Switzerland, Germany, the Soviet Union, Brazil, and Washington, DC. This interview was conducted on October 31, 1991.

BOWDEN: Upon finishing the introductory course into the Foreign Service, I was assigned to Newcastle-on-Tyne, England. I thought it kind of hard to understand why somebody with my Russian background and a couple of other languages, would be

assigned to Newcastle which was a dying consulate at that time. In fact, it was abolished about a year from that point.

Before I could get underway I remember a fellow named Bill Boswell in Personnel unilaterally scrap that assignment and reassigned me to the consulate in Zagreb, Yugoslavia, which turned out to be my first post. I arrived there in late October, 1952.

Q: Any particular observations on your period in Zagreb?

BOWDEN: I guess the most remarkable thing that I have to comment on about Zagreb is that I met a girl there who later became my wife and mother of our two children. So that was the greatest thing that happened to me in my first assignment.

It was a good introductory assignment, I think, to the Foreign Service. Actually I spent only a year in it because with the coming of a new President, Eisenhower, a RIF, as usual, was instituted. My job of vice consul in Zagreb, among others throughout the world, was abolished. It turned out there was a position in something called the International Claims Commission in Belgrade to which they transferred me. That Commission actually examined nationalized American property in Yugoslavia for purposes of compensation to American citizens. It was a great assignment because I spent very little time in Belgrade. I was mainly on the road dealing at the grass root level with people who were involved with property all over the northern part of Yugoslavia -- where as a matter of fact the fighting has been quite fierce recently, in Slavonia and in Slovenia and on the Yugoslav coast. I got to know the people, the language and customs through this very extensive travel over a period of almost a year.

Q: Did you notice much in the way of underlying differences between the Croats and Slovenians on the one hand and the Serbs on the other, in spite of the fact that this was in the early, strongly controlled Tito period?

BOWDEN: I really didn't. There were things that struck me as superficial in terms of language pronunciation. The Serbs kidded me about my Croatian accent in their language and said they would teach me how to talk correctly. But I had already known so many families with intermarriages between Serbs and Croats, Slovenes and Serbs. I never found this at the time a really serious problem.

Q: In spite of the memories of the Ustashi going back to World War II?

BOWDEN: Living in Serbia for 10 or 11 months, I never heard this mentioned as a principal subject of conversation or concern on anybody's part. It seemed to develop later and I think it has become a pretext, a rationale, for the ambitions of the Serbian communist party and in particular the leader Milosevic because it had really no importance in public or private discussion during my time.

Q: I take it from what you have said so far that you believe that the differences were not nearly as great as they have become later and that this is not due to the nature of the government.

BOWDEN: Absolutely. I am convinced that the Serbian fear of Croatia has been marketed for reasons known only to Milosevic and the Serbian communists. It is a terrible disservice to have dredged up something like this which in effect blames the entire nation for the atrocities committed by a puppet and Nazi installed government. The emotions which have been aroused over the past year or so in this matter now enter into a kind of vengeance pattern that we are not going to see the end of in my life and probably not for several hundred more years. So it has really been a criminal and irresponsible act on the part of the people who entered into this.

STEPHEN E. PALMER, JR.
Political Officer
Belgrade (1954-1957)

Political Officer
Sarajevo (1957-1959)

Stephen E. Palmer, Jr. was born in Superior, Wisconsin. He graduated from Princeton University in 1944 and immediately entered the U.S. Marine Corps. As an education officer, he taught other Marines reading, writing, English, and history. After leaving the Marines, he received a Master's degree from Columbia University. In addition to Yugoslavia, Mr. Palmer also served in India, Cyprus, Israel, England, Pakistan, and Switzerland. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on June 31, 1995.

Q: So you left there in '53, and I have you going to Serbian training.

PALMER: Yes. As noted I'd come in with Russian, and I had wanted to have a post in Moscow. Of course, they never sent anyone to Moscow or Leningrad on their first tour. I was told that the Russian field was kind of overcrowded, which it may have been because there were so few slots, at least in the Soviet Union, and that the coming field was Balkan specialization. I had studied the Balkans quite a lot during my graduate year, and I thought that Yugoslavia, among the Balkan states, would be by far the most interesting. So I volunteered for that, and again back in personnel this lady congratulated me and said it was just remarkable that I'd been able to get this training assignment. She congratulated me profusely. Then I asked how many people had applied, and she said I was the only one. Later it became very popular. But after about six months of Serbian at FSI they sent me to the University of Indiana in Bloomington which had a splendid program in the prospectus, but which program was very deficient on the ground. I think they were plans rather than actuality. However, rather than fritter away a year I

continued my language training there, and I found that the library had one of the two sets in the United States, in the original Serbian-Croatian, of the Secret Archives of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. Harvard had the other, and I ascertained that no one at Harvard had gone into...talking about maybe a 20 volume set, 15 or 20 volumes. So I started to dig into some of those, and I got the idea of doing an extended paper focusing on the Macedonian policy of the Yugoslav Communist Party, how they used the Macedonian problem in the revolution, in the war from which they emerged victorious.

Q: We're talking about the '40-'45 period.

PALMER: Yes, well actually it went back quite a ways, but it was focused on the war years and the immediate post-war years. And that is the paper which years later was accepted by...well first of all, years later Peter Krogh, now of the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown, was assigned to Embassy London on a...I think he had a White House scholarship that year, he was assigned to me in London and we got to know each other pretty well and the subject of this paper came up, and he asked to see it and then he found a graduate student who very ably up-dated the paper and then it was published in 1971. The title is "Yugoslav Communism and the Macedonian Question." I guess my portion was about the first two-thirds of it. And that was accepted as my Master's thesis at Columbia.

Q: Did you gain any impression about the Yugoslav Communist Party that might have been different from the impression that was generally held about the Russian Communist Party?

PALMER: Well, of course, the main focus of my academic approach was not the break with the Soviet Union, or the Soviet Union's expulsion of the Yugoslav Communist Party from the Comintern, but rather the whole nationality question of Yugoslavs as exemplified by the Macedonia question, and how really brilliantly the communist tacticians manipulated nationalist feelings all over the country in order to gain support for the revolution, and first of all to muster support against the great Serb element as exemplified by Mikhailovic, and, of course, the Fascist and Nazi-supported stooges in Croatia.

Q: As you looked at this problem of the nationalities problem in Yugoslavia today, May of '95 we're talking about terrible problems that the world, and the United States particularly, is facing of what to do about this tribal conflict. Did you get any impression about Yugoslavia from doing this as far as its unity, and its brotherhood unity, and its basic underpinnings.

PALMER: I must admit that I was favorably impressed in general by the Titoist approach to the nationalities question, and the whole idea of recognizing a Macedonian nationality. It's debatable whether it existed before, but it certainly exists now. The whole idea of Bosnia-Herzegovina without either Croatian or Serbian control, the whole idea of balance in the makeup of the federal power structure, and in the party power

structure, I think were positive ideas. Now, it can be said that they didn't work because of what happened subsequently. I would say that nothing else would have worked better.

Q: From your Serbian teachers, did you get any feel for the Serb approach to the Yugoslav problem?

PALMER: I think the teachers here at FSI were reasonably careful about appearing to be overly partisan. A Serbian lady who taught me at Bloomington was a fairly radical Serb nationalist, and I got earfuls from her going back many hundreds of years.

Q: Everything went back to the 1300s and the battle of Kosovo. You went out to Belgrade where you served from '54 to '57. What did you do?

PALMER: I was junior man in the political section, and the first really well trained language and area officer to hit the post. I was put in charge, along with a British colleague, but I was mainly the one in charge, of the Joint Translation Service which was very big in those days. That, of course, helped me not only to improve my reading language at least, but also my appreciation of the nooks and crannies of policy differences, etc. We expanded the coverage from the main daily newspapers and national party periodicals, to cover almost everything that was put out in the country. We were able to get quite a few reasonably significant insights from out of the way journals, provincial newspapers and magazines and party periodicals.

Q: How would this work? I mean, the fine art of trying to understand what a communist country was about rested rather heavily on listening to broadcasts, but particularly to the publications. I like to just get a feel from somebody who was in that.

PALMER: We assumed, I think correctly, that our foreign national staff on whom we depended very heavily, had to report to the secret police, were periodically questioned about what we were interested in, and what they had told us to look for, etc. So I felt very strongly that it was up to me, and to a certain extent my British friend, to do the broader coverage. In other words, something big came out on Borba or Politika...

Q: These were the two major newspapers.

PALMER: Yes. The Yugoslav translators would see them, and they would know that we would see them, and they would translate them, and there wouldn't be any question about covering party congresses, or whatever. But I didn't think they should be counted on to find little bits and pieces, little tidbits, tucked away in some small journal or remote publication. So I did quite a lot of searching myself, and then I would tell them we wanted it translated. I didn't use my spoken Serbo-Croatian very much, almost all the contacts...the ambassador and senior officers in the embassy spoke English or French or German, and it wasn't until I went to Sarajevo that I really began to use the spoken language.

Q: What was the situation in Yugoslavia in the '54 to '57 period?

PALMER: It was going very well bilaterally. We had a vibrant AID mission there, economic assistance was going on apace. Bilateral relations were good. Americans at the embassy were naturally very interested in what the Soviets were up to there, and they were interested in what we were up to, and also the Chinese who came in there with a huge mission, relatively huge. They were very interested in tracking each other. It was a center for international espionage. I did a lot of field trips, a lot of the embassy officers did field trips. I did an awful lot all over the country, except I didn't...because of our post in Zagreb, I didn't go to Croatia or Slovenia very much. And sometimes in remote towns local officials and security people would be suspicious; I wouldn't say hostile, but unfriendly. But usually we had word sent ahead that we were coming and the mayor should expect to receive us. Especially when they found out I could speak their language, the reception was almost always friendly.

Q: *Lots of slivovitz.*

PALMER: Lots of slivovitz, yes.

Q: *What kinds of things were you getting; you'd go talk to the mayor, or the head of one of their enterprises, or to the head of the local communist organization?*

PALMER: From the party officials, as expected, one received the party line almost always. We're still talking about going out of Belgrade. From others one found often a degree of frankness, often as an aside. But nonetheless there was criticism. The criticism I remember hearing, not everywhere but in many places, was that, "we're not getting our fair share of federal support, money and construction, and we need a steel mill more than those people up north do." Everybody wanted to develop fast, and there wasn't enough to go around.

Q: *You were in Belgrade during the great crisis of 1956, which would probably focus mainly on Hungary. This is around October of '56, also there was the Suez crisis at the same time and that probably was off to one side, Hungary was the big thing. How did the crushing of the Hungarian situation by the Soviets play where you were?*

PALMER: Well, there were two aspects to it. I recall the federal government beefed up its forces along the border to make sure there wouldn't be any military spillover. And then there was a very serious refugee flow, mainly into Voivodina, a region in the northeast of Serbia which is partly Hungarian anyway. I was not very much involved. Our AID and economic officers were, and of course the ambassador, and we had voluntary agencies come in, and the Yugoslav authorities accepted this outside help -- it was very welcome to them.

Q: *Did you find, at least your impression, that there was any change in the attitude toward the United States up and down the line, both within the party and private people concerned about wanting to support, for example, the United States because it looked like the Soviets might go in anywhere.*

PALMER: I do recall that the Soviet invasion of Hungary did reconfirm the rectitude of Yugoslavia's going its separate way. I don't recall when we started military aid assistance program. I don't know whether that triggered it or not. I remember we made available some modern aircraft.

Q: *But we were giving some there about that time already.*

PALMER: Yes, we were. I think we beefed it up as a result. I remember we had a military assistance program.

Q: *James Riddleberger was the ambassador.*

PALMER: A great man, yes.

Q: *How did he operate from your perspective?*

PALMER: He was a great teacher. He led, at least from my perspective, by example rather than exhortation. I remember when I first arrived and reported to the embassy I was told that everybody was up in the ambassador's suite, and I went up there and was introduced. Joan Clark was his admin assistant at that time, and she brought me in, and he said, "Steve Palmer. You can be in charge of these." And what they were doing was stapling together the English and Serbo-Croatian versions of the final Trieste Accord. So my first job was stapling, everybody was stapling -- don't mix them up. He and Millie were very warm, very caring about the staff, entertained graciously and often, assisted those who needed assistance. I have the greatest respect and the fondest recollection of them.

Q: *You had dealt with the Macedonian thing in your paper, did you get down and do much around Macedonia and take a look at it?*

PALMER: I was down several times, not only in Skopje but out in the boondocks. I never really knew if they ever connected me to that book, I doubt it. There was no specific indication that they did, but they had focused on the book when it came out. And yes, I could give Macedonia no more attention than I could give the situation in Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia -- Herzegovina, that's a lot to cover.

Q: *Did you ever get involved with the Greek embassy there. Did they ever beard you on the Macedonia situation?*

PALMER: No, I don't remember anything like that. It was mostly a newspaper war, as I recall, part of the campaign on the part of Skopje and Athens that continued. I had one incident which may be of interest which occurred to me on a field trip in Titograd, Montenegro. I was down there, according to a tradition which we set, to call on the President of Montenegro and head of the Communist Party of Montenegro on New Year's Day. So I was there New Year's eve, in a hotel that was fairly new but was already

decrepit and odoriferous, and a fairly unpleasant place. I was having dinner alone. There was much noise from one of the alcoves where a private party was in progress and it turned out to be Chinese. I asked the waiter, "Who are these Chinese?" And he said, "They're from the embassy in Tirana. They come here very frequently because it's so much better here than it is there." And in another area of the hotel dining room there was a really raucous party of people who turned out to be, I was told by the waiter, a film group. They were making a film about the war. One of my contacts from the press office came in and we were talking about the next day's events, and he took me over and introduced me to this crowd of young men and women movie stars, and this one man looked at me very intently and with an unfriendly air. To make a long story short, he got me off alone and pulled a knife and threatened to kill me. He kept calling me a German, and telling me how his family had been decimated by the SS troops, and he was going to kill me. I guess my Serbo-Croatian was accented enough so he knew I was foreign and thought I was a German speaking Serbo-Croatian. I had a devil of a time proving that I was an American because he didn't know much about America -- I talked about baseball. I was desperate, this fellow was absolutely smashed on slivovitz and he had this knife on my Adam's apple. Anyway, someone came in and disengaged him, but that was a colorful trip.

Q: Was there any concern in the embassy for the problem of the Albanian minority at that time, particularly in Macedonia and in Kosovo.

PALMER: Yes, especially in the Kosmet, and it was very hard to break through the walls that the authorities set against foreigners getting together with prominent Albanians in the academic world, or in any endeavor. That was very much alive, and we were very much aware that the Albanians felt extremely put upon by the Serbs.

Q: Did there seem to be, because of what's happening right today in Bosnia, did Bosnia-Herzegovina seem to be a problem, or not at that time?

PALMER: Let me answer it by this. Various people back in Washington had advocated the establishment of another consulate in the country, and the embassy was asked to comment on whether it should be in Skopje, there were those who supported that; or in Sarajevo. And I, and eventually the ambassador and the embassy as a whole, agreed that Sarajevo was the best place for two reasons. One, it was where the nationality question loomed largest; and two, it was where a lot of defense related enterprises were being established. The old partisan concept of having things in the mountains. So Sarajevo was determined, and it was largely because it was deemed to be the best place to observe the continuing playing out of the nationality question.

Q: Before we turn to your time in Sarajevo, were you aware of problems in the United States, criticism of our policy there often spurred by Croatian or Slovenian Americans, particularly in the Cleveland-Chicago-Los Angeles areas?

PALMER: Yes, although I can't recall that it had any impact on those of us working in the embassy. I know whereof you speak because during my days at the University of

Indiana I got to know some of the Macedonian -- IMRO, International Macedonian Revolution Organization -- people in Indianapolis.

Q: *Like the IRA.*

PALMER: Yes, Indianapolis is their center. We were aware, but we just treated it as a remnant of the war years, and the pre-war years, when there was great Serbian hegemony over the whole country.

Q: *The IMRO, what were they striving for at that time?*

PALMER: They were striving traditionally for an independent Macedonia, including northern Greece and western Bulgaria.

Q: *Normally, this seemed to be fought out in the field of linguistics. They would have a meeting of academics of the Balkans who they would try to get together. It seemed to fall apart because is Macedonia a language or not, or a dialect. You moved to Sarajevo where you were from '57 to '59. How were living conditions in Sarajevo?*

PALMER: Not bad. The consulate and the consul's quarters were in the same rather large, and very old, pre-Victorian building. I guess it had been someone's mansion at one time. It was turned into a museum after we closed the post. It was on a hill fairly close to the center of town, everything worked, and we had very pleasant quarters. As far as living conditions, creature comforts, it was a pleasant place to be.

Q: *When you went out there, Riddleberger was still the ambassador?*

PALMER: Yes. Rankin became ambassador shortly thereafter.

Q: What was your instructions when you went out there? What were you going to do?

PALMER: I don't recall having any. I had been sort of the driving force for setting up the post so I guess they figured I knew what to do. What I remember is a, let us know when we can help sort of attitude. I had a vice consul, his wife was our secretary, that was the American staff. Besides a driver, I think we had three foreign service nationals. It was not a visa issuing post, so most of our work was reporting and with a goodly amount of social security and VA check-up work, and many, many visits to villages to ascertain whether old so-and-so was still alive.

Q: *...told you, take me to your marble monument, a phrase I have learned. Everybody was buried under marble until you went out there it looked awfully like cement. Were you finding a different perspective by being out there?*

PALMER: Yes, I think so. For one thing it was possible to be on relatively close personal terms with really all of the key leaders. One bit of advice, which was given to me by a newspaperman, who later became head of the winter Olympics Committee, was

to become a hunter and a fisherman for the first time in my life. I bought the equipment and when they found out I would like to go on hunting trips, or fishing trips -- mostly hunting, I was invited to almost every one, and these were really the movers and shakers of Bosnia-Herzegovina, almost without exception they were hunters. So the camaraderie of going out in the afternoon and sleeping in a bunked room, and getting up before dawn and having breakfast of slivovitz and meat pie and then going out to shoot wild boar; one becomes a little close, and I think I was able to extract...I think there was a mutual frankness that one could not have acquired just with normal field trips.

Q: You meet somebody, and then you're on to the next appointment.

PALMER: It was harder in Montenegro which was part of our district just because I wasn't living there, but I think we had the Bosnia-Herzegovina situation pretty well taped.

Q: How did you see the political situation in that area?

PALMER: The nationality situation?

Q: Yes, the political situation.

PALMER: Well, on the one hand one saw intermarriage, mixed neighborhoods, an absence of any pronounced violence. On the other hand we saw in little newspapers, including often sometimes religious periodicals, evidence that so-and-so had been sentenced to umpteen years because of bad mouthing another nationality group, it was usually Muslims who were sentenced. Sometimes Serbs for bad mouthing Muslims, but usually it was Muslims for bad mouthing the Tito government. So obviously there was a bubbling of animosities. But at that time, of course, one didn't foresee how much the Tito type of government would devolve and fragment. If one had, I guess I wouldn't have been as optimistic as I was at the time about the eventual damping down of these old animosities.

Q: What had the Muslims done during the war? Had they been used against the Orthodox?

PALMER: Some had been used by the Ustashi against the Serbs, the Orthodox. A lot had gone with Tito. But the partisan units had large Muslim elements, very few came out in extremely senior positions, but some of them did. And certainly people like Djuro Pucar, the president, and Osman Karabegovic the number two man, they both were partisans. Karabegovic was one of the most prominent Muslims of the revolution. His wife also had fought with Tito's Partisans. When my wife called on Mm. Karabegovic, the latter displayed a scar from a bullet which had hit her just under a breast. In those two years, and I think Nick Andrews who succeeded me in Sarajevo would agree, we did not perceive any strong divisions within the party apparatus on the basis of nationality.

Q: I don't have a feel for the situation today, but there's a certain feeling that Sarajevo was the cosmopolitan place where people were intermarrying. Whereas in the old days

we would call them sort of hillbillies who were off in the hills, this is where the animosities were kept alive, but these would be the equivalent to what I guess we'd call them red necks today, that one wouldn't meet either politically or socially.

PALMER: I think you have a very good point there, and certainly despite what we were able to accomplish on a personal relationship basis on the republic level, we certainly didn't have anything like that in Travnik, or Bosanska Gradiska, or Mostar where I spent quite a bit of time. The latter was fairly cosmopolitan and open-minded. Of course, you had about half Serb and half Croat with a sprinkling of Muslims. No, but I think that's a good point. People in the villages who hadn't moved and it's become obvious a lot of them were living in the past.

Q: As you traveled around were you aware of the Yugoslav preparations for a war, essentially I guess against the Soviets, but using Bosnia as a mountain redoubt.

PALMER: That was our assumption. It made no economic sense to establish defense industries in these almost inaccessible places. So that was part of the mystique.

Q: I found myself one time doing a field trip, that the foreign ministry had set up and all of a sudden in a place and it was supposedly a cellulose factory, and I realized when I got in, half way through, that every question I was asking, it was a munitions factory. But they called it a cellulose factory and all I wanted to do was get the hell out of there before it blew up.

When Carl Rankin came did you get any feel for his tenure there?

PALMER: No. We had a pleasant visit and I introduced him to the people in power. We had a good talk. He wanted to know if there was anything more they needed to do to support us. No, I didn't get any feel for his overall stewardship in the mission.

Q: Were there any major events while you were there with Yugoslav relations with the United States, or else even in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro?

PALMER: No, it was very calm. It was quiet in that sense. Perhaps it was because we were the only post from any country in the city and the area. We never had that kind of a rumor mill.

Q: Usually diplomats feed off each other.

PALMER: Right. We were it.

Q: What were you getting on these hunting trips, and other times, from the local leaders at the republican level as far as how they looked upon Tito.

PALMER: Well, none of them spoke out of school in terms of the national leadership. What I was able to perceive was a realization that their then economic system was

inefficient and a hankering to try something else, but without going all the way to free market capitalism, and the whole idea of worker management was beginning to bubble up. I put my vice consul mainly in charge of the economic reporting. What we perceived was a lot of stumbling around in terms of this worker management concept and unhappiness on the part of the old party faithful who had been paid off for their wartime experience by being made managers, and were now having their authority diluted, or perhaps being let go. So there was that what I would say sociological unrest. I remember the mayor of Sarajevo very well, Ljubo Kojo, he's the one whom I put on the path of securing the old Washington trolley cars, the first in Sarajevo, or at least the first modern ones there. I remember he was always asking me about how things worked in this country, trying to think how to adapt his management of city affairs more efficiently and more fairly. So one could do a little bit of missionary work. They were receptive to that.

Q: Did we have a USIS establishment there?

PALMER: No, that came after the consulate was closed.

Q: How about when you were in Belgrade and Sarajevo, was Milovan Djilas a figure to play with?

PALMER: Oh, very much. I regret that I never called on him. As I recall I was discouraged from doing so by my superiors at the embassy. I lived when we first moved into Belgrade in temporary quarters for some months, I lived right across the street from him. I used to see him going out on walks. I always regret that I never had any personal contact with him.

Q: Was he somebody to whom people would refer to as far as his thoughts about the new class, and the stratification of the communist society?

PALMER: Yes, in hushed tones and mostly if they were members of the ancien regime.

Q: When you left Sarajevo in 1959, what were your thoughts whither Yugoslavia at that time?

PALMER: I was basically optimistic that the nationality problems could be further eased. And this was assuming that the power structure of the country remained about the same. That is, a relatively benevolent dictatorship centrally controlled, and that the big changes would be on the economic front with a degree not of capitalism, but a system with some profit motive involved. I was optimistic.

Q: When I left in '67 I was too. What about communism as a belief of philosophy? What was your impression of how well that was taking?

PALMER: Well, I had become convinced in my initial research and nothing in my almost five years there dissuaded me that the reason a lot of communists were communists was because of the nationality question, and particularly because of the great

Serb hegemony over the country in the inter-war period. And this was certainly true on the part of a lot of the Croatian communists, and Macedonian communists, and Bosnian communists. As you well know, despite the atrocities of which the Tito people were guilty during the war, and shortly after the war, it became a relatively benevolent form of communism. They only became tough when influential people, people in positions of economic or political power began to question too deeply.

Q: I can understand why the Yugoslav would say, okay, because I think we felt this way too, that at least this is a unifying thing. I mean, American policy was essentially that Yugoslavia wanted to stay outside the Soviet orbit, and too, it doesn't fall apart because we'd end up in a war there because of the Soviet presence which would take advantage of that. So Titoism seemed to make, from our point of view, an awful lot of sense. But other than that were you finding that the Yugoslavs that you'd meet in positions of authority believed in the tenets of communism, or was it just a means to an end?

PALMER: This is too global an assessment, but I would say more of the latter than the former. And particularly the intellectuals whom diplomats tended to meet. They were as unregimented mentally as any people in western Europe.

Q: It never really took the way it did in the Soviet Union. It never even approached that degree.

PALMER: I think that's a fair statement.

KENNETH P.T. SULLIVAN
Chief, Consular Section
Belgrade (1955-1958)

Kenneth P.T. Sullivan developed an interest in the Foreign Service during World War II. While serving in the U.S. Army, he took the Foreign Service Exam. In addition to Yugoslavia, Mr. Sullivan served in Germany, the Sudan, Austria, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by Thomas Dunnigan on October 25, 1994.

Q: So you went there as a consular officer.

SULLIVAN: I was the chief of the consular branch. I was there for a little over three years.

Q: How does one operate as a consular officer in a communist country like Yugoslavia?

SULLIVAN: It was not all that much different from working as a visa officer in the first phase of my Berlin years where we had a district in which you were, in the case of East Germany, were not permitted to travel there, but the people had to come see you. Now,

we were able to travel fairly freely within Yugoslavia, but it was pointless for a consular officer to do that as most of your work is bureaucratic paper work and the people will come to see you because you have what they want.

Q: Were you able to do any labor work while you were in Yugoslavia?

SULLIVAN: No, after I had been there for some months the economic counselor asked me if I would be willing to be labor attaché if they got the job opened and I told them that I would not. And I didn't think they should have a labor attaché anyway because the atmosphere there was absolutely unreceptive to labor work that would be meaningful to the United States. I told them that if they had any specific problems, I would be glad to do what I could, but I certainly wouldn't have the labor job because it didn't make any sense. This later turned out to be true. Some time after I was safely away from there, they did send a very qualified labor officer down and within a few months the Embassy was told that this man was bothersome so to finish his tour they made him principal officer in Zagreb and he ran the consular operation there.

Q: Any other comments about your days in Yugoslavia?

SULLIVAN: Oh, it was fantastically interesting because we could do actually quite a bit of political work. As I had done in Berlin when I moved from the political section to the consular branch, I asked my colleagues in these substantive fields if they had any questions I might help them out with. This was particularly the case in East Germany as well as in Belgrade because there were food problems. It was a simple matter, there were so few visas being issued, and people so eager to get them that you could quite easily call people in from a given village even and do a preliminary check on them and, of course, ask them if they got their rations or any other thing. So we got sort of an opinion poll from time to time. We only used one topic at a time with one person at a time so it was not intrusive. I managed to keep a little bit more informed in what was actually going on then some of the substantive officers that had no travel money.

Q: Now you were in Belgrade. Did you deal only with the Serbs or did the Slovenians and Croatians and others come in too?

SULLIVAN: We dealt with anybody who came in. But if there were troubling times, most of the troubling times came from American citizens getting in trouble with the local authorities. In those cases I was fortunate that my predecessor had told me one thing that was invaluable before he left. He said, "Don't bother with the Foreign Office if you want to get anything done. It just takes forever because they have to ask the secret police and the secret police doesn't answer very quickly." I asked my predecessor why he hadn't gone to see the secret police and said, "You would never do that." So, when I was about to make my initial calls I asked the ambassador if he had any objections if I called on the chief of the Section for Foreigners of the secret police. He said, "Why not. The most useful contact I have is the Minister of the Interior who is in charge of the secret police." So I established a pretty good contact and, of course, ties with the Chief of the Section For Foreigners, who was, by the way, a Slovenian and spoke fluent German so we had no

trouble getting along. We worked on a very simple principle that he and I were equally interested, although for different reasons, in having zero population of Americans in Yugoslavia jails. And it worked very nicely.

Q: After your...

SULLIVAN: Oh, one other thing.

Q: Yes, please.

SULLIVAN: Towards the end of my tour we had one incident that was very interesting. They had a revolution in Hungary.

Q: Oh yes, 1956.

SULLIVAN: Right along the border and I went up to watch the revolution which you could see from the border. The Serbian guards up there claimed that there was lots of fog and they couldn't see what was going on, but you could see what was going on. After the Russians got control of things, the first thing they did was stop the flow of Hungarians to Austria, which meant that the ones who were doing the fighting and wanted to escape had to come to Yugoslavia, which they did reluctantly since the Yugoslavs and Hungarians are mutually antipathetic. But this communist Yugoslav state some how or either felt bound by the Charter of the United Nations to grant political asylum to these fleeing Hungarians. They stripped the soldiers of their uniforms and weapons and trucks and gave them political asylum and put them in the now closed summer hotels. It took quite some time for Washington, particularly Congress, to recognize that about a quarter of all Hungarian refugees had fled to Yugoslavia not because Yugoslavia was communist, but because it was the only place they could flee to.

So I wound up, under the direction of Ambassador Riddleberger, as being the coordinator at the embassy of what proved to be a rather considerable refugee effort, although it was about a year late in getting going due to clearance which was done mostly by intelligence persons who were under rather strict control and we had international organizations and a number of our Immigration and Naturalization Service people on special operations. So it was very interesting business telling these people how to keep their nose clean. And then I was the contact between them and the secret police which was in charge of the whole business. Some fascinating anecdotal stories came out of this. It was a good effort and certainly interesting.

Q: So you were able to help many of the Hungarian Freedom Fighters to get to the US.

SULLIVAN: Well, not personally, but I facilitated the process. There was another group there. I must tell an anecdotal incident of the time to give you a little idea of the mentality of how Balkan people are. Shortly after I took over as consul, we began to get a very heavy number of requests for registration on the immigrant waiting list. As a matter of fact, in something like six or seven months we got about

100,000 applications which were as many as we had had from the time the office was open after World War II. And, of course, the quota was extremely small. Before any of the new applications came in the waiting list would have been five years for some of them already on the list. It turned out after a good deal of trouble including hiring extra people to do this registration, that a small group of Yugoslavs who were discontent with communism and with Tito had figured out that there is an American requirement that we publish the status and numerical count of our waiting list for immigration and that this is available in the United Nations once a year. So they set out to try to get the entire population of Yugoslavia registered as intending immigrants and they hoped that in this way if it were brought up in the United Nations, the United Nations would do something to get rid of Tito. This caused a little bit of indelicate relations between myself and my friend in the secret police section for foreigners, but I was as baffled as he was for several months. I think he figured it out sooner than I did.

DOUGLAS S. MARTIN
Security Officer
Zagreb, Yugoslavia (1958-1960)

S. Douglas Martin was born in New York in 1926. During 1945-1945 he served overseas in the US Army, upon returning he received his bachelor's from St John's University in 1949 and later received his law degree from Columbia University in 1952. His career included positions in Germany, Washington D. C., Yugoslavia, Poland, Laos, Austria, Turkey, Nigeria, and Cameroon. Mr. Martin was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in January 1999.

MARTIN: When I first arrived in Yugoslavia, I got a shock, because I had been studying for nine months, and I had tried to keep it up by paying for tutoring in California. When I arrived, I couldn't understand a word the guy was saying. Well, it turned out he was speaking Slovenian, which is related but different, and then when I got to Zagreb, it was still a shock because Croatian is different from Serbian, and Janko Jankovic was definitely a Serb.

I remember the first day my wife said to me - we were living in a hotel, but she wanted to go and get some bread. She said, "What's the word for bread?" and I said, "The word for bread is *hleb*," which I had learned - *hleb*. Well, my wife went to the store and said, "*Hleb*." And they wouldn't pay attention to her. They would ignore her. They could see she was a foreigner and an American, but that's the way the Croats were. Finally, they said, "*Kruh! Kruh!* The word is *Kruh!*" Well, the word is *hleb*, but I learned later, the word *hleb* is from a Gothic word *hláifs*, which is an ancestor word of our word for *loaf*, and it has become the word for bread in all the Slavic countries, but not Croatia. They have still kept the pure, original word for bread - I guess - which is *kruh*.

MARTIN: We were following Croatian nationalism and Serbian nationalism. Various Balkan nationalisms are really very strong, unbelievably strong. As I reflected already when I told you about the language, they were fiercely loyal to their own language and didn't want to use any Serbian words. Everywhere you went, people at a party or something, somebody would come up, "Hey, that guy over there - he's a Serb . . . he's a Croat."

MARTIN: Yes. We were there, and these guys said hello to him. He said, "You know, things are changing. Six months ago they wouldn't speak to me. Now at least they acknowledge my presence." Things were changing then. There was a little bit of a warming up, a little lessening - not a little bit, a lot lessening - of the fanaticism, certainly towards religion and also in general. Ideologically, they were loosening up.

We used to go once a month to Slovenia. Slovenia was also a very interesting place. The Bishop there had been thrown on the ground and set on fire. He was an interesting character. This guy was definitely a peasant type, and had gone through a lot, but was still around. We knew a lot of newspapermen there. Somebody from Washington used to give us instructions. We used to have a lunch appointment to see someone. We'd know what questions to ask him; they'd be sent to us. Slovenia was quite different from Croatia, less independent-minded but nevertheless very independent at the same time. They were somehow able to appear to be very loyal to Tito; at the same time, they were doing their own thing. Economically they were progressing. And the Croats were more likely to get into trouble politically than the Slovenes. As somebody said, the difference between a Serb, a Croat, and a Slovene - there are a lot of jokes like that - when you tell a Serb to do something, he says "All right," and the Croat says "Okay" but he complains about it, and the Slovene just does it. That's what they used to say. I don't know whether you remember jokes like that.

MARTIN: On the question of a different attitude between the posts in Zagreb and in Belgrade? Well, it was different. We were very closely associated with Croats. Everywhere we went, we had associations with Croats. We had a Croatian maid, and we had a lot of contact with the people there. We felt that the people in Belgrade, where it was a very large diplomatic corps, that they were more involved with the other diplomats there and with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They reflected a Belgrade point of view, which was not exclusively Serbian, but it was mainly Serbian.

It got stronger later on. You know, Jack Scanlan, later on our ambassador, and also in the breakup of Yugoslavia, when you had Secretary of State Eagleburger - we were the last ones to go along with the breakup of Yugoslavia. That all came from Eagleburger, Scanlan, and those guys with a fixed point of view. They never really got out much. Some did, of course. A guy like Nick Andrews and a guy like Steve Palmer. Get Steve Palmer, he'll tell you. We reflected a Croatian point of view, and to some extent Slovenian, a local point of view, local nationalism, and local events - we were local. And Belgrade was more international affairs.

NICHOLAS ANDREWS
Economic Officer
Belgrade (1958)

Consular Officer
Sarajevo (1959-1961)

Desk Officer for Yugoslavia, Bureau of European Affairs
Washington, DC (1962-1965)

Nicholas Andrews joined the Foreign Service in 1950. In addition to Yugoslavia, he served in Germany, Yugoslavia, Turkey, Poland, and Washington, DC. This interview was conducted on April 12, 1990.

Q: I'd like to go back to the Romanian period because this is really just about our first contact, wasn't it, with the Soviets and what was going to happen in Eastern Europe, 1944-46. What was your impression? You were obviously a young man but you were watching this happen.

ANDREWS: It's very difficult to reconstruct what it was that I was thinking in those days. I was aware of the fact that the OSS had sent people in to Romania as early as August 1944 when King Michael and some of his democratic associates pulled a coup against General Antonescu, the authoritarian ruler, and committed Romania to join the allies, and to get out of its treaty with the Germans. The OSS people were around and were sort of rather heroic in my eyes because they had come in so early, and therefore in the very exciting period, in fact before the Russians got to Bucharest. But by the time I got there, in December before Christmas, there seemed to be a pattern already established. There was an armistice commission, that is to say a commission of the three major allies, the Soviet Union, the British, and the U.S., who were supposed to enforce the armistice conditions, and the U.S. military representation was about 50 to 70 officers and men. The British had perhaps a few more. And, of course, the Russians were all over the country. The Generals in charge of the military, ours, the British, and the Russians, met regularly. In our small interpreter group of four people, we had two that translated to and from Russian, as well as two who did Romanian, and all four of us could do French. We had one of these Russian-speaking Poles. I think he came down to Sarajevo once, to hunt, which a lot of western diplomats like to do there, and I can't remember now making any very special arrangements. Those were usually made between Belgrade and Sarajevo. He didn't stay with us. I think they put him up at either a hotel or a lodge belonging to the Bosnia heads of government. I can't even remember precisely whether he had breakfast with us, because sometimes even when everything was arranged, they did come by and have breakfast with us.

But Rankin didn't play much of a role in my life, either as Consul or while I was in Belgrade. Kennan came -- I suppose that would have been 1960.

Q: *Probably '61, because Kennedy put him there.*

ANDREWS: Okay, and he came in with...well, I think the Embassy was delighted, and he was very active, very busy. He came down to Sarajevo while I was there, and I set up the usual protocol meetings with so and so, and so and so, which were dull, I think, from his point of view considering the persons with whom he had spoken in other Republics, or in Belgrade. I think Bosnia leaders did not stand out very much, although I had a somewhat higher regard for the Prime Minister than for the other people. He was still no great shakes compared to his counterparts in other Republics. So it was a protocolary kind of visit. There was a Czech built ski lift type thing, but which wasn't used for skis -- well, yes, you could carry your skis on it, but it was more a sight-seeing thing. We went up on that, took one or two pictures of views of Sarajevo. I don't even remember if we did a party for him. We would have normally done some kind of a reception, but that doesn't stick in my mind.

But I remember wondering -- wishing -- that I could remember everything he said, because it seemed to me from the very first time he opened his mouth, what he said was interesting. And, of course, I didn't remember a single thing he said. We didn't only talk about Yugoslavia. And his wife came down with him, and we thought that she was very interesting too.

Q: *To sort of tie this in with my own personal experience, one day in about 1963 Ambassador Kennan called me in, when I was chief of the consular section in Belgrade, and asked me from the consular point of view, could we survive without Sarajevo. I said, "Certainly. We had very little work there, so obviously I can't judge from a political reporting perspective, but we could certainly pick up all the consular work from Sarajevo without blinking an eye, and no extra staff." And whatever it was, George Kennan shut the post down. You were at the other end I take it?*

ANDREWS: No, I wasn't because I was in the middle. Steve Palmer opened it, I think, in '57, and ran it to '59. I had '59 to '61, Charlie Stout, '61 to '63, and I think Bob Shackleford came in '63-'64, something like that.

Q: *Sometime around there it was shut down.*

ANDREWS: In '61 there wasn't the question of shutting it down. It was perfectly true to say that it was not a consular post dealing with consular work as such. There was very little visa business, a couple of passports once in a while. There were some Americans of Montenegrin descent who had returned to Montenegro, and occasionally had to deal with their passports, or the children they begot as the result of second marriages. There was no property protection, there was no shipping and seamen, or anything of that kind. There were a couple of fleet visits which were very nice. I got to go down to Dubrovnik. Bosnia, of course, has no outlet, or at least has a sort of an outlet on the Adriatic, but it was constructed by Tito, and the communists. It didn't have a natural outlet historically in the Adriatic.

But I argued with O'Shaughnessy, and others apparently supported me, that if I was going to try and deal with the Republic of Montenegro, as well as Bosnia, and I was going to keep on going out of my district through Dubrovnik to get to Montenegro, shouldn't I at least have Dubrovnik in my bailiwick. Because the rules of the game were, when you left your consular district you had to notify somebody in the State Department, and of course, if I kept on going out via Dubrovnik into Montenegro, I had to keep notifying, and wasn't this silly. So O'Shaughnessy relented, and I did have the district of Dubrovnik in my consular district, which meant that when the fleet came to pay its visits I was able to go down there and get rowed to the boat, and get lunch, and participate in their activities. But it was a political post basically. It was meant as a window on that part of Yugoslavia which had suffered the most during the war, where you had this peculiar mix of Serbs, Croatics, and Muslims, Eastern Orthodox, Serbian Orthodox, Catholics, who had fought with each other during the war; who continued to compete for power within the communist party in Bosnia-Herzegovina. And where some Yugoslavs had consciously placed some of their industry which was supposed to survive in case they were again run over from the north.

Q: It was very obvious that the Yugoslavs had put themselves into a posture where they could go back to the mountains if necessary.

ANDREWS: ...to defend their territory. Yes, I think so, and Montenegro is very much that kind of a place also. So my function as far as I could tell, was to stay in touch with important opinion leaders in the area, report what they said and thought, and what they did. There wasn't much persuasion that I had to do about anything. There were a lot of talks I had with them about Germany because they were still extraordinarily anti-German more than 15 years after the end of the war. And having served in Berlin I had a milder attitude toward Germany by then. And it didn't fit for them to be so anti-German, and at the same time say, "But we want tourism." Because Germans were the ones who were doing the touring in those days, and bringing in foreign currency into these areas. And I think it showed because the Germans sometimes met very sort of rude Yugoslavs somewhere along the way, who were more conscious of the communist party attitude toward Germany, rather than the need to make people welcome in order to attract foreign currency.

But the Sarajevo experience was unique.

Q: One last question about this. When you were there, who was calling the shots? I mean were things pretty well located in Belgrade as far as what was happening there, or because of the ethnic rivalries were the people in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the communist party leaders...

ANDREWS: I think the leadership of the Bosnia communist party, had gained a great deal of respect from Tito, and he let them run things the way they wanted to. There may have been plenty of consultation and discussion back and forth, but I think in the last analysis Putsar could decide how to do things in his own bailiwick. The communist party, of course, had both Croatian and Muslim, and Serbs in the leadership, and they worked

reasonably well together. And then in all the district levels you had the same kind of thing, where you didn't have just Serbs here, and just Muslims there. You had some kind of a mix. At the time the Muslims seemed to be least...they appeared on the surface less than others. They were much more reserved, much more under cover. If there were Muslims on the board of something, they seemed to be less evident and didn't meet the public very much. I think that changed over the last 30 years, but that's since my time. At the time I was dealing with them, there were a few Muslims in the party leadership, including the Prime Minister, who were outgoing, and were active. But they were, of course, not church-going. I mean they didn't go to the mosques. Like all the communists, they didn't belong to any church, and didn't go for that. But the Muslims as a whole were those looked down on, both by Croats and Serbs.

Q: This, of course, we're in 1990 and we're in the middle of a tremendous crisis going on in the Kosmet area because of the Albanian problem.

ANDREWS: In Bosnia-Herzegovina probably the Croats felt that they didn't have as much representation as they thought they ought to. But they were keeping very low also. You just didn't hear expressions of Croatian nationalism in those days. The Muslims have since become quite important, not only in the politics of Bosnia-Herzegovina, but also in the economics of it, and two or three years ago this huge scandal about money, and corruption centered around a very prominent Muslim political family in Bosnia-Herzegovina. But at the time they were brought into the politics of the Republic, but they were not part of it. They were brought into it because the communists wanted their representation, and thought it was only fair that they should be represented. But they were not naturally leaders in that area.

In Montenegro, it was just Montenegrins. There was no role played by Albanians or anybody else in Montenegro society. What you had though, I think, in both republics, beginning at the time I was there, was a sort of conflict between the older generation and the younger ones. The older generation being those who'd been part of the communist movement before the war, who had no great education, had not acquired much of an education at any time, but were still in charge and didn't understand economic things, didn't understand a lot of other things. In Montenegro you had this clash coming, I think, a little earlier. And I thought when I was there that there were a couple of younger people in the Montenegrin communist leadership who were up and coming, in fact did up and come, and they became leaders in Montenegro and have since been dumped by the new resurgent generation of forty-year olds. But at the time that they were thirty or so in the fifties, they were beginning to come up in Montenegro, and they succeeded. In Bosnia that was a little slower, and you had this rather complicated business of allocating seats according to race and creed, and origin even though people didn't pay attention to creed anymore. Still you paid attention to the origins, social and the racial origins. So young people had a lot of difficulty in coming up in the party, and after all, you couldn't make a career unless you were a party member, and unless you made yourself attractive to people.

Q: You left Yugoslavia in 1961, and then you came back and I have you on the Bulgarian-Albanian desk from '62 to '63, and then you were on the Yugoslav desk, '63 to '65. When you moved to the Yugoslav desk, what were your major concerns?

ANDREWS: '63 to '65. One of the problems at the time was Tito's visit to the United States. There had been an aborted visit during the Eisenhower years, and Kennedy wanted to have Tito come. And in fact, this happened in '63 before Kennedy was assassinated. The visit was prepared, I mean we went through all the rigmarole of worrying about security, and program, and so forth. Originally Tito was supposed to come to Washington for a couple of days, then go elsewhere in the United States. Then, as is usual in these cases, there was some heating up of the condemnation of communist leaders in the United States from various areas, Serbs against Tito...

Q: The ethnic groups within the United States...

ANDREWS: Ethnic and others. So finally Tito decided not to go to the West Coast, or to the mid-West. He arrived in Williamsburg, and we had him stay there overnight and then come to Washington the next day and be received, and talk to Kennedy, and then stay overnight at Blair House, and have some other meetings. Then he went up to New York. I didn't go up to New York. In New York he was at the Waldorf, I think, and there were a lot of people as part of his entourage, including people from the Ministry, journalists, and others. And basically all four exits to the Waldorf Astoria were covered by ethnics and others who were trying to disrupt the meeting, and screaming, condemnations of Tito, or any Yugoslav who came out of the Waldorf. A few people were roughed up. The police were there, but the police couldn't tell which were Yugoslavs and which weren't, so it was rather difficult to organize the security. But it was rather difficult, and the Yugoslav press gave us a bad time. The New York police didn't enjoy it either. There was a terrible racket in the area when Tito came or left, and it was therefore really not such a great visit.

On the other hand, the talks with Kennedy went very well, and that was the most important thing for Tito. And secondly, after all this noise and hullabaloo in New York with various Yugoslav members of his group being pushed around by police, or by ethnics, or whatnot...I'm not sure at whose initiative, Kennedy called Tito at the Waldorf on the phone, and had a chat with him explaining. He apologized, he hoped that all this noise, and so forth, hadn't disrupted his visit. He said this was in the nature of the American system where people were able to state whatever they wanted to state. He apologized if the control of the crowd had not been effective enough, but that he would never forget his talk with Tito, and how much he'd enjoyed the personal contact, and so forth. So whatever it was, it was something that Tito remembered afterwards as not only a gesture, but also a kind of emphasis of the value of top level talks.

You always wonder in those things whether you could have done anything to prevent it. The problem is that the State Department doesn't really have any handle on how to deal with the police forces outside of Washington, D.C., and even within Washington, D.C. They don't have control over them. They can just ask for cooperation and usually they

get it. But in New York, or for that matter in any other state, there isn't any system whereby the police forces of the area where a foreign guest is going to visit, are alerted and prepared for that specific visit. They can deal with normal visits, but when there is a particularly sensitive visit, or one which may provoke violence, they're always taken by surprise. They're never able to handle it. It isn't that one doesn't sort of tell them, it's just that they somehow don't have the system for reacting. They don't have that sensitivity to how foreign relations impact on domestic affairs.

So it should have gone better. I don't know what we could have done to make it better, but I think Kennedy saved the visit by calling Tito on the phone, and reassuring him. Because otherwise the tendency was to think everything went well in Washington, but the real America is out in New York. And we in Washington won't bother, won't do a thing to prevent those people in New York from degrading the Yugoslav flag. So these visits are a real pain, and that didn't make me very happy, but you survive them. You can't do anything about it.

Q: One other thing in our relations I can think of that got George Kennan very upset was the threat to cancel most favored nations.

ANDREWS: That came out of the Non-Aligned Meeting, wasn't it, in Belgrade at which Tito announced...Tito took the position -- which was an anti-American position...

Q: Probably colonialism, or something...

ANDREWS: ...something like that. Some issue that really turned us against him. We came to the conclusion that he was not non-aligned, if he aligned himself with Neyeré, and Nasser, and other, on this issue. It may have been colonialism...no, was it the ban on nuclear weapons or something?

Q: It could have been the ban on nuclear weapons. There were several of these issues. I'm just not sure.

ANDREWS: The meeting was in Belgrade. Tito was host, and here he was taking a leading role...

Q: This was in the early '60s?

ANDREWS: This was early in the '60s, and Kennan hadn't been there that long...it was probably '64 because in '63 he came to the United States. No, that could have been earlier, it could have been '62.

Q: It was something like that, before I got there, and I got there in '62. I was thinking it had something to do with the Kennedy round of negotiations, or something, and for some reason Yugoslavia was not going to get Most Favored Nation...it had something to do with Frank Lausche of Ohio, and some others, who were trying to give some difficulty to

Yugoslavia for their ethnic constituents. It didn't go anywhere, but it caused a lot of hard feeling.

ANDREWS: It may have been '61 or '62. It seems to me it was mid-summer meeting in Belgrade, maybe August. And Tito made the speech, took the position of the non-aligned bloc which was pro-USSR, anti-U.S.

Q: *I think it was condemning American atomic testing, and saying that the Soviet testing was all right. That was basically...*

ANDREWS: Okay, something of that kind. And the reaction in the United States was, "He's not non-aligned." Frank Lausche, I guess, wasn't he himself of Slovene extraction? And others took the position that we should deny Most Favored Nation tariff treatment to Yugoslavia, and we saved it. I mean the State Department, and the Administration, managed to hold on to MFN for Yugoslavia, but it was a relatively close call.

Q: *How did you save it. I mean how can one save something like that?*

ANDREWS: In those days there were some powerful committee chairman who were often willing to go along with the Administration, and who could round up votes for the Administration. Nowadays each Congressman is a lot more independent, and it's much more difficult to round up votes, and they don't listen to their committee chairman as much. Then you used the Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations, and the Secretary and Deputy Secretary made their own phone calls, and talked to people. And slowly you sort of rounded up the necessary votes, but it was more difficult, I think, than we had thought. And we were also uncomfortable because we didn't like Tito's action either, and Kennan himself was very much angered by it, and wrote a couple of fairly critical messages, as well as speaking critically to the Yugoslavs with the result that they started worrying about whether Kennan was on their side and understood them or not.

I think Kennan's view finally was that he had made his point, and after all, non-alignment didn't mean that they had to be on our side every time, otherwise you could hardly call them non-aligned. But that we had to do a better job in explaining to them what our position was so that they wouldn't take these positions. I'm not sure that we ever quite succeeded, but, I think, tried harder after that, because we somehow took things for granted sometimes.

Yes, that was a very bad point. I think that was before I got on the desk. The rest of the time on the desk was on the one hand, dealing with the Yugoslavs and that wasn't so difficult. On the other hand was trying to get some sort of control over what it was that the ethnic communities in the United States were trying to do to disrupt our relations with Yugoslavia. Their view basically was to destroy Yugoslavia, or to destroy Titoism. It wasn't clear what they were going to put in its place. I think the Croats wanted to go back to an independent state, and the Serbs wanted to go back to a greater Serbia, but there was no sense of a democratic multinational Yugoslavia coming out of it. So that the State Department's view was not very sympathetic to the ethnic groups as such.

Besides which they weren't above using violence to make a point. And the violence included, not just demonstrations outside the Yugoslav Consulate General in Chicago. I think they had a Consulate in Pittsburgh, and a couple of other places, but they'd waylay some Yugoslav coming out of the Consulate, or waylay him a couple of streets away. And then the police would get involved, and the police wouldn't know who it was. And I know dealing with the FBI during that period, that they were of two minds. On the one hand, they regarded Yugoslavia as a communist country, and all communists were therefore by definition threats to the United States. On the other hand there was an obligation to protect the Embassies, the Ambassador, and personnel, from violence by American citizens, and they took the point, but didn't want to do very much with it.

WILLIAM J. DYESS
Consular Officer
Belgrade (1961-1963)

Ambassador William J. Dyess entered the Foreign Service in 1950. His foreign posts included Belgrade, Copenhagen, Moscow, Berlin, and the Hague. In Washington, DC, he served on the Czechoslovakian and Soviet desks, and he was Chief of U.S. Soviet Bilateral Affairs. He also served in Public Affairs and was a spokesman for Secretary (Alexander) Haig. William Dyess was named Ambassador to the Netherlands in 1981 and served there until 1983. This interview was conducted on March 29, 1989.

DYESS: First of all, I wanted Chinese and, secondly, I wanted Russian. Then they had other languages on down. I put Serbo-Croatian -- I don't know where it was. It was way down the list. Next thing I knew, I was picked for Serbo-Croatian language training. This was in the spring of 1960.

I learned that, indeed, there had been an opening for Chinese language training, but it was difficult to find people who wanted to study Serbo-Croatian. Since I had made the "mistake" of putting that down, I did not get the Chinese training. I got the Serbo-Croatian training instead. I went over to complain to a person, and they told me -- I did complain and I thought I had a good case -- they said, "Now, Dyess, we don't know whether or not this will influence your view or not, but you are slated for the junior political slot in Belgrade."

Of course, that did influence my view because I wanted to be in a political section, so I said, "Yes, I'll postpone the Chinese training and I'll go ahead and take the Serbo-Croatian."

This was in the late spring or early summer. I went in in August to language training, and then in December of 1960, I got my first assignment which was to Belgrade, but it was to the visa section rather than to the political section. I was furious and I raised hell. I got a run-around and, I must say, this was amusing because the person whom I felt had not

dealt fairly and honestly with me later ended up on my staff and worked for me when I was Ambassador to The Netherlands. It was an amusing thing, but we never mentioned this. We never mentioned it. [Laughter]

I went ahead there and I was in the visa section. I was wrong. I was mistaken in wanting to avoid consular work, particularly for a junior officer. It's the best kind of work you can have because, if you're in a country like Yugoslavia, like Eastern Europe, it brings you into contact with the local population. I went out on welfare and whereabouts cases, deaths and shootings, kidnappings, and God knows what. I had, I suspect, the most interesting job in the embassy. I was wrong in trying to avoid this. It was the very thing I should have done, and I'm so happy that I was able to do it.

Q: I have you listed there as political officer. Did you later...

DYESS: Yes, then I later moved to the political section. George Kennan was there. He's a remarkable man, but I will have to tell you, frankly, he is not, in my view, one of our outstanding diplomats. He made some serious errors in Belgrade which we can go into at some point, if you want to.

I was picked out and I became the editor of the Joint Translation Service. This was something run by the British and the Americans, mainly, and a number of the embassies that cooperated. This was an operation in which we got up around five o'clock in the morning and began to translate the Yugoslav press into the English language. Of course, the Serbians who did this did not speak English well enough. So a British colleague and I had to edit all that they translated because Kennan loved the English language so much. He was not willing for it to go in this sub-standard English. I would start to work about five o'clock in the morning, maybe have a little coffee and breakfast around seven o'clock, and then I wouldn't break for lunch until around three or three-thirty in the afternoon. It was a terrible job. When I left there, I had ulcers all down my throat. I was going to Belgrade and I got as far as Hamburg when I was put in the hospital with pneumonia. It was really an awful time, and I think it was unnecessary.

First of all, I think the officers should have been able to read the language themselves -- Serbo-Croatian. They shouldn't have had the translations. If we had to have the translations, all you needed was to know basically what the article said and not have it polished English. That's the way that George Kennan wanted it. Maybe we can come back to Kennan at some point, because I was there during that period when he was -- this was the beginning of the Non-aligned Conference. September 1, 1961, was the opening of that and the Soviets broke the nuclear moratorium that day, the day it opened. So this is very interesting story and I had a ring-side seat.

Q: Why don't we go into that right now.

DYESS: The Non-aligned Conference was organized by several of the so-called non-aligned states, but Tito and the Yugoslavs played an instrumental role. The first conference was there, as I recall, September 1, 1961. President Kennedy had sent to Tito

a letter congratulating him on opening the conference and wishing him success. I didn't see the traffic but I'm sure that Kennan advised him to do this, otherwise Kennedy wouldn't have done it.

On that day the Soviets broke the moratorium on nuclear testing, and Tito got up and excused the Soviets and slapped us in the face, in effect. If I had been the ambassador, I wouldn't have let my shirttail hit my backside before I got over there to let them know what I thought about this. After all, we were making favorable noises about the opening of the Non-aligned Conference, and the Soviets just rained on their parade.

Kennan chose to do it differently. He boycotted the Yugoslav officials and he did that for two or three months -- that was a long time. It was as if -- here are these three great entities. It's Tito, President of the United States, and the American ambassador, and if any one of the three is not in sync, then things won't work. The Yugoslavs could care less whether he boycotted them. They were quite happy not to have to have this thorn in their side. It was a serious error. The Yugoslavs did not come back with hat in hand and said they did anything wrong, or so and so. So Kennan developed the theory that the Yugoslavs were going to rejoin the bloc. You know they left in 1948. He said they'd be going back in.

I thought that was the craziest thing that I had ever heard, because I have spent a lot of time in the study of Eastern Europe because of Coolski. I knew this was one of the countries that had been liberated, not so much by the Red Army but by the Yugoslavs' own efforts. I knew that they were not going back in. This was the craziest thing I ever heard.

Q: Did you have a chance to report to weigh in to -- as a junior officer --

DYESS: I did. Once Kennan called me to his office privately. He said, "Dyess, how old are you?"

I told him, and he didn't say anything. I don't know whether he thought, "Well, Dyess, you're old enough to know better," or what. He did not particularly appreciate it.

There were a couple of officers who made fun of him privately. I did not do that, but I did oppose him publicly to his face. There were four or five other officers there and they supported him. They found examples to support him. They didn't amount to a damn, the ones who did this. There were several who became ambassadors from that group that was there then, but they were keeping their mouths shut. Larry Eagleburger was there but he was in the economic section, and Larry was not in these little political meetings that we would have. Some of the guys began to joke about the arguments between Kennan and Dyess. Here is Kennan, this famous ambassador, and Dyess is a junior FSO at his first post. It was rather funny, except that I was sure that on this particular point, he was wrong. I began to see that the problem was his ego. That was why he couldn't see clearly. The U.S. military didn't buy this, because the U.S. attachés did. They told me this at the time, because they heard what I was doing since it had leaked out. They came

and told me what they were doing. They were using one-time pads to send messages back to Washington so the Department couldn't read them, but they were saying it was not true.

I saw other examples that Kennan -- he was a very able man in many ways, an eloquent man, but his ego was something that I had never encountered before in an individual.

To give you another anecdote -- this was when Mrs. Meyer, the Washington Post lady, was down there with her yacht and de Gaulle was there as well as Adlai Stevenson, Chief Justice and Mrs. Earl Warren, Ambassador Attwood and his wife, Drew Pearson and his wife, and there were a few more. De Gaulle was supposed to have a meeting on Brioni with Tito. They were having difficulty making contact with him, so Kennan -- I guess he didn't have anything particularly against me for standing up against him, or maybe he felt I was one of the ones who was expendable -- picked me out and sent me down to the coast to make contact with the governor. I was to let him know there was an embassy here and we'd like to talk with him. Also, Kennan had been invited to go down and join the yacht to sail up and down the Adriatic. I got down there and everybody was going all over creation.

Mrs. Meyer was sitting on the deck. She asked me to join her and I told her what my situation was and what I was there to do. She said, "Mr. Dyess, let me tell you what I have on my hands here. I have a circus of untrained fleas and they are bouncing all over creation. I cannot make contact with them. Maybe you can. Where would the governor be? I don't know whether he's with Drew Pearson, looking at some church Drew Pearson built 20 years ago, or whether he is off with Earl Warren, or what."

Finally, I found him and made contact. Then I went out to meet the ambassador who had come down. In the meantime, the yacht had filled up and so the ambassador was disinvited. There was not room for him. "Sorry, George, we'll do this some other time."

He said to me, "It didn't make any difference. I've been on Bill Benton's yacht and his yacht's bigger than this one."

It was very interesting. I didn't know what to say until we got down there. I began to see that this man, who was in many ways a brilliant man, required some special handling.

There were some young ladies there. I guess they were granddaughters of Mrs. Meyer, and they asked me to join them at lunch. I was about to say yes, but then I thought, "I had better check with the ambassador."

I checked with the ambassador and he said, "No, I shouldn't join them," and so I didn't.

He wanted to maintain a very clear distinction. I have associated with generals and admirals and saw how they treated young officers, and that is not typical. It is not necessary.

This also helped me to understand the problem that he had with Tito. In other words, if he was mixed up in it himself -- his own personality -- his judgment was cloudy. If he was not mixed up in it, then he had no problems.

Q: *That's an interesting view of a man.*

DYESS: I could give you half-a-dozen other examples of this. The same thing got him in trouble in Moscow. He came out of Moscow --

Q: *You weren't with him in Moscow, were you?*

DYESS: No, I was not with him in Moscow. I was there with Foy Kohler and with Tommy Thompson.

But Kennan came out. He'd been there only about eight months. He gave an interview and said that the situation in Moscow was worse than Berlin in the 1930's. Now people didn't understand what -- all that George Kennan was doing was calling attention to the fact that he had been in Berlin in the 1930s when the Nazis came to power and now he was in Moscow. That's all he was doing. The Soviets did not take lightly to this, and they PNG'd him.

Q: *That's right. I remember he didn't last long there, did he?*

DYESS: An ambassador should not, no matter whether what he said was true, should not say it. He claimed he didn't know he was going to be quoted, but I'll tell you, if you talk to journalists at press conferences and you don't think you'll be quoted, that's rather naive.

He was a remarkable individual, but whenever he himself was wrapped up in the problem, then his judgment was cloudy. He later resigned and he was telling people there that he didn't know whether or not the President was going to accept his resignation or not. They were, because his resignation wasn't decided in the White House. It was decided in the State Department and they just decided he was more of a liability than they could. . .

Q: *Back to Belgrade now. About this time the Djilas business began to erupt. Did you have any --*

DYESS: I never met the man. I followed it. I followed some of his writings, but I never met the man. I felt great empathy and sympathy for him and I thought, "Now here is a man for the future of Yugoslavia." But he did not seem to have the political sense to be able to manage the very heavy intellectual and philosophical burden that he was carrying.

I traveled a good bit over the countryside, mostly as a consular officer and then on special missions for the ambassador later on. I was amazed at how the country managed to stay together at all. In Montenegro you've got a culture and a populace that is so totally

different from Slovenia. The Serbs and the Croats are -- I'm amazed that it has stayed together as well as it has for so long.

Q: A number of people have commented on the impossibility of that group of people --

DYESS: I had a lot of Yugoslav friends, first because in the consular work, I moved out a lot. Then when I was running the JTS, we had 18 to 20 Yugoslavs working for us on that. I've heard stories that they would tell. During the war, for instance, a knock would come on the door at night and you know there were armed people outside, but you wouldn't know which side they were on. You wouldn't know what to say. They could be any one of five or six different armies. If you said the wrong thing, it meant your life.

I remember hearing people talk about seeing young German soldiers slaughtered, not only Yugoslavs of the opposing political views slaughtered, but German soldiers, too, just slaughtered.

Q: Now you were there during the great earthquake, or were you?

DYESS: No, I was gone. Fortunately, I was down in Macedonia before the earthquake and I saw the famous church there, the one with the wooden carvings. I've forgotten what that is called right now. I did not see it after the earthquake.

Q: The Cuban missile crisis came along while you were there. Was there impact there? Did that have any effect on your career?

DYESS: No, not really. It did not seem to impact upon U.S.-Yugoslav relations.

Q: I did a little research into your background, so maybe I can ask a few intelligent questions as we go along. I guess while you were there, Gromyko and Brezhnev visited. That was in 1962. Then [Nikita] Khrushchev came in 1963. Did these impact your career at all?

DYESS: No. When was -- what time of year -- I left. . .

Q: I think they were trying to shore up the Yugoslav --

DYESS: What Khrushchev was doing was, in effect, he was hinting very strongly that there could be separate roads to socialism, and that the Yugoslavs could go their own way. The Soviets were not going to try to crush them.

The only thing I can remember about any of these visits was that it just created a lot more pressure on the translation service. I did not, in my junior position, ever go to the foreign ministry or call any senior government officials. I was not, at this time, a note taker. That's important because, in subsequent posts, I was a note taker and that's very important. The only thing I could do was to see the traffic. I guess I saw practically

everything except "eyes only." I had not really a first-hand view and it wasn't a second-hand view. It was something in between the two.

JAMES G. LOWENSTEIN
Political Officer
Belgrade (1962-1964)

Ambassador James G. Lowenstein joined the Foreign Service in 1950. He served in France before joining the U.S. Navy in 1953. He reentered the Foreign Service in 1957 and served in the Bureau of European Affairs, the Economic Bureau, and the Foreign Relations Committee, as well as in Ceylon, Yugoslavia, and Luxembourg. This interview was conducted on June 6, 1994.

LOWENSTEIN: Well, the following week the Korean War started. Having escaped World War II, I knew that military service was inevitable and something I really didn't want to escape anyway. So I took two weeks off, came back to the United States, applied for various officer candidate programs with a first preference for the Navy, and then went back to Paris to wait for the call. By this time it must have been August because the next thing that happened was in late November. After Tito's break with Stalin, the US had decided to give economic assistance for the first time to a communist country, namely Yugoslavia. There had been a lot of congressional resistance to this, so long negotiations ensued between the executive and legislative branches. Finally it was decided to give food aid to Yugoslavia, which had had a drought the year before. When the conditions were all agreed on between the two branches of the government, the food aid program was to be administered through the Marshall Plan but was not going to be called a Marshall Plan mission because Tito did not want to become a member of the Marshall Plan. He had turned it down on Stalin's orders in 1948. So it was called the US Special Mission to Yugoslavia. Instead of being given to someone from ECA to head, a former president of the American Red Cross, Richard Allen, was recruited. He collected a group of experienced ex-UNRRA observers. I am not sure what they were all doing at this point, but most of them had been with UNRRA during the war and had done this kind of work in Eastern Europe. In addition, there was one Foreign Service officer, Elmer Yelton, and a couple of ECA experienced accountant comptroller types. They came to Paris for a week of orientation before going on to Yugoslavia. During their time in Paris, about half way through, one of these men died of a heart attack. Mr. Allen called up, I think it was Everett Bellows, who was the executive director of OSR, the European Headquarters of the Marshall Plan, and said that he had authority to arrive with so many bodies and he was going to arrive with that number of people and not one less. He, therefore, needed a body and asked Bellows to find a body and get that body down to the station on Saturday night. This was Thursday morning, as I recall.

So I got the call. I said, "Well, first of all thanks very much but I really don't want to go, and secondly, I have this Navy problem." So about five hours later, Everett Bellows

called me back and said, "We don't care what you want. This is not a request, this is an order and I will take care of the Navy. This thing is only going to last six months or so and we will get you deferred. You be at the station Saturday afternoon at 5:00."

So, I arrived at the station and found all the other members of the mission. I was at that point 22 and I think the next youngest was about 36 and most were in their mid-forties. They were a very experienced group. They knew that there would be two people in Zagreb, three people in Belgrade, and one person in each of the Yugoslav republics. There were two particularly bad republics for climatic and isolation reasons. One was Montenegro and the other was Bosnia-Herzegovina. A third was Macedonia, but the person in Macedonia could easily drive down to Salonika for the weekend. Then it turned out that the fellow who was in Montenegro was only an hour from the coast, so the least desirable, it was decided was Sarajevo. When I arrived, the decision had already been made by unanimous consent of the others: I was going to Sarajevo.

As the train left, I was told where I was going. We got off in Trieste where we spent three days. Leonard Unger was consul general at that point.

Q: Trieste at that point was under control of the UN?

LOWENSTEIN: At that time it was under Allied protection. This was before the Austrian State Treaty was signed. Anyway there were American troops there as well as...

Q: It had not been given back to Italy.

LOWENSTEIN: No, all of it had not been given back to Italy definitively. Zone B was still in dispute. The troops were there to protect Italian rights vis-a-vis the Yugoslavs. There was a large U.S. army detachment and the reason we had stopped there was that the army was outfitting us with jeeps, C rations, and Arctic clothing. So we spent four or five days in Trieste then got into our jeeps and drove over the mountains, which in those days was pretty bad. By this time we are talking about the last week in November, the first week in December. It was quite something. We were going through snow drifts several feet deep, constantly stuck and having to be pulled out by horses. We went to Zagreb where we had another two or three days of orientation. Zagreb had a very unusual consulate. There was a consul and a vice consul and for reasons that I never found out, the vice consul and the consul weren't speaking to each other. They relayed all their messages through the male secretary/administrative assistant, whose name was Mr. Ramsey. You would go to the consulate and one would say to the other, "Mr. Ramsey, would you please tell Mr. so-and-so that I will not be here this afternoon." Mr. Ramsey would swivel around in his chair and say, "Mr. So-and-so, Mr. So-and-so will not be here this afternoon."

Finally the day to leave came. I was put in my jeep with no sides on it, Arctic clothing, a trailer full of C rations, a couple of extra tires, not one word of the language, and no experience in the field. I set off over the mountains from Zagreb to Sarajevo.

Q: Were you to be alone in Sarajevo?

LOWENSTEIN: I was not only alone in Sarajevo but I was the only foreigner in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The last foreigner who had been living in Bosnia-Herzegovina had been the Italian consul in Sarajevo who had left with his pregnant wife in the middle of a bombing attack. His name, I was told then, was Cavaletti, a name I have always remembered. When I got to Luxembourg as Ambassador and was calling on my colleagues, lo and behold the Italian Ambassador's name was Cavaletti. I said, "Are you related to the man who left Sarajevo during the war?" And he said, "I am the same person and the lady who met you at the door is my daughter who was born shortly after I left Sarajevo."

So I arrived in Sarajevo. The trip had taken almost 20 hours. I had two extra tires in the trailer and I used both of them. I was as close to exhaustion as I have ever been in my life -- before or since. This was the worst winter in Bosnia-Herzegovina in living memory. I had been driving through blizzards and getting flat tires all the time. I didn't know where I was, I couldn't read the signs, I couldn't understand directions when I asked. Anyway I finally got to the Hotel Europa, which was to be my home for the ensuing seven months. And for these seven months, my job was to go out every morning and visit every local distribution point at the level of the Opstina which were like village councils. I visited every Opstina in the Republic, driving something like 40,000 miles in seven months in Bosnia-Herzegovina. I was out on the road every morning from 6 a.m. to about 7 at night, except for Sunday, which I took off. I did a report every week on every Opstina visited reporting on everything I observed.

Q: What sort of things were you looking for?

LOWENSTEIN: I was looking at the distribution system to make sure that all the stuff wasn't being simply driven up to Party headquarters and dumped off in a back room some place for their use. I saw that there were distribution points, that the citizens were lining up to get the food, that there was some method for distributing it, and it was going from the rail head to these distribution points. At least, that was ostensibly the purpose. In fact, there was another purpose of the mission which became rapidly evident to me although it was never stated explicitly. We were driving around in jeeps that had the American flag and ECA symbol on the side, and we were accustoming the people to seeing Americans all over the country. We were pretending to observe much more than in fact we were capable of observing. But the observing we did do was a deterrent to abuses. And what we were doing, it later became clear to me, was also setting the stage for further assistance programs. In fact, military assistance started soon thereafter in 1955. By getting everybody used to the fact that Americans were running all over in jeeps marked with the American flag, the next step was a lot easier for both the government to swallow and the people to accept. It was sort of a salami tactic in reverse. It was the first Western involvement in Yugoslavia that involved a visible presence.

Q: Were the Yugoslav people sensitive about Westerners being there or just the Yugoslav government?

LOWENSTEIN: The people were not, the government was. The head of the Party in Bosnia-Herzegovina was a charming character named Rudi Kolak who, I was told, had been Tito's radio operator during the war. After I had been there about three weeks, he called me into his office. I should say I was alone -- that is, I was the only American -- but I was given an interpreter and a mechanic. The interpreter was a graduate student from Belgrade who hated being in Sarajevo and whose English wasn't really very good. At any rate, he informed me that Kolak was furious that anyone as young and inexperienced as I was had been assigned to Bosnia-Herzegovina. He felt insulted, and thought he wasn't being taken seriously. So I arrived at Kolak's office (and he did the same thing to me three times in the course of seven months). He began by saying, "Are you enjoying it here in Sarajevo?" I said, "Not at all. You don't permit me to talk to anybody [which he didn't]. There is no fraternization. There is nothing to do, and I don't enjoy it at all." At which point he said, "Well, maybe we should introduce you to some pretty girls." I said I thought that was a very good idea. At which point he would shake his finger and say, "No, no, that is not a good idea, it would distract you from your serious work."

Now the funny thing about it is that Rudi Kolak later fell into disgrace as the result of a sex scandal which was known as the Palais Rose of Sarajevo which involved women, orgies, etc. So, in fact, he was predicting his own demise.

But Sarajevo was rather rough.

Q: When you said you were not allowed to fraternize did that mean you couldn't talk to people?

LOWENSTEIN: The only person I attempted to establish a relationship with was the son of the hotel manager who was 19. He liked American jazz and I had a shortwave radio. I had a living room and bedroom in the hotel. A couple of times he would come in and listen to jazz with me on the shortwave radio. About the third time he came in, he said, "this is the last time. I have been told I can't talk to you again." In fact, nobody talked to me. Well, there were two exceptions. There were two local government liaison officers who would take me out every couple of weeks to a restaurant, but one spoke no English, and the other a little and I didn't speak Serbo Croatian at that point. Conversation was all through my jolly interpreter who by that time was getting on my nerves. So I read a lot of books, although I was so tired at night that most of the time I slept.

Q: How often did you get down to the Embassy?

LOWENSTEIN: Every month we were all called into the Embassy for two days. I would either drive up or go by train. Twice I was called back to Paris, each time for two days. But the only way to get to Paris was by train, and the train took two days each way.

Incidentally, the Ambassador at that time was George Allen. He made it a point of going out and visiting each one of the food observers. I should mention that I had been

promoted to the exalted rank of FSS-9 and was making a bloody fortune. I had gone from \$3200 to \$5300! George Allen came down to Sarajevo and spent two days with me. He came with his wife and stayed at the hotel. Whenever I was in Belgrade he invited me over for dinner and just couldn't have been more interested, accessible, friendly, open, very, very impressive. He came up in a later stage in my life which I will get into when we talk about the Navy.

After six or seven months of this, I finally got word from the Navy that...

Q: What were your relations with the head of the operation?

LOWENSTEIN: Richard Allen? Very good. The whole operation worked well. The observers did an excellent job on the whole. A few of them weren't overly serious and devoted, and they did have a better time than the rest of us. Richard Allen, the former Red Cross executive, not only had a close working relationship with Ambassador Allen, to whom he was not related, but he was also a wonderful man to work with. So the whole thing was extremely interesting. The work involved a lot of responsibility for someone 22 years old and while I hated it, I loved it at the same time.

Q: Did your reporting extend beyond the distribution system?

LOWENSTEIN: Yes, it did.

Q: Would you like to elaborate?

LOWENSTEIN: Well, we were encouraged to put in anything. Since I had a lot of time in the evenings, I did a lot of reporting about the conditions of the countryside, whatever political observations I could make without being able to talk to people, conversations that I would overhear and ask my interpreter to translate, what the liaison officers were saying, what Rudi Kolak was like, etc. I don't know if anybody ever read these things, I don't know what happened to them, but I enjoyed writing them.

Q: Now Sarajevo is right and center 42 years later. Would you ever have thought it?

LOWENSTEIN: No. I don't think that anybody who served in Yugoslavia and knew it well, at least nobody I ever met, predicted what has actually happened. That there were all of these tensions, sure. That there might eventually be some separation of the country, sure. That there were going to be perhaps violent local outbreaks, gang warfare, sure. But the kind of thing that has happened, I don't know a single person, Yugoslav or American or foreign, who predicted it. Sarajevo's standard of living in those days was extremely low, and the population spent their energy surviving. People were very poor. There wasn't very much food or heat. The winter was extremely severe. The only time in my life that I saw wolves was coming back from one of these jeep jaunts after dark and I saw them in the distance in my headlights. This terrified my Belgrade interpreter who hadn't spent much time in the country.

Q: You left Ceylon in May, 1961. How did you get into Serbo-Croatian?

LOWENSTEIN: Apparently when Kennan was appointed Ambassador to Yugoslavia he wanted an embassy staffed exclusively with people who had previous experience and spoke the language. So I received these orders.

Q: You didn't ask for them?

LOWENSTEIN: I certainly didn't ask for them.

Q: What had you put on your wish list?

LOWENSTEIN: I don't think I had gotten to that point. I still had six months to go. I can't remember what I was thinking, if I was thinking at all. And come to think of it, I don't remember ever being asked in those days what I wanted to do.

Q: Did you ever think about staying in South Asia?

LOWENSTEIN: Either I wasn't thinking ahead or this thing about Yugoslavia arrived before I could start thinking ahead, I can't remember which. All I know is that I had no fixed idea about when I was leaving and where I was going. I thought I wanted to get back into the European political/military stuff, but I wasn't absolutely sure. At any rate it all became academic because I got this message saying I was going to be assigned to Belgrade. I said that I had already been in Yugoslavia once without the language and I wasn't going to go through that again. I didn't really want to go unless I had language training first. So I was assigned to language training.

I came back for language training and in the class were Larry Eagleburger, David Anderson, Stu Kennedy, Harry Dunlop, Dick Johnson, and Dick Johnson's wife who was the best linguist in the group. It was the first time in my life that I had no responsibility all day. The only responsibility was to go and sit in a room and listen to Serbo-Croatian and come home and do some homework.

Q: By then FSI was in the garage?

LOWENSTEIN: Yes, in the garage. This was underground. Everybody else was complaining, but I thought it was just marvelous that I didn't have any pressure, or responsibility, or have to get anything done. All I had to do was to do my homework and learn the language. I thought it was a splendid year, myself, although I am not a great linguist.

Q: But, you already had a sense for Yugoslavia.

LOWENSTEIN: Yes, I knew what I was getting back into. I was very excited about working for Kennan. So, the only thing that I was concerned about was I didn't want to go through all of this and be assigned to Zagreb or get out of political reporting and be assigned to something else. I did lobby on that and I was assigned to the political section. I don't think it was a tough lobbying job because the political section was enormous.

I was assigned to do internal reporting in the political section, Larry was assigned to the economic section, David Anderson was in the political section too. Harry Dunlop was in the political section. So we all finished language training and went to Belgrade.

There I had the horrible experience of living in a compound, the first and only time in my life. One of the most miserable decisions the US Government ever made was to build compounds in places where it is difficult enough to have a relationship with the inhabitants of the country. This is guaranteed to make it almost impossible, especially in a place like Belgrade. I must say I hated every minute of it and vowed I would never go to a place again where there was any compound living.

I know the Foreign Service doesn't like to make distinctions between substantive and non-substantive people at embassies on the grounds that they are all part of the same family, but they are not part of the same family, or rather they are part of the same family but with different functions. It is absolutely ridiculous to put substantive reporting officers in compound situations. Anyway, I got out of there after a year, but it was a terrible year.

Q: How did you get out of it?

LOWENSTEIN: I got out of it by being on a list to get a house when one came available and my name finally came up. I offered to find my own house but was told I couldn't. The trouble with compounds is that once they are built they have to be filled.

Life in Belgrade was interesting, but not particularly enjoyable. There was a very good group in the embassy. There was some fraternization but on a very superficial level. You could get to know the journalists, the professors in the think tanks, a few odd bods you find here and there, but...

Q: That was tough after Ceylon.

LOWENSTEIN: Yes, but after Ceylon it was really a different bag. On the other hand, Yugoslavia was much more important for American interests, there was a lot going on, there were more journalists, more involvement in day-to-day issues that concerned the United States, etc.

Q: Talk about how Kennan ran the embassy.

LOWENSTEIN: Kennan ran the embassy in a very distant way. That's not his thing, he is a thinker, obviously. I saw very little of him. Far less of him than any other ambassador I worked for.

Q: Was the embassy building a big one?

LOWENSTEIN: No, and he had to walk past my office every day to get to his office. So he walked past it in the morning, on the way to lunch, back in the afternoon, out in the evening. He had to walk past it at least four times a day and on most days far more often than that. He never really dropped in. It was true that I was a second secretary in the political section and he had the political counselor to deal with and the economic counselor and a couple of first secretaries, but...

Q: How large was the political section?

LOWENSTEIN: The political section had a political counselor, Dick Johnson, David Anderson, myself and somebody else. It seems to me there were five officers.

Q: Did the ambassador have a weekly staff meeting?

LOWENSTEIN: Yes, he had a weekly staff meeting, but the political counselor attended it.

Q: You didn't attend it?

LOWENSTEIN: No.

Q: Oh. He didn't have a daily staff meeting?

LOWENSTEIN: No. There was a political section staff meeting a couple of times a week and occasionally he would attend that. But by and large one didn't have much connection with him.

Q: What was he interested in?

LOWENSTEIN: Well there was MFN, the perennial question with the Yugoslavs as to whether they were going to have MFN privileges restored or taken away.

Q: MFN stands for Most Favored Nation status dealing with tariffs.

LOWENSTEIN: It was right after the non-aligned summit in which Tito had come out and criticized the United States for testing nuclear weapons, but had ignored a massive Soviet test of nuclear weapons, thus breaking faith with Kennan. It was a rather rocky period in Yugoslav-American relations. There was a lot of police surveillance and all Americans were on their guard all the time against being overheard, compromised, etc. There was sort of a security neurosis.

There were a couple of things that stick in my mind which didn't really relate to Belgrade. One was...as I recall we were testing the Hungarians to see when they would give diplomatic visas to visit. Two embassy officers every week would apply for visas in pairs. I was paired with Gerry Livingston, who was in the economic section and whom I had known before the Foreign Service. Suddenly these visas came through for us and we were the first ones to go. Our orders were to drive to Budapest and spend the weekend and visit what was then a legation in Budapest, to see if anyone tried to tamper with our trunk because Cardinal Mindszenty was still living in the legation. And to otherwise observe how much we were followed, which wasn't very difficult because we were followed from the minute we crossed the border until we crossed back into Yugoslavia.

Another part of it was that the embassy was divided into field reporting teams. One officer from the economic section and one from the political section. We were supposed to go out two or three times a year. I was paired with Larry Eagleburger. So two or three times a year, Larry and I would go out in a jeep and tour around the country, sometimes with Tom Niles in the back seat, who was a junior officer trainee. I did most of the driving because I don't drink and Larry would accept all offers of slivovitz that began at 8:00 in the morning, so by one o'clock in the afternoon the driving naturally fell to me. I had Eagleburger or Eagleburger and Niles conked out on the back seat. Anyway, those trips were a lot of fun.

Q: Did you get back to Sarajevo?

LOWENSTEIN: I got back to Sarajevo quite often.

Q: Was that part of your reporting beat?

LOWENSTEIN: No, it really wasn't, but I got back during trips down and back to the Dalmatian coast. In fact, jumping ahead, after I got out of the Foreign Service, when I started consulting with companies with interests in Yugoslavia, I was in Sarajevo quite often, so I kept up with Sarajevo.

The reporting in the embassy was sort of the usual grind. What was going on in the Party, what was going on in parliament, the new constitution, what it meant, relations with other countries. There was a daily press summary that had to be translated and edited, which the junior officers in the political section, or what passed for junior officers, we were all rather elderly junior officers, had to take turns doing.

Q: Talk now about Kennan.

LOWENSTEIN: Well, Kennan was someone whose weekly dispatches read almost like movie scripts they were so well written.

Q: Did he do a lot of writing?

LOWENSTEIN: He did a lot of writing and was in the process of writing a history of US-Yugoslav relations.

Q: In effect he was a political officer.

LOWENSTEIN: Yes. He was also doing a lot of arguing with Washington all the time.

Q: What was he arguing about?

LOWENSTEIN: Congress's behavior. Kennan has never felt that Congress has had a role to play in foreign policy.

Q: Do you have any sense as to how the Department regarded him?

LOWENSTEIN: No, I really don't. He cut a very elegant figure in the diplomatic life of Belgrade.

Q: Did he involve others in it or was he pretty much a loner?

LOWENSTEIN: He certainly didn't involve me or some of the other juniors. He did involve a couple of the juniors. Gerry Livingston was a great favorite of his. First of all because his Serbian was absolutely marvelous. He had been a graduate student in Yugoslavia before he went into the Service and had the best language skills in the embassy.

Q: How was yours?

LOWENSTEIN: Lousy. Mine was equal to most everybody else's. David Anderson's was stronger.

Q: What about Larry Eagleburger's?

LOWENSTEIN: I wouldn't say his was any better than mine. But David Anderson's was better and Gerry was easily the best. So Kennan liked that because he could use him as an interpreter. He also had a Ph.D. in history from Harvard and could fit right into helping Kennan write the book he was involved in.

But, I can't say that I got to know Kennan well. He was there only for the first year. He was replaced by Burke Elbrick, who had a totally different kind of relationship with everyone in the embassy, I would say a very close relationship with everyone. I saw a lot of him and by that time we had moved to a house that was a prefab built on the back lawn of the residence, so we were also his neighbors. I enjoyed working for him enormously.

Q: He was very open.

LOWENSTEIN: Very approachable, very open, very funny, very experienced, effortless in the way he did everything. He had a daughter who became a good friend of ours. So

my relationship with Elbrick was quite different. I remember one great incident with Elbrick. He loved good cigars, and he smoked Cuban cigars. At one point, there was a congressional delegation visiting, and one of the congressmen said, and I was there at the dinner, "Mr. Ambassador, are you smoking Cuban cigars?" Without blinking an eye, Elbrick said, "Don't tell anyone, I have been assigned to destroy their overseas supply." He never heard a word about it again. He was a wonderful ambassador to work for.

Q: What was your reporting beat?

LOWENSTEIN: My beat was internal politics, yet again.

Q: Doing the same type of reporting you did in Ceylon.

LOWENSTEIN: Well, my theory has always been that the traditional Foreign Service division of responsibilities is that the senior political officer does the foreign office and international relations and the junior does the internal. I think this is totally crazy. The internal is much more interesting and much more important. Given a choice, I would prefer the internal. After all the other is running down to the foreign office and exchanging notes and reporting views on something, but it doesn't give you a real insight into the country or a basis for any kind of original analysis. So I always preferred internal reporting. When Dick Johnson left to go to Sofia to be the DCM and I took his place...

Q: What position did he have?

LOWENSTEIN: He was the number two in the political section. I think then I had some responsibility for the external, but I never paid much attention to it because it was the internal that really interested me. The thing I spent a lot of time on was an analysis of the constitution, long talks with the Yugoslav author of that constitution using some of the normative, analytical techniques that Kelsen had taught me. So working with Kelsen proved to be a very useful experience for that particular job.

Q: Did you predict Yugoslavia would fall apart?

LOWENSTEIN: No, at the time it was difficult to see that they would fall apart, except for maybe Slovenia. My theory at the time was that if you looked at the intermarriage between Croats Bosnians, Slovenes and Serbs, it was so high that within a generation or two there wouldn't be any ethnic divisions. Intermarriage would obliterate these ethnic distinctions. The second element was the very intelligent policy of Tito which was to draft everyone, but to make sure that they served outside their own republics in other republics. I thought these two things would work against continuing these ethnic divisions, but I was totally wrong, obviously. However, there is a large group of Yugoslavs who don't know who they are because they have Croat mothers and Serb fathers and Macedonian wives. The one group that was clearly going to be the object of everyone's prejudice was the Albanians. They were really looked on as *untermenschen* and discriminated against in every possible way or ridiculed.

Q: Why was that?

LOWENSTEIN: First of all they were of Albanian and not Serbo-Croatian origin. Secondly, they were Muslim. Third, they came from a very underdeveloped part of the country. Fourth, they had stuck together as a group and hadn't intermarried. Fifth, in Kosovo they were far less educated, had fewer opportunities and so they were economically deprived.

Q: So, it sounds like Yugoslavia was not much fun.

LOWENSTEIN: It was interesting but it wasn't much fun.

Q: You were more disappointed after Ceylon?

LOWENSTEIN: Well, I don't know that I was disappointed, I didn't enjoy it as much. The embassy was quite large. There was a certain amount of bureaucracy. The political counselor was not a pleasant fellow to work with. The compound business really took the bloom off the rose in the first year. In the middle of the third year I had to leave before my tour was up because my daughter was hurt in an automobile accident. There I found the whole administrative structure absolutely unbelievable. The child was almost killed, needed to be evacuated and I couldn't get permission to do so. I finally said the hell with it. It was so bad that my then mother-in-law, at her expense, flew her doctor out to Belgrade to pick up my daughter. The embassy fiddled around with it for days.

Q: Was that just bad luck do you think or was it the way of operating of that particular mission?

LOWENSTEIN: The latter.

Q: Because the system works if you get good doctors.

LOWENSTEIN: The system did not work in this case. It can work 85 times, but if it doesn't work for you the one time in your life that you need it, it scars you personally.

So I came back in October or November 1984.

LAWRENCE S. EAGLEBURGER
Economic Officer
Belgrade (1962-1965)

Ambassador Lawrence S. Eagleburger spent a large portion of his Foreign Service career in Yugoslavia, first in the economic section, and

later as ambassador. This interview was conducted by Leonard Saccio on August 13, 1989.

Q: Having spent eight years in Yugoslavia, four years as economic officer, and four years as ambassador in the period from '63, would you like to comment on your experience there, particularly in relation to our Soviet policy during that period?

EAGLEBURGER: There are a number of things with regard to Yugoslavia that I could comment on, and I'll come to the Soviet question in a minute. But to me, one of the most interesting aspects of the Yugoslav time in both incarnations was watching, and is watching, a Marxist-Communist system try to cope with the inadequacies of that system. The period from '62 to '65, when I was there the first time, in the economic section, was really an early attempt at what has become known as "worker self-management," which is really a Yugoslav attempt to hand over the management of enterprises in the country to the workers. It was, and continues to be, an aspect of a Yugoslav attempt to find ways to make an inefficient system more efficient, and it bears some relationship, I've discovered in later years, both to lessons that the Chinese have tried to learn in the process of what they're now engaged in, and which also may give us some insights into Mr. Gorbachev's problems now in the Soviet Union.

Essentially, I come away from that eight years largely convinced that the system, a Marxist-Communist system such as we find in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and less and less in China, is not capable of reform in any meaningful economic sense. I'm not even talking about the political side, because I would argue that there has been substantial reform in Yugoslavia on the political side, and substantial change and reform on the economic side, but that the limits on the ability to change the system -- I think the Yugoslav case, which, in a sense, has been going on since about the mid-Fifties -- demonstrates that with the best will in the world, if you remain within the basic parameters of the Marxist philosophy, the limits on your ability to make meaningful reform are fairly substantial. And therefore, it is unlikely -- certainly the Yugoslav case proves it up to this point -- it is unlikely that the reforms can take place unless you are prepared substantially to move away from the philosophical givens of Marxism.

Q: Would you comment on the effectiveness or the success of a part of the United States AID program with Yugoslavia, particularly from the economic point of view?

EAGLEBURGER: There are two aspects. The first, the military assistance in the aftermath of the break with Moscow, was absolutely critical to Tito's ability to continue to maintain an independent course. There was a fairly substantial amount of military aid given, both in terms of ground equipment and air equipment, which I think even the Yugoslavs today would admit was critical to Tito's ability to continue to maintain his independence. The economic side, by and large, was a success, particularly on the agricultural side, where what we did substantially improved the Yugoslav situation, even with the limits of a collectivized system. Our aid had a great deal to do with providing the Yugoslavs with the means over the course of about a decade, to become relatively self-sufficient in wheat, corn.

One of the things that the eight years in Yugoslavia also taught me is the limits of American ability to deal creatively with countries which have a system antithetical to ours, and which for geopolitical reasons more than anything else, have to take positions on a number of issues which appear to be substantially contrary to our own in the U.N., for example. At the same time, I am convinced now and have been for years, that fundamentally, the Yugoslavs, including the Yugoslav government and the party, recognize that their long-term interests rest with the West, not with the East.

Yet in the time I was there during [George] Kennan's period as ambassador, we went through a real agony; the Senate and the House, at one point took away most-favored nation treatment from Yugoslavia because they were unhappy with the way in which the Yugoslavs were conducting themselves within the non-aligned movement. That didn't last long and we got most-favored nation treatment back. We had similar problems with regard to the supply of arms to the Yugoslavs. After having distanced themselves from the Soviets, they began to move a bit closer to the Soviets in the Khrushchev period, and we ended our arms supply.

We have an inability to manage the nuances of foreign policy when it comes to questions such as dealing with a country like Yugoslavia, which clearly, if you look at it over a 40-year period, has moved substantially away from the Soviets, both in terms of its political views and, indeed, in terms of the way in which it organizes itself internally. Yet because it calls itself Marxist and Communist, there has been a less than steady pace in terms of the way we've reacted and responded to the Yugoslavs.

In the Chinese case, we seem to have learned our lesson to some degree, and are being a good bit more creative than we were in the early days of the Yugoslav break with Moscow. One of the factors that concerned me when I left the Foreign Service, and continues to concern me, is our inability to separate ourselves on occasion from the rhetoric and look at the realities of the relationship.

CHARLES STUART KENNEDY
Consular Officer
Belgrade (1962-1967)

Charles Stuart Kennedy entered the Foreign Service in 1955. In addition to Belgrade, he served abroad in Frankfurt, Dhahran, Saigon, Athens, Seoul, and Naples. He also served in Washington, DC at the Intelligence and Research Division, the Office of Personnel, the Foreign Service Institute, and the Board of Examiners. He was also a State Department Liaison Officer to Immigration and Naturalization Service and later worked on the Consular History Project. This interview was conducted by Victor Wolf on July 24, 1986.

Q: You had an assignment in Washington in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, and you also had Serbo-Croatian language training. But then I think the next big assignment you had that touches on this issue was as consul in Belgrade from 1962 to 1967. One of the things that would strike me as being significant here was the juxtaposition of our having essentially friendly relations with a Communist state, on the one hand, and the very stringent anti-Communist position laid down in the McCarran-Walters Act when it comes to visa issuances. Was that a major preoccupation for you?

KENNEDY: Yes, it was, because we wanted to encourage non-emigrant travel of the elite, the people we thought would return to Yugoslavia after visiting the United States. It was the only Communist country at that time with whom we had really close relations, but we had this law that just said if you were a member of the Communist Party or something, you had to get a waiver. The Immigration Service was really very good with this, because we could call the Immigration Service. They had posts in Vienna and in Frankfurt. And I could get a waiver over the phone, if necessary. But emigration created some problems, because many of the people who came to us would have been affiliated one way or the other, usually not Communist Party members, but they'd belong to the Workers Alliance or the Communist League, this type of thing. We would have to find out whether or not they were significant members or just rank and file members.

George Kennan felt his importance, because at that point he was a well-known historian and political thinker, as well as being somebody who had left the Foreign Service, and had been personally picked by President Kennedy for the position. So I had trouble, because every time I had a visa case that caused me problems, he was quite willing to get on the phone and call up Robert Kennedy, who was Attorney General at the time, to straighten it out, and I didn't think this was the right way to do this. You usually got around it by sort of going at a lower level.

Our problem there in Yugoslavia was really both the Communist side and dealing with getting waivers, but also initially non-emigrant visas for so-called visitors who actually planned to go to the United States. We had a great deal of trouble sorting out the "good visitors" from the "bad visitors."

Q: I know that in other Eastern European countries, there are several categories of what are called "bad visitors." One category are those who use the non-immigrant visa to come to the United States and stay permanently; the other are those who use the non-immigrant visa to go to the United States, work for a number of years, save their American dollar earnings as much as they can, and then when they return to their country, they are in a very good financial situation to live well. I know, for example, that this is a pattern or was, at any rate, in the late Seventies, as far as Poland was concerned. Did you encounter that sort of thing in Yugoslavia?

KENNEDY: Not as much as in some other countries, but we had our problems. Western Macedonia was a particular thorn in the consular side. There was an extensive Macedonia community in some of the factory towns of our Midwest, especially in Gary, Indiana. We would sometimes get a busload of men and women from the little town of

Ljubojno, near Bitola, asking for visitors' visas. Our experience was that most were going to stay as that was the pattern. It was no fun to sit and interview person after person, often young peasant women who were going to Gary or the like to be presented at the local Macedonia Hall for the bachelors of the community to look over and select them for their brides, and house servants (the wedding came first and then the house work came immediately thereafter). Sometimes we would break down and take a chance hoping that some of our visitors might return. I remember issuing one visa and noting on the approval card that the young lady I was issuing the visa to was so lacking in physical attributes of beauty that I was sure she would not be asked to stay. She was married within a month of entry. I sometimes think that the good citizens of the Gary should put up a monument to the consular officers whose mistaken judgments made the population of their city grow.

In 1967 Montreal had a world's fair, called Expo '67. Air Yugoslavia arranged for special charter flights to go to Canada for those who wanted to see the fair. The flights stopped off in the United States so we were in the transit visa business. We were flooded with applicants who wanted to see the fair. Now there were special air fares which was an inducement, but we were very suspicious when we had busloads of people coming up for visas who had never even been to Belgrade before, but suddenly had a yen to see a fair in Canada. We had to turn down many of these visas, much to the annoyance of the airline people.

We had many people who were getting Social Security benefits, who had been working in the United States, some through the war years, all had returned and were living rather well on what we would normally consider to be a modest pension, but in Yugoslavia at the time, it was significant. They had left their families behind. But the ones we were getting at that point were people who were just trying to get out. Yugoslavia was depressed and it was a little hard to get money back, and so the ones that were going were trying, as far as we knew, to settle permanently, but it was a little hard to judge at that point.

Q: What else do you think was significant, as far as movement of peoples is concerned, with regard to the five years you were in Yugoslavia? Can you give us any other thoughts?

KENNEDY: We did deal with the problem of escapees. Yugoslavia was sort of a semi-closed window for the rest of Eastern Europe. Many Eastern Europeans could get into Yugoslavia for vacations, for business trips, but they couldn't get into the West, because they would appear to be defecting, leaving. We spent a good bit of our time interviewing people from East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, not really from the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, who would see the American flag and felt they were there in Yugoslavia, feeling somewhat anonymous, felt they could come and talk with them about getting out, seeking refuge. We couldn't give refuge to them because they were not in imminent danger.

Q: You're referring to the asylum process, the distinction between what one could call legation asylum and territorial asylum.

KENNEDY: Yes.

Q: You couldn't give legation asylum.

KENNEDY: We couldn't give legation asylum. Then they would ask us, "How do I get to Italy or Greece?" which were the two main places to go. We would have to say, "We can't advise you to do this," because we had a concern about our relations with the Yugoslavs. But we'd say, "If I were doing this, I certainly wouldn't try this border crossing point. Maybe this one. We've heard people go through here." So we'd give them a certain amount of direction. The Yugoslav attitude was sort of "iffy," because they didn't want to be the prison guards for these people, but at the same time, they didn't want to lose their credibility with the rest of the Communist world. So sometimes they would pick them up at the border; other times they'd just shoo them back; other times they'd turn a blind eye and let them go across.

Q: Do you have any sense as to the percentages who fell in each category?

KENNEDY: I'd hate to judge. There was a significant number of people, particularly during the summer months, who came to us to ask for assistance, including people from other Communist countries, on getting out. We would talk to them and listen to them, try to give them as good advice as we could without jeopardizing our position with the Yugoslavs.

Before finishing with Yugoslavia I should mention the problems of fraud. They were not significant as compared to many other countries, but we had our problems. I had received a few unsubstantiated complaints about our chief visa clerk, Madam Zhukov. She was a very distinguished elderly lady who was in charge of quota control, which called forth immigrant visa applicants when their registration date was reached. It was hard for me to believe that she was engaged in some sort of shady deal, and the allegations were vague. I checked out whatever I could, but they smacked of sour grapes, of people who did not get visas for perfectly legitimate reasons. Then one day I was called early in the morning and told that Madam Zhukov had died in her sleep. After going to her apartment to pay my respects, she was lying on her bed while all of us gathered around and mumbled nice things about her, I returned to my office. There I had to immediately settle the line of succession. The other Yugoslav ladies who had worked under Madam Zhukov were all atwitter over who would take her place, with all sort of rumors going around about what I was planning to do. At that point I was not planning anything but to get through the day. But the concern was such that I had to settle the matter right away. During my conversations with the potential successors I learned that Madam Zhukov had indeed been taking advantage of the system. She would take a perfectly straightforward case shortly before we were due to set up an appointment for an interview and to issue the immigrant visa, call up the person and make a big show of going through the file, tisk-tisking and making discouraging sounds as she read the file.

This would make the applicant nervous and ask what the problem was? Madam Zhukov would say that there were difficulties and she was not sure if a visa could be issued. The applicant would ask what should be done and Madam Zhukov would suggest that they see a lawyer, and give a name. The applicants usually rose to the bait and did that, with the lawyer and Madam Zhukov splitting the fee. Since the visa was almost always issued there were few complaints, and the ones I received were not specific enough. The ladies of the visa unit saw this but were afraid of the Grande Dame and said nothing until she was dead, and told all within a few hours.

Another learning experience for me was on how to treat instructions from the Department. I discovered the hard way that you really have to look at everything from the local point of view and modify, if necessary. In 1966 or 1967 there was a major reform of the visa law which eliminated, among other things, the possibility of anyone signing up for a visa with little hope of ever being called. We had people who were registered as non-preference applicants who had no close relatives in the U.S. or line of work that would qualify them under the law, but they could put their names down on the list prior to the law reform. We had almost 100,000 on our waiting list and just from an office point of view it was a major burden since we were always having to answer letters and explaining that the waiting list was not moving, etc. The new law allowed us to cancel these applications after we explained that they had to be qualified, by job or close relative, which meant either parents, spouse, child or brothers or sisters in the United States.

The Department sent us a form letter that we were to translate into Serbian and send out to everyone. We expected that we would be able to cancel thousands and thousands of registrations after the applicants realized they did not qualify and did not reply to our letter asking if they did indeed have relatives or work that made them eligible. Unfortunately I had the form letter transcribed literally. Now in Serbian (and Croatian) there is a very complicated relationship system with special names for every relationship, including those of cousins on both sides of the family. Included in these names were the use of "brother from the aunt" or "sister from the uncle" denoting cousins, sometimes quite far removed. In normal talk the Serbs would refer to their cousins as "brothers or sisters" so when our letter went out all the applicants noted that they did indeed have "brothers" or "sisters" in the United States. Everyone in Yugoslavia has some sort of cousin in the U.S.! It took another mailing and much correspondence to untangle this mess. I should have said to my staff, "Look this over and see if there are any problems" but I just said "Translate it".

DOUGLAS HARTLEY
Economic/Political Officer
Belgrade (1960-1962)

Commercial Attaché
Belgrade (1972-1974)

Douglas G. Hartley was born in England to American parents and was educated at Eton and Harvard University. After entering the Foreign Service in 1956, his assignments abroad have included Copenhagen, Salzburg, Belgrade, Milan, Athens, Rome, London and Brazil. Mr. Hartley was interviewed in 1998 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: Popovich most of the time, til we had a revolt. Could you explain who the two instructors were?

HARTLEY: Both of these guys, Popovich and Yankovich, were Serbian exiles and they were in character completely different. Popovich was a sort of--how would you describe him? Blustering, very typical Serb actually in many respects. He was a very pleasant guy. I don't know what he was like as a teacher because I never had him. Yankovich was completely the reverse--a very thoughtful, studious, methodical, very slow guy. He was a good teacher, but he had a terrible monotone and after six hours of daily Serbo-Croatian it was hard to stay awake. I will never forget him always saying, "You see---You know." Just about every sentence had "You see--You know" at the end.

Q: Were you picking up anything about Serb culture? When I say Serb, I really mean Serbo-Croatian.

HARTLEY: I remember making contact with a member of the Yugoslav embassy, a guy called Dusan Strbac. We invited him and another guy over from the embassy and they came and had dinner with us. I played tennis with him and got to know him reasonably well. We had long talks with him about the situation. Of course, he was a pretty fervent communist. But they always had a different and interesting point of view on the Soviet Union. I found that the Yugoslav approach to the Soviet Union was interesting. I guess I tried to read some of the magazines. There was a pictorial dictionary of Yugoslavia that was produced. I had that for years and it got lost in one of the moves. Looking back on it, I think I got that when I got to Belgrade the first time. What with the language, there is fairly limited time for extensive research outside of the language, I found. Also, we had two young children.

Q: Could you describe the situation in Yugoslavia when you got there? Or talk about it.

HARTLEY: Well, in 1960 Belgrade was still very austere. Though they had disassociated themselves from the Soviet Union years before and they were receiving military and other aid from the United States for some years, basically the whole atmosphere was pretty austere. We got there in July and we were put in the Excelsior Hotel and were able to get out of that in a couple of weeks. I found a temporary apartment, which was difficult and had problems with heat, plumbing, and the whole bit--bedbugs, which chewed up on our baby in a big way. We stayed there for three months or so. The embassy had a housing policy, which meant that a lot of people have to wait for months and months to get housing. I ultimately worked through the Yugoslav protocol section to

come up with a downtown old apartment which had been the Syrian embassy. Our embassy was a bit upset because I was meant to sit and do diddlysquat while they found me something, but I stuck to my guns and we moved in after about 4 months. The apartment was owned by an elderly lady, Madame Rakic, whose husband was one of Serbia's foremost poets and had been a diplomat in the old regime. Belgrade itself was fairly grim though I always found the city fascinating and loved where we were living as it was in the old section next to the one mosque left in Belgrade. The shops had little to offer, and as winter came on, there was very little in the way of variety in vegetables. Though there were no shortages, per se, the choices were very limited. They had very limited hard currency reserves. They had barter agreements with various people like with Israel. All of a sudden, you would find thousands of oranges.

Q: Did you gain any impressions about Yugoslavia from the trip?

HARTLEY: I did gain impressions of the diversity of the country because you go from the Kosovo and Pristina, which someone described as being like a town in central Anatolia - a dirty, very primitive place. And then we went from there through these excruciating roads. The roads were largely unpaved in Yugoslavia in those days. They did an incredible amount from then until the time I returned in 1972 in terms of repaving and building infrastructure. Pretty primitive. You'd go to hotels and there would be no running water and sanitation conditions were terrible. We would interview the heads of the opstina (town councils). These were usually not very illuminating talks. They were for the record. And I usually conducted these because I was a member of the political section and I think my Serbian was better, too. We hit Titograd, now Podgoriza, capital of Montenegro and onto Cetinje on the Adriatic coast, a pretty little fishing village near the Albanian border. I had made an idle boast the night before at the restaurant. "You guys may have good fish, but you don't have good lobster." They said, "Oh, yeah?" The next morning about six o'clock or seven o'clock, we were wakened by this little boy who came up to the hotel room and said, "Your breakfast is served." So we took ourselves to the same place, down on the water and there was an enormous meal.

When Serbs, or for that matter any Yugoslav, asks you for a meal and to drink, they have no bounds for when they start drinking. It can be any time from seven o'clock in the morning on. So we had to drink about a bottle of wine each. And this was before the interview scheduled for 8 am. I remember we kind of staggered up the hill, found his office, and my language had become confused at best. When he was finally responding to one of my questions, I fell asleep and had to be woken up. It did not make a tremendously good impression, I think, looking back on it. We had a lot of fun and approached it with a spirit of adventure. It was great to get away from Belgrade. In any event, I produced a report which seemed welcome. I think it was seven or eight days we were on the road.

Q: Can you kind of explain the atmosphere at the approach of your junior Yugoslav hand at this point? And this became important later on by senior Yugoslav hands at the

breakup. Were you developing an attitude toward Yugoslavia at that time, do you think--you and your colleagues?

HARTLEY: The first time, I don't think anybody questioned the fact that Yugoslavia was an entity and that Tito had succeeded in welding together this entity. We accepted the fact that there were different areas in very widely differing degrees of advancement in terms of economic infrastructure and what have you. We looked upon it as basically like Italy, with the big imbalance between north and south. It was one of the reasons eventually for the breakup obviously, because the north and western republics of Croatia and Slovenia for the most part resented the fact that they felt they supported the less developed republics for which they felt no area of common interest. But these were pretty academic considerations as far as I remember. There was no active resistance, nor even criticism; even not in the occasional article from Slovenia or from the Croatian Vjesnik, which we did translate. We were after all in Belgrade and embassies tend to take on the profile of the area they live in, like trying to analyze the U.S. from Washington. Most of us liked the Serbs. I remember after two years of Athens--I'll probably come back to this--but coming back to Belgrade by direct transfer and feeling like I was on the way back home. The Serbians I felt more at home with than I ever did with the Greeks.

Q: I think this is true. I felt the same.

Q: Doug, you've been taken out of Athens, and you are sent up to Belgrade. This was '72 and you were in Belgrade from '72 to when?

HARTLEY: I was in Belgrade '72 to '74. I filled out the rest of a four-year tour in Belgrade. I was direct-transferred to Belgrade because they needed a Serbo-Croatian language officer to replace Bill Whitman, who was the commercial attaché. I drove up to Belgrade in a Volkswagen bus with my two daughters, Virginia and Sandra, three cats, two dogs, and a trailer with a boat on it. I got up near Thessaloniki and I left the boat and the trailer there to be picked up by Dick Jackson, who had recently been posted there. Anyway, we managed to get up to Belgrade, got housed, and my wife joined us. I started my job as commercial attaché under Ambassador Mac Toon, a career ambassador who had been in the Soviet Union and went on from there to Israel. He had been ambassador in the Soviet Union. My immediate boss was the economic counselor, a guy called Dave Bolen, who went on to become our ambassador to the Lesotho, then to East Germany. He had the distinction of being one of the relatively few black Foreign Service officers who had at that time achieved a high rank. He was pretty much of a hands-on guy who liked to keep pretty careful tabs on whatever was going on in his shop. He was there for a year. Then he was replaced by Leo Gotzlinger.

Yugoslavia had undergone a tremendous change in the 10 years I had been away. The first tour it was very definitely an iron-curtain type of a place. It was the kind of place you didn't want to stay very long. You wanted to get out to Trieste and a lot of us tried to do that as much as we could to see the shops, to see the bright lights. Trieste looked really

good after Belgrade in those days. This time, coming back, they were beginning to build up - had already built up their foreign debt pretty much, which I think was one of the reasons eventually for the disaster that happened in their country. They were freely importing all sorts of consumer goods. The Robna Kuca (a department store) in Belgrade had just about anything you wanted. In fact, afterwards when I went to Salvador, Brazil, there was less of an assortment than there was in Belgrade at that time (not now, mind you!) In other words, it had become in the interim-- maybe not so much politically but economically--increasingly tied into the west not only in terms of consumer goods but also in terms of trade patterns and what have you. Of course, they had a peculiar type of economic setup that was somewhere between capitalism and communism, which consisted of the state enterprises, *preduzece*, which had certain characteristics of fairly free-wheeling - at least superficially - characteristics of western corporations. But in fact, were coddled in a way that western corporations weren't. But they had the advantages of being able to retain overseas accounts - for example, hard currency accounts. They also had the great advantage of being co-owners of banks in Yugoslavia, so they could basically write themselves their own ticket. And when it came to loans, this again came back to haunt them later on when the bubble burst and repayment time came due and the world had somewhat of a recession as it happened later, back in the '80s. But when I was in Belgrade, things were looking good. People were looking much better than they had. They dressed better. They were less fearful since the secret police wings had been clipped back after Alexander Rankovic, the Serb head of the UDBA (secret police), was caught, they say, bugging Tito's bathroom in 1968. The political situation was basically frozen but there was greater ease of traveling to the rest of Europe, it was easier for ordinary folks to get to the Dalmatian Coast. The roads were incredibly improved over the early 1960s.

Anyway, you didn't hear of the police breaking into people's houses overnight and taking them away, and that sort of stuff. There was to some extent a rule of law in Yugoslavia at that time. Tito was more a benevolent dictator than anything else. He would go off and spend a lot of time in his many palaces and leave the business of government to his ministers.

Q: You were part of the economic section. Was there concern within the economic section? I mean, we were not - it wasn't our debt - but a concern about how the Yugoslav economy was going as far as debt was going, at all?

HARTLEY: I think there was considerable concern. In fact, while we were there, Ex-Im Bank [Export-Import Bank] sent a senior vice president, Ray Albright over there-- after, I think, some of the enterprises, which were using the guarantee of the central or Republic governments to launch some enormously costly and suspect projects, had trouble repaying. In any event, ExIm suspended further loans while I was there. There was a devolution, a considerable devolution of power away from the federal government in Belgrade and back toward the republics. The republics were given the responsibility of developing their own economic plans. The result was a plethora of projects. It was as if each republic was trying to see if they could beat the other republics in the number of projects they could come up with. The expense of these projects was mind-boggling. I

remember that at one point we tried to tabulate the number of projects and tried to come up with some project descriptions and that sort of thing - a little guide on the projects. It was quite obvious that most of them were economically not viable and would never take off. This, I think, is one of the reasons the banks were beginning to worry about the Yugoslav debt problem. But I don't recall when I was there just how far it had built up, but the repayment burden didn't become crucial until the 1980s which just happened to follow Tito's death and the failure to establish an adequate succession.

Q: How did you find dealing with the Yugoslavs at this point? Was it a difference in making friends, talking to people at enterprises, business, that was different than before?

HARTLEY: Absolutely. There was a terrific difference. First of all, as a commercial attache I was able to travel around quite a bit. In 1960, I was lowlier and desk-bound. At that time you had to go through the federal ministry if you were going on any field trips with itineraries worked out in advance; you had to have interpreters present. When I came back, they had what they called the Yugoslav Chamber of Economy, which basically didn't really have much of a function. They would help you get in touch with companies in various republics. They would get you in touch with a particular chamber for the particular republic. But as I recall, we would normally, by that time, arrange our meetings directly with the companies, and we could be pretty flexible as far as the scheduling went. I myself used to go off just by myself or with a driver, sending a rough itinerary to the Chamber. And very often just by train, or I would take my own car and go and talk to these people in various places. I guess I got around to all the republics.

Q: What were you telling American firms that were trying to do business? "Make sure you get your money up front?" Something like that? Or how did it work?

HARTLEY: Well, most of the companies that were coming in were coming in as potential joint venture partners. So normally, as I recall at that time, you could not have a majority ownership in a Yugoslav company. You could have up to 40 or 45 percent or something. The people I spoke to were mostly people coming in to actually set up, to establish, a particular company. They were nuts and bolts. But prior to that, its true, there were also other company representatives that would usually come in for a general briefing about Yugoslavia. And we would review the investment law with them. We would review the current political-economic situation with them. Normally they had been briefed in advance. They would go to Ex-Im Bank or somebody in the States to get a pretty good picture of the debt situation, for example. But the thing that most of them could not understand or cope with was the fact that 1) there was no plan in Yugoslavia at that time and 2) the central ministries were not involved in a plan. Or indeed involved in any of the economic planning, which had by that time had evolved to the republic level. So they would say "Well, but this is a communist country. Surely as a communist country there has got to be some central planning. Somebody has got to know what's going on." And the answer was "No, actually if you're really going to find out about setting up operations, say in Macedonia, which is part of our consular district, part of our embassy district, then you really have to go down to Skopje and talk to the people there." It was a

problem of basically trying to explain to them this peculiar structure that was Yugoslavia, which was not centrally planned, even though it was a communist country.

Q: How did you all find Yugoslav law as far as a person wanting to invest? At that time was it more or less friendly to foreign investment or was it a tricky one that would come up and hit you all the time?

HARTLEY: They were really anxious to get foreign investors in. The government kept on working on investment laws in order to polish the investment law and make it more reactive, responsive to western concerns. I remember that. I think the main problem was to make sure that they found a Yugoslav company that was solvent and in relatively good shape and had a fairly good reputation so that they would not be surprised by getting in bed with the wrong people. I think that was something we were concerned about. I think the biggest deal was the Krsko nuclear project. Krsko is in Slovenia not far from the Austrian border. We had a situation where GE, the Italian subsidiary of GE, and Alstrom (Swiss) were bidding against Westinghouse (U.S.) for the contract. We got involved in this difficult problem. We had two U.S. companies basically bidding against each other. And whom did you support? I worked on this with Toon and eventually Westinghouse did get the project. It seems to me that we tended to favor Westinghouse simply because Westinghouse was a U.S.-based firm.

Q: Did you find that there was a difference between dealing with the different republics-- I think in particular Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia. Those were the ones you had, weren't they?

HARTLEY: Yes.

Q: Were things pretty much concentrated in Serbia?

HARTLEY: There was the famous steelworks in Skopje, capital of Macedonia. They had a productivity of some 10 or 15 percent of capacity at max. We would go down there and see that. This was one of the prides of the Macedonian manufacturing sector. There was also the Bor Mines in Bosnia. But they had in our area, obviously around Belgrade, a concentration of manufacturers. You had Kragujevac, which was about a hundred kilometers south of Belgrade where they produced first the Zastava and then the infamous Yugo. The same company later started churning out armored vehicles. Serbia may have been starting to plan for a bust-up as early as the 1970s. I recall that the Bar-Belgrade railway was opened in 1974, the sole link between Belgrade and the Mediterranean through the port of Bar in Montenegro. But I had no business with military producers. I would get down to Montenegro, not that they had a great industrial base there, but it is a beautiful place with spectacular scenery, and, incidentally, Yugoslavia's leading brewery in Niksic.

Q: Particularly in the area you had responsibility for, what was the American impression of the productivity of the Yugoslavs as far as getting involved with them, as far as how they worked, and how the rules of the economic game pertained to Yugoslavia at that time?

HARTLEY: Well, I think there were a lot of questions about the system and the efficiency of the system and the whole working out of this idea of worker self-management, initially idea of the party theoreticians, the Slovenian cartel. And the idea of workers being involved in management and being able to take part in company decisions and that sort of thing. It was theoretically excellent and people liked that, but it really translated unfortunately in most parts of Yugoslavia into the workers voting themselves increases in their paychecks at the expense of productivity. And this was another one of the things that really got up and really bit them. But when I was there, it was not yet evident because there was plenty of foreign money coming in, even though there were some warning bells. People were investing in Yugoslavia. It was considered, by far, a more desirable investment place, say, than any other in Eastern Europe.

You have to remember that in those days all the other parts of Eastern Europe were part of the Warsaw Pact and therefore integrated into the Soviet economy. So Yugoslavia was not, and most of Yugoslavia's trade was with the west. It was a special case. It was kind of looked upon as an experiment for a new approach. But having said that, I don't think we in the embassy ever really saw this approach as a particularly economically efficient approach. But we also felt that it was the best that could be done under the circumstances. You had an ideological structure that even though it had weakened--basic to the structure of Yugoslavia at that time was the communist party. The political power realities were not reflected in individual republics but with the communist party. And so that principle of the party predominance, no matter how you might have wanted to dilute it, was a fact of life under Tito. The organization of the economy would reflect it some way or other, this predominance of the party even though it might be concealed. Certainly companies were given much greater autonomy in terms of their internal structures and external trade than ever existed in other Eastern European countries.

RICHARD E. JOHNSON
Political Officer
Belgrade (1962-1963)

Deputy Chief of Mission
Belgrade (1974-1978)

Richard E. Johnson entered the Foreign Service in 1951 and, in addition to Belgrade, served in Hong Kong, Toronto, Warsaw, Sofia, Rio de Janeiro, and Brasilia. He also served at the Polish Desk and at the United

*Nations and was Director of the Office of Regional Political Programs.
This interview was conducted on January 30, 1991.*

Q: Then you left that, and this is where our paths crossed. You took Serbo-Croatian. Was this sort of a normal course for somebody who wants to be an Eastern European hand?

JOHNSON: Yes. By then I think I'd decided that Eastern Europe was my bag and that I couldn't stay in Poland indefinitely, so I volunteered for Serbo-Croatian.

Q: You spent a year there studying, or about a year, in the bowels of the...

JOHNSON: It wasn't quite a year.

Q: No, it was about eight months or so, in the garage of Arlington Towers.

JOHNSON: Yes.

Q: That's where the courses were located. Well, what did you do then? I mean, you came to Belgrade, and what was your job?

JOHNSON: Just a little reminiscence about our language training. You remember Jankovic and Popovic, the teachers, both from the little town of Sabac, about sixty miles outside of Belgrade.

Q: On the Sava River.

JOHNSON: Popovic owned the hotel in the center of town, which is to this day the principal coffee shop. And I remember asking these two gentlemen how does it happen, when there are only two instructors in Serbian in the whole U.S. government, they're both from the same little tank town? And their answer was that it's in Sabac that the purest Serbo-Croatian is spoken. Well, I thought that was kind of cute and kind of funny, and I told this story many times. I told it last June in Belgrade, and the guy didn't think it was funny at all. He said, "You know, that's where Karadzic is from. And he's the guy that..."

Q: Who changed the whole language.

JOHNSON: Absolutely.

Q: He was my god, as far as I'm concerned, because he did something about the spelling of Serbian, which made it impossible to misspell.

JOHNSON: Yes.

Q: And simplified the language. Anybody who'll do that is a god as far as I'm concerned.

JOHNSON: It's spelled the way it's spoken. So that's why Sabac was on the map.

In Belgrade, on that tour, I was a second secretary in the political section, no great shakes. I did things like analyzing the new constitution -- about forty-five endless pages in the dullest airgram that ever was sent. But the thing that made that tour interesting and exciting was that George Kennan was our ambassador.

Q: Could you explain, in the first place, his reputation before you went there, what you felt about him, and then how you found him as a boss.

JOHNSON: Well, of course I was tremendously impressed with him before I went, with what reading I'd done. And as a boss I just can't imagine a more exciting person to work with. The other boss that I would say that I particularly enjoyed working with in my career was John Crimmins, in Brasilia. But Kennan was the sort of a person who liked to rap with his junior officers, as did Crimmins, it happened. And he, as you remember, developed this project of publishing a history of Yugoslavia, and each of us was assigned a chapter, then he would ask us to come up on Sundays and sit around the fire and discuss various aspect of developments that were going on. He is such a tremendously articulate and deeply intelligent person that these were really fascinating Sunday afternoons. Also, he would invite us in when he came back from a meeting with Tito, and he would tell us how the meeting went and analyze it in very perceptive terms.

I remember one story about his dealings with Tito. I'm not too sure that it's true, but it could be. That after one meeting, he was getting up to go. He and Tito were by then quite good friends. And Tito started to say something as Kennan left, he said, "Mr. Ambassador, if you don't mind, I'd..." And then he stopped.

And Kennan said, "Yes, what is it?"

And Tito said, "No, never mind, never mind. I don't want to say it. I don't want to appear ungenerous."

And Kennan said, "Well, now, come on, please, we know each other well enough so that I know how to take it if you want to give me something straight."

And so Tito said, "All right, sit down." And Tito told him that he'd just as soon not have any more U.S. aid. That it was embarrassing to Yugoslavia to be a bone of contention in the U.S. Congress each year, and to have the question raised as to whether Yugoslavia was Communist or not. And that he thought Yugoslavia had progressed enough so that if we could shift to trade not aid he would appreciate it.

So Kennan went back and sent that telegram in. And fortunately the Department of State and Congress took it on good terms, and the aid was gradually terminated. And really

from then on our relations were smooth and cordial, at least up to the present day. It's hard to say what's going to happen in Yugoslavia now and where the U.S. stands. We have to see what results before we can decide.

Q: We're speaking right now, in January 1991, where there is terrific tension between Serbia and particularly Croatia and Slovenia. A very, very critical time.

JOHNSON: Yes. Absolutely. Serbia and Croatia and Slovenia, yes. But what I was going to say is that, all along, since the date that aid program terminated, our relations have been just extremely smooth and very cordial, hardly a ripple on the stream.

Q: Could you describe a bit about how you, and maybe the political section, saw the political situation in Yugoslavia in this period of '62, '63ish.

JOHNSON: Well, I'm trying to separate what happened on my second tour in Yugoslavia from what developed at this time, in these earlier days. There wasn't a great deal of liberalization in Yugoslavia then. They had made their break with Stalin and deserved full credit, high marks for that. And they had developed their own economic system and I felt deserved high marks for that. As far as contacts were concerned, it wasn't easy. There was still a certain amount of distrust of foreigners, I'd say, and of course the Yugoslav press was not very liberal or not very free then.

I look back on that tour as having been exciting, in the sense that Yugoslavia was a country going its own way. And the one nice thing about it, one could travel. And if you went through protocol in advance, you could meet officials in towns and talk to them about the situation where they were.

I say "if you talked to protocol in advance" -- on one occasion we were visiting Pristina and the word had not gone in ahead. We checked in at the office of the...I guess it was the head of the autonomous government, or the vice president of it, and announced ourselves. And we were told to sit down. And we sat down and waited for about forty-five minutes or an hour. And then someone came down and said, "What do you want here?"

And we told them it was just a friendly visit, to talk about conditions.

"Well, you can read about it in the newspaper. We are not interested in talking with you. You're obviously trying to get some information that is not going to be made generally available. And we would appreciate it if you would leave town immediately" (before sundown, as in our Westerns)

And we were escorted by the UB to the edge of town.

Q: UB being the Udba, the secret police.

JOHNSON: Those were the bad days. Things gradually got a good deal better, and I have a wonderful time now when I go to Yugoslavia. I visit wherever I want to go.

Q: Just as an aside, protocol one time arranged for a visit. We asked to go to some industry, and I found myself, with another Foreign Service officer, Harry Dunlop, in the middle of a factory, and we noticed that everything they said was very guarded. It didn't dawn on us until we were halfway through our meeting that it was a cellulose factory, which made gun powder. Protocol probably hadn't realized it, and we hadn't realized it, and here we were talking about what do you do, you know. And they were very, very unhappy about this.

JOHNSON: No wonder. Well, there were possibilities to get factory visits and visits to towns, and certainly life was a lot different in Yugoslavia even then than it was at that time in Soviet-bloc countries.

Q: Well, how did you figure what was going on in the political world there? You had two newspapers, Politika and Borba. I was sitting in the consular section, and I would read them, both in Serbian and then in English translation, and no matter which you read them in, to me they were almost incomprehensible. How did you cut your way through the verbiage to find out what were the political dynamics of the country?

JOHNSON: Well, although contacts were not easy, informal contacts with just plain friends, contacts with government people, some of them very shrewd observers, and with journalists, you remember this, were entirely possible. So I shouldn't have indicated there was a freeze on contacts.

I remember in particular one very fine senior constitutional lawyer who was connected with the government in a sort of consulting capacity, and very often, when I'd read of some political development or when I wanted some interpretation of a provision of the constitution, I'd call this fine old gentleman up and he'd say, yeah, come by. He wasn't giving away any secrets, he was just sort of telling me how things worked and how they were going to work. And there were other contacts of that sort that the political section had, open contacts, obviously cleared by any authorities that needed to clear them. And we could talk to journalists, who were fairly well informed.

Q: Well, how did we view the Tito government? Did we see this as having continuity after he departed the scene? Were we talking about trouble on the horizon, or not?

JOHNSON: I don't think we were. I don't know how you feel about this, but I don't think we realized then how unstable things would become when Tito passed away.

And, of course, Tito's approach to that was a rather frightening one. Instead of taking someone whom he trusted and training him to be successor, preparing him for that, Tito took the opinion there can be no new Tito; the only thing that's going to hold this country together (and there's certainly some rationale for this viewpoint) is to give each republic

an equal opportunity to speak its piece in decisions -- government by consent (which has turned out to be terribly clumsy).

But I don't think we viewed that with alarm when he died, I think we felt this was a good way to allow the republics to let off steam. And we felt that, sure, you can't have that kind of a government indefinitely; we expected that some kind of a leader would gradually emerge from this, who would have the support of all the republics. I think we felt that the process of Yugoslavia becoming an integrated nation was inexorable, inevitable. We were influenced by people who said, "Don't ask me whether I'm a Serb or a Croat, I'm a Yugoslav."

Q: I felt very much that way, that we didn't see these almost cultural fissures that have come up. We thought that perhaps the experience of World War II and all had...well, we were really superimposing the United States's experience on Yugoslavia, I think, in many ways maybe.

JOHNSON: Yes, we were also, though, I think, giving weight to practical factors: the Slovenes needed a market, and there it was in Serbia; the Serbs needed some components from more developed regions, and the Slovenes and Croats could provide that. Alone these republics, we were wont to feel, would have had a heck of a tough time. We felt that gradually these old animosities and nationalist feelings would wear away. And then, you remember, there was this resurgence of Croatian nationalism, in Tito's day, that he squashed.

Q: And we didn't see any real problem from the Albanian minority at that time, did we?

JOHNSON: In Kosovo?

Q: Kosovo.

JOHNSON: No, it took Milosevic to awaken the interests of the Serbs...

Q: Milosevic is the present authoritarian leader of Serbia.

JOHNSON: Yes, it took him to awaken the interests of Serbs in recovering this great battleground, this great scene of so many Serbian glories. Of course, all of these feelings emerge as soon as the Communist Party is removed, this great crust that keeps feelings down. And, in effect, there was a system. It was a horribly inefficient system, but things ran. Well, as soon as that crust is removed and you get an active prime minister like Markovic, who wants to go about reforming instantly and bring some efficiency into the economy -- a free market, close down the factories that aren't making money, that sort of thing -- that then gives rise to all kinds of not only nationalist feelings but arguments among the republics on economic matters and disagreements with the federal government: we can't afford all of these unemployed workers, we don't want these fine plants to shut down. And so I think, as Yugoslav officials today are wont to say, it was almost

inevitable that once you gave them an opportunity, the people would bring these feelings to the surface and there would be clashes.

Q: Then you went back to Belgrade as deputy chief of mission. You were there from '71 until about when?

JOHNSON: Seventy-one until I went to Brasilia in '74.

Q: What happened? Why all of a sudden were you off to Belgrade again?

JOHNSON: Well, I was the political counselor in Rio, and they were looking for a DCM in Belgrade. That was, of course, a boost up for me. The ambassador then was Leonhart.

Q: And he had a blowup with his DCM.

JOHNSON: Yes, he had a problem with his DCM and they needed a new DCM quickly, preferably one with some experience and one who could try to defuse disputes. And I guess the way I'd gotten around this Army-State Department dispute within the Embassy in Rio made me plausible for this job. I'm not sure whose recommendation it was, but I was happy to get the job because it meant a boost to minister counselor level.

Q: Well, you served under two rather active ambassadors: William Leonhart and then Mac Toon, but they were quite dissimilar, weren't they? How did you find their style of operation?

JOHNSON: Yes, I would say they were dissimilar in one important respect. Ambassador Leonhart was very concerned about detail; he thought most detail had some broader implications. I remember arriving and being told by the administrative officer that morale was low because the swimming pool hadn't been opened and it was already July. The swimming pool committee had not been appointed. I had hoped to handle that detail quickly for the Ambassador, but I discovered that he was concerned about late-hour noise disturbing the community. He saw this as part of our profile in Yugoslavia generally.

Q: I'm amused, because I was the head of the swimming pool committee when it first opened up, and I know that became a bone of contention because the swimming pool made some noise for the ambassador's wife when she took her afternoon nap.

JOHNSON: Which ambassador was that?

Q: This was Elbrick.

JOHNSON: Elbrick, yes. Of course, in Yugoslavia the pool was quite removed from the house.

Q: It was removed. It wasn't that bad, but it was a problem. It was an essential (there was very little to do there), and it was a very important element to them.

JOHNSON: There was a tendency for things to pile up on Ambassador Leonhart's desk. I think his forte was in speech- making. Or answering toasts; that was the only time I really heard him. He was a thoughtful person, and you could be sure when he got up to make a toast it was deliberate and intelligent and thoughtful, he had really thought it through. He made an intervention just three nights ago at a thing I went to, and again it was very different from the interventions others had made and it exactly fit for the occasion.

Toon was much more brisk, much more military in his style. He saw me as his alter ego. He told me that that's what he wanted me to be, and he said he hoped that I could handle most of his dealings with the staff. Which in a way is good, because you know where you stand and you have some authority. But the problem was that members of our staff I think at times felt that they had a right to see the ambassador, to sit down with him.

A case in point is when the public affairs officer was putting together his program for the coming year and he had to submit it to Washington. He wanted to be sure that the ambassador had seen it and liked it, and he wanted to discuss it with him in person. And I couldn't blame him.

But often Mac's reaction would be: "Can't you take care of that? Do I have to see this person? Can't you see him and discuss it?"

And then if I said, "No, sir, I think he has a right to sit down and talk with you," Mac would say, "All right, if you say so." And he was quite gracious with the PAO when he did. But he preferred having everything go through me and if possible for me to shunt things off. And that was generally his style. It was an efficient style, it kept the embassy moving in good shape.

Q: What were the main things in our relations with Yugoslavia during this period? This was from '71 to '73ish?

JOHNSON: Wasn't that when the Krsko nuclear power plant contract was signed? That became a major issue. We were, of course, delighted when Tito gave the green light for the contract to be awarded to Westinghouse. But throughout most of my tour this was under construction, and the Yugoslavs were concerned that Westinghouse was not using enough Yugoslav material, not training enough Yugoslavs, not using enough Yugoslav engineers. And I was called in, one of my last responsibilities, when I was chargé d'affaires just before I left, and they delivered a stiff demarche, telling us to get Westinghouse to live up to the terms of the agreement. I think they subsequently did, and it's a good, functioning, efficient plant.

But the fact that that is an issue that sticks out in my mind indicates how unruffled and uniformly good our relations were. Much, much fewer incidents than in our relations, say, with our NATO allies.

Oh, they picked up a U.S. official of Yugoslav origin visiting from Western Europe and put him in prison overnight. He had gone back to his hometown, as I recall, and was preaching sort of anti-government, anti-Tito sentiments, and so they picked him up and put him in prison. Well, this resulted in tremendous screams. I mean, you don't put in prison an official of another government. But as soon as I went around to the Foreign Ministry, they let him go.

Q: This was somebody who was originally born in Yugoslavia?

JOHNSON: Yes, he was a U.S. official, U.S. citizen, but of Yugoslav origin.

Oh, there were other arrests of U.S. citizens, but I don't remember any major incidents then in our relations, do you?

Q: No, I was out of there then, but there was nothing very major happening. How did we view, from Yugoslavia at that point, the Soviets? Did we consider that Yugoslavia was a country that was threatened by the Soviet Union?

JOHNSON: Sure, and how! And that was in part the reason for our tremendously close relations with Yugoslavia. When they told us they didn't want our assistance, we didn't force it on them, but in many other ways, ever since then, right up to this date we've done everything we could to help them economically: Ex-Im Bank loans, OPIC programs, very generous duty-free treatment under GSP, CCC credits, every way you can think of helping a country economically.

Q: I suppose overriding our concern was that if Yugoslavia collapsed, there would be a tremendous destabilizing situation, particularly as regards the Soviet Union, which was still under Brezhnev, and we felt it was a rapacious neighbor.

JOHNSON: Yes, we felt the Soviets would like to get access to the Adriatic, and we knew they had asked the Yugoslavs on several occasions if they could rent a piece of this or that naval base to service their vessels. The Yugoslavs absolutely refused. But that was a very real consideration in our policy toward Yugoslavia. I think, secondly, we wanted the Yugoslav experiment to succeed, because we wanted the world to see that there were possibilities for more liberal forms of socialism. I don't think the Yugoslavs today would say that workers' self-government was a success, but at that time we thought it might succeed and we wanted to do everything we could to help.

THOMAS M. T. NILES
Political Officer

Belgrade (1963-1965)

Ambassador Thomas M. T. Niles was born in Kentucky in 1939. He received his bachelor's degree from Harvard University and master's from the University of Kentucky. Upon entering the Foreign Service in 1962, he was positioned in Belgrade, Garmisch, Moscow and Brussels, and also served as the Ambassador to Canada and later to Greece. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on June 5, 1998.

Q: Can you tell me about your experience taking Serbo-Croatian?

NILES: It was an interesting experience, in retrospect. At the time, it was difficult. What I mean by that is that the prejudices and personalities of the two teachers are interesting as I look back on it but painful to endure at the time. In particular, one of the two teachers, Dragutin Popovich, was an extraordinarily opinionated, bigoted person and unattractive person.

Q: Insufferable, I think, is a good term.

NILES: That's right. He was a person of very strong feelings. He was anti-Semitic, anti-Italian, anti-German, anti-Croatian, and strongly anti-Communist, of course. Understandably, he was a very bitter man. He and his brother-in-law, who was a gentler and kinder person, Yanko Yankovich, came from the town of Sabac, on the Sava River, to the west of Belgrade. They had been prosperous people before the war. They had lost everything and been taken prisoners by the Germans in 1941. They were sent to Germany to a prison camp, where they were liberated in 1945 by the American forces, and somehow made it to the United States, and eventually ended up teaching at the Foreign Service Institute. The exposure to Popovich, not so much Yankovich, did not make spending two years in Belgrade seem all that attractive. He was so objectionable, so bigoted. He told stories that he thought were terribly funny about abusing people of other nationalities before the war, mainly Albanians and Jews. Anyway, we learned a lot about Serbia, despite this. I don't know that he was such a good teacher, but the course was good. Bob Barry and I arrived in Zagreb and Belgrade, respectively, with a good command of Serbo-Croatian after an abbreviated, six-month course. We both left the country with fluency in Serbo-Croatian after two years. So, he was probably a good teacher, but he was a difficult character.

Q: One of the things I got out of this, when I did it in 1961, 1962, was the Serb mentality, that I didn't really run across when I served there. But, to see this man in "full flight" made me understand some problems we are having with Yugoslavia today.

NILES: No question. I agree entirely. I think, in that sense, it was good preparation to see Serbian chauvinism in action. I remember once a discussion with Popovich concerning the names of cities, specifically what the Serbs called cities outside Yugoslavia. He said "We always use the local name of the city, whatever it is. We don't engage in any changes to make the name fit our language. We just take the name, Paris,

Berlin, London, Rome, and Bech.” I said “What is Bech?” He said, “The capital of Austria.” I said, “Well, it’s Vienna, not Bech.” He said, “No, Bech. That is the real name.” Bob Barry and I had gotten a Serbian map somehow that showed the names of the cities. Most of them were names that were recognizable. Two that were not were Vienna, which they called “Bech.” “Solun” for Thessaloniki. He said that that was a perfectly logical thing to call Vienna “Bech.” Then, I said, “What about Solun? What does that have to do with Thessaloniki?” He said, “Don’t tell me about “Thessaloniki.” That is a Serbian town.” I said, “What are you talking about?”

Q: I recall something that hit the time. I just couldn’t believe it. When Popovich was talking about the Salonika front during World War I, how they dealt with some soldiers in the Serbian army who had mutinied. They didn’t shoot them; they killed them with axes. His face sort of lit up. It gave me a feel for, I don’t know what you want to call it, Serbian-Balkan cruelty, this idea of...

NILES: Getting up close. A gun is very impersonal. If you kill somebody with a knife or ax, you are really getting up close and personal. I’m not surprised. I don’t remember that particular story, although there were lots of stories about the retreat of the Serbian Army after it was largely destroyed by the Germans under Field Marshal von Mackensen in 1916, across the mountains with old King Peter and the future King Alexander, first into Albania and then to Greece.

Q: They went across Montenegro, actually.

NILES: Yes, first into Montenegro, then Albania and finally to the Thessaloniki area in northern Greece. He taught us the words to the song “Tamo Daleko.”

Q: That means “They are far away.”

NILES: It refers to the Serbian Army. They were far away in Greece, but they were going to come back, and they did, with the help of the French General Franche d’Esperey. It was a haunting song. By the time I got out to Belgrade, I found my younger contacts, among the Serbs, singing that song. You are absolutely right. Popovich was excellent preparation. He was a caricature. You were there in Belgrade from 1962 to 1967. I was there from 1963 to 1965. The Yugoslavia we served in did not permit “nationalist excesses, but it was there, under the surface. The younger people with whom I associated, people in their twenties, sang those songs, but they were careful. Serbian nationalism was under wraps.

Q: There was a problem, I think, in American representation. I don’t think we really understood the depths of this. It is only later that we saw the fissures.

NILES: We believed, as did most others, that “Bratstvo I Jedinstvo,” “Brotherhood and Unity,” had been achieved in Yugoslavia. We reported to Washington, somewhat contradictorily, about conflicts or disputes among the Republics, but it was exclusively in the economic area, about how centralized investments would be divided. “Political

factories” was the term people from Slovenia and Croatia used to describe investments in Serbia, Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro. Should you build a tire factory in Svetozarevo or Kragujevac, instead of in Ljubljana? That was the level at which we saw it. It was a dispute over dividing up the federal investment pie. We bought the Tito version of Yugoslavia. I believed, and I recall telling visitors, that the experience of the war had been so terrible for the Yugoslavs, for the Serbs, Croats, Muslims, everybody- (end of tape)t is in Greece.” He said, “No, Serbia.” Of course, Popovich did not recognize post-1945 internal boundaries of Yugoslavia.

When he talked about Macedonia, he called it “Tito’s Republic of Macedonia.” For him, it was the “Vardarska Banovina,” which is what the Serbs called it after they seized it from the Turks in the Balkans Wars of 1912/13. Tito, of course, cut Macedonia off Serbia to reduce Serbia’s size within his Yugoslav federation. Popovich didn’t accept any of that. In the inter-war period when he grew up in, there was no Macedonia. There was no Bosnia-Herzegovina, most of which was then part of Serbia. Inter-war Yugoslavia was made up of Slovenia, with its current borders, Croatia, and Serbia. Croatia included part of Bosnia, but Serbia had by far the largest part. Popovich, and I assume Yankovich, refused to accept the fact that the Serbian borders had been redrawn by Tito. Milosevic also refuses to accept that. This is a consistent Serbia nationalist position.

NILES: I remember Telly Savalas came into my office. He was coming from Munich, and he had just bought a red BMW. I will never forget this. He had his wife and a couple of kids. He said, “I bought this German automobile in Munich and it has German license plates on it.” Actually, it had the round “z” or “Zoll” (customs) license plates. Anyway, he said, “It has a “D” for Deutschland, on it. When I got down here, people told me that I was going to attract a lot of unfavorable attention because people in Serbia really hate the Germans because of what they did during the war. They told me they might kill me.” Then, he asked, “Is there anything you can give me, an American flag, or some kind of a U.S.A. sticker?” I said, “Come on, relax. They are not going to do anything to you. It is true that the Germans behaved in a terrible fashion here. But, there are German tourists all over this place. Every other tourist is a German. There are not quite as many in Belgrade, but don’t worry. But, just one thing: avoid the town of Kragujevac.” He said, “Where is that?” I said, “Well, you won’t get near it. You are just going to stay in Belgrade, right?” He said, “Yes.” I said, “Don’t worry. You will be fine.” He was really panicky. Somebody had told him that the most hated people in Belgrade were the Germans. But, overall, there were few tourist problems.

Q: From what I gather, I don’t think there was much. In the Political Section, was there much looking at the ethnic situation? I want a snapshot of that period.

NILES: We spent a lot of time on the ethnic issues. Our attitudes tended to be somewhat contradictory because on the one hand, I think we bought into the Titoist fantasy about “brotherhood and unity.” We did not, by any stretch of the imagination, anticipate what was going to happen in 1991 in Yugoslavia. We felt that the ethnic groups within Yugoslavia would be able to live together in relative harmony. On the other hand, we looked very closely for any sign of ethnic discord. We were in close contact with our consulate general in Zagreb to get their sense of what was going on there in the press, in political life. Vladimir Bacaric was the Party leader in Zagreb, and he had been in power there for many years. On alleged health grounds, he was apparently able to resist pressures, perhaps from Tito himself, to come to Belgrade. He was replaced at the end of the 1960s by a younger group headed by Mika Tripalo and Slavka Dapcevic-Kucar. They were thrown out by Tito in 1971/72 for “bourgeois nationalism.” In any event, in the early 1960s we paid close attention to what Bacaric had to say on national issues. What kind of spin was he putting on some of the economic issues? Was it different from what was being said in Belgrade? So, we were very alert to this. One of the things that was clear was that there was enormous competition within Yugoslavia for investment resources. The Serbs, Macedonians, Montenegrins and Bosnians were under a lot of pressure to justify the expenditure of money that was coming, in part, from Croatia and Slovenia, for investments. There was a lot of talk in Zagreb and in Ljubljana about “political factories,” which was the code word for opposition in the richer Republics to the income redistribution function of Belgrade under which investment resources would be used, for example, for the Skopje steel mill instead of upgrading the steel mill at Jesenice, Slovenia. In fact, we gave them Ex-Im Bank credits for Jesenice, as I recall, so they did not starve, either. The economic issue was the focal point of ethnic discord. Otherwise, right until the end of the time I was there, I can’t remember any signs of real conflicts between the nationalities of sort that could lead to what happened in 1991 and beyond. There was one exception. We were very sensitive to that. That was the situation in Kosovo-Metohija, or the Kosmet. At that time, we called it “Kosovo i Metohija.” I don’t know what happened to the “Metohija” part.

Q: *Kosmet.*

NILES: Right, Kosmet. We spent a lot of time down there. I went several times visiting and wandering around some of these places that we read about today, Pristina, Djakovica, Prizren - all these Godforsaken places, although some of rural areas were very beautiful. Pristina, itself, was ghastly. Even then, in Kosovo, there were clearly some real problems. Then, you had mixed leadership down there, Albanians (Kosovars) and Serbs. There were more people from the Albanian ethnic community in the Party and government leadership, but with strong Serbian participation. In the economy, the Albanians were largely doing the fetch-and-carry work. They were the miners at the Trepca zinc-lead mine and refinery that we visited. Just before I left Yugoslavia, there was an incident, which, I think, in retrospect, was even more important than we thought it was at the time. It occurred, I think, in Ljubljana. It involved a strange murder, in which two Albanian workers murdered a Colonel in the Yugoslav National Army (JNA) on the street. If you think back to the status of the Army, and the fact that they murdered a Colonel on the street, (they stabbed him to death), this was serious stuff. Our Consulate General in

Zagreb did the reporting on this, Karl Sommerlatte and Bob Barry. The strangest thing about it was that the Albanians didn't know their victim, the JNA Colonel. They had no particular problem with him. He had done nothing to them. At their trial, they simply said that they were discontented. Maybe they were drunk, but they decided to express their dissatisfaction and killed a Colonel in the Yugoslav National Army.

Q: *In Ljubljana.*

NILES: In Ljubljana. I can't remember the specifics of that trial, but I do remember the case. At the time, we felt that this was pretty serious stuff. We were wondering what was going on. As far as we knew, though, it was an isolated incident. I don't think there were any others reported in the press, and we wondered at the time why they publicized that one.

Q: *In Belgrade, we would see, as they called them, "the Shiptars," it is a pejorative term. They had white skull caps on. They were the ones who did all the fetching and hauling.*

NILES: We had a few in the Embassy who worked in the Commissary. We had those two brothers who worked in the Commissary.

Q: *Smiley and Happy.*

NILES: Smiley and Happy. I'm not so sure they were smiley and happy in real life.

Q: *We wanted to get them drivers' licenses. I was President of the commissary at one point. We had to send them down to Skopje to take the driver's test because no Albanian could get a driver's license in Belgrade.*

NILES: I remember that. These people had many grievances. We didn't hear much about them. We knew from what we picked up, such as the driver's license case, that there was significant discrimination against Albanians in Serbia.

Q: *Looking at it, sometimes The State Department and those dealing with Foreign Affairs, are accused of (that is not really the right term) not wanting to upset whatever the existing thing is. In other words, the devil we know is better than the devil we don't know. Was this a factor in it?*

NILES: No question. But, let me just say, it is hard to look at what has happened in the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia today and say that what replaced the political structures that existed of September 1, 1991 are better from the point of view, first and foremost, of the people who live there, and also of the United States. You can argue that we are better off with a broken up, weaker Russia, and an independent Ukraine, etc. I am not all together sure. I think the final story hasn't been written there. We certainly are better off without a imperialistic, expansionist Soviet Union, but by 1991, the Soviet Union had

largely ceased to be that kind of a threat to the United States and our Allies, at least at that time. It was very unlikely, it seemed to me, that a similar threat would reemerge in the Soviet Union, which had become essentially a status quo power and very much concerned in the first instance with its own internal problems, which were insuperable ultimately. Nobody as far as I am aware could make a case that anybody, except the Slovenes, have benefited as a result of the breakup of the Yugoslav Federation. The chaos of the millions of refugees, endless destruction, death, and misery which is going on today, particularly in Kosovo, but also in Bosnia and elsewhere, is just unbelievable. The price that we have all paid and continue to pay for the insane ambitions of Tudjman and Milosevic is beyond calculation. So, yes, we tried every way we could to encourage some new structure in the former Yugoslavia. We supported efforts by Gligorov and Izetbegovic to cobble together some sort of Confederation. Secretary Baker clearly saw what was about to happen and told the leaders of Yugoslavia when he met them in Belgrade on June 21, 1991 that they were on a course toward "civil war and bloodshed." This was directed particularly at the Slovenes and Croats, who were moving toward formal declarations of independence. Essentially, their answer was, "To hell with you. You don't know what you are talking about." Five days after Secretary Baker was in Belgrade, they declared independence on the June 26, 1991, and the rest is history. Secretary Baker saw that once you took Croatia and Slovenia out, in fact, once you took even little Slovenia out of the Yugoslav Federation, it was like a house of cards. You took one small piece out, and the whole structure became unstable. As when we were there in the 1960s, the Croats and the Slovenes formed a kind of a mutual support society against the Serbs and the others, poorer people. Each reassured the other. But, if you took Slovenia out, it made it so much more difficult to keep Croatia in. If you took Slovenia and Croatia out, there was no way that Bosnia and Macedonia were going to stay in there with Serbia, which was so much too large for them. They needed Croatia and Slovenia in order to balance against Serbia. As weak as it was, the Yugoslav Federation 1991 was much better from the point of view of the individual peoples of that area, and from the point of view all of the surrounding countries, and of the United States, than what has followed. We tried to discourage the fracturing of the country, to discourage independence, keep the EU from recognizing Croatia and Slovenia. That was our big push in the fall 1991, against the wrong headed and nutty policies of the Federal Republic of Germany, specifically Genscher aimed at recognition of the independence of Slovenia and Croatia. Genscher recognizes it now and refers to that policy as the greatest mistake of his career.

Q: Were you feeling any particular problem with the Yugoslav desk officers, because this came up later on? But, at this time, it was a nasty situation, but we weren't getting around our throats being cut, things like that.

NILES: The problems came up over Bosnia. For some reason, the terrible refugee problems that emerged in Croatia, when the Croats and the non-Serbian population were driven out of the Krajina and out of Slavonia, didn't quite register in quite the same way as Bosnia. It was ethnic cleansing, perhaps on a more limited scale, and perhaps not

quite as violently, and it didn't really register in the same way in the West. We certainly saw it as a serious problem, and we looked for ways to stop the fighting. What did we do? We had a lot of consultations with the Europeans. I participated in those. They didn't have any particular effect. In the fall of 1991, we sought to persuade the Europeans not to recognize the Slovenes and the Croats as independent countries. That was a strong pitch by Secretary Baker.

Q: What was our analysis at the time, and what were we doing about it? Why were the Germans taking this particular thing, because I would have thought they would have been very sensitive to this?

NILES: You would have hoped so, given historical experience, but that was not the case. The secret lies in German coalition politics and the role of the Bavarian wing of the so-called "Union Parties," the Christian Social Union (CSU). The Christian Social Union is an interesting party. It is a Catholic party, essentially restricted to the land of Bavaria. The Christian Democratic Union is the standard bearer for the "Union Parties" in the rest of Germany, although it, too, is strongest in the more Catholic laender such as Baden-Wuerttemberg, Rhineland-Phaltz, and Hessen. It is weakest in the Protestant parts. In any case, the CSU was the principal voice in Germany for recognition of Slovenian and Croatian independence, and this was all tied up in support for the Catholic parts of former Yugoslavia against the Orthodox Serbs. We could have been in the eleventh century. Foreign Minister Genscher may have had some misgivings. I always thought Genscher at least understood why Secretary Baker was so strongly opposed to this. He now admits that his adamant support for EU recognition of Slovenian and Croatian independence was the greatest mistake of his political career, and keep in mind that he was Foreign Minister of the FRG from 1974 to 1993.

Q: He was FDP, wasn't he?

NILES: Yes, Genscher was the CDU/CSU's coalition partner as leader of the FDP. He was replaced by Klaus Kinkel, another FDP leader, as Foreign Minister when he finally retired after almost 20 years as Foreign Minister. But, in any event there were no CSU fingerprints at the Maastricht summit, but the CSU was the strongest force within the Union Party/FDP coalition in favor of recognition. This reflected the Catholic, southern-German attitude toward the Balkans. The idea was that the Slovenes and the Croats are our Catholic Allies, and we have to protect them from the Serbs.

Q: This goes back to the great Schism there.

NILES: No question, 1054 and all that. That was something that was obviously of less concern to a Protestant from Saxony like Genscher.

Q: Was there a significant Croatian vote or anything? I don't think of Germany as being very...

NILES: There were Croatian immigrants. Yes, there were Croatians living in Germany, but that was really not it. That was subordinate to the world view of some people in Germany in influential positions who felt that this was an opportunity for Germany to make up for some things that had happened 75 years before. The Greeks believe in conspiracies, as you know. They are conspirators and they figure everybody else is. They had this elaborate scheme that they presented to me when I arrived there as Ambassador in 1993 about what really happened in Yugoslavia. Who was responsible for this? The Greek view of what had happened in Yugoslavia was that there was this conspiracy which consisted of the Vatican, which they hate, the Germans, whom they hate, and the Turks, whom they hate. It was a very improbable triad, but the Greeks were not totally wrong on the role played by the Vatican and the Germans. Now, the Turks had little to say or do one way or another with what happened in Yugoslavia. But, there is no question that Vatican diplomacy was very strongly in favor of the recognition of Croatian and Slovenian independence. We got that from the Cardinal Secretary of State Sodano when Secretary Baker and I met with him in Rome in November 1991. We were there with President Bush for the NATO summit. The President and Mrs. Bush were having an audience with the Pope and the rest of us, four or five of us, sat in this extraordinary room. Thomas Melady, Ambassador to the Vatican, Bob Zoellick and Reggie Bartholomew, then Under Secretary of State for Security Issues, were there, too. We sat in this room with a ceiling that must have been 100 feet high, and with extraordinary frescoes by Perugino all around. We were told that when he had finished his part, the lower parts of the facing long walls and one end of the Sistine Chapel, he did that room. We were sitting - eight of us - at a lovely small, ornate table in the middle of this great room. We talked mainly about Yugoslavia. These Vatican diplomats were very circumspect. Their solicitude for the Slovenes and the Croatians, and the religious people, was very strong and very clear. Cardinal Silvestrini was there. Archbishop Turon, a French prelate who is, as they all seemed to be, a very clever guy, was also there. He once came to call on me at the State Department with the Apostolic Delegate, another brilliant Vatican diplomat. Today, the Pope goes to Croatia and beatifies Cardinal Stepinac. I don't think Cardinal Stepinac was a war criminal, but to say that he was a Saint, and to do that in the present circumstances of the Balkans, to go to Zagreb and throw that particular ember onto the inflammable material lying around there, is incredible.

NILES: The Slovenes attitude was that they were not part of it and it was somebody else's problem, even though they played a considerable role in creating it. Izetbegovic, whom I did not discuss, was a much less decisive, focused person. He was not, nor were his associates, Muslim fundamentalists. In fact, I don't think there were any Muslim fundamentalists in Bosnia until the Serbs began to kill people, right and left, because they had Muslim names, and burned down the mosques. The Serbs created Islamic fundamentalism in Bosnia. I don't think Izetbegovic is a fundamentalist today. He is a Muslim, but he was certainly not a person who was hostile to Croatians and Serbs because they were Christians. He was a perfectly reasonable guy, and not terribly

focused, in terms of what he was trying to do. I don't think he was a terribly effective leader, although, I have to say, he faced a very difficult situation, from the very beginning. His country was invaded, largely, maybe 70% occupied, almost one million refugees out of the two million Muslims in Bosnia. There were four million people, I think, in Bosnia in 1992. We figured 44% or maybe 50% were or non-Orthodox or Catholic, whether they were Muslims or not. You visited Bosnia and I visited Bosnia when we were in the Embassy. I once met with the Ries-al-Ulema, the Chief of the Muslim Clerics in Yugoslavia. He was a nice old guy, based in Sarajevo. He gave us a Slivovitz. I think he had some himself, as best I can remember. These guys were not serious Muslims. I don't think the Ries-al-Ulema lived according to the Koran. He was nice low-key, old guy who had an impossible task.

Q: I always think of my interpreter when I was in Bosnia for an election a year ago, who said that he was a good Muslim. He was a Captain in the Bosnian Army when he wasn't chasing girls and drinking. I asked him how often he went to the Mosque. He said that he had never been in one, but he was a good Muslim anyway.

NILES: Those guys never darkened the door of a mosque. The mosques were historical places. They were respected, as far as I could tell, but they were certainly not used. Now, of course, you see Muslim women in Bosnia going around with head scarves and people praying in the (rebuilt) mosques. This was all a reaction to the brutality of the Serbs, and to a degree, the brutality of the Croats. So, who is most responsible for the destruction of Yugoslavia? Milosevic and the Serbs were the chief offenders, but Tudjman and the Croats played a key supporting role. If you ask who is primarily responsible for the humanitarian disaster in Bosnia, the answer is Milosevic, and his Serbian cohorts, Karadzic, Mladic, and Arkan. These people are war criminals. But, the Croats did terrible things there, too. The Croats were the ones who, in the area of Herzegovina around Mostar, destroyed all the mosques and blew up everything.

ROBERT G. CLEVELAND
Director, USAID
Belgrade (1963-1965)

Ambassador Robert G. Cleveland served at foreign posts including Bucharest, Paris, Sydney, Bangkok, and Belgrade. He also served at the Southeast Asian Office and Office of Public Services. This interview was conducted by Horace Torbert on June 8, 1990.

Q: Your next post was Belgrade. How did the question of that post happen to come up? Were there any interesting sidelights on how you received the assignment?

CLEVELAND: Although my Asian experience had been interesting, and there were several assignment opportunities in the area, I hoped to return to Europe, my old stomping ground. At the time, an old friend, Bill Tyler, was Assistant Secretary for

Europe. One day in October 1962, I called on him in his office, had a rather relaxed chat, and expressed my desire for a European posting. I mention this only because that was the day before the Cuban missile crisis became public. You would never have known it from Bill's demeanor! Soon thereafter, I was asked if I would like to go to Belgrade as Economic Counselor and Director of the AID Mission. It was a familiar area; George Kennan was Ambassador; having served in Romania under very negative conditions, it seemed good to work in an area that seemed to be moving in a positive direction. I accepted with enthusiasm.

We arrived in Belgrade in January, 1963. We found comfortable quarters, including a very competent staff waiting for us, and settled in very quickly. My first concern was the AID Mission. The Mission had been established in 1950 not long after Tito's break with the Cominform. It had provided substantial economic assistance, including agricultural commodities, industrial equipment and technical advice during the period. By 1963, however, it had been removed from the list of countries eligible for economic or military aid. As Mission Director, it therefore became my job to wind down its activities while maintaining contact with the principal Yugoslav officials who handled aid matters.

Nevertheless, the Yugoslavs really appeared to wish to continue U. S. technical aid programs even at their own expense. To me, this would have been in the U. S. political interests; I therefore enthusiastically pursued conversations at my own level with Yugoslav officials to work out a proposal. However, at that time, Ambassador Kennan was disturbed at some of Tito's speeches, and became unwilling to support me. Consequently, the whole proposition fell through.

Q: This was when the Nonaligned Countries movement began, in which Tito was exercising leadership.

CLEVELAND: That's right. Neither Ambassador Kennan nor Washington were very keen on that movement, nor really on Yugoslavia, despite its independent status. Yugoslavia still professed to be a "Peoples Republic" with a one-party system led by the League of Communists. Thus Congress, especially several important members, lumped Yugoslavia with the rest of the Communist world. This made the Embassy's job difficult. On the other hand, I found my dealings with the Yugoslavs very pleasant; we could always reach agreements with them on many matters - textile exports to the U. S., for example - but then gaining the approval of Washington was always difficult.

As I said, State and other Departments were getting a hard time from certain members of Congress who had anti-Tito constituents - Americans of perhaps Croatian origin. This really impeded a number of things that would have been in the joint interest of both countries.

Q: You refer, of course, to the Ustashis and their friends.

CLEVELAND: Yes; it's rather sad that much of the opposition to Yugoslavia from within the U. S. came from people of Croatian background, many of whom had

cooperated with Hitler before coming to this country. They were probably more anti-Serb than anti-communist. The division continues to this day, based on religious and historical differences.

I made up my mind that at this post, I was not going to be office-bound; I managed to travel to all parts of the country, visiting all the republics, AID projects, farms and industrial sites, even including a uranium mine. It was good for our relations, and certainly helped our reporting.

Q: There are also some very pleasant tourist places in Yugoslavia.

CLEVELAND: Frankly, we did a lot of tourism when we could find the time, but that was often included in official trips. We saw most of the old monasteries and other historic spots as well as the tourist centers. There was a huge low-price tourist industry going on, much of it directed at both Germans. German tourist agencies were shipping people in wholesale, and putting them in rather tacky hotels. The hotel staffs were country folks, most of whom didn't seem to understand our idea of cleanliness. If you're brought up in a farmyard, why should you?

Perhaps the most striking things one saw on these travels were the enormous differences between the republics. I've already mentioned the Serb-Croat problem, but there were other strains. The prosperous republics didn't like supporting the poorer ones. As long as Tito was alive, there was grumbling, but none of the outright hostility of today.

There were two memorable events during our stay in Yugoslavia:

The first was the assassination of President Kennedy, which of course was a terrible shock to us all. Marshal Tito was truly upset; he visited the Embassy for nearly an hour and talked about his memories and thoughts about the President. He had visited Washington earlier that year, and was a guest of the White House. He seemed to have developed a real admiration for Mr. Kennedy, so his feelings were obviously sincere. If my memory serves me, he also commented that when something happens to one Head of State, it could happen to others.

The other important incident was the earthquake at Skopje, the capital of Macedonia. It was a terrifying event, which almost completely leveled the city. We visited it as soon as possible and sent urgent messages to Washington recommending major assistance. A military medical group came down from Germany right away and did emergency work. At the same time, all the European countries arrived with all sorts of assistance. We had recommended that the military also provide shelter by setting up Nissen huts; we also proposed a financial package. The huts finally arrived, later than we'd hoped. A team of Engineers did a fine construction job under difficult circumstances, particularly bad weather. The financial package was more or less of a fiasco.

On my staff at the time was Second Secretary Larry Eagleburger, currently the Deputy Secretary of State. We assigned Larry as POLAD to the military unit in Skopje. He was

and is bilingual in Serbian. It was a difficult but essential job, and he performed brilliantly. The work was done fast, with less than the normal friction, and we ended up looking pretty good. I should perhaps add that Larry's tour was up shortly thereafter; on his departure, I gave him by far the best performance rating I ever gave anybody. His subsequent career, including Ambassador to Yugoslavia, has certainly confirmed my high opinion of him.

Q: Somewhat earlier, I had a similar experience with Bill Sullivan, then a young officer at the Embassy in Rome. At the time, I was stationed in Salzburg as POLAD to the U.S. occupying forces in Austria. The military were building a supply port and depot at Leghorn; they were having a terrible time because of labor troubles etc. They spoke no Italian. Bill went up from Rome, and was able to turn matters right around. That was the beginning of his brilliant career.

CLEVELAND: I can give you more positive comment on Sullivan. He worked under me in the Southeast Asian office as Burmese desk officer. He could handle that job with one hand. He drafted like an angel. He became Harriman's assistant, and went up fast from there.

Q: Forgive the digression, but we are off the subject!

CLEVELAND: Both men were exceptionally brilliant, and were lucky to have the opportunity to shine.

Q: George Kennan was your Ambassador for a while. How was he to work with?

CLEVELAND: Kennan was a very attractive human being, for whom I have much affection. He was and is a fine historian, a brilliant draftsman, but a faulted Ambassador. He really didn't use or listen to his staff. He didn't like Tito, and it seemed to be mutual, so his analysis of events in Yugoslavia suffered.

Q: That's not an unusual assessment. Then Burke Elbrick came.

CLEVELAND: He did, and we were glad to have him. He was a solid professional, very experienced, and very agreeable to work with. He was one of the last of the "Prewar" Foreign Service Officers.

THOMAS P. H. DUNLOP
Political/Consular Officer
Belgrade (1963-1965)

Thomas P.H. Dunlop was born in Washington, DC in 1934. He graduated from Yale University in 1956 and served in the U.S. Air Force overseas from 1957 to 1960. In the Foreign Service, Mr. Dunlop served in many

overseas posts including Yugoslavia, Vietnam, and Korea. He also served in the State Department in Washington. He was interviewed on July 12th, 1996 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

DUNLOP: Yes. I served at the Embassy in Belgrade from March, 1963, to June or July, 1965. I wanted to get out of Washington as soon as I possibly could, and March, 1963 was the earliest that I could manage.

I was assigned to the Political Section in Belgrade and served there for one and one-quarter years. You would remember, perhaps, that I served for a time under you in the Consular Section. I think that I spent perhaps a year in the Consular Section.

Q: You had a little "glimpse" of Yugoslavia in 1957 when you went down from Berlin, where you were attending the Free University there. When you went to Yugoslavia in 1963, what was your impression of the country? Also, what was your initial impression of the Embassy? We're talking about the situation in March, 1963.

DUNLOP: I had a sort of depressing look at Yugoslavia in 1957. It was early spring. Anybody who's been there knows that Belgrade is not all that attractive a city. It is heavily polluted with coal smoke, the people look rather dour, and, as I said, were rather hesitant to strike up any kind of useful conversation. Well, I was there for only three days in the spring of 1957. Anyhow, that was my impression.

I came back in March, 1963, the same month during which I had visited Belgrade the first time. Belgrade looked the same! [Laughter] The police state regime which Tito had clamped on the country had relaxed a little by the time you and I got there, but not all of that much. Rankovic, who was Tito's top policeman, was still very much the number three, if not number two man then in power. From all of the information available to us, Tito looked to Rankovic to enable him to do pretty much what he wanted to do and when he wanted to do it to anyone. Certainly, Tito did nothing to counter this view.

There was a police state atmosphere. I certainly did not find Yugoslavia a place where people were looking very optimistically toward any change in the system. Things had been that way for 18 years when I got there, since 1945, in other words.

A lot of my impressions, I think, in a situation like mine, came from the local employees of the Embassy. The Foreign Service Nationals in the Embassy in Belgrade in 1963 were basically people who had been educated before World War II, who had come from "bourgeois" or, perhaps, upper middle class families, and whose whole family fortunes and prospects had been destroyed by the communist takeover. They were bitterly anti-communist, or at least pretended to be bitterly anti-communist, and there may have been a few "pretenders." However, the vast majority of the Foreign Service Nationals reflected that view of the world which people in the Balkans often have, that it's a pretty hard place to live. They seemed to feel that there wasn't much to be expected in the way of good things. Since they were at the bottom of the food chain there, they were not happy

campers. Some of them may have had sunny dispositions, but their circumstances were not very good.

My first job in the Political Section put me in close contact with a lot of them in the Translation Service of the Embassy.

Q: Could you explain what the Joint Translation Service was?

DUNLOP: My first job in the Political Section was the one which the "new boy on the block" always got, to be the American editor and supervisor of an operation that translated the local press on a daily basis, six times a week, from Serbian into English. This service was run in conjunction with the British Embassy, which also assigned a junior officer as their contribution to this effort. Costs of putting out the translations were shared between the British and American Embassies. The work was actually done in the American Embassy. I think that we had 11 or 12 Foreign Service National employees in the Translation Unit at that time.

There was a Yugoslav supervisor, a wonderful man whom I got to know well and like. He was older than the people whom he supervised. His job was to come in each morning, look at all of the newspapers available for that day, and then pick out the most important articles. He and the other translators would then begin to translate these selected articles into English. By the time the American and the British supervisors would arrive in the office, the translators would have made their own decisions on which articles to translate, but they would then check this with the American or British supervisor. If we agreed, which we often did, they would go ahead and complete the immediately most important articles, which would then be typed on stencils, proof read by the American and/or the British supervisor, and reproduced. Those were the days when stencils were on green or greenish-blue paper which spread ink all over the place. It would usually be about 6:45 AM that we would start reading the stencils. It was an onerous task. The translators would then complete the early part of their job, which was to translate at least the headlines of the most important articles. We weren't supposed to summarize anything but we would forward portions of some of the more important articles to members of the Embassy staff.

Then they translated longer articles, "think pieces" which had been printed earlier and which they were in the process of translating. They would go back to jobs like that when the more pressing translations were completed. Those longer articles which they finished were then appended to this daily document. By the time I left the Political Section, we were putting out 35 to 40 legal size pages or more of translations, every day. These stencils had to be quickly read and then printed rapidly. The copies of the translations were then distributed to the Embassy. One of the reasons why this job was important was the lack of diplomatic contact with the local Yugoslav community. The Yugoslav police were determined to minimize such contacts, and they were successful in this regard. Ordinary Yugoslavs were afraid to maintain anything like the relationships which you would find in other, non-police states. So the Survey of the Yugoslav Press which was

produced by this Joint Translation Service provided a significant proportion of the information available to the Embassy.

One of the amusing aspects, at least at the time, although it was not always a happy factor in our lives, was that George Kennan was the American Ambassador to Yugoslavia. As anyone who knows anything about Ambassador Kennan knows, he is a beautiful writer who cares deeply about the English language. We were producing this Survey of the Yugoslav Press under considerable time stress. Remember that these translations had been produced by non native speakers of English, and the stencils containing the translations were then corrected by an American and/or British supervisor, blearily looking at this material by the dim light of early morning.

We made lots of errors, which George Kennan found very painful. After all, it was "his" Embassy, and this product was coming out under his general imprimatur. It seemed that his patience would usually last for about 10 days. He would read this stuff for about 10 days, his irritation level would flow over, and he would send back down to the Political Counselor, my boss, some comment like, "Do we HAVE to make this mistake eight times?" I would come into the Embassy staff meeting, having produced this stuff, and these comments would all come shuttling down the chute to me.

Now this job would be over by about 10:00 AM. The rest of my time I would spend on whatever was left to do in the Political Section, until I went to work for you in the Consular Section.

Q: Let's talk a bit about the Yugoslav press. What was gleaned from these translations? It was "boiler plate," turgid prose. Communist prose has to be seen to be believed. With luck the reader of these memoirs will never have to read or see this stuff.

DUNLOP: That's true. I guess that the best thing that could be said about the Yugoslav press was that it was one means by which the Yugoslav communists talked to each other. It was one way that the man out in Sabats or Skopje, picking up his copy of "Borba" [Struggle], would know what the government wanted him to understand, the official view on a given event.

Let's take an international event, such as the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, for example. I was not in Yugoslavia during the Cuban Missile Crisis but I can imagine that it was of great interest to people all over the country to know to what degree the government wanted them to know about the Cuban Missile Crisis. After all, they had some access to other information. They could listen to the BBC [British Broadcasting Corporation] and the VOA [Voice of America]. However, they had no access to other papers. No foreign newspapers were available. Well, maybe the "Herald Tribune" was available, three days late, or something like that. The communist press was one way that communists communicated with each other, so it was one way that we could tell what they wanted the world to learn what they thought. So that wasn't useless. That had a use.

Sometimes there were debates in the Yugoslav press. Within limits, the government would allow such discussions. The ideological czar at the time, Edvard Kardelj, would allow a debate to emerge about some issue, in somewhat the same way that people "leak" stories in the US or "run things up the flagpole" and see what the reaction is out in the country. We were not all that prescient at that time in identifying these debates. However, over time you got more skillful at it. We got to be something like "Kremlinologists", that is what some people did. They could become "Kardeljologists" or "Borbaologists" by looking at these press reports. They did provide some insight into the way that new things might be "coming down the pike." I'll give you one example of this.

Were you still there in the Embassy in Belgrade in 1965?

Q: Yes. I was there until 1967.

DUNLOP: Then you were there when the "reforma" were announced and when Rankovic fell from power. I left Yugoslavia before that happened. In fact, I was not in the Political Section for the run-up to these developments before I left. I was in the Consular Section. However, I imagine that at some point before these rather dramatic changes were made public by Tito, there was some intimation of them in the press and in the party theoretical journals. It was not all daily newspapers that we read. We read "Kommunist," a magazine which was the voice of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia which spoke to the party from Belgrade, as well as other theoretical journals.

I suspect, though I cannot remember the precise time and date this happened, and I may not even have been in the country when it did happen, that the Embassy began to sense that there was some "tremor" underneath the volcano. One way to sense such a development was to read and reflect on articles in theoretical publications. There were other ways to do that, but this was certainly one way to do it.

Q: How about on international events? During the time that we were in Yugoslavia, Africa was very much a subject of attention on the world scene, although the normal Yugoslav couldn't have cared less about it. References to Africa were one way that they could show that they were "at one" with the international communist movement.

DUNLOP: I think that is certainly true. Tito had seized for himself an international role far beyond what Yugoslavia could normally be expected to play, as a state with a population of whatever number of million people, important though it was in the total, European context. I think that when historians come to write about Tito, they will kind of marvel at this. They will ask themselves, "How did he do that? How did he become one of the five leaders who sponsored the Bandung Conference of Non-Aligned Countries in 1955?" The five national leaders included Nasser of Egypt, Nehru of India, Sukarno of Indonesia, Tito of Yugoslavia, and there was a fifth one, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana. They met at Bandung, in Indonesia, and pronounced this "Third Way", supposedly not communist, not capitalist, but something which they called a non-aligned way. Tito was very good at inserting himself into that leadership.

Later on the non-aligned countries had regular conferences and issued "position papers" and communiqués of all sorts about all kinds of matters.

For four or five years, starting in the mid 1950's, the United States and the Soviet Union had been involved in very difficult negotiations over a nuclear test ban treaty. At various points the US and the Soviet Union were not too far apart but then the differences seemed to grow, and so forth. However, in 1962, just before your and my arrival in Yugoslavia, the US and the Soviet Union had reached a self-imposed, generally agreed upon "moratorium" on atmospheric nuclear tests. This was not the result of a treaty, but was the result of a public understanding that, at least for the time being, we and they would not conduct large nuclear tests in the atmosphere. In 1962 Tito hosted the Non-Aligned Conference, which appeared to be a big deal, attended by all of these high "Mukity Mucks." Some not so high "Mukity Mucks" came charging into Belgrade to present themselves to the world as parts of this "new way." For reasons that, certainly, I don't understand, Khrushchev chose this time to break the moratorium on nuclear testing with the largest ever hydrogen bomb explosion. It was several times larger than the largest bomb that we had ever exploded. Furthermore, the Soviets exploded this bomb in the Arctic, an area which they had not previously used for nuclear testing. This raised all kinds of questions of nuclear fallout and pollution.

However, the Non Aligned Countries didn't open their mouths about this. They expressed no criticism whatsoever of the Soviet explosion. This absolutely infuriated Secretary of State Dean Rusk, President John F. Kennedy, and the whole Washington establishment. This cast a shadow over our relations with Yugoslavia during all the years that I was there. It was Tito's choice not to refer to the nuclear explosion. He didn't have to ignore that. Tito could have spoken out if he had wished. However, he wasn't going to do it as the only non-aligned leader to do so, and none of the others chose to say anything about this Soviet nuclear explosion. We thought that Tito should have made a statement, but he didn't do it. This really annoyed our people back in Washington.

Q: What type of work were you doing in the Political Section beside editing the work of the Joint Translation Service?

DUNLOP: Well, there wasn't a lot of substantive, Political Section work to do. That was for three reasons. One was that the section was, frankly, over staffed for the work to be done. We had the Political Counselor, Alex Johnpoll. The deputy chief of the Political Section was Dick Johnson. Then there were also Dudley Miller, Jim Lowenstein, David Anderson, and me. That's six people in the Political Section. Access to information in Yugoslavia was very limited and the ability to go out and do reporting on youth and subjects like that was virtually non-existent. Leaving me out of it, there was an awful lot of talent in that group of five officers whom I have just mentioned. They were all fighting over a very small "pile of bones" to report on. Added to that was the personality of the Political Counselor, with whom I did not get along very well. He was very possessive and grabby. He did not share reporting responsibility with the other people in the Political Section. In fact, if I was unhappy about that situation, this was only a

shadow of the feelings of disaffection felt by Dudley Miller, Dick Johnson, Jim Lowenstein, and David Anderson.

I did a hell of a lot of things beside run the translation service. There are always all kinds of errands to be run. I would take diplomatic notes over to the Foreign Ministry, attend public meetings and take notes, all of that stuff. As far as responsibility for reporting was concerned, I dealt with youth, sports, and whatever junior officers did. I would look for opportunities to say something useful about that in the reporting stream, but there really wasn't much for me to report on.

I traveled a lot. That was fun.

Q: I was going to ask about that. I remember that we took a very interesting trip to an area which is now the "hot spot" of the world, that is, Bosnia, including all of the places which have become names known for horrors of one sort or another during the recent conflict in Yugoslavia. Could you talk a bit about your impressions of traveling around Yugoslavia, how you did it and what you were getting out of it?

DUNLOP: One of the things that the Embassy did very well was to recognize the benefit of official travel by Embassy officers. Since some of us were under-employed, this was a very good way to spend some time. Even if we had been fully employed, it still would have been a good way to spend some of our time. Sometimes in Embassies it's hard to find time to get out of the capital city. I'm sure that the Consular Section never found itself looking for extra work. In the case of the Political Section, our officers were always encouraged to travel. Most of them did so because they were not only encouraged to travel but they liked doing it.

We traveled in pairs, which was a good idea for lots of reasons, one of which was the very mundane reason that it's very dangerous to drive around that country. It's always safer to have two people in a car than one. There was also the security aspect. The Yugoslavs kept Embassy personnel under fairly tight surveillance. Sometimes this surveillance was aggressive, although most times it was not. Having two Embassy officers traveling together was always a good idea under those circumstances. The security police might want to stage a provocation. That is, they might want to allege that something happened when it hadn't or try to make something happen which would not ordinarily have happened. The object might be to put an Embassy officer in a compromising situation and embarrass the Embassy publicly. Or the object might be to put pressure on the individual officer concerned or attempt to blackmail him. In such a case having two officers traveling together was always better than having one officer traveling alone.

So we would travel paired up. Sometimes Consular Officers like you and I would travel together. Sometimes it would be an Economic Officer like Ed Siegal and I who would travel together. Sometimes it would be another Political Officer who would travel with me. However, the idea was to take about 7-10 days and work out an itinerary through a very interesting part of the country. In the case of the trip to Bosnia which you and I took,

it involved going to Bosnia and Croatia and then returning to Belgrade, I guess. We went to Slurj, I believe. I remember that we were there on the evening of All Saints Day [November 1]. We saw people going to the cemeteries on All Saints Day.

Q: We also saw an ammunition factory. The Foreign Ministry used to schedule these visits. We went to a cellulose factory, remember that? All of a sudden, half way through, we were meeting with people who wouldn't talk to us. I couldn't understand it. There was barbed wire strung around it. I said to myself, "What the hell, a cellulose factory? These people make paper, Kleenex, or something like that." Then, all of a sudden, it dawned on me half way through the visit, "Good God! This is where they make explosives!"

DUNLOP: Well, you had to get permission in advance for these visits. You had to ask for and get permission for the proposed travel from the Protocol Office in the Foreign Ministry. This meant that you were dealing with the security people [UDBA]. They would give you permission to visit these places. You could usually go to most of the places you wanted to see, because after a while you tended to avoid asking for permission to visit places which the Yugoslav authorities were less likely to approve. So, rather than have a proposed trip disapproved and then resubmitting a list of other places to visit, which was just a waste of time, you would propose visiting the places which they were more likely to approve. This included visiting factories, which was always fun to do, especially if the people in the factories were proud of what they did, like cutting logs or something like that. You might not know how logs were cut in Yugoslavia. That was fun.

During the trip you would visit the local authorities, the "Opstina" people. This would include the Mayor of the town and his deputy, or somebody that he would designate. Sometimes we visited youth organizations or met with labor union people. We would visit a factory or two. In the meantime, we would see the countryside and get the opportunity to interact with people in cafes, restaurants, and in informal meetings where, perhaps, it was a little easier to get the conversation going. In fact, it was usually quite a lot easier out in the countryside to talk to people than in Belgrade, although sometimes it was possible to do so even in Belgrade.

I don't remember. Did we ever notice any surveillance on that trip we took?

Q: Not really. We were always very careful and made a point, as I'm sure you did, too, in your travels of stopping and asking a local policeman where such and such a place was. We would say, "We're from the American Embassy and we're going there. Could you tell us how to get there?" We asked for directions even if we knew how to get there. We could see the policeman hustling back to his telephone call box. It made things simpler so that we weren't confusing anybody.

DUNLOP: Although there were some exceptions, the roads were usually at least passable. We used to take a four-wheel-drive vehicle. Sometimes that was useful, sometimes not. It was nice to know that you had that kind of vehicle. These vehicles were big, black...

Q: I think they were called "Travelall's" or "Carryall's". They were built by General Motors...

DUNLOP: They had very strong, steel springs. You would really get bounced around. The roads were often dusty and rough, so the actual travel was sometimes something of a chore. However, the countryside was gorgeous. In those days and, to some degree, now, too, I think, the villages you drove through, unless it was in a war-torn area, would be very interesting. The Muslim villages would look very "Muslim." Not only would there be a mosque but there would be people wearing traditional Muslim clothing. In a Serbian village it was the same way. You could find out, perhaps, from Embassy people who had traveled there earlier that the market day there was, say, on Thursday. These were always great days to visit a place.

Market day would be a time when the farmers in the area would come into the village from miles and miles around. Sometimes, they would stay overnight, with their donkeys and carts. They would set up their stalls and sell their produce. The girls would usually be dressed in all their finery, because that would usually be a "bride barter" day. It was absolutely fun.

There would be good food and good wine in the countryside. I never got used to being offered "slivovitz" and being expected to drink it at 8:00 AM.

Q: I know. You had to have three glasses, by custom, because you can't just "walk on two legs," as they used to say.

DUNLOP: Of all the "going native" things that I liked in Yugoslavia, the least attractive was drinking slivovitz. I do not like that stuff.

Q: I don't like it, either. I used to receive gifts, which I would put behind the couch in my office. When I left Yugoslavia, I gave these bottles of slivovitz to the Embassy caretaker. He was delighted. I had accumulated gallons of slivovitz behind the couch.

DUNLOP: Slivovitz is a plum brandy. At times it was highly alcoholic. At other times it was only moderately alcoholic. It never had just a little alcohol in it. It was the custom to serve it to visitors as a courtesy. There were lots of little customs like that which were observed very strictly, and, I'm sure, still are. In the course of a trip like that, if you had a meeting at 8:00 AM, you would go into a room at the office of the person you were calling on. On the table would be glasses of mineral water. They would offer you coffee and then, after you had perhaps gotten your coffee and mineral water settled in your stomach, and thought that you were home free, out would come the bottle of slivovitz!

Q: Sometimes, you would make two to three such calls in the morning. There would be no calls in the afternoon!

DUNLOP: It was fun to do. We would always go back and write a trip report, which would include what we had observed and a summary of anything interesting which people had said, which occasionally happened. Most of the time the people we met were very cautious about what they said to us. Nevertheless, it was a way to get your "feet on the ground," literally. It was very interesting out in the countryside. You would travel, of course, I made this trip to Bosnia with you. I also traveled to Montenegro, up into the Voivodina [near the Hungarian-Yugoslav border], in fact, everywhere I could go in the country.

Q: Harry, I can remember our trying to explain our involvement in the Vietnam War, I think, to Communist Party officials who seemed to be genuinely interested in the subject. It was amusing because both of us later on ended up serving in Vietnam. We would just quote from the guidance papers which we had received.

DUNLOP: You know, one of the things that always happened in these meetings is that there would be two Yugoslavs there. This was because, like us, they didn't want to be "compromised." There would always be someone there to listen. At times, although this depended on the circumstances, there would be three Yugoslavs there. There would be someone sitting in a corner, taking notes on the conversation. You could pretty well tell that he was a security agent.

They had to go through a certain ritual with us. They had to make a few "bows" to the current Communist Party line. If it was a day to "bash America" on Vietnam, they would just have to do that. Now, whether they believed the line, or cared that much about it was another matter. Some probably did believe the party line, although some probably didn't. One thing that I admired about the Yugoslav people in the countryside, and I think that you may agree with this, is that when they could be friendly to us, they really were genuinely friendly. Usually, a certain level of friendship and openness was possible out in the countryside. They really and basically liked Americans. If they didn't have a cousin in Gary, Indiana, they had a close neighbor who had a cousin in Gary. The cousin in Gary would write to them and say, "The US has a lot of trouble, but I tell you what: come on over!" [Laughter] So they had the impression that America and Americans were generous and friendly. And we were.

How many times people would volunteer their thanks for our help during the period 1948-1952, when they knew that, whatever bad things had happened under Tito, another whole set of equally bad or worse things was looming up if the Russians ever marched into Yugoslavia. They would make remarks about the "Truman eggs." Remember "Truman eggs" "Trumanova Jeje?" Those were powdered eggs we sent to Yugoslavia in times of destitution.

Q: Would you talk about the feelings of Yugoslavs toward their fellow Slavs, the Soviets, the Russians?

DUNLOP: I never found any Yugoslavs who had anything more than a lot of fear of the Soviets. Now, there is a long tradition in Serbia of looking fondly at their fellow

Orthodox Slavs in Moscow. Although history doesn't support this, there is the sort of myth that, whenever Serbia gets into trouble, the Russians can be counted on to come to their help. The Russians didn't help the Serbs at the time of the Congress of Berlin [1875] and at a lot of other times. However, there was this sort of feeling that the Slavs were "brethren together." There has been some Pan-Slav feeling stimulated out of Moscow which has often found some resonance in Belgrade.

Certainly, Belgrade was conquered by the Soviet Army in 1944 and, in effect, raped. That's what the Yugoslavs I met remembered. Since the Yugoslavs had gone through a horrible experience during World War II, there was fear of another war, fear of civil war, fear of being helpless pawns of the great powers. I don't think that most Yugoslavs thought that the next catastrophe that descended on them was going to be started by the Americans. However, Tito tried to make sure that everybody believed that. It was in Tito's interest that the Yugoslav people believed that they faced a great threat and that Tito was going to manage the situation satisfactorily. That was always a great asset to him.

Q: During your time at the Embassy in Belgrade, with the trips throughout the country and your work on the Joint Translation Service, and even including your work in the Consular Section, by the time by the time you left Yugoslavia did you have any feeling for the ethnic animosities and "whither Yugoslavia"?

DUNLOP: Yes, I did, although all of us who knew Yugoslavia are horrified at what has recently happened to the country. I don't think that this is hard to understand. We can get into this later on, no doubt, but I don't think that the horrors in Bosnia were inevitable.

Q: We're talking about Yugoslavia during the 1990's.

DUNLOP: Yes. However, I think that we believed that these horrors were possible. I think that Popovic and Jankovic, our two Serbian teachers at the FSI, left with us a strong view of Serbian nationalism, a feeling that the Serbs had never been able to get anything easily. I remember one of the words that Jankovic used. Perhaps Popovic would have used it, too. Jankovic would say, "You know, no matter what else you can say about the Balkans, under the Turks we all suffered. Under the Austrians and the Magyars, and under the Hungarians in particular, the Croats certainly had their problems. But it was Serbia that took the lead. The Serbs created the Yugoslav state." They would say that the other ethnic groups didn't do that. So they would conclude that, "We Serbs deserve credit for that. But we've never gotten credit for it." That's what the Serbs feel. I think that when I was in Yugoslavia, I was aware of that feeling. Certainly, when I later came back to serve in Zagreb [in Croatia], I saw the opposite side of that coin. I remember being appalled at the Serbian contempt for the Albanians, the "shiptars" (name for Albanians, pejorative when used by Serbs). The Kosovo "shiptars" came to Belgrade to clean the streets, and so forth. Then I would talk to our Albanian acquaintances in the club, whom I met.

Q: "Smiley" and "Happy."

DUNLOP: Yeah, the two brothers who made awfully good drinks down in the bar. After a while I was Treasurer of the club, so I actually wrote out their paychecks. I remember that this gave me more time to talk to "Smiley," who was the older one. He once told me, "You know, Mr. Dunlop, there are only two places in Yugoslavia where I feel comfortable. One is in my home in Pec, in Kosovo, and the other one is right here in this club. I can't walk out this door and not feel that people hate me." He was absolutely right about that. The Serbs both hated and loathed the Albanians. That contempt, plus hatred, is a poisonous mix. That leads to genocide. That's terrible stuff.

Q: I recall that I was the head of the Embassy Commissary at one point. We wanted, I think, to get "Smiley" a driver's license. We had to pay for him to go down to Skopje, in Kosovo, to take the driver's test, because no "shiptar" could pass a driver's test in Belgrade.

DUNLOP: Well, they could tell you many stories like that, most of which have some truth to them. A disturbing number of them would be all true.

I think that there were two impressions that I brought away from that first tour of duty in Belgrade. There was this intense dislike of other Yugoslavs by the Serbs. I remember another saying which I kept hearing. "Wherever there is a Serbian house, there is Serbia." By that they meant that the Serbs had a Serbian state and a Serbian body politic, which formed a single unit. History had denied to the Serbs the rights which it had given to everybody else. In fact, history hadn't given this right to everybody else, because there are lots of places where a given people have no state. Look at the Kurds in Iraq, Syria, Turkey, and Iran, I guess throughout the Middle East, for crying out loud. However, the Serbs had this feeling that they were a uniquely persecuted nation, much put upon by history. They felt that they had not been allowed to live under their own leaders. A lot of them were not. Of course, in Serbia itself they could. But they were talking about the Serbs in Croatia whom we know about now. They are called the "Krajina Serbs." There are other names for various areas out there. Or take the Bosnian Serbs.

So when all of this started all over again in 1989, I thought to myself, "Oh, my God!" Whether you are comfortable with this feeling or not, whether you consider that the Serb complaints are justified or not, certainly this is not a complaint that justified what they wound up doing. However, that feeling is there, and it has to be accommodated in some way to make it possible for this situation to be "managed." To manage this situation, you have to understand the deepest felt needs of the various players. There are the Croatians with their feelings, the Serbs with their feelings, and the Muslims, of course, with theirs.

I think that it was those two things, the way the Serbs regard the Albanians and my distaste for that attitude and this sense that the Serbs have a feeling of identity with each other and with a history that is still not complete. This is perhaps best expressed in the view which I mentioned before: "Wherever there is a Serbian house, there is Serbia."

Q: I think that we'll stop after we finish the section on Yugoslavia. I would just like to talk a bit about the time that you served in the Consular Section, when I was chief of that Section. What were you doing there and what were you getting out of that?

DUNLOP: I think that there were only two of us in the section, weren't there? Therefore, what you didn't do, I did. We were not compartmentalized into handling immigrant and non-immigrant visas and then American services. I have some very good memories from that time, one of which was that it was a very pleasant experience to learn a lot from you. I came into the Consular Section with only a very basic, short course in Consular Affairs. I think that covered three weeks, or something like that. I basically had to learn all of that stuff over again.

I remember a couple of impressions that stayed with me. One of them is that, in those days, the "preference" waiting list for Yugoslavia was something horrible like 12 years. That meant that, if a family member or some other Yugoslav, didn't matter whether he was a Serbian, Croatian, or whatever, was eligible to come to the United States because of whatever set of circumstances of family status which, under our laws, allowed him to become eligible, he still had 12 years to wait. This amounted to a lifetime for most of these people.

That situation generated pressure within the waiting line. It led people to falsify their applications so that they could get into the United States under other terms and then stay on, because they had preferential status. We had to turn those folks back if they came into our office and lied. That made them forever ineligible to receive an American visa, if we could document this sufficiently or assert it. I just felt that this was a terrible situation. It had to be done, because it was what the immigration law said. I was so glad when the law was later changed, although I don't know exactly how it works now. However, at least this meant that there wasn't so much pressure on these people to come in with very cleverly constructed "stories." Sometimes they were not so cleverly constructed, but they were all in great danger of losing the opportunity ever to come to the United States. That was one thing that I remember.

I remember feeling very uneasy about making some of those judgments, but that's human nature, and you had to make those judgments. The judgment would be that this person lied, based on your understanding of how the whole culture worked. For example, there was a Macedonian woman who would come in to apply for a non-immigrant visa to visit an aunt in the United States. The "aunt" was probably a 22-year-old woman. Well, the chances were that she was going to marry someone she had never met. Or she had met him already but they couldn't arrange the marriage "deal" in time. He had to go back to the United States before his visa or re-entry permit expired. Now they had to arrange how many cows and pigs and what portion of a plum orchard in Yugoslavia would be transferred. Now she was going to go to the United States to complete the deal. It was kind of stressful to handle cases like that.

The other thing I remember is a couple of welfare cases involving American citizens. Remember that terrible automobile accident out on the Novi Sad highway?

Q: Yes.

DUNLOP: There was one person, an American, killed. It happened at Christmas time, and the body was sent back to the United States. I remember that I had several things to handle. You probably talked to the families, mostly on the phone. I would visit the hospital and get some word from the doctor. Then I went out to Novi Sad. There were two young men there, when this terrible accident occurred just before Christmas. One of the passengers had severe damage to his head. The other one was killed. The body was out in Novi Sad. So one of my jobs was to go out to Novi Sad and help make the arrangements to ship the body back to the US, which was fairly straightforward but kind of gruesome. In fact, we didn't do this very often.

I remember bringing the bloody clothes of the dead man back to Belgrade. They just handed them to me. I wasn't prepared for this. They said, "Come back tomorrow" for the bloody clothes. They gave me a bundle of clothes, tied up in rope and soaked in dried blood. So I brought the clothes back to the Embassy and put them in a corner of the basement garage of the office. Every time I would go down there, I would see the bundle of bloody clothes, just sitting there.

Among the other things that I had to do was to witness, sign, and certify whatever that air waybill was. That was to be attached to the coffin or the shipping container when it was sent back to the US. My certification was that this is, in fact, the body of a deceased American citizen. In this case the body would not fit into the container, which was too short. I said, "Well, what happens now?" They told me, "This happens lots of times. We just break the legs." [Laughter] So I guess that's what they did. Did I ever tell you that?

Q: No, I don't think so. Maybe you did.

DUNLOP: I don't know whether I told you that or whether I just wanted to bury that story so deep in my memory. They weren't going to open the coffin. They rarely open a coffin. The man's face was totally disfigured as a result of the accident.

Anyway, I can remember some of these things, which are very typical of what a Consular Officer does. I also remember going to the airport to meet the family of the deceased man. They flew out to Yugoslavia on about December 27, after we received the good news of one young man's recovery, following our hearing about the death of the other young man. That wasn't so bad, because I had some good news to tell them. I think that you met the family at the hospital.

Q: This is the lot of a Foreign Service Officer, often having to deal with a very difficult situation.

DUNLOP: Then there was the occasional American citizen, a kind of lost "waif," usually during the summer. We had no official, approved allotment of US Government funds to help these people. The Embassy had a fund which you managed and for which we

collected money every so often. We'd go around to the Embassy community with our hands out. Did the Commissary or anybody else make a regular contribution to this fund?

Q: They did. We tried to be reimbursed for what we spent out of these funds. However, by the time the lost "waifs" got back to the United States, they usually were not very obliging about paying up.

DUNLOP: This would be essentially for a one-way ticket to the US plus enough additional money to buy meals for a day?

Q: Yes.

DUNLOP: I remember one young woman who said that she had been assaulted on the highway. It didn't look as this had happened. She didn't look very haggard when she came into the Embassy. We wouldn't have treated her any differently if we really suspected that her story was false.

Q: I think that this case involved a truck driver. Wasn't she hitch hiking?

DUNLOP: She could well have been. However, if I remember correctly, her demeanor was not that of someone who had just a hard and very harrowing experience. Her expression suggested that she was thinking, "I wonder if this story is going to work."
[Laughter]

Q: Yes.

DUNLOP: Well, as I recall, a similar story worked for her in Athens. Maybe she thought that it would work in Belgrade.

Q: There were an awful lot of judgments made on whether people were "playing a game with us." We had a lot of games played on us, too. This was an era of the "footloose and fancy free" young American. Just the beginning of the "wanderjahr" of many American young people who would come into the Embassy with a "hard luck" story like this.

DUNLOP: I had another experience of that nature, which was a little bit different. It was very much a reflection of that age when I got to the Consulate in Zagreb a few years later. Maybe I could talk about that.

Q: Okay.

DUNLOP: I thought that we had a very busy Consular Section in Belgrade. We had a lot to do. Later on there was some question about the buying and selling of influence among the local staff. I wasn't aware of it at the time. Were you there when it happened?

Q: There was a great deal of concern about it. I had always been concerned about this possibility but couldn't prove anything about it. One morning I came into the office, and

Mme. Zhukov, a very proper, Russian lady who had been the "doyenne" of the staff of the Consular Section, died. I was thinking, "Good God, who's going to replace her?" I went off to view the body, as one did. I came back to the office and had to settle with the young or not so young ladies of the Consular Section as to who was going to replace her.

Then out came the story, "Oh, Mme. Zhukov has been playing fast and loose." The women in the Consular Section said that Mme. Zhukov would tell a well qualified, visa applicant with no apparent problem at all that, "You've got a real problem here. Maybe you ought to see a lawyer." The applicant would reply, "Well, whom should I see?" She would say, "Why don't you see Gospodin Mr. X," who was a friend of hers. There would be that type of thing.

DUNLOP: She suggested that the applicant had a visa problem, when there wasn't anything that needed fixing. Let me add one other thing. You were asking me about my impressions of Yugoslavia. Here is another, strong recollection. That is, the impact on people of a police state. A lot of this, though not all of it, is derived from my experience with the local staff of the Embassy in Belgrade.

Let's take it for granted that people from the Balkans are "worst case" folks. They tend to see things and sometimes people in the worst light. They are very suspicious of being manipulated. They are likely to promote themselves by telling tales on other people. So these very human failings may be as great or greater in a place like the Embassy in Belgrade, as any place else. Then you add on top of that a police state, which does, in fact, recruit people to "tell" on other people. In fact, it coerces people to do things against their will. For example, a loyal employee of the Embassy may be coerced to give information or try to steal information about these foreign, capitalist diplomats, who are enemies of the people's socialist state. Then the situation is compounded. The Yugoslav Government doesn't have to do a lot to disrupt and to divide people under those circumstances or to see that happen, if they think that it's in their interests.

In fact, the secret police can call somebody in and interrogate them. Then they can let it be known to other people that they've done that. How can that person say that he or she has never, in fact, entered into some compromising arrangement with the secret police? This is a kind of poison that seeps into personal relationships, even more so than would otherwise be the case.

I remember, and this was also true up in Zagreb later on. In fact, it was true to a somewhat lesser degree in Belgrade 12 years later, when I came back to Yugoslavia. It is a very nasty thing that happens almost immediately when you get that situation where the government has the power to do with people as it wishes. People begin to believe that they have done things.

RUSSELL O. PRICKETT
Economic Officer

Belgrade (1964-1968)

Prickett was born in the town of Willmar, Minnesota, way back in 1932, and lived as a child in Norris, Minnesota. He attended Hamline University from 1950 to 1954 achieving a degree in Political Science. He joined the Foreign Service in 1959.

Q: Well, what was your impression of Yugoslavia. This is the first time way out in the big world, wasn't it? And this would have been what, about '53 or so?

PRICKETT: This was the summer of '53.

Q: What was your impression of Yugoslavia at that time?

PRICKETT: Well, walking through Belgrade from the Studencki Dom down around Boulevard Revolucija up to the American embassy to pick up our mail we passed what passed for their Pentagon in those days, a very low old building with a stone wall yard; and I was very much impressed with the very businesslike automatic weapons that the guards carried. I met a number of young people, of course. It was very interesting. They were poor. You saw the film When Father Was Away on Business." It was from that era, and those open light bulbs hanging in the public buildings or in the private places, the very rudimentary facilities that people had, that took me right back to '53. It was just after the war. The bullet scars were on the buildings. There were still ruins around and about that hadn't been rebuilt. Yugoslavia was only five years after Tito's break with Stalin.

Q: How had he handled the ethnicity, which is so important now?

PRICKETT: Tito had been very much a leader of the Communist Party's opposition to the ethnic rivalries. Tito had set up this system of the six Constituent Republics — Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Bosnia, which was then called Bosnia-Herzegovina. They had carved off from Serbia the two autonomous provinces, so-called, of the Vojvodina and Kosovo — as it was then called, Kosovo-Metohija — "Kos-Met" we sometimes called it. The whole idea was that the pre-World War II Yugoslav monarchy had been a very, very heavy-handed thing, and the only people who appreciated it were the Serbs, because the monarch was Serbian. The Croats, the Slovenes and the others really felt oppressed by that monarchy. The Treaty of Versailles had created Yugoslavia as the "Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, Slovenes," but it was dominated by the Serbs. The Croats and Slovenes, throughout the 19th century, had had quite a different idea, even though they had all shared in this movement towards Yugoslav unity. These former subjects of the Turkish and Austro-Hungarian Empires saw maybe a unified country as their way out of those empires. Both of those empires, of course, imploded surprisingly quickly, from the point of view of people who had been observing them for centuries, with World War I. So maybe before they were ready, but in any case, in a hurry, here was this country ready to be born — people who were ethnically very similar, linguistically very similar, with different religious heritage, the

Orthodox Serbs and the Catholic Croats and Slovenes. Well, the Slovenes and the Croats had looked to a kind of a federation or confederation in which they'd have some voice in the central government and a fair degree of autonomy at home. The Serbs looked at a union as being part of a pan-Serbian movement in which they would share the benefits of their monarchy with their Slavic neighbors and cousins. And the latter arrangement was really what emerged after World War I.

So part of Tito's appeal during this civil war that was taking place during World War II was that he was offering something different from the old Serbian monarchy. During World War II, you'll recall that the first resistance movement that we heard about were the Chetniks under Draza Mikhailovic, a colonel who had been elevated to general rank when the monarchy fled from Yugoslavia during the war. Well, Mikhailovic saw his mission as keeping some kind of an army in being ready to rise up when the allies invaded. Tito and his partisans, on the other hand — and this was, again, a broad movement of which the Communists were the point men — adopted the policy of fighting Germans whenever and wherever they could. And this brought terrible reprisals from the Germans. They'd come into a village where a German soldier had been killed, and they'd trot out ten Yugoslav men and line them up against a wall and shoot them, ten to one. Well, those reprisals drove people out of the villages and into the hills, looking for somebody with whom they could fight Germans. And generally the first folks they found were Tito and his partisans. So this general strategy, or tactic, brought a lot of power to Tito and his people, and in addition, he was already forming his philosophy of a broad umbrella under which the Slovenes could be the best possible Slovenes and the Macedonians the same and including the Serbs and so forth. Plus, the Serbs were about 40 percent of the population, and this provided some balance to their otherwise disproportionate power, and the idea of this carving out of the autonomous province of Vojvodina and the autonomous region (later called province) of Kosovo and giving them some local autonomy and separate voice in this central government also further lightened the weight of the Serbs in this overall balance. So that was one thing they did. And the other, then, that was parallel to it was to be absolutely anathema to regional nationalism. They got their folkways and folksongs and dances and so on, and the idea that Croats hated Serbs and vice versa was utterly a complete no-no. The Communist Party was very, very tough on that. There were some purges of folks who promoted anything that could smack of separatism or whatever. Interestingly, in the first Yugoslav constitution of 1946 and some subsequent versions, the constituent republics — Serbo-Croatia and so forth — had the right on paper to secede from the Yugoslav Federation, and that was one reason that any suggestion that Kosovo might be given the status of a constituent republic was immediately brushed aside because the fear was that Kosovo, which even then had a majority of ethnic Albanian population, would want to secede and join with neighboring Albania. That couldn't be allowed because, after all, the traditional patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church was down in the town of Peć in Kosovo. Dečani and other monasteries were there, and the famous field where the losing battle had been fought with the Turks back in 1389, Kosovo Polje, the Field of the Blackbirds — that was down there, too. It was kind of a dog-in-the-manger sense on the part of the Serbs, because any Serbs who could get enough skills and enough education to get out of Kosovo were getting out. It was the poorest place in all Europe, about 100 miles across from east to west and north

to south, with the possible exception of Albania itself, probably the poorest area in Europe.

Q: *In pictures of Milosevic, he's always standing like that. Isn't he a short man?*

PRICKETT: I don't remember. Mikhailovic, you mean, not Milosevic.

Q: *I'm sorry, Milosevic.*

PRICKETT: Milosevic is short too.

Q: *Short.*

PRICKETT: Yes.

Q: *He's always standing like Tito —*

PRICKETT: I think he patterns his body language after the Marshall, yes. Yes, I think so.

Q: *Okay. I'm sorry, I'm getting away from your substance.*

PRICKETT: But it is a trait, I think. These are people with immense pride, and you didn't see a whole lot of Yugoslavs slouching or slumping, ever. Mostly they're tall folks, and so if somebody is short and achieves a position of leadership in the country, he's got to stand tall, and he's got to have something about his physical presence. You may recall the Yugoslavs had done very well in international basketball. They're a bunch of tall people. Walk down the street, and you see young kids in the distance, and by the time you're meeting them, you know, they're towering over you. High school kids 6' 1", 6' 2", very, very common.

Q: *Did you have a good local staff?*

PRICKETT: I had an old fellow named Dan Dobredolac, who was my commercial assistant. He was the engineer that I mentioned that had seen the Serbian bodies coming down the river. And then the second assistant was named Nada Vujicæ. She was the wife of a Serbian engineer. They lived over in Pančevo across the river, and they were both very, very devoted. They had both lived through the toughest time of the Communists. A lot of anti-American stuff had gone down, and the local staff were either fiercely anti-Communist or they were on the pay of the Yugoslav secret police. So we had to assume that even if our help was very sympathetic to us, that there was no way that they couldn't be coopted to tell what they knew, and so, of course, our embassy was very much segregated as to who could go where without an escort. My commercial library was down

on the first floor right next to the entrance to the embassy, and my office was up on the fourth floor. So I got a lot of exercise going up and down the stairs. The elevator was small and old, so I kept in pretty good shape during that. With the exception that all of this traveling around meant that you ate an awful lot of what you would call barbecue down there in Texas. The Yugoslav food was heavy, but good, substantial stuff. You had a lot of high-cholesterol, a lot of meat and potatoes. The meat was very good. It was beef and pork and lamb and on a spit, roasted outdoors.

Q: And Slivovitz and other things to drink, and beer and whatever.

PRICKETT: Oh, yes. Beer, and Yugoslavs make good wines, their white wines especially, but they have good reds and whites. People always said their wine was better than their beer. I developed a taste for the beer first and later came around to the wine. After leaving the country, even, in the '80's, you could buy Yugoslav wines in the supermarkets back here in the States. That's jumping way ahead, too, but Coca-Cola developed a barter program, and they were selling their Coca-Cola over in Yugoslavia and taking Yugoslav wines in exchange.

Q: How was Sarajevo as a city in those days, sophisticated and cosmopolitan?

PRICKETT: No, not so much. It was very much inward-turned. It was —

Q: Ethnically what was the composition, or did it matter?

PRICKETT: It hardly matters, almost equal parts of Bosnian Muslims, Serbs so-called (that is, people of the Eastern Orthodox heritage), and Catholic-heritage Croats. You're talking about Bosnian Serbs, you're talking about people who come from the Eastern Christian heritage. Bosnian Croats are of the Roman Catholic tradition. And the Muslims. First time I was ever in Sarajevo was in 1953 as a student. I was in the Hotel Europa — *Evropa*, as they call it — and I could count from my hotel window 15 minarets — lots of Muslim mosques in Sarajevo.

Q: I never regarded them as intensely Muslim —

PRICKETT: Very secular, but the mosques were there. Their little coffee cups had the crescent in the bottom, in good design, or their tea services and so on.

Q: Nobody was veiled, or were they, in the '60's?

PRICKETT: No, but they did have a kind of a headscarf their faces were not veiled, but often the hair would be covered.

Q: Not the university students.

PRICKETT: No, the kids were very much of the 20th century.

Q: *Blue jeans.*

PRICKETT: Yes. Later on. But blue jeans came in in the '60's. In fact, they were among my clients as commercial attaché. Actually, Levi's, I believe, worked out a licensing arrangement and did some manufacturing.

HARRY A. CAHILL
Economic Officer
Belgrade (1965-1968)

Harry A. Cahill was born in New York and graduated from Manhattan College, where he majored in English. It was at the Army Language School in Monterey that he developed an interest in foreign service. In addition to Yugoslavia, he served in Norway, Poland, Nigeria, Uruguay, Columbia, and India. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on July 29, 1993.

Q: *And where did you go?*

CAHILL: I went home to SAIS, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies to do graduate work in economics. One day in Warsaw a message had come congratulating me on being chosen for Yugoslav language and area study. But the next pouch announced that I had been selected for econ study at university of my choice. I took the latter offer and thus changed my direction in the service. Thinking of our children, I thought best to stay at our Virginia home and commute to SAIS. The year was invigorating, the teaching good. Then in the summer of 1965 we sailed to Yugoslavia. You have heard of that place?

Q: *Yes.*

CAHILL: There was a consular chief there by the name of Kennedy. A very good mentor you were. Wise advice on many counts. I was in the econ section.

Q: *Let's stop here and pick up the next time we get together.*

CAHILL: Beautiful.

Q: *Today is November, 5, 1993. Harry, what was the economic section like when you were in Belgrade?*

CAHILL: The section was amply staffed. Abilities varied. Hopes were high for an economy that would grow and link itself more and more with the west for mutual gain.

My duties ranged all over the place, reporting and working in many economic areas. One large task, however, was to manage the AID program which at one time had been our biggest.

America had poured in tremendous assistance after Tito broke from the USSR's yoke in 1949. We financed many huge and small projects. My job gave me the freedom and authority to travel anywhere, visit any factory, any industrial plant, any complex where AID money had gone. The money went everywhere from school lunch programs to armaments factories to huge power plants. Repayment was in dinars. I figured out a way to reprogram the dinars, and we launched into new programs. The Yugoslavs were generous in allowing me to recommend projects which they actually implemented. I greatly enjoyed visits to the Economic Ministry. After warm greetings a waiter would appear, a man who looked like a punch-drunk boxer. He wore a tuxedo and offered a silver tray with orange juice, wonderful slivovitz and sweets. We would munch happily, and then my hosts would say: "Dobro, tell us now where should we put the money?" One early call was the Belgrade-Bar railroad, once proposed by Emperor Franz Joseph around 1904.

Q: Bar is in Montenegro...

CAHILL: On the southern coast next to Albania. Further north up the coast is Ploce where we recommended building a port with the AID funds. Today it is the main seaport for the new state of Bosnia, vital in the war.

Q: We are talking about the present war between the Serbs and the Bosnians and Croats.

CAHILL: Yes, conflict on vicious terrain. In winter snow or summer heat I would pass through Yugoslavia's rugged hills and mountain passes on the way to check assistance programs, another new dam, emergency food deliveries after an earthquake, CARE feeding units, steel mills. Every bend in the road was a perfect ambush site. The Yugoslav army trained for small unit operations of this type.

Q: In the embassy there was always a good sense of morale. It was the best place that I have served for spirit and the caliber of the officers.

CAHILL: Yugoslavia was a world within itself. Full of contrasts and natural riches and potential. We had great hope for the future in the econ section. A solid base would be built by 1970. CEOs and academicians flowed in to ask us about worker-ownership of factories and future investment. But the gilded tomorrow never came. The death of Tito and his strong unifying hand hurt deeply. Another key element was the failure of the financial system. It did not work on economic principles but on cronyism and political greed. It dished out credits to terrible projects and shady operators, to friends and ethnic comrades. Childish leaders ran amuck with the nation's wealth. Politics became thuggery. Break up the nation and alienate communities for short-term political gain. I saw the same disease in Nigeria, Sri Lanka and India.

Q: What was your impression of Tito and his rule at that time?

CAHILL: Tito was a very strong man. No one knew who would succeed him. He went on, and on, and on and on. He was the unifier.

Q: Tito was considered at that point a good thing?

CAHILL: A stable thing, a good thing, a man who held the country together. He believed he was Mr. Yugoslavia, the man who had the best interests of Yugoslavia at heart. He dwarfed everybody else. He was the banyan tree in whose shade no other trees grew.

Q: Because we are speaking from the perspective of 1993 and this horrible falling apart of Yugoslavia, what was your feeling and maybe of your colleagues, about the ethnic divisiveness at that time?

CAHILL: We thought, I suspect just about everyone in the mission thought, that ethnic divisiveness was in check, even fading. The evidence said so. I probably traveled as much if not more than any embassy person and I would constantly find people saying "we Yugoslavs." There was pride in this. They were Macedonians or Croats or Serbs first but they were also Yugoslavs and saw personal gain by being so. Government moved its officers around. Big companies moved managers around. Slovenians headed factories in the south. The army was totally integrated. I did not hear calls for the end of the union or serious backbiting about other ethnic groups.

Q: And it wasn't as though people were living in absolute terror of the secret police. You couldn't say these things in public, but at the same time we had very frank discussions at that time.

CAHILL: There was no strong, palpable fear. The official theme "Oneness in Brotherhood" seemed accepted. Our view was that it was national suicide to break apart. Most people would lose, not win in any sense. We thought that most of the population thought as we did.

Q: This may be one of our problems. As a practical people it is hard to envision the passions of nationality.

CAHILL: Well said. I suspect that incitement of passions to rip a nation apart largely came at first from outside. From political thinkers in Central Europe and overseas clubs of ethnic groups who cannot get hurt themselves but can cheer on the warriors from the safety of a distant armchair. The money and the hate words are pumped "home".

Q: It is like the IRA.

CAHILL: Go to the north Bronx to see IRA funds collected.

Q: People who leave a country tend to want to preserve the old hatreds more often than the people in the country.

CAHILL: They glory and find virility in it. They are snugly safe from negative consequences.

Q: How did you evaluate Ambassador Elbrick in running the embassy when you were there?

CAHILL: He gave the appearance of a veteran skipper who smoothly sailed over the seas. Dignified, confident, aware, outwardly relaxed. Thoroughly professional.

Q: Yes, I had exactly the same feeling. When did you leave Yugoslavia?

CAHILL: I left on the Fourth of July, 1968 and said, "Oh, how nice to escape a long July Fourth reception." We went in a red Volkswagen bus which I had bought in Germany some months before and driven to Belgrade. We now had six children, Steven almost born on a Belgrade-Munich plane in August, 1966. We headed north on a sentimental journey to historical sites like the battlefield of Caporetto, once in Hemingway's Italy but now in Yugoslavia. As we drove from Belgrade to Genoa we crossed much land that had changed hands at various times between Austria, Italy and Yugoslavia. So much of the north is vulnerable to irredentist claims. Back in America on home leave, the same VW bus took us on a tour of 36 states over six weeks. Time for the children to learn about their own country.

WARREN ZIMMERMAN
Political Officer
Belgrade (1965-1968)

Ambassador
Yugoslavia (1989-1992)

Ambassador Warren Zimmerman was born in Pennsylvania in 1934. He graduated from Yale University, received a B.A. and M.A. from the University of Cambridge and served in the U.S. Army in 1959. Upon entering the Foreign Service in 1961, his postings abroad included Caracas, Belgrade, Moscow, Paris, Madrid, Vienna, and Geneva, with an ambassadorship to Yugoslavia. Ambassador Zimmerman was interviewed in 1996 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: Well you came back for Serbian. I would like to talk a little about the Serbian training because it's a pretty good introduction. By the way I know the, people reading this should know we talk about Serbian because that is what you learn. I mean it was called Serbo-Croatian, but there wasn't any nonsense about...

ZIMMERMANN: Well there were not Croats in the course that I took. They were real Serbs.

Q: Oh boy. So you took Serbian from when to when?

ZIMMERMANN: I took it from the summer of '64 to the summer of '65.

Q: Could you talk a bit about the teaching of the language and what you got from the teachers.

ZIMMERMANN: Well my teachers were undoubtedly the same as yours. Two elderly Serb émigrés who were in their own way central casting Serbs, particularly Dryden Propovich, who had been an officer in the Royal Yugoslav Army and fled Yugoslavia because of his hatred of Tito. He was not by vocation, avocation interest or profession really, a teacher. I mean he was a military officer; he was a politician; he was anything but a teacher. I had the feeling that nothing bored him more than teaching. What he really wanted to do was inculcate into his captive audience all of the Serb values. Of course this was fascinating.

Q: In many ways I found that most, the greatest thing we got out of it something which I am sure both of us are using today to judge where these people came from.

ZIMMERMANN: Absolutely right. You got a real understanding of how a real Serb thinks, and he was a Serb nationalist. I didn't know it at the time. I mean I didn't use those categories, but he definitely was. Spending day in and day out with a man whose mind works in that way really did give you a fantastic insight into the way real Serbs think. You don't really get that insight if you don't have that amount of exposure. The other teacher who was his brother-in-law was Yanko Yakovich, a very gentle man. He probably also was a Serbian nationalist, but he was too polite to talk about it very much. One had the sense that again, he didn't much enjoy teaching. I had the experience sometimes of watching him fall asleep while he was talking in class, but he was an exceptionally nice man. The two of them would occasionally invite us around...

Q: It does seem incredible. What about the nationalities problem? Again we were talking about at that time how Tito was handling it, how we saw Serbia, Croatia, Bosnians, etc.

ZIMMERMANN: I have to say I was not really aware of the depth of the nationality problem. This may have been because I was naive or it may have been because this was one thing Yugoslavs tended to try to hide from foreigners. It also may be that it was not as big a problem as all that. We knew there was a problem in Kosovo, the southern province of Serbia that the Serbs were pressing very hard against the Albanians there, and that there were rumored atrocities and torturings and so forth. We also knew there was a

strong outbreak of language nationalism in Croatia. Their view was that Serbo-Croatian is not a language. Croatian is a separate language. We have to have our own words, and that this could spill over very quickly into political tension as it did in 1971 when Tito then purged a group of so-called Croatian nationalists. I remember believing, and I think I actually said this in various reports and speeches, that Yugoslavia is not the most unstable country in Europe, that you don't have to worry about Yugoslavia staying together. It will stay together at least as long as Tito is there. So, I have to say I didn't take the nationalism problem very seriously in the 1960s.

Q: It was my impression (I was not a political officer. I was a consular officer. We overlapped part of the time. I left a little before you did) that Tito was really working hard on suppressing the nationalist thing. It was brotherhood and unity was sort of the motto. Maybe the new generation growing up would not have the same feelings. This is naive as hell on my part but I think maybe this positive feeling kind of permeated the embassy officers. Did you have any feeling?

ZIMMERMANN: I think that might be true. On the one hand, Tito cracked down very hard on any outbreak of nationalist sentiment. That is very intimidating, of course, so there wasn't very much that was visible. I think the point you make is actually quite interesting, that we were still just a generation away from WWII when we were in Yugoslavia in the 1960s. So people who had been young in their teens and twenties in that war, were still only in their 40s in the 60s. They had a very clear memory of the horrors of that war, and they may have felt that we have to transcend this. We have to get away from this kind of approach. So many Yugoslavs were killed by other Yugoslavs in WWII. But if you then fast forward to 25 years later, the people who were in their 40s are now in their 60s and 70s. They are retired for most cases. They don't count any more. The people who are in their 40s now are people who don't remember the war, who don't remember what happened, who don't remember how horrible it was. It is quite conceivable that that generational gap made it easy for the dictators, the nationalist dictators of today to find a following.

Q: What about Bosnia-Herzegovina. Was that even considered a separate place or was that just neutral ground?

ZIMMERMANN: No, it was considered a separate place. It was an independent separate republic. It was one of the six republics. It had a somewhat corrupt communist leadership that played the national key very carefully. It had just so many Muslims, so many Serbs, so many Croats in positions of power. Certainly not reformist, not particularly western oriented, kind of a sleepy communist rule. Macedonia was at that point not reformist either although it became quite reformist well before it became independent. Montenegro had just undergone another coup d'état like Kosovo orchestrated by Milosevic which brought into power a young leadership, some of them in their 20s who talked a good game on economic reform but turned out to be pretty close to Milosevic, and the ones that weren't were quickly purged out of that leadership, which

quickly fell under the control of Momir Bulatovic who is now prime minister of Yugoslavia.

Q: Let's say if something is done in Kosovo, is that a Yugoslav problem or a Serbian problem from your perspective?

ZIMMERMANN: That was a Serbian problem. From my perspective as an analyst, it was a Serbian problem because only the Serbs counted in Kosovo. Yugoslavia as Yugoslavia had almost no power in Kosovo. In fact just before I got there, the Serbs requested from the Yugoslav federation that the Yugoslav army be reinforced in Kosovo to protect the people of Kosovo, Serbs. The Yugoslav presidency complied with that despite the fact that at least some of them would have objected to it, the Slovenes and the Croats certainly. And the man to whom I presented my credentials, the Muslim Dizdarevic, would have objected to it as well. The Serbs got their way partly I think, because no republic wanted to assert the power of the Yugoslav federation over other republics because they all wanted their own autonomy. So they basically gave the Serbs a free hand in Kosovo. Now, in the end, this did not set well with the Slovenians who began to understand that to the degree that the Serbs were oppressing the Albanians in Kosovo, to that same degree it would become difficult for Yugoslavia to join the European Community and the other European organizations. In other words, the Slovenes drew the conclusion that Serbian policy in Kosovo was dragging the whole country down and making it impossible for the more progressive republics like Slovenia to move toward Europe. That was really the thing that began the movement toward the breakup of Yugoslavia, the Slovene calculation that they couldn't do it in Yugoslavia, they had to do it independently.

Q: So, Kosovo is the river that runs through it.

ZIMMERMANN: Absolutely. Kosovo was the origin of the breakup of Yugoslavia.

ZIMMERMANN: It was race discrimination in the '60s I think, or in the '50s in the South. I titled this cable "Kosovo Burning" because I believed that the prospects that Kosovo would blow up were both great and imminent.

Q: What were you getting from both sides of the, both the Albanians and the Serbs there?

ZIMMERMANN: Actually the prime minister of Kosovo was an Albanian. He was the sort of person the Serbs referred to as an honest Albanian, that meant Albanian Quislings, people who supported Serbs. He had a Serbian wife. My meeting with him was horrifying in one sense. He was very nervous, and there were a lot of people around him. He did not meet me alone with one or two aides. There quite a lot of people in the room. They seemed to be watching very carefully what he said. He went through the line which was everybody's got their rights in Kosovo; it is absolutely wrong that the Albanians have been deprived of anything. I said, "It doesn't seem to be the view of too many observers."

Did he have any idea what the future would be and what should be done in the future. "Yes," he said, "all political prisoners should be released." At that point I looked around and saw some of these hard act characters who were watching him and did not look very happy. I noticed that this was a proposal that was never again repeated. You would talk to Serbs who were high up in the administration or important in cultural affairs or in the parliament, and they would be very arrogant about the Albanians. The Albanians on the other hand, seemed very cowed, I thought. I met Rugova for the first time who was the formal head of the Albanian movement, a cultural figure. He was a poet. I met him in the union of writers building in Pristina, and they didn't seem to have an idea of what to do. It was pretty clear they did not feel that they had any power base to speak of except the people themselves in Kosovo. Ultimately they worked out a strategy which was to pull out Albanians from every institution including hospitals and schools that they weren't already expelled from, in other words try to take the trend the Serbs had started to keep the Albanians out, take it even to a higher degree by pulling themselves out thereby creating a situation in which you had two cultures in Kosovo which did not rub up against each other very much. This was very different from Bosnia where there was always, even during the war, a lot of interchange among the different ethnic groups.

Q: How bad had the Albanian rule been? I mean were prisoners, killings, beatings, looting whatever?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, on a scale of 10, we could say what the Serbs were doing to the Albanians was about nine, but what the Albanians had been doing to the Serbs was about three. There was no deprivation of political rights or very little. There were individual instances of abuse that were probably not followed up, prosecuted. But Serbs had scrapbooks full of all kinds of alleged atrocities, and very few of them stood up to the objective scrutiny of various NGOs, the non-governmental organizations, that would go down there and investigate them.

Q: Well, when you were back in Belgrade, what about Belgrade society? I am not talking about the literati, but the intellectuals, the government people and all. How did you find yourself received there?

ZIMMERMANN: Oh, very well. The United States has always had a good relationship with Yugoslavia and a good relationship with Serbia. Belgrade was a Yugoslav city for five days a week. You could find Croats, Slovenes, people from all the republics who were there because they had work to do in Belgrade. On weekends, Belgrade was a Serbian city because all of the Slovenes, the Croats, the others had gone home for the weekend, and I really mean all. Very few stayed around. Then it was a Serbian city, and a very pleasant and attractive Serbian city, I thought, with that kind of seediness that comes with the Balkans and a lot of liveliness that comes with people who are energetic and have views on all kinds of things.

Q: Did you find, as we are doing this interview right now, we are in the midst of a bombing campaign of bombing Belgrade and Kosovo, and we are essentially at war with Serbia. One of the things that has struck me, I mean it hasn't surprised me is on the

interviews of sort of plain Belgrade Serbian citizens how they dismiss the Albanians I mean almost as though they are not real people. How did you find, did the plight of the Kosovars raise any sympathy at all with your Serbian friends or acquaintances?

ZIMMERMANN: Outside of the few human rights activists I would say that there was zero concern among the Serbs I knew for Kosovars, even among people who should have known better.

Q: Intellectuals, university types,

ZIMMERMANN: Exactly. I remember sitting at dinner next to a very nice looking well dressed Serbian woman in her 40s who was an art historian, spent many years in New York, knew the west very well, knew the United States very well. We were talking about the Kosovo problem. She said, "The way to solve the Kosovo problem is to line the Albanians up against a wall and shoot them all." Now there may have been a bit of facetiousness in that remark, but even if she didn't mean it literally, it showed a kind of unconcern for other human beings that was pretty appalling.

Q: Well, in a way, it reflects attitudes. I always think of the quote of Golda Meier one time in Israel. "There are no such thing as Palestinians". These are people who got in their way.

ZIMMERMANN: And I am afraid that the popularity if you can call it that at least the support that Milosevic has gotten from a large majority of the Serbian people is because Kosovo is his big issue, and because in many ways, they agree with him on Kosovo.

Q: Where did you look at Milosevic's hard core support? Were these country boys or was this the working class? I mean you get to the really hard core and then you get the ones who flock to the nationalist banner.

ZIMMERMANN: I would say he got his support from two major elements. One was the intellectuals. Serbian intellectuals belong I think in one of the circles of hell for what they did to their own country. The whole idea of victimization in Kosovo, the whole idea of what Serbia should do to right the wrongs done to it in Kosovo came out of the Serbian Academy of Sciences, this body of Serbian intellectuals. Milosevic tapped into them in a very major way, so they bear a lot of the blame for what went on, because they gave a kind of intellectual patina to what was a very ruthless power grab. Secondly, I think it was a rural phenomenon. Milosevic, somehow was able to portray himself as a defender of the Serbian orthodox faith when he was a communist his whole life, and presumably an atheist. Nonetheless he did, and I think in rural areas of Serbia, he had a lot of support among people who were not very well educated and who responded very strongly to Serbian nationalism. In urban areas there was less support although there was a kind of a national hypnosis that went on for some time. It seemed as if he could do no wrong; he was so popular. But when the hypnosis wore off, his core supporters were the intellectuals, were the peasants, and to a degree of course, the police and to some degree the army also.

Q: Could you talk about the role of the Serbian Orthodox Church because this as we saw at the time because looking at it now in 1999, the church doesn't seem to have played a mediating role. It seemed be sort of right there with the nationalists. How did you find it at the time?

ZIMMERMANN: You described it exactly. The Serbian church throughout history has always been a national church. I mean the Serbian Orthodox religion is exactly synonymous with Serbian nationalism and the Serbian people, and the church has always seen its role as the cutting edge of Serbian nationalism. It was that way in the Serbian revolts against the Turks in the 19th century. So the church was playing a traditional position, a traditional role when it supported Milosevic's nationalism. The only thing that was a bit paradoxical was that he was a communist. Nevertheless, I think the church helped him a lot in blowing away the more moderate opposition he might have had. The Serbian church at least in my experience tends to be run by elderly patriarchs who are usually a little bit at sea when it comes to political nuances and are probably quite easily manipulated by younger people lower down who have the spark of nationalism about them.

Q: Well, you know, we are both veterans of this era in Yugoslavia, but looking at this, I have always thought the church and to some extent the Serbian mothers were responsible for passing on this poison of nationalism. It permeates. There doesn't seem to be anybody saying this is wrong. I mean we have had our problems with civil rights in the United States but at a certain point we kind of worked our way out of it.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, I would put it this way. I think there is an enormous sense of fatalism in Serbia, that things are always going to be the way they always were. Serbia will always be victimized. Serbia will always have to fight for itself, and the mothers I think are in a sense the carriers, maybe more than any other group of this feeling. This obsession with the past retracing the tragic history of Serbia for every visitor who comes. I have probably listened to stories about the Battle of Kosovo a thousand times despite the fact that I know by now what happened there. But it would have been impolite not to let one Serb after another tell me about that battle and about how Serbia was so greatly wronged by everybody. If you are that fixated on the past, you are not really looking at the future. You are not really looking at what can be done to get you out of the past. Of course, Milosevic played to this fatalistic tendency extremely brilliantly.

Q: Because in a way when we think about our race problems, in a way it was sort of the moderate business intellectual community who came and said we have got to do something about this, that brought about the real change.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, and that happened in South Africa as well. Many people think that that situation turned for the better when the business community finally went to the white leadership and said we can't take this any more. You didn't have that factor in Serbia, partly because the business community was a communist business community. They were a part of the party structure because business was not important to them. They

weren't that successful at it. Not as successful as Croats and Slovenes were in business. It wasn't their thing.

Q: Soros being...

ZIMMERMANN: George Soros being the multi billionaire financier and a man who had already founded a very effective organization for democratic assistance to eastern Europe called the Open Society Institute. So, Markovic was trying to make his mark on the United States, and I felt that my job was to persuade Washington that he was a good man, he was trying to do all the right things, but he had much bigger problems in doing them than the leaderships in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland which were getting most of our assistance, rightly at that time. Markovic's problem was he had almost no power. He was constitutionally speaking, the weakest prime minister in all of Europe, maybe in the world, because of the way Yugoslav power was broken up and the degree to which power resided in the republics rather than the central government. So Markovic had an uphill fight all the way. We had a U.S.-Yugoslav trade association which would meet every year in Yugoslavia, usually on the coast. It met close to Dubrovnik in 1989. Markovic came down and talked to the group, American businessmen mostly, and they were enormously impressed with him. They shared the view that we had in the embassy that this was a man who was really trying to do some very good things. So on the one hand there was a kind of a euphoria because Yugoslavia had a prime minister who was really trying to make it a fully western country, and democratize it as well. At the same time it had all of these problems with rising nationalism and with the fact that there was no central control at all, and therefore the nationalisms that existed in different republics were unchecked. There was really no way to stop them. There was no way, for example, to stop Milosevic from doing what he was doing in Kosovo. Markovic had no power to do that, although he didn't like it and he saw that it was holding Yugoslavia back from western approval, he was simply unable to prevent whatever Milosevic wanted to do in Kosovo. So, there were these two counter trends that were going all through 1989. Most of the people on my staff in the embassy felt that Markovic was going to lose, that he was fighting a losing battle. I didn't disagree with that at all, but I felt that my job, despite the odds, was to promote Markovic and the kinds of things he was trying to do because the alternative- (end of tape)

Q: Well, how did the events of November-December '89 in eastern Europe following the fall of Czechoslovakia, I mean the expulsion of the communist parties, did that reverberate strongly where you were?

ZIMMERMANN: I would say not, interestingly enough. Yugoslavs as you know, tend to be extremely narcissistic. Since from 1948 on they carved out a separate path from the other communist countries, they tended to resent being lumped with them in any way. In 1989 when those countries began to be independent, they ignored that too. They probably should have drawn some conclusions from the fact that communism was fast disappearing from all over eastern Europe, but they didn't draw those conclusions. They certainly should have drawn the conclusion that they had ceased to be geopolitically important to the United States and the west. As long as the Soviet Union was around as a

threat, Yugoslavia was a very important piece of real estate. Once the Soviet Union began to slip into its long sleep of inactivity, the importance of Yugoslavia began to diminish. Yugoslavs did not draw the conclusion that they had to move very quickly in the direction that Hungary and Poland and Czechoslovakia were moving if they were going to continue to get the support of the United States. They had been pampered for 40 years. They had been the only communist country that we really favored. Now all of a sudden they were way behind everybody else or almost everybody else. They didn't draw the appropriate conclusion, so I would say the events of the liberation of eastern Europe did not have a very great effect on the Yugoslavs, but they did have a very great effect on western Europe and the United States in diminishing Yugoslavia's importance to the west.

Q: You haven't mentioned, and I can't remember where, Bosnia, Herzegovina. Was that a republic at the time?

ZIMMERMANN: Bosnia Herzegovina was a republic. It was a republic that was created by Tito after the war so it had the same status as Serbia or Croatia or Slovenia. Of course, being a multi ethnic republic, a kind of a mini-Yugoslavia that way, it used what they called the national key. The party and the government were always run by a combination of Serbs, Croats and Muslims. When you had the elections in Bosnia Herzegovina, you had a Muslim candidate who ran on a Muslim ticket. You had a Serbian candidate who ran on a Serbian ticket. The Croatian candidate was the only one who actually had a multi-ethnic approach. So, Bosnia, just like Yugoslavia, was bifurcated or trifurcated into nationalist parties who were scrambling or struggling for control.

Q: From your various sources, I am talking about the agency, political attaches, political officers, USIS and all were you seeing increased nationalistic, was that pox getting worse and worse?

ZIMMERMANN: Oh yes, particularly in Serbia and Croatia. In Slovenia, the nationalism was as much a pro-western democratic approach as it was a Slovenia for the Slovenes approach. Croatian and Serbian nationalism were extremely hostile to each other and extremely hostile to anybody who didn't agree with them. The word traitor appeared all the time. If you were a Serb who wasn't a Serb nationalist, you were a traitor to Serbia. You weren't a true Serb. The Croats went through the same thing. This was propagated very heavily by the intellectual class.

Q: You mentioned before the intellectual class has a lot to answer for.

ZIMMERMANN: They had a lot to answer for. The Serbian Academy of Sciences was a hotbed of rabid Serbian nationalism. The same was true in Croatia. Tudjman himself was an historian if you can call it that. He actually did write histories, very contentious biased histories, but he was a so-called intellectual. So, they do have a lot to answer for. Of course, once you get nationalist leaders in power, the press begins to toady to them, or if it doesn't toady to them, it gets taken over, or if it doesn't get taken over, it remains a

lonely voice against the trend. People tend to jump on the bandwagon when they see the way things are headed. A lot of people who I thought were moderates in Croatia and Serbia actually turned out in the end to be rabid nationalists. Not because they started out that way, but because that is the way they saw the wind blowing.

Q: I think of particularly receptions or dinner parties when you had a chance to sit down and talk. Did this become more and more the subject of dinner parties at the embassy and all?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes. We thought our job was to bring people together, so we would have people to dinner and receptions who might disagree with each other. Already the situation was so bad they would never see each other if they disagreed. We had one dinner party for Katharine Graham, the publisher of the Washington Post who came, I think that was in early 1991. She came with her editorial page editor and with one of the columnists, a very high flying Washington Post group of three or four people. We had a small dinner party. We had the president of Slovenia who flew in for it. We had a major Serbian intellectual and a couple of other people, and the Serb and the Slovene started to attack each other in a way that was so embarrassing to me. I just didn't know what to do. A maid who was serving the table was in tears about it. Of course I am not sure how Mrs. Graham took it. It was quite interesting certainly for her. It was illuminating about what the true situation was. But these were two people who both had extensive experience in the West, had been professors in western universities. The nicest people that we knew, and they were going at it hammer and tongs, very insulting to each other.

Q: Do you really think so or I mean was Milosevic and Tudjman so I mean they both had their own agenda which envisaged a certain hunk of the other person's territory.

ZIMMERMANN: I suppose if you put the question, I have to say that there is nothing the west and or the United States could have done to hold Yugoslavia together. The nationalism had gone so far and had become so poisonous that there probably was nothing any outside agents could have done to prevent the breakup. The next question is, while if it was going to break up, is there anything we could have done to assure that the breakup was non violent. Frankly I don't think so.

Q: Well, before Baker came out, were any of the other European countries doing the equivalent of sending missions there or coming up with initiatives?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, the European Community was enormously active. Luxembourg had the presidency, too bad in a way because it is a small country without too much influence, but they came out to Yugoslavia. They offered the squabbling republics enormous amounts of economic assistance and cash and whatnot to compose their differences and try to work out an economic plan for an economic reform. Markovic strongly encouraged this. It was clearly the rational thing to do. The community was doing the right thing. Guess what, nobody listened. That was when I realized that it's sometimes just as fruitless to appeal to somebody's rationality as it is to appeal to their irrationality. The rational choice was not to go in a direction which ended up causing

three wars, a fourth if you count Kosovo, hundreds of thousands of casualties, a country decimated, going from one of the most promising economies in Europe to one of the most hopeless. Nobody could choose that rationally, and yet that is what they chose.

Q: Was there sort of a cadre of rational people whom you saw talking and working and all, or was this getting harder and harder to find?

ZIMMERMANN: No there were plenty of them. Most of them, I have to say were communists. They were Tito-style communists who understood perhaps better than most, the dangers of nationalism. Tito was a dictator, but at least he was a dictator who did his best to suppress nationalism in Yugoslavia. He understood the dangers of it because he had been through WWII which was a civil war in Yugoslavia. These people, many of them were human rights advocates. A lot of them are now in New York or Paris or London, not in Yugoslavia any more because there is nothing left for them there. They did not constitute a critical mass. They were not important enough in mass to turn things around. And Milosevic despised them and Tudjman despised them. They were just not accepted by the nationalist groups.

Q: Was Bosnia considered a particular problem at the time, or was that something that developed later on?

ZIMMERMANN: Bosnia came on the radar screen as a problem when it became possible that Croatia would declare independence, because there is a Croatian population in Bosnia, and there is a Serbian population in Bosnia. Croatia's independence was a vital issue for Croats and for Serbs. The president of Bosnia Izetbegovic won the presidency on a very strong Muslim religious ticket. He had not run for election as a fan of multi-ethnic society. He had run as a Muslim. But when he got into power, that is not the right word for Bosnia, when he got into office - he certainly had no power - he understood that if he was going to hold Bosnia together, he had to reach out to the other communities, the Croat and Serb communities, and he had to try to make liaisons with other people in Yugoslavia who cared about holding the country together. He made a very close alliance with the leader of Macedonia, Kiro Gligorav who was a wonderful old liberal communist figure, and was the president of Macedonia. Izetbegovic said early on, "If Croatia becomes independent, Bosnia will be destroyed." He said that to Baker when Baker came to Belgrade. It was a very dramatic moment. Of course that is exactly what happened. There probably were ways to save Bosnia. I don't see the same inevitability about the war in Bosnia that I do about the breakup of Yugoslavia. There, I think the west might have had a role. First of all, when the Yugoslav army started committing very violent acts against civilian populations in Croatia, particularly destroying the city of Vukovar and shelling Dubrovnik, this wonderful medieval town, the west did not react. NATO did not take any action. I think in retrospect, and I hadn't recommended this at the time, if NATO had done that, the Serbs might have shelved their strategy for Bosnia which was to incrementally declare independent Serbian areas in Bosnia supported by the Yugoslav army, and then ultimately just take over 2/3 of the country. That was clearly, as we look back on it now, what the Serbs and the Yugoslav army intended to do. I think if NATO had shown some muscle, this would have been in the summer and fall of 1991,

they might not have gone ahead and implemented that plan. The Bosnian war started in April of 1992. Izetbegovic by the late summer of '91, was getting almost hysterical about what might happen in Bosnia. He was asking for UN peace keepers to come in in a preventive mode, and he was turned down flat on that. Then he switched himself from saying Yugoslavia had to hold together, he began to say, well, maybe Bosnia should be independent, hoping that the west would defend Bosnia, which it didn't do.

Q: But in a way you are really talking about we no longer were sort of the bulwark for Yugoslavia against the Soviet Union. Not only was it not important to us, we weren't important to them I take it in a way.

ZIMMERMANN: Well, we certainly weren't important to Milosevic. He didn't really care what the United States did or said, and he wasn't going to react on the basis of whether we held out the hand of friendship or the mailed fist. Either he was very smart about that or he was intensely stupid because in the end he paid, at least in economic terms. I am sure he will pay the ultimate price in the end for it, but it is true. He didn't care what the west thought. Now, Tudjman did care. Tudjman was different in that sense. He wanted to be considered a western statesman, and so what the Germans thought, what the French thought, what the Americans thought was important to Tudjman. Not to Milosevic.

Q: While you were there did they go through, what happened to Markovic?

ZIMMERMANN: Markovic just dwindled away. During 1991 you got the Croatian and Slovenian declarations of independence. Markovic tried very hard to block that. He even tried to sic the army on the Slovenes. He was a party to the army's attack on Slovenia. He lost power when the European Community came back into the picture in the summer of 1991 trying to broker arrangements between the different republics so as to forestall violence, and then ultimately setting up a big commission under Lord Carrington, former British foreign minister, to try to get the different republics to define their relations with each other, so that if they were going to be recognized as independent, there would be in place a series of guarantees against violence. That was the whole point of what Carrington was trying to do. Carrington didn't even deal with Markovic in that situation. He would deal with the heads of the republics. He would deal with the major parties like Karadzic, who was the head of the Bosnian Serb party. Markovic didn't even have a role. That was a very big mistake I think by Carrington. I think Cyrus Vance also made a mistake in ignoring Markovic. We should've been doing the best we could to prop up Markovic as a figure for reform and democracy whereas we just cast him aside and dealt with the nationalists. He ultimately resigned, I think, in December of '91, a failed figure, a Yugoslav Kerensky.

Q: Very sad. Tudjman, you say he was paying attention or at least got to be perceived as a positive figure, did you deal with him at all?

ZIMMERMANN: A lot, yes, because when it was a country, I was accredited to the whole country. I went a lot to Croatia and Slovenia because they were such key players

in everything that was going on. Even after Croatia and Slovenia declared independence, I was received as if nothing had happened. I had a little trepidation about that because they were now independent. I was not, according to them, the American ambassador any more, but they received me as if nothing had happened. Tudjman would give a lunch for me. I had access to everybody including the leaders. So, it was a very weird Alice in Wonderland kind of situation, but we went on having conversations. All during the war, the Croats had with the Yugoslav army, I went several times to Croatia, had meetings with Tudjman. He seemed to have it in his mind, I think he got this from Croatian émigrés in the United States, that the United States was going to intervene militarily on the side of Croatia against the Yugoslav army. I exerted a lot of energy to try to persuade him that wasn't true. It wasn't going to happen; he shouldn't count on it. But he seemed to believe it nevertheless.

Q: No, by the embassy and by the consulate general, too.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, well, I would say the first month of the Croatian, Serb-Croat war was a bit ambiguous because, after all the Croats had declared their independence which was to the army an illegal act. The army claimed during the first month that it was simply trying to restore order. Then it became clear that this pattern I just talked about, that the Serb toughs would go in and shoot up the Croatian village and then the army would come in and "restore order" but somehow the village would be left in the hands of the Serbs, not the Croats who used to live there. So it became clear say by August that the aggressors were the Serbs, were the Yugoslav army. There was a group of observers from the European Community who were there, whose role was ridiculed I think quite unfairly. They were unarmed. They wore white uniforms which made people call them Good Humor men. But they were there to make sure that atrocities did not go unreported. They were quite useful in doing that. The Dutch had the presidency of the community at the time, and they unleashed one particular Dutch diplomat who kept trying to negotiate cease fires in different parts of Croatia and who took a lot of risks. He was shot at many times in order to do that. So there were attempts to quiet things down. Vance came in September with a mandate from the UN to try to get a cease fire. He took a very even handed approach. He did not feel that the Serbs were the only aggressors. He felt that Tudjman had a lot to answer for as well. Vance had been a deputy secretary of defense for the United States. He had a lot of pride in the military virtues, and he saw what the Croats were doing to the Yugoslav army. For example, blockading them in their barracks so they couldn't get out, and sending in dog food when they said they were hungry, and taunting their wives who were often Croatian women. Many of the Serb officers in Croatia had been there a long time and had Croatian wives. It was pretty bad on both sides, and Vance got a lot of respect in Serbia with Milosevic for being even-handed about it. I think at the end of the day, there is no doubt that real aggressor was the Yugoslav army, but it wasn't all that apparent at the beginning.

Q: Well now, when Baker came out, how did his party, were they ready for what they found?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, I think Baker knew at the time he came that the odds were long against his success. Interestingly enough, he was traveling with some American press, because he was going to other countries. He had been in other countries and was going on. They were taunting him. They would yell at him, "Too late, too late." In other words, if he had come earlier he might have done something but he didn't have a chance this time. Baker did what I considered a brilliant job starting early in the morning and going until late at night, seeing one republican leader after another plus Markovic plus the foreign minister, Loncar. I thought he handled himself brilliantly. He did the best he could with a very bad hand of cards, and he failed. As he was leaving, the American press yelled at him, "Too late, too late."

Q: I mean it doesn't seem like the press, I mean was there any other plan? You know, it is all very nice to say do something but you have to figure out what to do.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes. Baker was trying to buy time for negotiation. I think the most he would have done is bought time. I don't think he would have staved off anything. If he had come six months or a year earlier with a real plan of economic support that could've been made very visible to the Yugoslav public, it might have been possible to do something. I think the passions were too great to do it. There are some situations that outside influence can not affect. I think that this was one of them.

Q: Well, were you getting from a segment of the Yugoslavs particularly the Serbs because you were located there but also sort of why didn't you do more type of thing or what's the United States going to do about this, or were the Serbs, even the people that would be closer to us, were they caught up in the...

ZIMMERMANN: We were cordially criticized and disliked by all the protagonists. The nationalist Serbs argued that we were not really for the preservation of Yugoslavia. We wanted to break it up because we weren't supporting the army in its efforts to put down the Slovene-Croatian uprisings. The Slovenes blamed us because we were trying to hold Yugoslavia together, meaning in their view that Milosevic was going to run things. The Croats had the same view that we were doing Milosevic's business by trying to hold Yugoslavia together. The only people that supported us were the anti-Milosevic opposition in Serbia, the independent press in Serbia, some moderate Croats who didn't like Tudjman, most of the liberal Slovene communist party, all of the moderates in Bosnia from Serb, Muslim and Croatian sides. All the Kosovar Albanians liked us because they knew we really were opposed to Milosevic on the Kosovo issue. The Macedonians liked us because we were trying to hold Yugoslavia together somehow.

Q: Well, did you have the feeling that the American press when it did report on this, the accusation was the United States, i.e., its old Yugoslav hands were trying too hard to hold Yugoslavia together when we should have tried for a more peaceful separation.

ZIMMERMANN: Well, that is the argument. The weakness of the argument was to me, that I didn't think there was any way that a separation could have been peaceful.

Q: There were too many overlapping things.

ZIMMERMANN: That's right, too many overlapping things, too many hostilities that had been stoked up by these nationalist leaders, too many guns around, too many tanks around. I certainly don't argue that we should have held the country together so it could be run by Milosevic. Maybe there was no solution to that. That's why we pushed so hard for Markovic. He represented an alternative to a Yugoslavia run by Milosevic. But the problem was Tito of all people should have understood that if you want to get rid of nationalism, you have to have the possibility of a strong central government.

Q: And he didn't provide for that.

ZIMMERMANN: He provided for the reverse. He created a constitution that was unworkable from the center, that meant that no leader could emerge from the center and run the country.

Q: How did you find reporting in the western press during this period?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, the western press ignored Yugoslavia for a long time. I remember talking to a New York Times correspondent in 1989 who came through. There were no resident American correspondents in Yugoslavia when I arrived. Not a single one. Dusko Doder came later, but he wasn't working for an American paper then. He had worked for the Washington Post, but he was working for a European. Laura Silber who was an excellent American correspondent was working for the Financial Times. There was no American paper represented. The New York Times person came through once and he said, "You know, it is very hard for me to report on Yugoslavia because it is so complicated that you have to explain so much in the first paragraph that the reader is turned off immediately out of boredom." So it took them a long time to pick up I think. Once they picked up, then they were pretty good.

Q: Now what had happened in Bosnia when you left?

ZIMMERMANN: The war had been going on for about six weeks. There had been the immediate invasion across the Serbian border of the irregulars, paramilitaries, and they had shot up a lot of Bosnian towns and killed and imprisoned a lot of Muslims. The Bosnian Serb army had emerged, this was one of the great con jobs of military history. Officers and men of the Yugoslav army who came from Bosnia were all transferred back into Bosnia as members of the Yugoslav army. Then at a given time they all became the Bosnian Serb army all of a sudden. They were all from the Yugoslav army including

their commander, the nefarious General Mladic who was a colonel in the Yugoslav army. So, the Serbs had an army of trained people with arms and equipment amounting to about 65,000 people, which is a good sized European army. Where as the Muslims started with nobody.

Q: Did you see any hope; was there any hope, or was this part of a longer plan of Milosevic that Bosnia was going to be taken over more or less?

ZIMMERMANN: The Serbian plan for Bosnia began to be visible in April of '91. Unfortunately we didn't see it in all of its implications then. It was to have the Bosnian Serbs pick fights with the Muslim leadership, declare different pieces of Bosnia autonomous. The army would come in to "protect the population there" but would effectively guarantee the autonomy of these pieces. They would become ink spots all over Bosnia, areas which did not recognize the government of Bosnia's control. Then to pull people out of the Bosnian assembly and the Bosnian government because they were Serbs. Of course by the national key there were Serbs in the assembly and the government. To pull those out thereby again weakening and challenging the control of the government. Then to have the military come in, the Yugoslav army which of course had a right to be in Bosnia because it was a part of Yugoslavia, to arm the local Serbian population and to deny arms to the Muslims, and then to ultimately to declare an independent Bosnian Serb republic in Bosnia. Then to spread the territory that republic controlled up to 64% was the number you usually heard, so 2/3 of the territory of Bosnia. This for a population that was only about 1/3 the population of Bosnia. They explained that by saying that Muslims live in cities, so they can have cities except Sarajevo. They can't have that, but they can have most of the other cities. Since Serbs are farmers they get the land. So it was all very logical, and anywhere Serbs are buried is of course Serbian territory, so that is a new principle as well. This was all worked out with the Yugoslav army. All through the Bosnian war, the Bosnian Serb army was paid from the Yugoslav army and equipped. There wasn't even much of a secret about it. That was the plan.

Q: Did you ever talk to Karadzic?

ZIMMERMANN: Karadzic, I talked to him a lot, yes.

Q: How did he strike you?

ZIMMERMANN: I think quite mad. I think he was quite mad, a raving nationalist. Soft spoken so you don't get the full effect of it until you actually listen to what he is telling you, which is that Muslims are iniquitous, they always lie and cheat and steal. You Americans don't understand them because you haven't lived in the Balkans and I have, but that is the way they are. The only way to deal with them is to oppress them. It is the only way. A southern racist from 1850 would have sounded smoother than that.

Q: Warren, how did you leave? Were you pulled out when all our ambassadors were pulled out? Was that it?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes. Well, the Bosnian war began in early April of '92, and it became immediately clear that Milosevic was pulling the strings on this. So I was sent in to see him several times in the next couple of weeks to remonstrate with him and to complain about the aggression that he was launching against the Muslims. Of course he would shrug it all off. He would say, "I don't have anything to do with Bosnia. I am the president of Serbia. You know that. Bosnia is not my problem. If you want to talk about Bosnia, go to the Bosnians, not to me." Finally my instructions got stronger and stronger, and he had a harder and harder time denying that he had anything to do with it. But it was very clear both in the press reporting and the views of Washington of the government, Milosevic was guilty, the prime malefactor in Bosnia. So our quarrel was more with him than with anybody else. Finally because nobody could think of anything else to do, the decision was made, we don't want to do business with these characters. So NATO took a decision, on U.S. initiative to withdraw the ambassadors. Leave the embassies under charges. Embassies never disappear, they keep going right through everything, and the ambassadors left. I had a very surreal experience the night before I left. Since we were pulled out in a hurry, we had quite a lot of food in the freezer and alcohol and stuff around so we thought why not have a farewell party on short notice for the people we really like, the people who stood for the kinds of things the west stood for. So we got the word out. Of the people we invited everybody came. There wasn't a single person who didn't come. Sixty-five people came, a former foreign minister who resigned because he couldn't stand Milosevic, members of the Serbian opposition. We didn't have time to get people from Croatia. These were all people from Belgrade. Vuk Draskovic, one of the opposition leaders, the other opposition leaders were all there, courageous journalists, human rights people, just friends. There were confessions. People would talk to us and tell us their innermost thoughts. This was the other Yugoslav, in the western, democratic Yugoslavia. You asked a minute ago if anybody was for the U.S. These people were, and they were and are wonderful people because they weren't taken in by the nationalist rhetoric that you heard all around. Draskovic who had a reputation as an opportunist came up to me and said, "I just want to promise you, I have real conviction of loyalty to western values and market economy." He was about 80% right I guess in what happened. Midway through the party, Arkan sent his men up disrupt the party. Arkan actually had his ice cream store just three or four blocks away from my residence. We knew it was Arkan because my very alert Serbian driver noticed his jeep. He knew what his jeep was and he saw it. These guys came up in jeeps and they started to spray toxic poison what do you call it, for getting rid of bugs.

Q: Fumigating.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, all around the garden. It was a nice night and we were having the party outside. They were trying to drive the guests away. My driver took them on for which he got a full shot of this toxic stuff in the eyes. But they did go away. We didn't

know what to tell the guests until one of them came up to us and said, "We noticed you are spraying in the garden. How did you manage to find that really good spray? We have been looking for it for a very long time." So they didn't know that Arkan had made a failed attempt to disrupt our party. That was the night before I left. The morning I left, I got my final instruction to go in to complain to Milosevic, if I could find him, but he wasn't available. He was never available on weekends, so I talked to his foreign minister. Another demarche railing at them for what they were doing in Bosnia. I spent literally up until the time I had to leave for the airport to leave the country telling this guy how strongly we objected to what they were doing. Very smoothly, he was a former diplomat, a former Yugoslav diplomat, he was coming back at me with all the defenses that they used. Finally I got exasperated and I said, "I have to go, but I just have to ask you one question, which is how does an intelligent man like you who has been a diplomat and seen the world and been in the west and by the way has a Croatian wife, how can you believe this bullshit that you are telling me?" He told me he believed it. Then I left.

Q: Well, I think for many of us who knew Yugoslavia, you could understand what happened in the '30s in Germany better. I mean, you know, you kind of wonder how could the Germans have done that, but then you watch it being repeated.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes. If you are just a common person, a normal person, it is easier to go with the people in power. Your job isn't going to be threatened. You are not going to be called a traitor. You are not going to get in trouble, just easier to go along. And if you are going to go along, that is the first step. The second step might be get a little enthusiastic about it because these demagogues give you wonderful arguments. They sound very persuasive. They show you television footage of Croats massacring Serbian youths and the same footage of course, exactly the same footage is found in Croatia with the names changed.

Q: I am told there was even some that came out of WWI got reused again and again. When you came back what sort of a... What did they do with you? What were you up to?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, I came back and I immediately started to work as the head of the refugee bureau. I was back in the Bosnia picture again because we were beginning to have a lot of refugee problems. But I debriefed. I talked to a lot of people including Baker and Scowcroft and Eagleburger. Being out, I began to think, and that's when I began to lobby rather hard for air strikes. I hadn't come out for air strikes while I was in Belgrade. When I got out and began to put things together a little bit, I began to realize what we really needed to do was to take out the Serbian installations over the hills in Sarajevo for example, the communications lines and so forth, and I was convinced then as I still am, that had we done that, it would have been relatively cost free, and we would have driven the Serbs to the negotiating table where they would have settled for a lot less than they settled for today. We would have saved 100,000 lives.

Q: Well, what happened?

ZIMMERMANN: I had a long talk with Scowcroft. Eagleburger was strongly against the use of force for Vietnam reasons. People who had experience in Vietnam simply didn't want to go down that road again and he felt this was going down that road again. Scowcroft, of course, had been in Vietnam as had Colin Powell. I had the feeling that Scowcroft was listening to me more than the others were. He kept me longer in the office than he should have. We looked at scenarios, where would you bomb, how would you do this and so forth. I had the feeling that maybe he was thinking about it. But I think in retrospect it wasn't going to happen. It was an election year. Bush was running. He didn't want to get mired down. I think he himself was hard over against the use of American military anyway. Then I took a month vacation. I came back in the fall. I went quite often with Eagleburger to deputies committee meetings where policy was being thrashed out. It was very clear by the way those meetings were being run by the national Security Council, that we weren't going to do a thing. The Pentagon and the Joint Chiefs and the office of the Secretary of Defense representative would come in absolutely hard against any use of American soldiers. If you were a uniformed American soldier, you had to get permission from the Secretary of Defense even to go to Bosnia. Every initiative that was proposed for humanitarian relief that involved the U.S. military was opposed by the Pentagon. Opening a road from the coast to go to Sarajevo, nixed by the Pentagon. Using air force planes to beam television images so people could get a more objective view, killed by the Pentagon. No fly zones, killed by the Pentagon. Air drops of relief of places you couldn't get to by road, killed by the Pentagon. Ultimately many of these things were done very successfully but over the dead body of the military.

Q: Was it the Vietnam sort of a Weinberger doctrine?

ZIMMERMANN: The word Vietnam, you never heard it, not in those meetings anyway, but it was definitely Weinberger Powell doctrine. You don't engage militarily unless you have absolutely a 100% chance of success. Unless you have an exit strategy whatever that means or unless you have assurance that there would be no casualties or very few. We would never have gone into the Gulf War if we had applied those rules because they were expecting a lot of casualties in the Gulf War. Our casualties were much less in the Gulf War than were expected, and Bush had the courage then to go in and do it, do what had to be done. But he didn't have it in Bosnia.

Q: Well, then you moved into the refugee side for awhile didn't you?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, I did that for two years.

Q: What was that like?

ZIMMERMANN: It was actually enormously inspirational. I had no experience with refugees. By the way it is a bureau in the State Department that is unique because people actually give up foreign service assignments in order to continue to work there. They get so taken up with the mission of it. There are many former foreign service officers who are there who gave up their commissions in the foreign service to stay there. I asked my staff, I said, "I would like to see the worst refugee situation you can find. I would like to

go out and look at that." They said, "The worst is in Kenya because that is where all the refugees from Uganda and Somalia and Ethiopia go. So go up to northern Kenya and you will see." So I spent some time up there. I thought it would be depressing, but of course it was exactly the reverse. If people can get as far as a refugee camp, they are probably going to be all right. The death rate is very low, once they get to the refugee camp and can get water out of these great bladders of water that they have and get this very primitive corn meal food. Once they get there, they are all right. What is inspirational is you have these kids, and really they are kids. Most of them are in their 20s from all over the world, Australia, New Zealand, France, Ukraine, United States, Canada, who build cities of 20, 30, 40, 50,000 people in a couple of weeks to take care of these refugees as they come across. Somebody knows how to build latrines. Somebody, the French nurses are there for medical. It is just an enormously inspirational thing to see these different organizations, different nationalities all working together. You read a lot in the press about how dysfunctional refugee work and big problems like Kosovo and Bosnia are and how much backbiting there is. That is an exception. In most parts of the world where the refugee situations are really bad - Africa is certainly the worst - the reality is people really work together and do a spectacular job.

Q: Well, you mentioned you resigned in '94, why?

ZIMMERMANN: There were two reasons, and I am not really sure which to give priority to. One is I was strongly at odds with our Bosnian policy. I had written a few memos to the Secretary of State to try to get it changed, and they had not been acknowledged. It was clear we weren't going to change. I wanted us to use air strikes, and they didn't want to do that. Not only did they not want to do it, but they used deception and subterfuge to pretend that we had a tough policy when we really didn't. One of the aspects of that was to make the humanitarian effort, which actually was working pretty well, carry the load of the policy. The pretense was that because we had a strong humanitarian effort and it was working, we really didn't need anything else. So in effect what I was doing, what the refugee bureau was doing was a kind of cover up for the lack of a really muscular policy. I didn't like being used as a dupe for that, so that was one issue. The other was when Clinton came in, I had been in the job for about six months. I was very excited about Clinton coming in; I had voted for him. I was very pleased that Tim Wirth, who was a friend, was going to be undersecretary for global affairs, and would have my bureau under his wing. But Wirth was unable to get the White House Personnel people to approve me for continuing. Nor did they say "Get him out."

Q: You were an assistant secretary.

ZIMMERMANN: Well, it is more complicated. This was one of the bureaus that was not run by an assistant secretary, as PM used to be. I was not an assistant secretary, and therefore I didn't require Senatorial approval, but my deputies were deputy assistant secretaries. But when Wirth came in at my suggestion he made it an assistant secretary

position. He got the Secretary to agree to make it an assistant secretary position, so I would have had to have been nominated, and then approved by the Senate. The catch 22 was the White House personnel people were unwilling to nominate me. They made it very clear that they were looking for a minority person, although they couldn't find one, and Wirth was, I don't think he was objecting, but he interviewed a number of minority candidates, and he didn't find anyone good enough. So I hung on in a nether world of doing the job but not being approved for the job. Many of the friends of refugees in the Senate understood that and they were very upset. They liked me because they felt I was a strong refugee advocate. They were suspicious that I would be succeeded by someone who wasn't or worried about it anyway. It began to be difficult to do the job because it began to get around in the refugee community and the Senate that I hadn't been approved, which made them think I didn't have the confidence of the Clinton administration. I think it never got farther than the personnel people.

Q: They were trying to establish a profile of having more women and minorities in...

ZIMMERMANN: Not even women. Women don't make it anymore, but it was minorities. This was a very clear mandate that came from the President and his wife with which I am in full agreement. But I don't believe in quotas. They are illegal. I felt if I was doing a good job, I should be kept on. If I wasn't doing a good job, I should be fired, but I didn't think it was being in between and not knowing where you stood. So that was part of the mix too why I left.

DELL PENDERGRAST
USIS Officer
Belgrade (1966-1969)

Mr. Pendergrast was born in Illinois in 1941. He received his BA from Northwestern University and his MS from Boston University. His positions abroad included Belgrade, Zagreb, Saigon, Warsaw, Brussels and Ottawa. Charles Stuart Kennedy interviewed him on June 24, 1999.

Q: Did Kosovo ring any... Was it a force, or not, or was this pretty much Serbia?

PENDERGRAST: Well, I think the impact on Croatia was that the riots that took place in Kosovo in 1968 against Serbian domination of that province resonated considerably within Croatia. They could at least silently sympathize with Albanian resistance to Serbian domination. As time went along over the years, I have no doubt that there was a dynamic of anti-Serb feeling playing out in different parts of the country: Kosovo, Croatia, parts of Bosnia, Slovenia. Perhaps no organized conspiracy, but the perception of a Serb-dominated Yugoslavia ran deep through the country. Tito was able to contain it through both power and concession, but his successors could not. My judgment is that the Yugoslav ideal had modest potential after World War I, but central government became too closely identified with the Serbian monarchy and nation. The sectarian,

cultural, and regional divergences deepened and then fragmented badly in World War II. Tito was able through brutality and raw power to rebuild the facade of Yugoslavism, but it was an unstable structure constructed on a foundation of dictatorship. Many people - including in the U.S. government - were misled by the illusion and nature of Yugoslav unity. And, even today, we continue to have this typically romantic American notion of a multiethnic, multicultural democracy in the areas of the former Yugoslavia. I am not optimistic. And, it troubles me that we flood treasure and personnel into places like Bosnia and Kosovo in this naive aspiration to create harmony among people totally divided by history, culture, and religion. I am surprised that both the Bush and Clinton Administrations did not listen more to people who had a better sense of the on-the-ground reality in the Balkans. Not only there but elsewhere I've watched in the world, including Vietnam, Americans have this chronic, largely well-meaning tendency to try and substitute our own commitment, technology, and power for the deficiencies in the local community, a form of myopic cultural arrogance that historically has always afflicted imperial nations, but often is their main vulnerability.

Q: *Did you come across in your contacts at the university debates or arguments on Vietnam?*

PENDERGRAST: No, the subject rarely arose in my contacts across Croatia with student or other university groups. You might run into it against an *apparatchik* type at a university, someone who just trying to follow the proper ideological line, but in everyday contacts it rarely came up. Vietnam to me was a very distant, not terribly relevant fact of life, not knowing then that I would end up and experience Vietnam first hand. But at that time it was not something that I really thought about very much other than embracing the conventional position that we were there to defend against a communist threat to that society, but it was not something that I or the Yugoslavs wanted to discuss.

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Q: And I'll just put at the end of the tape, where did you go, so we'll know?

PENDERGRAST: Well, in early '69, I was assigned to Vietnam, preceded by 10 months of Vietnamese language training. I left Yugoslavia earlier than we anticipated because at that time, USIA, as well as other agencies, were rapidly increasing their personnel in Vietnam. I left Yugoslavia with great reluctance. My wife and I had traveled through most parts of the country and were captivated by the extraordinary beauty of the country as well as the spirit and hospitality of its diverse peoples. It is a fascinating country touched often tragically by history and by the complex mix of cultures and religions. I could not think of a more interesting place to start off a Foreign Service career.

WILLIAM B. WHITMAN
Commercial Attaché
Belgrade (1968-1971)

Economic Counselor
Belgrade (1979-1981)

William B. Whitman was born in Orange, New Jersey in 1935. He was raised in both New Jersey and Illinois. He attended university at University of Colorado and Northwestern. He entered the Foreign Service in 1960 and served in Italy, Bolivia, and Yugoslavia.

Q: What was the political economic situation in '68 when you got to Belgrade?

WHITMAN: Well, you had the economic side, you had the reforms had just taken place, and Yugoslavia was opening to tourism, to foreign investment, doing essentially what the Chinese are trying to do today, have a Western economy with a command state on the political side. So for me there was an awful lot going on and people were very interested in Yugoslavia because politically because it was the so-called non-aligned Third Way, Tito was a leader of the non-aligned movement and we paid a lot of attention to him. Delegations would come, people would fly in to see Tito; Nixon came to court and there was lots of wooing. And very strong interest in what the Yugoslavs thought about the economy, about politics, about everything. Yugoslavia assumed a position of importance way out of proportion with its actual position. But if you look at where it was located, and look at Tito's personal position, it was quite something. It was an exciting time to be in Yugoslavia.

Q: You know, there was a lot of publicity about this and I think we all felt good that this was the Third Way and all that, but were you in the position of saying, well this is all very nice but one, it's not that type of country to really be able to deliver much and it's way overblown?

WHITMAN: I was interested in what I was doing because I thought there was a real sense of purpose to this. And you sort of wished them well, I mean these are people trying to grope their way, or Tito, for his own reasons, trying to grope his way toward more rational society, a more rational way of doing things. And some of it was pretty ludicrous, I mean the Iron Hand was never really out of sight, but Tito was then pretty old, you never knew what was going to happen afterward. Some very attractive younger politicians were standing around, Tito of course had no successor and never chose one, but you had to hope that maybe a sort of a younger group would come in and take this and move it the right direction. And we were very solidly behind Tito as a government.

Q: Well you mentioned you wished them well, I mean it's really insidious when you think about, I think most of us served in Yugoslavia I think, I was there for five years, just the year before you, how almost we were, I don't want to say cooperative, but we became quite strong partisans of whole, I mean this was such an attractive place at the time.

WHITMAN: Yes, well I agree with that, and subsequent events in Yugoslavia make people look with great nostalgia on that period. Because when Tito was there, you didn't have millions of people killed, or raped or whatever. Remember, during the war about 10 years ago, they dressed somebody up with a Tito's Marshal uniform and him out in the streets of Belgrade, people stomped and cheered and threw, and hugged him saying "we missed you" and things like that. Although Tito had plenty of defects, they then looked like the good old days of only 10 years before. Yes, it was superficial in a way because the Croats were just keeping this under wraps and we knew, that was the big issue. Nobody really, really knew what would happen, what was going on under the surface.

Q: Well, during the time you were there, wasn't this the time when Tito came down pretty hard on the Croats? Because they were beginning to get overly nationalistic?

WHITMAN: Well, he was right in a way, I mean I was in Croatia right after they became independent and it was nutty and nationalist. Zagreb Radio had a program about the Croat language; every day three new, maybe freshly invented, words that you would learn, so you didn't have to use the Serbian words. I mean, it went on and on and on. I think that's probably eased since then, but it was, they were very nationalistic and obnoxious. And they were very resentful of the Serbs who hogged all the good jobs, ran the state airline, took the money out of the tourist enterprises in Dubrovnik and all up and down the coast and brought money back to Belgrade and then doled it out to themselves. If the Croats were lucky they'd get a small percentage.

Q: Well, were you or members of the embassy talking about this resentment or were you overly aware of this?

WHITMAN: We were aware of some things. I don't think we really got into where we could say definitely. It was clear to us, it was clear to me, the Slovenes had their own thing, and that was so obvious. And Belgrade left them alone basically. The real, the Macedonians, the southern republics, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Serbia basically were on the same wavelength. For example, and events have proved this since, the Macedonian

and Montenegrin economies were inextricably tied with that of Serbia. They didn't really have what it took to really go off on their own, and so it was the Croats then, that were really the main issue. And in the history of the former Yugoslavia you found that the Slovenes and the Serbs worked together very well in the interwar Yugoslavia to check the Croats.

Q: How did you find the...

WHITMAN: But to answer your question, I don't think we ever really adequately understood the depth of that.

Q: Well my feeling was, I had heard, I'm sure you did too, about the horrors of World War II, the burning of the Orthodox Church of Glina and all of that, but, sort of OK that was World War II, they're simply not going to kill each other, I mean, something happens. It just comes to my mind, life has gone too far..

WHITMAN: That's exactly that's the first thing.

Q: I mean the horrors that came out of Bosnia, of what the Serbs did, and I identified.. did you find that you kind of identified with the Serbs and found your counterpart or somebody in their consulate general in Zagreb that there was a, I won't say a disconnect, but a certain affinity each to their own area.

WHITMAN: Yes, I always, over seven years in Yugoslavia I found the consulate in Zagreb to be quite pro-Croat. When you live there in a polarized situation, you're talking to Croats all day long and they're telling you certain things in a very delicate way there's a danger of becoming a cheerleader. At the same time in Belgrade we tended to think that Yugoslavia, as then constituted, would go on and on. And we thought, Yugoslavia seemed to have a lot of promise, despite its imperfections. Remember, they were way ahead of everybody else in Eastern Europe in those days. And we thought, I guess, or I thought, no one would be so stupid as to break this up. And then when Tito died remember in 1980, that was the big question, what's going to happen?

Q: Did you find, were you noticing a discrepancy between the way the enterprises, commercial enterprises in Macedonia, Serbia, and Croatia, Slovenia, was there a rank order?

WHITMAN: Yes, I mean, clearly so, in Ljubljana you could see that this was a very different almost Austrian situation. I mean they were just a world apart from Serbia. And in those days I think the Slovenes found it useful to go along with the Serbs and maybe the Croats too, but it was always clear to me that this was a very different place. And then Croatia, well what part of Croatia are you talking about? Are you talking about Osijek where you have similarities to say Vojvodina and that kind of thing, or are you talking about the coast where you have a cultural background that's Italian-influenced.

Q: How about, in the trade world, how good an investment was it? In other words, the American people coming in.

WHITMAN: Oh, we were pushing it of course, for a lot of reasons.

Q: But were we pushing it basically because we wished Yugoslav well and it was a stone in the eye of the Soviets or, but what about American business?

WHITMAN: Well they had to make their own decisions. I mean we could take them, we could introduce them to people, talk about the positive feelings we had about Yugoslavia, but in a last analysis, they're not going to act only on what I say, or what the ambassador said or anything like that. There was a lot of high level encouragement, but that was about all you could do. And, joint ventures never really, I don't think we ever had any really important, I think there were some that were sort of exploiting cheap labor or whatever they could use, but basically you wouldn't find the kind of venture came out of that that you would find with a company say in France or Mexico. So it never really caught on, because the Yugoslavs never wanted to really give up majority control. It was 51/49 and the 51 was theirs and you have the old joke, the joint venture meant it was their joint and your venture [laughter] and I think a lot of people said, and then they started, it was all, they were doing it by the seat of their pants. They were saying we can do this so you have majority control, we're structure the board so even though you only have 49% of the financial management, you have 55% control, and that kind of thing. There was a lot of improvisation, and that makes business uneasy to because, well maybe they could change it against me at some point if they want to. So it never really caught on, but there was a major amount of trade increase, but you never got the tourism. People thought of it as going behind the curtain, which we definitely didn't feel. We thought the curtain started in Bulgaria or Hungary, but it was a fascinating time to be there.

Q: That was a shock for all of us. I think this is probably, is there anything else we should cover do you think?

WHITMAN: About Belgrade?

Q: Yes.

WHITMAN: No, except to me, it was the first substantive job I had in the Foreign Service after being in the Foreign Service for 12 years. And at that point I got engaged in the career aspect of it. I was then married and I was living a more serious life. And it was a wonderful place to be. As for the Enders/Leonhart thing, I guess FSI (Foreign Service Institute) still uses it as a textbook case of what not to do, and maybe it is. But, basically I thought that was one of the best assignments you could have. I had my own program, I had my own contacts, I had my own budget, I was very busy. And so when I left in '72, I was not at all relieved, I thought it was just a great thing.

Q: What about the Yugoslav system of worker self- management? How was that working?

WHITMAN: There was an awful lot of fiction connected with this. You'd find companies that were doing well, but you could almost bet that if they were doing well they weren't polling the workers every time they made a management decision. They had strong managers who would inform people, and often the workers had built up confidence in these people as managers. They'd say, look we need to buy a fleet of trucks and instead of taking a lot of time, the worker rep would say OK. They'd explain it, but basically it was not a decision that was reached by the workers' counsel. There were less successful companies who did the workers' council thing and they were usually not well-run.

Q: As you were doing this did we see that Yugoslavia was going on a downward slope?

WHITMAN: There was a fear when Tito died that the Russians were going to come in. That was a fear I certainly heard expressed by some Yugoslavs. By that time, 1980, it might have happened.

Q: How did you view the distribution of funds between the republics. The Slovenians and the Croats were complaining that the Serbs were grabbing all the money to a certain extent Macedonia and Bosnia but basically those damned Serbs were milking the rich cows of Slovenia and Croatia for their own benefit.

WHITMAN: That was definitely a factor, in fact there were foreign exchange riots in the streets of Zagreb. People protested, because what happened was a lot of the hard currency earned from tourists visiting Dalmatia would have to be turned over by the bank of Dalmatia to the central bank in Belgrade which was seen as a Serb institution. At that point it was theirs and they would reapportion it because they had import restrictions and things. You could get authority to buy the foreign exchange for certain items and not for others. So the bank was thought to be favoring Serbian and Montenegrin enterprises in making those foreign exchange allocations. Those decisions meant that a lot of those dollars never got back to Croatia, and that's why there was student and general unrest in Zagreb.

I went back to Croatia after they became independent and one of the problems they had then was that the people in Dalmatia were angry that they had to turn over their currency to Zagreb. So you essentially have the same problem now in an independent Croatia. In any event, there was a lot more strife going on under Tito than we knew or could see. I don't think we ever really reported that there was enough hatred in Croatia to power a breakup.

Q: Looking at the country were you seeing a change in the divisive forces, the ethnic things, or not?

WHITMAN: That was stuff that was really held very closely, far down. Every once in a while you'd get a whiff of this from somebody who said, I had dinner with my relatives in Zagreb and all they talked about at dinner was how much they hated the Serbs. Ok, I got a couple of conversations like that, but it was pretty well-masked. Obviously, Tito would deal with you harshly. He did deal with the Croats harshly in that settling of accounts. So everything was sort of sitting on it, and I still think it could have been avoided if it hadn't been for Milosevic and Tucman.

Q: Was Croatia really different, as the economic counselor did you see Croatia as being a different breed of camp than what you're getting...

WHITMAN: Sure in Slovenia certainly. First of all I always thought in the back of my mind that Slovenia eventually someday will go off on its own. If you were asking, did I see the breakup of Yugoslavia, the answer is no. Partly because I don't think I was aware of how pernicious this leadership could be. It was also pernicious but it was also tapping into some real hatred. I didn't think they'd be that stupid to blow the place up. It was a going-on institution with its imperfections. It was still a hell of a lot better than Bulgaria, Romania, and other neighbors. And I didn't think they were that dumb, but they were.

SIDNEY FRIEDLAND
Political Officer
Belgrade (1970-1972)

Sidney Friedland entered the Foreign Service in 1957 and served in Toronto, Vienna, Belgrade, and Geneva. He also served in the Executive Secretariate, the Bureau of International Organizations, the Office of European and Canadian Affairs the Office of Oceans, the Office of Environment and Science, the Anti-Terrorism Bureau, and on the Board of Examiners. This interview was conducted on April 1, 1993.

FRIEDLAND: During our stay in Vienna, we had spent a summer vacation on the Dalmatian Coast, and we became very taken with the Yugoslavians, and I was due for a U.S. assignment, and what happened was that I decided that I wanted to serve there, put in a bit which included 9 months of language training, was selected, and was assigned to Belgrade effective the summer of 1970 to be proceeded by 9 months of Serbian language training, starting in August of 1969.

Q: As somebody who went through that in '61, '62 -- who was teaching you and what were you getting from the language training, any brainwashing or any feel for the country?

FRIEDLAND: The instructor was a fellow named Janko Jankevich, who was in his mid-to-late-70's. At the time, he had not been in Yugoslavia, since having been captured in an original German invasion in '41, and taken to Northern Germany and spent the war in a

prisoner of war camp, accordingly, all of the language training that we got, was basically an inter-war Serbian. We had no vocabulary really of post-1945 Yugoslavia. Plus, I learned later, that Mr. Jankevich was from a cultural village 40 or 50 miles out of Belgrade, the village was Sabac, and we were all coming out of the Foreign Service Institute Yugoslav Language Course were totally identifiable within the first sentence we spoke because of this very prominent Sabac accent which we were trained in. However, about half way through, they introduced a new instructor by the name of Milosevic. Father Milosevic, who was a Serbian Orthodox Priest, and had a congregation in Wheaton, Maryland, finally given the fact that Mr. Jankevich was in increasingly poor health, decided to train a successor. I believe Milosevic was the minister of the congregation Jankevich attended. So he came, and he was much more up to date, and he was a native Belgrader, so our accent was somewhat improved.

The problem with the language course was basically that it was utterly too long. I started with the 5th week of the course, and I was the only one that stayed through to the bitter end until June of 1970. I was rated either at 2+ or 3, which was reasonably fluent, but I had no practice out on the street, and different accents, all of this kind of thing. It seemed to me that after the first 5 months after the course, I really wasn't making that much progress, plus, after, the first 6 or 7 months, I was the only person left in the class, the others had all gone off early or had gotten recruited in one sort or another, and being with this old ailing man, he'd fall asleep in the afternoon, and you really couldn't learn in that situation. But, I stayed until the bitter end, and in July of 1970 we went off to Belgrade.

Q: *What were you doing there?*

FRIEDLAND: This was interesting -- I wound up in a very touchy situation. The year before I left for Belgrade, Tom Enders had gone to Belgrade as Deputy Chief of Mission, The Ambassador there, William Leonhart, was totally paranoid, as well as being an alcoholic thirty-second degree. Immediately, he sensed that upon the arrival of Enders, that Enders was out to get him, oust him as Ambassador, get him sent back, and take over himself. Enders I don't think had that in mind, although he is a very ambitious man, very active, and is considered both a towering intellect who doesn't try to hide it very easily.

Unfortunately for me, Enders and I come into the Foreign Service in the same class, the A-100 class, and so in his paranoia, Leonhart, assumed that Enders was packing the Embassy with supporters of his, and that my assignment to Belgrade, I'd never had any previous Eastern European experience, was part of Enders' efforts to get supporters in there, although very interestingly, after A-100 class ended, our paths diverged, we never served at the same posts again. I would occasionally see him in the halls, and he remembered who I was, but I never had any relationship with him whatsoever, professional, social, personal. I was assigned to Belgrade in the economics office, but back in those days, you could be an account officer in one tour, political officer in the next, and this was my next job.

I arrived at post and was told that I would be assigned as clerk officer, and as it turned out, the political counselor was a fellow named Clayton Mudd...

Q: *Who had been the desk officer in my day...*

FRIEDLAND: Oh really? He was as thick as thieves with the Ambassador aligned against Enders. Leonhart put me under Mudd's thumb, so they could keep track of me, so I didn't do things on Enders' behalf. We couldn't have done that in the Economics section, because the head of the Economics section was new as well. Ray Albright, who came over from Treasury, an external affairs person, an international affairs person. So, I got over there, I had just been promoted that summer to a Class 4 officer.

Q: *About equivalent to a major...*

FRIEDLAND: I had had three promotions in the past 5 years, and I was doing very well, but between '66 and '70 I had three promotions. So I got there and I was told I would be in the political section rather than the economic section which was preferable, because I was a political officer, and I really didn't know much about economics. Things seemed to be going very well, then I remember I was invited over to a reception at the Ambassador's and I had been in the Foreign Service for something like 11 years, and I had never served in an Embassy -- the Consulate in Toronto, in Vienna at a mission, to an international organization, but I had never served at a traditional Embassy. This was in some sense new to me.

This was a reception for a number of senior Yugoslav government officials, one of my duties was to stand next to the Ambassador in a reception line, and I was told to make sure that the Ambassador had a little table behind him, and that his glass was constantly replenished with Scotch. I did. He was sipping on it constantly, and by the time the reception had gone through, he was really quite smashed. Then this was a sit down dinner, and I sat at a small round table. After the dinner was over we retired to a screening room, and the movie screen was wheeled in, and the lights were darkened, and the movie Brigadoon came on. As the movie went on, and as soon as a musical number came on, a voice came out of the dark singing along with the words. A drunken voice, and I'll never forget hearing the drunken, singing voice! The Yugoslav guests were just sort of sitting there with their mouths hanging open! As soon as the lights came on, the Yugoslavs made a beeline for the door, and the house was cleared out in 5 minutes.

There were all sorts of American officers, but he asked me, the Ambassador and the new Consul General to stay behind. He was literally totally drunk, out of his mind. He kept us going until two o'clock in the morning constantly, and his wife was with him. We called her Pidge, so he turns around and said, "Pidge, get me another Scotch! You know why I call her Pidge? Because when I first met her she had really big breasts and I said you look like a pidgeon." This was really very embarrassing, and it went on until two o'clock in the morning.

I mentioned to some of my colleagues at the office, and they said that that was one of the better performances, he falls down sometimes. One of my friends in the Economics

section said he was down in Skopje with, and they had a reception at Hotel Macedonia, in Skopje, and he did this on several occasions.

Q: I was there and stayed with Larry Eagleburger down there on a tour just before the earthquake, then I spent three weeks in a military hospital during the earthquake.

FRIEDLAND: This friend of mine went down there with the Ambassador, and he was in a reception line, just shaking hands and getting the person's name, and then passing the name on to the Ambassador. He got a name he remembered and leaned over to whisper it to the Ambassador and the Ambassador was not there, he had passed out.

Q: You are an officer of the government of the US, here is an Ambassador causing all sorts of awful problems, I would think that this would be the sort of thing that one way or the other, the inspector general would be tipped off to this, come out, and bring somebody back for rehabilitation or something like this. He'd been an Ambassador to Tanzania before that. How did this happen?

FRIEDLAND: I really don't know, all I can say is that by the time I had got there, Enders had left post, he had been recalled to preside over a promotion panel, and he was gone for the entire time that I was there. He may have mentioned it, and I think that he probably did mention it, we did have inspectors come out in June, and Leonhart was yanked out of there, approximately 2 or 3 weeks later. A week before the visit of Marshal Tito to the US, Mac Toon was sent in immediately, and Mac Toon accompanied him. I don't know how long Leonhart was there before, I mean his claim to fame was that he predicted as a junior officer in 1948, and put on paper, with his signature that Tito and Stalin would fallout, and that Tito would leave the Soviet Bloc. The fact that he did turn out right, made his fortune in the foreign service. He must have been there close to two years.

Q: In this uncomfortable situation, how did they use you?

FRIEDLAND: They used me as the junior of a three man political section, with Mudd as a political counselor, Byron Ward as a political officer, and me being a junior political officer, although by this point, I was a class four officer. I wasn't aware that this was a class six position, because I wasn't told.

Q: I was chief of the counselor's section, I would get a young officer, first tour usually, maybe second, have a year with me, and a year with the political section.

FRIEDLAND: Exactly, and that's what ultimately happened. I was used to do routine political stuff, a party meeting, etc. I was introduced around, I'd made foreign office contacts, journalist contacts, I proposed to go out, I checked the files, and no one in the political section had gone out since Skopje in '63. So I proposed to make a tour of the capitals of the republics in our district. Which meant Sarajevo, and Skopje, Titograd was a bit out of the way, so I did that at a different time. So I went, and I met the Prime Minister of the Republic of Bosnia, and I became a good friend of his staff aide, and I got

the Chef de Cabinet one of these leader grants, and ultimately, the Prime Minister became the Prime Minister of Yugoslavia, and very tragically was killed in an airplane crash, along with his Chef de Cabinet. This happened a number of years later. I was the first one to do this in years, and I sent in all of the reporting on this. All things considered, things went well until my efficiency report came, I was told I was doing a good job, making all of the right contacts, and I was blasted. It was reviewed by the Ambassador, and Leonhart got Enders transferred out after he did his promotion board presiding, he was told to come back to Belgrade to clean out his house, was given an hour to come to the Embassy and clean out his desk and files. He gave a goodbye party at his house, and left, and nobody ever saw him again.

Q: *He went to Cambodia.*

FRIEDLAND: Exactly, and that was it for Tom Enders. We got a new DCM, Johnson, but he didn't come in until April or May, or something of that nature. Mudd wrote my efficiency report and the Ambassador reviewed it, and it was terrible, and I had never gotten a bad report. I told him, I was flabbergasted, If you thought that I was doing such a terrible job, why didn't you say so? Well he said, I intimated, obviously you have never served in an Embassy before, you don't know what stuff is like here, so here I was, and back in those days, there were no dissent channels, this was '70, '71. What could I do? I wrote that I thought that I did a better job than Mr. Mudd suggested in the report, and I am sorry that I committed errors, this sort of thing. The Ambassador said that these matters had been fully discussed with Mr. Friedland.

So in June we get the inspectors, the inspector that inspected the political section, was either an A-100 buddy or a buddy of Leonhart, and he used the efficiency report written by Mudd as his report on me. What particularly galled me when I saw it later was that either Leonhart or Mudd had told me to schedule a reception for the inspectors, and so we did, and the inspector, I found out later criticized something on the reception, can't remember what it was, didn't like the food, or something, but I got criticized for that. One thing turned out though, and they criticized the Embassy for misusing me, in putting a Class 4 officer in a Class 6 position, they had a Class 5 officer as head of the consulate, which was either a 5 or 4 position, so I was a 4 at this point, and there was a five in it, and they decided to switch the two of us. I went down to become head of the Consular section, and the Consul went up to take my political job. I spent the second year in that position, and it was a whole different thing.

Q: *I thought it was the best job in the Foreign Service.*

FRIEDLAND: It was a fantastic job. We had marvelous local help, by and large, and second of all, this was the first time that I was the chief of anything and it was wonderful managerial experience, I had two vice-consuls working for me, an American secretary, besides the local staff, our own section of the Embassy. I was part of the country team, and went into the country team meetings, every week. And Leonhart was on his way out, Toon was on his way in, Toon was just a whole different thing, this guy was really fascinating to work for. I reported to the DCM, Dick Johnson, who was just a very nice,

efficient, good manager, a nice guy, and a nice as boss as you could ever want. After I retired, I bumped into him, and he wrote me a marvelous report, and the report that I got from Mudd put me in the lower 5% and I was given notice that I had to improve or I was going to be out on my ass which was devastating, especially after 3 promotions in 5 years, and then suddenly to be put in the bottom 5, I had never been in a position like that and I didn't know how to cope.

Q: In the Consular's section, what were the visa pressures or protection of welfare problems?

FRIEDLAND: The way we did it, I had to have that tour in Toronto, so I was familiar with Consular work. I had the two vice-consuls do all the visa stuff, and I handled the welfare. We had Mr. Montage, who was there for 20 or 30 years, and he was a great assistant in dealing with local police. We had kids killed in accidents in Bosnia, stuff like that, it wasn't just Zagreb that had a lot of welfare protection stuff, we had stuff too. I remember Montenegro, we had a woman who lost her husband, keeled over and died, in someplace in Montenegro, and I had to come get her, put her on the plane with her husband's coffin. It was fascinating. I did a social security trip through Bosnia and Montenegro, I went to some of these little towns, Zenica, Zvornik, with these pensioners to see if they were still alive, through the whole consular district, and Johnson gave me a super report. I still did not get another promotion for ten years until 1980. It didn't do me in, within that year.

Q: Malcolm Toon is one of the major figures in the period as far as being an Ambassador, how did he operate from your perspective? Being in an Eastern European post at the time?

FRIEDLAND: This guy was considered a god by everybody at the Embassy, nobody ever second guessed him and Mudd was a sycophant, he could get along with Leonhart, he could get along very easily with Toon, because he never gave his boss any trouble. So there was no problem there, and he was very good, and he dealt with Tito, man to man, There were no go-betweens, his first or second week, he flew with Tito to a State Visit. I didn't mention, we got Nixon on a Presidential Visit the year before Tito was paying back a Nixon visit, which was really something to get involved in.

Q: What was your impression of how the Nixon visit went?

FRIEDLAND: I think it went very well. What was particularly sort of awesome was the resources. The cost to the American taxpayer, the way these things were going on, the high tech stuff, the advance parties, backup limos, I had never seen anything quite like this before. We went around with the backup team, we had these communications facilities where we could be sitting in a conference room in the Embassy and talking to the advance team in Washington like we are talking now, this was 1970, just putting through a phone call back in those days was amazing. Then the first team came out and we were assigned our different events, and my event was the arrival of the President at the Royal Palace, which Tito used as a reception area for Heads of State, the White Palace.

I was given a part and I was also given the dinner that Nixon was hosting for Tito, and I was advised by a member of the advance team that every morsel of food was prepared in the White House kitchen and flown over in a U.S. Government jet that consisted of the dinner and the Strolling Strings who would play at the dinner. The Strolling Strings being a Nixon specialty, and would stroll through the dining room while they ate. I never participated in something of this magnitude before. Kissinger was of course the head of the NSC at the time, and Rogers was Secretary of State, a cast of close to a hundred, and it was simply amazing, and I took my advance team counterpart to the Palace for a march through, where the President would enter, and had to present these scenarios. "The limousine will pull up to the doorway, you will enter, turn right where you will be met by Chief of Protocol, etc. You will be seated next to so and so, who is the minister of whatever." This is what you sort of think of when you serve at an Embassy. Here I had been in the Foreign Service for 12 years at this point.

Q: I have never had one!

FRIEDLAND: It went well, and of course there had to be a return visit, so the fall '71 was set and was the immediate precipitation for the recall of Ambassador Leonhart. Toon has served in the Soviet Union, Poland and in Czechoslovakia, he had known all of the Slavic languages, but was trying to keep up his Russian, and he had a country team meeting to report on his visit to Tito, and this was another thing that he did, and he was so good at it, he'd see Tito, or something important, he would call a country team meeting and immediately report it to all the heads of section. How does this seem compared to what you've been hearing Mr. Economic Counsel, Tito told me this, what have your contacts been telling you, is he bullshitting me or what? He called us in the first time after his return, and he said that Tito is fluent in Russian, he spent five years in Russia, his wife was Russian, and I'm fluent in Russian, so we spoke Russian. Here we were, the two of us together on a flight from Washington, to Houston, NASA, and he said, "Mr. Ambassador, we get along very well, in Russian, you are the US. Ambassador to Yugoslavia, my native language is Serbo-Croatian, you really oughta learn Serbo-Croatian." And he said, "Look, I am a Sovietist, I served in Eastern Europe, and one thing I have learned serving in Moscow, Warsaw and Prague is that you begin mixing up the languages, and pretty soon, you are speaking petty-slav, you lose your edge in any one of these languages, having had this problem already in Polish and Czech, I was convinced that I was not going to learn Serbian to further mess up my Russian". And then he said to us that Tito told me that I had better learn Serbian and I'll expect to be here another two years at least, so I'd better learn Serbian, so he started taking lessons. But I know how he feels

Q: I have taken both Russian and Serbian, and I can't, now that I've been away from it for so long, that they move together.

FRIEDLAND: When I came back, I was tested at 4.4 in Serbian, I was really pretty good at it, then, I went 8 years without ever have spoken a word, and then in 1980, I spent a week in Skopje, on a US delegation in a Science Committee, and it was terrible. I was

not understood by the people in hotels, restaurants, street, whatever, I tried, however, my boss, who had served in Warsaw and was very fluent in Polish was getting by with his Polish. He said he was using his petty slav, he had also had some Czech or something along the way, and I hadn't had another Slavic language.

Toon did ultimately learned Serbian and whether it damaged his Russian somewhere along the way, I don't know. Such a pro.

Q: How was the Vietnam War playing that you were picking up there? We were beginning to pull out, but we were doing a lot of nasty stuff, bombing and all of that.

FRIEDLAND: It was not a big thing. The Yugoslavs were pro-Hanoi. We'd bomb Haiphong harbor and they would enter routine protests. They would make routine statements at various meetings that other made, but there was no pressure, no demonstrations that I recall, very small part of our overall relations. They were pretty cool about it.

WALLACE W. LITTELL
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Belgrade (1970-1974)

Wallace W. ("Pic") Littell was a USIS officer connected with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and the first USIS representative in Eastern Europe in the early 1950s. He later became Assistant Director of USIS for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. In addition to Yugoslavia, Mr. Littell served in East Germany, Poland, and the Soviet Union. This interview was conducted on October 1, 1992.

LITTELL: I was in Yugoslavia at a good time. The current situation is very painful for me because I...

Q: It was 1970 to '74.

LITTELL: As a matter of fact during my time there, we established reading rooms, or information centers, in all of the Republics but Montenegro, and were well on the way to establishing one there before I left. So I had friends and contacts in all of the Republics. I understand the current situation somewhat because I knew Yugoslavs all over Yugoslavia and I know the Serbs survived 500 years of the Ottoman empire, and the others have survived occupation of one sort or another and they are very tough, stubborn people. But they may be too stubborn for their own good at this point.

Q: Were the differences between the Serbs and Croats noticeable then, or was that papered over by the Tito dominance?

LITTELL: No, no. You knew the differences even though the official language was Serbo-Croatian, or Croato-Serbian depending whether you were in Zagreb or Belgrade. You knew the differences and you couldn't help but know because of the World War II period, and the hangover. Of course, the Croats and Slovenians, particularly the Croats, had a very strong fascist element during the Nazi period and the period of Nazi occupation in Croatia. There was a nominal independent Croatia under Nazi sponsorship, and they'd killed a lot of each other (Serbs and Croats). So you knew the antipathies existed and, of course, they are Slavs -- both of them -- but you do have the religious difference, the Roman Catholic Croats and the Orthodox Serbs. And you have a difference in tradition. The Serbs fought the Turkish occupation for hundreds of years, and the Croats and Slovenians were under the Austro- Hungarian empire, or Italians in the case of the Slovenians. But there were the antipathies and the memories of World War II even then, and unfortunately, of course, they're being strengthened now.

WILLIAM A. WEINGARTEN
Serbo Croatian Language Training, Foreign Service Institute
Arlington, VA (1970-1971)

Economic Officer
Belgrade 1971-1974

William Weingarten was born and raised in Baldwin, New York. He attended Colgate University and served in the US Army in Korea until 1965. After entering the Foreign Service in 1962 he worked in Paris, Yugoslavia, Brussels, Australia, and Canada.

Q: *Did you take Serbian, then?*

WEINGARTEN: Yes, I took Serbian.

Q: *From what, '70 to '71?*

WEINGARTEN: '70 to '71.

Q: *Where, at the Foreign Service Institute?*

WEINGARTEN: Were we still in Arlington Towers then, or were we over on Key Boulevard?

Q: *I took it in the garage of Arlington Towers.*

WEINGARTEN: When did you take it?

Q: *I took it a long time ago. I took it '61-62.*

WEINGARTEN: Yes, I think we were in the -

Q: *Probably in the Crystal -*

WEINGARTEN: I think we were in it then.

Q: *That tall building.*

WEINGARTEN: Yes, Key Boulevard.

Q: *Who were your teachers?*

WEINGARTEN: Father Milosevic and Mr. Jankovic - remember Janko?

Q: *Oh, yes.*

WEINGARTEN: And Popovic was the voice on the tape. We never had Popovic as a teacher.

Q: *You missed something - not much, but you missed something.*

WEINGARTEN: At the time we used to have to drive down as a department and listen to the tapes in the Department. And listen to Mr. Popovic say "Dobur dan!" And he was supposed to be... If the king's folks had won and dominated or managed to dominate after the end of World War II he was going to be the interior minister.

Q: *He would have been a very good minister under Milosevic, too, for the interior. He was a very inflexible person. As a matter of fact, I found him a very good source for understanding Yugoslavia later on - almost revolted against him. In fact, a group of us had taken... We were assigned to Popovic; we were not allowed to study with Jankovic, and we ended up revolting and asking that the classes be mixed, much to their dismay.*

Just to end this phase of learning about the language, what were you picking up from your teaching and reading about Yugoslavia?

WEINGARTEN: Well, I guess what I was picking up there was the kind of myth that the Yugoslavs like to portray of themselves as rugged and stalwart defenders of their country against the Germans and that sort of thing. They're very proud of that. I just got the impression from Janko about a country that was a vigorous and happy place, and he was very sad that he couldn't go back to it because of the political situation. Our other professor was Father Milosevic, a Serbian Orthodox priest, but a man with a great sense of humor and jolly, a heavy-set fellow. And you got nothing whatsoever from either of them of any kind of internal stress between Croats, Serbs, Slovenes, and so on, except in kind of a joking way like Serbian recruits in the army ask how many pairs of undershorts they want. A person somewhere says, one, two, three, and then finally a guy from

Macedonia says, "I'll need 12," and then, "What do you need 12 for?" and he says, "*Januar, Februar...*"

Q: *These are the months.*

WEINGARTEN: Yes, the months. So it was that kind of a... you got that kind of impression of it, and you had really no sense of underlying animosity... nor for that matter did I get much sense of what _____ between the nationalities when I got to Belgrade. The Croats in '71 had a nationalist phase, and it wasn't even really an uprising. They just had some people out in the square, and that was repressed very harshly. And the Serbians, the government in Belgrade, was always very concerned about the *Ustaši*. They had an incursion of people from Australia and Canada into the Bosnian mountains, all of whom were either killed or captured and then executed. But you know, you never really felt any deep hatred. One of the few times I've really been shocked was looking at a *Time Magazine* on a plane coming back from Paris in '91, I think, and it showed pictures of guys with masks on and combat fatigues with the dead civilians they'd just killed.

Q: *This was in Bosnia.*

WEINGARTEN: Yes. It was after the war with the Slovenians and after the Vukovar battle with the Croats. And this was just guys that had come down in the mud and they'd killed all these... Bijeljina - it was at Bijeljina, in Bosnia... killed all these old folks, lying there, and there was a picture of a guy with an AK-47 taking a kick at the head of one of these dead people. And I said, these are not the Serbs I knew.

Q: *Yes.*

WEINGARTEN: They were solid and very hardy and rugged folks, but you didn't think they would go after old women and old geezers [men], but they did. And so you just had to reexamine our feelings about the Serbs. We *loved* Serbia.

Q: *Oh, we did, too.*

WEINGARTEN: We had a marvelous time.

Q: *We had five years there, and just loved it.*

WEINGARTEN: Our kids loved it. Our kids learned to play soccer with Yugoslav kids. I used to run sports programs there, and I'd seek out Yugoslav kids to come and play soccer. They taught the American kids; they also didn't take any guff either. And I just thought they were terrific people. But of all the countries I served in, I think that would be the one I would not go back to at this time. I'd have a hard time with that. Have you been back?

Q: *I've been back to Bosnia twice as an election monitor.*

WEINGARTEN: When?

Q: *Last year and the year before.*

WEINGARTEN: Oh, okay. How do you find it?

Q: *Well, it's a different world, just a different world. I find I had very little sympathy... I have no sympathy for the Serbs. Some of my fellow officers who served there, I think, can't get rid of that bonding or something, but I didn't.*

WEINGARTEN: I just could have no sympathy whatsoever for anybody that did that. And I'm sorry, in a way, that in this war that we have just waged in Kosovo we didn't come to grips with these people, the Captain Arkans and Seselj crowd.

Q: *Let me stop here. We'll pick this up the next time. We've talked a bit about your time in language training in 1970-71 and all about what you were picking up from it, and we'll go to when you went to Serbia, or to Yugoslavia, in 1971.*

Q: *Today is the 17th of August, 1999. Bill, you were in Belgrade from when to when?*

WEINGARTEN: I was there from 1971 to 1974.

Q: *What was your job?*

WEINGARTEN: I was an economic officer and covered pretty much whatever anybody wanted done on economics, from oil to trade to -

Q: *Also that included commercial work in those days, didn't it?*

WEINGARTEN: Oh, yes, quite a bit.

Q: *Who was the ambassador at the time?*

WEINGARTEN: When I got there it was Bill Leonhart, and very shortly after I got there he was called back and was replaced by Malcolm Toon, who was the ambassador for the three years that we were there. And I think I met Leonhart once, just on arriving there. And he had, as you know, had a major problem with his DCM, who was Tom Enders, and he got rid of Tom Enders, but shortly thereafter the Administration called him back and replaced him with Toon.

Q: *This was a very well-known blow-up. I mean, I think it had been growing for a while but it happened at a country team meeting before your time. But was the aftermath of this sort of hanging around when you arrived? How would you describe sort of the mood of the embassy and what you were getting?*

WEINGARTEN: Well, it was kind of curious because they had pro-Enders and anti-Enders groups, and people would invite you into their office, close the door, and then tell you in hushed tone what had happened at such and such a time between Enders and Leonhart, and who had wronged whom. It was really quite a show. I didn't have anything to do with it. I wasn't there long enough to pick a side or to have a side picked for me, but I was very happy that I didn't have to go through that.

Q: Was the problem at all what we would call "substantive," or was this just purely personality as far as your -

WEINGARTEN: I think it was purely personality, from what I heard. There may have been some substance involved, but it just was two people who apparently simply did not get along with one another and had apparently developed a very strong, more than just dislike but almost a hatred of one another. They apparently could barely be civil in each other's company. It was really a curious affair. It was nice to avoid.

Q: How did you find Malcolm Toon as the ambassador?

WEINGARTEN: He was really quite good, really professional. He was a very, very tough guy. He always prided himself on that. He was later ambassador to Moscow, and the Russians refused to accept him for about almost a year, nine months or so, because he was so very, very tough with them, and he was known as a man who enjoyed giving them bad news and, indeed, never shrank from giving anybody bad news. As I say, he was a very tough guy, very forceful fellow.

Q: Did you feel he came with an attitude? I think he'd had previous Soviet experience, and my impression was, I remember, when Spike Dubs came to Belgrade from Moscow, he had sort of a carryover, thinking that Yugoslavia was a miniature Soviet Union for a while, and things just were really so different that it took a little while to sort of adjust to it. Did you find this at all with Toon?

WEINGARTEN: No, I had the sense he was flexible enough to come into a place like Yugoslavia, assess it, assess its leadership, find out very quickly how it worked, and as in the Soviet Union, it was the Party in Yugoslavia that made things happen, and then the superstructure, to use a communist term, that we all dealt with. Actually, the League of Communists was very closed to the embassy. We could only very rarely go and talk to one of the people who were running the party, you know, somebody like Stane Dolanc. There was also a screwy guy that was the ideologue, who used to go on television every once in a while and spout real nonsense, and sometimes I would translate that, because Workers' self-management was the big deal and had some kind of resonance in the West in France. There was a lot of theory about it, and I'd sometimes have to translate the stuff and put it into English and send it to the States, and I remember Toon saying to me once, "Bill, this is a load of crap." And I said, "Well, I can't help it. It's not my writing; it's..." I can't remember the fellow's name now, but he was the number two or the number three to Tito.

Q: *Was this Kardelj?*

WEINGARTEN: Yes, it was Kardelj, that's right.

Q: *Edvard Kardelj, yes. He was Slovenian, I think, wasn't he?*

WEINGARTEN: Yes, what an obscurantist he was. He never made sense, never used a simple word when he could use a complicated one. Did we ever discuss the language training?

Q: *I think we did.*

WEINGARTEN: Yes, we did. Did I tell you the story about coming to Yugoslavia and our teacher - remember Mr. Jankovic, and he had come from Šabac - did I tell you that story?

Q: *Why don't you tell it again? We can eliminate it if necessary.*

WEINGARTEN: And he'd grown up in Šabac, which at the time, I guess before the war, had cultural pretensions as a competitor, challenger to Belgrade. And of course after the war, Šabac sank into obscurity and became a pig-farming center, a hog-raising center, and Jankovic's Serbian never changed. He was pre-war and had a Šabac accent, and so a generation of Foreign Service officers apparently went to Yugoslavia with a really rustic accent, out-of-date Serbian that was pre-war, never really learned how to use the intimate verbs. And we had this wonderful lady in the embassy - I think she was probably there when you were there.

Q: *Angelovic?*

WEINGARTEN: Madame Angelovic, who took us all in hand and he taught us Serbian. It was like a finishing course.

Q: *When you arrived in 1971, what was the political-economic situation in Yugoslavia as you saw it?*

WEINGARTEN: Right after I arrived, there was a challenge in Croatia to Tito or to the Communist Party. It was a nationalist movement in Zagreb that was a pretty mild sort of movement, but it was put down very harshly by Tito, who realized - as we've seen since - that any kind of insurgent nationalism can have very serious impact on the other nationalities within Yugoslavia. And so he shut that down pretty hard, put people in jail, broke up demonstrations, all sorts of things. Then in '72, another curious event that I recall was the invasion of the Ustaši. Fifteen or so heavily-armed guys came in from Austria, who were Croats from Canada, Australia. They came in and they took over a little town up in the mountains in Croatian Bosnia, way up in the mountains. They took that over for a couple of days, and then the police and the army came in and wiped them

out, captured a lot of them, and then held them incommunicado, and then apparently interrogated them pretty thoroughly to find out who had sent them, who had financed them. For about three or four months they thought that the Americans were behind it, but they never released any of the testimony and, as a matter of fact, shot everybody that they had captured. It really was a "dead men tell no tales" sort of thing that took place.

But it could be a very suspicious place. Another thing that we had at that time was the detente with the Russians, and the Russians embassy was a large embassy there, larger than ours, and they put on a real charm offensive, and Toon was sensitive enough to realize that this kind of thing bothered the Yugoslavs. You'd see the Americans and the Russians having lunch together, at receptions in honor of one another, so he'd sort of tried to damp that down a little bit. But it was an interesting time. Every country I've been to I've really enjoyed being in for one reason or another, even Vietnam. It's just a marvelous place, and I'm sorry we didn't make more of it than we did. But Yugoslavia was a terrific assignment.

Q: What was your impression of the economy there?

WEINGARTEN: Well, it worked to some degree, because people were willing to overlook a lot of things. They had tremendous problems. They owed debt to one another within the country, and they never paid it off. They'd just keep on building the debt. Finally, it just seized the whole economy up. But they were very open to imports. They also had, I thought, a very poor banking system. That's one of the things I followed. I got to know all of the people that ran the National Bank because I could speak Serbian. These guys preferred to speak either English or French, which I could also speak, so I'd go over there. I remember one time I was supposed to have an interview. It was supposed to talk to the man who was known as the "Gray Fox of the National Bank." He was the guy who did their foreign exchange dealings. And I got over there, and they said, "Well, he's not available." And I said, "But I've got an appointment with him." And he said, "Well, he's off listening to a lecture by Milton Friedman." And then another guy I tracked down was somebody over in the Plan, in the Ministry of the Economy, I guess it was, who was in charge figuring out the prices for all the inputs of industry everywhere in Yugoslavia. And I went and saw him and met him a few times. He was very interesting. He was a professor, a Macedonian, but he was absolutely... I figured he was a little bit nuts, because he didn't have a computer, and he tried to figure out the relationship of all these input prices, one to the other, and could never get them all right, so he'd get something wrong and the farmers, for example, would start to drive their cattle across the border to Italy to sell it rather than sell it this artificially low decreed price. But there were always things like that. A couple of people came to see me once and they said, "We have a proposal to make to you for developing a nickel-mining operation in Macedonia." They said, "This is a surefire thing. All we need is \$200 million." And so they gave me a one-page prospectus on this and said, "Well, what do you think?" I said, "Well, that's not the way to get \$200 million from international lenders - or from anyone. You really have to have it studied, looked into." But believe it or not that actually became a project. Somebody did lend them the money; they built the... Actually, it's down in Kosovo, the northern part of Kosovo, in Kosovska Mitrovica

or somewhere, or Trepca, and it's a great big nickel facility, and it did get built. It was also the kind of country that foreign lenders liked because it was developing, there was a cadre of people who had been to school in the West who seemed to know what they were doing. It was a relatively open society. It was just streets ahead of everybody else in Eastern Europe, so people liked to come and lend to it. It was an interesting economy.

Q: Well, what would you tell an American who came in and said, "I'm interested in opening up either a trade relation or a factory or something here in Yugoslavia"?

WEINGARTEN: Well, you'd have to look around for a reliable partner, somebody who could help you through the regulations. I'd translated all of the banking regulations in to English for people, and some of them didn't make any sense no matter what you did with the translation, and I went and asked this fellow, the Gray Fox, and I said, "What is the meaning of this? I don't understand this." And he said, "You're not supposed to understand it. It was written that way. That was not to be followed, not to be understood; it was just to make people come see us, and then we make the decisions." To American businessmen, I'd say be very careful, somebody looking to invest in Yugoslavia, find a reliable local partner. There were outside organizations - the World Bank. There was an Investment Corporation of Yugoslavia that Tony Solomon ran. Go check with them and find somebody reliable, but then don't throw all of your money into it. Be very careful with it. It was a kind of an economy that lent itself to anecdotal evidence. The statistics were baloney for the most part and did not take into account all of these payments that had seized up between companies. And as I say, I followed the banks, and the local banks had sort of a Western façade to them. You know, you'd go in and do a foreign exchange transaction sometimes and they were reasonable, but of the six major banks, I remember one time a U.S. banker came in and said, "What's going on with this bank?" and I said, "Well, the manager's just absconded to Western Europe with a lot of money." He said, "What about this one?" "Oh, the president is in jail." But there was always a lot of corruption, speculation, cooking books, and so on. Which is why you needed somebody reliable to make your way there.

Q: Well, how did you find the self-governing enterprise system worked in reality? Were you able to get a fix on that?

WEINGARTEN: Yes, pretty much so for the self-governing workers-governed plant or factory, the real final arbiter of most arguments or difficulties was the local Party rep, and all of this other superstructure was just that - and very complicated. They had levels of representation and a lot of workers involved in it, and I guess in that sense, if you weren't very sophisticated, you'd think that was the way it ran, but basically, if they did have an investment problem or had a real labor relations problem, you went to the Party, and the Party decided at the local level, and if they couldn't do it, then they took it to the municipality and then further up.

It was a fascinating place, and another thing we liked about it, my wife and I, was that of the many places we'd been it was the one that had one of the closest most cohesive diplomatic communities in it. Do you recall that?

Q: *Oh, yes, very much so.*

WEINGARTEN: We're still friends with some of the people we made acquaintance with in Yugoslavia. We'd go out. There was an English-speaking hunting group. There was a French-speaking hunting group, tennis tournaments. They had all sorts of things going on, and they did a lot of parties and a lot of smaller embassies were there that didn't have any idea what was going on... that were kind of clueless, and nobody spoke Serbian and so on. So they were always happy to hear what sort of opinions we had of the place.

Q: *Were you able to make trips out into the country?*

WEINGARTEN: Oh, yes, quite a lot, and we used to go pheasant hunting down in Bosnia, down around Brcko. A lovely area, you go out, and there were always... I spoke Serbian, but the embassy always wanted you to go out with someone else. They didn't want you to go out into the country by yourself, so I always went with my assistant, whom you've probably met - Anda Miloslavjevic, who used to work... Well, anyway-

Q: *Yes, I knew him.*

WEINGARTEN: -he used to go out with me, and we'd go various places, all over, and the Ministry of Finance would always send this very small and timid man to come along with us so there'd be three of us, and he, it turned out, was a sort of an agent for the UDBA, the secret police at the time, and would report on what we were doing. We weren't doing anything... you know, we weren't going around taking pictures of sensitive installations. So we'd go out in this trio, and I remember we went to Kosovo Polje at one point in time. I just wanted to see that. And I remember Anda Miloslavjevic, who was a fairly sophisticated guy, burst into tears when he was on the Kosovo Polje. You know, the battle the Serbs lost 600 years earlier. So we'd go around, we'd talk to municipality officials, we talked to businesses, and always do it in Serbo-Croatian, unless we ran across somebody who was really good in English. And I always got a good reception, partially because we had the secret police guy with us. Anybody give us a problem, they'd have a bigger one in return. And the secret police guy was a very nice, very gentle little man. It turned out that he had some years earlier been picked up, thrown in jail by the UDBA, just beaten unmercifully, so much so that he apparently could not stand to be by himself once darkness fell, and so he'd always come into Anda's room and sleep in Andre's room. There wasn't anything going on between them, but he was just afraid of the dark and so badly brutalized by the cops.

Sometimes we'd go someplace and somebody would just... any question we asked, the reply would be some sort of doctrinal thing, you know, "As Edvard Kardelj has said..." but for the most part people were happy to see us, seemed to be, anyway. One of the jobs I had, I got about \$1000 a year in travel money from AID. They wanted somebody to go around and look at all of the projects that they'd built and see if they were still there - the steel mills in Skopje, the dam up above Dubrovnik, you know, that sort of thing - and I

thought, fine. I had a four-wheel drive vehicle, I'd just go all over the place and stay in little hotels in little towns.

Q: *Did you get over into Croatia, Slovenia at all?*

WEINGARTEN: Not much, just we did a... we'd go through there. Of course, they have a consulate in Zagreb, and they covered those two areas pretty thoroughly. We'd just drive through. My wife and I would make two runs a year to the PX up in-

Q: *Aviano?*

WEINGARTEN: Near Aviano - it was Vicenza. And we'd go through Croatia and Slovenia and then in to Italy, and each step of the way there was more electric lighting, the roads were wider, better. You know, the whole thing, sort of observable degrees of economic development got better until finally you went to Italy and got into Italy and it was really so much brighter than towns like Belgrade. We'd go up there, and we'd do a day's PX shopping. We had three kids. We'd fill up our station wagon with stuff, and then to entice my wife to do this, I'd always promise her dinner in Venice. So we'd put all the stuff in the room and take the car down to Venice, take the boat, and have a nice dinner.

Q: *How was our consulate general in Zagreb reporting on this clampdown on Croatian nationalism? Was our consulate general seeing a different Yugoslavia than you all were seeing it in Belgrade, do you think?*

WEINGARTEN: No, I don't think so. I think he was just seeing another aspect of... We could tell that this régime had some very serious concerns about nationalism and regional differences. But as far as I could tell, there was no conflict between the consulate and the embassy, as I recall. I may be wrong. Most of the reporting from the consulate came through the embassy before it went back to Washington, and so, no, I never noticed, or I never picked up any real dissension between the two posts.

Q: *Later, of course, these things we're talking about now - we're talking in 1999 - and Western Europe and the United States have been very heavily involved in the breakup of Yugoslavia - did you get any feel for the divisions in that society?*

WEINGARTEN: No, I never did, and the funny thing is that both my wife and I spoke Serbian. We had Serbian friends. We traveled a lot within Serbia. We liked the place. We knew the people. People could tell that we liked it, so that helps them to be more open. We always admired the Serbs, thought the Serbs were terrific, straightforward, gutsy people. But you got a sense that a lot of history had passed between these people, but you never had any slightest inkling that they would ever take after each other the way they did. And I remember one of the most shocking things I've ever seen was coming back on a plane from Paris to Washington after a meeting in Paris and reading *Newsweek*, which I never read. I picked it up on the plane and read it, and I saw a picture of one of

Captain Arkans' people in Bijeljina, in Bosnia, and it was just after they'd finished killing some unarmed civilians, and they were lying in the street-

Q: *This was during the Bosnian-*

WEINGARTEN: Yes, this was '91, right in the beginning. And this one guy, this thuggish looking guy, was kicking one of these dead people in the head. I think you'd recall the picture if you saw it again. I was shocked by that. I said I couldn't believe that Serbs could do this sort of thing. I always thought that they were... because they had propagated this myth that they had fought the Germans to a standstill in World War II, which as it turns out was a myth. The Germans only had a few divisions in Yugoslavia, and for the most part these guys fought each other. But still the myth lasts that they were brave and forthright kind of people that wouldn't kill women and kids and old people, but it turns out that they did. But you didn't have the impression going around Yugoslavia that this sort of thing was just beneath the surface, but it must have been.

Q: *Were you getting a feel towards - now we call them the Kosovars or the Albanians there; we called them Scriptars in those times - I guess it was a derogatory term - but did you get any feel towards the Serb attitude towards those people at that time?*

WEINGARTEN: Well, Serbs didn't much like them, but at that time Kosovo was autonomous within the Federal Republic, and so they had rights there. They had rights until Milosevic took them away in '88-89. But it was dirt poor. It was really a dirt-poor area. There wasn't much going on there economically, and so we would go down to Priština sometimes and talk to people. We didn't spend a lot of time down there. It didn't seem like there was much going on. And there was no or very little Serb-Albanian... Serbs and Albanians didn't mix but they didn't seem to... they weren't at daggers-drawn - or at least not to an outsider. Have you been back?

Q: *I've been to Bosnia.*

WEINGARTEN: Oh, yes, you told me that. That's right. I'm not sure I'd want to go back. It's one of the only places I've been, I think, that I wouldn't want to go back to because Serbs that we knew would talk sometimes about Kosovo Polje and it's a historical kind of thing, and people talk about the Civil War here. But then who knows who you're talking to. How they managed to elect a government like Milosevic and support or at least tolerate people like Seselj and Arkans and thug outfits like that.

Q: *I have to say that I had a wonderful time, same as you, but I don't have any feeling of sympathy for the Serbs. I mean I find myself, these people, as a people, unfortunately, are responsible for some of the greatest horrors certainly in Western Europe.*

DONALD C. TICE
Political Counselor

Belgrade (1972-1975)

Donald C. Tice was born and raised in Kansas and attended the University of Kansas. He served in the US Air Force before entering the Foreign Service in 1957. He did work for the service in Belgium, Canada, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia.

Q: Were you able to travel around Yugoslavia much?

TICE: Yes. I did as much traveling as I could. The problem there was that I had a Political Section of six officers, as I recall, and somebody had to stay in Belgrade and attend the meetings. So I didn't travel as much as I liked. I traveled to all of the Yugoslav republics many times and was always pressing Ambassador Toon to get out and travel more.

I think that one of the funniest trips that we had was the first trip (for Ambassador Toon) to the Republic of Kosovo, in southern Yugoslavia. There wasn't any "easy living" in Kosovo. The best hotel there was pretty "seedy." [Laughter] You were lucky if you got a shower, never mind whether it had hot or cold running water!

Q: Did we see a problem in Kosovo at that time? Were you able to talk to members of the Albanian ethnic group there?

TICE: Yes. The problem there was literally growing rapidly, because the people of Kosovo had the highest birth rate of any area on the European continent. This was a problem that the Serbs were anguishing over. One of the last rulers of Serbia had died fighting the Turks, but "the holy fields of Kosovo," as this period of Serbia was recalled, were becoming an enclave of Albanians, whom the Serbs considered were an "inferior people." The prejudice of the Serbs against the Albanians is difficult to believe, even compared to feelings which both you and I have observed expressed, right here in the United States. This Serb feeling expressed the most "vicious" discrimination against a minority group which I have ever seen. The Serbs considered the Albanians "animals." At that time, of course, the Serb working man was often up in Germany making money in German factories, while a good part of the unskilled work in the Republic of Serbia, certainly in Belgrade, was done by people of Albanian ancestry from Kosovo.

Q: The Albanians from Kosovo wore distinctive, white skull caps. Any time there was any hauling to be done, it was done by people wearing white skull caps.

TICE: That's right. It was a festering problem. Everyone knew that it was a problem and that it wasn't going to go away, though the Serbs were trying to ignore it. Tito was trying to assuage or diminish the problem by encouraging development in Kosovo, but he was meeting with resistance from the Serbs and the northern republics, none of whom wanted to see wealth they were creating go to the Albanians in the Kosovo.

Q: At that time were we "cultivating" the Albanian minority, if that is the right term?

TICE: Well, we opened a USIS Information Center in Skopje in Macedonia, the republic adjoining Kosovo, which had a large Albanian minority. While I was in Yugoslavia, there was a marvelous American named George Forner, George had been a Presbyterian minister, then joined the Peace Corps, and then worked for USIA. He was one of those people whom you would call on if you needed some kind of missionary in the wilds of Brazil. He just thrived on going into a place like Kosovo.. When they rebuilt the part of Skopje which had been hardest hit by the 1963 earthquake, what they called the "gradski zid," the "city wall," which enclosed the old city, had completely fallen down. On the old foundations they built the new "city wall," consisting of buildings about seven or eight stories high. There were residences on the upper floors, with shops and offices on the lower floors.

So we put our USIS Information Center in one of the ground floor areas of the new city wall. Well, the building was going along very slowly. Forner, virtually single-handed, "ramroded" getting the construction done, ordering material, and getting workers to keep working instead of going off to drink "slivovitz" [plum brandy, a popular alcoholic drink in Yugoslavia]. While everything else was sort of a "shell," the USIS Information Center was a "bright spot of light" in this desolate area. Forner was known as "the American" in Macedonia, and he traveled a lot into the "Shiptar" area of Kosovo, too.

Q: "Shiptar" is the Serb word for the Albanians. How were relations, as we saw them, between Greece and Yugoslavia in those days?

TICE: They were "proper" and "correct" and presented no big problems because, while the Greeks have always considered Macedonia to be Greek, there was no attempt to mount "incursions" into Yugoslav Macedonia or that kind of thing. If there were any problems with Greece, they were referred to as "problems with Greece and Bulgaria."

Q: Did you find that the Political Section, and the Embassy as a whole, served as a "resource" for other, friendly Embassies and for foreign correspondents in Belgrade?

TICE: Oh, yes. We were very close to the press and were constantly being asked questions by friendly Embassies. A significant part of our job involved providing information to friendly Embassies. This also, of course, gave us a certain leverage. The symbiotic relationship with the resident foreign also was useful in instances when we might want to know something about this or that but didn't want to go and ask the question directly of some government official. We could put a friendly reporter up to asking the question. We were Dusko Dodor was there for the "Washington Post", as was Strobe Talbott [formerly "Time Magazine" correspondent and now Deputy Secretary of State]. He apparently was based in Belgrade while he was editing "Khrushchev Remembers" [Khrushchev's memoirs], but on sight strategically should Tito die. Another excellent reporter was Roy Gutman, who then worked for Reuters, but subsequently moved to "Newsday", where he subsequently won a Pulitzer Prize for his early reporting on genocide in Bosnia

Q: When you say that you would "use" the foreign journalists or had a "symbiotic relationship" with them, what do you mean?

TICE: Well, you might know through intelligence sources that something or other had probably happened. A foreign journalist might come to you and say: "Have you heard anything about this or that?" If you wanted to warn him off the subject you could say: "No, never heard of it." However, if you wanted a matter to come to public notice or thought the journalist might be able to smoke something out, you could stimulate your journalist colleague to look into it further. This was, of course, a two-way street, because it provided the Journalist had the benefit of being tipped off or guided in the right direction to get a story. This is a classic journalist-diplomat relationship worldwide.

Q: The journalists could ask about such a subject without "ruffling feathers," which might be the case if an Embassy officer did it.

TICE: Oh, yes. The journalists sometimes came up with information which we hadn't come across. We could then check out this information through our intelligence sources. Occasionally, the result of the check would be that the information was accurate and might provide some further details regarding a development. Then you could get some guidance on what you could and couldn't say about the subject. That was the other side of this relationship.

I'll never forget that there were rumors about a Right Wing, communist "cell" down on the Dalmatian coast of Yugoslavia, led by a guy that Tito had thrown out of the Communist Party years before. One of the reporters came to me and said: "I've got very good and detailed information on this. I don't want to look like a fool. I don't know whether to report this or not." I said: "Well, if I were you, I would run it." He said: "Thank you." [Laughter] We wanted this story to get out. Once it was out in public, we could collect more information on it. So that was a useful relationship.

Q: You were there during the "Watergate Affair." What impact did that have in Yugoslavia?

TICE: The Yugoslavs weren't terribly interested. They regarded President Richard Nixon and Secretary of State Kissinger as "friends" and supporters of theirs. This was because Nixon was the first President to invite Marshal Tito to enter the front door of the White House. He had made a previous visit to the White House but was "smuggled in" by dark of night during the administration of President Kennedy.

Q: That was in 1963.

TICE: Yes. However, this was the first time that Tito came into the White House in his full regalia. I was on the Yugoslav desk then and was involved in all of that.

When the Watergate affair began to unravel, I think that the Yugoslavs basically didn't understand it. I happened to be having a reception at my house the day that President Nixon resigned.

Q: This would have been in the summer of 1974.

TICE: Right. I had an old, black and white, Sears television set, which I had rewired to receive the local Belgrade stations. When something big was happening in world news, the local Belgrade stations would pick up international coverage, and the stations were carrying the resignation story direct from Washington. So, I set the TV on a central pedestal in the entry hall of my residence and I turned it on so this reception featured coverage of the story that the President of the United States had resigned.

A number of Yugoslavs came up to me and said: "You Americans are the strangest people! Why would you show this to us?" My answer was simple: "Because that's what democracy is all about. That's how we change our leadership. You people should know that." However, in the larger sense, the Yugoslav public wasn't terribly interested in the Watergate Affair. They didn't consider it a "big deal." They felt that our leaders changed all the time, so what was the "big fuss"?

THOMAS HUTSON
Consular Officer
Belgrade (1972-1975)

Thomas Hutson is from a small town of just over 2000 residents in Nebraska called Red Cloud. He entered the Foreign Service in 1969 and served assignments in Iran, Yugoslavia, Kyrgyzstan, Moscow, and Canada.

HUTSON: The consular work was fascinating. I must admit that I had some difficulties in Belgrade. I went through a period of cultural shock, including some depression. First of all I discovered that although I had tested 3-3 in Serbo-Croatian, I did not get a chance to use it very much. We had a wonderful local teacher, Mrs. Andrić, who proceeded to destroy any confidence that I had in my language skills. She did reconstruct my capability and probably improved it. But at the time, her approach was not good for my spirits. I also had to face some very difficult consular cases - dual nationals returning and being arrested.

Death cases were often difficult. I remember one case which occurred on the Fourth of July - which was also a Yugoslavian holiday. I was at a swimming pool and got a call from the duty officer who reported that someone had died in the Hotel Yugoslavia. The duty officer reported that his widow wanted to speak to me right away. I said I would get dressed and go to the hotel. I was told that the widow wanted to speak to me right then and there. So she got on the phone and told me that according to their religion, her husband had to be buried in Los Angeles by sun-down the following day. I said that this

was the Fourth of July which was a holiday in both of the countries involved. I told her I would try my best. I had a wonderful local employee whom I called. Lo and behold, the man was buried in L.A. by sun-down the next day. We got incredible cooperation from the Yugoslav authorities. When we dealt with human issues such as death, the Yugoslavs really came through

I think I did develop a knee-jerk reaction against the Croats largely over Jasenovac. I still judge books written about that part of the world by looking in the index to see how much of a discussion there is about Jasenovac. It was quite evident to me during the Serbian-Croatian war - the flight from western Slavonia and eastern Slavonia and later the flight from Krajina. I see the Jasenovac mentality behind those atrocities. If there is any rationalization for the Serb brutality, that was it. They were settling that score against the Croats. I have never been able to rationalize in my own mind why the Serbs were so cruel to the Bosniaks; I never knew of any reasons for that behavior.

Jasenovac was the death camp on the north side of the Sava River. I have estimated that tens or hundreds thousands - Serb, Jews, and Roma - were exterminated during WWII by the Ustashe. I did visit the camp; the first time was in 1997, while I was covering the elections in western Slavonia. At the time, I didn't realize its importance. There was a museum there, but the camp was still in primitive conditions. It had not been cleaned up or restored.

In the very strict social stratification existing in Yugoslavia, the Kosovar Albanians were just one level up from the gypsies. They did all the menial labor - street cleaners, etc. When you might mention the Albanians to a Serb, you were bound to get some kind of derogatory comment. We had several working in our American club, where they seemed to be very happy and well-liked. Unfortunately, the last time I visited the club, I noticed that none of them were still around; they had all been fired for stealing meat. A regional security officer had been brought in; he had tracked down the thieves who were then fired. They went back to Macedonia and set up their own shops.

LOWELL FLEISCHER
Consular Officer
Belgrade (1973)

Lowell Fleischer is from a small town in Ohio. He attended Ohio Western University, where he majored in journalism and political science. In addition to Yugoslavia, Mr. Fleischer served abroad in Venezuela and Columbia. He was interviewed by Thomas Dunnigan on January 31, 1995.

Q: Now when your tour in FSI was ended you had a complete change. You were sent to Yugoslavia?

FLEISCHER: Yes, that was a deliberate decision on my part. I felt that I had been in the Foreign Service by that time a good ten years, almost all of it connected with Latin America, except for a stint in INR and I really thought I wanted to get some experience in another area of the world. I found out that there was a political slot open in Belgrade and so I applied for language training with the idea of going into that slot. As it turned out I never did go to that slot because for personal reasons the person who was in it was kept on for a year and by that time I was already five months into nine or ten months of language and area training and decided I would still like to go to Belgrade. So I consented to become counselor of consular affairs and off to Belgrade we went.

Q: But you went there with Serbo-Croatian language training?

FLEISCHER: It was Serbo-Croatian language training. Ten months we had, nine or ten months of Serbo-Croatian language training, yes.

Q: Was it a happy embassy when you arrived?

FLEISCHER: Yes it was. You know, Belgrade was an interesting place in those days. Marshal Tito was still very much a leader of the non-aligned movement. He was an important figure when it came to world affairs. Tito was always consulted on issues by both east and west. So things were interesting politically. It was also interesting because I arrived at the same time as a new Ambassador, a non-career ambassador who had been the Deputy Secretary of Labor. This was Laurance Silberman who is now a member of the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia. A very militant republican who had been an acting member of the cabinet practically when he was Deputy Secretary of Labor. Anyway I met him in Washington before we went out there and was quite frankly very impressed with him. The DCM was a career foreign service officer, Dudley Miller. The Ambassador brought with him a staff aide whose name now has slipped my mind, but somebody from outside the foreign service. Eventually the staff aide and the DCM were clashing and stepping on each others' toes and one day we went to the staff meeting and found out that the DCM was no longer going to be the DCM but was going back to Washington. He was in essence fired by the Ambassador. That disrupted things at post on the personnel level for quite a while. No DCM was ever sent out again and in effect Ambassador Silberman's staff aide became the DCM, never in name, but in many functions. Those of us who were section chiefs went right to the Ambassador with many issues that ordinarily would have gone to the DCM. We really did not miss another layer. So it worked out for some of us anyway. This may be an appropriate time again to comment on the issue of non-career ambassadors. Larry Silberman had his supporters and his detractors within the Embassy. I consider myself one of his supporters. I think Larry was able in some ways to be a more effective ambassador at that particular time in Yugoslavia than perhaps a career ambassador would have been. He was willing to step on some Department toes. He also knew personally a lot of the members of President Jerry Ford's cabinet and was able to get them to come to Yugoslavia. I'm not sure under other circumstances that they necessarily would have wanted to do that. I remember Bill Simon for example, the Secretary of the Treasury, coming through and I think this was important for a lot of reasons. I don't know that the Embassy would necessarily have

disagreed with any policy line that EUR was trying to push. It wasn't that so much as Silberman just deciding that he was the guy in the spot. He was willing to take a few more chances, let's say, than I think maybe a career ambassador would have been able to take under the same circumstances. I would like to mention one case in particular that I had worked on for over a year as the Counselor for Consular Affairs. We had a US citizen by the name of Lazlo Toth who had been arrested by Tito's police for alleged industrial espionage. This guy was a chemical engineer employed in the sugar manufacturing business in the U.S. He was born in Serbia, educated in the U.S., and became a U.S. citizen. He was back visiting his family. There was a sugar plantation nearby where he had worked as a young man and he was visiting that sugar plantation and took some photographs. Well, he was arrested for taking photographs and they charged him with industrial espionage of all things -- as if the sugar plant technology in Yugoslavia was on a higher plane than it was in Colorado. Well it took us over a year to get him released and I am convinced that the only way we were able to get him released was to have people like Bill Simon put that issue at the top of his agenda when he went to call on officials in the Yugoslav government. And we did the same thing with absolutely every U.S. officials who came to Belgrade. Larry Silberman thought it was an absolute outrage that Lazlo Toth had been arrested on obviously trumped up charges and my instructions from him were to do everything I could to get the guy out. Ambassador Silberman told me that he was willing to do anything I asked him to do. I don't want to be too harsh on the foreign service at all, but we could have had a career ambassador in that situation who would have been reluctant to smash as many Yugoslav toes as we smashed trying to get this guy out. Larry Silberman didn't care if he was criticized for devoting so much time to one American in jail. He thought it was an absolute outrage and we were going to get the guy out. I just know a lot of foreign service officers who would have been reluctant to do that. So I think Silberman did a good job. He would have been more effective had he spoken Serbo-Croatian as his successor Larry Eagleburger did. I also think that Silberman was more willing to ruffle Tito's feathers than some career ambassadors would have been. It was probably a time in the twilight of Tito's presidency where he needed somebody to ruffle a few feathers. So I think Silberman was very, very good at doing that. At the same time he was able to keep confidences and being effective in operating the people below Tito's level. But in Yugoslavia in those times it was Tito and nobody else. I mean we all tried to get to know other level people. We all tried to put our best thinking caps on and come up with scenarios about what would happen to Yugoslavia when Tito was no longer there. I'm sorry to say that I don't think any of us could have predicted the eventual fate that befell the country. Although we did have a pretty good indication that it was only Tito, the glue that was holding the thing together. I can remember for example another little anecdote. "Borba", the official communist party newspaper, was published in Belgrade in Cyrillic and in Zagreb in the Latin alphabet. Well, if I did not feel like struggling with Cyrillic on some days I might pick up a Latin edition because it was a little bit easier for me to read even though in those days my Serbo-Croatian was fairly decent. One day I was in my office reading it when the chief local consular assistant, a lawyer who had studied abroad, and an intellectual Serb on whom I relied on him for a lot of things, came into my office and he saw me reading Borba with the Latin lettering in it and he had a fit. How could I think that I was understanding the true meaning of what I was reading, that I was getting

as much as I could out of that article if I was reading it in Latin as opposed to reading it in Cyrillic. That's just one tiny little anecdote that illustrates I think the strong antagonistic feelings which the various nationalities which had been jammed together in this artificial country. Let's face it, that's what Yugoslavia was. That's just one little anecdote I think that served to illustrate how strong the feelings were among the various parts of Tito's empire in those days.

Q: Were you able to get out of Belgrade, to travel around the country at all?

FLEISCHER: I traveled quite a bit as a matter of fact. Belgrade was not a closed, completely closed society in those days. We were watched and we used to play little games with the police who we knew were writing down the diplomatic tag numbers of our cars, for example. But as a consular officer it was a little bit easier for me to travel sometimes than as a political officer because I could go to an area on the pretext of visiting U.S. citizens, investigating social security checks, visiting U.S. citizens in jail, etc. I mean I was going to an area to visit an American in jail or whatever, and use that time that I was there to do other things as well. So it was fairly easy to travel around, and interesting to travel around in Yugoslavia. Serbia was fairly well off. Yugoslavia is like a lot of other European countries in the sense that the northern part of the country was the rich part and the southern part was the poor part. That seemed to hold true for Yugoslavia as well. You would get down near the Albanian border for example or on your way down towards Greece and those were the poor areas. One of the things that struck me traveling around during that period of time were the number of half-finished houses we would see. You would be traveling around in Serbia and there would be a farm field and all of a sudden you would see a half-finished house, fairly good size and wonder what was going on. Well, what most of this was, there were a lot of gastarbeiters in Germany ... Serbs who went to Germany to work as "guest workers." They would come back with their earnings, and use them to start building a house, buying a little business or whatever. They would return to Germany and work again and plow their earning back into their houses in Serbia. This was happening all over. There were a lot of Serbians working in Germany. I remember another little incident to illustrate that. I had a Volkswagen sedan, a bigger Volkswagen with a rear-engine and a fuel injection system. I had trouble with the fuel injection system and I had trouble getting somebody in Belgrade to fix it and decided I would take it to Austria. When I took it to the shop, the mechanic was a Serb. So there were a lot of them in Germany and Austria and other parts of western Europe who had gone up there to work. It was a society which was functioning, but it was also a society where you knew that in Croatia, for example, or in Slovenia which were the two northernmost sections of the country, the two richest, the two closest to western Europe where they were obviously pushing the communist envelope. You would talk to people up there who owned small factories for example. The Yugoslavs were always sort of flexible. You could have a private restaurant or a private business as long as you only employed a handful of people - I don't remember the exact number -- outside of your own family. In Croatia and Slovenia, they were always expanding that trying to add more, pushing the envelope as it were. But Yugoslavia was certainly better off in those days than a lot of the other eastern European countries. Among other things, I was president of the school board in Belgrade for a year or two and

I remember getting a call from my counterpart who was also an embassy officer in Sophia. I got a call one day asking me whether it was possible to buy a water heater or nails on the market in Yugoslavia. I said: "My God, yes, you can buy a water heater any place; there are a lot of hardware stores." So he came over personally in an embassy vehicle to get a new water heater for the school in Sophia because they were not available in Bulgaria.

Q: From one communist country to another?

FLEISCHER: From one communist country to another. So in that sense, certainly economically in those days Yugoslavia was much better off than Romania or Bulgaria for example.

Q: Were there evidences then of the strong Moslem nationalism that we're seeing now?

FLEISCHER: Yes, there were. Obviously, you went down to Moslem territory, to Sarajevo, the scene of so much bitterness today. I can remember on several trips to Sarajevo and I can't imagine that that place has almost been obliterated from what we see on television today, but the Moslem influence was extremely strong. You would talk to a mayor or a city councilman or a Moslem leader in that area and it was very evident that there was a resentment toward Belgrade that was a little more than the resentment that you find in many other places toward the capital city. I mean, you and I have both served in countries where if you're not in the capital city there was always a resentment there. I found that in Colombia, I found that in lots of other places where I served, but this was more than that. You knew that religion was at work. The other thing that I've thought about a lot since then with the recent break up of the country, the Serb against Moslem, the husband against wife in some cases which we've all read about, when you look at it historically and you try to reason it out and you think that it's really just almost an accident of history. The line between where Roman Catholicism and the Latin alphabet was the norm, and on the other side where eastern orthodox religion and the Cyrillic alphabet are used is where the advance of the Ottoman Empire was stopped. A lot of the Moslems are ethnically and racially the same stock as the Serbs. So, you know, if the line had been fifty miles away, we'd be dealing with an entirely different situation.

Q: There were some prominent visits I gather during your time in Yugoslavia?

FLEISCHER: Yes, there were. President Ford came through for example, to Belgrade.

Q: Was this when Tito was still alive?

FLEISCHER: Yes, that was when Tito was still alive. President Ford had a very successful visit to Belgrade. Tito went personally to the airport to greet him. Tito didn't always do that for a foreign visitor, and he went personally to greet President Ford and met him at the airport. That was an extremely busy time for us and I think that that visit really went very well and served I think a lot of good purposes during that particular time. I don't think presidential visits always do that. But this was a novelty there in Yugoslavia

and I think it worked quite well. We had other high level visitors during that time. I remember a visit by Carl Albert who was the Speaker of the House of Representatives at the time. That was a disastrous visit, I think you can say. Albert is still alive so maybe I should be more careful in what I say, but Albert was known in those days as a pretty heavy drinker and he continued to do so while he was on that trip. I mean in the control room, we eventually had to lock liquor up and he got pretty annoyed with us I must say.

Q: I've been in several experiences like that with our congressional representatives.

FLEISCHER: But this was the Speaker of the House of Representatives for heaven's sakes. Tito honored him with an official dinner. Tito was always not present at such events. Albert could not even remember the name of the country he was in and when he got up to respond to a toast he thought he was in Czechoslovakia. I mean he got countries mixed up. I mean that was a kind of disastrous visit. So there was both the good and the bad. Traveling in Yugoslavia was very easy. Geographically it's a very good place to be stationed. We drove to Greece and it was an easy drive to Vienna or to Budapest and roads were pretty decent. The north-south route was fairly dangerous. You get Greek and Turkish truck drivers on the way to Western Europe and in those days it was really only a two-lane highway and they weren't exactly too careful about pulling over and sleeping when they should. But you could put your car in a car-train in Belgrade and go from Belgrade to Ljubljana and in no time at all you'd be in northern Italy or drive over the pass and be in Austria. So it was a very good geographical location. It was a very pleasant place to be assigned.

LAWRENCE P. TAYLOR
Economic Officer
Belgrade (1974-1976)

Lawrence P. Taylor was born in Cleveland, Ohio and raised in Pittsburg Pennsylvania. He graduated from Ohio State University and did graduate work at American University and Kent State University. He entered the Foreign Service in 1969 and has staffed embassies in the Dominican, Zagreb, Belgrade, Indonesia, Canada, and England.

Q: Did you sense at that point - I mean, it was a pretty small consulate general, wasn't it?

TAYLOR: Yes, the consulate general was small.

Q: So were you feeling any - I won't say tension, but - was there a difference in outlook and all between the officers in Zagreb while you were in Zagreb and those in Belgrade?

TAYLOR: Yes, one thing I mentioned earlier is we saw the country and the issues from a somewhat different perspective. From the capital of the country, from the heart of Serbia in Belgrade, it seemed like the system was not just alive and well - it certainly was,

I wouldn't disagree with that - but somehow had successfully mastered the ethnic tensions and hatreds and conflict and cultural clashes that historically have been present in those societies. And sitting out where we were, we knew that that was not the case.

That was one thing. Now there had been something called a "Croatian Spring," a couple of years earlier, named after the "Prague Spring" of '68. And in the Croatian Spring of '71-72, the genie of Croatian nationalism had almost gotten out of the bottle down there in Zagreb. There was this one terribly emotional moment in which at the opera, at the opera house in Zagreb. Croats love music and opera. You know, they think of themselves, really, as part of the Austrian-Hungarian tradition. They're not part of the Orthodox Church. They're Catholic, they use the Latin alphabet, they're part of Europe, thank you very much - not like the Serbs, who are part of Asia and Orthodoxism and all of this, in their minds. And they love opera, and at one of these operas, for the first time in the Communist period - it's an opera about the Turks besieging, it may have been Vienna or it may have been another, I can't remember which town it was - and as the Christians sally forth to do battle on stage, for the first time in the Communist period, unfurled was the old Croatian flag.

Q: *Oh, boy.*

TAYLOR: And it was such a shock. And the reaction was immediate. The entire audience rose to its feet and cheered and cheered and cheered. This sent tremors throughout the whole system, it was such a natural, spontaneous, but very real view into what was beneath the surface there. Anyhow, as the system got control of the Croatian Spring, the embassy to some extent got control of the consulate general as well, and the consulate general, which during that earlier period had sent political reporting in under its own name, had been asked to send in most political reporting through the embassy, so that the embassy could provide comment on it.

Q: *Ah, yes, well, when I was in Belgrade, '62-67, towards the end I found myself telling my colleagues in Zagreb, I said, "Yes maybe this is so, but you weren't 500 years under the Turkish yoke," which is what the Serbs say. And I mean, my God, it permeates.*

TAYLOR: It permeates everything, I know. It was very interesting to be in Zagreb, and then to be in Belgrade and really be able to see the country from both perspectives.

Q: *While you were in Zagreb, did you run across people who were trying to escape from East Germany, Czechoslovakia? So many would sort of come down for the summer. They could get there and all that. And then many of them looked towards getting the hell out.*

TAYLOR: Right. No, we didn't see any of those. We knew what was going on, and of course, Yugoslavs could travel freely. I mean there were hundreds of thousands working as guest workers in Germany. This was one of the safety valves of the system, both the people could leave if they wished to, but also that they could earn money and do well and bring it back into the country and help their families. We knew these other nationalities

were coming down there and in that environment trying to exit. We didn't see them applying for American visas or deal with them directly. Occasionally we had a Palestinian passport or so show up at the Consulate trying to get a visa. Of course, at that time that was not possible to do.

Q: *What was your impression - you were an economic officer - of the economy?*

TAYLOR: I thought the Yugoslav economy of the day was quite good, in large part because of the foreign workers and their remittances - it was a tremendous boon to the system - but also because this was the heyday of the growing tourist industry. The Dalmatian coast was being opened. Germans, but other Western Europeans, were coming there in increasing numbers, and so the tourist earnings were also quite good. It seemed to me that internally, worker self-management was not as successful as outside academic experts thought it was, and that the country, despite its socialist ideology and philosophy, the reality was that the country itself had serious class splits, serious urban-agrarian splits, and serious north-south splits, in which Croatia and Slovenia were doing very well, thank you, and Macedonia, the Kosovo, and Montenegro were very much third-worldish and 19th-century, when you traveled through.

Q: *There was the charge, later during the split, about 15 years or so later, that one of the feelings in Slovenia and Croatia was that they're taking all our money and dumping it in Macedonia and Montenegro and all, and we want our own money.*

TAYLOR: Well, that was the price of being one country, that there was some redistribution that had to be made in order to keep everybody on board, and that they were paying more in taxes than they were getting back was certainly true. In the end they didn't wish to be part of one country and maybe the others didn't either. There was not that natural, genuine sense of identity. I always felt, Stu - I don't know how you felt - I felt there was a kind of a Yugoslav man and woman, but that, that sense of identity, of being Yugoslav, was limited to the generation that fought with Tito. They truly had transcended their ethnic conflicts. They became Yugoslavs in their outlooks and in their self-identities, but even though they came to dominate the system, to control the education and the schools, to control the churches, to control everything, they could not pass that sense of identity on, even to their own children. And so it wasn't what was going to happen when Tito died, although that was an important question. The more fundamental question, what was going to happen to that country when that generation passed through and there was no one left who was a Yugoslav and the identity then would fracture? And I think that's precisely what happened.

Q: *Was there any thought that, if Yugoslavia splits, there would be a Bosnian state?*

TAYLOR: No, not at the time I was there. People did not think of Bosnia as a genuine state at the time I was there. That was kind of a no-man's-land between Croatia and Serbia and was not thought of as having its own natural identity as a state.

Q: I know, as I say, last November, I went there as an election observer and started saying, I'm sorry, I don't speak very good Serbian, and they said, "You're speaking beautiful Bosnian!" Were we looking at Kosovo at the time?

TAYLOR: We were. We were very well aware at the embassy that Kosovo was a potential flash point, that the demographic trends were working to a situation in which the Serbs would become such an increasing minority that it would be very hard to see how they could continue to control the province effectively, and at the same time, given the Serbian sense of soul and history, that the Serbian state was rooted there and that the glories of Kosovo Polje were something integral to Serbia that they would never let it go. And we covered that. We all traveled to the Kosovo. We looked at that, the embassy, there was an officer there, Jim Shoemaker, did some very interesting reporting on the university in Pristina in Kosovo and Albanian nationalism, so that was not something that to the people who were there unnoticed. It may have been unnoticed in Washington - I don't know - but that was something that Ambassador Toon and Ambassador Silberman were very much aware of.

Q: How did you find dealing with the Yugoslav government as an economic officer?

TAYLOR: At a personal level it was quite easy, but at a professional level it was very bureaucratic and tedious, I have to tell you, and unless there was really something in it for them, it was damned near impossible.

SHELDON J. KRYS
Administrative Counselor
Belgrade (1974-1976)

Sheldon J. Krys was born in New York and raised in Washington DC. He graduated from the University of Maryland and entered the Foreign Service in 1965. He has served in England, Yugoslavia, and Trinidad and Tobago.

Q: Did you get any feel from your Serbian teachers about Serbia and the Serbia mentality?

KRYS: Certainly when you got there, you were able to put it in better perspective, but it was quite clear you were dealing with loyalists. The regime had been extremely repressive under Marshall Tito who [made certain] that there was going to be [only] one line. It wasn't going to be Moscow's line, but it sure as heck wasn't going to be the West's either. In a way you learned about the mentality that existed after the Second World War, but also between the First and Second World War because that is part of the mentality. Some things just don't die, they just go on. We spoke Serbian very much like

people who lived in Belgrade but we had a '30s flavor because some [of our teachers] had come before the war and some just after the war.

Q: I don't know if you had the same teachers I had. I had Yankovitch and Papovitch.

KRYS: No, I had the next generation. Papovitch's tape was the tape we used. [His speech was a] rattle, it was military, just a mile a minute and it was very much a type [from] between the wars, kind of metallic. I had Father Milosevic for part of that and Mrs. Hanniher who was a new teacher who had been at the embassy in Belgrade so that was a little bit after the war. But we had one class with Papovitch.

Q: What was the situation in Yugoslavia as you saw it at that time?

KRYS: It was really on a little bit of an upsurge. There was a little more cooperation with the West, somewhat less concern with the East at that time. By Eastern European standards, clearly by Iron Curtain standards, you were in the lap of luxury with the availability of domestic goods. Nonetheless you saw enough people around and enough people were in the embassy itself working for us who'd suffered dramatically at the hands of this particular regime for perceived cooperation. We had a number of people who were sent off to lead mines for a while because either they worked for the American government or they were seen at one point to have been too close to the Germans. That generation was still there.

It would have been very hard not to have felt very comfortable. We felt very comfortable in Belgrade. We were close to the Foreign Service nationals. They still come to see us when they come to the United States. Lots has changed, lots of things had changed since the business, this massacre ongoing now. We didn't have a variety of vegetables, but we had vegetables. The tomatoes came from Bulgaria at the right time. The cucumbers... You went to the zelenvanuts at the right time and bought your 50 different kinds of peppers.

The embassy became very close-knit following a visit of President Ford and Kissinger. It hadn't been that close-knit before. We rebuilt the consular section. We did a number of things that brought the embassy closer together. We moved the consular section into the building adjoining the chancery rather than in the basement.

Q: Did you find that security problems - spying and this sort of thing - was much of a problem?

KRYS: It was a constant thing to be concerned with. I fired a Foreign Service national the first week on the job [who] was obviously a plant. As you well remember, unlike the rest of the Iron Curtain Soviet missions, you could hire directly. We also knew that those people that we hired were really under pressure to cooperate. This individual in our view was not only part of the UDBA, the secret police, but he was also harassing the employees on the job. My predecessor in the day or so that we had as an overlap said, "You can't fire anybody around here, you better make sure you're very careful about it."

I took a very different view right away because he harassed one of the employees to the point where he emptied her purse of money and [told her], "If you don't like it, lump it" in coarser terms than that. He was on a week's holiday the first week I was there and it was a problem left on my desk. I had his pass removed and I immediately went to the ambassador who said, "Of course, that is fine. It's not a problem." That was a good example to the Serbs.

We also took an attitude that it was up to us to guard our classified information. If people were under pressure, we understood that and they could say whatever they wanted to say so that they didn't find themselves [under] constant threat. I had a number of people who came to me and said "My child is going to be expelled from school because I am not cooperating." The attitude was "Tell them what you know because you shouldn't know anything that somehow endangers U.S. national security." That made life a lot easier. As you remember, the FSNs could not go above the second floor without an escort and we had [other] measures in place. [Against] electronic [penetration], we took countermeasures, and about six months a bug was discovered in one of the guest houses at one of the residences.

Q: You sort of assume that everything is bugged. In fact, we'd sometimes use the telephone to pass on messages. When Zagreb would call and say they're having a consular problem I'd say, "I'll ask the ambassador to talk to Marshall Tito about that."

KRYS: You really bring to mind a great story but I'll have to remember who was [involved]. I think it was Don Tice who was head of the political section. Marshall Tito hadn't been seen for a while and there were intelligence estimates galore about his imminent demise. He of course survived, I left and he went on. But he hadn't been seen for a long time and I think Don Tice had received a telephone call and it may have been from Dusko Dodor who has gotten some [criticism], bad press, unwarranted in my view.

Q: He was a reporter for...

KRYS: At that point he was with the Washington Post. Dusko [phoned], and Tice [about Tito]. Don said, "Yes, there is some concern that Tito hadn't been seen for a while." Don left the office 15 minutes later to go to a reception. At the head of the receiving line was someone from the Foreign Office who said, "Oh, Don, how very nice to see you. I saw President Tito just 15 minutes ago and he looks wonderful." It was a direct response to the intercepted phone call. Those were the games that were played on all sides.

Q: Speaking about security, one of the more difficult problems dealing with locals was people coming to the embassy to seek asylum because it was fairly open, whereas most of the rest of the Iron Curtain was not, and it was run by locals. Our local employee Foreign Service nationals would be the first point of contact. Did this present a problem or not?

KRYS: It's funny that you mention that. The first point of contact going into the building was the Marine guard and in the consular section it was a Marine guard by the time that I left. We had made two posts because of the [section] now [separated]. It was my very last day, and we were packing out, when a Russian tried to defect. There may have been others, but I wasn't aware of them, and I didn't know about them because it wasn't in the cards for me to know. There were others who took care of it. There wasn't a mad stream of people who had something to give to the United States. There were easier ways of getting out of Yugoslavia, as you know.

Q: When you get in a clash which became well known within the Foreign Service - there are a few of these, but this one really stuck out - how did you work it? As administrative officer, your task is really to bring everything together and to make it work. How did you handle it? I'm trying to get a feel for how one deals with this sort of situation.

KRYS: Essentially you are dealing with your peers both in terms of age and experience. So [you become] a place for them to come, if you will open the door and if people feel that there is trust there. There was trust. Three or four people from the embassy came and [told me] what [they] wanted to do; it really meant getting out of the post. [I] talked more about mission, and more about getting the job done there and trying to create buffers between the individual and the front office. That is the job of the DCM, but if there isn't a DCM then either someone [else] does it or it doesn't happen. Some careers can get hurt that way.

There was one individual who felt very strongly and saw this as a cause that he wanted to carry forward. It was buffered somewhat with a small compromise, I'm sure there is always compromise. It was a very difficult time at post. I'd have to think back to that moment for the months that it went on as to how we really handled it. His friends in the section - he was in the political section and his friends in the economic section - tried to find a way to make the mission go forward. I think that is one of the things that is not always understood. When you are overseas in an embassy, you are part of a whole. That whole doesn't encompass everything in the world; it is that embassy at that time which is in the forefront. You're there for a purpose and you try to make it work even under adverse internal circumstances.

EDWARD C. McBRIDE
USIS Officer
Belgrade (1974-1978)

Edward McBride was born and raised in Savannah Georgia. He attended university at Belmont Abbey, the University of Georgia, and Georgetown. He served in France with the US Army and lived in Paris for a time

afterwards. Between 1974 and 1975 he worked for the USIA in the American embassy at Belgrade.

Q: Of course you learned that the center of the universe was Shabac.

MCBRIDE: Shabac, exactly. You were a part of that. But it was a wonderful experience and a way to for me. I had long thought that my career interests were going to be served by spending time in eastern Europe. This was the first opportunity to do that, and so I was really quite excited and buoyed by the experience of going to that part of the world. I couldn't have had a better introduction than the Serbo-Croatian staff at FSI.

Q: I must say that I was with the class of Larry Eagleburger and David Anderson, and we had Popovich. At some point we rebelled because they wouldn't mix. We were told Jankovich would give a little different perspective. But looking back on it, Popovich was a hard line Serb and gave you a feeling for Serbia that holds up today in the year 2001.

MCBRIDE: It certainly does. I think in fact that Jankovich and perhaps the rest of the family were a wonderful sort of, I won't say balance because there was not really a lot of balance there, but the extreme position represented by Popovich was somewhat mellowed by Yankovich and his very charming and very soft spoken wife. But there was a Popovic sister who was very rabid as well, but there were two daughters who were very enlightened in their views in the sense that they were very realistic. They were obviously very pro Serb, but they were also able to see that there were some imperfections in the Serbian races, perhaps something that escaped the attention of Popovich.

Q: Anyway, so where did you go, Belgrade?

MCBRIDE: I went to Belgrade, yes.

Q: And you were there from when to when?

MCBRIDE: I was in Belgrade for four years and a bit. I was there from '74 to '78, and so I saw a lot of the changes that were quite dramatic. Unfortunately not the demise of Tito, because that occurred after we left. But it was a wonderful time to be there because we were still in a way enchanted by the independent position that the Yugoslav government took with respect to the Soviet Union, and their worker self management concept which seemed to be all the rage and sort of seduced everybody who thought that this was a different path. Indeed it was to some extent, but it was a very exciting time to be there. I was the cultural attaché at the embassy again. We had a lot of activities and a lot of programs. Many of them were overfunded if I can say that. I think mainly because we were trying to lavish attention and court the Belgrade government. These programs were quite effective and helpful in doing that. So it was a great time to be in Yugoslavia, and with country wide responsibilities, I traveled from one end of the country to the other. In those days we had several American cultural centers in Yugoslavia. In addition to Belgrade, we had one in Novi Sad, Zagreb, Ljubljana, Sarajevo and Pristina. We also had one in Skopje. But that was quite an elaborate presence for those days.

Q: Let's talk about what you did and what was sort of the work.

MCBRIDE: Yes, the mainstay of the program in Yugoslavia from the cultural perspective was supporting the centers where we did active American programs. It involved speakers; it involved musical, cultural events, films. Each of the centers had a very good library. We promoted American studies through uses of the center. We had a very active, in fact in those days, the largest Fulbright program in eastern Europe. We also had the only binational commission in Eastern Europe, which was quite a feather in the cap of the Yugoslavs, again reflecting its independence. But we did manage with the Fulbright program to have the financial participation of the Yugoslav government. Sometimes it was difficult, but by and large, they were supportive to the extent of, I don't remember the figures exactly, but they put a couple of hundred thousand dollars a year into a program that was pushing a million dollars in those days. And because we had a binational commission, in addition to the government representatives to the ministry of education, we had other voices represented. From the arts community, I remember we had some very good people. We had a couple of writers. It was in fact more difficult to find Americans to serve on the committee who were not official Americans. But we did manage, and we had a pretty good selection. So the Fulbright program was important. The other program that warrants a little comment here was the so-called cultural presentations program that the State Department had been running for quite some time, to bring American visual and performing arts events to posts around the world. I think we were perhaps the last highly visible vestige of that program which, although it didn't go under, but it certainly went into a decline after that. But the performing arts in particular were very well represented in programs in Yugoslavia. That was because we had two big festivals there that had traditionally had important American representation. One was the Dubrovnik Summer festival which was a great cultural event on the Adriatic and brought performers from many countries. We had very heavy representation, primarily dance and music. We had the New York City Ballet was there. The Paul Taylor Dance Company was there. The Los Angeles Philharmonic was there. Merce Cunningham was there. I mean there were very important American cultural events in all of Yugoslavia, but particularly in Dubrovnik. We also supported a theater festival in Belgrade called the Belgrade International Theater Festival. We brought many prominent theater companies. The Actor's Theater of Louisville was there. The Yale Rep was there. We did quite a bit in that field. It was interesting because again the Yugoslav government or the concert agencies, which were quasi governmental, were financial participants as well in most of these ventures, so we were able to do quite a bit. But with the two events that I have mentioned, and a strong and rather continuous flow of solo artists who came either to perform in concert, a pianist and violinist what have you, or as soloists with some of the local orchestras. The Zagreb Philharmonic was a very good orchestra, as was the Slovenian Philharmonic. Both at least once or twice a year in their seasons would have an American either as a soloist or a conductor or something like that. So it was quite an active time. That programmatically was what the cultural section was heavily involved with. Again as I say, because these programs were countrywide, I was on the road a lot and traveled all over Yugoslavia. I found it a very stimulating job. We met a lot of

Yugoslavs and worked with different people in the arts, in theater, in music, and particularly in education.

Q: How did you find the artistic community, both theater and music, particularly theater and writing because as far as their relationship to the government? You know I am thinking, here is a communist society.

MCBRIDE: Sure. It had its good days and its bad days. A lot of it really depended on the current state of international relations. If there was a problem going in the bilateral relationship, we would usually get a very frosty reception, getting family member nominations for candidates for Fulbright programs or something. On the other hand, the artists asserted, and usually got away with, a fair degree of independence. But if they could, they ducked most of the hot political issues. But occasionally there would be times where we would find ourselves in an embarrassing situation because of one event or another. But more often than not, the obstacles came from very practical things. It was just like negotiating any other deal. I remember when we were negotiating to bring the Los Angeles Philharmonic to Yugoslavia, which we ultimately did, and they played in three cities and had a wonderful success. But the Yugoslav concert manager, who was involved in this, was negotiating on a lot of other deals which he simply didn't have the financial backing to pull off. We would find ourselves at the end pulling rabbits out of the hat, putting more money in projects to salvage what we knew was worth doing. But in a way it was gentle blackmail looking back on it, because I am sure the guy knew very well that he was in no position to deliver what he had agreed to provide. One example: the orchestra was coming to us from Rome, and he had agreed to provide an airplane to transport the orchestra over from Rome to Zagreb where they were to perform first. That was fine, but he produced an airplane which was too small to get the entire 120 odd member orchestra and their instruments and luggage on board. So in the end we had to go back and put extra money into chartering a larger plane. So little incidents like that made life interesting, but it also was an example of the resources that the Yugoslav government had available. But by and large, they met their commitments. You asked about writers. For example, there was a big festival every year in this lovely little place in Macedonia called Ohrid. Lake Ohrid is on the border between Albania and Yugoslavia. They sponsored a poetry festival there. We brought two or three very distinguished poets over in the time that I was there. One of them, Mark Strand, I remember particularly, had a huge success. The Yugoslavs were always very careful to have stars from the east as well as the west, so there was a very heavy sprinkling of Czechs, of Russian poets and writers to match the French, the Americans and the other Yugoslav literary community who participated in this event.

Q: How about the libraries? It can get tricky in libraries because you will find books that are not on the A list or something in a communist regime getting into the libraries. Did you have to watch that?

MCBRIDE: Good point, because I am going to jump ahead a bit. That issue was a major problem in my next assignment which was Bucharest. But in Belgrade it was practically a non issue, because the Yugoslavs were able to travel so much. The government, as you

remember in those days, guaranteed anybody who applied for a passport very fast service. Yugoslavs were big travelers, so if there was a book that the regime was not interested in, they could go to Italy and buy it, or they could get a friend from London or Paris or America to send it to them. So the book issue was not a very big deal in Yugoslavia. We didn't have any problems. Some people were interested in local books and asked if we had the latest Djilas book. Well, of course we didn't. That was not a sensible thing for us to do. Djilas, although he had a great following in America, was Yugoslav and our whole stock in trade was presenting American writers and American works, and therefore we didn't stock foreign authors. Although much of his stuff, as you know was published first in English before it was published anywhere else.

Q: I was there in the '60s. I remember a local employee saying, "You want to go down to the Jugoslovinska Media," which is the big bookstore, publisher, "And go under agriculture and look at some of the books there." There was a whole big stack of Animal Farm by George Orwell. A curious place to put it. Well it was sullied very nicely.

MCBRIDE: That is a great line. I will have to remember that. But we did use publishers occasionally as partners in projects, but they were more often than not generated by the publisher. If they wanted to bring out a book that they knew was not going to be a particular best seller, but they thought it was important to have in translation, they would occasionally come to us. Infrequently, I can not remember a specific title, but we did help occasionally to subsidize a few titles that they would then bring out in a Serbo-Croatian version.

Q: How about movies? I mean most of it is obviously commercial and I mean the Hollywood bit. Did you find that Hollywood was helping, hindering or how did you feel about this?

MCBRIDE: Well again because Yugoslavia was a more open society than most in Eastern European or the Balkans in those days, there was no shortage of American films playing in Belgrade. The only problem was that they couldn't pay top dollar, so you didn't get immediate first run films, but there were a lot of American movies shown with subtitles or dubbed. But there was little activity by the embassy mainly because it was an expensive game to get in to. We did a very few sort of invitational showings that we would get mainly with the help of the defense attaché, because they somehow used to get first run films for the staff use. We got some special permission through Jack Valenti to have an exceptional screening sponsored by the ambassador by invitation. We would occasionally show hot new movies. But by and large the film part of our business was very small because it seemed to take care of itself. Now images of America derived from films is a problem in a lot of places, and Yugoslavia was no exception thus you would see one aspect of American culture that was there because it was commercially viable to make films about bad situations that we wouldn't necessarily want to focus on. It was a strictly a commercial venture, and the producers in Hollywood were not fools. They obviously did jobs to make money, and they did. Some of those images were not the ones we were most happy to project, but on the other hand, the freedom of expression

was worth a little something in that regard, too, so we didn't get too upset about the film situation. Again as I say, we didn't get too involved either.

Q: Did you find that you had a problem sort of staffing and getting enough say down in Macedonia? I can remember talking to the exchange professors, and one of them was in Ljubljana and having a wonderful time, and the one down in Skopje was saying, "You know I am an expert on Melville, my first class of students asked me if Queen Elizabeth was an American, and something about Marilyn Monroe." I mean, he found it really a very disappointing place.

MCBRIDE: I found the same thing. I suppose in a way the less prosperous republics were also the ones that had the most infrequent contact with the west. That was certainly true in Macedonia which also harbored other ambitions we are reading about in the papers now. Those folks seemed a little bit more hard line I guess. They were tougher. Negotiations with the University of Skopje were always difficult. The rector there seemed to be more blatantly a political appointee who had one view of the world that didn't often match with ours, His view of running the university was not comparable with the enlightened views of the rector in Belgrade or in Zagreb perhaps. But I found dealing with those two republics, with Pristina and with Skopje the hardest sell. But on the other hand, when you did get people in or events scheduled there, it was very rewarding to see the turnout because there was a huge curiosity about things American. It was still the envy of most Yugoslavs in those days to visit the United States or to follow the footsteps of a cousin or somebody who had emigrated to Pittsburgh or to Cleveland or where ever. But the story that I can tell you, I apologize in advance because it has one terribly vulgar word in it, but it was very funny. I went down to Skopje with an exhibition or with a curator of an exhibition that was going to come down ultimately to Macedonia. We went around to look at the proposed exhibition site. The guy thought it was fine, and we ultimately went back with the exhibition which was about the American west. The woman who was the curator was a very tough lady, and a hard line communist. Again it was a political job. She was only peripherally interested in art, but it had been her lot in life to become the director of this Skopje museum. It was in an old converted Turkish bath, a han. It was a beautiful building architecturally, and it had been converted quite tastefully in to a museum. We were walking along, and the woman was being a little aggressive and nasty. The pictures were hung. There were wonderful scenes, you know, Bierstadts, Buffalo Bills, Remington sculptures. It was quite a good exhibition from the Buffalo Bill Museum in Wyoming. But at any rate we were walking along, and there were none of the normal sort of things you would expect in an American museum. There was no climate control; there was no, the security was very vague and lax. There were windows open and the air and whatever else wanted to come in did so. This woman was really being nasty as we were walking along. "I guess you are concerned about all the things like the lack of security and the poor climate control and everything." This wonderful curator goes up to one of the paintings and he takes his finger and he flips a little thing off of it. He said, "I am not really too worried about that. What I am really worried about is the bird shit on the paintings." The birds would fly into this room. I mean he was very cool about it, but the message was communicated, and suddenly those

windows were closed. We no longer had that particular problem. It was a very nice way to relieve the tension as well. So we got along famously with the woman after that.

Q: During this time, I mean this was not your job, but obviously you were talking to the intellectual community. In France the intellectuals were very important and Britain the chattering class had its influence, too. Did you get any feel from sort of the intellectuals and artists in Yugoslav society in its government and all?

MCBRIDE: I don't think they were nearly as important in the mix as the two examples you have cited. I do think they had a fair amount of influence. I think the government was mindful of their presence. They could take academic freedom only so far. I mean they were not going to get away with blatant criticism of the system and they were going to be in great trouble if they went too far. But too far was a very murky line. Let me give you one example of that, that I felt was kind of interesting. I mentioned that we worked with this organization called the Belgrade International Theater Festival. They sponsored an annual festival, and one year they came to us to ask our help in bringing a new production that had been all the rage in the States and very controversial because it was one of the first times there was full frontal nudity on the stage. This was "Hair." If you remember about it, it was quite a, I mean it was quite a breakthrough. The woman who ran this festival, who was very well connected politically asked our help. We declined. We didn't have any money. I think it was convenient that we didn't have any money, because we weren't too keen on the controversy. But be that as it may, undeterred, this very shrewd woman managed to buy the performance rights for Yugoslavia, and worked very closely with the producers in New York, and ultimately brought the production to Belgrade. It was maybe a year after it premiered in New York so it was still a hot ticket. It was very controversial, and it was the kind of thing in the kind of society that Yugoslavia was in those days. Prudishness was a pretty important factor there. The fact that this woman could not only decide that she wanted to do it, but pull it off without worrying about the consequences that the government might sort of close her theater or slam her or do something. She did it, and it was fine.

Q: We are now talking the year 2000, where Yugoslavia exists no more and is broken up into ethnic groups and we have had I think four wars. We are almost starting the fifth now over the ethnic problem. Did the ethnic divisions play any role in what you were doing?

MCBRIDE: A lot, because there was always the question of balancing interests in the federal government. The Yugoslav government had to reconcile huge differences between the competing republics. So whether it was trying to decide what you were going to do in Sarajevo to keep the Bosnians happy or how you were going to appear not to be overwhelmingly in favor of the more advanced republics, the Croats or the Slovenians, you were always aware of that tension. In several conversations we had with the Yugoslav authorities, they would never admit it publicly, but would discuss it privately. They had very strict instructions in terms of funding, because they were funding partners in many U.S. projects, especially the Fulbright program. That brought with it certain strings. They had to have a certain say in managing projects. Each of the

republics had a strong say in the way in things worked. There was always this tension between the republics, particularly those like Bosnia where there was a strong Muslim influence. Those views were often at odds with the more western sophisticated advanced views of a Slovenia, say. So those issues were constantly there. And seeing what has happened now, I think it is tragic what has happened to Yugoslavia. I am very sorry that Yugoslavia has disappeared, but it was all too predictable in many ways. Tito held it together while he was there, but this sort of concept of rotating presidency was bound to give way sooner or later. So all the strife and ethnic conflicts that now are part of contemporary Balkan history were never far from the surface, certainly in the days that I was there. I expect the same with you, maybe more so even; I don't know. It was a great issue all the time, and it was one that you had to be very careful to keep both in focus and in balance because you could go down a very slippery slope very quickly, almost before realizing you were on one.

Q: Well when I was there again, mid-'60s, Tito was very much in power, and I think we were, we somehow thought he was going to create a new generation of Yugoslavs. It is obviously wishful thinking. You know, every time you turn around you are getting hit by this other, by the nationality thing, but I mean Tito was standing up against the Soviet Union. We wished them well. And also I, it was one of these things. My God we know these people. They may have their disputes, but they are not going to go out and kill each other. Which is of course exactly what they did do. I think we felt...

MCBRIDE: I think we certainly felt the same. We were there at a time when the relationship was on a big upswing and things were generally quite positive. You felt that you could do almost anything. To this day I count many Yugoslav friends, not only Serbs but others as well. It was quite difficult in the last few years to talk to them, even the history professor that I alluded to earlier, who was the mainstay of American studies in Yugoslavia, Dragutin Jivoinovich. I saw him a time or two here with some Serbian friends whom we kept up with here. We found after the last encounter that it was very difficult because the whole issue of Serbian nationalism absolutely boiled over. A man who we thought was enlightened and sort of sophisticated, had traveled a great deal, had studied abroad, and had been exposed to many different kinds of cultures and ideas was, in the last analysis, a very rabidly nationalistic Serb. It is hard to imagine now how breathtaking our naivete was in a way. But it doesn't help in any way. It is still a very tragic situation. I am sure that you have followed it, too, but I noticed something quite recently about the Serbian situation that fascinated me. Watching the Lehrer report on television the other night after the arrest of Milosevic, one of the panelists was Dusko Doder who was a former journalist for the Washington Post. As you know he has written a couple of very interesting books about Yugoslavia, and his comment I think, was really insightful. It was not a throwaway, but it was in the middle of a lot of other stuff, and you really had to fish to get it out. What he said in essence was that the Serbs have historically and even up to now confronted their past with great difficulty. And if they don't have some opportunity now after the arrest of Milosevic, then they really need to have this catharsis, to get it all out and come to some terms with their past, and to admit that they were really pretty rotten bastards a lot of the time. If you don't get this out, the

healing is going to be awfully difficult. Plotting a sensible course for the future is going to be equally difficult. I am not sure that is very high on the radar screen in Belgrade.

Q: You said you had three ambassadors while you were there.

MCBRIDE: Yes, I went to Belgrade in the days of Malcolm Toon who I overlapped with for about a year or so I guess. I don't know exactly, but he was very much a kind of Eastern European old hand. He had been both there and in the Soviet Union and was considered to be quite a seasoned and experienced diplomat. We were there together as I said, for about a year.

Q: What was your impression?

MCBRIDE: I think he was a little authoritarian actually. I thought he was very smart, and I thought he was one of the people that really understood Yugoslavia almost through the prism of the Soviet Union. In many ways that was shrewd, smart, and helpful. In other ways it was a great liability, because I think the Yugoslavs resented that comparison. In some ways they were quite right to do so. I remember one famous story that I don't get the details quite right, but Tito came on a state visit to the U.S., and the ambassador accompanied him over. I think he got into deep trouble with the entourage particularly with Tito. The problem was the Russian reference or connection or something. Maybe he was speaking Russian; I don't remember what, but I think it was not a very happy beginning. The state visit was a huge success. He then went on to be ambassador to Israel after he left Belgrade. He was succeeded by Larry Eagleburger who was an incredible man and a person for whom I have enormous respect. He ran the embassy very well, and I think he was certainly of the three, the most successful ambassador. He was ultimately succeeded by a man named Larry Silberman, who is still a force in Washington life.

Q: It seems to my mind that the Yugoslavs, at least the ones we saw, were particularly responsive to art, to literature, and to music. Although they could be essentially considered a backwater, these are people out searching and looking, engaged. A lot were.

MCBRIDE: Yes, I think they were. You have to temper that a little bit to say we are talking about a very thin stratum of society here. We are talking about basically urban educated, intelligent, middle class if you can use that word to describe anybody in a classless society. But people who were educated and enlightened. They were a very thin layer of all of this, and when you go out to the Sabac or the provinces, you find a very different person there. You don't want to use the word peasant because that's not a good way to describe them these days, but there were a lot of people who fell squarely into that category.

Q: They were peasants. Folks who would come into town and looking at the big buildings.

MCBRIDE: Yes. They would almost get killed by traffic because they had never seen so many automobiles before. So that is truly the bedrock of society, but on the other hand the people we were dealing with, we made no bones about it, we were out to get the people, I mean to influence people who were in a position of influence and to reach out to those people was our mission. I think we succeeded by and large pretty well with that. But that was not a very large chunk of the population. So I think the Yugoslavs, if you describe Yugoslavia as the country it was, was a very conservative, somewhat backward society. The people that we were dealing with represented a small, but extraordinarily significant minority.

TERRENCE CATHERMAN
Country Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Belgrade (1974-1980)

Terrence Catherman was born and raised in Michigan. He attended the University of Michigan and entered the State Department in 1979 over job offers from the CIA. Mr. Catherman was interviewed in 1991 by G. Lewis Schmidt.

Q: Did you notice any intensity in the ethnic differences within the country which has now flared into unfortunately civil war proportions?

CATHERMAN: They were always there. I didn't notice that it was intensified with the single exception of the Kosovo. The Albanians in the Kosovo area were becoming a bigger problem and there were disturbances down there toward the end of my tour. In 1979 there were some killings down there. The Yugoslav army moved in. Things were degrading there, no doubt about it. As far as Croatia and Slovenia were concerned the relations were not good but I did not feel they were degrading while I was there.

Q: You didn't have the intense blow-ups that are now taking place?

CATHERMAN: No, because Tito was still alive. You know the old story about Yugoslavia being a country of five nationalities, four languages, three religions, two alphabets, and one Yugoslav. And that was Tito.

Q: How was the Catholic Church treated in Yugoslavia? Was it pretty free to operate?

CATHERMAN: Croatia was Roman Catholic.

Q: Yeah, I know they were Roman Catholic, but there was a lot of Muslim influence in the country, too.

CATHERMAN: The Muslim influence was essentially in the Kosovo area and in Bosnia--its capital is Sarajevo. Yeah, you had Muslims down there. Actually Muslims were able to practice their religion throughout the country. The Roman Catholic Church was most active in the north--Slovenia and Croatia. It was tolerated in Serbia, but the Serbian Orthodox Church was essentially the church of choice among the Christians in Serbia. And that applied also to Montenegro and Macedonia.

Q: It is not necessarily connected with your professional experience, but what do you guess is going to happen now? Is the country going to fly apart?

CATHERMAN: I think it will, yeah. The Serbs will try to pull the Slovenians back and will probably succeed applying a lot of force. The Yugoslav army is officered essentially by Serbs and there is going to be some violence. I'm not clairvoyant, I don't know how this will spin out. The Slovenians obviously want to become part of Western Europe. They want to get away from the albatross around their neck, the rest of Yugoslavia, since they contribute their lion share of the economic sustenance for Yugoslavia as such. So I think it is going to be very difficult.

Q: The Croatians, of course, are always at swords point with the Serbs.

CATHERMAN: Right.

Q: Your are right, I am afraid that country is going to fly apart.

CATHERMAN: Yeah. We have one major difference now and that is the cold war is over and the Soviet threat is not as powerful as it used to be. So if it does fly apart, from our point of view, it probably would not mean the end of the world. It would have been extremely dangerous for us, the Americans, back in the "60s and "70s when I was there and the Soviets were still considered the enemy.

Q: One final question before we leave Yugoslavia. At the time that I was at the War College we visited Yugoslavia as well as the Soviet Union. At that time I found that the army was probably the most vocal in their condemnation of, and contempt for the Soviet government. Was that universally true, did you find any of that when you were there? Much more so than the civilian population who tended to keep their feelings more quiet in that respect.

CATHERMAN: That is a tough question. The Yugoslavs, including the army, were very careful while I was there not to irritate the Soviets overly. As long as the Soviets in Yugoslavia behaved, the Yugoslavs would rather have tolerated them and not create or allow tension to develop. I didn't have all that much experience with the army, but I did meet a lot of officers. Certainly from the civilian component the attempt was not to play up the tensions between the Soviets and the Yugoslavs. The tensions were certainly there, but we tended to hear of them from intelligence sources rather than from on-the-street conversations. Of course, we knew what the Soviets were trying to do. They were

certainly, I would say, brutal in their treatment of the Yugoslavs. They were doing what they could to subvert the economy and the society and I think in some respects they were somewhat successful.

Q: I suppose the reason why the military were as outspoken as they were was because we were the War College group and they didn't necessarily distinguish between those of us who were officers in the military and those of us who were civilians. They thought they were dealing with essentially an American military oriented group, and I suppose that was the reason they were more vocal.

CATHERMAN: You were there in an earlier and much tougher time, during the cold war.

Q: This was in 1960 when I was there.

CATHERMAN: Right, exactly. That was a tough period. It was a period when the Yugoslavs had not firmly established that they had pulled away from the Soviet Union. They were still working on it. By the mid '70s, when I went there, that was pretty well established. Not that the Soviets were not trying to subvert the Yugoslavs, but they did not pose the massive threat that they had posed when you were there in 1960.

LAURENCE H. SILBERMAN
Ambassador
Yugoslavia (1975-1977)

Laurance H. Silberman was born and raised in Pennsylvania and southern New Jersey. He attended university at Dartmouth and the Harvard Law School. In 1975 he was appointed ambassador to Yugoslavia. Ambassador Silberman was interviewed in 1998 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: Before going out to Yugoslavia, there's a usual procedure of sort of reading up on the place and all. How did you see our relations with Yugoslavia at that time? What were you getting both from the State Department but also, you might say, your own internal agenda?

SILBERMAN: Let me stop for a moment. You know, I've written at least two articles in foreign policy journals concerning my experience in Yugoslavia. Are you familiar with those?

Q: Yes.

SILBERMAN: One in Foreign Affairs, which is not so much on Yugoslavia but it was a good title. It was "Towards Presidential Control of the State Department," which was

quite controversial. And the other one, in Foreign Policy Magazine, which was entitled "Europe's Fiddler on the Roof," referring to Yugoslavia. The "take" on Yugoslavia that came from the European Bureau, which I assimilated during my period of orientation, was of course that Yugoslavia was a major success in American foreign policy because it had broken with the Soviet Union, at least to a certain extent-

Q: *You're talking about Tito.*

SILBERMAN: Yes, Tito had broken with the Soviet Union in 1948, and our objective should as much as possible be to sustain the independence, territorial integrity, and sovereignty of Yugoslavia. That was almost a mantra, those three terms. It was also true that within the State Department and the CIA and the NSC, there was a keen awareness that if World War III was to break out, if there was to be a conflict between the Warsaw Pact, the Soviet Union, and the Western powers, it could easily come about because of a conflict in Yugoslavia, particularly in the event that Tito should die and there should be some kind of struggle for power in which the Soviets would seek to intervene. There was a general perception that the Soviets still licked their wounds about 1948 and would love to intervene in Yugoslavia, putting paid to the independence movement. So one of the reasons that I felt that I was interested in going there as ambassador was that I could see the stakes could be very great indeed, and it was fascinating in geostrategic terms, but it was also fascinating in ideological terms, because I wished to try to understand as much as possible about the Yugoslav self-management, "Third Way," whatever you would like to call it, their experiment with a modified Communism. Of course, the Eurocommunism movement was very big at that time, too, so that made Yugoslavia important for those reasons. Generally, however, when I went off to Yugoslavia, I had spent a good deal of time talking with people in the European Bureau, the CIA, and NSC concerning their views on Yugoslavia, and I think I described the State Department's approach to Yugoslavia.

Q: *What you're saying - I always, when I served in Yugoslavia earlier, the feeling was very much that Berlin was the number one place where all hell could break loose, and Yugoslavia, with the death of Tito and the possible dismemberment of Yugoslavia, was number two as far as how World War III might start.*

SILBERMAN: That's correct. And by the time I went out, Berlin was no longer perceived as the place where it would start, because by that time a *modus operandi* had developed there, but Yugoslavia was always a potential flashpoint because essentially it could be thought that neither the West nor the Soviet Union would be comfortable or accept a Yugoslavia moving precisely in one direction or the other.

Q: *Did you have any problems getting confirmation?*

SILBERMAN: No, not at all.

Q: *Did you have a chance to get the feeling of Henry Kissinger at that time towards sort of East-West relations, particularly Yugoslavia?*

SILBERMAN: Yes, some exposure before I went out, more through cable traffic and other meetings with Kissinger. But that goes into a broad range of issues. As you probably realize, after I came to Belgrade I gradually came to have a modified or somewhat different view than the standard European Bureau of the State Department view on Yugoslavia. And Kissinger, I think, was rather bemused at the differences and some of the sparks that flew between me on the one hand and Art Hartman and others in the European Bureau concerning my views on Yugoslavia. I came to have a different view. I thought the view of the European Bureau was as much as possible to accommodate and not pay much attention to the aggravations that Tito caused in international affairs, because at all costs we should support his independence. My own view, and this was during the dénouement of the Vietnam War. My own view, after I went to Yugoslavia, was that Tito was beginning to lose a good deal of respect for the United States as a major power and thought the tide was running against us. He had been very tough in his own army to repress or get rid of any officers who he thought were sympathetic to the West. And I took him to be more concerned about Western influences than Soviet, in part not because he was afraid of the West in terms of Western power - he didn't like Western ideals, which he was afraid of - but he was not afraid of Western power, but he was increasingly afraid of Soviet power. Now that led me to believe that our policy was somewhat incorrectly formulated, in that we should be much tougher with Tito and much more unyielding and much more aggressive, because I thought he was a man who reacted to power above all else and his perception of strength. And I thought that the more accommodating we were to Tito the more he was inclined to move towards the Soviet Union. So we had a fundamental difference of views.

Q: You mean American ambassadors who were-

SILBERMAN: That's right, American ambassadors to Europe met in London in the winter of 1975-76, where Sonnenfeldt first set forth his views concerning our policy towards Eastern Europe, which, in his view, could be described as one of seeking stability and perhaps accommodation. I thought that was fundamentally wrong. I thought the strategic aim, the most important strategic aim of American foreign policy, was the disestablishment of the Soviet Union through prudent means. And I said that specifically at a convention after I left the government in a debate with, amongst others, Bob Strauss, Phil Habib. As I recall, it was in Hawaii, and I think President Carter was there, but I can't be certain about that and I can't quite figure what the time was. I remember at the time making that argument and Phil Habib being appalled that anyone would state American policy in those terms, but I had that view increasingly as ambassador to Yugoslavia. I was opposed to the psychological and ideological aspect of detente. Now it's a question of degree, of course, but I wished to lean forward and to be more aggressive in challenging the Soviet ideologically in every way that was prudent. And therefore I sent a cable flatly disagreeing with the Sonnenfeldt Doctrine, a cable which, incidentally, arrived in the State Department, as I found out later, with some trepidation because the Sonnenfeldt Doctrine - and I did not know this as ambassador to

Yugoslavia - had leaked and become quite a bone of contention between Reagan challenging Ford for the Presidential nomination. So obviously, news of an American ambassador in disagreement with the Sonnenfeldt Doctrine would not have been welcome if it leaked. But my cable did not leak. I understand Larry Eagleburger as under secretary for management went through desperate efforts to avoid it leaking.

Q: Going back more to the specifics, you arrived in Yugoslavia. What was your impression... Let's talk about the embassy first and how it operated and how you saw it, and then we'll talk about relations with the Yugoslav Government.

SILBERMAN: At some point I must be perfectly candid with you. Either in my orientation process - I think it probably started in the orientation process - I began to get the sense that my nomination as ambassador to Yugoslavia was not exactly a welcome event for the professional Foreign Service, and I was rather shocked and surprised and thought, Well, you know, I'm pretty well-informed about Yugoslavia, and indeed on international affairs in general, more so than one would expect of the typical non-Foreign Service appointee; but I did not realize that for the Foreign Service officer, Eastern Europe was thought of as a preserve of the Foreign Service and that my nomination would be seen, as the first since Gronouski as ambassador to Poland under Kennedy, as a break in this tradition and quite offensive to the Foreign Service. Of course, I was blissfully ignorant of all of that. If I had gone to Germany, I would not have been so regarded.

Q: No-

SILBERMAN: It was more acceptable that political appointees went to Germany. I knew nothing of this.

Q: Well, Yugoslavia was really even more than anywhere else considered sort of a chasse gardée, as the French would say it, and not only that, but it was pretty much a preserve of those who have served in Yugoslavia.

SILBERMAN: Precisely.

Q: Or had very close... I mean, there was a real Yugoslav mafia.

SILBERMAN: No, exactly correct, exactly correct. I knew nothing about this. I knew nothing about the... I did not ask to be appointed ambassador to Yugoslavia. It was offered to me by Kissinger and Scowcroft, both of whom had... Scowcroft had served in Yugoslavia. Eagleburger was enthusiastically in favor of it, and he had served there. It never even occurred to me that the Foreign Service would resist it, nor did it occur to me, frankly, that the career civil service - like the Foreign Service - would have anything to say about political appointees. You know, after all, I had been the chief operating officer, as under secretary of Labor and as deputy attorney general - two major departments of government. I'd never had any difficulty dealing with the career service, even though the Labor Department was largely composed of people whose politics were contrary to the

Republicans; and that was true - not by any means as much - at Justice, but certainly true of many. I never had any difficulty dealing with career lawyers in the Justice Department or the FBI. I never had any difficulty dealing with careerists in the Labor Department, even though my views were often different. I never detected the kind of resistance to political control in either of those departments that I saw in the State Department. And that's what shocked me in the State Department, when it became apparent that the conduct of foreign affairs was not thought by most career officers to be the preserve of the political appointees. In that respect the State Department was absolutely different from any other department of government. And it took me a while to understand it, and of course I wrote about it in my article in Foreign Affairs, "Towards Presidential Control of the State Department," and understood it from a somewhat more sympathetic viewpoint as I thought about it in terms of incentives, economic incentives, and management and so forth, and the reason why this tradition developed. But I was an innocent when I arrived in the European Bureau. My wife began to detect that there was a certain resistance to our appointment, but I was not aware of it until I arrived in Belgrade.

Q: Well, I think, too, that as a retired Foreign Service officer but not really in the policy branch, I think Yugoslavia was particularly sensitive one to... You know, I mean, most of the other places, if a political appointee comes in, all they want to know is, is this a real buddy of the President who can pick up the phone and have clout or is this just a castoff of some senator who wants to take care of some friend who really has nothing? I mean, that's the major consideration, because they're very well trained in this. But when you get to Eastern Europe, I think you're moving into a different world.

SILBERMAN: No, that's true. Now even for anybody who wished to pay attention, it was perfectly obvious that I was rather close to President Ford as well as Kissinger. Kissinger had begged me to go into the White House to run intelligence, which I refused to do because he at that point distrusted Colby. I had been deeply involved in intelligence matters as deputy attorney general, so I was not a total neophyte about matters that related to foreign policy, nor was I without my political connections both in the White House and with Kissinger. So I was quite amazed. I couldn't figure out why, but as you well understand, the Foreign Service *Gestalt* was resistance to... And I thought the fact that I was not a wealthy contributor but was someone who had served in various senior government positions based presumably on whatever qualifications I had brought by myself would be perceived by the Foreign Service as a good thing. But I think, rather, that it was rather a bad thing, the fact that I did know something about foreign affairs, that I had had senior positions in the Executive Branch, and that I was well connected made me even less acceptable for Yugoslavia. That's what astonished me.

SILBERMAN: When I arrived in Belgrade, the wives of the Foreign Service officers, particularly led by the DCM's wife, were palpably nasty to my wife. I remember them telling her that there were only certain times that she could play tennis on our tennis court. She had, of course, been part of my life through the Nixon administration and had

actually served on a presidential commission for the education of disadvantaged children and had actually worked as a volunteer in the President's reelection campaign in '72. She was hardly naïve, but in many ways she was innocent. She had never run into this kind of resistance or nastiness. And it was palpable. I mean, it was... And that, because it became apparent to me that this was the way in which the Foreign Service was reflecting their hostility to my appointment. In dealing with me, they were correct - obviously, scrupulously correct, but not a step more than correct, and Dudley Miller was I didn't think enormously helpful. And it was apparent to me after a month or so that Dudley and his wife were particularly the core of the resistance to my appointment, which I thought, you know, this is silly - why should I tolerate a DCM who was hostile to my appointment? So I simply called him in one day and said, "You're going home." He said, "You can't do that." I said, "The hell I can't. You'll be quite surprised. I'm sending off a cable to Kissinger telling him you're going back." And I don't think that had ever been done.

Q: *Oh-*

SILBERMAN: Not by a political appointee. So I sent Dudley back, and things changed overnight.

Q: *Well this is often the problem. The DCM-ambassador relationship is very important, and often a DCM who's familiar with a country falls foul of an ambassador because sometimes they've got too many connections. I mean they know the people and all that.*

SILBERMAN: That was not it at all. I was very grateful that he would have developed. My impression of him, perfectly candidly, was that he was a gopher for Mack Toon. Mack was like a banyan tree under which not a lot grew. Mack was a very strong, tough ambassador, and I think Dudley was simply a gopher, not a true deputy. I don't think he had an enormous intellectual ability. But there were some very talented people in the embassy, ultimately. Mark Palmer came out as the political officer, and I thought he was wonderful.

Q: *I'm interviewing Mark now.*

SILBERMAN: Yes, and he was sent to me specifically by Eagleburger and Kissinger. He had been Kissinger's speech writer, so I knew he was absolutely first class. I wanted first-class people. When I sent Dudley back, I asked Larry Eagleburger to find somebody really good for DCM, and he found Harry Bergold, who ended up as ambassador somewhere, I can't recall. Unfortunately, he was on his way to being my DCM when Don Rumsfeld, one of my best friends, who was Secretary of Defense, swiped him as an assistant secretary of defense, so at that point - some months had gone by - I had brought a special assistant with me, a fellow by the name of Brandon Sweitzer. As a political appointee I was entitled to bring a special assistant. Brandon Sweitzer had been a White House Fellow, he spoke four languages, and he had been Pete Peterson's executive assistant, after his White House Fellowship days, Pete Peterson being Secretary of

Commerce. I had encountered him both on the White House staff and working for Peterson, and I don't recall whether he approached me or I approached him when I was picked to be ambassador to Yugoslavia, but in any event, he wanted to go off as my special assistant. He was a very able and talented guy, and so after a few months of not being able to come up with somebody suitable for DCM, I said, Oh, the hell with it, I was going to make Brandon the DCM. Well, I thought the Foreign Service would have conniptions. You can't do that. So I ended up not having a DCM and made him *de facto* DCM, and the Yugoslav Government and, of course, all other embassies, had to treat him as DCM. I forget what I called him - counselor? But he was the *de facto* DCM for the two years that I was there, and he did an excellent job.

Q: What was your impression of the political reporting? Was there a spin as far as you watched the people reporting from the embassy on Yugoslav affairs?

SILBERMAN: Well, you know, after a while it was my view that the reporting on Yugoslav affairs from the embassy was a matter to be controlled by the ambassador. That doesn't mean I wrote every cable - of course not - but I did approve and edit and very definitely felt that reporting was under my supervision. When Mark Palmer arrived, replacing the political appointee who was there - I can't recall who was there before him, but Mark Palmer was there and Marty McLean was there, and these were young men whose views about the Soviet Union detente, ideological questions, were similar to mine. Mark and I used to constantly argue over who was more of a revolutionary, his political views were on the left side of the political spectrum, I on the right side, but we had similar views about United States needing to confront the Soviet Union, and in similar ways. So we were very much in synch. It took me some time before my thinking gelled, but not all that long, a few months. And now with respect to the actual factual reporting, I don't recall my having much concern with the orientation of the officers. I was always anxious to get more and more information. I was pushing them all the time. One of the things I did do, which I'm sure you have views about, is that it occurred to me that much of our information came at dinner parties and that because of protocol the wives of officers would usually sit seated at dinner next to the official we were trying to pump, and that they would be a hell of a lot better at pumping them if they knew what they needed to get, what kind of information we were interested in. So I adopted a technique of bringing the wives of officers, particularly the political officers, into the tank once a week to brief them-

Q: We're talking about that horrible plastic bubble there.

SILBERMAN: Right. One of my younger officers complained at one point that his wife knew more about American foreign policy towards Yugoslavia than he did because she was at those weekly meetings. I also was responding to the increasing concern that the country had about our wives of Foreign Service officers. They couldn't really do anything in Yugoslavia, so how would they remain stimulated and interested. Many of them were well-educated women. And so I tried to double my staff by decree. But the economic reporting was generally quite competent. Charles York was in charge of economic affairs. The intelligence operations were well done. Dan Wages and Bert

Gerber were my chiefs of station. I hope that's no longer classified. And both of them were excellent. Bert Gerber was really brilliant. He had come from Iran. My administrative officer, Sheldon Kryss, subsequently became an ambassador.

Q: *Oh, yes. I've had a long interview with Sheldon. He's first-rate.*

SILBERMAN: Yes, I thought he was wonderful, and we had a particularly troublesome problem when Carl Albert came as the head of a CODEL to Yugoslavia.

Q: *He was-*

SILBERMAN: Speaker of the House.

Q: *Oh, Speaker of the House, from Oklahoma.*

SILBERMAN: Yes, and he was a terrible drunk, and when I found out he was leading the CODEL, at the invitation of the Yugoslavs, I was appalled, because I knew what a terrible drunk he was and what a cipher he was. I actually went to the Yugoslav Foreign Ministry at one point when we were talking about the CODEL, and I explained that he was a drunk and that there was to be no alcohol served while he was in Yugoslavia at any official occasion. Well, I forget, the foreign minister or somebody said, "How can you say that, Ambassador? He's the third-ranking official in the United States?" And I said, "Well, that's more for show." Which was an incredible thing to say. But I was so anxious at that point not to portray a sense of weakness or a reality of weakness to the Yugoslavs - and I knew Albert from my days in the Executive Branch - and I was hopeful that they would take from me, adopt the position that he was a convenient figure for officials in the Congress - which was true - and he was not to be taken seriously. No liquor was to be served. Well, the funny thing was, he would desperately try to get hold of liquor anyway. He was an alcoholic. And he was quite frustrated about my efforts to prevent it, and he got hold of Sheldon Kryss, and he said, "I want a bottle of bourbon, and I know what the ambassador's doing, but he's a political appointee, and you're going to be around after he goes, and I will make sure you're in real trouble unless I get a bottle of bourbon." Sheldon came to me, and I said, "Give him his bottle of bourbon. I can't protect you."

Q: *What was your reading? You've got there, you've gone through the sort of coming at it from your perspective on East-West relations, but one, you met Tito and then you were looking at his government. What was your impression when you got there, I mean after you'd had a chance to do a bit of absorbing of the situation?*

SILBERMAN: Well, one of the things that was most interesting of all was how desperate the Yugoslavs were to not permit us to understand their micro-decision-making. You may recall that they made much of self-management in this Third Way. Now I thought it was important to try to understand how this system really worked - who was making the crucial decisions with respect to any particular enterprise? Was it the workers' council, which was doctrine or dogma? Was it the chief executive, selected

often by the workers' council? Was it the Communist Party in the enterprise? Or was it the trade union? It could be, in any particular enterprise, any one of those four. Perhaps the most successful enterprises were run by executives that had some kind of constituency within those other three. But when I was trying hard to find out how things actually worked, the Yugoslavs regarded that as very threatening because, for one thing, they didn't know for sure how things worked, and Kardelj would set up this doctrine, and it may not have anything to do with what actually was happening, so they found it very threatening that somebody was trying to understand exactly how they were making decision.

Q: Kardelj being sort of the ideologue, the guru of the Communist Party.

SILBERMAN: Right. And actually there was one speech that the head of their OPA, the minister of the interior, had made in which they specifically identified the very kinds of questions that I was asking as very dangerous probes by intelligence agents. There had been some discussion about my involvement with the CIA, so the Yugoslavs always felt that I had some shadowy connection with the CIA. Much of the dealings with Yugoslavia dealt with international affairs, that is to say, ILO, the UN kind of things, in which the Yugoslavs, as leaders of the Third World, the Nonaligned, were constantly giving us great grief. And there were some specific instances where Yugoslavs played a very mischievous role, one with respect... I'll never forget, which I got through intelligence leaks, that Tito had encouraged the North Koreans to create an incident on the line between North and South Korea, which you may recall eventuated with a couple of Americans being killed.

Q: Well, by that time, were we seeing the Yugoslav military as more Serb-dominated than it had been?

SILBERMAN: That's interesting. My recollection now is that there was a sort of a... I don't think there was a perception that the military had been more Serb-dominated. It always had been to a certain extent Serb-dominated, and particularly, should I say, Montenegrin-dominated. I think 20 per cent of the generals were Montenegrin, and only 500,000 Yugoslavs were Montenegrins. Of course, as you know, they have a splendid military record.

Q: Sure.

SILBERMAN: And that was a constant bone of potential contention within Yugoslavia. I recall that there was a good deal of concern that you could detect amongst Croats concerning Tito's wife, who was a Lika Serb.

Q: Considered the most beautiful woman in Yugoslavia, but also from the Vukrainia area.

SILBERMAN: Exactly, and fiercely pro-Serb and anti-Croat. So there was a good deal of concern amongst the Croats what her role might be. But on that point the Yugoslav government was, of course, fanatic in their effort to project an image of unity within

Yugoslavia. I remember there was a census taken, I think when I was there. They asked people what they regarded as their nationality, and only 11 per cent of the people in Yugoslavia described their nationality as "Yugoslav." I don't know whether they knew what they were doing when they took that census, but it was an ominous note. And we knew the centrifugal forces were potentially quite significant. There was this perception in the State Department, the European Bureau, that the unity of Yugoslavia was very much in our interest. And on that I had a somewhat different view in that I did agree that we should not be in the business of encouraging centrifugal forces, but that our primary concern should be encouraging democracy and freedom, and insofar as those two interests conflicted, encouraging democracy was more important. In that respect, I think the European Bureau as a whole said, "No, no, no, unity is more important." And that reflected a difference in our views of the importance of ideology as opposed to other factors. The State Department has never been as comfortable with ideology as people outside the State Department, as you well know.

Q: *Oh, yes.*

SILBERMAN: That was not true of Palmer. He was very much an ideologue. Now that's not to say that I would have thought to encourage the kind of breakup of Yugoslavia that could encourage the Soviet Union to come in, but the Yugoslavs were constantly whispering in our ear that the only thing that kept Yugoslavia together and therefore made it a strategic independent entity in the middle of the Balkans was the Communist Party. Now I think they were wrong, but they were close. The thing that held Yugoslavia together was not the Communist Party; it was the fear of the Soviet Union. Ergo, Yugoslavia fell apart not when Tito died - there was a lot of talk of Tito as the key - but when the Soviet Union collapsed and there was no longer a threat that kept Yugoslavia together.

Q: *Well, tell me, were you playing the game - you must have been - of "After Tito What?"*

SILBERMAN: Oh, sure.

Q: *I mean, was this something you'd sit around and-*

SILBERMAN: Oh, sure. We'd spend an ungodly amount of time on that. In fact, if anything, that was my major objective as ambassador, which was to try to figure out what we should do - we being the government of the United States - in the event Tito died, and various scenarios came to play.

Q: *Did you come away with any particular scenario that you thought was most likely?*

SILBERMAN: I always thought it was possible that you could get an internal conflict within Yugoslavia which would lead the Soviet Union to come in. I didn't know how lengthy. And that such conflict could be touched off by Tito's death. But we didn't know. We weren't sure. We didn't know how strong the centrifugal forces were, the nationalist centrifugal forces. We couldn't measure them. I do remember thinking to myself that

there had to be some reason why the vast majority of Croats who emigrated to the United States or Canada or Australia became such fierce supporters of an independent Croatia and couldn't believe that that didn't reflect the view of the majority of people in Croatia.

Q: I do want to talk about it. I'm an old consular hand, and - why don't we talk about Laszlo Toth?

SILBERMAN: Toth was, as you know, a naturalized American who worked for a sugar company in Colorado. He had emigrated from the Vojvodina. I think Toth was originally a Hungarian-Yugoslav. The day that Ford came to Yugoslavia, a special day it turns out, Toth was arrested, and I had little doubt, as I learned this happened, that it was done by people in the secret police, in UDBA, who were hostile to Yugoslav-U.S. relations, and therefore it was hardly an accident. He was arrested on that day. He was alleged to have engaged in espionage because he had taken pictures of machinery in a sugar factory. The sugar factory was one he had worked in. The machinery was bought on the open market from West Germany. It was absurd on its face. And I took it as reflecting a very aggressive posture on the part of the Yugoslav police and a big shock. He was able to communicate with me - he was a very shrewd fellow, and he figured a method of communicating with me. I don't know how he got these documents, these tiny documents, out. And I got the most heart-rending notes from him to the effect that I know I'm only a recently naturalized citizen and therefore not as important to the United States as somebody who has many American Ancestors, but nevertheless I'm a loyal American and I wish help as much as possible. It turned out - I did not know this although I suspected the worst - that he was arrested because UDBA had asked him to spy on Yugoslav immigrants in the United States and report to UDBA concerning Croats or others who might be hostile to the Yugoslav régime. He refused. And that's why they put him in jail. We didn't know that, but we knew that the reason why they were holding him was ridiculous.

Q: Did you get consular access to him?

SILBERMAN: No, because the Yugoslavs were taking the position, since he'd been born in Yugoslavia, they would not recognize his American citizenship, which, of course, infuriated us even more. This thing came to have enormous importance in American-Yugoslav relations because I and my consular officer, Lowell Fleischer, made it of significant importance. I took the fact that he had been arrested the day Ford was there I took to be a reflection of forces within Yugoslavia that wished to act in a fashion of relative contempt for the United States.

Q: It was a real slap in the face.

SILBERMAN: It thought so, and I thought it was essential that this, amongst a number of other actions, be taken by the United States as the slap in the face that you just suggested it was and we should slap back, but hard. So I put increasing pressure on the Yugoslav Government with, I must say, the resistance of the European Bureau. They kept cautioning. They kept saying, "Well, you can't do this. You know, you can't

jeopardize American-Yugoslav relations over this one individual. And I kept saying, you know, it's not just one individual. This is reflective of a broader problem we're having in Yugoslavia, and it's the right issue to make a stand on for a whole host of reasons. Well, the Yugoslav Government was increasingly irritated by the pressure that I was imposing, and they were complaining in Washington. And The Wall Street Journal Washington Wire, in the spring of '76, carried a little piece, which as an insider in Washington I understood full well it's meaning, which was that Laurence Silberman, ambassador to Yugoslavia, who formerly had a distinguished record at Labor and Justice, was causing needless difficulty in Yugoslavia and was not doing a good job. Something to that effect. Well, I knew what that came from - either Sonnenfeldt or Hartman or somebody close to Kissinger. I was sure it didn't come from Eagleburger, and I was pretty sure it didn't come from Kissinger. On the other hand, I could see where Kissinger would think, What the hell's Larry doing about this fellow Laszlo Toth? Although the cable traffic made it perfectly obvious what I was doing, but I could see Kissinger being a little bemused by all of this or at least not sure. And certainly either Sonnenfeldt or Hartman leaked that to The Wall Street Journal in Washington. So I insisted on meeting with Kissinger in Paris. I forget why we were in Paris. He was in Paris for another reason, so I met him, and I said, "Listen, I'm perfectly willing to resign. If you're not backing me, I'm out of here." And Kissinger said, "No, no, I don't want you to resign." And he said, "Look, if you're having any problems, you should talk to Larry Eagleburger." I didn't totally trust Henry. I couldn't imagine that that leak to The Wall Street Journal wouldn't have come from either Sonnenfeldt or Hartman, and Hartman was a career appointee, who wouldn't have done anything without Kissinger's knowledge. And Kissinger knew I knew. I think, to tell the absolute truth, that Kissinger - you would wonder how in God's name would an ambassador be capable of dealing with Kissinger this way - but remember, I had some political ties, significant political ties, to Ford and others, and I think Kissinger always was a little nervous about what I knew as deputy attorney general.

Q: Well, you say you fought the Yugoslavs? How did this take place?

SILBERMAN: Well, I put enormous pressure on them. Eventually, I cut off all meat sales from Yugoslavia to the United States military. I don't remember how I did that, but-

Q: That was a big deal!

SILBERMAN: That was an enormous amount of money. I cabled Bill Simon, who was Secretary of Treasury and a friend of mine, to oppose IMF funding for Yugoslavia. I cabled Frank Zarb, who was energy czar to make a speech in which he made reference to this American in jail. So the Yugoslavs were under enormous pressure. And of course, I was driving them nuts, and they would pressure the State Department to in turn pressure me, but after that meeting with Kissinger in Paris, the State Department was no longer - certainly the European Bureau was no longer - in a position to try to pressure me. They Yugoslavs came close to PNGing me.

Q: That's declaring you persona non grata.

SILBERMAN: Right, but they really didn't dare do that because they knew that the State Department would be obliged to PNG their ambassador here in response, and perhaps the publicity that would result from that would not be favorable. But what they did do, which was rather amusing, was they came up with various devices to threaten me - physically threaten me. You know, they would have reported through our CIA that people meeting in a cafeteria were overheard plotting to assassinate me, and they actually caused a ruckus when we were down in Dubrovnik, which scared the hell out of my little daughter. There was supposedly somebody escaped from jail who was looking to cause me trouble. I never gave that any significance whatsoever because in a communist country the government has a monopoly on the terror, so I knew that was just a device to try to unnerve me and get me to leave.

Q: Well, was your analysis and that of your staff that this was still the security agency - the Yugoslav UDBA, the Ministry of the Interior - calling the shots as opposed to, say, the Foreign Ministry?

SILBERMAN: Oh, I had escalated this to the point where there was no question this was being decided by Tito. It was inconceivable that Tito wasn't making those decisions. And I always took it to be a battle for Tito's mind, and you see there's a principle in dealing with the Yugoslavs, or the Serbs, which you, having been there, know. They love to say that pressure doesn't work on them. The important principle to keep in mind is that *inadequate* pressure never works on them. But enough pressure... And when both the meat sales and the IMF funding was a problem, they finally gave up, and I think it was in June of '76 that they released Toth, and then I got to meet him at the airport and find out precisely what happened. And I really felt so wonderful about it because when I found out that he was put in jail because he refused to work for the secret police in the United States, I really felt this was a fellow who was worth fighting for.

Q: In talking to Mark Palmer, we've reached that point. I'm still doing it. He said he supported you and pushed you and, not pushed you but supported you, all the way until the very end at the airport, and you made a speech, and he felt that was wrong - not a speech, but a statement - in other words, that you sort of rubbed the Yugoslavs nose in the dirt on this one, if I recall correctly. Do you recall this?

SILBERMAN: I did make a statement at the airport, and I think he's right about that. He probably did disagree with it, but I to this day think I was right because, sure, it rubbed their nose in it a little bit, but it also made the potential prospect of their doing anything like that again even less likely. I mean it made the pain even worse. Now I think from Mark's point of view, in terms of his relations with the Yugoslavs, dealing with them, he probably regarded that as problematic because they would have been really furious about it. But from my point of view as a political appointee who's there for a time, I was delighted to make sure the pain was good. In other words, I thought they should pay a good price for that, including a good public relations price. So I disagree. I disagreed then, and I disagree now, and I think it much less likely that they would have done it again, or other countries would do that.

Q: *It would put the Yugoslavs' backs up.*

SILBERMAN: Right. So to a certain extent I had an obligation with both of them to give them the story after Toth was released. But secondly, I - and here is where I firmly disagree with Mark - to have permitted the Yugoslavs to have kept Toth in jail for 11 months, not only for no good reason but for an absolutely terrible reason - the reason that he told me about at the airport, that he refused to work for UDBA in the United States - would in my notion have been a betrayal of American interests, because it would have allowed the Yugoslavs to get away with something - that is to say, keeping Toth in jail for 11 months - and pay no price. The publicity that resulted when I told the story to The New York Times and The Washington Post gave Yugoslavia a black eye, which is exactly what they deserved, and made it much less likely that any other American, naturalized American, was going to be arrested in the future. And so I reiterate, having thought about it clearly, the point that I felt at the time that it was the right thing to do at that point to tell The New York Times and The Washington Post what happened, to make sure the Yugoslavs suffered somewhat of having made Toth and the United States suffer.

Q: *Well, when one looks at this, there are instruments of foreign policy, and these can be played different ways by different people.*

SILBERMAN: Exactly. Political appointees had a comparative advantage; Foreign Service officers have a comparative advantage. I was using my comparative advantage there. Now, subsequently, I didn't tell you, but the Yugoslavs did everything in the world to try to force me out, including various threats to my life, which I never took seriously because the Yugoslavs had a monopoly on terror.

Q: *Yes, nothing was going to happen unless they did it, and it was pretty damned obvious.*

SILBERMAN: But I think you should know, if I didn't tell you the last time, there was one lawyer who represented dissidents in Yugoslavia, who had been a colonel in the partisans in World War II for whom I had a great deal of respect and whom I would occasionally see at parties. He was, I thought, invulnerable because of his World War II background. But I was told, after I came back from my post time as ambassador, that after he attended a Christmas party, a goodbye party for me, a couple of months later he was killed on the highway between Belgrade and Zagreb under circumstances suggesting that he was assassinated, which made me feel terrible.

Q: *You were then-*

SILBERMAN: - ambassador to Yugoslavia. I think this was in the winter of '75-76. And so I am notified that I am to take on another task as special envoy for ILO affairs while I am ambassador to Yugoslavia. Now what was interesting about it was that as ambassador to Yugoslavia, I was constantly struggling with the Yugoslavs concerning their leadership of the Nonaligned, which caused no end of grief for the United States in various multilateral fora. As special envoy in the ILO affairs, I was taking a position which couldn't have been more contrary to the Yugoslav position, but it was consistent with my general job, which was to try to do everything I could to dissuade the Yugoslavs from taking so-called nonaligned positions but which were really very close to the communist views on a full range of matters. So I was commissioned by the Cabinet committee. I was notified by Scowcroft I think it was, as NSC advisor, that I was to be the special envoy. I had to go down to Greece, as I recall, to talk on the phone, because the cable traffic was inadequate to discuss it at great length. And then I went off for various trips, interspersed with my time in Belgrade. In other words, I would take off for three or four days and go to London and then to Paris and then to Bonn and to Rome, and basically all of our allies, including Australia, Japan, Canada, and so forth. And I went round everywhere and gave the message, which was (a) I represented everybody in the American political spectrum, the Republicans and the Democrats. It didn't matter what happened in then next year's election. Our position was quite firm about this, and if our allies wished us to stay in the ILO, they had to support us on these messy ideological issues which they would prefer to sweep under the rug. I had some really wonderful meetings. I met with the prime minister - was he foreign minister or prime minister at the time - of Great Britain, Callahan, and I met with him, and as I came into his office, the head of the TUC, which was left-leaning and hated Meany, was quite obviously and ostentatiously going out of his office, so Callahan was telling me, in effect, that he had already been primed by the very people who were going to oppose my pitch the strongest. And we had a rather contentious session. I think the minister, the DCM in London, a good fellow by the name of Spiers, who was also a Dartmouth man-

Q: You know, because at the time, the overriding thing in Yugoslav foreign policy was to keep the Russian bear from coming at them, and they couldn't afford to do too much to their one support unless their one support turned soft.

SILBERMAN: That is correct. You see, my fundamental view, and this is where I disagreed with the European Bureau, Hartman *et al*, was that I thought it was more than likely that Yugoslavia would be stiffened vis-à-vis the Soviet Union if we were tough as nails, if they were afraid of us, if they had respect for us. The more they thought we were weak and, as I told you before in the aftermath of Vietnam they really did think we were weak, the more they thought we were weak, the more they were inclined to get closer to the Soviet Union rather than the other

MARK PALMER

**Political Counselor
Belgrade (1975-1978)**

Ambassador Mark Palmer was born and raised in Michigan. His father was a career naval officer who served during World War II. He studied both at Yale University and abroad at the University of Kiev. He entered the Foreign Service in 1964 and was political counselor to the Yugoslavian Embassy in 1975. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1997.

Q: What about the economy? I served five years in Yugoslavia a little earlier and the thing I came back with was a sign saying "Lift ne radi," "The elevator's not working." This was the real Achilles' heel of the whole Soviet system. Were we able to evaluate it properly, do you think?

PALMER: Nationalism.

Q: I was thinking of the economy.

PALMER: Oh, the economy. Sorry, my head was back in this other stuff. No, I think we didn't evaluate it properly. If you look at the CIA analysis year after year, on the whole I think they were much too accepting of the... perhaps because of the lack of any other way of dealing with it ...you know the Soviets always had X percentage of growth a year and they had much too high GNP per capita figures.

The CIA used to do a sort of discount factor on the official statistics. But basically they took them and that was the U.S. government's view. It wasn't just the agency's. It was the inter-agency, intelligence community view. I think many of us thought it was crap.

If you just went around and looked, if you got into places like Tambov, and you looked at what was in the stores; and you looked at what people's per capita income was in terms of their apartments, how they lived, it wasn't anything like what we were being told. This was not a formidable economic engine. So, I think this was another area where we didn't do enough "in the street" comparison with the official reality and come up with our own views.

Q: When you arrived there, how would you describe in 1975 the situation in Yugoslavia?

PALMER: Well, Tito had been in power for a long time at that point. I think everybody had kind of settled into thinking pretty much that Yugoslavia was stable and that he was enduring. So it was not a place where rapid change was expected. People were constantly doing the death watch. That is, how long Tito personally was going to survive.

Q: We're talking about since the end of the war. We're talking about 30 years at this point.

PALMER: Right. But he was still strong, politically invincible and had all of his palaces and wore white uniforms and did his thing. He was a very strong leader and had managed to bring together all of these peoples into a not always happy union. There had been, just before I arrived there - I think it was in '71 - Croats within the communist Party had exercised their kind of independent spirit and desire to have some more autonomy. So that there were stresses and strains within the Communist Party as well as more generally.

Tito had at that time a higher per capita prison population of political prisoners than the Soviet Union. People in the building I lived in (a building with Yugoslavs, not an embassy building), middle class professional Yugoslavs, were extremely nervous about even the most modest political conversations. So, although we rather favored Yugoslavia and Tito because of his foreign policy and nonaligned status, as opposed to being a member of the Warsaw Pact; nonetheless, it was a dictatorship in a full blooded way.

Q: Were we beginning to feel uncomfortable with this political imprisonment and all that? How did that sit with you when you first arrived?

PALMER: Well, for me personally, it didn't sit well at all. As I'd mentioned before, I joined the Foreign Service out of the civil rights movement. I felt very strongly that, whether it was a communist dictatorship or a Saudi dictatorship, in my judgment, American foreign policy should be getting rid of these dictatorships.

Then, my ambassador when I arrived had formerly been deputy attorney general. He was a conservative Republican, Laurence Silberman, was very anti-communist. He was very much determined to keep a spotlight on these issues. And in addition to that, I remember Bob Dole coming out at one point to help us get a political prisoner out of jail.

Q: I didn't serve there at that time, but you could pick it up through the newspapers and all of that.

PALMER: Right. There was a real disconnect because there was an old Yugoslav Mafia or crowd, group of people who had served together in Belgrade. It was a particularly distinguished group, that had served there in the early '60s; and who went on to extraordinary success both in the Foreign Service and outside.

So this group, I think, felt strongly that in Yugoslavia we needed to understand it's special characteristics. It felt that we should be sensitive and not to push too hard, particularly not in public. Silberman had a different view and frankly, I did too. I was in sympathy with his view more than I was with Washington.

Q: In retrospect, I can see that I fell into the Yugoslav Mafia. I think the thing that drove me - I'm not sure about my colleagues - was the fact that Yugoslavia is a country that could be fractured easily, not necessarily internally but by external forces. It had seven neighbors, all of whom had claims on it; and that these could be stirred up.

And, God help us, World War I started there. And there was no reason to think that world war three couldn't get involved there. And so for that reason, really, this is sort of my guiding light. But this is sort of realpolitik, I guess.

PALMER: No, I think that's an accurate reflection that there were a variety of these elements. There was what Indians would call fissiparous tendencies which you mentioned. That is, the danger that the place would fly apart.

And there was this concern, this geostrategic concern that, after all, he wasn't part of the Warsaw Pact. He could not do military planning with the Soviets. This was a strategically important piece of turf relative to Greece and Turkey and Italy, the soft underbelly, etc.

So I think there was a legitimate debate or argument. But it was an argument which, in the State Department, really hadn't been had. This was because there was this very strong consensus about the one side of this. And I would say that consensus carried right on through 1990-1991 and heavily influenced our initial attitude toward Milosevic.

And in my own judgment, it was wrong and is to this day to some extent wrong. I don't agree with our current Bosnian policy. I think this is a kind of classic example of where radical thinking has not been permitted. If you look at Kosovo today, I think that there should have been radical thinking in the department in 1991.

I think a grand deal should have been done, a strategic deal under which the Serbs would have gotten the genuine Serbian parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Croats would have gotten their part, and the Muslims would have been given a territory and a state which was viable. And in return for that with the Serbs, most of Kosovo should have gone to Albania, in my judgment.

Now I'm not saying I'm right. But I think it's a mistake not to have in our foreign policy establishment that kind of thinking that is bigger and more radical, as opposed to more incremental or stasis thinking. Our general tendency is to think in stasis terms. That is: "How do you sustain the status quo?"

Q: What was your impression? You were in charge of political affairs but, obviously you were part of the country team and all, of the Yugoslav economy. At one time it looked great, because it was compared to the Soviet one which was dismal. But were we away from that and beginning to look at it realistically?

PALMER: Well, I have a slightly tangential way of explaining my view. My wife was doing her Ph.D. there at the University of Belgrade in biochemistry. She got her degree, and defended her dissertation in Serbian. So she was really integrated into a samoupravleniye unit, a self management unit at the university. She was unique in that regard. There was no one else in the embassy community who actually was a member of a worker self management team-- supposedly the core of the entire Yugoslavia ideology and economy.

And, although, that was not a factory, it had all the same characteristics basically of decision making and the relationship to the Communist Party. So, partly through my wife's experience and partly obviously through other conversations and intelligence and work, I concluded early on that worker self management was a complete shambles. I concluded that this was a terrible way of trying to run industry, or anything.

And, of course, it was both run that way and not run that way, because there were - as you know from your own experience - there were various systems that were at work. There was direct political control as well as this self management stuff going on. So I did not think that the Yugoslav economy was great.

If you looked at why were they doing relatively well, part of it was that there were huge numbers, I mean several million Serb, Croat, and other "gastarbeiter" guest workers in Bavaria and throughout West Germany sending back large amounts of money. You saw all these houses being built. Well, the money that built those houses was coming back into Yugoslavia from these "guest workers."

So, I did not share in the view of some. I don't know that that was a widely held view within the service: that Tito had somehow found a way economically to make a place work relatively better than, say, the Soviet Union. I didn't think he had. I didn't think this was a really much, much better way than the way things were run in Czechoslovakia or Moscow.

They had a tourist industry. That helped, but even that wasn't run particularly well. So, no, I didn't think that the economy was sterling. And they had potential. They do to this day have potential.

WILLIAM PRIMOSCH
Commercial Officer
Belgrade (1976-1978)

William Primosch was born and raised in Ohio. He attended the University of Notre Dame and George Washington University. He entered the Foreign Service in 1975 and was assigned as Commercial Officer to the Belgrade Embassy in 1976. Mr. Primosch was interviewed in 2006 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: What were you doing?

PRIMOSCH: I was a commercial officer. At the time, the State Department had the commercial function in the Foreign Service. It turned out to be an interesting job for a first tour officer because it got you out of the embassy a lot. You interacted a lot with the

local businessmen and traveled throughout Yugoslavia. I also participated in a lot of different kinds of business events, which I found unusually interesting for a first tour.

Q: I have interviewed Silberman. What was your impression of him? Was he pretty far away from your...

PRIMOSCH: It was a pretty small embassy, so even as a junior officer, you did have a fair amount of contact with the ambassador or at least observing the ambassador and being involved in meetings with him.

My impression of the ambassador was that he was a very smart professional. I think he was trying to pursue some very specific objectives. He was rather tough on the Yugoslav government. In retrospect, I think that was perhaps the better strategy. In all of Eastern Europe and in Yugoslavia, the overall approach was to try to win over friends and governments. The idea was that somehow we were going to encourage more independent policies that would be more favorable to the United States. In particular with Yugoslavia, the government under President Tito was more independent than the other communist satellites. Yugoslavia didn't consider itself to be a "satellite." It was thought that somehow we would be able to break Yugoslavia away from its close ties with the USSR or at least get it to lean toward the United States in some of our confrontations with the Soviets and the other communists. There was also a belief that from the commercial and economic perspective if you could show them the benefits of capitalism, bring the Yugoslavs into contact with Western businessmen and Western business practices, and Western investment, that this would accelerate the change and that Yugoslavia would evolve away from a communist system and become more independent.

Q: Speaking of Silberman, how did you find the Yugoslav economy and opportunity for commercial American interests there?

PRIMOSCH: There was a coincidence of interests in Yugoslavia. As I noted, we believed that if we could get more Western and American businessmen involved in Yugoslavia, that would support our foreign policy goals in encouraging a more westward leaning government and people. At the same time, in the 1970s not only in Yugoslavia but in Central Europe and even in the Soviet Union, there was a greater interest in doing business with the West because of all the problems in their state-controlled economies. They didn't have modern technology. They needed foreign investment, and they were also trying to generate hard-currency exports. So, we had a very active commercial program in Yugoslavia to try to encourage U.S. businessmen to come. Some were interested. They saw these as new markets. At a time when western commercial efforts in Western Europe may have reached their limit, Yugoslavia, Central Europe and the Soviet Union were seen as new potential markets, not necessarily large but significant enough that companies could make some money there. In reality, the business opportunities were quite limited. There were some U.S. companies who were doing a significant business there but not a lot.

Q: Were you there at the time when this American businessman was arrested on charges of spying? ... Could you explain what that was and how this operated?

PRIMOSCH: He was an American businessman of Hungarian extraction. His name is Hungarian, but he might have been a Hungarian from Yugoslavia since there is a large Hungarian minority population in the Vojvodina area of northern Yugoslavia. He went to a factory, allegedly was taking pictures of sensitive equipment in a sugar factor, and was arrested as a spy. That part of the country has a lot of beet sugar production. He was arrested as a spy and they had kind of alleged he was working for the CIA or Western intelligence. The Yugoslavs were rather paranoid about the United States' intelligence seeking to penetrate Yugoslavia at that time. It got to ridiculous levels where you would go to a factory and ask someone, "How many people work here" and they wouldn't tell you because they apparently thought: "Well, I might get in trouble because I told this person from the U.S. embassy who could be working for the CIA, something that someone is going to blame me for giving away secrets." Even the most innocuous information was considered secret. I don't think the Hungarian-American who was arrested had any connection with any Western intelligence. He might have just pissed some Yugoslavs off, and they picked him up. They were going to put him on trial. Ambassador Silberman took a very hard line that this had to be resolved. He talked very tough, including making some very tough public statements that got a lot of Yugoslavs mad. Reportedly his comments angered President Tito himself. I think the Yugoslavs came to the conclusion that keeping this guy was more trouble than it was worth and they let him go. But what really set the Yugoslavs off – and I had heard that this went all the way up to Tito himself – is that at the time he was released, Ambassador Silberman went to the train station to see the man off as he left Yugoslavia and made a statement to the press, something to the effect that: "This shows that you can't do this to an American." I believe that immediately after that happened, he was considered persona non grata. He couldn't get any senior-level appointments. I think that was when it was decided that he ought to leave. It also coincided with the change in administrations in Washington (i.e., in January 1977).

Q: Did this have a dampening effect on business people coming to Yugoslavia?

PRIMOSCH: That wasn't a problem. I think a lot of U.S. business representatives who did travel to Yugoslavia were from either Western Europe or Greece. I don't think that was a big problem for American business representatives, but there was always this overlay of suspicion about Americans, particularly among unsophisticated government bureaucrats, that rose to rather ludicrous levels. This diplomatic problem probably didn't help. But it wasn't so damaging that we couldn't get out and do things and meet with people. I think particularly people like myself who were clearly commercial trade officers were not effective in a major way, but Ambassador Silberman was.

Q: Yugoslavia is attractive. When I took Serbian, it was with Larry Eagleburger. We went out there in '62 together. Was there a change when Eagleburger took over?

PRIMOSCH: In a lot of different ways there was a change. Personally, Larry Eagleburger was a fine man. He was very nice to everyone. I was at a fairly low level in the embassy, but I do remember him treating everyone well, as professionals. He had a great sense of humor. There was a sense of a steady helm, of someone who knew what he was doing. He had a lot of enthusiasm for trying to advance the strategy of encouraging Yugoslavia's independence and its ties with the West. He looked particularly on trade and business as a way to try to influence Yugoslavia and encourage internal change, which all of us at that time had hoped would accelerate with contact with the West. We thought that this could be an evolutionary kind of change as opposed to a very abrupt falling apart, which is what happened after Tito died.

Q: Looking back on it, an interesting thing is how much there was a Yugoslav establishment within the Foreign Service. A good number of people who did rather well in the Foreign Service went through Yugoslavia, which was both a challenging but also kind of a fun place to be.

PRIMOSCH: That's right. I think at that time in the '70s and even into the '80s as well, there was a sense that being involved in issues involving the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and the East-West struggle was at the cutting edge of diplomatic work and was some of the most challenging work in the State Department. There always seemed to be a crisis of some sort that you were involved in. As it turned out later, I was also in the Office of East European Affairs when the Polish labor strikes broke out, and there was concern about the Russian invasion. There was a continuum through the '70s and '80s of intense diplomatic activity and challenge in that part of the world.

Q: What was your impression of the workers management system in Yugoslavia? It was supposed to be the Yugoslav way, which is different than the central planning system in the Soviet bloc.

PRIMOSCH: The "worker self-management system" was considered by some the middle way between a state planning system that existed in Central Europe and the Soviet Union and Western style capitalism. It struck me that the economy at that time had significantly more and better consumer goods than economies in the Soviet Union and Central Europe under the central planning system. But at its core it wasn't that much better. The enterprises had a little more independence. There was maybe a little more incentive among the workers to produce a higher quality product. But in the end, there wasn't a dynamic that encouraged innovation or competition or quality like you have in a market economy. It really was in the end a failure that Yugoslavia is still living with because they tried to continually adopt that system even after Tito died without success. On the other hand, in Central Europe and Russia, the post-USSR governments made pretty much a complete break and tried to create a market economy. Some such as Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary have done fairly well, but Yugoslavia, even though in many respects it has some advantages in terms of skilled workforce and level of technological development under their system, couldn't get much more out of this hybrid market system. There was an expectation when I was there that somehow the worker self-

management was going to work and that it was also compatible with foreign investment and more trade with the West. To some extent, it was but only to a very limited extent.

Q: As far as our looking at it and reporting, do you think that we were trying to put the best face on the economy and the opportunities there?

PRIMOSCH: I think we were and that was a mistake. I don't think we were as critical as we could or should have been and that wasn't just in Yugoslavia. That was in Eastern Europe as well in countries where we thought that we sniffed change in the air. Hungary was certainly one of them where there was a sense that it was one of the "nice" socialist countries because the government wasn't so brutal, at least not that we were aware of, and government officials and business executives were more polished and more Western oriented, at least in their outward demeanor. There was a similar view of the Poland and the Polish government, which always had very sympathetic support from Polish émigrés, U.S. policy was to give these countries special privileges in terms of access to Export-Import Bank credits and most-favored-nation (MFN) tariff treatment (i.e., normal U.S. tariff treatment as opposed to special high rates for most communist countries). But in retrospect, we were too uncritical and too optimistic of what the limited liberalization of their systems would permit in terms of economic change. In the end, we were too hopeful.

Q: Today we're looking at four or five Balkan wars in the last few years. Could you see at that time the dissolution of Yugoslavia into a bloody mess?

PRIMOSCH: I certainly could not have envisioned this when I was in Yugoslavia, and there was no one talking of that either. Anyone who went to Yugoslavia serving in the political-economic area had done reading on Yugoslavia's history. You don't have to dust off too many book covers to learn of the terrible, bloody events of the 20th century that had left so much enmity between the different ethnic groups, particularly between the Croats and the Serbs, more so than with the Muslims. No one was talking about the possibility this would occur again. The action plan was focused on what do we do when Tito dies. There was a very thick book which we updated in the State Department every year on the action plan for a whole series of steps that we were expected to take in terms of military precautions, in terms of diplomatic communication, when Tito died. There was concern that the Russians would immediately try to exert their influence, maybe even invade and try to bring Yugoslavia back into the Soviet Bloc. So, that was a very myopic view of the threats to Yugoslavia and what would happen in the future, even though people were aware of the history. Most Americans and I personally find it even to this day hard to believe that the Yugoslav people could do such brutal things to one another, particularly people who in many cases have lived right next to each other, but just happened to be from different ethnic groups. That kind of brutality is just hard to understand. I think it should be a lesson learned for any place in the world where we're trying to promote our diplomatic objectives. We need to be continually aware of how ethnic tensions can very quickly intensify and become very violent. We can't be too optimistic about finding peaceful solutions.

Q: I have much more understanding of the whole of events that happened during the Hitler time in Germany. When looking at Yugoslavia, you thought, "Well, they don't get along, but these are civilized people. They're not going to go out and slaughter each other." Of course, we all watched in horror what happened.

PRIMOSCH: When I was there, I cannot recall any or perhaps just a couple of ethnic incidents where the police beat up someone, there was a fight, or someone got killed. But this was shortly after we had riots in American cities for three or four years and where you saw racial tensions in the U.S. just at a fever's pitch coming and going and people were getting killed. Then you read about the history of Yugoslavia, and you look at what you see. But you don't see that kind of tension that you saw even in the U.S. I think the natural conclusion is, well, that's all in the past and these people now are more civilized and more understanding and it just couldn't happen again.

ISABEL CUMMING
USIS Officer
Belgrade (1976-1979)

Isabel Cumming was recruited by USIS in 1957. In addition to Yugoslavia, her career included service in Tehran, Seoul, Stockholm, Warsaw, Rome, Tokyo, and Bonn. This interview was conducted on January 15, 1990.

CUMMING: I went to Belgrade. Worked for Terry Catherman and Eagleburger was the Ambassador for part of that time. There was a man (Silberman) before that whose name escapes me and he was not very popular with the Yugoslavs so --

Q: Was he a political appointee?

CUMMING: A political appointee, and he is now a judge in Washington. He went to Washington and went back to a law firm. I think that's where he came from. A friend of mine works in the law firm. She was his secretary. But he is now a judge so he is no longer there. I can't remember his name at all, but he was a very -- you know, a dynamic man.

Well, as a matter of fact, he is the man who wrote that letter which Anderson picked up, which said, if you'll excuse my expression, "kiss my ass," and the man sent the letter to Jack Anderson. I remember Terry Catherman getting a call from Washington and wanting to know if this was true.

You know, it's kind of a low blow when you get something like that from Jack Anderson's office. But he was an interesting man, there's no question about it. But then Larry Eagleburger came.

The relationship between the embassy and USIS when I first went there was very, very bad.

Q: That was when those political appointees were --

CUMMING: When the political appointee was there. He had fired the DCM. The USIS had a very bad inspection trip and it was a ghastly, ghastly thing.

Q: Who was the PAO when the bad inspection reported?

CUMMING: Well, Terry Catherman was the PAO for my whole time and he was new at the time the inspection came out. But it was something he fell into. But it was like the embassy and USIS were "we and they" or "us and you" -- you know, there was no cooperation.

But it finally changed when Eagleburger came out because he said, "I want absolutely none of this. We are all we." So then we started working with each other. I did not feel that we, being USIS, was not working with the Embassy, but it was the Embassy who was not working with USIS.

We were not in the Embassy per se. The building was divided so that we were on the corner, the Consular section was in the center, and then the Embassy. We were not allowed to keep anything secured in our office. We had to run back and forth with this all the time and lock it up in an office we had in the Embassy.

So that we were sort of the orphans on the outside. But then when Larry Eagleburger came out, it was entirely changed. Of course, Eagleburger had been in Yugoslavia at the time that Yugoslavia needed -- they always felt that he was the "godfather" of their country because he was there at an economic time that was very important to them and he was the former economic officer.

So he was very well loved by the Yugoslavs, which did not hurt the American Embassy one bit.

Q: I think from what you said when we were off tape that Eagleburger had a great deal of respect for Terry and --

CUMMING: Absolutely. Absolutely, and Terry Catherman and I sat in the DCM's office when his DCM was gone. He had Terry come up to act as DCM and as a matter of fact, in the interim (between Silberman and Eagleburger) they wanted Terry to come up there, but the State Department would not have it. They said that USIS officers did act as DCMs, and I think this was in between Larry and the previous Ambassador.

So they took in the economic officer. But when Larry Eagleburger was there and Larry Eagleburger wanted a man to sit in the DCM's office it was Terry Catherman. Both of us sat in that office for a week.

Q: Did he work pretty extensively -- Eagleburger work with USIA --

CUMMING: Absolutely. He relied on us considerably. Terry went with him to the -- when he was calling on the cultural people or calling on anything pertaining to USIS he always took Terry with him and he was on phone or Terry was in that office.

Q: How many years were you there when Eagleburger was there?

CUMMING: I was there for three years and I think Eagleburger was there probably about two years. Just probably -- a year and a half to two years. Something like that -- right.

Q: Who was the Ambassador after that then for the rest of your tour?

CUMMING: One of our -- well, Eagleburger was there when I left. But incoming was -- oh dear, what's his name? He was a man I knew. He had been in our Eastern European office.

Q: You mean the USIA --

CUMMING: Well, he was a State Department officer and he had come over to work in our Eastern European office.

Q: Davies?

CUMMING: No.

Q: Not Dick Davies?

CUMMING: No. Davies was my area director when I was in Poland. Then he went to Poland as the Ambassador and he -- oh, there was a picture of him not very long ago riding in a little Yugo car.

No. I knew him very well. He came out to Yugoslavia when I was there and I laughingly said, "Are you going to be the next Ambassador?" and all he did was wink, you know. It was not to be known at that time -- and then I met him in Washington.

I think he was being held up for some reason, but he was constantly having his physicals to keep up and he did go.

Q: Would have been held up politically by somebody like --

CUMMING: Politically. Politically, yes. Politically, but he -- oh, dear, I know you know him. He was our area officer. Shoot, I believe he was a State Department officer.

He came to work in the Agency. But Eagleburger was still there when I was there and I think then he went back to Washington and then --

Q: Well, of course -- although Yugoslavia was a Communist country it was the one that was mostly broke long ago with the Kremlin, and in my few visits there, I found it a much more liberal society than any of the other East European countries. How did you find it?

CUMMING: I had no problem in Yugoslavia at all. The only time I ever felt that I was being followed -- of course, having served in Poland, I was conscious of this, is when I went down to Sarajevo -- drove down to Sarajevo to a wedding. Our young branch PAO was married and we went down.

Coming back I was being followed by the MOs and I always said, well, they are just going to make sure I'm not getting lost. They didn't do anything. They just followed but I was very close to a military grounds and I think that they just wanted to make sure that I didn't go on them.

I never felt when I was in Yugoslavia that I was in "Communist" country. I traveled greatly. I think I did more traveling in Yugoslavia than any other country and I never once, with that exception, felt I was being followed. We had embassy plates on the car so they knew exactly who we were and --

Q: What about the association of USIS officers and the staff with the Yugoslav people? Did they have pretty free access?

CUMMING: Absolutely. No problem. No problem at all.

Terry Catherman had lots of contacts; his wife is an artist and she was into the art scene and they knew, I think, every artist in Yugoslavia and were invited to all the arty programs, all the arts shows.

The art people were very -- of course, you know the art people can be the sort of troublemakers of a country, but they were very friendly to the Cathermans and the Cathermans to them. But Terry had a wide range of contacts and friends and his language ability in Serbo-Croatian was so good that he just could go anywhere at all. He had no problem.

Q: Was this true of not necessarily the language but more on the contacts -- was this true of other officers like the press attaché and --

CUMMING: Our press attaché's Serbo-Croatian was also very good and he had a string of friends and many contacts.

So, USIS was very, very well thought of in that country. We worked as the U.S. Information Agency. We were not known as the press and cultural office and the Ambassador used us all the time. If he needed one of the officers to go with him, he

would always call on a USIS officer, unless it was a political situation and then of course he would take his political officer.

Because Mark Palmer, who is now an Ambassador, was our political officer and his language was also flawless. He and Terry were very, very good friends and so Terry was very much into the political situation.

Q: How about the cultural attaché? He must have felt a little bit overshadowed if Terry and his wife had such an extensive contacts among the arts community --

CUMMING: Well, the cultural attaché was not -- he had a lot of arty art friends, of course, but he was more the cultural representative and -- I can't remember -- his name just escapes me, but you would know him. He is a marvelous man. He has a British wife -- an English wife -- and he was more into the music scene than the art scene. But he knew all these people also. I think it was due to Dottie's painting because she, herself, is an artist, that put the Cathermans into the arts community.

I now remember, Ed McBride was our cultural affairs Officer (Mary Rose Brandt was our ACAO).

I don't want it to sound like Dottie and Terry Catherman did all the cultural work, particularly in the arts. Ed was very much into the scene and ran the show; Dottie, being an artist, was very involved in the art scene but as a painter and artist. We had a Center, which Ed ran -- plus all the regular cultural affairs work that goes on in a country.

Q: Do you have any other comments about Yugoslavia now?

CUMMING: It was a good assignment. I liked it.

Q: Yugoslavia is a beautiful country.

CUMMING: It is one of the most beautiful countries in the world. And people don't realize -- there is a lot of beautiful, beautiful scenery in that country.

Q: The Dalmatia coast is just unbelievable.

CUMMING: Oh, its gorgeous. It's beautiful.

Q: If you have any interest in archeology, it's a treasure chest also.

CUMMING: But it has some of the most interesting churches anywhere in the world, gorgeous mosaics that have been gouged by the Turks. You know, history -- just history -- history.

Q: Oh, I know. Of course, there is one city there that still looks pretty much like a Turkish town -- Mostar, up north of Dubrovnik. I served in Turkey for a couple of years and I almost thought I was back in Turkey --

ELLEN M. JOHNSON
Secretary to Deputy Chief of Mission
Belgrade (1977-1979)

Born and raised in New Jersey, Ellen M. Johnson entered the Foreign Service in 1955. In addition to Yugoslavia, her career included service in Japan, Poland, the United Kingdom, Czechoslovakia, and Germany. She was interviewed on April 27, 1994 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: Well, then you went out to Belgrade from 1977-79 with Art Wortzel, was that right?

JOHNSON: Yes. At the time he was assigned as DCM to Belgrade there was no secretary slated for the job. He asked me if I would be interested and without hesitation I agreed. So once again I found myself in a communist country working for a fantastic person whose work habits I knew very well. In addition, Larry Eagleburger had been named Ambassador to Yugoslavia and he, after a number of weeks, was able to persuade Millie Leatherman, his long time secretary in the Department, to accompany him to Belgrade. I knew Millie and therefore found myself upon arrival not only knowing the entire front office but knowing that I would not have difficulty working with them. That doesn't happen very often.

Q: How did Eagleburger run his embassy?

JOHNSON: He worked very hard at keeping morale high. Newcomers were invited to the Residence for lunch soon after arrival and a number of times throughout their tour and encouraged to discuss situations that might be causing a decline in morale. People did speak up and Larry and his wife, Marlene, did listen. A little note here: Marlene tried very hard to get the wives interested in a variety of fun and "good causes" events, but the "liberation" of the Service wife from the evil ambassador's wife had begun and she had little luck. I always felt when this happened a lot of wives missed out on rewarding activities because rather than choosing events, based, perhaps on the attitude of the wife, they refused requests for assistance outright.

Officers and staff were included in the staff meetings, which as noted earlier I feel is important to the morale of a post in a communist country. Although Larry generally had strong ideas about how to approach a subject, or how to react to something, he was willing to listen to other people. If your presentation was strong enough he would change his mind and give you credit for the outcome. Even if you were unable to change his mind, at least you felt you were given a chance to express your views and he was listening.

He thought it was important for junior officers to rotate around the embassy as much as possible, including some months assigned to the front office. They didn't act as aides when assigned to the front office, but he made sure they had projects to work on and reports to write. The young officers always seemed to appreciate the attention.

Larry wrote extremely well and never seemed afraid to tell it as he thought it was, even though the recipient may not have wanted to hear it. I understand people in the Department read his cables because they were always so interesting and straight forward. He may have been out of step with the current thinking on some subject, but it was how he saw it. I think you can see this trait in his television appearances on TV news programs today.

A not so happy trait of Larry's was that he did have a temper and often his first reaction to something he didn't like was to lose his temper. Fortunately for Belgrade the DCM was Art Wortzel, who was very low-keyed, knew Larry well and just how to handle him. For example, when Larry got the news that a senior officer had done something not very diplomatic, he yelled, "I want that man out of the embassy. I don't want to see him again." Well, the connecting doors between Larry's office and the DCM's was open and Art walked in and said, "What is the problem now?" It wasn't long before Art had calmed him down and had come up with a suggestion of how the situation could be handled and there no longer was a problem. So he needed someone like Art around to handle things on those occasions when his temper would suddenly flare up over something expected. Another DCM might have just cowered in his office and let the situation get out of hand, not only possibly ruining an officer's career, but also the good morale that Larry normally worked so hard and successfully to maintain. Fortunately most of Larry's sudden outbursts were confined to his office and were temporary, especially if Art was around.

Larry was a person who didn't know how to relax. He was always busy doing something. Millie and I used to hate it whenever he became ill enough to stay home because all day long, what seemed like every fifteen minutes, he would be on the phone with a new project for us or someone in the embassy that he had been lying in bed thinking about. We would have to run around and get what he wanted and then deliver them to him at the Residence. We did our best to keep him healthy.

He encouraged everybody to get out and see the country and meet the people. Belgrade is not blessed with interesting things to do within the city. It is an ugly city with no character, to boot. However, once you get to the west coast, that is a different story. The old towns, like Dubrovnik, are monuments to history and the countryside is lovely. At least this was true before the Bosnia situation which is going on today.

The Yugoslavs loved Eagleburger, however, because he had been at the embassy as a junior officer during the earthquake some years earlier and had been sent down to Skopje to help.

Q: Yes, I know, because I preceded Larry. He and I came into Yugoslavia at the same time, we took Serbian together. I was a political adviser to a hospital for three weeks beginning the day of the earthquake in Skopje. Larry followed me about three weeks later with an engineering unit which was putting up some prefabricated houses outside of Skopje that ended up as a gypsy village.

JOHNSON: Well, it is always nice when people remember that you came in and did something to help them out in time of catastrophe. We sometimes think people aren't appreciative of what you do for them.

Q: Anything else you would like to mention?

JOHNSON: Well, Tito was still alive then, but barely. I remember one day looking out the embassy's front windows and watching a parade drive by. Tito was standing in an open car leaning on a railing. He looked terrible, almost as if he had already been embalmed. And to make matters worse, the vehicle following his car in the parade was an ambulance! I didn't think this was very reassuring to Tito or the Yugoslavs lining the streets watching the parade. That was my only view of Tito.

It was an interesting two years.

Q: You left Yugoslavia in 1979. This was a change in administration, etc. Were you tempted to stay?

JOHNSON: No, I really didn't like Belgrade as a place to live, although I enjoyed Yugoslavia and the embassy. A few months before I was due to depart I received a call from the DCM in Bonn who was losing his secretary and wanted to know if I would be interested. The DCM was Bill Woessner, who I knew from Warsaw days when he was a junior officer in the consular section when I was there. I was ready for a change from living in a communist country...two years generally was long enough at a time, unless the city had a lot to offer like was the case with Prague...and felt the combination of Germany and working for Bill Woessner in my favorite position as DCM secretary, sounded great, so I agreed.

ROBERT E. McCARTHY
Consular Officer
Belgrade (1977-1979)

USIS Officer
Montenegro (1979-1981)

Robert E. McCarthy was borne in 1942 and raised in New York City. He served in military intelligence between 1966 and 1968. McCarthy entered

the Foreign Service in 1973 and was assigned to Belgrade in 1977 until 1979.

McCARTHY: I went to Belgrade from 1977 to 1979.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you got there?

McCARTHY: Ambassador Eagleburger.

Q: Larry and I took Serbian together.

McCARTHY: Oh, God.

Q: We both went out there in '62.

McCARTHY: This is when he was involved with Macedonia and the aftermath of the earthquake?

Q: Yes. I went there, too. I was the officer who took a MASH group in the Seventh Army there, and Larry took engineers afterwards.

McCARTHY: Yes. Was it right after the quake?

Q: Yes, well I was new to the consular section. I was there the next morning. A group came down... the British, and I think one or two other consular officers of other embassies... we took a convoy and went down there. What was the state of our relations when you got there?

McCARTHY: Relations were pretty good. As you remember, Yugoslavia was a big member of the non-aligned movement. It was communist, but had its own third-way house brand of communism. Yugoslavia wasn't in the Warsaw Pact. It was lying astride the Adriatic, blocking any of the Warsaw Pact access to the Mediterranean. One would have to go through the Dardanelles, past Turkey, a NATO member. It was liberal, compared to other communist states at that time. There was a lot more individual freedom; Yugoslavs could travel. As you remember, Yugoslavs knew what life was like outside. They had relatives, whom they could visit. Tourists could come to Yugoslavia and travel all around. Embassy personnel didn't need diplomatic notes requesting permission to travel outside the capital. So, relations were good. They were soured periodically, often by a dual national case. You know, someone would come with dual citizenship and would be drafted into the Yugoslav army while visiting relatives. But, in general, the relations were good.

Q: What sort of consular work were you doing?

McCARTHY: I started off on non-immigrant visas and federal benefits and then added immigrant visa work. From time to time I was involved in cases involving American citizens. I think the consular officer's position is probably the hardest in an embassy.

Q: Well, you tell a lot of people "no."

McCARTHY: You tell a lot of people "No." In the space of a couple of minutes you're making critical decisions about their lives. You have to apply the law, of course, and the applicant has to convince you he'll return after his visit. You can't become cynical and refuse everybody or be a bleeding heart and believe everybody's story. You get lied to a lot, so it is easy to get jaded.

Q: Were you picking up any feel for the Yugoslav ethnic divisions and all that?

McCARTHY: Yes. There would be incidents at soccer games. People would tell ethnic jokes at the expense of others. You'd see the way the Albanians would be treated by many Serbs when they're working on the street cleaning crews. My wife and I traveled around Yugoslavia almost every weekend, went to every part of Yugoslavia, except the very southeastern corner of Macedonia. We saw differences and some animosities, but it was far from being a seething cauldron bound to erupt. People talked about the birth rate in Kosovo and the subsidies for Kosovo, and you'd go up to Slovenia and the Slovenians would complain that they were carrying the rest of Yugoslavia on their backs. Tito kept a lid on everything of course, and you were sent to prison on Goli Otok for nationalism. Still, a demagogue was needed to make those low-level feelings burst into violence. There was a certain level of prosperity when we were there, so people were not worrying about a shrinking pie at that time. So there was no great need for scapegoats.

Q: Well, you mentioned a wife. When did a wife appear on the scene?

McCARTHY: We got married just before going to Yugoslavia.

Q: What's her background?

McCARTHY: She's from Texas originally, and then the family moved to California. She went to school in California, graduated from Berkeley, was a health nutritionist, and then came to Washington to work for the Pan American Health Organization. We're both folk dancers, very into ethnic music, and that's how we met. In fact that was one of the reasons I wanted to go to Yugoslavia. Some wives might not see Belgrade as very alluring for their first overseas assignment. Marjie was really positive. For her it was the ideal place to go.

Q: If you talk about ethnic things, just the tribal qualities there are wonderful.

McCARTHY: Absolutely. And folk festivals, and little off-the-beaten-path places where you can find traditional crafts still applied to daily life.

Q: Did you get any particularly memorable consular cases that you...?

McCARTHY: Yes. There was one automobile accident on the Autoput, the main highway from Greece through Yugoslavia to Austria. A lot of gastarbeiters, the guest workers in Europe, used to drive to and from Turkey that way. It was a long drive, they would get sleepy, and the cops said they would find bricks on the floor of a car by the accelerator. It was a form of cruise control; the brick helped keep a steady pace. Anyway, there was an accident involving an American and other people of several nationalities. I went to the morgue to corroborate the American citizen's identity. You'd think that you could look at photos and then identify the body. But by the time you factor in the embalming fluid, changed hair styles, passing years, etc., I found I could not be sure. A relative of the American came to Belgrade and made a positive identification. The body was shipped to the parents in Germany, and it turned out it was the wrong one. It was so anxiety producing for the poor family.

Q: Oh, God, oh, yes.

McCARTHY: The family and I talked on the phone several times, and ultimately things were straightened out. Besides the human tragedy involved, it was clear that simple things are not that simple. They're not so cut and dried. Here's someone who knows the person, looks at the bodies in the morgue and says "Yes, that's her." And it's not.

Q: That's very sad. Yes.

McCARTHY: And the prison cases were sad too. The "representative payee" cases I always found very interesting. Americans of Yugoslav origin or maybe Yugoslavs who had worked in the United States often retired in Yugoslavia and received their social security payments. In some cases they were not competent to manage their own affairs, so a representative payee would receive the check on behalf of the beneficiary. One of us had to travel out and make sure that the person was alive, that the person was being treated well, and that as far as you could see, that money was going toward that person's well-being. These trips were often to "behind God's back" ("Boga za ledja," as the Serbs say). Someone in the village café would direct you to a remote area, and you'd walk out into a huge cornfield and yell out "Milane." And sooner or later Milan would answer back. He'd take you to the house. You would see the representative payee and talk with everybody. It was a small window on remote village life that you otherwise simply would not see.

Q: I know. What I did, I came back with bottles of Schlivovits, which I detested.

McCARTHY: [speaks Serbian] Domachi, domachi je.

Q: Oh, yes, "much better if we make it ourselves" – which really wasn't true.

McCARTHY: I liked it myself.

Q: Did you have the problems of people coming from small villages in Macedonia to get visas?

McCARTHY: Oh, yes.

Q: I remember there was a town called Labovno, and all these people wanted to go, in those days, to the Canadian Expo in Montreal. These are people who'd never been out of Macedonia and all of a sudden they wanted to go see a World's Fair in Montreal. You got good plane tickets, but none of them ever went to see the thing. What a mess.

McCARTHY: Yes, you definitely had that. And the hardships they would endure just to get there for the interview impressed one how hardy the Yugoslavs were in those days. Someone would be sitting in front of you, and you happen to know there was a major blizzard in their region. They have a baby with them, and you ask how they got to Belgrade. "Well," they might start off, "We walked five hours to," you know, some town... where they got a bus and then got a train. They would tell you all this, not expecting any particular recognition, but just recounting it in a matter-of-fact way. In a number of those remote places, their contact in the United States was often someone who had a restaurant, and a number of "waiters" just happened to be going on visit. All the while you are saying "no" to all these people, they were sitting there heavily armed. They probably didn't have a metal detector when you were there, but we installed one in the late 1970s. The first few days, before word got around, there would be this pile of guns and knives and daggers in the consular section...

Q: God, I never knew about that. [laughter]

McCARTHY: [laughter] Exactly, neither did I. And I'm thinking, I'm saying "no" to these people and they're sitting over there armed to the teeth.

Q: [laughter] Now I know.

McCARTHY: Exactly.

Q: What was your impression of Eagleburger's running the embassy.

McCARTHY: Eagleburger was great. He was politically astute, analytical, and could cut through all the excessive information. And he was funny, funny as hell. You remember.

Q: Right.

McCARTHY: Could be witty in a sardonic way, in a whimsical way. Very good with people. Relaxed them right away. You'd go to a meeting with Ambassador Eagleburger and somebody in the foreign minister and he was great. Later, when I was in Montenegro he came for the opening of the American cultural center, and the Montenegrins loved him. "Larry, Larry," they kept calling him. The head of the foreign relations department in

Montenegro pointed with pride to a picture on his wall. There was an earthquake down in Montenegro and we sent in Hercules planes loaded with emergency supplies. The picture is of a plane being unloaded at Titograd Airport. The head of the foreign relations department is standing there with his hands in his pocket, watching, and Eagleburger has his sleeves rolled up, and is offloading boxes. And of course, everyone kids him about this, "You're standing there with your hands in your pockets and the American ambassador is working." The Montenegrins had a reputation for being very lazy. Matter of fact, during the earthquake, they said, "The Montenegrins are really rolling their sleeves up now." "Oh, they 'e finally getting down to work?" "No, they're lining up to get inoculations." To make a long story short, Eagleburger was a terrific ambassador.

Q: Yes. His wife, Marlene, started out as a consular assistant in my consular section.

McCARTHY: Also great. Talked to everybody in the embassy. Great for morale. No nonsense, really practical.

Q: Oh, yes. You said while you were there you opened up a culture center?

McCARTHY: Yes, we had American centers in every one of the republics except Montenegro. They wanted a center, and Ambassador Eagleburger thought that we should be represented everywhere. This was our way of getting our message out to the Yugoslavs and hearing back from them. We had to finance it out of embassy resources. The embassy wanted someone from the existing staff to go down there, and I volunteered. I took the assignment as part of a transfer from State to USIA. By that time I realized that USIA work was more to my liking and was where I would be most effective. So Marj and I went down there, and for the first year I worked out of an apartment, on the second floor of a private house.

Q: In Titograd.

McCARTHY: In Titograd.

Q: Was it Podgoritsa, is it coming back?

McCARTHY: It was called Titograd then. It now has its old name of Podgoritsa again.

Q: The main street was Marshala Tita.

McCARTHY: Yes.

Q: Always.

McCARTHY: Marshala Tita, indeed. We belonged to a folk dance group in Belgrade, and we used to sing songs about the marshal.

Druze Tito, mi ti

Se kumemo. Mi ti se kunemo.

“Comrade Tito, we dedicate ourselves to you.” American diplomats in a Yugoslav folk dance group singing songs in honor of a communist!

So, anyway, yes, we lived in Titograd and at the same time we were constructing a center. My job was to go out and meet everybody, establish contact with all the major institutions, the key players in Montenegro, and oversee construction of the center - air-conditioner circuits, furniture orders, talking with construction crews and the city housing administration.

Q: Were the Montenegrins a different breed of cat?

McCARTHY: Yes, in some ways they were a different breed of cat. They had a very traditional mountainous clan culture, where your name and family history were very important. People knew what clan you were from, and every clan had a reputation. Ideally, though not always in fact of course, the culture put a premium on honor and your word as bond. You were supposed to be courageous and speak your mind, and there was a tradition of scholarship. An interesting blend. And Montenegrins are very tall people.

Q: Hawks, beak nose.

McCARTHY: Yes, yes. There the custom of the corzo the evening stroll. You remember all those cities would have central streets blocked off, and people would walk up and down the streets, greeting each other during the corzo. There was, not exactly a swagger, but a confidence that the Montenegrins demonstrated in just the way they walked around that would strike visitors. After you lived there for a while, you sort of got used to it. But someone would come to visit from Belgrade and say, “It’s like being in West Side Story or something.”

So the point, coming back to your question, is that the Montenegrins didn’t, even though Montenegro was a small republic, have any inferiority complexes. They had a lot of contact with the outside world. When they were a kingdom, you know, they had a capital up in the mountains in Cetinje, and we had a representative there until the end of WWI. We re-established that relationship with the American Center, our first official American presence since that time. The Montenegrins took this as perfectly natural. They weren’t defensive, they weren’t afraid, They weren’t trying to put you down. We were just... equals... “We are a great people, you are a great people.” That was sort of implicit in everything that happened.

Montenegrins were also extremely sociable and hospitable. So a meeting in the office... and in those were the days of “rakia” in the morning was very social. In my book closet I had Wild Turkey bourbon, homemade rakia, Johnny Walker scotch, and several other choices. It was considered really bad form if somebody came to visit you, even if it was 11 in the morning or 10:30 in the morning, not to offer coffee and a drink. You know, “But what will you have to drink?” The Serbs had some of that sociability too, but it was

even more pronounced in Montenegro. You'd go into somebody's office on an appointment, and you'd be talking to the director of, let's say, a museum. You'd be talking to him and somebody else would come in. Rather than say, "I'll be with you in a minute," the museum director would wave him on in, and it would be sort of like the Johnny Carson Show. You know, the new guest comes in and sits a little closer to the host. The guy who comes in to fix the radiator comments on the cultural exchange program, gives me suggestions. I would feel free to tell him how to fix the radiator if I wanted. Other people arrive. Pretty soon you'll have six or seven people there, from all different walks of life, and everybody's business being conducted at the same time.

Q: Well, how did the culture center take?

McCARTHY: It took very well. There were some people who were against the whole idea. That was considered one of the most "Soviet" of the Yugoslav republics. There were some old guard there who didn't like it, but by and large people saw the center as a window to the outside world, as recognizing Montenegro, as bringing in lots of ways in which people could learn English and could be exposed to cultural influences from outside, as educational. We would have film evenings, we would have lectures. We would bring in Fulbrighters to talk to teachers. We'd have different events in the Center, and we'd take exhibits on the road. You know, you used to be able to throw those collapsible exhibits into the back of the station wagon and drive up to some mountain town and set up that exhibit, using special self-standing frames. We'd bring in lecturers on everything from arms control to urban planning and solar energy, and the Montenegrins would be very interested. You know, they're intellectually very curious. They have a tradition of education and scholarship, and we had very good discussions. And how could I even have not said this at the very beginning, the wonderful, wonderful local staff! We had the luxury of hiring from scratch and the top FSN there, Hilda Zakrajsek, was just superb. Very sensitive, well educated, bilingual, a self-starter, lots of ideas, and she was committed to improving conditions in Montenegro. Before I hired her, she already had a reputation in the republic, had accompanied delegations from their bank to international negotiations several times, and had been one of the top English teachers in the republic. So that was very good, too, and I guess she brought in a constituency. So I think the center was generally well received.

Q: Was there a University of Titograd?

McCARTHY: There was.

Q: Did this amount to much, or...

McCARTHY: It wasn't one of the best universities in the country, but it was important for Titograd, yes. We had Fulbrighters there who had an impact. You had some English language people who were very good. It was mainly, as I recall, more a technically oriented university.

Q: Did the fact that you had a hunk of the shoreline, you know for summer traffic, did that make much of an impact?

McCARTHY: Oh, yes. The Montenegrins had an expression. If anything went wrong, if there was a complaint - for example, in the summer the water doesn't get up to the second floor, the heating has a problem, or whatever it happened to be - they'd say, [speaks Montenegrin] "Zato more je blizu" "But, for all that, the sea is close," meaning, there's a compensation: 45 minutes over the mountain, and you're at this glorious seacoast. So how could anyone really have grounds for complaint, when you consider that?!! There was a tourism industry on the coast, [laughter] but the service was a little alien to some of the Montenegrins at that time. It's the flip side of the coin of this clan mentality and emphasis on dignity, and equality, two people speaking as equals. The idea that tourists could put up their hands and say, "I want you to come here" or beckon with the finger would really rub them the wrong way in some of these establishments. So it was a bit of a tough haul to inculcate that ethos or service to tourists.

Q: How about immigration? Was there much of a connection with Americans, you know, with immigration and all that.

McCARTHY: Yes, a number of people had relatives overseas. There was quite a bit of communication back and forth. Quite a bit of visiting. There was the ferry to Italy too, from Bar to Bari. Some relatives abroad still managed to get out of touch. I remember one description of an uncle coming back with this big chest of hard-to-get tools (in his day) that were sold everywhere by the time that he got back with these things. He had a flash frozen picture of deficit items in his mind.

Q: Were you there during the earthquake?

McCARTHY: No, I was in Belgrade during the earthquake. Another officer and I went down there in a Land Rover to try to find information on Americans who were in Montenegro the time.

Q: Was there a rather quick recovery from the earthquake?

McCARTHY: Yes, fortunately it happened on the weekend, and as you see with all these earthquakes, there are pancaked buildings and everybody wonders what happened with the construction standards. You know, these floors just collapse on one another. Their recovery was pretty quick, although you still saw some of the ruins around some time afterwards. The roadways were disrupted, communications were disrupted, but they patched it up.

Q: Were there ship visits while you were there?

McCARTHY: Yes, but not to Montenegrin ports. There were ship visits farther up the coast. The Navy, as I recall, was experimenting with having our ships repaired during port calls, and having Yugoslavs working on the ships. As I remember, we were satisfied

with the work. They were clearly putting very good people on that. An aircraft carrier came to the port of Split, and my wife and I happened to be out on the island of Khvar, opposite Split. We were sitting at an outdoor café, and had just ordered from the waiter. The waiter's friend came by and said, "There's a ship visit... unbelievable... 5,000 American sailors, etc." He did make it sound pretty interesting. Anyway, our waiter left then and there to take in the ship visit. [laughter] It was a big deal.

THOMAS P. H. DUNLOP
Political Counselor
Belgrade (1978-1982)

Thomas P.H. Dunlop was born in Washington, DC in 1934. He graduated from Yale University in 1956 and served in the U.S. Air Force overseas from 1957 to 1960. In addition to Yugoslavia, he served in Vietnam, Korea, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed on July 12, 1996 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: Then in 1978, Harry, you left your "detail" to the Pentagon and went to South Korea? Is that right?

DUNLOP: No, I went back to serve at the Embassy in Belgrade. That was my final assignment to Yugoslavia. I've been back on visits since then, but that was my final tour of duty in Yugoslavia. It was my next Yugoslav experience.

Q: You were in Belgrade from 1978 until when?

DUNLOP: 1982. I spent four years there as Political Counselor, the most responsible job I'd had in the Foreign Service up until that point. I looked forward to working in a country which I thought I knew well and would get to know better. The Ambassador there was really kind of a legend in the Foreign Service, Larry Eagleburger. I was flattered that Larry accepted me in Belgrade. He could have said, "No." However, I'd always thought well of him and still do. I've differed with him recently about some Yugoslav issues but I still have a great deal of admiration and respect for him.

By the time I went to Yugoslavia in 1978 we had three children, one of whom was seriously handicapped. She was retarded. We also brought a dog, a cat, 17 pieces of luggage. So, with this menagerie, off we went to Belgrade.

Q: What was the situation in Belgrade when you arrived there in 1978?

DUNLOP: On the surface, I think, it looked very familiar. I remember having the feeling that I was seeing an old movie again. Actually, I felt that we were living through the same experience. The frames were a little slower, as these familiar sights came in review.

Belgrade had not changed. The atmosphere of the city had not changed very much. I think that my first impressions were always useful in these matters. I remember thinking, "'Plus ça change,' but not much longer, because Tito couldn't live all of that much longer."

Q: How old was Tito when you arrived in Belgrade in 1978?

DUNLOP: Tito was still in power and still active. Although periodically there would be rumors about his health, those rumors had been spread since the 1960's. He was a man in his 80's. He was variously believed to have been born in 1896 or 1898 and was now getting up into his early 80's. He was as vigorous or was portrayed as being as vigorous as ever. The creaking political system that he had put in place [in 1945] was still functioning as he had intended it to function, with him as the capstone of the structure.

I had left Yugoslavia in 1972, very depressed over the crackdown on Communist Party liberals in Croatia and Slovenia which Tito instituted, as I think I mentioned. This had taken place just a few months before I left. I felt that was a grave error and an unnecessary infliction of pain on individuals that I knew and liked. Also, this crackdown was a serious, political error by Tito who thereby cut off a whole generation of new, young modernizers who certainly could have been extremely valuable in the transition after his death. However, the emotions created by that crackdown had subsided by 1978. Police pressure on the people was certainly very strong at the time I left Zagreb, having been reimposed at the time of this crackdown. However, this pressure had been reduced to a low level by the time I arrived in Belgrade in 1978. People were still traveling. The Americans in the Embassy were, perhaps, less under surveillance in 1978 than we had been, certainly at the end of my tour in Zagreb six years earlier [in 1972].

Even though local Communist Party leaders who had been vocal promoters of liberalization and modernization of the system were in political exile, there was still strong, nationalist pressures in the Communist Party leadership in each of the republics, and particularly in Croatia and Slovenia. I had to get reacquainted with that situation. I was in the Embassy in Belgrade and relying on the Consulate in Zagreb, but the Consulate there seemed well up on things. So it didn't take too long to adjust to changes in the situation.

The Embassy was still in the same, creaky old building, which had gotten worse by now. Of all of the Embassy buildings that I have worked in, Belgrade was the worst. Of all of the Embassy buildings that I have visited, Belgrade was the next "worst." I think that the Embassy building in Moscow was the worst of all. And the Embassy building in Belgrade got worse during the four years that I was there [1978-1982]. The working conditions there were increasingly bad.

Q: How did you find dealing with the Yugoslav Government?

DUNLOP: We mostly dealt with the Yugoslav Foreign Office. The Yugoslav Foreign Office was well staffed with competent people who, generally speaking, were on the "up

and up." That is, if they could avoid lying to you, they would do so. I think that they recognized that diplomacy flourishes where there is a certain level of human trust and understanding between individuals.

Our relationships with Yugoslavia on various issues had, perhaps, become a little less contentious. For example, let's talk about Yugoslavia's leadership of the Non-Aligned Movement. Since the late 1950's, Tito had prided himself on being one of the major leaders of the non-aligned world. He had been one of the co-chairmen of the famous meeting in Bandung [Indonesia, in 1955], along with Nasser, Nehru, and Sukarno. Who was the other one?

Q: Kwame Nkrumah.

DUNLOP: Nkrumah. That meeting laid down the five principles of peaceful co-existence. They then held a series of non-aligned conferences, every other year. These were very elaborate, showcases for these chiefs of state. Tito was always and very visibly strutting his stuff at these meetings. We had a lot of arguments in the 1950's, and particularly in the 1960's, with Tito about issues which were very important to us.

However, by the 1970's Tito was in a contest with Fidel Castro for leadership of the non-aligned movement. Castro's own, very considerable ego was competing with Tito's for a leadership role in the non-aligned movement. Not only was it fun to watch, but we had somebody to cheer for! [Laughter] So the non-aligned Movement was not as much of a problem for us as it had been at certain times in the past.

The Yugoslav emigre community in the United States, particularly the "nasties" and especially the Croatian "nasties," had actually committed some murders and blown up some airplanes in Europe, although they never blew up any in the US. They hijacked some airplanes and committed some internecine murders in the United States, mainly involving extortion schemes involving money and that kind of thing. However, this kind of activity seemed to be at a low level. They were not the threat that they had seemed to be in the past.

President Carter paid attention to Tito. Carter instituted a series of letters, some of which, I thought, were overly obsequious or sugary. They would contain phrases like, "...relying on your great experience..." They would contain an invitation that Tito "enlighten" President Carter. I like to see chiefs of state writing letters, for a couple of reasons. These letters shouldn't be too frequent, but these exchanges make sure that they are read by everybody at the court. If a chief of state holds a given view, by God other people are going to hear about it. I think that exchanges of this kind can be useful, but I thought that the Carter letters to Tito were a little too saccharine. However, Tito liked them. They smoothed his feathers and so may have served President Carter's purpose.

Another circumstance, I think, made our relationship with the Yugoslav Government better, and I'll speak very frankly about this because I think that it was important. Larry

Eagleburger had replaced a man named Laurance Silberman as Ambassador to Yugoslavia. Silberman had been a disaster.

Q: He was a...

DUNLOP: He was a political appointee selected by the administration of President Ford.

Q: He's now a judge.

DUNLOP: He's now a judge here in the Washington area. He's a very conservative, right wing person who has made such sweeping pronouncements as that, "The State Department should be abolished! If that is not done, all Foreign Service Officers should be shot!" Ambassador Silberman was detested by the Yugoslavs, because he made public knowledge of his dislike of Tito and of the Yugoslavs. As Larry Eagleburger said happily to almost anybody, "I've got the easiest act in the world to follow out here." Silberman had come, done his "thing," and gone. Thank God, I didn't experience this from having had to live with Ambassador Silberman or serve on his staff. However, to do him justice, about 15 percent of the people in the Embassy who had worked with him liked him a lot. That left a lot of people who didn't think much of him.

So irritants causing frictions that got us cross-wise with the Yugoslavs were not very prominent during those last two years of Tito's life [1978-1980]. Tito died in June, 1980, about halfway through my tour of duty in Belgrade. I think that I arrived in Belgrade in July, 1978.

Yugoslav-Soviet relations were always important to us, as they were to the Yugoslavs. Generally speaking, during these four years [1978-1982] the Yugoslavs showed as much concern about Soviet adventurism and hard-nosed policies as we could have reasonably expected them to show re Afghanistan, for example. We didn't feel that the Yugoslavs were being either unwary or, even worse, tending to collude with the Russians. This was the time of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan which began in December, 1979, with the coup d'etat in Kabul and all of that.

The Soviet Ambassador in Belgrade, whose name escapes me now, was a complete boor. He represented all of the worst of the old Soviet diplomacy. I think that the Yugoslavs viewed the Soviets as dangerous and a threat to them, but the Yugoslavs were also becoming sort of contemptuous of the Soviets.

At that time, you know, we still had that image of the Soviet Army as being a massive machine which, perhaps, would not act with great precision but which was capable of exerting enormous pressure on any battlefield, anywhere in the world. The Soviet Army could bring to bear all of the superior armor and artillery which it had. Its first line aircraft might be flown a little less skillfully than aircraft in other countries, but, by God, there would be a lot of them right over your head. By the time of my tour in Belgrade, 1978-1982, the Yugoslavs had, perhaps, developed a little more realistic view of the Soviets. They weren't so concerned about the danger of provoking the Soviets.

We managed to get the agreement of our NATO allies to deploy "Pershing" [surface to surface] missiles in Europe during this period of time. This was a very controversial issue for some of these European countries. It was a controversial issue back in the United States as well. However, Helmut Schmidt, the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, was very helpful to us in that regard. I remember one Yugoslav telling Ambassador Eagleburger that the Russians would not "permit" the deployment of "Pershing" missiles in Western Europe. So Ambassador Eagleburger replied, "Well, what in the hell are the Soviets going to do about it?" The Yugoslav said, "Well, they'll find some way to make you sorry that you did this." Well, we did it, and the Soviets didn't do anything about this deployment.

We had a pretty good commercial relationship with Yugoslavia at this time. The boycotts of Yugoslav goods and the agitation about Yugoslav civil and human rights had died out to some extent in the United States. American labor unions had been very anti-Yugoslav during the 1950's and 1960's. By the late 1970's they had become less so.

A Westinghouse nuclear power plant was in the final stages of construction up in Croatia. Making arrangements for its construction had involved a very difficult negotiation, and there were always commercial frictions over that plant. However, this problem was confined to the commercial area.

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 Charge. 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 Charge 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 Charge. 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 Charge 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 kidnaped.

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 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.

Q: Let's move into 1980 and Tito's slowly, laboriously, and painfully passing from the scene. Could you discuss that?

DUNLOP: I think that Tito was variously believed to be 84 or 85 as the new year of 1980 approached. He held the annual Diplomatic Hunt, which was one of his last such public events, if not the last in late autumn 1979. His practice at Christmas and New Year's had always been to stage a kind of "state procession," like Queen Victoria or Queen Elizabeth, visiting one of the major areas of the United Kingdom. Tito would visit one of the [seven constituent] republics of Yugoslavia, hold forth there, and give a New Year's Eve party, which would be afforded extensive, televised coverage. He could be seen as the benign, smiling, "playful" leader that he sometimes probably was.

In 1980 I believe that he was going to do that in Slovenia at Christmas time. He went to Slovenia, but events didn't take place quite that way. Just at that time rumors began to spread that he was ill, and that's why there hadn't been a lot of television coverage of gala parties and receptions, toasts, speeches of thanks, and so forth. In fact, he had fallen seriously ill. Apparently, he had periodically had a kind of thrombotic condition in his lower left leg. This had been adequately treated in various ways, using blood thinners and whatever else is usually done. However, this time this condition came on him again and put him to bed. The authorities tried to hide this condition. They put him in the clinic at Ljubljana, probably the best medical facility in the country, where he eventually died.

About two weeks after he was hospitalized, they finally announced that he was ill. Within a relatively short time the pronouncements on his illness and the events surrounding them indicated that this was a life threatening condition. I guess that the Yugoslav authorities did what they might have been expected to do. They made a big show of calling in medical experts from all over the world. They got Doctor DeBakey from Dallas, TX. DeBakey was then prominently known in Europe because of heart transplants. They got a comparably famous or internationally well-known Soviet physician in. They got Swiss and French doctors. The regional medical officer whom we had on our staff in the Embassy in Belgrade had a lot of contacts among the Belgrade medical community. He was able to keep us pretty well abreast of the situation, or at least of the informed gossip about it. The doctors weren't being told any more than the public was, but they had a better way of judging what a medical communique really meant. I remember the doctor saying at the Embassy staff meeting, when he gave us the latest "poop" about Tito's condition, that it was a real error that the Yugoslav Government had made when they decided to treat Tito by committee. He said that this was inviting the worst. He said that Tito would be much better off if he would just check himself into a US Clinic under the name of "Joe Broz" and say, "Here I am. Please treat me." He could leave it to them to decide what doctor would be in charge of his treatment.

However, of course, they didn't do this. They had this process going on where a medical board would meet and issue official communiques. This went on for six months, during which time part of his leg was amputated. That may have prolonged his life a little bit. He died in May or June, 1980. His birthday was always celebrated on May 25. I'm not sure whether he died just before or just after his birthday.

His funeral was a major event. The decision always has to be made as to who will represent a given government at the funeral of a chief of state. I'm sure that we can all remember President Charles De Gaulle, walking with great dignity behind the caisson carrying President John F. Kennedy's body. As Tito was a chief of state for 50 years, during which he carved out for himself a place in history, a lot of countries sent their chiefs of state. The Germans sent Helmut Schmidt, who was Federal Chancellor at that time. Other countries sent people of lesser rank. We sent President Jimmy Carter's mother, Lillian Carter, and Vice President Walter Mondale. There was some consternation over that. I'm sure that "Ms Lillian" was a grand lady. She had been in the Peace Corps in India. However, there was some consternation over that. I think that it was more of a tempest in a teapot than anything else.

Among other things, within three weeks of Tito's funeral we were able to announce a state visit to the new, Yugoslav Government by President Carter which had sort of been under consideration for some time. It would take place later in 1980. That was helpful.

Tito's funeral was a very impressive event. There was a lot of real public shock and some real sorrow. I always felt that the foreign, and particularly the American, press exaggerated the sorrow part. I always thought that Americans in general exaggerated the degree to which Tito had won the "affection" of his people. He had certainly won their respect and their fear. Certainly, there was a mixture of emotions in the feelings of ordinary Yugoslavs for him. Huge crowds attended the public ceremonies. The funeral was held in Belgrade. If I can say this without sounding too foolish, the Serbs respect death and visibly show their respect for death. Death is an important event. It is not something that you kind of avoid talking about until it happens. Then, when it happens, you don't talk about it for very long. In Serbia death is a "big deal." I guess that I am not expressing this very well, but the crowds that turned out were respecting death, as well as Tito, the individual who had died.

One of the more important questions about the funeral was what role would Mrs. Tito play. Mrs. Tito was still Mrs. Tito but had been in internal political exile...

Q: This was Jovanka...

DUNLOP: Jovanka Broz. The lady who had been Tito's wife of record for many years, since shortly after World War II. In fact, she had fallen out of favor for reasons that were obscure and remained obscure. I think that we have already discussed that a little bit. She may have allowed herself to get too closely involved in some of the discussions regarding the fate of Yugoslavia after Tito's death with people from her part of

Yugoslavia, Lika. This is a Croatian-Serbian area known as the Krajina [in western Bosnia], where Lika Serbs live. She came to the funeral, acted with great dignity, and was allowed to place a wreath on his coffin.

After he was buried, his tomb was quickly turned into a pilgrimage site for visitors. Every schoolchild, certainly in Belgrade and in many other cities over the intervening years, was bussed up there to walk around his tomb. We were all kind of interested in how well that would be done. People's tastes in these things vary. However, the tomb isn't too garish. His remains lie in a room filled with flowers. People come into the room at one end and walk a half circle around his remains and go out the other end. There is a very handsome, marble slab there with a simple inscription. Such visits were still going on when I left Yugoslavia in 1982. I am told that the tomb has now been closed. People are not now being bussed and trucked up to visit his tomb.

Q: This was a much discussed subject when I was in Yugoslavia. You and I were in Yugoslavia back in the 1960's, and a popular subject of conversation was, "After Tito, what?" Particularly when he was under medical treatment, what was the talk, speculation, or planning at the American Embassy on what would happen after the death of Tito?

DUNLOP: Larry Eagleburger was still Ambassador when Tito died. He was replaced by David Anderson later in the summer of 1980. Before Tito died, but not long before then, and, I think, after we had learned of his final illness, Ambassador Eagleburger tasked us all, although we would have volunteered to do this anyway, with writing an analysis on "Whither Yugoslavia?" This would have been one of the 40 or 50 such pieces produced in the previous 40 or 50 years.

I remember this analysis quite well. Tito's death would obviously be an important report. We all tried to sort of "see the end" of this particular tunnel. At least, we wanted to know if there was any light there, at the end of the tunnel. I remember the broad outlines of this report. I don't think that there was a lot of controversy over it in the US Mission. People who had thought about this matter were all given an opportunity at least to talk their way through it. I think that I was the principal drafting officer. Ambassador Eagleburger, of course, edited it very substantially, as he would do with such an important report. It went out under his personal name.

I think that I can remember its main points. It said that it would be a mistake to expect any turmoil or any economic or political instability in Yugoslavia for the next several years, and perhaps as long as the following five years. The machinery which Tito had put in place would probably "creak along" at least that long. I remember that we finally got the word "creak along" into the report. However, in no way could Yugoslavia, as it then existed, survive over the long run. There had to be a fundamental change in the way Yugoslavia was governed. At this point [just after Tito's death in 1980] it was important to identify the people who would be competent to make those changes smoothly and without turmoil and conflict. The possibility of the dissolution of Yugoslavia certainly would raise itself eventually, after the next five years or so. The Embassy expressed the

hope that the emerging Yugoslav leadership would find ways to prevent turmoil and conflict from happening. I hope that I am not being too self-serving in recalling this report that way, but that's pretty well what we said, and that's not too far from what happened.

For five years or so Yugoslavia did "creak along," and then it began to come apart. By 1987, I guess, Milovan Milosevic had already made or was about to make his move in Serbia. By 1988 he had made it, and God help Yugoslavia!

There certainly was no feeling that the Soviets were going to be able to do anything. In fact, we always said, and I think rightly so, that one of the strongest, cohesive factors in Yugoslavia was fear of the Soviets. The Soviets had just demonstrated how totally reckless and brutal they could be in intervening in another country, Afghanistan. This was very fresh in the memory of the Yugoslavs. We felt that this would be one of the factors that would tend to hold Yugoslavia together, at least for a while. We used the terms "centrifugal" and "centripetal" to describe the various tendencies in post-Tito Yugoslavia. We listed some "centrifugal" factors and some "centripetal" factors. Fear of the Soviets was a strong centrifugal force. As the Soviet Union began to disintegrate in the late 1980's, so did fear of it.

Q: Even when we were in Yugoslavia in the 1960's, this was always the situation. At that point, anyway, I don't think that we were really talking about the horrendous dissolution of Yugoslavia which has taken place more recently. However, we considered that it was really the threat from the Soviet Union which was keeping the lid on the "box" that was Yugoslavia.

DUNLOP: Some people said that if Tito didn't have the Soviet threat to deal with, he would have to invent it. As it turned out, he didn't have to invent it, because it was there and, at various times, it was quite real.

In the Embassy we always tried to "inventory" people and their influence. That's an important thing for an Embassy to do. In a country like Yugoslavia there's a limited number of people who have power and a discernibly limited number of people who are at least at the second level of power. You need to know their names and how they are spelled. After that this process is less clear. You try to inventory those people, their abilities, their orientation, and whether they are "modernizers" or not. We just didn't find very many "modernizers" at the very top of the Yugoslav Government. One of them was a Montenegrin named Bactar(?) Muzsov, who was recently almost killed by a bomb. He survived from those years. He was Prime Minister, President, or senior political figure in the new Macedonia. He was one of the people who, we said, has some of the attributes that it's going to take to get through the troubled times that probably lie somewhere around five years into the future. However, there weren't too many others that you could name. And none of the Croats. I remember looking at the Croats we listed, with whom I was familiar to some extent, or thought I was a few years before. They were all the people whom at one time we were glad to see out of power, because they were not

really future leaders. But now they were all back in power, put there by Tito after the 1971 purges.

Q: Yugoslavs are basically a talented people for whom one can have quite a high regard. They certainly had a reputation for an absolutely first rate Foreign Service. How did the Yugoslavs end up with such a mediocre political leadership?

DUNLOP: I think that's what Tito was doing. When Tito saw the faces of the bright, young folks appearing, especially a whole bunch of them at once, which he saw in 1970 and 1971, in the Serbian state leadership and Communist Party, in the state leadership and Communist Party of Croatia, and in the state and Communist Party leadership of Slovenia and Macedonia, he knocked them down. He would not tolerate their emergence into power for reasons which were probably partly personal and partly reflected his style of governing. Perhaps this attitude is endemic in an authoritarian leadership. You've heard the old joke, which has been told about many places. I'll just repeat it here. Somebody may ask, "Why did they let this happen?" They answer this with the story of the scorpion and the tortoise by the side of a river. Fire is burning up to the banks, and they've got to get across the river. The scorpion and the tortoise were bargaining. The scorpion said, "If you don't take me across the river, I'll sting you, and we'll both die." The tortoise says, "If I don't take you across the river, we'll both die." The scorpion says, "Why don't you let me ride on your back, and we'll both live?" So the scorpion gets on the back of the tortoise. The tortoise swims out on the river. When they are half way across, the scorpion stings the tortoise, and they are about to die. The tortoise says, "Why did you do that?" The scorpion answers, "It's the Balkans." [Laughter]

Q: I've heard this as pertaining to the Middle East, with the scorpion and the tortoise crossing the Nile River.

Harry, obviously, we're looking at the Yugoslav situation from the perspective of 1996. You were the Political Counselor in the Embassy in Belgrade, 1978-1982. Were you able to travel out of Belgrade and sound out the ethnic groups that made up Yugoslavia at that time?

DUNLOP: Yes. I think that collectively the Embassy did that. We had a lot more access as Tito's power waned during his last six months of life. One of the things that we were looking for were security crackdowns. It was reported by some European foreign correspondents that it was inevitable that the Yugoslav Government would become increasingly nervous as the Old Man's death approached. They speculated that the Yugoslav Government would start cracking down in various ways. There would be arrests of people who were critical of the government. There would be harassment of people aimed at limiting contact with foreigners. However, that did not happen.

We had a lot of access. Perhaps I should mention here one of the things I should have said earlier, when you asked how things were different in 1978, compared to the early 1970's. I said that some of the atmosphere of tension I had experienced in Zagreb some six years before had disappeared. Generally speaking, access to people was easier, and

the press was able to say more about real events, in realistic terms, than it was before. There was less of this patina of "This is the best of all possible socialist worlds" which had previously seemed to cover everything. You had to scrape that away to get down to what was going on in the way of issues and confrontations in the country. It was easier to report and to get out into the country.

I had a couple of younger officers in the Political Section in Belgrade whom I regarded as brilliant and still do. They were really doing remarkable things, such as establishing contact with people at the university level, for example, in student committees and so forth. We had never been able to establish contact with such people before. Even though these people might have wanted to talk to us, they wouldn't have done so. The police would have made it uncomfortable for them if they had dared to talk to us.

For example, in the period shortly after Tito's death [in May, 1980], I will mention something which still has its implications for the present. In the spring of 1981, following Tito's death, there was a surge of the recurrent political tensions in Kosovo. I say "resurgence" of tensions because this had periodically happened over the years. There had been such a resurgence in 1968, just before I returned to Yugoslavia. There certainly had been a lot of difficulty in imposing Communist Party rule in Kosovo during the period 1945-1948. Here we were in 1981. There were student strikes and obviously a factional struggle going on within the Communist Party of Kosovo. To remind those who listen to or read these comments, the Kosovo is that portion of southern Yugoslavia very largely inhabited by Albanians. Kosovo is also the heart of the old, medieval Serbian state. It's the place where four or five of the great Serbian Orthodox monasteries are located which the Serbs look at with great reverence and awe. These monasteries are identified with the Serbs and give them a sense of national identity. The monasteries are, indeed, marvelous to see. Kosovo is where the Serbs place the mythological beginning of their historic, modern struggle against the Turks, who beat them at the Battle of Kosovo. It is in a fashion the Serbs "Jerusalem."

The population profile in Kosovo at that time [1981] was about 75 percent Albanian and maybe 25 percent Serb. It is now [1996] over 90 percent Albanian. There was then a resurgence of political instability in Kosovo, generated by Albanians wanting more say over what the government does and the emergence of friction with the Serbs over that. There was rioting at the university, which spread into the streets. Tanks were sent down there. There were rumors of massacres and large numbers of people killed.

The Embassy in Belgrade was very much interested in this, and we sent a couple of our officers down there. They actually observed some of this violence and were able to report on it. Other embassies did the same. The Italian Embassy sent some people down to Kosovo. The Greek Embassy was always interested in what was going on in Kosovo. Then the Protocol people in the Yugoslav Foreign Ministry called us up and told us that Kosovo was "closed" to visitors and that we couldn't go down there. Correspondents were being told that they couldn't go there.

What did the people of Kosovo do? They came up to Belgrade to see the press and came to our Embassy to see us. These were the same people that we would have been talking to, had we gone down there. They were able to come up to Belgrade. Police controls were not in place to prevent that, so we had access to them. Kosovo was the place where the most friction existed during the last two years of my tour in Belgrade [1978-1982]. The Yugoslav Government actually sent front line troops into Kosovo. They didn't want to do this. They wanted to use their militia and their riot police. However, they didn't have enough of them, so they shipped front line troops down to Kosovo in large numbers. They found that they had to put a tank battalion or two in the streets of Pristina [capital of the Republic of Kosovo]. There were some pretty horrendous pictures taken by civilians with video cameras which were available then. There is nothing quite so impressive as a tank, slithering from side to side down a street that's narrow enough and has parked cars on both sides of it. It's kind of a "dodge 'em cars" exercise, with high stakes.

We knew pretty well what was going on down there. We knew that the Serbian response, or the Yugoslav Government response, was as it almost always has been with the Albanians, to give minimal lip service to negotiations and then hit them just as hard as they could along the bridge of the nose, as it were, with the largest piece of lumber, so to speak, that they could find handy. If necessary, hit them again. That's what they did in 1981.

As far as Croatia and Slovenia were concerned, the Consulate in Zagreb was directly responsible for reporting out of there. I traveled up there. I remember a couple of conversations I had in Slovenia, which confirmed what was so evidently going to be the case or was moving in that direction. In most instances the Slovenians had already made their own little world up there. They were the ones paying lip service to Belgrade. They kept their eyes fixed very firmly and pragmatically on what was good for Slovenia. To the degree that they had to pay money into the Yugoslav Treasury which went for developing the less developed parts of the country, they would do it as long as it was necessary to keep a large group of Slovenians employed in the federal government in Belgrade. They would do that, but those Slovenians would get on a train every Friday and go back to Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia. This was called "The White Train." By the time it got to Ljubljana they were a rather drunk group of Slovenians. [Laughter]

The Slovenes started an airline, in competition with "JAT," Yugoslav Air Transport, the national airline. JAT was then kind of a reserve wing of the Air Transport Command of the Yugoslav Air Force. Its head was an active duty Yugoslav general. Its pilots were all qualified officers in the Air Force reserve. There is no reason why that shouldn't have been the case, actually, but you would think that would make JAT the "government" airline, by God, and the Slovenes wouldn't have a prayer of being able to compete with it. But they did! I forget the name of the Slovenian airline, but they got it up and running. This was before all of the turmoil of the late 1980's. The Slovenes went out, leased some airplanes, and hired pilots. Of course, JAT didn't like it, but in the post-Tito era it wasn't able to stop it.

In late 1980, just about at the mid point of my last tour in Belgrade, David Anderson replaced Larry Eagleburger as Ambassador to Yugoslavia. As you will recall, Stu, David was in the same Serbo-Croatian language class as Eagleburger, you, and I. He was an excellent officer who had a lot of experience serving in Germany. He was a very good man to serve under. I was very happy to see him come in. Eagleburger went back to Washington to be Assistant Secretary for European Affairs and then Under Secretary for Political Affairs. After that, he retired from the Foreign Service and went off to make money with former Secretary Henry Kissinger's consultancy firm in New York.

Q: By this time Tito was dead. You were reporting and looking at things from this perspective. You didn't mention Bosnia Herzegovina, which later became the "cockpit" of everything. Was Bosnia of particular concern at that time or was your attention pretty much focused on the other areas?

DUNLOP: One of the things I believed, and which doesn't necessarily seem to be everybody's belief who has a hand in Yugoslav affairs here in Washington, is that Bosnia doesn't exist as a separate Bosnia entity. What goes on in Bosnia is a function of what goes on in Croatia and Serbia. The Muslim community in Bosnia does, of course, exist, has a right to and should be able to express its own political will and desires through some form of really representative government, with full, civil safeguards. However, there never has been a Bosnian state since at least the 11th or 12th century. Bosnia had no national identity as such throughout the long years of Turkish occupation, and it's my view it does not today.

The Croats and the Serbs in Bosnia had preserved their respective national identities. When it comes to "push and shove," as it frequently does in Bosnia, it's a matter of Croats shoving Serbs, or vice versa, and the Muslims sort of get in the way. That may sound very dismissive of what a lot of Americans may think of these days as the "noble" and deserving, Muslim population of Sarajevo and the surrounding areas. The Bosnian Muslims have a government and should be allowed to run that country as the government, is the prevailing view.

I think that people dealing with Yugoslavia during the early 1980's, trying to project their views into the future, if they had anticipated the dissolution of Yugoslavia, and I think that they might well have done so, or if they wanted to project a scenario including the dissolution of Yugoslavia, never would have said that there will emerge an independent, Bosnian state. They would always have seen Bosnia as being carved up between Serbia and Croatia. They probably would have guessed that, given their wishes, the Muslims would choose to go with a Croatian side. With good leadership the Croats could make that a tolerable choice for the Muslims in Bosnia. I still think that this could have happened, and I emphasize the word "could."

It seems to me that it was never likely that, of their own free will, the Muslims would opt for inclusion in a Serbian state. There are historic reasons for this, but they stretch right into the 20th century, and they are even stronger now. The friction between Muslim and Serb has always been greater than between Muslim and Croat.

Q: During World War II the Muslims and the Croats sort of ganged up on the Serbs.

DUNLOP: That's right. And the Germans were able to recruit a very substantial number of Muslims into what they called the "SS Hundjar Division", which had just about the same record of treating civilian populations as every other armed unit that marched through Bosnia. "Hundjar" is the Turkish word for the curved scimitar the Turks used to have. So the translation into English of the "Hundjar Division" is the "Scimitar Division." Their shoulder patch, which I've seen, is green (the Muslim color), with a silver scimitar, dripping with blood! [Laughter]

Q: Did those two "stalwarts" of progressive democracy, Franjo Tudjman and Slobodan Milosevic, cross your sights at all while you were in Yugoslavia?

DUNLOP: No, not really. I think that you asked me about Tudjman during my first tour in Croatia. The answer is "Yes," but only in a peripheral kind of way. He wrote some columns in a nationalist publication, "Matica Hrvatska" about how Croatia's rights were not being fully respected. There was also a "Matica Srbska," but "Matica Hrvatska" was an organization originally designed to promote the Croatian variation of the Serbo-Croatian language. People find this very difficult to translate into English. One of the translations for "Matica" is "Queen Bee," but that's absolutely the wrong translation in this case. "Heart" might be another translation, although the word doesn't literally have that meaning. I like the word "Hearth." However, it means generally the "place of the keepers of the embers of the fire" of Croatandom. This weekly magazine, "Matica Hrvatska," made interesting reading. I certainly read that publication, cover to cover. It had columns by people like Tudjman in it.

By 1978, when I returned to Yugoslavia as Political Counselor in the Embassy in Belgrade, Tudjman had been in prison. I don't know whether he had been imprisoned as a direct result of Tito's crackdown in the early 1970's, but he certainly had been one of the targets of the crackdown. He had never held a position in the Communist Party of Croatia or the Croatian Government of that era. He was never a member of the liberal element in Croatia, either. "Liberal" is a convenient word to call it, although not everybody who was in it was a "liberal." However, he was not in the group led by Dapcevic, Tripolo, and in Slovenia, Kavcic. Tudjman was writing these rather long and sometimes dull discussions of what the next target for the Croatian nationalists should be and whether the ethnic composition of the police force is the same as the village they live in. That was one of his arguments. If you have a village where 17% of the population is Serb, there should only be 17% Serb policemen. That was the kind of thing he was saying. "Affirmative action," but typically Balkan, in reverse.

Slobodan Milosevic was simply off the radar scope and out of mind. The man who was his protégé, who is credited with having nurtured him politically inside the Communist Party of Serbia, was, in fact, one of the old "war horses" of the Serbian Communist Party. He was quite visible. I'm trying to remember his name. "Stankovic" comes to mind. He had a big head with white hair. I can't remember. Apparently, at that time Milosevic was

one of his up and coming, young protégés. However, we never heard of him, and I'm sure that the Ambassador never met Milosevic.

Q: You still had a year and a half or so to go with the new Yugoslav Government after the death of Tito in 1980. How did you view the new government and how did you find dealing with it? There was a rotation of personalities...

DUNLOP: Well, the old government had its "creaky" joints, and so did the new government. They had the same, terribly elaborate system. There was a "rotating" presidency among nine men which changed every six months. They were elected every three years, or something like that. There were a couple of "co-opted" members, like the Chief of the General Staff of the Army, as well as a couple of other people. It was a very clumsy arrangement. They were supposed to reach decisions by consensus, like the Politburo of the Communist Party. In fact, the Politburo never worked that way. It always wound up with about three people having real powers of decision. There were nine members of the governing committee, one of whom served as president for six months, then being replaced by another committee member. However, when it came to "collective decisions," it was very difficult to get nine people to agree. Anyway, this was the system, which was pretty "creaky." And the persons were also "creaky" -- aged remnants of the Partizan days, for the most part.

Our main dealings with the Yugoslav Government, other than to observe what it did, were with the Foreign Ministry, which was still staffed by the same, competent people. They were sometimes irritating, but they were competent people. We had known them all along. There were a couple of younger people in the Foreign Ministry. I remember having some conversations with them that were encouraging.

On instructions from the Department of State I once went in to talk to the man who was dealing with the "Non-Aligned Movement" on some issue that was coming up. We wanted to have our views on this issue registered with the Yugoslav Foreign Ministry. He had this big map, which had also been published in the press, called "The World of Non-Alignment." All of the non-aligned world was in red, like the old maps of the British Empire. Here were all of these countries around the world in red, including Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia was a little pimple at the top of this map, with huge countries scattered all around. Its population was of course tiny, compared to some of the others.

I couldn't resist the temptation to say to this guy, "You know, I've always admired you people. How did this little country [Yugoslavia], which is basically Caucasian, have all of this influence with these huge, other countries, which are basically not Caucasian. How long do you think this situation will last?" He said, "Until Tito dies. It may outlast him, but not much longer." I saw that as kind of an opening and said, "Well, look, I'm not telling you that your foreign policy is misdirected," nor is it what I tried to imply to him. I said, "However, what about a redirection of your energy and priorities? You people spend so much time and money on the non-aligned. You have this big battle with Castro, on which we wish you well. But why do this?" He said, "Only Tito could have explained that." So, yes, there were some people who knew that this orientation toward the non-

aligned world was kind of a reflection of Tito's own personality. This "fixation" on the non-aligned needed adjusting. You won't hear a Yugoslav voice in the non-aligned movement now. Well, maybe they do have membership in the non-aligned movement, but this was a phenomenon of the Cold War, I guess, as, perhaps, history will say.

Q: You left Belgrade in 1982. From your perspective at that time, where was Yugoslavia headed?

DUNLOP: Well, I would have said pretty much what we said a couple of years earlier. The existing system didn't look as if it was under any threat of an immediate demise. However, the whole structure had to be readjusted eventually to meet two major, political criteria, as well as some further rationalization on the economic front.

The old Yugoslav Government had tried to accomplish a number of disparate things. I think that this reflected one of Tito's failures to understand and was one of his political errors. He really thought, back through the period from 1965 to 1970, that he could devolve all of this economic decision making power to the various republics that make up Yugoslavia and still keep the political decision making power. He didn't see what tensions that would create. He didn't appreciate that eventually decision making on both political and economic issues would have to be in the same place. The "mirage" of this separation of economic and political decision making was something which the new Yugoslav Government was trying to prolong. That is, they evidently thought that they could let these governments in Zagreb [for Croatia] and Ljubljana [for Slovenia], as well as Belgrade for the Serbs, run their own economic affairs but still be subordinate in important, fundamental, political ways to a group of aged leaders in Belgrade.

I did not think that was going to work over the long run. I thought that situation would have to be changed to accommodate two, really fundamental needs. One was that both the Slovenes and the Croatians were going to insist on becoming independent states. They would achieve this goal some time, some how, and in some way. At the same time the Serbs would insist on some kind of guarantee for the safety of Serbs living in Croatia and Slovenia. Whether this concern was justified or not, the Serbs would not trust themselves to somebody else's governance, unless some very imaginative things were done to reassure them.

I used to make this a comparison and I still think that it's valid. The Serbs had to retain their "myth" of a Greater Serbia, but it was an important "myth." The Serbs needed to know that other Serbs were "safe." That is, Serbs in their houses, where they lived, were "safe." I think that could have been arranged and accomplished, either with people staying in the same places where they lived or by means of some carefully guaranteed and supervised population transfer over time. Now, of course, it's impossible to think of that, at least for the foreseeable future.

I think that we all knew that change was in the air. We hoped that it would come without a catastrophic breakdown and didn't believe that such a catastrophe was inevitable. However, the Yugoslav leadership would have to face some really hard dilemmas and

make some extremely hard choices, which they weren't doing at that time. They were just sort of going along until they couldn't go along any more. Nothing was in place to "rein in" Milosevic [of Serbia] or Tudjman [of Croatia].

Q: Harry, let's talk about the preparations made for the visit by President Carter. In fact, was this the first visit by an American President to Yugoslavia?

DUNLOP: No. I had the experience of being involved in a visit by President Nixon in Zagreb. We were, of course, a small post, and President Nixon only spent a few hours there. The Nixon visit took place in 1969, I believe. I learned something about the impact of a presidential visit on a Foreign Service post, which is, of course, enormous.

I remember one anecdote from this visit which might be of some interest. There was a change in the schedule. The presidential party spent much of a day in Zagreb, because of the weather. The motorcade, which was to take the party to a helicopter pad, had to be reorganized. I was the officer assigned for that "event." There is an officer assigned for each of the events during a Presidential stopover. This event involved the luncheon being given by the Croatian Government for President Nixon in the old town part of Zagreb, which is rather congested, with narrow streets and so forth. It is rather attractive but not appropriate for automobile motorcades.

The whole thing got totally messed up. Assignments of given individuals to vehicles were made and changed. There was a lot of chaos. All of these automobile engines were running in a small square there. Finally, the vehicles went off with or without the right people. There was a haze of exhaust smoke across this square. As I gazed across the now empty square, holding my briefcase, I saw the towering 6'4" figure of our Secretary of State, William Rogers, standing on the curb. I was certain that he had been left behind.

I trotted across the square, wondering what to do now. I then saw standing beside Secretary Rogers the much shorter, 5'7" figure of Mirko Tepovac, the Yugoslav Foreign Minister, who had extracted Secretary Rogers from all of this chaos and said, "You don't want to do any of that, do you, Bill? Why don't you come and visit a nice art gallery and an artist whom I know?" The only other person aware of where Secretary Rogers was at that time was Secretary Rogers' personal bodyguard from the Office of Diplomatic Security in the Department of State. The bodyguard was absolutely apoplectic, and his radio wouldn't work! I, on the other hand, was vastly relieved.

Anyway, President Carter came to Belgrade in 1980, not long after Tito's funeral. He had sent his mother, Lillian Carter, to be his personal representative at Tito's funeral, a decision by President Carter which a lot of people thought was not too good. I think that the Yugoslavs took this fairly well, but a lot of chiefs of state and chiefs of government went to Tito's funeral, and, although President Carter couldn't come, sending his mother didn't exactly resonate too well. However, President Carter came to visit Yugoslavia soon after the Tito funeral and made a good impression.

The Carter visit was like other presidential visits. It was preceded by several "advance" visits to Yugoslavia, as always, by various planning groups. There is always the White House Communications Agency advance party. Then are the Secret Service advance people. There is the President's own White House advance people. If the Secretary of State travels with the President, there is the advance party from the Executive Secretariat of the State Department. Sometimes there are "pre-advance" and "pre-pre-advance" groups. That is a tremendous burden, both for the host government, as well as the Foreign Service post concerned. Even in the best of circumstances, it's a burden. Frictions emerge as the White House people insist that things have to be done precisely this way and no other way. The host government may have other ideas. After all, they think that they are "in charge," in their own country, but they are not.

The Carter visit, which lasted two days, went well. Carter had done his homework, as I suspect that he usually did. He had read his "briefing books" and was well prepared. He made a generally good impression, both on the Yugoslav authorities in the successor government to Tito and, so far as we could tell, the general populace of Belgrade. Americans are pretty popular in places like Belgrade. Carter comported himself well, as did his wife Rosalynn, who had a bad cold. I admired her for soldiering on, when she obviously did not feel very comfortable. There were no untoward events associated with that particular visit, as I have heard of in presidential visits to some other places. There was nothing more than the usual friction when these two bureaucracies come in contact with one another, each one thinking that they have to arrange things exactly their way.

BERNARD F. SHINKMAN
Director, American Center
Belgrade (1982-1986)

Bernard Shinkman was born in New York City and raised in Maryland. He attended Dartmouth College. He entered the Foreign Service in 1978 and was appointed the director of the American Center in Yugoslavia in 1982. He has also served in Ghana, the Philippines, England, and Canada. Mr. Shinkman was interviewed in 2004 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: What were you picking up from your teachers? Often one gets quite familiar with a country or gets a feel for the ethos or whatever you want to call it of the country from your teachers.

SHINKMAN: They were an interesting bunch. The head of the Serbo-Croatian department; as it was then, was a priest in an Orthodox church. I learned a lot more than I had ever known in my life about the Orthodox church. It was absolutely fascinating to me. I think the quality of teaching was generally good. A couple of weak points, but generally good. We had an older guy who I'm sure cannot be there anymore because he was elderly, but he was teaching us 22, 23 years ago, who was a member of the Royal Navy back

when Serbia briefly was a kingdom, I guess. And a little side anecdote for that. Later on, during the fighting in Yugoslavia in the early '90s, when I was in London, I went and had lunch with the crown prince of Serbia - or maybe it was the crown prince of Yugoslavia?

Q: *Crown prince of Yugoslavia.*

SHINKMAN: No, but it was Serbia, Croatia and maybe even Slovenia.

Q: *The kingdom of Slovenes. The Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.*

SHINKMAN: The kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Yes. That's who he was. And he had actually been born in a grand hotel in London. I think he was born in the hotel, whatever that famous hotel is on Park Lane. The Dorchester, I believe – and I believe they declared that suite to be sovereign Serbian territory for the time it took him to be born so that he could be – a great, rather thin, subterfuge – so that he could claim to be born on Serbian soil. And we had a pleasant lunch as I say ten years later in London. He's a stockbroker in London and doing very well at it.

Anyway, so yes, we studied the language. I learned the language. I learned a lot about the Orthodox church. Most of the language faculty of course were vehemently anti-Communist. Not surprisingly. And pretty much anti-Tito. And just sort of what you would expect. But as I said, pleasant people and a variety of teaching styles and teaching skills.

Q: *Did you get any feel for the Serb-Croatian tensions?*

SHINKMAN: Yes. Absolutely. One of the teachers, typically, taught Croato-Serbian, as it was called. And that was for the students who were going to Zagreb. And we would occasionally have classes with that teacher just because it was not a large department at FSI. A teacher would be sick or something and not show up. So the Croato-Serb teacher would take the class. There wasn't hostility but you very much got the sense that they felt that they were two distinct cultures – Serbs and Croats – and, you know, there was some friction there, animosity.

Q: *You went out when?*

SHINKMAN: So I went out the fall of 1982 to Belgrade.

Q: *Now you were what? What was your job?*

SHINKMAN: I was the Director of the American Center, which was separate from the American Embassy. The American Embassy was off Kneza Milosa, and we were I guess a mile or maybe two away.

Q: *Cika Ljubina.*

SHINKMAN: Cika Ljubina. Good for you. Absolutely right. And it's not always a bad thing to work away from the embassy compound. There is a little bit of distance so you can go over to the embassy when you need to be there. But you could also get away from it and get out and do your job. The setting was – you know the building, obviously – it was a beautiful setting on a corner at one end of this historic street in Belgrade – about all that's left of Belgrade, really, that's historic and attractive. In Skadarlija, the region that has been largely preserved.

I had the nicest office I've ever had in my life with tall ceilings and tall windows, looking down a grand boulevard. And in the American Center we had printing works, we had a constant series of art exhibits in the gallery, we had visiting speakers, we had a very active library, research center. It was a very, very active American center, which I believe – I was told – was the oldest in Europe. It has opened before the end of the Second World War. After the Allies marched through Yugoslavia on their way toward Germany, the American Center was opened immediately. So it was opened sometime early in 1945, I suppose, or late 1944. But it was, as I say, a beautiful location.

It was an interesting job. I met all manner of Yugoslavs, of course. It was an odd time because Tito had died a year or two before. '80 or '81, I don't really remember. And I think everyone felt that he had been masterful at holding Yugoslavia together through the sheer power of his personality. So, everybody felt that the country would collapse after his death. And it didn't. So people were cautiously optimistic. And sort of felt, "gosh, maybe this will work." And that continued for the whole time we were there. The whole time up until 1986 when we left there was a sense that, "gosh, maybe we can make this work."

Q: *Now who was the ambassador while you were there?*

SHINKMAN: There were two ambassadors during my stay. The first was David Anderson. Both of them were terrific. He was there for my first two years at post, as I recall. And during my third year, Jack Scanlon arrived. They both did an excellent job. They were very good at working with the leadership of the country and did a lot for U.S.-Yugoslav relations.

It was interesting. Of course, the economy was always in difficult straits. The Yugoslavs were very proud of the fact that they were the only country, apparently, to have ever kicked the Soviet military out. The Yugoslavs left the Soviet bloc officially in the late '40s.

Q: '48.

SHINKMAN: Something like that. '48, '49. And they were very proud of that. They liked to think of themselves as more Central European than Eastern European. To us, I think basically, or to most people who didn't study it very closely, they were just another East European country which didn't happen to be behind the Iron Curtain. But they were still in that camp. The Yugoslavs liked to think of themselves as being more sort of

Austrian. And actually, of course, they had many, many links to Austria as well as to Hungary. There was the Hungarian province north of Belgrade, Vojvodina. And in Slovenia, there were areas along the border with Austria – as we discovered by traveling there – where on the Austrian side children could go to elementary school and the medium of instruction would be Slovenian. It was territory that had moved back and forth between the two countries over time. And you could, as I say, study in Slovenian in Austria, which is kind of interesting.

Belgrade itself is not a very interesting city. It was largely leveled by the Nazis at the beginning of the Second World War and then leveled again by the Allies at the end of the war, as you know. But it is a wonderful jumping off point. We did more traveling from Belgrade than from anywhere else. We would regularly spend a weekend in Budapest, travel up into the Alps in Austria for New Year's. We would take the car train up to Ljubljana overnight, with a sleeping compartment, and then have a car there and drive into northeastern Italy and have a vacation in Venice or Florence. Every spring we drove due south down through Macedonia to Greece and took a villa on a Greek island for two weeks. Just fabulous vacations and none of them very expensive. Obviously, couldn't afford expensive vacations.

Q: During '82 to '86, what was the Center doing?

SHINKMAN: Well it was outreach to the community. We did a lot with the cultural community, of course. We did a lot with universities. An awful lot of students, of course, university level students. We ran a very active speakers program, much of which fell in my lap. I figured out afterwards that I programmed almost a speaker a week, maybe a speaker a fortnight, over the period I was in Belgrade. So we were out at the Serbian Institute of Architecture, or Civic Engineers, or whatever, and we would have somebody over from the States to talk on that institute's interests. We had a very well known speaker, Ellis Katz, who was head of the Federalism Center at Temple University, who came -- a most engaging speaker, because the Yugoslavs were trying to set up -- or thought they had set up -- a federal system and thought that elements of it would be similar to ours. So we had a very active speaker program. Lots of outreach to institutes, to universities, cultural programs, just the whole gamut of those sorts of programs. It was an interesting time and, of course, one of the great fun things about being a public diplomacy officer is that you meet these speakers coming from the States who are the top in their field. It was fun to hear these people talk about anything from architecture to federalism and some of them remained friends after we returned to the States.

Belgrade was an interesting assignment. The economy of course was struggling. Tito, as you may remember, had this policy called "Republikanski Kluc", the "republican key", which meant that every one of the six republics had to have what every other republic had. So you had an oil refinery in each of the six republics. You had a steel plant in each of the six republics. And of course the country was about the size of Wyoming, had 20 million people or something. Could not possibly sustain these things. So this very political system was a great drain on the economy.

The decrepitude of the socialist system was evident to me visibly because those parts – and this isn't really fair to socialism – those parts of downtown Belgrade that had been rebuilt in view of my office had all been rebuilt with very poor structures and poor concrete, and I literally could sit at my desk and about once every few weeks. I would hear a great crash outside and would look outside and a balcony had fallen off a building. It was down below and thank God no one had been crushed by it. There would be a pile of rubble and smoke rising from it. And that really did happen regularly just because the buildings were built so poorly. But anyway, the Yugoslavs had hopes the system would work and as we now know it did not.

Q: Did the ethnic tensions permeate your organization?

SHINKMAN: Not very much. No. But, they were evident in society at large. And I have a classic example. I remember each republic – well, titles are very important – they would all have an Institute of Science and Technology, which was the most important, significant organization in the society. And if you were a member of that and could describe yourself as a member of that institute, that was more important than being a judge or a lawyer, doctor or engineer. That was the title you used. The Institute would publish tracts, as most sorts of organizations do. And I remember one coming out one day, authored by a member of the institute, which professed to say that the Albanian people were genetically inferior to the people in other parts of Yugoslavia.

Well I ran into a very good friend who was a professor at the university one day who had been studying in the States. He had been there on a Fulbright, got his masters degree at SUNY Binghamton or somewhere – and he was a member of the Institute. And I said to him, “Voya, how could they print this rubbish? This is crazy. This is nonsense.” And he laughed and said “oh, you don't want to worry about that. For political reasons they have to print this stuff from time to time.” Then he paused and he said, “but you know the Albanians really are a pretty stupid people.” So there was obviously some irrational prejudice there.

Q: Did you get involved in putting anything in Bosnia or Macedonia?

SHINKMAN: We had – again because of the Republikanski Kluc - we had an American center in each of the republics. We had six American centers and some of them were very small and wouldn't under normal circumstances warrant having an American diplomatic presence in that town. I did not supervise the other five center directors but I was in close touch with them and in charge of feeding material to them.

So yes, we fed a lot of material to the other American centers. In Slovenia it was warmly received and the Branch PAO (Public Affairs Officer) had a great time because people loved to get stuff from him. At the other end of the spectrum was Macedonia where it was a pretty hard slog. And Titograd which was the capital of . . .

Q: It was the capital of Montenegro.

SHINKMAN: Montenegro, excuse me. In the capital of Montenegro it was very hard. And the Branch PAO down there faced a really hostile audience. He had a hard time getting people to come to the American Center for a lecture or anything. It really was difficult for him. Sarajevo went through having the Olympics there in '84 and they were much more sort of open and Western as I said. But for the guy down in Titograd, Dell Hood, it was a tough slog. And I think our people down in Macedonia had a pretty difficult time there too.

Q: Yeah. These are sort of the end of the line, in old terms. Sounds pejorative, but it would be basically a different country.

SHINKMAN: Yeah. I think that would be right. I also remember a good example of inter-republic rivalries or lack of cooperation. The Macedonians make absolutely wonderful white wine. Absolutely delicious white wine. Of course at that time the Yugoslav currency, the Dinar, was not convertible. But the entrepreneurs in Slovenia – the most highly Westernized republic – would buy the wine from Macedonia in casks for almost nothing and then rebottle it in Slovenia in good Western-looking Austrian bottles with handsome labels, giving the variety of the wine, and then sell it abroad. They had the Pepsi Cola distribution rights. They would pay for the Pepsi Cola to the Pepsi Cola Company with this white wine and get Pepsi Cola back. So it was as good as hard currency in terms of importing something. And the Slovenians did extremely well and the poor Macedonians got a few cents a cask for their absolutely delicious white wine being drunk in the West.

Q: What was the main thing you were doing there?

SHINKMAN: I'm trying to think of themes that we had in our Country Plan as we used to have for USIA. We wanted to support English teaching, of course. We wanted to help support federalism. We thought that if the country was going to work, I believe, it was our policy that to help them develop a federal system was a good way to do that. So, as I said, we brought in speakers on federalism. We talked a lot to the media. We did everything we could to encourage open media. And of course the media was completely controlled. But there were reporters or journalists who we were able to send to the States for IV (International Visitor) tours and those sorts of programs. And there is no question that those people came back with very different views than before they left. For those sorts of people an IV grant can be life changing. And many of our contacts who went on those programs came back.

The only one who didn't benefit – here's another little anecdote, I always have anecdotes. Part of my territory, Serbia, of course, included the provinces of Vojvodina to the north, which was the Hungarian ethnic region, and the Kosovo to the south. They were given a title which meant that they had some autonomy but in fact they had none. They were just part of Serbia. "Semi-autonomous region" or something like that. So I would go down to Kosovo, I would go down to Pristina every month or two with a visiting speaker or for some other reason and always enjoyed it. A fascinating, very remote and rural area. But I found a local party hack, a guy who had risen to a prominent position in the local

Communist party. And I thought maybe we could get this guy to the States - he had been to the Soviet Union and treated royally – and teach him a bit about an open and free society. Well, it was in my whole career – and I've sent an awful lot of people on International Visitor programs – it was the only one that was a complete loss. He came back absolutely unchanged and very disgruntled because he thought he had not been treated with the deference and respect that he should have been. He expected to have chauffeured limousines to take him every where he wanted to go. And as we always do on the International Visitors program, we try to put visitors on local trains and planes and taxis or go with a group of people in a van and do it the way we Americans do it. But he was not content that he had not been met with chauffeured limousines at every turn. So he didn't do too well. But we tried to get people from all strata of society, all variety of professions, to the States.

Federalism as I recall was one of our main themes. Yugoslavia was drafting its constitution and it was something like the tenth constitution they had had in twenty years. Unlike ours which is remarkably brief and crisp, theirs was something like six hundred pages long and had everything down to the price of a parking ticket, I think. Those were the sorts of things included in it. And we were trying to help them establish a government that could sustain itself and that would be responsive to the citizens of Yugoslavia.

Q: How did you find the authority of the Yugoslav government responded to these lectures? Were you able to get visas from the ministries and all that or not?

SHINKMAN: It depended very much on the individuals. One of our strongest contacts was the government press spokesman at the parliament. Ambassador Scanlon, after he left government service, worked for a pharmaceutical company in Los Angeles started by a Yugoslav immigrant. And that company hired this same man later – that was years after we left – who had been the government press spokesman in Yugoslavia to work for them. So some people had the self confidence to work with us and I guess had confidence in their positions. I'm sure they knew very clearly that their contacts with us were being monitored.

It always amused me, there was a very small Protestant church community that was made up of expatriates. So we were active informally in church circles. We would go once a year and have a service that was arranged at the Orthodox patriarch's private chapel. I would talk religion to our contacts sometimes, in a very casual social environment or whatever. And almost always they – although obviously organized religion was discouraged in a Communist society – many Yugoslavs would still have their kids baptized at birth. All the children were baptized, certainly that we knew. It would just come up in the course of conversation. It was not something we would necessarily ask.

Q: As I recall, you are sort of in a clad-iron type of building at Cika Ljubina. Did you have any problems in the show windows which you had at the center? Something the authorities would say "Well this is out of bounds?" or something like that?

SHINKMAN: Not that I recall. It would have been a logical thing to happen. But I don't recall it happening. Gosh, you know, now that you mention it, there's something in the back of my mind, but I can't remember it. If it happened, it only happened once during the four years I was there. And I don't think we consciously, I'm sure we did not consciously choose materials that would not be provocative. At the same time, we would not choose things that would be provocative on purpose. But I think we just, you know, got exhibits from Washington on whatever subject and we put them up. You know, we had a U.S. Presidential election while we were there, so we put up stuff about the elections and that sort of material. But no, I don't recall a problem with that. The only thing I remember about the outside of the building is that someone came once and put a little PLO Palestine liberation flag draped over our front door one night. I turned it over to the RSO (Regional Security Officer) and I've always kicked myself because I wish I had kept it. I think it would have been such a neat souvenir. But I did the right thing and turned it over to the RSO.

Q: Well I remember I was there when Kennedy was assassinated. And of course the window had all sorts of pictures of him. And there were flowers laid there. It was very moving. Well, how were the police? I mean, we are talking about the security apparatus. Were they a problem or not?

SHINKMAN: I never had a problem. We had an unusual status. The American Center Director was given special status, but not diplomatic status, which always kind of irritated me. There would be a letter on the license plate for all diplomats. I think the letter was "A."

Q: "A," yes. "60A."

SHINKMAN: "60A" was the American. There would be two digits, the letter "A" and then the number of the vehicle. And "60A" was the American embassy. And we were "20E," which was sort of "all other semi-official organizations." I guess the UN High Commission for Refugees for instance would be "20E" and maybe foreign news agencies, I don't know. But anyway, it was people who weren't diplomats but were sort of almost diplomats. As I said, it used to irritate me. But it didn't make a big difference. We seemed to be treated the same as everybody else. I'm sure when I traveled, particularly to places like Kosovo, that I was watched. I mean you just assumed that you were. You assumed – I have no evidence that our telephone was bugged – but we always assumed, every minute, that we were. I don't have any evidence that my staff were reporting to the police. But in those sorts of controlled societies, there are so many gradations of what it means to be watched that I'm sure we were, whether it was just somebody checking in at the local police station once a week or somebody actually doing it because it was their job. So we were just always cautious about that. Careful not to say things that were not politic when we were at home or anywhere else. There was always an awareness, but it didn't disrupt our lives much.

PAUL GOOD
USIS Officer
Belgrade (1985-1986)

Paul Good was born in Kentucky in 1939. After receiving his bachelor's degree at Cascade College he received his master's degree from Ball State. His career in USIA included positions in Thailand, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Nigeria, Australia, Yugoslavia, South Africa, Morocco, and Senegal. Mr. Good was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in August 2000.

Q: Yes, five republics.

GOOD: Plus Belgrade.

Q: Yes.

GOOD: State said it couldn't cut any of them because they said, "If you have a presence in one, you've got to have a presence in all. And we had no choice. As a result our budget was 95 percent tied up by fixed expenses. We had no way to play with programming, except as we could find somebody to sponsor it for us. We didn't really have American companies there to tap as we had in Santo Domingo or even Australia. So it was a difficult time because of the resistance - you can imagine from the administrative section at the embassy to somebody coming in and taking back under agency control what they had been running however they wanted to before.

Q: You were there from '85 to?

GOOD: '86 because my wife was medically evacuated, in September of '85 and I stayed on until March of '86.

Q: What was your job actually?

GOOD: I was setting up the executive office and trying to find money.

Q: USIA's executive office?

GOOD: USIA's executive office provided the infrastructure, doing the budgeting for all of the branches, personnel. We had, of course, security problems. We had housing problems. It was a time of real shortage. I mean, not as bad as it's gotten, but comparatively speaking there wasn't a lot to buy for eating. There wasn't much in the stores. Store window fronts would be empty. You go down to the market and maybe find a paprika or two. We had to import. We'd get deliveries from the Frankfurt commissary. We would get milk down from Austria.

Because of the restrictions of the weather and so forth, there wasn't that much to travel. Bribes. We got there in late January, early February; this was February. In March my wife, our 5 year old went, and I went to the coast for vacation. We spent two weeks together, and then I came back. My wife stayed for another three weeks just to get out of this horrible house situation and hoped that spring would help. It turned out it didn't. There was another problem. They had very nicely put a brand new rug on the floor after the old one had been ruined, and they got the best they could get there in Yugoslavia. Unfortunately it shed and shed. It would never stop shedding. Ultimately of course, you vacuumed it out so there was nothing left, but that left a lot of lint in the air. The doctor was concerned for Mark's health on that one.

But talk about a lifestyle. As a resident in the country, we got resident rates at the hotel. The exchange rate was in our favor, obviously. But it cost me \$13 a day for hotel room and food, three meals for the three of us at the hotel at the coast.

Q: Where were you at the coast?

GOOD: We were at Porec, which is directly across from Venice on the Istrian Peninsula, which is a lovely peninsula, as you probably know. It's really more Roman than it is, well it's certainly more Roman than Yugoslavian, although part of that Roman is more modern Italy. Anything that was built to last was not built by the Yugoslavs. That's for sure. I'd sit in the porch at the hotel room and listen to the tiles pop off the walls in the bathroom. The roads that were in good condition were the roads that the Italians had put in. The water system was the Italian system. The sewage was an Italian system.

It was a German tourist area. All the way down the coast from Trieste you found resort locations, all the way down to Pula. They had nude beach resorts for the Germans, which you didn't see from the road. But if you took your boat out on a tour to visit some of the ocean sites, you'd see them out there surf boarding, windsurfing nude.

Q: Was there the feeling that, you know, this isn't going to work, or wasn't it working?

GOOD: I'm just reading Zimmermann's book, our last ambassador's book, on his time there.

Q: Yes?

GOOD: And it got worse. It depended upon when. When I was there, it was still working, but not well. The biggest problem was that everything was run by committee, not just at the top level, but everywhere through the country. Every decision had to be unanimous.

Q: The committees each were representative of every republic, I guess?

GOOD: Well, yes, every republic had a representative on the top governmental board, and one of those was president. It rotated republics every year, but at every

governmental level, things were run by committees. I wouldn't buy fish in Belgrade because normally it came up by train. There were a couple of hundred jurisdictions it had to go through, which might have delayed it 15 minutes here, and hour there. Who knows how many days it had taken that fish to get to Belgrade! It just wasn't running well. But it wasn't yet ready to fall apart.

Q: Did Kosovo raise its head?

GOOD: Kosovo was of course noted. A Slav would say, "Ha, ha, there's a Kosovar. He's a gypsy! He's darker! He's shorter! He's not intelligent!" The government policy to make sure that every high school had not only the language of the republic, but also a second republic language as the two language choices. You could go on and take something else after that, and they designated what republic language would go in as the second language in each school. The schools that got Albanian as their second language were not happy. They didn't like that. The idea that genocide was being exercised, or done by the Albanians against the Slavs, was a topic of regular conversation. In Serbia, that was assumed. True or not, it was assumed.

When you know that 90 percent, maybe 95 percent of the population down there is Albanian or Kosovar, not Serbian, there was a possibility that there might have incidents in which the Albanians were killing Serbs. But really it appears, from what I can read since, that since the Serbians were in charge of the government and had the military control, an Albanian who might try to foment some problems was dead.

Q: Yes.

GOOD: The Serbians were attempting to take over land, and they were generally dominating, except in numbers. And of course, it was not a province. It was only an autonomous area, which was run by Serbia, just as the Vojvodina to the north was. So it didn't have full ranking, and Slovenia, obviously, was unhappy. One of the reasons it pulled out, ultimately, was that it was feeling that it was funding this poor, poverty struck place. It was a poor place. The roads were bad. The people were shepherds.

Q: Yes.

GOOD: It was bad.

Q: Yes. You were there only a relatively short time, but was the feeling of the embassy that this place might split up?

GOOD: There was the fear, yes. Yes, because they just didn't seem to have any way to get it together. The Slovenians thought themselves better, felt a chip on the shoulder that they weren't being treated equally with the Serbs. Since they obviously were more sophisticated, had a better economy, and so forth, they didn't think this was fair. Language was a problem.

But as a tour, I consider it one of my highlights because I enjoyed the people, I enjoyed the country, I got around a lot because it wasn't Australia. (Laughing) After a year, here I could travel. It was close; it was cheap. I did all the traveling I could. One of the younger officers in USIS and I and his fiancé, they got married as soon as the embassy sent them on TDY to Sarajevo. They didn't want to be forced to get married in Belgrade. So they said, "No." As soon as he got TDY to Sarajevo, they got married; it was okay, great fun. He had Russian and Serbian, so no problem with the languages. We just went all over the place.

Q: Did you run across problems in the rivalry, which is now everybody knows, but was anybody who served there apparent, particularly Croatia and Serbia? Did you have problems in your organization there?

GOOD: No, we probably had a little more trouble down in Sarajevo and Bosnia in that they were really backwatered down there and didn't like it, because they had not been backwater under the Austrians. That had been the Austrian provincial. Zagreb did consider itself to be as important as Belgrade. It wasn't getting that kind of comparable reaction from the Serbs. We weren't in the middle of the fight between the provinces, and it didn't affect my work at all.

Q: I was wondering whether it affected your work, in that I remember when I was running the consular section in Belgrade. My local employees had no sympathy for or really working with those in Zagreb.

GOOD: Yes, well, we didn't have that type aid working. Our units were pretty autonomous at the local level. I didn't sense that in our organization. You felt it with the Kosovar, but we didn't have a post down there at that time. We didn't get that one till fairly recently in Pristina. Skopje was out of sight, of course. The language was different, and people didn't travel that much between.

There was, of course, a negative feeling toward the Greeks, although that politically has changed a bit in recent years. I remember, one of our Greek employees in the admin (administrative) section nearly got killed by the husband of one of the ladies with whom he apparently was more than professionally involved. But they all rolled with the punch and they got over it. But the Greeks were not really accepted as equals with them.

Q: Well, there was the Macedonian issue, too.

GOOD: Yes, yes, no question about that one.

Q: This might be a good place to stop, I'm thinking. We'll pick it up then in, well, '86 when you have to leave for medical reasons because of your wife. Now Yugoslavia.

GOOD: I should say though, before we close that my travel wasn't just internal. The Embassy had a policy that we were told that we should follow, of being out of the country every month, somewhere out of Yugoslavia. We did, except the first month and

the last month I was there, because you can get to Austria, to Bulgaria, to Romania, to Greece, to Italy, very simply. It was more of a psychological thing. I didn't feel the pressure that those who'd served in Russia seemed to feel about being watched all the time. I thought, "Gee, that's an extra benefit. I'm secure. Nobody's going to bother me because I'm being watched."

LARRY I. PLOTKIN
Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS
Belgrade (1986-1990)

Lawrence I. Plotkin was born in Chicago, Illinois and raised in Southern California. He attended the University of California at Los Angeles and joined USIA in 1973. His posts included Poland, Panama, Washington, DC, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria. Plotkin was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.

Q: What was the political situation when you got there?

PLOTKIN: The situation when we got there was still good. Yugoslavia was divided into six republics and two autonomous areas. The problem, which we knew before we arrived, was that the political system allowed no one to become a national leader. They had a rotating presidency; each year it passed to a leader of a different republic. No one had a Yugoslav constituency. They had a Serbian constituency or a Montenegrin constituency or a Slovene constituency, etc. This was little by little eroding the ties among the republics and exacerbating their differences. Throw in the Kosovo situation which was constantly worsening while we were there. The result was that the minor tensions of '86 became a war in '91. The Embassy was aware of the problems. I had countrywide responsibility, traveled a lot and to almost every corner of the country. It was perfectly clear. I'd also read Rebecca West's "Black Lamb, Gray Falcon" before I went out there.

She wrote it during or just before World War II, and it's based on experiences she had touring Yugoslavia just before the War. She was very much a Serbophile, but at the same time recognized that there was enough guilt to go around. She knew that as long as the peoples of Yugoslavia were held together by a strong central government, they might manage, but that should the center ever weaken, they would be at each other's throats. Obviously she was prophetic. But while we were there, we had no trouble traveling from place to place. The biggest problem we faced was language, particularly in Slovenia where they didn't really want to hear Serbian and in Croatia where a Serbian accent wasn't appreciated.

Q: How would you characterize the media?

PLOTKIN: I did not work directly with the media on a daily basis because I was the CAO, not the IO, and we had a large USIS Belgrade office and branches in each of the

republics. We had a half a dozen officers in Belgrade, two in Zagreb and one each in the other four republics. It meant a degree of specialization. Yugoslavia was regarded as a key country in the world at that point. It was the one European communist country, two if you count Albania, that had broken from the Soviet bloc and it was very involved in the North South dialogue and in the movement of non-aligned nations. Well before we were there, the USG had decided to make a substantial investment in Yugoslavia and reach as many people as we could. The result was that as CAO I supervised the second largest Fulbright exchange program and the second largest International Visitors in Europe. Only the German programs were larger.

Q: Within these programs did you try for balance, to get enough Kosovars or enough Macedonians involved?

PLOTKIN: It was complex. The Fulbright competition was free and open. Some Yugoslavs didn't believe that because they simply couldn't believe that connections didn't influence everything, but I can guarantee you it was a free and open composition because I went throughout the country interviewing people, supervising exams, the whole business. We did, however, strive for balanced participation, based on population, from the country's eight administrative areas. All candidates took a written test and those who scored highly enough were then interviewed by a board that always included the Yugoslav executive director of the Fulbright commission, usually someone from the Ministry of Education ministry and always a USIS FSO. I did a good portion of those interviews, but others participated as well. They were designed to get a sense of candidates' command of English and a sense of their ability to cope in an interview and at an American university.

We graded people on a zero to 100 basis, but the cut off was about 90. A lower score wasn't competitive. Seeking a final roster representative of all parts of Yugoslavia, we made only minor compromises. There were times when a Kosovar who scored 92 was chosen over a Slovenian who scored 95. But the Kosovar was qualified. We never took anybody who wasn't qualified, who didn't have at least a score of 90 out of 100. We also, as we did in Warsaw, sought to achieve a balance between science and technology on one hand and the humanities and social sciences on the other.

Q: The Fulbright program had been going for a long time. Were you able to make use of Fulbright alumni?

PLOTKIN: When I was there we initiated a program to find the Yugoslav alumni, to involve as many as possible in an outreach program, and to get them to give back to the program. We were beginning to have some success at the time I left the country, but then everything fell apart. Roughly a year after I left, the country was in so much disarray that the commission was closed and most of the program suspended. Among the losses were embryonic Yugoslav Fulbright Alumni and American Studies Associations. I had taken the lead, working with Yugoslav colleagues, in setting up an American Studies Association to better connect Yugoslav Americanists with American studies in the U.S.

They met once and then civil war tore the place apart. Losses like these added to the greater sadness caused by the slaughter that took place.

Q: Why was that we didn't have Fulbright alumni associations in most countries where we're spending so much money? It seems like an opportunity lost.

PLOTKIN: I'm not sure why it didn't happened earlier. In many foreign cultures, there is little or no precedent for these kinds of associations or for any form of volunteerism. In many cases you're try to start something that, with the exception of political and religious associations, is completely new. Creating a Fulbright association in some places is the first attempt at something like a civil society. It was working in Yugoslavia. Alumni read grant applications and worked on interviews with us until the break-up of the country and closing of the Yugoslav Fulbright Commission. I subsequently was involved in a similar effort in Bulgaria, which I'll get to later, where the success continues.

Q: How about the U.S. Fulbrighters who came to Yugoslavia?

PLOTKIN: We had a very successful program. We sent about 50 Yugoslavs to the U.S. each year and received roughly the same number of people from the United States. The American Fulbrighters were very diverse. We had everything there from law professors to people in American studies, to people in the sciences. The breadth of the program was in part due to the fact that we had a subsection of the program that allowed us to bring in Fulbright grantees from the U.S. for as little as two weeks to do intensive seminars. That allowed us to get people who could never have given us an academic year or even a semester. For example, it enabled us to include a professor of medicine for two weeks of intense training of techniques the Yugoslavs wanted to learn. U.S. grantees came for from two weeks to a year, renewable, some to study or do research, some to teach. We placed them throughout the country so that each republic and territory had Fulbrighters.

Q: In your Fulbright meetings did you run into any nationalistic clashes?

PLOTKIN: Sadly, yes. The Croats always thought the Serbs got too many grantees and the Serbs always thought the opposite. The bickering went on all the time. The question for us was whether this kind of antagonism was simple national rivalry, nasty but not deadly, or whether it was a sign of a situation so passionate that the next step would be drawn daggers. Early in our tour, Ruth and I, and most in the Embassy, were optimistic about the situation. By the time we left it was clear to many of us that things were getting increasingly bitter and that one false step could turn the situation into a civil war. On the other hand, perhaps even more of us thought that the Yugoslavs just couldn't be that stupid; that they would come to the brink, look over the edge and back off. They had so much to lose. Yugoslavia had 20 million well educated, reasonably hardworking people. It probably could have been the first Eastern European member of NATO and of the EU, until everything went terribly wrong.

Even those of us in denial about the possibility of civil war were not blind to the myriad signs, including in the cultured world of a CAO. In late 1989, I went to Ljubljana to open an exhibit of contemporary prints by American artists. I could have spoken in Serbian and have been perfectly understood, but they insisted that I speak in English and actually translated me poorly. On another occasion, a U.S. Fulbrighter teaching in Zagreb, the harpsichordist of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, agreed to do a program in Belgrade. The truck driver bringing his harpsichord from Zagreb refused to drive into Belgrade. He said he didn't dare drive into Belgrade with Zagreb plates on his truck. Incidents of this kind were increasingly frequent. At the same time, Milosevic was having his hey day, stirring up a mess in Kosovo. Yugoslavia was on the brink. We left just before it became truly violent.

Q: How did a civilized people come to civil war?

PLOTKIN: The Germans were civilized, too. We should have learned by now that that doesn't make much difference.

Q: What was your impression of artistic attainments and artistic world in the various parts of Yugoslavia?

PLOTKIN: It varied from field to field. I traveled a lot, but most of my time was spent in Serbia, so I have to qualify my comments to some extent. In terms of painting, there was a lot going on throughout the country. There were no restraints on artists in terms of what they could paint, what media they could use, how they presented their view of the world in their art. There was a huge variety of styles in play, some of it representational, some of it reflecting the history of icon painting, some of it very nonrepresentational and contemporary. There was also an appreciation of what we and what other countries had to offer in painting exhibitions.

Similarly in music there was every thing from the most dissident modern music to the very traditional being both composed and performed, and being performed very well. Theater, conservative in Slovenia, was very avant-garde in Belgrade, some of it truly cutting edge. There was an annual contemporary theater festival there in which people from all over the world were doing some of the wildest things I've seen anyplace. It really was a hugely enthusiastic and active time to be there.

Q: How about Slovenian culture? Was it between the West and the East? How did it fit?

PLOTKIN: Though the most western economically, Slovenia was the most culturally conservative part of the country. Slovenes thought of themselves as Western, but it's a small country of only about 1.8 million when we were there. Slovenes felt themselves surrounded by bigger countries whose cultures were putting the squeeze on theirs. It made them highly nationalistic, intent on preserving and fostering Slovene culture, and defending their separate cultural identity. The result was that it was easy to get an American play staged in Belgrade where it was welcomed gladly, but was almost

impossible to that in Ljubljana where the stages were reserved for Slovene plays. They were just that much more intent on their special cultural identity.

Q: How about Croatia? They were extremely proud and put themselves forward as being much more cultured than those uncouth Serbs. How did you find dealing with them?

PLOTKIN: I had no problems there. I would not have agreed with them that they were more cultured than the Serbs. Croatia does have a longer Western cultural history dating its time as part of the Hapsburg Empire while Serbia was part of the Ottomans Empire. In addition, Croatia is Catholic and Serbia Orthodox. Croatia allied with the Nazis, Serbia with the allies. They have histories forming their world views that are simply too diverse and dividing rather than unite them.

Q: How about theater in Croatia and elsewhere in the country?

PLOTKIN: I never went to the theater in Croatia so can't really comment. In Macedonia, there was a lot going on. We had the European premier of American play in Macedonia in the only Turkish language theater outside of Turkey while we were there, translated into and performed in Turkish rather than into one of the official Yugoslav languages. It got very good play. It was even on Yugoslav-wide television with subtitles. There was a very active community of artists there as well and substantive book publishing.

Macedonian is the offspring of Bulgarian, to which it was practically identical until the creation of Yugoslavia, and Serbian which has deeply influenced the language since World War I. It is now officially separate language for at least political purposes. Shortly after I returned to Washington from Bulgaria in 1997, I was asked to welcome a group of Macedonian journalists who had come on a VOA program to the U.S. I thought what the hell; I'll speak to them in Bulgarian. So, I introduced myself in Bulgarian and said a few nice words and then apologized for not speaking their language. I got a great laugh because of course they had understood me perfectly. The differences between Macedonia and Bulgaria are at a level that would ever interfere with one understanding the other.

Q: What about the arts as portrayed on television?

PLOTKIN: There was a certain amount of theater and music programming, more on the traditional side than on the avant-garde side. Television was dominated by popular local and foreign shows, sports and news.

Q: Did you have to fight the popular image of America as presented in the movies, the pop music, TV sitcoms, everything. Was that hitting Yugoslavia when you were there?

PLOTKIN: American pop culture had already flooded Poland when I was there 10 years earlier. It was a given by the time we were in Yugoslavia. American popular culture has won all pop culture competitions hands down. It's everywhere. Everybody wears jeans. Everybody listens to American rock and roll. Everybody goes to American movies. The

hard thing for us is to find a way to balance the image created by pop culture where the U.S. tends to be portrayed in sensational terms, often negative. Even when the U.S. is portrayed sympathetically, it's through splashy big movies like "Titanic." The best we can do is to demonstrate to the cultural and political leaders we deal with that we're not all cowboys or Ku Klux Klan and should not be portrayed by taking one element of our culture and making it stand for all of what we are.

Realistically though, it's impossible to overcome the impact that pop culture has on the general population. By the time we were in Yugoslavia, everything from the west was available on the market, legitimate or pirated. We had no choice but to focus on that part of our audience that could be reached through cultural and educational exchanges, cultural propaganda if you like. Our greatest success was through the presentation of people like Brodsky, Doctorow, Ginsberg, and Rostropovic, people whose reputations were international and who were either born in the U.S. or better yet chose the U.S. We were able to get large and influential audiences for both their presentations and in terms of the local media reaction.

Q: What was your impression of the universities?

PLOTKIN: They were pretty good. I dealt mostly with the humanities and social sciences departments, and fields ranging from American studies, literature and history to economics and political science. Among the things we did was to try to influence the texts they used, trying to get the most objective and positive views of the U.S. presented. We also worked on curriculum development, sometimes using American consultants who were obviously more expert in these fields than those of us at the Embassy were. Some were Fulbrighters on grants in Yugoslavia and others were returned Yugoslav exchange grantees. Several of the returned grantees had such successful Fulbright tours in the U.S. that they were teaching half time in the United States and half time in Yugoslavia.

At the same time, the experience of living in the U.S. was not always fully successful. One returned grantee, I won't mention his name, an American studies and history professor at the University of Belgrade, traveled back and forth to the United States all the time. He was a bright, charming fellow whose politics were probably in the middle of the curve and who was basically a social liberal. But mention the word Kosovo and it was like throwing a switch at his head. He basically regarded Kosovars as a subspecies. It reminded me of my time in Augusta, Georgia in the 1960s.

In 1961, I was in training at Fort Gordon, Georgia, as a member of the California National Guard. I was able to travel Atlanta for the Jewish high holidays and was delighted with the opportunity to get off of the base, even though I was a non-observant Jew. In Atlanta, I was hosted by people who, like my Belgrade colleague, were culturally sophisticated, charming people. I quickly learned, however, not to mention those who were then called Negroes. It was like throwing the same switch in their heads. Suddenly, you were dealing with people who simply didn't accept Negroes as full members of the species. It was a stunning lesson in human nature and an omen of what was to come.

Back to the universities. We had an excellent Masters Degree program in American studies at Zagreb University, the only one in all of Eastern Europe. We supported the program with Fulbright grants in both directions and with significant library support.

Q: Getting America presented in European universities had long been a problem. Anybody with a good education in the United States gets a hefty dose of a European literature, culture and history. Europeans with a good education get very little about us.

PLOTKIN: Well, we used to learn a lot about Europe, especially those of us studying in the humanities. Getting American studies into European universities is difficult. For one thing, most European universities are rigidly compartmentalized. There's huge resistance to creating interdisciplinary studies programs of any kind. Obviously American studies is exactly that. You need to involve people from history and literature, sociology, geography and economics and a variety of other fields. You have to have a university that is ready to invest resources in what for them is a highly non-traditional kind of program. It isn't easy to make these kinds of breakthroughs, but if you don't have a program like that available to students, you obviously aren't going to get any systematic presentation about the United States. What you do get will be occasional classes in individual areas, literature or history, and parts of classes focused on moments of impact by the U.S. on European events, the World Wars, the Cold War and the like.

When I was in Poland dealing with university English departments, students had to choose after two years of study between being an English major or an American major. It was then a matter of which of the two dialects you mastered and which literature you read. For students in other disciplines, there was little opportunity to learn about the U.S. Practically speaking, there was little U.S. history in the history department, little opportunity for history students to take a course in American literature or for lit students to take a course in American history. I expect there's been increased interdepartmental cooperation since I was there. Among my frustrations was that the success we had in developing American studies in Yugoslavia, the masters degree program in Zagreb, the opening of a masters program in Belgrade, and the country-wide American studies association, was blown away by the civil war and the separation of the old Yugoslav into five separate countries and counting.

Q: How did you find museums and exhibit halls?

PLOTKIN: It was easy to find talented and committed people with whom to work who were willing and interested in hosting American exhibits. Our biggest problem was the condition of potential exhibit venues. Our art lenders and curators demanded, and rightly so, that exhibit halls be properly climate controlled and have good security. Very few of the exhibit sites in Yugoslavia, or elsewhere in the region, has up-to-date technology or the funds to up-grade their facilities. I often found myself trying to convince USIA that the situation really was good enough and that we could make it work. But we were responsible for the well-being of our exhibits. Every time an exhibit arrived, a USIS officer had to be present to examine each work as it was unpacked to compare it to the notes that were made by the USIS officer who had supervised its packing at the previous

post. At the end of the exhibit, we returned to make sure no damage was done and to note any changes in the state of each work in the exhibit. We were really quite meticulous and documented everything from a nick on the frame to any apparent damage by light or moisture or contact to the work itself. We had to take it very seriously.

Q: Who were your ambassadors and how did they use the cultural side?

PLOTKIN: Our first ambassador was Jack Scanlon. He was succeeded by Warren Zimmerman. Both were interested in using exchanges and cultural exchanges to support U.S. policy. Often, at my request or because of their genuine interest, they appeared and spoke at USIS-organized events. Their presence gave the events more weight and got us better media coverage. The American ambassador was a figure of some importance in Belgrade. They had occasion to use our performing artists at receptions in their residence as a way of getting into the same room people who might not otherwise be seen together.

USIA at that time ran an annual competition for young American concert artists that led to their touring abroad. We placed them in ambassadorial residences, music academies and concert halls to great effect. Ambassadors Scanlon and Zimmerman also made good use of the arts in embassies program. At our request, they hosted a Fulbright reception every year. Very often when they traveled within the country they would call on our Fulbrighters. We always made sure they knew who was out there doing what and made sure that the ambassador, the DCM, whoever was going out to other parts of the country had a chance to talk to our grantees. They were both interesting people, and they were very often better keyed in to what was going on outside of the capital because they weren't "official Americans." They lived and worked much more in the society and in their universities than we did or could.

Q: When you left there did you feel that things had worked out well. Was it a good time?

PLOTKIN: For us as a family, it was wonderful. Beyond all of the professional aspects of our tours there, the International School of Belgrade was excellent. Our daughters went there for four years and I served four years on the board, part of that time as chairman. It was a school that didn't have that much in the way of facilities, but had truly excellent teachers, both the Americans we brought in every year who made up about 50% of the faculty and the Yugoslav teachers who on the permanent staff.

We had a Serbian music teacher on the faculty who - I don't know how she did this - could make a 10 year old male soccer player think Mozart was great. On the occasion of my 50th birthday, our daughters decided to surprise me. We had dinner at home and then they blindfolded me and we drove off to see "The Barber of Seville," in Bulgarian. I thought they'd last through intermission; they were only in the first and third grades at the time. Well, they loved it. They were no more willing to leave at intermission than they would have left Disneyland at noon. I don't know what influence I've had in their lives, but at the end of the performance we were ready to leave and they said, "We can't leave. We have to go backstage and congratulate the performers." What have I done? It's a cultural attaché's dream.

The school also gave me a couple of opportunities to embarrass our daughters when I spoke to school community audiences as chairman of the board and they were in the crowd. I think they've forgiven me for that.

Because I had country-wide responsibilities, we were also able often to travel together throughout Yugoslavia, and we took many of our vacations there in Sarajevo, Dubrovnik, Split, Ilidza, Lake Ohrid, and throughout Slovenia. We saw practically all of the country. The girls cried to see smoke rising from Dubrovnik when it was attacked by the Serbs.

Finally, a professional note. If I had any impact in Yugoslavia, it may have been on the literary community. As CAO, I attended many book presentations, readings, poetry festivals, and was privileged to host many of our most important writers. I've already mentioned Ginsberg, Doctorow and Brodsky, but there were others as well. In addition, we were able to support the publication of American writers by Yugoslav publishers. To my great surprise, years later when we were in Sofia, there was an article in the leading Belgrade literary journal commemorating the death of Joseph Brodsky. The article recalled his visit to Belgrade and thanked me by name for my role in bringing him there

WILLIAM E. RYERSON
Consul General
Belgrade (1987-1989)

Ambassador William E. Ryerson entered the Foreign Service in January 1961. His first tour was as staff assistant in the U.S. Mission in Berlin. He then went on to consular designated positions, including Barbados, Poznan, Bonn, and Belgrade. Ambassador Ryerson was interviewed by William D. Morgan in 1992.

Q: *Now, Serbo-Croatian, because the theme here is language.*

RYERSON: And to Belgrade. And while there....got an extra position...lots of fraud problems. And a lot of the fraud involved native speakers of Albanian, of whom there are approximately three million in the borders of old Yugoslavia. What was Yugoslavia, actually.

Q: *Former, we use this quite often now; with Yugoslavia, with the Soviet Union.*

RYERSON: Former Yugoslavia, particularly in Kosovo. Which is now part of Serbia. But also in Montenegro and Macedonia. I will hire a fraud assistant, a fraud investigator, but that person's also going to have to speak some Albanian.

Q: *Was there a reason why there was more fraud in that area than in other ethnic areas?*

RYERSON: Poorer...and there'd been some enterprising airline representatives selling tickets, and frankly assisting with the fraud. They would make arrangements for the person to fly. Belgrade/ point "X"/ head of a national airline/ Mexico. And they would be met. Now these are people who speak only Albanian, who show up in Mexico City, and suddenly find that they're in the suburbs of San Diego. Well, bull feathers! You don't, I said, you met José, and you spoke to him in Albanian, of course, and...right Charlie! It's not plausible. Obviously this airline representative was involved.

Q: This was happening while you were there as CG?

RYERSON: Yes.

Q: Were you part of the ensnaring of this evil plot, or...

RYERSON: No. Immigration Service discovered part of it, we were aware of things, going on. At any rate, a fraud person, someone who speaks Albanian, and I had him.

Q: Let me just ask, linguistically speaking, an Albanian speaker, from Montenegro, or Kosovo, applying in Belgrade for a visa, would speak what language to use the interviewing officer or to the local staff?

RYERSON: Usually, he or she would have some kind of Serbo-Croatian, but not always. Sometimes, it was Albanian, only. They would bring an interpreter with them. And one of the reasons that I wanted to have someone, is precisely so that we could, sort of, control the interview. Then after I hired him, I thought, hmmm...suppose he says to the visa applicant, "recite the seven times table, and I'll tell this jerk whatever I think he needs to know, so that you can get your visa. And then you meet me in the alley and I'll..."

Q: And it will be 5,000 hookadukes! (laughs)

RYERSON: Right...so I asked him to teach me, so I also felt that this would be a way that he would come to feel part of the Embassy. Albanians in Yugoslavia, at the time, and even more so now, look for some of the racism that was emerged in Serbia.

Q: Re-emerged.

RYERSON: Re-emerged. Were looked down upon. You could take a statement made by some Serbs about Albanians, substitute the word, excuse me, substitute the word 'nigger' and hear 1952 in Mississippi. It was that kind of thing. Now the Serbian legation, in Tirana, Albania, in 1928, sent a dispatch to the Foreign Ministry in Belgrade, which began with the words, "because these are not of human kind." And that mentality hangs on.

Q: This isn't just for the Albanians, though from what we're seeing on television. They, the Serbs feel this about some of their other neighbors, too!

RYERSON: Yes, well the Albanians are at the bottom?

RYERSON: The Albanians are at the bottom.

Q: *Again, I'm taking you from your, the linguistically...*

RYERSON: Albanian, our readers should know, is not a Slavic language. It is an Indo-European language, as is Greek.

Q: *Illyrian?*

RYERSON: Yes, it's thought to be descended from the ancient Illyrian... Greek...Urdu.

Q: *Roman, Latin, Urdu?*

RYERSON: Urdu is an Indo-European language. But it's a family all its own.

Q: *Caught by the mountains, maybe; you have the tribes?*

RYERSON: Yes, the Germanic languages here and Romance off there, and Greek by itself, Albanian by itself, yes. Sort of.

Q: *Almost as bad as Hungarian and Finnish!*

RYERSON: Which, of course, are not Indo-European languages. Quite separate. You know, there are lone words, which you recognize...

Q: *That were taken from...*

RYERSON: Well that thing that rides on rails and is pulled by a locomotive. That is a 'train'?

Q: *'Train' with many new vowels...*

RYERSON: No. T-r-e-n.

Q: *Oh, T-r-e-n, kind of...*

RYERSON: This is a 'wall'...

Q: *French for wall...*

RYERSON: German, also, and tavolina. Italian.

Q: *I would have thought the Italian would have provided a...*

RYERSON: Well, it is for some things, the verbs. Oh, the verbs! Different, take my word for it!

Q: *Even worse than Russia?*

RYERSON: Yes, there are a couple of extra moods in the various...there's a form of a verb you use to express surprise. Oh, is it really me? Is it really raining? we do it with certain locutions in English. There's a whole separate verb form just for that. Anyway, I will learn a little bit. A, it will make this fellow feel, perhaps, a little more part of...

Q: *Did he take to your learning this? Or...*

RYERSON: Yes, he did. And...I will be able monitor a little bit what he's interpreting and it is just sort of fun. And I got hooked! Then I tried to make arrangements, made arrangements to study it, was going to do a two-week immersion course in Prizren, down in Kosovo. And went...

Q: *The Embassy was supporting you on this undertaking?*

RYERSON: Well, yes, I was doing it on my own, but the embassy was, thought it was a fine idea. I made the arrangements to go, for January, when I made them, I went down at Thanksgiving time and talked to this professor, fifteen minutes of non-stop Albanian. The man wouldn't shift to anything. He agreed he would do this immersion thing...

Q: *You were immersing indeed?*

RYERSON: Well, you know, I was out of his office, down the street, with him throwing nouns at me. This is a this, and this is a that, and when you go into a shopping place, this is an egg...this is a blah, a blah, a blah...whew! Finally, got the man to shift to Serbo-Croatian and then on the telephone several times, always in Albanian. I sweated every time.

Q: *It's physically hard on telephone!*

RYERSON: Called me about ten days before I was to go, and said, and I quote, "Billy, I have been obliged not to do it." In perfect English. Serbs had gotten to him and told him you will not.

Q: *Why?*

RYERSON: I presume they didn't want an American diplomat in Prizren in January of 1990. And, indeed, during the time I would have been there, things started happening in Kosovo. So, I am not persuaded that, that, perhaps, wasn't planned ahead of time.

Q: *Yes, yes.*

RYERSON: At any rate, he said, "Oh, you will learn it!" Well, to go back to linguistics, I did then get a teacher in Belgrade, who was the official interpreter for the Serbian Assembly.

Q: *Because there has to be a Ser...*

RYERSON: Actually, bilingual Serbo-Croatian/Albanian. He spoke no English. So I was learning Albanian through Serbian. And that made an extra challenge. Many Albanians speak English; they learned it through BBC, or they learned it as the Prime Minister told the Deputy Secretary of State: "Oh, I found a book for learning English!" But it was in Russian.

Q: *Learned Russian, in order to learn English!*

RYERSON: In order to learn English! Yes, and that's not unusual in Albania.

Q: *So, when you went through these various experiences of being able, or not being able to learn Albanian relatively easily, what did you end up as a number, as a score, as we call it.*

RYERSON: Never tested in it!

Q: There's no one to test you!

RYERSON: Well, they have somebody to test now. I ended up with a second instructress, a lady who was a refugee from Tirana, now living in Australia. And I was doing some seven and eight hours a week, one on one, in the Spring of '90, in Belgrade. I think on a good day, I might have had an S-2.

Q: *Oh, that's all?*

RYERSON: Oh yes.

RYERSON: 'Cause it is hard!

RYERSON: It is difficult...

Q: *More so than Serbo-Croatian, for example, or Slavic one, like Polish?*

RYERSON: No, it's different, and I'm that much older.

Q: *Yes, and it's harder!*

RYERSON: It's harder!

GEORGE KENNEY
Yugoslavian Affairs, Bureau of European Affairs
Washington, DC (1992)

George Kenney received a bachelor's degree in economics from the University of Chicago. Mr. Kenney's government service began with the State Department's Bureau for Economic Affairs. In 1991, he joined the Foreign Service. In addition to serving in Marseille, Mr. Kenney has also held positions in Kinshasa and Washington, DC. This interview was conducted by Michael Springmann on September 10, 1993.

KENNEY: I found a job in the Bureau for European Affairs. A friend of mine was the lone desk officer for Yugoslavia. He was completely burned out from fifteen-hour workdays, every day. I had known this fellow from our childhood because he had grown up in a Foreign Service family, as I had. He was several years older and had on occasions, been my baby sitter. He wanted to establish a second position to help him. The Bureau agreed and it was established, and I was assigned to it.

Formally, I went to work on the Yugoslavia desk on February 1, 1992 although I had actually started in mid-January. From then until I resigned on August 25, 1992, I worked on Yugoslav issues.

Q: So you became the assistant country desk officer? When in your view did American policy toward Bosnia begin to fall apart?

KENNEY: I guess I was called deputy officer in charge. I think we failed to develop a policy toward the Bosnians from the start of the crisis. If you go back to '90 or '91, it was fairly obvious that Milosevic intended to destroy the Yugoslav federal system in order to create a greater Serbia. But the world was sort of tired, after going through the Gulf War. The bureaucracy in State did not want to encourage the dissolution of any Communist or ex-Communist country partly in fear that that might encourage the Soviet Union to fall apart. At a higher level, to the extent, that either Bush or Baker focused on the area, the intelligence was that Yugoslavia would fall apart fairly violently. So they thought that if the U.S. committed itself to do something about that potential breakup, we might become involved in a war and might have to commit forces -- a risk they didn't want to run. So they supported a "hands-off" policy whatever else we might say.

We sent a lot of signals to the Serbs that we would not really get involved. We might act as neutral mediators, but that didn't bother Milosevic and the Serbs at all. Because there wasn't any high level interest in looking at the crisis, we never really defined the problem very well. By the time the conflict began to get out of hand, Eagleburger and Baker were saying that it was a civil war or an ethnic conflict. They were trying to rationalize the U.S. not getting involved. It seems to me that the right way of looking at this, is to understand that Milosevic was able to take over a crumbling Communist system, substitute his own

political machinery and start to manipulate people, particularly through the mass media -- the electronic media. Most people in Serbia are illiterate; probably less than five percent have a college education. They depend on radio and TV. There were a couple of independent radio and TV stations in Belgrade, but for the most part, the Serbian masses depended on state-controlled media. From 1986 through 1991, Milosevic was telling people that they had a lot of grievances that needed to be redressed. If they weren't persuaded what they heard on TV, Milosevic was also getting control of the police, the secret police and the army as well key unions and jobs. So people couldn't very easily resist all this. To make it even easier, the Croatian government, under Tudjman, was moving in a somewhat similar direction, although not as malevolently. Tudjman was kind of threatening the Serbs in Croatia. The Croats violated Serbian human and civil rights and in some cases, killed people and in some cases, stole property and put people in jail. The Serbs in Croatia had cause for alarm.

In any case, the Serbs started the conflict. No one on the outside world wanted to become involved. We went from bad to worse. By the time I arrived on the desk in February 1992, I immediately noticed that the CIA was predicting that Bosnia was very likely to blow up. As I considered the intelligence reports and analysis and talked to people to learn as much as I could, it seemed to me that the CIA estimate was probably correct. So I recommended that at a minimum, the State Department develop a contingency plan for dealing with the breakup of Bosnia, so that if it started to happen, we would not be caught unprepared. No one really wanted to listen to that kind of recommendation. We were so caught up in rationalizing non-involvement and on reliance on mechanisms such as the CSCE or the EC to produce some sort of settlement. We didn't want to contemplate how much worst the war could get.

Q: If the desk was urging some action, who was resisting? The Assistant Secretary? The Deputy Secretary? The Secretary?

KENNEY: There are two levels to this. In early January, Eagleburger returned to the Department from a White House meeting to tell senior officers -- I wasn't there, but I was briefed -- that whatever we do, we could not get substantively involved in the Yugoslav crisis. We could proceed with as many diplomatic meetings as we wanted, but we could not commit the U.S. to do anything. We were permitted to talk to the EC and the Europeans, but that was the limit. Eagleburger was very consistent on that. He absolutely did not want us to get close to some kind of substantive involvement. The bureaucracy took those marching orders very seriously. Senior officers tried to avoid absolutely anything that might bring us closer to involvement. We could not talk about genocide or atrocities because that might arouse public opinion and force the administration to do something. We could not talk about starvation in Sarajevo for the same reasons.

Months before we started an airlift to Sarajevo, I had suggested that we do so because I knew that starvation there would start in the foreseeable future. The argument against that was that we might find ourselves in another Vietnam, and we couldn't risk that. When reports of atrocities and concentration camps began to leak out, I suggested that we should investigate by sending survey teams out to get the facts. We could have debriefed

refugees. We could have built up a data base for possible later prosecution of the perpetrators. We didn't want to do that either. We have avoided dealing with the problem in every way; we did not want to take any risk of arousing public opinion. There was great concern that we might be forced to change the policy.

I think that at the top level there was a clear desire not to do anything. The bureaucracy, at the senior levels, picked that up and tried to enforce that policy. The bureaucracy at the mid-level really resisted. I knew virtually nothing about the Balkans before I started to work on these issues. I soon learned from my colleagues in INR, in the Bureau, in the field, in CIA what was going on in Bosnia. I was a blank slate, but it became obvious to me very quickly from what I heard from all sources that our policy was not working. That view was a majority view by far among the working level experts. So there was a disconnect between the working level who could see what we were doing was a terrible mistake and the senior level who thought they had some better political sense. Interestingly enough, later on, by July and August, as we entered the Presidential campaign, Bush and Baker seemed to become interested in testing the waters a little more. Baker on a couple of occasions during appearances before Congress made strong statements to the effect that we would do whatever it would take to deliver humanitarian aid. I remember that I tried to tape those words so that they could be used for press guidance. But the Office Director insisted that we would have "to walk back" from those statements. After the Secretary made some statements, the principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for EUR called in the NATO Ambassadors to brief them on what the Secretary had said because they were all very interested. The briefing in fact provided no indication that we had changed our policy, even a little. I think that the senior bureaucrats failed to realize that at the senior political level there may have been disagreement or confusion about what our policy should be. So the senior bureaucrats stuck to their original marching orders which, as I said before, were essentially "do nothing" and say as little as possible. We still see that today. We are trying to get a U.N. war crimes tribunal prosecutor. The British absolutely do not want to have a prosecutor who will bring indictments because they think, correctly, that such indictments would upset the peace process. Others, like myself, believe that indictments would be a good thing to punish the perpetrators some day or at least to hold potential retribution over some people's heads. The U.S. is caving in to the British; we are not willing to challenge them in the Security Council. So we are not really pushing for the selection of a strong prosecutor, but are looking only at compromise candidates who are certainly not going to seek indictments. It is a farce almost to a point where someone should nominate Kurt Waldheim for the job.

Q: Was that disconnect between the mid-level staff and the senior leadership a function of age or outlook or career concerns?

KENNEY: I wouldn't say that age was a factor because there were a couple of senior officers who were very much opposed to our policy, or lack of policy, who continued to work surreptitiously against it. It was an extraordinary situation. Normally the "leaks" in the State Department come from the Seventh Floor's political appointees. Now you find people at the Office Director's level throughout the Department, who have knowledge of what is going on, who are talking relatively openly to the press. It is quite remarkable.

People, who I would never dream would talk to a reporter, are now willing to take calls from them or talk to them face to face. People who oppose the administration cover a broad range of ages.

There may be a division between people in the 20-40 age group and those in the 50-60 group, but the division is sharper between rank levels -- the mid-level vs. the senior level, i.e., the Assistant Secretary, the Under Secretary, the Deputy Secretary. When I was in the Department, our Bosnian policy was made by a very small number of people: Eagleburger, Kantor (Under Secretary for Political Affairs) periodically, Tom Niles, Assistant Secretary for European Affairs -- an old Yugoslav hand -- his principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Ralph Johnson, our Office Director, Mike Habib. Those five guys were making the policy. They didn't listen to the desk officer, they didn't listen to INR, they didn't really listen to CIA. The "do nothing" policy was approved by the top level of the administration.

Q: What was the position of our missions in the country? Did they just toe the line?

KENNEY: The Embassy in Belgrade was entirely too cozy with the Serbian government. Ambassador Warren Zimmermann talked to Milosevic and believed he could deal with him. It wasn't until he was recalled in July, 1992 that Zimmermann had a change of heart and began to doubt that Milosevic could be dealt with and that perhaps force might be necessary. He would send cables which said that on the one hand, Milosevic was a bastard and vicious, but on the other, he is sort of reasonable and that there were ways to talk to him. After the Ambassador's recall, we left a Charge in Belgrade who conducted "business as usual," when we should not have done so. There is an irony right now because although we have an Embassy in Belgrade, we do not recognize the present Serbian regime and do not conduct diplomatic relations with it. We do not recognize the so-called Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. We maintain that Yugoslavia is dissolved; we recognize three of its former republics, but the "Federal republic" exists in a gray area. Why do we have an Embassy then? The Department wants to maintain an Embassy to have a listening post and an observer in Belgrade and a facility which permits some communication to the Serbian leadership. We have exchanged diplomatic notes to provide mutual protection for the diplomats, but if we are going to be serious about punishing Serbia, we should start by taking some actions, such as closing our Embassy. If we ever to take any military operations, we should close the Embassy to prevent our staff from becoming hostage. It seems to me as long as we have an Embassy in Belgrade, the Serbs must know that a lot of our threats of military action are hollow.

The Embassy was divided roughly the same way the Department was. The top level, more or less, was sympathetic with our policy. The working level, with whom I would talk daily, thought that our policy was completely screwed up. They were looking for ways to change it. I used to have long conversations every morning with the political section staff. We would explicitly condemn our latest policy pronouncement or action. The Department's Yugoslav desk and the Embassy's Political Section were very much of the same mind. We conversed on an open telephone line, and didn't really care whether the Serbs overheard us. I would talk to my contacts in the Political Section who would

give me the latest up-date on the situation in Belgrade. They reflected, at least in the "spin" they put on the events, the concerns that we shared. The broader "think-pieces," usually written by the ambassador or the DCM would be much more in tune with hopes of the senior officials in the Department and would emphasize the "talk to the Serbs" attitude.

At several points, our Office was trying to cut some of the other Department off from the communications from Belgrade. The Office Director and the DCM from July through August wanted to characterize the Bosnian war as the U.N. was doing. Rather than reporting a variety of differing interpretations of events on the ground, the Office and the embassy increased their communications through the Official-Informal channel which is not circulated in the Department. Only one copy of these messages were made for filing purposes. Finally, the Office of the EUR Assistant Secretary decided to crack down on this process. It dictated that all cable exchanges with the Embassy should be in regular channels. So the Office and the Embassy began to use the classified FAX channel to agree on a particular line to be taken; after reaching such agreement, the message would be turned into an official cable. It was something!

There is one story that sums up the experience. In early July, we were having a flap about concentration camps. One reporter had just written a book "Witness to Genocide." That included a lot of material on concentration camps. He had been very brave. He had traveled through Bosnia visiting a lot of these camps. I had heard about some of his stories because he had told the Consul General in Zagreb that he was working on this book, and wanted the C.G.'s views and insights. The C.G. sent in a reporting cable, warning us that these stories and more would be made public soon. I thought that was an important break because I knew that once these stories of atrocities hit the press, we would be forced to respond. But I couldn't get anyone above me to focus on the issue. The problem was ignored until the stories broke. Then the Department reacted by saying it knew nothing of these matters. It would not acknowledge that there was a problem. The situation became very confused. At one point, the Department's spokesman Boucher had to admit that we knew about the concentration camps, then he retracted that admission. A day later, Tom Niles was testifying in Congress. Congressman Tom Lantos from California asked him what he knew about the camps. Niles had received two bits of advice on how to respond to that question: a) "stonewall" -- i.e., deny any knowledge (this advice was given by the Office Director) and b) admit that we had a terrible problem and were trying to find out as much as we could on an urgent basis (my advice). Niles "stonewalled." He was really dressed down by the Committee. When he came back from the Hill, the Department went through another two days of crisis. Finally Eagleburger issued a formal statement which said that we didn't have much information, but were trying to collect as much as we could as quickly as we could. In the midst of all of this, I had to compile a short narrative for the President's evening reading book, which includes 10-15 different items. This report is intended to supplement the President's daily intelligence briefing. My paragraph was about concentration camps. I said that we knew that Serbs ran some camps; that we knew that the Serbs were responsible for most of the abuses, but at the same time I said that the Croats and the Muslims also ran camps, although the abuses in these facilities were not as serious. I gave some rough estimates of

the number of camps. By the time, I had finished circulating the draft for clearance, Eagleburger's office changed it to read that all factions run camps and that all factions perpetrate abuses. I thought that it was just too much for a factual statement to be censored so that the President would not learn the truth. The bureaucracy had taken its original instructions and had taken them to extremes. We were, in fact, saying that since our policy was not to do anything, the President should not be roused by fact; he might take some action. The Department would do what it was supposed to by keeping the U.S. out of this.

Q: Was your career ever explicitly threatened and told to toe the party line or was it all implied? How was pressure applied to you?

KENNEY: It was all implied. You get in part to be an office director or an deputy assistant secretary by being sensitive to subtle signals. It is barely a twitch of an eye-brow that sends these people into shock. I was never told to get in line or I wouldn't be given another good assignment. Never. Ironically, the people who have worked the hardest to uphold the administration's position have not prospered: Ralph Johnson got an OK job, not great; Tom Niles got an OK job, but also not great. They were not rewarded for their obedience. The only guy in the whole Department who really agreed with the administration's position was my Office Director and with whom I disagreed strongly, got an excellent assignment as Political Counselor in London.

Q: There was obviously a strong disagreement between those who felt that the Bosnian conflict was hundreds years old and those who thought that as it was primarily a Serb aggression, it was a new phenomenon.

KENNEY: Right. The experience taught me that individuals really matter. Milosevic really mattered; he made all the difference in the world. If Milosevic hadn't lived, the Serbs would not have created him. Milosevic himself, if he had a different personality, could have turned Yugoslavia in an entirely different direction. He could have used his great bureaucratic power to bring Yugoslavia into Europe, to increase economic prosperity. But he is really a diabolical man. Hitler was like that, also Stalin, Lenin. There are people, including evil ones, who can change history. Milosevic was one of them. Very early in his regime, we could have told him that we didn't (sic) him trying to build a "Greater Serbia." We should have told him that we were prepared to apply economic sanctions or we were prepared to punish him in a variety of ways. We might even have threatened to arm his opponents. Milosevic didn't get firm hold of the Army until mid-1991 just before the start of the fighting. He has purged the military since that time on a number of occasions, including a recent major discharge of a number of generals. Soon he will have to get rid of some colonels. The Yugoslav Army was a large, professional organization -- the fifth largest in Europe. A lot of its officers were American trained. They were reluctant to fight their own people. It was an unprofessional thing to do. It was difficult for Milosevic to get control of the military. He had to fool them to a certain extent about his objectives. Now he had built up a domestic police force in Serbia which is as strong, if not stronger, than the Army. There were a lot of ways we could have

exercised leverage on him, but we didn't. By the time we got around to invoking sanctions in mid-92, it was too late.

Q: Was there any real organized opposition in State?

KENNEY: Not really. That is something I would do differently if I had to do it over again. After I left, individuals started to send "Dissent" memoranda. There were twelve who sent a letter to Christopher; there were another half dozen "Dissent" memoranda. Although it may not have had a huge impact, it was a way for individuals to go on record and to show that dissent existed in the ranks. In my work, I dealt every day with the press spokesperson for EUR who was married to the Executive Secretary of the Department. "Dissent" memoranda go to the Executive Secretary. The spokesperson was telling her husband what I thought of the policy; he thought that my message was getting through regardless whether I was putting it on paper or not. The only purpose of writing a "Dissent" memorandum would have been to leave a paper trail and in retrospect, I think I should have done so. But I didn't have the experience to know that at the time. I also think I should have asked for meetings with some senior officials, such as Kantor. I would have told him that we were making some very dangerous mistakes and that our policies should be reconsidered. But I was too inexperienced to know to do that.

VICTOR D. COMRAS
Serbia Sanctions Program, State Department
Washington, DC (1998-1999)

Victor D. Comras was born in New York State in 1943. Comras graduated from Georgetown University in 1964, the University of Florida Law School in 1966, and promptly joined the Foreign Service. While in the Foreign Service, Comras served overseas in Zaire, Nigeria, South Africa, France, Canada and Macedonia. He also worked on the Law of the Sea negotiations. Comras was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

Q: Today is May 5, 2003. Maybe we should talk about the whole Kosovo thing.

COMRAS: I'd like to do that. In June 1996 I left Skopje and went to the University of Pittsburgh, where I was a diplomat in residence. But, I continued to watch the events in Yugoslavia very closely. This included the aftermath of Dayton, what was going on in Bosnia, Kosovo, and, of course, Macedonia.

Up until June 1996 I was a participant in shaping or dealing with many of these events. From 1996 until late 1998, I was just an interested observer. In late 1998 I was asked by James Dobbins to join his team and to handle the sanctions related to the Kosovo war.

You know, in the role of an observer you get to be even more critical of what's going on than when you are a participant. I watched with great interest, and a great deal of

skepticism, as the post-Dayton scenario unfolded in Bosnia. I am thankful that it turned out a lot better than I would have thought. In my view the credit goes more to SFOR than to the agreements worked out in Dayton. They provided the security force necessary to secure the peace in Bosnia and to get the warring faction forces back into their barracks.

There was much less success in providing for a stable Bosnian government that would be able to reintegrate the country. Train and equip also fell largely by the wayside. The Bosnian economy remained (and remains today) in shambles. There is still no timetable for eventual IFOR troop withdrawal. But, nevertheless, due mostly to IFOR continuing force presence - and the presence of U.S. forces well beyond the one year that was initially envisaged by President Clinton - stability was maintained. But, there was a price to pay. And one price was to strengthen, rather than pull down, Milosevic in Serbia.

Milosevic used the aftermath of the Bosnian conflict to strengthen his own hand as an international player. He became an essential interlocutor with respect to events in Bosnia, he was able to serve his own purposes and interests, and he was able to strengthen his repressive regime in Serbia and in Kosovo. Following Dayton, our diplomats traveled more and more to Belgrade to talk with Milosevic about events related to Bosnia and to get his accord or support for our various projects there.

Dayton overlooked the Kosovo issue. It pushed the question of Kosovo aside. Rather, our policy was to retain what became known as an outer wall of sanctions pending resolution of several issues in Serbia, including the Kosovo question. This outer wall of sanctions didn't amount to much except for limitations on direct government and international assistance to the Milosevic regime in Serbia.

During the Bosnian war, Kosovo lost its autonomy and became the subject of a direct repressive regime from Belgrade.

The story of Milosevic and Kosovo starts in April 1987 when Yugoslav President Ivan Stambolic sent Sloba to pacify the restive Serbs in Kosovo. Tensions had risen between the Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo soon after Tito's death. Albanians constituted the majority living in Kosovo and Albanians dominated the local Communist Party apparatus. But the Serbs were very distrustful of the Albanians and complaining of discriminatory treatment.

Kosovo holds an important place in Serbian history and lore, and Serbia has always had a very strong emotional tie to the province, which once had a majority Serb population. That changed during and after the Second World War as a result of the settling of additional Albanian families moved into the region during the Second World War and the expulsion of Serb families. Following the war the Serbian exodus continued, heightened again by civil disturbances in the early 1980s.

The Serbians wanted to curb the domination of the province by Albanians. They believed this could be accomplished by withdrawing Kosovo's autonomy and allowing the Serbs to benefit politically from the vast Serbian majority in Serbia (of which Kosovo

was a part). Milosevic was directed by Stambolic to meet with the Serbs and to ask them to show patience and cooperation vis a vis the Albanian Communist party leadership. Milosevic reportedly broke away from his meeting with ethnic Albanians to mingle with an angry crowd of Serbs in a suburb of Pristina. This was his opening to play his new "Serbian Nationalist" card.

His actions in Kosovo served as a marker in Yugoslav history that the Tito era was over and that Serbs, who constituted a majority of all Yugoslavs, would now be free again to demonstrate their own nationalistic inclinations. This helped set the stage for the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the Balkan wars that followed.

Milosevic easily won the support of the Serbian nation in Kosovo and elsewhere, and released a penned up nationalism that stormed across Yugoslavia. This force propelled him into a firm leadership position in Serbia as he pushed aside Stambolic. It also had a direct impact on growing Slovene, Croat, Macedonian, Bosnian, and Albanian nationalism throughout the region.

With his rise to power Milosevic moved quickly to suspend Kosovo autonomy and to impose direct rule from Belgrade. The Albanians lost their control of the province. They were forced out of the government, out of the bureaucracy, out of the police, and out of the schools. They began to establish their own parallel institutions in order to provide basic order, education and daily requirements for their community. Kosovo became a police state controlled and patrolled by special Serbian police.

The deteriorating situation in Kosovo led President Bush, on December 29, 1992 to issue his famous Christmas warning. Having obtained intelligence that Milosevic was planning to use military force in Kosovo, the Bush Administration warned Milosevic through diplomatic channels that the U.S. was prepared to take unilateral military action, without European cooperation, if the Serbs sparked a new conflict in Kosovo or Macedonia. These were real concerns. Many believed that Milosevic intended to use the JNA (the Serbian Army) to escalate and extend the Bosnian conflict into these areas. What was meant to be a private message was quickly and widely reported in the Press.

It was never clear what the Christmas warning really meant or how we intended to back it up. But President Clinton acted quickly to give the Bush warning credence. Plans were made during the final days of the Bush administration and then into the Clinton administration to place American soldiers in Yugoslavia for the first time. They were to be stationed along the Macedonia border with Serbia as part of what was then the UNPROFOR mission in Macedonia. UNPROFOR was the first experiment in deploying a preventive peacekeeping force. The initial force of 300 soldiers grew to almost 1,000.

The inclusion of American forces in UNPROFOR Macedonia was meant to send a clear message to Milosevic that if he did cross that line with Military action in Kosovo or Macedonia he might have to engage American soldiers directly. While the force contingent there was mostly symbolic, engaging even a small American force could lead

the U.S. to become directly engaged in the conflict. This was something Milosevic wanted to avoid.

Milosevic seemed to heed that warning at the time. He did not make any significant military incursions into Kosovo and he did not make any at all into Macedonia. There were a couple of border issues that arose in the years that followed but nothing terribly serious. This remained the situation until the Dayton accords were concluded. But the situation began to change shortly after the Dayton Accords.

During the Bosnian war Serbia conducted a number of police actions in Kosovo and continued to institute a very repressive regime. However, he choose to tolerate the Albanian creation of parallel institutions to handle Albanian affairs in the province. It was clear, however, that Albanians had lost basic civil and human rights.

We were very concerned about this deteriorating human rights situation. And we used our efforts to place additional pressure on Milosevic to relax his repressive measures and to restore autonomy to the region. This became one of the conditions for sanctions removal. As I said earlier, some of these sanctions ostensibly were to continue after the Dayton accords as what was called the outer wall of sanctions. These included certain air traffic rights and steps restricting assistance for economic development such as international financial assistance, international loans and guarantees, other things that might help the Serbs come out of the big hole that they had dug for themselves during the sanctions period and the war. These outer sanctions were to be held in place to deal with the Kosovo issue as well as other human rights questions.

I was already greatly concerned, as were many others closely following the situation in Yugoslavia, that the U.S. had relaxed too many elements of the sanctions already at the outset of Dayton and had done so without establishing appropriate benchmarks for fulfillment of the Dayton obligations. We advised that the sanctions should be relaxed only as these various Dayton commitments were being fulfilled. But, this is not what happened. At Holbrooke's insistence, the sanctions were suspended at the beginning of Dayton and were formally lifted on the signature of the accord.

The Albanian leaders in Kosovo watched the Dayton meeting closely. They were quite upset that a return to Kosovo autonomy was not included in the Dayton agenda. They were also very upset to see that the principal economic sanctions on Serbia were being tied only to Bosnia and not to progress also on issues related to Kosovo.

Q: Did you get the feeling that there was a Dayton crew at the State Department who were living in euphoria and didn't want any complications, they had done that and wanted to move on?

COMRAS: Yes, I think that's right. I think there was a great sense of relief and accomplishment in the State Department, and within the Clinton Administration when the Dayton Accords were signed. The ending of the fighting in Bosnia was a great accomplishment. There was a determination in the State Department to move forward

with implementation as quickly as possible. Discussions were focused on how to keep progress moving forward in Bosnia. Bosnia was the biggest issue on the table and had the highest priority, even when it came to dealing with related Balkan issues.

I must admit that the fulfillment of some aspects of the Dayton Accords went much smoother and faster than I had anticipated. This was particularly so with regard to the military aspects and getting the warring armies back into their barracks.

Bob Gelbard took over from Richard Holbrooke as the person responsible in the State Department for overseeing implementation of the accords. He became our representative to the Contact Group. As you know Holbrooke left the government shortly after the accords to pursue private interests.

One of the first problems Gelbard faced was the continued entrenchment of the more radical Bosnian Serb nationalist leadership including Radovan Karadzic and his military chief, General Ratko Mladic. Their supporters retained control in the Serbska Republic and continued to thwart positive movement at the Federal level in Sarajevo.

The Administration very much wanted to see progress on implementing Dayton's political provisions. This was not possible as long as the radicals retained political control. One of Bob's goals, therefore, was to promote new and more moderate leadership within the Bosnian Serb community as well as within the Croat and Muslim communities. This was essential to future political development at the federal level and for the country's future political stability. The hope was that we could get such moderate leaders to begin to work together to heal some of the wounds and move the country forward. Gelbard and his team believed that Biljana Plavcic could help us accomplish this. Mrs. Plavcic had served at one time as Karadzic's Vice President. While she was also tainted with radical Bosnian nationalism during the war (and subsequently voluntarily faced sentencing for war crimes at the Hague) she had already broken with Karadzic and stacked out a more moderate line. At that moment she seemed to be the answer - the moderate who could garner sufficient support to represent the Bosnian Serb community in the new government. But, she first needed to gain the support of the Bosnian Serb Parliament.

The road to promoting Plavcic's leadership ran directly through Belgrade, as it did for so many of the Bosnian issues. Milosevic had become the essential arbiter for any issue dealing with the Bosnian Serbs. Plavcic was clearly not one of his favorites, but for a price he would be willing to play ball. Gelbard had to work out a deal with Milosevic in order to get his help to get Plavcic elected by the Bosnian Serb Parliament as RS Acting President. In return for his support on Plavcic, the United States began to relax some of the outer-wall sanctions that were held over after Dayton. We indicated that this might include letting the Yugoslav national airline begin to fly, and we began to entertain the possibility of providing some assistance directly to Serbia.

I must say that this sent some very negative signals to the Albanian leadership in Kosovo. The Kosovo Albanians began to perceive our policy as Bosnia-centric. It appeared that

we would be satisfied with Milosevic so long as the Dayton track moved forward in Bosnia. We appeared to be less and less interested in events in Kosovo and more and more eager to simply get out of the Balkans. These signals could not have come to the Albanians at a worse time.

The Albanians were also closely watching the Palestinian Intifada and the attention it drew to events in the Middle East. Some of the more radical leaders began to think that an Albanian Intifada in Kosovo might serve to draw world attention back to Kosovo.

Before the Plavcic issue there had appeared to be some progress being made on Kosovo issues due to the work of the Sant'Egidio Community. This became known as the Sant'Egidio process.

The Sant'Egidio Community became involved in Kosovo in 1996 at the request of Kosovo Albanian leader Ibrahim Rugova. Rugova was very let down with the Dayton Accords, and with the absence of any language in the accords concerning Kosovo. He turned to the Sant'Egidio Community to assist him in finding ways to deal with the Serbs and to obtain some kind of humanitarian accord that would ease the harsh humanitarian conditions under which the Kosovo Albanians continued to live. Sant'Egidio concentrated its efforts on seeking an accord that would get the Serbian government to reopen the schools and reached an accord on September 2, 1996 to reopen the Albanian primary and secondary schools. Further work was also underway to reopen the University of Pristina. This looked like an important breakthrough and it gave rise to some optimism that maybe further progress would be achieved regarding a new post-Dayton status for Kosovo.

But it just may be that the gestures that we made to Milosevic regarding the Plavcic deal - and signs that we were willing to lift remaining sanctions in return for progress in Bosnia on implementing the Dayton Accords - sent a wrong signal to Milosevic concerning our interest in Kosovo. Milosevic may have believed that so long as he behaved in Bosnia and did our bidding and helped us in what we wanted to do in Bosnia, he would keep us happy. He may have felt that his cooperation on Bosnia would give him a free hand elsewhere. Besides, the Americans were already beginning to show increased concerns about international terrorism. Milosevic might well have thought that he could place a "terrorist" label on the increasingly radical Albanians in Kosovo who were just beginning with their own "intifada." Milosevic may have concluded that the Americans were simply less interested in Kosovo than they were in Bosnia.

This scenario is supported by the fact that Milosevic quickly changed course regarding the September 2, 1996 school agreement. The Serbs simply didn't do what they said they would do. The schools remained closed, and negotiations on reopening the University stalled. There was little or no reaction to this from anywhere in the international community. The deadlines came and passed and nothing happened. It wasn't that Milosevic disowned the agreement. He just didn't do anything to implement it.

Milosevic appeared to be at the height of his power. But, then we were all surprised by major anti-Milosevic demonstrations that broke out in Belgrade in December 1996. Milosevic had called for local elections expecting to win big. However, the results proved the contrary. Milosevic moved quickly to manipulate the outcome and to claim victory in every major city in Serbia. This farce was so evident, however, that the opposition was able to turn out millions of demonstrations in Belgrade and across Serbia. It looked as if Milosevic might be facing his final days in power. But, the demonstrations ran their course without any real international support or intervention. Milosevic conceded a few local elections and rode out the storm. He spent his next several months shaking up his own government and resecuring his hold on Serbia's political processes. Having survived this challenge, he emerged stronger than ever. He also decided to reenforce his political base by appealing again to Serbian nationalism. He again used the growing threat of Albanian rebellion in Kosovo as a new Serbian cause celebre.

Starting in October 1997 the Albanians began to demonstrate against Milosevic's failure to implement the school agreement. Their anger rose with each demonstration. "We had an agreement, they chanted, but nothing's happened." Albanian Students began to carry out a "protest walk" around the university every night. They would circle the university peacefully, carrying placards and shouting slogans. They wanted to give some exposure to Milosevic's failure to implement the school agreement.

Milosevic didn't seem to care. He was continuing to make us happy on Bosnia, and we really weren't reacting to what was happening in Kosovo.

On March 2nd 1998 Serbian police charged into the demonstrators and began a new crackdown. The following day I went to the Office of the then Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs. I remember telling her that "Today is the first day of a new Kosovo war." Unfortunately, I had it right!

Meanwhile, events in Macedonia were also on a downward spiral. Relations between the Macedonian government and the Albanian minority were deteriorating rapidly. The incident sparking the problem related to an Albanian cultural event in the town of Gostivar. To mark the occasion an Albanian flag was raised alongside the Macedonian flag in front of the local city hall. Macedonian police overreacted and sent in a police squad to tear the Albanian flag down. This set off a local demonstration which rapidly grew in size. The Macedonian police called for reinforcements and the demonstration grew even bigger. The Macedonians ended up by arresting a number of local Albanian leaders, some of which were sentenced to several years in prison. This proved to be a major setback for inter-ethnic relations in Macedonia.

I was surprised that our Ambassador did little to calm the situation. In fact, his report to Washington seemed to lay the blame squarely on the Albanians and to vindicate the overreaction of the Macedonian police and the strong prison sentences handed out by the government. I indicated my disagreement at the time. I believed that rather than take sides on this issue, our role should have been to act as honest brokers to calm relations between the two communities. To my mind the long prison sentences meted out by the

Macedonian government were outrageous under the circumstances. The costs for these actions became much clearer subsequently.

Q: What was your job at this point?

COMRAS: In 1997 I was serving as the Senior State Department Coordinator for Holocaust Asset Restitution. I had just returned from the University of Pittsburgh where I spent a year as Diplomat-in-residence.

Q: Were you keeping your hand in?

COMRAS: I guess you might say that I remained an interested observer during this whole period. Anybody who wanted my opinion got it whether they wanted it or not. I did all I could to keep abreast of the issues. I felt that I had been exiled from those dealing with Yugoslavia because of my Dayton related criticisms.

Anyway, getting back to my story. Events continue to get worse in Kosovo. The Serbian police were cracking down on Albanian demonstrators, and more and more Albanian students were turning to more and more radical paths to respond. The Sant'Egidio process was failing and support for an Albanian intifada was growing. More and more Albanians were abandoning Rogova's stated policies of peaceful (non violent) protest.

A new Albanian force began to emerge in Kosovo. It was known as the UCK or Kosovo Liberation Army. While we certainly did not support their activities, they were becoming a force to be reckoned with. I think we made a big mistake, however, when we referred to them as "terrorists." If they were terrorists, then Milosevic could feel justified in dealing with them as terrorists. This appeared to give him an okay to take a freer hand in dealing with them. He began to ratchet up military action in response. The Christmas Warning was about to be tested.

Serbian military units began to deploy in Kosovo and against the UCK.

The Serbian authorities used the excuse of UCK activities to step up their repression of the Albanian community in Kosovo. They had great difficulty knowing which Albanians were UCK and which were not. So they went around Kosovo like the forces of Simon de Monfort in the 13th Century Albagenisan crusade. When Simon de Monfort asked the Abbot of Ceteaux, the Papal legate, what he was to do with the inhabitants, the legate answered "Kill them all. God knows his own." The Serbian forces shot first and asked questions later. More and more Albanian villages went up in smoke. Kosovo was becoming a new major Balkan crisis.

The Contact group was still concentrating on Bosnia and was slow to pick up on the growing Kosovo crisis. Things were going somewhat better in Bosnia, and there was a reluctance to place new pressures on Milosevic. Our contact group representative, Bob Gelbard was sent to Belgrade to deliver a message to Milosevic that he needed to cool-it in Kosovo. When he arrived in Belgrade Milosevic refused to see him. This represented

a very dramatic turning point. Milosevic was determined to move ahead in Kosovo, and try to cash-in on our evident Bosnia-centricity.

Here was the envoy of U.S. Secretary of State Madeline Albright - the person who was our lead person on Balkan issues - coming to talk to Milosevic about Kosovo and Milosevic wouldn't see him. What should have been our response? Well, I don't think we got it right. Instead of a strong response, we tried a conciliatory one. If Milosevic wouldn't see Gelbard, maybe he would consent to see Richard Holbrooke, the architect of the Dayton Accords. Milosevic and Holbrooke already had a very established relationship. Perhaps Holbrooke could turn him around.

I don't think that was the right answer to take out Gelbard and substitute Holbrooke. Holbrooke was smart enough to know that he had to keep Gelbard in toe. So, they both went to see Milosevic in early May 1998. One result was to undermine Bob Gelbard's own role and credibility with the Serbian leader. He preferred to deal with Holbrooke, who he knew as a dealmaker. From this point on Gelbard's position was marginalized. Holbrooke would take the lead in a new round of shuttle diplomacy between Belgrade, Washington and Pristina.

I think we should stood behind Gelbard from the start and read Milosevic the riot act directly from Washington if Milosevic continued to refuse to see him. We should have raised the ante - not waited for Milosevic to raise the ante. We shouldn't have appeared to be going to Milosevic to get his accord. We should have made him back-down at the outset!

It should have been clear that the Christmas warning remained valid, and that continued military action in Kosovo would be met with a forceful response. Instead we got involved in a drawn out negotiating game with Milosevic playing all sides - feigning, and then withdrawing concessions, and continuing to carry out his military actions. Looking back, we can see that the crisis continued to go downhill for the next 14 months. And so much damage had already been done when we finally decided to intervene with force.

But let's go back to the beginnings of this new round of Holbrooke diplomacy. After a full round of shuttle diplomacy Holbrooke concluded a deal with Milosevic involving a package of measures which was to include an immediate cessation of military police actions in Kosovo and direct talks between Milosevic and Rogovo's Albanian governing council. That sounded good but it was disastrous!

The Rogovo government was absolutely shocked and felt betrayed by Holbrooke's agreement with Milosevic. Milosevic had always said he was willing to have Rogovo come to Belgrade to talk with him directly. After all he knew that it would be like the Lion talking with the mouse. What leverage could Rogovo, or his colleagues bring to the table in Belgrade? They knew they would be at a great disadvantage in such discussions. Besides, they didn't trust Milosevic at all. Following the Sant Egidio negotiations, and in other talks, it had become clear to them that Milosevic couldn't be held to his word in any these agreements.

The Rogovo council position had always been clear - They wanted negotiations with the Serbs under international auspices. The power and the pressure on the Serbian government couldn't come from the Rogovo council. It had to come from the international community. The Albanians had always looked to the contact group, or international organizations to sponsor any discussions regarding Kosovo. Only under such a formula could the Albanians have any possibility of gaining concessions from Milosevic. In direct negotiations their position would always be very tenuous.

They saw the Holbrooke - Milosevic agreement as a serious set-back for this strategy.

Despite their protests we put them under enormous pressure to form a delegation and to go to Belgrade for such talks. They continued to refuse to join in what they viewed would only be charade in Belgrade. So we ratcheted up the pressure on them and threatened to leave them to their on to deal with increased Serb violence in the province.

The Rogovo council faced a real internal crisis. Rogovo finally caved in to our pressure and agreed to form a delegation to go to Belgrade. But many of the members of his council resigned. And many of his supporters began to shift their allegiance to the UCK. We tried to soften the blow by promising that we would include international observers in the talks and closely observe the negotiations. Rogovo wanted Holbrooke there. He didn't get him. We assigned the observer task to the Director of the Office in the State Department responsible for the Balkans, James Swiggart. Subsequently that role was transferred to our Ambassador in Skopje, Christopher Hill.

The discussions in Belgrade were a real fiasco. Milosevic made only a brief appearance. The real discussions took place at a much lower level. A second meeting was scheduled, but never occurred. In the meantime fighting had intensified in Kosovo and the Rogovo government was being deserted by more and more of its members. It became increasingly clear that neither side had anything to bring to a negotiating table. The Albanians didn't trust Milosevic to carry out any commitments. And it was apparent also that the Rogovo government had lost its own ability to speak for the Kosovo Albanian community.

However, the contact group was not willing to recognize the failure of the process.

Rather than abandon this approach, Christopher Hill and Wolfgang Petritsch, the Austrian ambassador to Belgrade, representing the EU, began their own shuttle diplomacy between Belgrade and Pristina. They concentrated on negotiating a framework agreement that would include basic documents related to political and civil institutions in Kosovo.

I have to say that this became a very ludicrous operation, especially against the background of increased fighting in Kosovo, the deterioration of the Rogovo council, the increasing importance of the UCK (and their absence from the process), and the failure of Milosevic to live up to any of his concessions. It was time to call Holbrooke back into the fray.

Holbrooke carried a very stern message to Milosevic. He was directed to make it clear that we were heading toward possible military action. NATO aircraft began to over fly Kosovo. We also began to build up NATO forces in Macedonia.

Holbrooke's instructions were to tell Milosevic that, in order to avoid NATO intervention he had to agree to the introduction of international peacekeeping mission in Kosovo which would include uniform military peacekeepers. Unfortunately, Holbrooke produced

something far less. He made an agreement with Milosevic that did not include military peacekeepers. I'm never quite sure whether that was within the realm of the instructions that he had been given or how that played through.

The outcome was a completely civilian peace monitoring mission. It was to be based on the lines of other EU monitoring missions in the region. There would be no armed military elements within the mission. Holbrooke explained that Milosevic absolutely refused to allow any foreign military presence in Kosovo.

I think the mission assigned to the new peace monitoring group was one of the most challenging in history. The mission had an impossible task. They worked hard and honorably. And they reported truthfully on what was going on. But, they were helpless to stem a deteriorating situation. They became the witnesses themselves to growing issues and atrocities. In the meantime Christopher Hill and Wolfgang Petritsch were continuing on their shuttle missions to work out a political framework agreement.

In December 1998 I wrote a memorandum to then Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Marc Grossman regarding my concerns about the negotiating process on Kosovo. I told them I thought the Christopher Hill shuttle mission should be ended. I suggested that we convene an all - Albanian party conference to forge a unity governing council in Kosovo and that we establish a common Nato - Kosovo Council negotiating position paper which should be used in a new round of negotiations held outside of Yugoslavia. The new negotiating paper would be subject to discussion and appropriate revision, but would have the weight of NATO behind it. While Grossman found my paper intriguing, he admitted that he little influence on what was going on with our Yugoslav policies at the time. He promised to convey my memo to others.

Apparently, our Yugoslav team had already decided on a somewhat different course. They did not believe that we should appear to choose sides in the Kosovo crisis. Nor did they favor our working out a Kosovo unity council.

Christopher Hill suggested a somewhat different approach. He wanted to call for an international conference to bring the Albanians and the Serbian Government together to hammer an agreement out under international auspices. I think that's where we should have been at the outset - about a year earlier. But, I believed it was much too late for that now. Anyway, Hill's ideas led to the convening of the Rambouillet Conference.

Q: That was the name of the site in France.

COMRAS: That's right. The Kosovo conference was held at Rambouillet, just outside of Paris. The meeting was ostensibly presided over by the French and British Foreign Ministers as the selected representatives of the Contact Group. In fact, most of the negotiations at the conference were handled by Christopher Hill and Wolfgang Petritsch. Slobodan Milosevic never attended the conference. He sent his Foreign Minister instead.

The conference opened with great fanfare, and the presence of just about all of the Foreign Ministers of the Contact Group countries. There were solemn speeches on the need to deal with the issues and work out a resolution. But, the conference went downhill from their.

It was a very unique conference. It dealt with issues of war and peace. It dealt with headline issues of confrontation seriously involving the interests of the United States, Europe, the Balkans and world peace. But, just about the full contingent of Foreign Ministers left at the outset. The conference was left to be handled by mid-level diplomats who lacked direction or authority.

The Albanian delegation was badly fractured among Rogovo and UCK supporters. The Serbian delegation had no authority to deal. They had to refer everything back to Slobodon Milosevic.

The Albanians hadn't worked out a common position and lacked both a common position and common goals. These ranged from those who insisted on complete Kosovo independence to those willing to accept some form of autonomy. The conference was another complete diplomatic and substantive disaster. The international press saw it for the disaster that it was. The Serbs saw it for the disaster that it was. They took advantage of the discord among the Albanians and were able to leave the conference looking as though they had tried to make a deal, but the Albanians were the hold-outs.

When the conference finally broke without any positive result, the blame game began. The contact group realized they needed to develop a common position and hammer out agreement on that position with the Albanians before they could move forward. That meant getting the Albanians to agree among themselves - something I had recommended in my December 1998 memo.

Well, anyway here we were with a deteriorating crisis. Slobo's troops were increasingly active in Kosovo. New Serbian troops were massing along the border. NATO plans were stepping up their over flights. New NATO contingents were moving into Macedonia. Against this background we convened a second Rambouillet Conference. And this time there was a common position presented to the Serbs on a take it or leave it basis. We laid down that kind of line at Rambouillet along with the demand for military armed peacekeepers. It was rejected.

In response to the Serbian rejection, and continued Serbian military operations in Kosovo, We began to carry out a limited air campaign against Serbian forces in Kosovo. We also began to have bombing runs into Serbia proper. A war had begun.

The Kosovo War was conducted from the air. We targeted Serbian troop movements as well as certain support facilities - roads, bridges, supply trains, communications facilities and oil. Serbia has no oil production of its own and relies on imported oil. We view oil as their Achilles, especially when it comes to military activities.

But, as fast as we were knocking out Serbia's oil reserves, Serbia was importing new oil, mainly via barge along the Danube. We had gone to war without seeking to impose any new controls on the flow of oil to Serbia. In fact the only sanctions that were in place at the beginning of the war were the leftover outer wall measures from the Bosnian conflict.

I was always surprised by the fact that we never pushed for new sanctions on Serbia during the run-up to the Kosovo war.

Anyway, only after the air war had commenced did we consider what should be done to stop the flow of new oil into Serbia.

At the time I was serving as the Director of the Office of Canadian Affairs. While I was not directly involved in the Kosovo issue, I continued to make my views known via memos, email and hall and office conversations.

At the moment the war began I was also preoccupied by the decision to move the Office of Canadian Affairs from the European Bureau into the an expanded Bureau of Western Hemispheric Affairs. Our office was no longer with the European. It was now with the Bureau that handled our relations with Latin America.

To my great surprise, I received a call from the EUR people to come around and talk to James Dobbins and James Pardue (his deputy) about what was going on in Kosovo. They asked my advice and assistance on developing and implementing a new sanctions program on Serbia. With my agreement they requested that the Western Hemispheric Affairs Bureau release me as Director of the Office of Canadian Affairs so that I could work full time on this project. I guess my exile had come to an end. What started off as a temporary position became a permanent position on Jim Dobbins' staff.

Our first sanctions priority was to stop the oil moving to Serbia. This was to prove a very difficult task - especially so as we were operating without any new UN Security Council resolution upon which to base such sanctions. We also faced the same kinds of problems that plagued the application of sanctions on the Danube during the Bosnian war period. The Danube enjoys a strict freedom of navigation and commerce status. And without a UN Security Council resolution it was going to be difficult to get countries to abridge a right guaranteed in the Danube Convention. Remember, the Kosovo war was a NATO action, not a UN action.

Our problem was to convince the Romanian, Bulgarian and Ukrainian governments to stop the flow of oil up the Danube to Serbia. Most of this oil was coming from Russia. And Russia itself was disinclined to cut off the flow. The Russian people were already expressing great sympathy for the Serbians in this war.

I formed up a new interagency negotiating team involving both the State Department and the Defense Department. We traveled together to Bucharest, Sofia and Kiev to see what could be done. We needed to get agreement from the Romanians and the Bulgarians to work together to cut off the oil flow. They sought to deflect the pressure we put on them

and argued that we had to go directly to the Ukrainians and the Russians to stop the oil at the source. But we knew that wouldn't work. We just had to continue to keep the pressure on the Romanians and the Bulgarians, and to play on their stated interest in eventually becoming NATO members.

We also played on their concerns regarding the possible damage done to the Danube and their riverbeds from oil contamination. After-all, a war was going on and we could not guarantee that oil barges on the Danube would not be hit!. What if a barge train on the river was at the wrong place at the wrong time during a river raid. Can you imagine what that would do to the river with all that oil going down the river? Can you imagine what that would do to the ecology of the Danube River and to the region?

I think these issues weighed heavily on the responsible Bulgarian and Romanian authorities. They had their lawyers look closely at the terms of the Danube Convention and agreed that they could take appropriate regulatory steps, under the situation, to insure against such a river disaster. They agreed to turn back any oil barges that might be heading into the war zone.

Once the agreement was in place, and reported. We left the region to return to Washington via London. While in London we received the good news that Serbia had just caved and signed a Military Technical Agreement to end the fighting. I think this was around June 9, 1999. We joked among ourselves that as soon as Sloba heard that he wasn't going to get any more oil, he caved in. But it was still a great undertaking and the team was very pleased with the outcome of it. The issue then became, "What now?"

The Clinton Administration had finally decided that Milosevic had to go. President Clinton made it clear that the U.S. and its allies would not assist or deal with the Milosevic government and that we would work through peaceful means to foster democratic regime change. So what about the sanctions. The first inclination among the U.S. and other Contact group members was that now that the war is over sanctions were no longer necessary. I disagreed. I thought that sanctions were needed even now - as a main impetus for peaceful regime change. I wrote a memo arguing that targeted sanctions were critical to our accomplishing democratic change in Serbia. Secretary Albright agreed with my position and directed that we continue our sanctions work.

By that time most of Europe had dropped blanket sanctions on Serbia. The situation in Iraq at that time had already led to sanctions being discredited as too blunt an instrument with too much humanitarian fallout. There was concern that we might cause considerable suffering in Serbia if we maintained too broad a sanctions package. So, if we were going to have sanctions against Yugoslavia for regime change, they would have to be very targeted or smart sanctions.

We had to develop a program that we could sell to our European friends - again we did not have a UN Security Council resolution to work with - that would assist our efforts to getting the Serbia people to dump Milosevic.

The program that was developed was a multifaceted program worked out between the U.S. and the European Union. The objective was to strengthen the Democratic Opposition in Serbia while weakening the Milosevic regime. We would target the regime and its political, military, and bureaucratic support structure as well as its political and financial supporters.

We were going to go after Sloba's money, the money that supported his regime. We included in the target circle those we could identify as providing the political, economic, financial foundations of the regime as well as those supporting the repressive structure Milosevic had created to retain power. We defined a group of about 25 major individuals and companies that were the main sources of revenue and support. Their names were placed on a black list and trade and transactions with them were prohibited. Any of their assets found in a cooperating European country would also be frozen. Their names were also reflected in a blacklist issued by the EU which prohibited trade with them. These measures had a strong impact on Sloba and his financial support. It was beginning to cost more than it was worth to be a friend of Sloba.

Q: Talk about the Europeans. The French and the Germans and the Russians often have varying interests. How much were you able to... Were there some elements of these ones that I mentioned or others that had to be dragged kicking and screaming?

COMRAS: There was a consensus among the critical group - the French, the Germans, the British, and the Americans - on how to move toward regime change. However, there were some differences over where to place the greatest emphasis. Some supported a greater effort on working with the democratic opposition. They were somewhat more reticent when it came to tightening sanctions measures against the regime, or withholding assistance for infrastructure projects - for example the reconstruction of bridges over the Danube. But all in all there was agreement on a common approach that contained both aspects - assistance for the democratic opposition and sanctions against the regime. There were a number of times when we had to get Madeline Albright to intercede at the highest levels to keep the program together, particularly on the sanctions side. It was easier on the democratic opposition assistance side.

The key to retaining broad European Union support for the sanctions against Milosevic was to target them carefully. Exceptions also had to be made to take humanitarian considerations into account. These exceptions involved such issues as providing limited oil to individual towns through carefully managed assistance programs. We tried to give credit to democratic opposition groups so as to increase their influence and credibility.

One of the biggest, and most controversial issues was whether or not to assist Serbia in rebuilding Danube bridges. This was the greatest test of our "no assistance" policy. My instructions were to try and hold back a number of European governments who were more willing to assist the Serbs in rebuilding the Danube bridges. I also had to deal with complaints from the Bulgarians, Romanians and Hungarians that the bridge damage was disrupting so much commerce on the Danube that it had created serious economic problems for them. There was also growing concern that obstructions in the river could

cause ecological damage to the river and might hold back the winter ice flow which could result in serious winter flooding. Nonetheless, because of the strong determination of President Clinton and Secretary Albright to the “no assistance” policy, we were able to hold back providing assistance to Serbia for the bridges. I have to say Serbia was their own worst enemy in this regard. They tried to blackmail the other European countries using the Danube by closing the river through Serbia to international traffic.

The Russians played no major role in implementing or blocking the sanctions. Nor did they contribute support to the democratic opposition.

Q: Were they opposed?

COMRAS: They remained pretty much on the sidelines during this period. I guess that was the best we could hope for. However, private Russian individuals and companies did seek to take some advantage from the sanctions through black market and gray market dealings.

There were a lot of other issues of direct concern to the Russians regarding the status of Kosovo, and what was going on in Bosnia. They weren't opposed to regime change in Belgrade but they were not going to be active participants in taking on Milosevic.

Q: As you were doing this, did you see a change in the Kosovars, the Albanian side? Were they coalescing more?

COMRAS: Initially Rogovo was completely discredited. During the war he had become a political hostage of Milosevic. Milosevic held him in “protective custody” in Belgrade. They got him to go on television to call for an end to the NATO bombing. At the time the UCK tried to brand him as a “traitor.”

On the other hand, we also had to deal with some of the radical Albanian leaders with whom we were not comfortable. This included some leaders of the UCK.

After the end of the war the UN, the EU and the United States all worked to develop the growth of pluralistic democratic parties in Kosovo. That effort has had some success. Let's hope it holds.

We're going to be in Kosovo for a long time. There are still a number of intractable issues. But hopefully time and Europe will help begin to heal things.

I've always believed, and I think this view is shared by many others, that there could be no resolution of the status of Kosovo, and no lasting political stability in Bosnia so long as Milosevic was in power in Belgrade. But, in the post-Milosevic era, the stakes are very different. Serbia is less threatening. It is moving slowly toward democracy, a free market economy, and participation in Europe institutions. Within that context, the stakes for Kosovo are moderated. In this context some kind of loose association with Serbia remains possible. This would especially be true if Serbia, Kosovo, and the other former

Yugoslav countries all continue their quest for full membership in the European institutions.

Autonomy was impossible for the Albanians to accept in the Serbia of Milosevic but it's not so dramatic a solution in a democratic Serbia that is really part of Europe.

I am concerned that a fully independent Kosovo, under present circumstances, could undermine the stability of the region. Kosovo would not be viable economically. Its independence would create serious economic and political problems for its neighbors also. Besides its relations with Serbia, one must consider the impact on Macedonia and its large Albanian minority which might wish to break away from Skopje and join with Kosovo. Then there is the question of relations with Albania proper. This destabilizing effect could reach into northern Greece where there is also a sizable Albanian minority.

I expect that, in time, we will see the establishment of growing economic and political ties between all of Yugoslavia's former provinces and republics. They could all benefit from such closer ties. Such ties would clearly be to their economic, political, and cultural advantage especially given the strong family ties, intermarriage and dependent economies that already exist. It makes sense now that they have gotten rid of the one great nationalistic dictatorial regime that so threatened the other Yugoslavs.

You know, it's something of a miracle that Macedonia survived the Kosovo war and its aftermath. Milosevic had warned a number of times that if NATO forces bombed Serbia or Serbian troops in Kosovo, the Serbian army would kick out all the Albanians from Kosovo. They said it. And they did it. Right at the beginning of the Kosovo air war, Serbian troops and local Serbian militias went into the Albanian towns and villages and did all they could to force the local inhabitants to flee southward into Macedonia. Milosevic's tactic was quite clear. He wanted to push the Kosovo Albanians into Macedonia to completely destabilize Macedonia and broaden and internationalize the conflict. This, he believed would lead to an international conference where a settlement would have to be imposed on all of the parties including the Macedonians, the Albanians, and the Serbs.

According to Macedonian President Kiro Gligorov, Milosevic had long planned, that, in the event of a Kosovo war, he would seek to destabilize Macedonia. His plan would be to push the Albanians south. Divide Kosovo with Albania, cede the western part of Macedonia (and its Albanian majority) to Albania and take the remaining part of Macedonia back into Serbia proper. This seemed to be what Milosevic intended. His first response to the NATO bombing was to force the exodus of Albanians southward.

It was miraculous that Macedonia didn't come apart. One of the reasons they were able to withstand this onslaught was that they were already at least semi prepared to handle it. There were British and U.S. troops already in Macedonia at that time. Both governments made a commitment to the Macedonian government that they would share the burden of the Albanian refugees and not allow it to fall alone on Macedonia. Handling the flow of Albanians across the Macedonian border became an international effort and played

against Milosevic. Milosevic thought that the Macedonia would either be overrun, or seek to forcefully stop the refugees from entering. He believed that either scenario would cause an uprising among the Albanians in Macedonia.

The Albanians coming across the border we held in NATO run refugee camps close to the border. There was a commitment to return most them to Kosovo as soon as the fighting their ended. Others might be provided refugee status elsewhere. These commitments considerably lessened the pressure on the Macedonian government and assuaged the concerns of both segments of Macedonia's population.

The United States and other NATO countries provided the funds, the camps, and the logistics to handle the refugees. Ironically, the only really negative effect that this had was a perverse one. A lot of the Macedonians were upset that the Albanians were getting so much international support. Many of them felt that they did not receive their share of assistance or consideration from the troops stationed there.

The influx of Albanians into Macedonia and the continuing instability of Kosovo after the war did create or exacerbate a number of problems for Macedonia. It certainly increased tension between the Macedonian Slavic and Albanian communities. Some of these problems were allowed to fester during the period after the Kosovo war. A group of disgruntled cross border Albanians sought to take up the work of the UCK in Macedonia. They formed their own National Liberation Army (NLA) and began to infiltrate into the mountains above the town of Tetevo. They hoped to attract strong Albanian popular support for their movement. This had all the appearances of setting of a new round of Balkan interethnic fighting.

But the NLA never really found the popular base they would need for such a conflict. They never received the same grass-root support that existed for the UCK in Kosovo.

The NLA uprising did, however, force the Macedonian government to come to terms with some of the legitimate Albanian demands. With some negotiating help from the United States and the European Union the Macedonian government made some necessary concessions in the Macedonian constitution that recognized certain rights of the Albanians that should have been there in the first place.

Both sides faced the precipice of inter-ethnic war and both sides realized that was not the course either community in Macedonia should follow. I hope that the country came of this threatening episode stronger and more coherent than before.

Q: What was your observation of the role of Greece?

COMRAS: Greece was a real problem for Macedonia under Papandreou, who was an opponent of Macedonia in almost every respect. The relationship between Gligorov and Papandreou was bitter and distrustful. There did not seem to be any way to resolve the issues between the two countries as long as these two leaders continued to face each other off. When Papandreou left the scene, the situation began to change. The new Greek

Prime Minister Constantine Simitis, was a very different kind of leader. He recognized that the issues between the country were more nationalistic-based than real. The tension between the two countries served no interest for either country. He recognized that Macedonia could never really pose a significant strategic threat to Greece or to Greek interests. He understood that there was no reality to the threat of Aegean Macedonians trying to reclaim territory in northern Greece. He understood that the real risk to Greece was instability in Macedonia. Greece, he said, had a real stake in a stable Macedonia.

The Simitis government could not change its relations with Macedonia overnight. Given the context of Greek politics, it could only move slowly and cautiously in this direction. The first phase was to reduce the rhetoric between the countries, and to implement the accord worked out by Vance, Nimitz and Okun. The next phase was to free up impediments to trade and investment. Greece soon became the largest outside investor in Macedonia. More and more Greece worked to become a “big brother” of Macedonia, inextricably tying Macedonia into a relationship with Greece that would be positive for both countries. This is what’s happened. The nationalistic issues, of which there are still many, receded in importance. They lost their front page impact for both countries.

Q: Let’s talk about Holocaust assets. What was the situation that you dealt with?

COMRAS: Let me step back a minute and pick up my career story. I left Skopje in the summer of 1996 and went to the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public and International Affairs as a Diplomat-in-residence. I was given this opportunity as the Department really didn’t know what else to do with me at the time. I had hoped for an onward assignment as chief of mission elsewhere, but I had become a little too controversial for that to happen at that time.

I had a great year at the University of Pittsburgh. It gave me a valuable opportunity to think, teach and write. And I did all three. I taught courses on U.S. diplomacy and Foreign Policy and ran an advanced seminar on the use of Economic Sanctions. When the year was up I still did not have any on-ward assignment. Instead I was asked to help out in the Bureau of Public Affairs. I was given a temporary position to write a paper on helping the Department of State improve its national outreach. How could we create a more positive foreign policy constituency within the United States? It seemed to me that we had a major task ahead of us in that area. Over the last two decades - and really since the Vietnam War - we had burned most of our bridges to America’s non-government foreign policy institutions. This includes think tanks, universities, and the foreign policy press. We had defined our relation with these institutions in an “us and them” mode, rather than a more positive cooperative foreign policy relationship.

In previous times, the State Department had enough money in the budget to carry out a number of joint programs with Universities and outside foreign policy pundits and institutions. It had commissioned studies, held joint meetings, established advisory boards and otherwise involved these institutions in the foreign policy making process. Over time, the money for these kinds of activities dried up. There were much fewer of them. Also, the State Department began to classify many more of its documents - even

on mundane issues that could have no real impact on our national security. The State Department more and more became an institution unto itself and separated itself from the non government the foreign affairs community. We began to consider the others as outsiders and even to resent their intrusions. As they were increasingly cut-off from our daily work we took it that they didn't have sufficient information to make any useful contributions. They, in turn, began to feel more and more alienated by us. This is part of the analysis I wrote it up. We needed to do something to restore a cooperative and collegial approach to foreign policy consideration. There were a number of things that we could do to improve this situation.

One of the best remaining programs we had going with the universities was the diplomat in residence program. This program put State Department people on the faculties of key universities. It was one of the few direct links we retained with these schools. I recommended that we expand this program further. It needed to be more than just a holding pattern for people like me - senior officers the department didn't know what else to do with. We needed to make it a stronger part of our foreign policy outreach.

We also need to do many other things to better engage the foreign policy community in our deliberations. We should work to foster a stronger national debate on foreign policy - a debate in which the State Department can participate in directly. We cannot simply draw up walls around our building and pretend that foreign policy is our exclusive bailiwick. Too often it appears to the public that we develop foreign policy in secret, and in private and then thrust it upon the community and then tell them to go to hell if they disagree. That appears to be the situation today.

Years ago when a Foreign Service officer came back to the State Department, he was invited by the Public Affairs Bureau to go out to give talks. In fact, they even gave some a hitch and trailer to go around the county on speaking tours. They go all over the country to speak on campuses, on the radio and before foreign policy groups.

The Department really doesn't encourage its officers to do such talking any more. There is a fear that somehow we will say the wrong thing and deviate from the State Department line. God forbid that any Foreign Service officer or member of the State Department deviated from what State Department positions. I guess we want to convince the public that there is only one right answer and that we have that right answer, and that we arrived at that answer without much discussion and debate. The public must be lead to believe, I guess, that every Foreign Service thinks exactly like every other Foreign Service officer and there is no debate.

I don't think foreign policy or the Department of State is so fragile. We ought to stimulate debate not avoid it. We ought be able to answer critics with dialogue rather than diatribe.

We ought to make the most that we can of the Open Forum. I'm proud to see what's happening in the Open Forum. We ought to stimulate and invite American Foreign Service officers to reach out to their own universities, to their own other institutions to

write, to publish, to editorialize. But instead of doing that, the Department has created one new impediment after another in the way of such outreach. They have made it extremely difficult for a Foreign Service Officer to speak publicly or to write. By the time I retired from the State Department in 2001 it had become near impossible for a Foreign Service officer to write an article on foreign policy and get it published. In past years one had to get Department clearance prior to publication. This usually involved a review to ensure that the article didn't contain classified information, or otherwise misconstrue or mis-portray U.S. foreign policy. The clearance process was handled by an office the Bureau of Public Affairs. A Public Affairs Officer reviewed the article and solicited the views of interested offices. He communicated directly with the author. He would make suggestions for changes or amendments to the article. Rarely was an article turned down for substance.

Today, the process is much more cumbersome. If a Foreign Service Officer wants to publish an article he has to take himself directly to each interested office and get their approval. Once he has gathered all the necessary approvals he submits it to Public Affairs who undertakes its own de novo review of the material. I want to know what Foreign Service officer has the time, inclination, ability on his own to negotiate his article with each interested bureau or office. And besides, the process takes so long and is so cumbersome, the article is likely to be outdated before it can be cleared.

Q: They've basically shut down the ability of people to...

COMRAS: Yes, They have cut the Department and its officers off from possible outreach. And they do so, they say, to ensure that we all speak with a uniform voice. We're a democracy and I think it's important that we talk with a unified voice when it comes to explaining or interpreting existing policy. But this should not apply to personal, not government views, nor should it interfere with legitimate public discussion and debate concerning our policies. I do not think it does any real harm to the State Department that the public knows that we have internal differences and debate in the process of formulating policy. Why shouldn't there be known differences within the State Department just as there are differences between the State Department and the Defense Department, for example.

Q: It shows an attempt of control and insecurity.

LEON WEINTRAUB
European Affairs Bureau Coordinator, OSCE, State Department
Washington, DC (1998-2000)

Mr Weintraub was born and raised in New York City, educated at Hunter College, Brooklyn College and the Universities of Pittsburgh and Wisconsin. After service in Liberia with the Peace Corps he entered government service, first with the Navy Department and then with the

State Department Foreign Service. His service in Washington and abroad involved him with a variety of countries and issues including African Affairs, International Organizations, Narcotics and Peace-Keeping operations in Africa. His foreign posts were Bogotá, Tel Aviv, Lagos, Quito and Geneva. Mr. Weintraub was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

WEINTRAUB: Then, again, it seems every new job I have is completely different than anything else I've ever had. I went into the Bureau of European Affairs as the coordinator for the OSCE, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The OSCE is the most inclusive Euro-Atlantic organization. It has virtually all European countries in it; Russia, all the states of the former Soviet Union, the Vatican, Lichtenstein -- I mean all the micro states as well as the United States and Canada. You know, it started out as kind of a balance between the East and the West, the Helsinki Agreement signed by Gerald Ford and Leonid Brezhnev. We in the west pushed for action on human rights, while they on the Soviet side pushed for inviolability of borders, and we both kind of got what we wanted. It was an agreement that started out as a conference on security and cooperation, the CSCE, and years later it became a full-fledged international organization, the OSCE. So the office was housed in the, basically the European Office of Regional Political and Military Affairs. The European Union was in an office of economic affairs, Regional Economic Affairs, within the European Bureau,. Obviously the EU is becoming much more of a political animal as well, but as we all know it started out as a coal and steel community, then as a European common market, but now obviously it has a more political agenda as well. But the OSCE was basically in the same office that handled NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. NATO did the hard security, if you will; we did the soft security.

Again, like in the summer of '92, when I walked into the IO bureau, and I ran straight into events unfolding in Somalia, which later would become all consuming, in the summer of 1998, when I walked into the OSCE office, without a great deal of European background, I walked into what would become the events in Kosovo, in the former Yugoslavia. We had already had the Dayton Agreement so most of the fighting-

Q: That is the war in Bosnia.

WEINTRAUB: Bosnia and Croatia, Slovenia, the Serbs -- you know, most of that had been solved or resolved to a point. But now what we were talking about, this was within the constituent Federal Republic of Serbia, specifically the Province of Kosovo. And this was starting to heat up just as I came in around August of '98. It was within the province of Kosovo, where a majority of the population was of Albanian ethnic identification. I'm not sure precisely how ethnically different they are from the Serbs but I guess they see themselves as separate, both groups do. The people that are known as the Kosovars are predominantly Muslim, they speak a different language from other Serbs, they speak Albanian as far as I can tell, and maybe they are ethnically different but I'm not sure.

Q: They do appear to be.

WEINTRAUB: Do they? Okay. The Serbs, of course, are Slavic, Eastern European, they speak Serbian and generally belong to the Orthodox church, the Serbian Orthodox church. There's a history of bad blood between these two groups. I guess the Serbs remember with infamy a defeat they had, a defeat that the-

Q: 1389.

WEINTRAUB: Yes.

Q: I spent five years in Belgrade.

WEINTRAUB: Yes. - that the Serbs suffered at the hands of the Turks.

Q: The Battles of Kosovo, yes.

WEINTRAUB: Yes. So Kosovo has a high resonance within Serbia and the fact that the province had now become majority Kosovar Albanian really rankled many Serbs. There were a lot of allegations of human rights abuses by the Serb authorities, by the police forces against the Kosovars. There was the start of the Kosovo Liberation Army, an underground movement which was starting to inflict some casualties on the Serb forces and things were not looking good at all.

Well, we called in once again Ambassador Richard Holbrooke who had knocked heads together to get the Dayton Agreement in the mid-'90s, and he made some trips to Belgrade. And finally Holbrooke and the Serb leader Milosevic hammered out an agreement whereby the OSCE would play a major monitoring role. So in the fall of '98 when I was fairly new on the job we, the OSCE, was called upon to start a KVM, Kosovo Verification Mission, with Ambassador Bill Walker as head of it. There was an agreement where the OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission would monitor behavior on the ground, activities on the ground in Kosovo. The Serbian authorities, the police forces, paramilitary forces, other security forces were supposed to pull back to certain areas and then NATO was going to overfly to verify through imagery that forces were being pulled back. So there were a lot of very long days setting up the Kosovo Verification Mission; like many of these things, once a paper's signed everybody wants like 100 people out there in a week.

Fortunately, at this time, the Norwegians were assuming leadership of the OSCE. The OSCE is headed by an annually chosen "Chair in Office," as it's called, a CIO, selected from among the members. There is a secretary general of the organization, but the secretary general is primarily an administrative head. The political leadership, or CIO, is by a rotating chairman in office and we were fortunate to have the Norwegians doing this at this time. So they, with our support, they dedicated a lot of resources, a lot of time, to set up this Kosovo Verification Mission. And I don't think we could have wished for a better job than they did. They installed a lot of communications facilities, a lot of

physical facilities to set up a verification mission in Pristina, the major city of Kosovo Province and other areas around it as well.

Well, Ambassador Walker could probably tell you much more about this than I can but there continued to be serious incidents throughout the fall and the winter of '98-'99. Things were not getting better. Slobodan Milosevic was kind of an obstinate guy, a cantankerous guy, and the Kosovo Liberation Army didn't make things any easier. Obviously their aim was independence or merger with Albania, either of which would be unacceptable to Serbia. So under Madeleine Albright's leadership we had another international meeting in Rambouillet, in France, where the Serbs, the Kosovars and major powers in the region all came together to see what could happen once again.

Now, I think what happened is that the outside powers wanted to put a stop to this so we put a proposal on the table: certain Serbian forces would pull back, the Kosovars would do other things; there'd be respect for human rights, etcetera, etcetera. At first point, neither side accepted it; neither the Kosovars nor the Serbs accepted it. I think this was in February. The common wisdom at the time then and afterward was that our side, the U.S. and others, leaned on the Kosovars to accept this. It didn't grant them autonomy, it didn't grant them independence. But we thought it was the best that could be available at the time. And I think we kind of leaned on them to accept it. Eventually they did, but the Serbs did not accept it and the conference ended without an agreement. And in the meanwhile the tensions between the two groups within the province are building and building. And then it was in March, I believe, that the bombing campaign by NATO began. Proposals to take stronger action by the UN went back and forth in the Security Council. Obviously we were quite certain that the Russians and the Chinese would both veto any call for action in the Security Council.

In addition to what was happening in Serbia and in Kosovo, there was an outflow of refugees from there, unsettling the region, particularly in Italy, which was the next country over after the former Yugoslavia. There were a lot of refugees coming into Italy and into Austria. And the decision was taken, in NATO, to bomb Serbian positions and bomb Belgrade as well.

Q: There was considerable human rights- essentially ethnic killing was-

WEINTRAUB: This was the term that started in the former Yugoslavia, "ethnic cleansing." There were, you know, very serious reports of atrocities.

Q: Yes.

WEINTRAUB: Very serious reports. And it was the kind of situation where years later -- how do you look at yourself in the mirror if you think there's something you can do about it and you don't? And this, of course, is five years after the massacres in Rwanda and, you know, people said the reason we didn't go into Rwanda is because memories of what went wrong in Somalia the year before, what happened there, in the "Blackhawk Down"

incident. Now people might say, well, maybe the reason we did go into Kosovo is we're ashamed of what we did not do in Rwanda. These things have a cumulative effect.

So the bombing began in March of '99. I think there was a supposition it wasn't going to last too long. I think it lasted about six weeks. And we had that political incident where in error we bombed the embassy of China in Belgrade, very embarrassing, of course, and also there were significant losses of life and losses of property as well.

So the bombing campaign did last, I think as I said, about six weeks. It did generate a certain amount of opposition. I think Secretary General Annan went on the record as not accepting it as a legitimate use of force, since it was not sanctioned or approved by the Security Council. I think that still rankled certain people who thought if ever there was a case where outside intervention was needed, just as it was in Rwanda, this was another one. But eventually we reached a situation where the Serbs sued for surrender and then we started working on a way to administer Kosovo. I think -- although the language is not out there in specific terms -- essentially the province of Kosovo is like a UN protectorate. It really has been, I believe, for several years after the bombing essentially run by the United Nations with other organizations as well, each doing certain jobs; the OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) has certain responsibilities there, the European Union has certain responsibilities, the United Nations has certain responsibilities. So it's a somewhat unwieldy situation, and I think it remains so to this day. The majority of Kosovars probably would prefer, I think, number one independence, and number two integration with Albania. Obviously, Serbia would like neither of those outcomes. And it's now coming on six years after that campaign. I haven't followed it closely, but I don't recall seeing anything showing signs of a resolution of that situation.

Q: Well right now I'm interviewing Larry Rosen.

WEINTRAUB: Oh yes.

Q: Larry is out there, and we haven't come to that point yet but he's out there as an ambassador, I think, I'm not sure if he's working for the states or whether- the U.S. or whether he's working for the OSCE or what because he's retired but he's out there.

WEINTRAUB: Right. He was in the European Affairs Bureau as -- I think -- as the head of the Office of South Central Europe at the time, so we worked a lot with that office, of course.

Q: Well, during this time, what were you doing?

WEINTRAUB: Well, we were trying to make sure the OSCE had the support it needed and it did the job it needed to do. Basically, we interacted with our mission in Vienna to the OSCE; our ambassador was David Johnson, who I think is now DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission) in London, to pull together -- we had work with other OSCE members, and particularly with the Norwegian CIO, to pull together a Kosovo Verification Mission in very short order. And like in any multi-lateral organization people often, when time

comes to take action and allocate resources, people often look to the United States to follow our lead. So we had to make sure we knew what we wanted. So again, I worked a lot in tandem with our office right next door that worked with NATO, particularly during the bombing phase, and even before and after; we had to make sure our military track and the civilian track worked together. So there was a lot of time putting together the Kosovo Verification Mission, looking for people to staff it up, to be verification monitors of what was going on. Then when the bombing stopped, we had to make sure the OSCE was as active as possible in getting all the support people out there. So we were either working very closely with the Norwegians or the next Chairman in Office – I forget who it was, it may have been the Dutch, I'm not sure. There was, in any case, a lot of organizing to do to get the people out there, to first do the verification mission and then -- post-war -- to help the major reconstruction efforts.

Q: Well, for the verification procedure, a cadre had been developed in Bosnia of election monitors run by the OSCE.

WEINTRAUB: Right, right.

Q: And, I did this for two times, you know, as an old Serbian hand. But there was a large number of retired Foreign Service officers brought into that. I know at least one, Harry Dunlap.

WEINTRAUB: That name sounds familiar. We had some of these people but of course, you know, the election monitoring period for OSCE monitors is usually only a week or two. But these requirements were for longer periods, these people would be there maybe for three or four months and under more difficult conditions, as there was a certain amount of tension in the countryside. So I had to try to staff up that monitoring function at the same time as we were staffing election monitors for elsewhere in Europe, particularly in the new emerging democracies in the post-Soviet countries . We needed to -- that was another one of my responsibilities with a staffer in my office -- to try to recruit a certain number of U.S. election observers to take part.

Q: Well, you mentioned that we were concerned that China and Russia would veto. What happened with them?

WEINTRAUB: Well, obviously they were not in agreement with our policy to act through NATO rather than through the United Nations. The Russians obviously were not part of the decision to start the bombing, certainly. But once it was over and we put our troops on the ground the Russians wanted to be there, and they were there. It was similar to the post-war occupation of Germany where we had U.S., British, French, and Russian zones. As far as I can recall, I think we had similar zones in Kosovo. I don't think they were as rigid and not as

Q: No, there were areas-

WEINTRAUB: There were certain areas. I believe there was - at one point, Ambassador Walker may remember better than I would or others might, there was a bit of tension when the Russians arrived earlier than we expected them to.

Q: The Russians pulled a brigade or something out of Bosnia and did an end run and headed for Pristina.

WEINTRAUB: Yes, I think they got to the airport.

Q: Where their people in Moscow were saying oh no, we're not doing that. And they were, you know. And there was, in fact, a little bit of concern that, was this a rogue element. I mean, was the military, was the Russian military running things and putting stuff in. As it turned out, the British happened to be in Pristina when they arrived and they just let them sit and they eventually- And we also stopped attempts by the Russians to supply this group by air, we wouldn't-

WEINTRAUB: Right, right.

Q: They couldn't get over flights. And they just sort of, I won't say withered on the vine but they had to depend on the kindness of the French, the British and the Americans.

WEINTRAUB: Right, right. So that supply situation finally ended. Yes, I remember for a period of maybe 48 hours or maybe 72 hours, there was a little bit of an element of angst there about what this Russian advance element was doing. As you said, we couldn't get clarification from Moscow of just who had ordered them there. But once we got over that action, things kind of settled down and I just don't know what the status of Kosovo is now, but as far as I can tell, it's still unresolved, still for the most part under a United Nations mandate.

Q: Yes and no give on either side.

WEINTRAUB: No, by neither the Serbians nor the Kosovars.

ALPHONSE F. LA PORTA

**Political Advisor to Commander of NATO Forces in Southern Region
Naples, Italy (2000-2003)**

Ambassador La Porta was born and raised in New York and educated at Georgetown and New York Universities. After serving in the US Army, he joined the Foreign Service in 1965. During his career the ambassador had several assignments in Washington in the personnel and administrative field. His foreign assignments include Indonesia, Malaysia, Turkey, New Zealand, where he served as Deputy Chief of Mission, and Naples, Italy. In 1997 he was named Ambassador to Mongolia, where he served until

2000. Ambassador La Porta was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.

LA PORTA: The question of Southern Serbia was a running problem in early 2001 through about early July. We had an American POLAD in the area, Sean Sullivan, and his deputy who was a U.S. navy lieutenant commander, Wayne Porter, who were intimately engaged in negotiations with the Albanian and Serb factions to get a truce and some confidence building measures in place. Everything from building village roads and sinking new wells in remote villages, establishing a code of conduct for politicians, obtaining a better deal for Albanians in the local educational system, getting Albanians into the medical service were some of the things that were done.

Southern Serbia, or the Presavo Valley, was a precarious situation and there was great fear that the situation, which was aggravated by parties in Belgrade and exploited by some Albanian hypernationalists in Kosovo over the border, could have erupted into a general Balkan war. I think that it's to the credit of NATO diplomacy that that situation was not allowed to get worse.

End of reader