

YUGOSLAVIA

COUNTRY READER

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Lewis W. Bowden	1952-1956	Vice Consul, Belgrade
Robert Gerald Livingston	1953-1954 1955-1956	Student, Belgrade Student, Zagreb
David E. Mark	1954-1957	Desk Officer for Yugoslavia, Bureau of European Affairs, Washington, DC
Stephen E. Palmer, Jr.	1954-1957 1957-1959	Political Officer, Belgrade Political Officer, Sarajevo
Moncrieff J. Spear	1955-1957	Economic/Political Officer, Belgrade
Kenneth P.T. Sullivan	1955-1958	Chief, Consular Section, Belgrade
Robert Gerald Livingston	1956-1958	Analyst, Yugoslavian Affairs, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, DC
William D. Broderick	1956 1957-1959 1959-1962	Serbo-Croatian Language Training and Area Studies, Washington, DC and Berkley, California Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, DC Economic Officer, Belgrade
John W. Shirley	1957-1958	Junior Officer Trainee, USIS, Zagreb

	1959-1969	Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS, Belgrade
Douglas S. Martin	1958-1960	Security Officer, Zagreb
Robert C. Haney	1958-1962	Consular Officer, Belgrade
Michael H. Newlin	1958-1963	United Nations Affairs (IO), Washington, DC
Nicholas G. Andrews	1958 1959-1961 1962-1965	Economic Officer, Belgrade Consular Officer, Sarajevo Desk Officer for Yugoslavia, Bureau of European Affairs, Washington, DC
Raymond Ellis Benson	1959-1960 1961-1964	Branch Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Zagreb Press & Information Officer, USIS, Belgrade
S. Douglas Martin	1960-1961	Analyst, East Europe, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, DC
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William P. Kiehl	1970-1971 1971-1975	Serbo-Croatian Language Training, FSI, Washington, DC Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Belgrade
Allan W. Otto	1971-1973	Consular/Administrative Officer, Zagreb
William A. Weingarten	1971-1974	Economic Officer, Belgrade
Donald C. Tice	1972-1975	Political Counselor, Belgrade
Thomas Hutson	1972-1975	Consular Officer, Belgrade
Lowell Fleischer	1973	Consular Officer, Belgrade
Harry Joseph Gilmore	1973-1975	Yugoslavia Desk Officer, Department of

		State, Washington, DC
Lawrence P. Taylor	1973-1974 1974-1976	Chief Consular Officer, Zagreb 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, Belgrade
Lawrence H. Silberman	1975-1977	Ambassador, Yugoslavia
Ronald J. Neitzke	1975-1978	Consular Officer, Belgrade
Mark Palmer	1975-1978	Political Counselor, Belgrade
Irwin Pernick	1976-1978	Deputy Chief Political Officer, Belgrade
Jack Seymour	1976-1977	Yugoslav Desk Officer, Washington, DC
Isabel Cumming	1976-1979	USIS Officer, Belgrade
William Primosch	1976-1978	Commercial Officer, Belgrade
Ellen M. Johnson	1977-1979	Secretary to Deputy Chief of Mission, Belgrade
David M. Evans	1977-1979 1980	Economic Counselor, Belgrade NSC Committee re Post-Tito Yugoslavia, Washington, DC
Robert E. McCarthy	1977-1979 1979-1981	Consular Office, Belgrade USIS Officer, Montenegro
William P. Pope	1977-1979 1979-1981	Political Officer, Zagreb Political Officer, Belgrade
Lawrence S. Eagleburger	1977-1981	Ambassador Yugoslavia
Thomas P. H. Dunlop	1978-1982	Political Counselor, Belgrade
Richard M. Miles	1979-1981	Yugoslav Desk Officer, Washington, DC
Razvigor Bazala	1979-1982	Deputy Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Belgrade

Raymond Benson	1979-1982	Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Belgrade
Ruth Kurzbauer	1981-1982	Language Studies, Belgrade
Harry Joseph Gilmore	1981-1985	Deputy Chief of Mission, Belgrade
Joseph R. McGhee	1982-1983	Yugoslavia Desk Officer, Washington, DC
Russell O. Prickett	1982-1985	Economic Counselor, Belgrade
Bernard F. Shinkman	1982-1986	Director, American Center, Belgrade
Leonardo M. Williams	1983-1986	Branch Public Affairs Officer, Ljubljana
Richard M. Miles	1984-1987	Political Counselor, Belgrade
Katherine Schwering	1984-1987	Economic Officer, Belgrade
Morton I. Abramowitz	1984-1989	Director, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, DC
Paul Good	1985-1986	USIS Officer, Belgrade
Razvigor Bazala	1985-1987	Yugoslavia County Affair Officer, USIS, Washington, DC
Ruth E. Hansen	1986-1990	Political Officer, Belgrade
Larry I. Plotkin	1986-1990	Cultural Affairs Officer, Belgrade
William E. Ryerson	1987-1989	Consul General, Belgrade
Timothy E. Deal	1988-1989	Director, Office of Eastern European and Yugoslav Affairs, Washington, DC
E. Ashley Wills	1988-1991	Cultural Operating Officer, USIS, Belgrade
Warren Zimmerman	1989-1992	Ambassador, Yugoslavia
Robert Rackmales	1989-1993	Deputy Chief of Mission/Chargé, Belgrade
Lawrence Dunham	1992	Office of Foreign Missions, Washington, DC
George Kenney	1992	Yugoslavian Affairs, Bureau of European

		Affairs, Washington, DC
Anthony C. Zinni	1992	Deputy Director of Operations, European Command, Stuttgart, Germany
Katherine Schwering	1992-1993	Analyst, Former Yugoslavia States, Washington, DC
Ronald J. Neitzke	1992-1996	Principal Officer/Deputy Chief of Mission, Zagreb
Marshall Freeman Harris	1993	Desk Officer for Romania, Bureau of European Affairs, Washington, DC
Rudolf V. Perina	1993-1996	Chief of Mission, Belgrade
William P. Pope	1994-1995	Coordinator, Interagency Committee to Enforce Sanctions on Yugoslavia, Washington, DC
Richard M. Miles	1996-1999	Chief of Mission, Belgrade

JAMES COWLES HART BONBRIGHT
Second Secretary
Belgrade (1941)

Ambassador James Cowles Hart Bonbright was born in Rochester, New York. He graduated from Harvard University in 1925. After graduation, he toured the world with a friend and became convinced that he was destined for a Foreign Service career. In addition to Yugoslavia, Ambassador Bonbright served abroad in China, Canada, Belgium, Hungary, Portugal, and France. He was interviewed by Peter Jessup on March 10, 1986.

BONBRIGHT: The trip down to Belgrade was uneventful. I must say the countryside looked very burned out and dull, very dirty and dusty, no water to speak of standing anywhere. It was a rather grim countryside at that time of year.

When we got to Belgrade, the city itself had a rather forbidding look to it. The most impressive thing about it, of course, is its location at the confluence of the Sava and Danube Rivers. Somewhere somebody had told me that the best hotel in town was one called the Serbski Kral, or Royal Serb. So we headed for that, and I signed for a room. When we went upstairs to our room, we walked into a place which was about as dirty as I've ever seen anywhere. There must have been a quarter-inch of dust on every bit of furniture, all over the place. It was impossible. I knocked the dust off one straight-back chair, asked Sybil to sit quietly on it and not to move until

I came back. Then I went out and finally got through by telephone to Bob Joyce, who was the only officer of the legation in town. He gave me the name of another hotel to try. This we did, and this wasn't much better, but it did us for the short time that we had to have such quarters.

The minister at that time was Mr. Arthur Bliss Lane. He had been, I think, the youngest man in the Foreign Service to be made chief of mission somewhere in Central America, I think, so he was still young and bright and active. I might say now, though, while I'm on the subject, he was an extraordinary man to work for. He was quite erratic, had a violent temper, and would go into fits of despondency and annoyance. Sometimes he'd go for two or three days without speaking to anybody. He also had his time as a pretty heavy drinker, which didn't help. Anyway, he and his wife Cornelia, a very nice woman, were then taking a brief holiday in Bled, a lovely resort place in Croatia, up high enough to be cooler and lots of greenery.

Q: Aren't there lakes or waterfalls there?

BONBRIGHT: There's a lovely lake there.

Q: Wasn't that Tito's favorite redoute?

BONBRIGHT: I don't know. If so, I think he chose pretty well, but I don't know that there were all that many choices.

Anyway, the minister suggested that we drive up to Bled to spend a few days and get acquainted and get a little rest from our trip, which was nice of him, and we accepted with alacrity. So we had four or five days up there looking at this beautiful lake, and playing a game of golf with the minister and a couple of Americans who were staying there briefly.

Going back to Belgrade, the legation staff was pretty small. Bob Joyce, the second secretary, was shortly to leave. I was to take his place. Another second secretary, Homer Byington, was already on leave, and he only came back to pack up and go off on another assignment. So shortly after I got there, I was the only diplomatic secretary in the legation. There was a consul named Macatee, and also my friend from Brussels, Carl Rankin had come down after we did to become commercial attaché of the legation.

Finally, we were able to obtain a house in the suburb of Dedinje. It was about a mile or so out of the main part of the city up on a hill. Macatee had a house there and so did Rankin. It was up near the royal palace and a nice part of the town to live. The house that we rented had belonged to an American who had gone home on leave and, of course, never came back.

Q: Because of the war?

BONBRIGHT: Because of the war, yes. It was not a thing of beauty, but it was well-built and a comfortable place to live, and we felt lucky to have it.

Q: How much in the atmosphere was there that war was inevitably descending?

BONBRIGHT: It was pretty evident all the time. All winter the pressures kept mounting. The atmosphere was very bad. The government of the Prince Regent was leaning more and more towards the Axis, despite all our efforts and the efforts of the British legation.

Q: Had Italy invaded Albania, and they hadn't attacked Greece? Wasn't that about that time?

BONBRIGHT: I think so, but you know, I draw a blank there. Things came to a head in March, I think, on the 25th. To our dismay, they signed the Axis Pact. The reaction, however, rather surprised us, it was so strong, and two days later a revolt took place under the leadership of an Air Force General Simovich, who threw out the previous government and canceled the adherence to the Axis Pact. In all my life I don't think I've ever seen such a spontaneous roaring reaction to any event. The people poured into Belgrade from the towns all around it. Everybody in town was out on the street. I've never seen such jubilation. This was obviously very deeply felt. Unhappily for them, it was the death warrant for them, and Hitler made it perfectly clear that he wasn't going to accept this.

Q: It was, in a way, an intense expression of nationalism, wasn't it?

BONBRIGHT: Yes, I think so. These were very active days for us, and we were doing our best to keep in touch with the government and give them such moral support as we could. But in the end, April 5th, I think it was, the British legation informed us that the German attack was expected on the next day. This information came, I think, from intercepts made of military messages.

Q: And that would have been launched from Austria, wouldn't it?

BONBRIGHT: And Hungary, too. But actually, the troops came in the other way around the corner. The British, of course, packed up in a hurry and took off for the coast. Cy Sulzberger, who was The New York Times man for the Balkans and made his headquarters in Belgrade, was there at that time, and he left for Greece. Many others got out as quickly as they could, but time was pretty short. Our own plans for dispersal had been made to be used in case of need. Mr. Lane had decided on his own to stay in the city. He asked Rankin and me to stay there with him. Macatee, as consul, was to follow the government if they left the city, and the military attaché, Colonel Louis Fortier, was to follow the general's staff wherever they might be.

Q: The British went to the coast because they could be evacuated by naval ships?

BONBRIGHT: Yes, a destroyer picked them up down there somewhere. I don't think they were able to stop in Greece; I think they went on to Egypt. If they got to Greece, it was for a very brief time. Yes, the Germans must have been down already towards Greece and Crete.

The next morning the British news proved to be correct. Around 7:00 o'clock the first waves of German bombers came up and down the Danube and flew over the city. There was practically no defense. There was a little anti-aircraft firing for a while, a handful of fighter planes went up and got into some dog fights, but they were put out of action in no time at all. I can't say it was really any defense. Of course, as soon as any air defense was dissipated, anti-aircraft was

inconsequential. There was nothing to prevent the German planes from flying as low as they pleased. The whole city was a sitting duck. A day or two before the invasion, the government, I think, had declared that Belgrade and Ljubljana and Zagreb as open cities in hopes that they would not be bombed. This was a gesture which many Germans ignored. The only real meaning it had was in connection with Belgrade. There was never any danger of either Zagreb nor Ljubljana being bombed. The Croatian Ustashi movement was already going strong, and they, of course, were far from being a danger to the Germans.

Q: Ardent collaborators.

BONBRIGHT: There was a heavy bombardment in the morning and another one around 11:00 that same morning and a third one around 4:00 that afternoon, and then one more the following morning, and that was it. It was plenty.

Q: It was indiscriminate, or were they aiming at certain...

BONBRIGHT: No, I don't think so. The height that they had come down to, most of the bombing was in the residential and business sections. There were no possible military targets there. A few large bomb shelters had been dug, and some of these were hit. Of course, many, many people were sheltered. The whole city was on fire practically, and there was a very strong wind blowing, which looked as though the fire would do even more damage than the bombs. Oddly enough, the fires didn't spread all that much after the first day or so.

Q: Are you talking of hundreds killed or thousands?

BONBRIGHT: Everybody was guessing. The guesses ranged from 3,000 to 20,000; we thought that the first one was too low and the second one was too high. The German legation themselves, I think, estimated about 7,000, which may have been about right. They ought to know.

Anyway, as far as the first attack, we were all pretty well confined to our homes. When things eased off momentarily, we all headed for town to the minister's residence, where we found him and Mrs. Lane safe, but it had been a close call. They lived in a row of townhouses, and the house on one side of them had been hit, and the explosion pulled the wall out of part of the minister's house. It was still habitable, but not really in very good shape. It was decided then that that was a poor place for them to be, and they went out to Dedinje and took up residence in the Rankin's house. Some other staff went to the Macatees' house, and my wife and I took in a mixed bag of members of the Turkish legation, Ray Brock, Cy Sulzberger's assistant for the Times, and a couple of others. It was a good time to move, because the morning after that, in that one attack, the house on the other side of the minister's residence was hit, pulling out that wall. So he would have been in a bad way. It looked as though they were aiming for him, we thought.

Q: This was April of '41?

BONBRIGHT: Yes. It was on Easter Sunday, April 6th.

Q: This was eight months before Pearl Harbor.

BONBRIGHT: After we got the minister started packing up and out, I drove down to the middle of the city to have a look at the damage, and it was very, very considerable -- tangled wires, poles in the streets, a lot of fire, a lot of broken glass. I was luckily able to help a few people move away from the center out further to the outskirts of the city. I also wanted to see what was going on in the foreign office, to see if there was anything there we could do. I ran there into Stoyan Gavrilovich, who had been a good friend of ours, and he was the top sort of political career man and well-liked. But the place had gone crazy. Nobody was in charge; everybody was going his own way as best he could.

Q: When General Simovich deposed Prince Paul, did he leave the country or was he jailed?

BONBRIGHT: I think he got out, but I don't remember where he went. He may have been given shelter by the Germans.

Q: When did infantry appear or Army?

BONBRIGHT: About a week, I think. Oddly enough, they had expected the drive to come down over the Hungarian plain in the northern part of the country, but the actual breakthrough was south and east of Belgrade. Troops came in from Bulgaria. This had been presumably a strong part of the Serbian defense, but it didn't prove so. As I say, the military were badly disorganized and so were the civilians. For example, Francis Smith, the local representative of Standard Oil Company, they had enormous reserves of gasoline and oil in the north of Belgrade, which he had immediately released to the government right after the revolt, and they never took advantage of it. They never touched the stuff. It's still there. The Germans just took it over on a platter. So they weren't very well organized.

I had gotten to Dr. Gavrilovich, and I was happy to give him a ride. I didn't tell anyone this at the time, but he did not ask to be taken to his home where his wife and children were. I took him to the home of his girlfriend. We got her out of her house, and she had some family out on the outskirts somewhere. I took her out there and we dropped her off. As a result of this -- I can think of no other reason -- long after, I received a commendation for aiding the government, obviously written by my friend Gavrilovich.

Everything pretty well stopped of a normal time and for a few days there we spent most of our time scrounging around for food and water. Electricity, of course, was out. We all had put in our houses a limited supply of dried beans and rice, those sort of staples, and luckily there was a roadside spring which was only a couple of miles from our house. There we filled up these big five-gallon demi-jugs of good water and filled all our tubs and anything that would hold water for the houses. So that helped. For greenery and vegetables, of course, we had nothing, no meat, nothing. So for quite a while, we lived on these dried beans and rice and a salad made of dandelion greens, which were all over our garden by the thousands. They were a welcome addition to the diet, but I've never looked at one since with any desire to taste it. They're not my favorite.

Q: At this time were roads south and west clogged with people fleeing in anticipation of the

Germans, or were they just staying there?

BONBRIGHT: They were out in the country. They didn't have much warning. There was no place for them to go. At the end, when the troops got closer, of course, people from towns in the way, there was some influx of refugees, but I don't think it was anything like what it was in France.

The Germans did a little harassing. They never stopped trying to take our automobiles away from us, even though we had the American flag and had papers attesting to the source. But by screaming loudly and demanding to see a superior officer and constant protests to the German minister in the town, they finally let us alone pretty much.

Eventually -- it wasn't too damn long either -- it was about a month we were there like that, then the Army disintegrated in the field, so Colonel Fortier came back after only a couple of days from the staff. The government, they got down to the coast and some of them, including my friend Gavrilovich, were evacuated by the British destroyer. So Fortier came back, and there we were. Not much to do. I used to go every day to the meeting of these colleagues, where there was a lot of talk and absolutely nothing accomplished. Finally, the Germans got sick of having us around.

Q: As they had in Brussels.

BONBRIGHT: Yes. They wanted us to get out. This was quite understandable, I think. I should say here that I've wondered many times since what would have happened if General Simovich had not led a revolt that overthrew the Axis Pact. In the long-run, of course, he would have lost the war, just as other countries of that area did. But physically, they would probably not have taken the beating that they took from the German Air Force. From our point of view, there is one very clear and definite advantage that came out of it; the Yugoslav uprising upset the German time table. They launched their invasion of Russia, I think, about June 11, June 21, something in that area, and we always thought that they had planned to start it sooner. This diversion created delays for them, not only the troops that were sent in to Yugoslavia, but when they came in, they had to be taken out again and got into the pipelines, so to speak. That following winter, that delay may have been an important gain for the Russian defense.

Q: It took a while for Tito to emerge.

BONBRIGHT: Quite a bit longer. At first we weren't for Tito at all. The British were much more for him, in fact. We opposed it for some time, I think.

Q: Did Colonel Fortier join Mikhailovic?

BONBRIGHT: He finally came home when the rest of them all came out, I think. But thereafter, I know I used to see his name in the paper. Whenever a Yugoslav military man came to Washington, he was always appointed an aide for his attractive officer.

Q: That raises a question. Maybe it's a bit premature. But nowadays, military attachés go to

something like a Foreign Service school to learn something about the country and have some language training, and it's pretty intensive, but between the wars, I always understood in general, or even after World War II, that people would scratch their head and say, "What are we going to do with Major Brown? Let's make him an attaché," and that a lot of them were pretty inept characters. What was your impression in your career of military attachés?

BONBRIGHT: My impression was better than that. I worked with some good ones, and, of course, I've been exposed to Letitia. Her father was military attaché at the Hague, you know, and in the Philippines in the Thirties when he was killed. He and Eisenhower were both advisors to General MacArthur.

Q: But your experience was rather favorable?

BONBRIGHT: Yes. Of course, like every other service, there are some poor ones, and some are better than others.

ABTAM GILMORE FLUES
Office of Strategic Services
Yugoslavia (1944)

Colonel Abtam Gilmore Flues was born in Saginaw, Michigan in 1903. He graduated from Princeton University in 1926 with a degree in history and literature, and received a law degree from Harvard Law School in 1929. He worked as special counsel to the late Governor and Senator John Bricker of Ohio. At the onset of World War II, Colonel Flues volunteered for service in the OSS at the age of 38. In addition to Yugoslavia, he served abroad in Egypt, Hungary, and Austria.

FLUES: One day very shortly after that, I happened to be walking down a street in Cairo and I ran into a very close friend, Adolf Schmidt. He was a Major and he was in the OSS. Dolph Schmidt and I had been classmates at Princeton and when I went on to Harvard he was at the Business School and I was at the Law School and we roomed together at Harvard. I knew his family very well. Here we meet on a street in Cairo. Now I had done a little service for the OSS people over in Algiers and I should also say in Tunisia by that time. I was helping them get started in one or two things. And I said, "Dolph, give my regards to Lada-Mojarsky, who is the OSS head in the area, and let's have dinner together." So I saw him the next day and we had dinner together, and he said, "Gil, Lada-Mojarsky wants to see you." So I went in to see the Colonel, and I went into his headquarters and he said to me, "Captain, don't you think it's about time to get back to your own army?" I said, "What do you have in mind?" He said, "How would you like to join the OSS; I'll make a Major out of you overnight, I can do that." And he said, "I would like you, if you will agree to it, to take an OSS mission into Mikhailovic in Yugoslavia." I answered, "That as far as being a Major, I am not a professional army officer; it doesn't make a great difference to me how I fight this war." But I said, "The mission sounds quite interesting," and I got to thinking, well how do you get into Mikhailovic and he said to me, "You jump in." I guess I turned a little green, but I sort of thought that I was committed a bit, so I said, "All right

I'll take jump training. Where do I go, what do I do next?" He said, "I am going to assign a group of men to you and we're going to send you to the British jump school up in Palestine. After you have taken your training there we will be organized to get you off to Italy and then into Yugoslavia." So, I picked up the men who were to go with me in Cairo and we went off to Palestine to the jump school in Palestine which was in behind Haifa in the Valley of Jezrael. There we took our jump training. Now the British trained in two ways. Like most Americans you would go out through the door of a plane. You're on a static line. They also trained us to go through the floor. In the Wellington planes they had a hole in the floor, of course with a hatch on it, and when you went out through the hole, four men sat with their feet into the hole and at jump times a sergeant would say "Number one go," and you push off and drop down through the hole. Then, "Number two go" and so on.

This doesn't have much to do with Yugoslavia at the moment.

Q: We're getting there, we're getting there...don't worry.

FLUES: The thing you had to do was don't push off too hard or your head could come in contact with the shield which was protecting you from the slipstream of the plane. One man had almost knocked himself out doing that. And we were again on a static line so it was not a free jump. We went through all kinds of preparatory training and I must say it was an excellent training because by the time the British got through with you they had convinced you that it was just another way to get out of a plane. One little interesting note, we had plastic helmets and the helmet that I drew had been worn by some British chap who was quite a whip and he had written on the helmet, "Elbows in and knees together will get you through all kinds of weather. But whatever they teach you it's just a farce, for whatever you do you'll land on your arse". The people that were training with us there were very interesting. Training at the same time was a British unit composed of LRDG men (Long Range Desert Group). They were the men who had almost picked off Rommel on a raid behind the lines in North Africa. They were now being converted into jumpers. The other unit that was training with us was the Greek Sacred Brigade: they were being trained as jumpers also. I may say that unfortunately, when we made the assault on Sicily, a diversionary assault was also made on Crete; those men were sent in, on a jump into Crete; they went in with no air protection whatsoever and the Germans slaughtered them.

Q: Oh, how sad.

FLUES: Well, after being trained by the British as a jumper, we reported back to Cairo and we sat around for a while waiting for the signal to go up to Italy.

Q: Excuse me, had we invaded Italy as of this time?

FLUES: Yes, by that time we had. So finally we get the word and we fly up to Italy. Now something else has changed in between. Winston Churchill got wind of the fact, through the OSS, the Americans were sending a mission into Mikhailovic. He flew into an absolute rage I was told. At any rate he brought a lot of pressure to bear on the Americans not to send anything into Mikhailovic. He said, "We've put all our eggs into Tito's basket and we can't ride two horses in the same race. Don't, for God sake, send any people into Mikhailovic." My mission to

Mikhailovic was canceled. We were flown up to Italy, and now we were to go in to Tito's partisans.

Q: Could you explain for the record who Mikhailovic was?

FLUES: Mikhailovic was a General of the regular Yugoslav army. He was a royalist, to start with; he was a professional army man, he was Greek orthodox, and he was a Serb. Tito, in opposition, was a Bosnian, he was a communist; as far as having any religion, I don't know.

Q: He probably had a Catholic background, and came out of Croatia.

FLUES: He was brought up a Roman Catholic, as opposed to the Greek Orthodox. He was certainly an anti-royalist.

Q: Oh, yes.

FLUES: So these two men were absolutely different and opposed to each other. Churchill's idea, was that you couldn't back both men, you had to back one or the other and they had picked Tito. Because Mikhailovic at this point, and the reason why the OSS wanted to send a mission in to him, was the word we had he was down to eight rounds of ammunition per man. He was unable to do anymore fighting, and was actually doing no fighting. He was not harassing the German line of communication down through Yugoslavia to the Greek islands. So the mission was to see if he could be reorganized, re-equipped to get the personnel together to make himself again a fighting unit where we could put more pressure on the Germans. So the job was to find out what he had, what he could do, and what he needed. And to say that mission was canceled, later it was revived, and the OSS sent in, I believe it was Colonel McDowell who was actually sent in to Mikhailovic. That's after my time. We go up to Italy and we were quartered in Bari and we were there for some time, not a great length of time, but then the word came that we were to be sent into Yugoslavia. When you were going into Yugoslavia you were sent to Brindisi which was the take-off point. On this particular night a small group of men and I, we were all as I say, jumpers, were flown into Yugoslavia.

Q: DC-3 probably.

FLUES: The old horse wagon of the air force.

Q: Two engines? C-47.

FLUES: Something like that. It was not even armed in any way. So you went off at night and the Germans, of course, had fighters all over that area trying to keep American supplies and so forth from going into Yugoslavia. They had night fighters up, and the word was you flew without lights, you flew dead, and kept away from anything that the Germans might be able to throw up. We flew over the Julian Alps and we came in about one o'clock in the morning across the Drava River into northern Slovenia. We were now in touch via sugar phone with a...

Q: Sugar phone, or was it a short wave radio.

FLUES: Yes. We are now in touch with a ground crew. These people had set up a temporary air field and they were regular McLean men, they were RAFs.

Q: He wrote a book on the mission to the East. It was a well known book...

FLUES: Right, he was very close to Tito...

Q: ...and close to Churchill too.

FLUES: Fitzroy McLean. A fine good man, fine officer. What the British had done was to take a cow field which was level, and that's something that you don't find too much of over there. They had a ground crew organized of Yugoslavs. Every man was armed with a flare. When we were told to come in and we were going to make a landing, we came in and one moment suddenly beneath you is a flare path. The word was out and every Yugoslav soldier lit his flare and suddenly we had a flare path. We came in, the moment we touched ground, boom it was dark again. Well, I was glad to get all my men down in that way. If we had jumped in you run the risk of losing some men to start with, and chances are you lose some or all of your equipment because as you know the stick goes out...

Q: The stick being the ????

FLUES: An eight man stick was the way you were organized to go. You, as command officer go out first and your exec officer comes out last and may I say, anybody who gets stuck in the door, if you were going through the door, got what they called "the helping hand." The jump sergeant standing at that door, if anybody got stuck in the door, gave the helping hand to that chap which meant a boot in the pants, of course. They were literally booted out of the plane. Well, we didn't have to jump for it. We got down on the ground. I got all my men down safely, I got all my equipment down safely. I would like to make one other observation. At this time the British had a jump set which was far superior to what the Americans had. For instance, all your lines fed into a lock on your chest and you were taught as I said, elbows in and knees together, the moment you touch earth you made your roll. Get on your back, hit your lock and all your lines flew free so that you weren't dragged on the ground in your parachute. Some people died that way. The Americans had to unhook themselves line by line. The British had a bang, you were free, your lines and your parachute floated away on you. Now, I understand that Drew Pearson before the end of the war came along and found out about this difference and made quite a ruckus about it and the Americans adopted the British jumping harness before the end of the war. Well, anyway that's just an aside. At any rate we're now on the ground with this British unit of McLean.

Q: Before you went, were you told what your mission was?

FLUES: Yes. As commanding officer I was particularly briefed. The mission was to support first, the McLean people. We were to help organize getting wounded out, getting in supplies. Also where we were, we were in almost direct route of the bombers going up to hit the Ploesti refineries in Romania.

Q: These were also major oil fields.

FLUES: And also the bombers going to hit the Chepel Island steel mills outside Budapest. So, any planes that were shot down or couldn't make it all the way back, we were supposed to get their men and forward them back to Italy. And farm houses in that area were organized, if any plane came down near them and if any men were alive, get them into particular farm houses where literally bunks had been built. And where supplies had been set up to take care of these men until we could communicate with them and get them back to Italy. Now that was another mission that we were doing. I also had another mission: sound out what was going on in Hungary. Could we think of any opportunity to find out anything that was going on over there in the way of an underground movement. Could anything be organized in the way of an underground movement? So that was my briefing. We also took out with us \$10,000 in Swiss gold coins for use in any of that kind of work to see what we could do. We stayed there as I say in that particular area and I think what you would like me to do is to tell you something about how the Yugoslavs were organized.

McLean's men and my unit were attached to the Partisan Sixth Corps, commanded by Lieutenant-General Pero Drabcin. I'll tell you about Drabcin a little later. We reported in not only to the British but to Drabcin's people, the Sixth Corps. They assigned a bunker to us. All the Yugoslav units and British had bunkers. Now this bunker that they assigned to us was dug out of the solid earth. I would say its dimensions could be as much as thirty to fifty feet long and probably twenty to about thirty feet wide. I went down into that bunker, it had logs for the sides and roof of it, and the Yugoslav officer said, "Now there are, as you must know, ventilators. Will you check the ventilators." I checked all of the ventilators. He said "Now come with me on top." He said, "Can you tell me where all the ventilators are?" I couldn't find them. They were masters at camouflage. Masters at digging these underground bunkers. Why the bunkers? They had no way of containing a solid German attack on the area, particularly with tanks. They had nothing with which to defend themselves against tanks except what we might have sent them.

Q: Bazookas.

FLUES: Bazookas. So they would have to evacuate an area. They had no transport for wounded, for instance, and no transport for what supplies they had that they could not carry with them. The wounded men were put in a bunker and supplies were left with them. Now I could tell you there was a rule of the bunker. If you had to evacuate the area and your wounded were put in one of these bunkers, food was left with the wounded men and one able-bodied man. The rule of the bunker was that if any one of the wounded made a noise, couldn't stand his wound and made an outcry, the able-bodied man immediately killed him. And I know of instances where Germans came into the area and actually units were on top of those bunkers and never knew that there were living men beneath and those bunkers were later opened up and except for those who had died meanwhile, they got their wounded out. This was a merciless war, no quarter was asked on either side. The partisans had no place to keep prisoners so they took no prisoners. Obviously, the Germans therefore took no prisoners. The only way you could hold up a German attack on the area was in any road which came into the area, and it was very heavily forested, very mountainous, Yugoslav axmen would cut a tree about three fourths of a way through; when they got word that a German attack was coming with tanks, the axmen struck a few blows and the tree

would fall over the road. So to go through, the Germans would have to get those trees out of the way, and while their tanks were immobilized their men were working to clear the road, and of course, the partisans were busy trying to pick them off. That was one way they could try to at least hinder a German attack into the area.

Now the low area, where my men were, was close to a village called Vocin. But Vocin was really no longer in existence and I'll tell you why. And this is why the Yugoslavs, the men fighting against the Germans, hated the Ustashis, the Croatian Ustashis.

Q: They were Croatian, Catholic fascist group.

FLUES: That's right. They were an auxiliary army organized by the Germans and the Italians. They were far more terrible than any Germans. This little town of Vocin: they rounded up every living being left in it. All the able-bodied men were already with the partisans: women, children everybody and they put them in this beautiful little orthodox church and they set it on fire, and they burned them all. Those who tried to break out, they machine gunned. Now I went into that little church and the beautiful frescos were peeling off the walls. The whole village was gone. Man, woman and child. So, you can understand that the Yugoslav armies did what they did whenever they caught up with any of these Ustashi people. I can tell you some of that too. I went out on patrols with the Yugoslavs and one time I went out on a mounted patrol and I'm not a horseman. They gave me a white horse, that damn white horse was one of those animals that can't let anything pass it. It had to be at the head of the parade. Now they stuck me with this horse purposely. I am a man on a white horse, a literally almost uncontrollable horse, and their point man. If anybody was going to get shot out there, I could understand that I was the guy who was going to get it first. Actually, we didn't run into any Germans on that patrol so it all worked out all right. I went out on night patrols with them also. Up in the woods, it was so black that I couldn't see my hand before my face. You would be coming back through the partisan line, and all of a sudden a voice would say "stoi".

Q: Which means stop.

FLUES: That means stop. You stopped. You not only stopped you didn't move. The next thing I knew, a hand and arm would come around my throat and feel my dog tags, and that was my ticket for re-entry. Then I could pass.

Q: Were you able to converse? How were you communicating with these partisans and what sort of talk were you having with them?

FLUES: Some of them could speak English, almost all of them would speak German. I had a man who could speak German. But also, the British had officers who could speak Serbo-Croat.

Well, to tell you just a little about Drabcin. Drabcin was a professional soldier; he was also known as one of the Old Internationals. He had fought against the Nazis on the side of the loyalists against Franco and the Nazis in the Spanish Civil War.

Q: The International Brigade.

FLUES: Yes. He was a trained soldier who had also seen action. He was a well-educated man, he was a university man. He was always trim and sharp as an officer. I remember one night, my men and I were having mess with partisan officers and after eating everybody got to drinking. May I say, the liquor that they had in that area was something. It was made out of raw potatoes and everything else. It got to the point where you warmed yourself before breakfast with a shot of this stuff, but it was really powerful.

Q: Oh yes.

FLUES: At any rate, on this particular evening people began drinking, and a partisan officer suddenly shouted "Smrt democracy, smrt fascismo."

Q: Death to fascism.

FLUES: Then some fool officer shouted, "Smrt democratia!"

Q: Oh, God, that means death to democracy.

FLUES: And I turned to my men and I said, "Time to go." We got up and walked out. The next morning I got a call from Drabcin, and he said, "Please come over and talk to me." When I went over to see him, he apologized for the incident and he said, "I also reprimanded that officer."

Drabcin was a fine good man and an excellent commanding officer.

Q: Was there on the part of the Yugoslavs, was there much interest in the United States?

FLUES: I'll get to that in a little bit.

I am just going to say that not too many years ago my wife and I were in Belgrade, and we went out to the White City, and there is a war museum out there. I had heard that Drabcin, who became renowned as one of the real heroes of Yugoslavia, he had died by that time, but that there was a memorial room to him out at the war memorial. So we went out, but unfortunately it was on a day in which it was locked up and I couldn't get the caretaker to let us in. So I missed seeing the memorial. But I just wanted to say that everybody knew about Drabcin. He was one of the real heroes.

Now I'm back to the question...

Q: Was there much intercourse between your soldiers and the partisans about life in the United States, US role, that sort of thing...

FLUES: Really very little, in a way. We were quartered in cabins in the woods and I may say that the camouflage was terrific. The cabin that I occupied was with two other officers, and I'll get to that, was a log cabin with a tree going right through the middle. You couldn't see it from above. Most of the food that we ate was supplied by the partisans. Pig was the only meat you got.

But there were enough vegetables and so forth and our planes were bringing in food here and there to supplement. So we got along all right so far as food was concerned.

I can remember an incident when there was a fire fight, which we were not in, but one of the partisan leaders had been killed by machine gun fire. I always remember his name -- Nicholas Demonya. He was one of the very early partisan leaders and there was a ceremony for the burial. He had been brought from where he was killed, he had been put into a casket and relays of Jug soldiers carried him from village to village, and I was representing the Americans. There were British officers representing the British and there were Jug officers.

Q: Jug being Yugoslavs.

FLUES: We walked from village to village behind this cortege and at every village they would open the casket and the villagers would look on the face of Demonya and the women were keening -- like they do. We would then carry him on. Finally, we took him to the side of a hill or a small mountain and that's where he was buried. They told what he had done, like he had been one of the earliest and had lived in caves, he with a few companions and then finally gotten the resistance organized to where many were in it. But he was one of the very first fighting against Germans and Croatians.

They were communists. It was very interesting that there was a very large wooden cross at the head of that grave. So they were sending him off in whatever he needed in the earth and the world above.

Now, getting back to the very good point you were going to bring up. The partisans had organized in a field a meeting of all the villagers of that area. They came in from everywhere. Maybe there were as many as 5,000 people in this field. They had a stand from which we were to speak. Now, as I said, the British had Croatian speakers, officers who could speak Serbo-Croatian. The Yugoslav army had their Commissars just like the Russian army. I remember this one Commissar got up and he told all about the fighting and so forth, and he went on to say that the Russians were the ones who supplied them, who brought in whatever food they got, that all military supplies came from the Russians. That was their source of help. This British officer stood up, and I say he could speak Serbo-Croatian, and he turned to that Commissar and he said to the people, "This man is an absolute liar. There have been 95 lifts into this area or drops and landings into this area by planes. The Americans have brought in 91 of those drops, the British have brought in 2, the Russians have brought in 2." He said, "This man is lying to you, your help has come from the Allies, from the Americans and the British. The men who are in here supporting the Partisan 6th Army, are all British and Americans, not a single Russian."

Now, all the emphasis was on, all credit was to be given to the Russians. They were the ones to get the credit, and they even, I remember seeing, they thought that some Russians were coming in, they had put in some sort of an archway to greet the Russians when they were to come in. I'll tell you who did come in -- lots of Russians.

Q: Now, these were Germans...

FLUES: These were Cossacks, regiments known as Circassians. All of them were mounted. They came in after my time. I had already been pulled out. The Yugoslavs wouldn't refer to them as Russians, they called them Circassians. They did not want the people to know that they were Russians fighting on the German side.

Q: Someone was a Soviet general who when captured early in the war, recruited an anti- Stalin force, this is just for the record, of Russian prisoners all of whom were pretty much eliminated by Stalin after the war.

FLUES: That's right. The Russian was General Vlasov. His men were known as "Vlasov's Russians." Now, the only time I ever ran into Russians later on was in Austria where Vlasov's men finished and where they had dismounted and just let their horses go free. If you think a locust will clean off an area, you should see hundreds and hundreds of horses eating anything and everything that they can get their teeth into.

Now the war is over at that point. Now I am speaking about up in Austria. German labor camps were being emptied. People were coming out of the camps. They would beg them to take whatever horses they could take home with them. So that's what finally happened to the horses. The British had to do something about the soldiers themselves. The Soviets asked that they be repatriated. I remember two trains for the men were made up. Officers had been separated. The British had put these Cossacks on the trains and every other car or so, there was a platoon of British soldiers with machine guns. If any man jumped off the train, he was shot. They took these trains up into Austria, Stzittal, was the name of the town, and turned them over to the Russians. After about two trips, when they heard the machine guns begin, before the train even started pulling off to return, they knew what was happening to these Russians turned back to the Soviets, so they stopped taking any more of them into the Russian lines. Quite a few of those men, I understand, landed down in Brazil and were settled there and in other parts of the world, but they never got home.

Well, we're back in...

Q: We're back in Slovenia.

FLUES: I've explained what our mission was. As far as Hungary was concerned, we tried to make a crossing of the Drava one time with the help of the Yugoslavs. But the Drava was so solidly held by the Germans we had no way of breaking through. There were a few Yugoslav casualties and that was the end of it. We made no more attempt to get into Hungary from below the Drava River. We were in touch with base by radio and may I say, Tito never got up into this area.

Q: I was going to ask what you were getting about Tito? Any impressions?

FLUES: Tito was down on the Isle of Korcula off the coast of Yugoslavia. He was down there because the British did not want him picked off by the Germans -- so he was in a safe place down there and if the Germans made any attempt to get to Korcula, he could be immediately flown off or taken by water to Italy.

Q: There had been this very famous parachute attack on Tito's headquarters at one point.

FLUES: I don't know about that. Now, as I say, I got the word to pull out. I had two men that were with me in my cabin who also came out with me. Those left behind took over, equipment, everything. We came out with only our uniforms. We came out on a plane which was headed for Italy and again at that same airfield that I have spoken about in the cow field they brought wounded and loaded them on the plane. There was a girl. I would say she was quite an attractive girl, and I would place her not over twenty years of age, maybe 18 or so. She had had both legs amputated above her knees and as we were going to put her on the plane, as with all the other wounded, the Yugoslavs were taking the blankets from her. I said to this Yugoslav doctor, who happened to be a woman, "We've got to keep blankets on this girl. We're going to fly 20,000 feet above the Julian Alps, the plane is not in any way heated. She can't stand it; she will die." The only reply I got from the doctor was, "We are Yugoslavs, we are tough, she will live," and she took the blankets from her. The girl had nothing on but a shift. We got her on the plane, most everybody else was a man, and my officers and I took off our parachutes and we wrapped that girl in our parachutes. When we got down on the field at Foggia she was still alive. We got her into an ambulance, and that was the last I ever saw of her. God knows if she ever lived. I can't believe what kind of life she could have with both her legs gone.

Well, that's the kind of thing that you ran into.

Q: When you finished up there, when you came back, were you making any reports on the effectiveness of the partisan movement whether what type of political orientation or how you saw things developing in Yugoslavia after the war, anything of that nature?

FLUES: I could only say when you asked about what I told them what was going to happen in Yugoslavia was that it's going to be a big Kentucky mountain feud, on a national scale. They're going to be fighting against each other and it's going to be a fight of who come out on top. Mikhailovic and Tito are going to be directly opposed to each other. As you know, Tito was able to establish the control over all of Yugoslavia. He captured Mikhailovic, put him up against a wall and shot him.

One other incident; before I came out; speaking about what happens with those who are captured. A group of Domabrans had been captured by the Yugoslavs. These were men who were organized by the Germans, not as combat units, somewhat like police units, in an occupied territory. They could police the area when regular Croatian auxiliaries were going to the front line. This group of Domabrans had been picked up by the Partisans. I would say, maybe, there were as many as thirty men. They were lying around on the ground. Yugoslavs were going around kicking them in the head, and I tried to stop that, and I said to a Yugoslav officer, "What's going to happen to these men?" I sort of sensed what he was going to say. I said, "You've got to give them a trial, some of these men have not killed anybody, have not harmed anybody, they have been police officers, they're not an army unit of any kind. You've got to at least give them a hearing and find out if they've done anything wrong." He said, "We will try them, and then we shoot them." That's what happened to them.

Q: With the British who were on the mission, who was in charge, was it an American, or British, or was it really joint? Usually, someone has got to be in charge.

FLUES: Well, I could say that I retained charge of my own unit. I simply coordinated what I was doing with what they were doing. They had their own headquarters -- I had mine.

Q: Was there a difference in feeling or direction or what have you, between the British mission and the American mission to this group.

FLUES: I didn't encounter any of that. Now remember I was pretty used to working with the British, I had been working with them for two years. We got along very well together, I can't say enough praise for the men that I knew and worked with.

Q: Was McLean with you?

FLUES: I never met the Brigadier until years later, right here in Washington, DC

Q: He wrote a book, The Eastern Approaches.

FLUES: That's right. He has written several books. He was quite a traveler. I think he wrote something on Iran.

Q: Yes, he went to Central Asia, and all that...

FLUES: I have a book or two of his. In fact, he autographed a book for me when I saw him in Washington.

Q: Well, now...

FLUES: And incidentally, I have often wondered, the Brigadier must be dead...

Q: I think so.

FLUES: I would say that because he would be a man who would be invaluable with his experience in Yugoslavia and yet his name has never turned up. As far as I know.

CARL F. NORDEN
Supreme Allied Commander
Mediterranean (1945)

Carl F. Norden attended boarding school in Switzerland where he became bilingual in English and German. He served in Yugoslavia during World War II. He then received a Master's degree in political science from Harvard University and worked for City Bank for six years before entering the Foreign Service. In

addition to his position as Supreme Allied Commander, Mediterranean, Mr. Norden served in Poland, Suriname, Cuba, and with the State Department's Bureau for Latin American Affairs. This interview was conducted on May 2, 1991 by Ambassador Horace G. Torbert.

Q: Could you tell me a little more about your experiences in... and getting into Yugoslavia, and what your efforts were to see Mikhailovic, and perhaps any other things that you happen to remember about that period, which I think is historically very interesting.

NORDEN: I passed up an opportunity to go and meet Mikhailovic, simply because it was very tricky to get in. You had to be dropped in, more or less. You had to wait for another plane to pick up some stranded pilots and then take you out again, and the chances were that you would be Mikhailoviced for longer than you wished to be. And the other, of course, was that I knew he was a lost cause as long as the British would not back him.

Q: And the British were the only people that had the resources at that time.

NORDEN: We had the resources; everything was done with our resources.

Q: But not in situ, so to speak.

NORDEN: They used our planes, they used our munitions and so forth. They were given to Tito. But we did not put our foot down and say no, we won't let you have them, you have to vote for Mikhailovic. This was a tricky regional thing in that country, because Mikhailovic, of course, was a Serb, he was a Royalist, whereas Tito, of course, was probably a Croatian.

Q: I didn't know exactly what he was. I realized that he was the one man who was able to bridge the various...

NORDEN: Well, he was part Slovene and part Croatian; he certainly was not a Serb.

Q: Well, as you said earlier, he was brought up in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, so that...

NORDEN: Oh, very definitely. Well, of course, the Croatians are more Austrian than Hungarian.

Q: Than certainly the Slovenians.

NORDEN: They're Catholics; the Serbs are Orthodox, and strongly. So they're very different people. And as you see now, they don't get along at all.

Anyway, I was tempted, but I also had a poor opinion of Mikhailovic's political savvy. I mean, he was so pro-Serbian, it was perfectly obvious. He remarked publicly, sometime before, "My head says Yugoslavia, but my heart says Serbia." Now that doesn't show the abilities of a politician, particularly, if you're going to have a united nation.

Q: So perhaps in a way the British were right, then? It's hard to tell, but...

NORDEN: I don't know why the British flopped way over. I still don't know. But the present pudding shows what the real situation is. I mean, the Serbs are not about to go to bed with the Croats. But the British line was there was no way of having a Yugoslavia if you put all your cards on the Serbs, that it would mean a split country, and that they were pro-Yugoslav, they felt that was necessary to have a Yugoslavia, because if the country split up right at the end of the war, it might mean trouble, and it might mean trouble with the Russians and so forth. I don't know why they took this line, but they took it. And when the British carry through a line, any line, everybody in the whole British establishment has to go down the line with it.

Q: And they have an establishment which we don't, of course.

NORDEN: They have no room whatsoever for dissent in the British foreign policy organization. We do. We have some.

Q: Well, it's interesting, and I don't suppose we'll ever know. But you never can get very far by debating what would have happened if a different action had been taken at that time.

JOSEPH WALTER NEUBERT
Political Officer
Belgrade (1947-1949)

Mr. Neubert was born in Montana. He attended Yale University and served in the US Army in World War II. Entering the Foreign Service in 1947, Mr. Neubert served as Political and Economic Officer in Yugoslavia and Tunisia. Following Russian language studies at the Foreign Service Institute in Washington, Mr. Neubert was posted to Moscow, Soviet Union, where he served as Political and General Services Officer. From Moscow he was assigned to Tel Aviv as Political Officer, where he served during the 1957 Arab-Israeli War. This Oral History is a self interview, done in 2007.

NEUBERT: Perhaps because the Army had, in a misguided moment (those tanks I served in didn't speak Serbian) taught me Serbo-Croatian, I was first posted to Belgrade, where I arrived in December 1947.

But perhaps we should back up a moment. We (I and a number of my colleagues) crossed the Atlantic on the old America -- then the Blue Ribbon holder. It was a far cry from the troop ships I, at least, was used to. And we all had great fun dancing on rolling decks with willing damsels. Or was it the other way round? Anyway, some of us got to Paris en route to points farther East.

When, finally, the Orient Express moved out toward Belgrade, I was ready to cope with any lovely spy who presented herself. None did. The only interest was provided at Trieste when the Italian train crew came through and removed all toilet paper and light bulbs before turning the dark hulk over to the Yugoslavs.

Arrival in Belgrade was something of a shock. I had, of course, expected some kind of welcoming committee -- perhaps not the Ambassador -- but someone. There was no one. But there were about three feet of snow on the ground. Well, after an hour or so, I managed to get my baggage together and onto a horse-drawn sledge and all of us went off up the hill to "the best hotel in town" -- to wit, the Hotel Moskva (what else?).

It turned out that the Moskva (whatever its earlier name was) was a posh, pre-war affair in which (astonishingly) they had reserved for me the bridal suite -- with a twelve-foot bathtub -- sunken, yet. I enjoyed a good soaking and a peaceful night but, come morning, decided that a newly-fledged diplomat couldn't afford the tariff. So I hied myself off to the Embassy and, making my number, inquired after more reasonable quarters.

The administrative officer apologized that I had not been met and suggested I move into a room on the top floor of the Embassy, a floor also occupied by the Embassy guards. I readily agreed; it was free. What I didn't know was that it was also infested with bedbugs. I soon found out and, a few days later, was happy to move into one room in a Yugoslav home, suggested by the Foreign Office. There, I couldn't have been happier. The owners were wonderful people and made me feel at home.

This was not, however, the end of my connection with the top floor of the Embassy. In those days, we did not have Marine Guards. The guards of the Embassies were civilians. As I recall we had four such guards in a former bank building, in which the Consular Section (where I worked) was on the ground floor (with a separate entrance) and the Chancery was on the fourth floor with the guards quartered on the fifth floor. Not, perhaps, an ideal security arrangement. But there it was. Anyway, it just happened that I, the new Consul, Basil McGowan, and a new security guard, Mitch Styra, all arrived on post more or less simultaneously. A day or two later, Styra, making his rounds one evening, came into the Consular Section (which, as I said, had its own entrance) to find this unknown "person" rifling the safe. He promptly hauled out his .45 Automatic and ordered the "thief" to cease and desist "or else." McGowan, a red-headed (if graying) Scotsman, told him to get lost. Styra cocked his pistol. McGowan suggested they call the Ambassador. The Ambassador, Cavendish Cannon, spoke to Styra, told him McGowan was all right, and asked him please not to shoot.

This might have ended the whole affair. But more was to come. The guards living on the top floor (all bachelors) were fond of picking up girls, usually at the Lotus, the only bar in town, and taking them up to their rooms to spend the night. To do this, they had to take them past the guard desk on the fourth floor. Styra objected to this and laid down the law -- no more when he was on duty, at any rate.

Well, a few evenings later, when Styra was on duty, the doorbell rang and he opened it. There he saw one of the other guards and an unknown woman. He roared, "God damn it, Joe, I've told you not to bring your whores through when I'm on duty."

Joe had no chance to reply. The woman drew herself up haughtily and said, "Sir, I am Mrs. McGowan. I have come for the mail." Relations between the McGowans and Styra never

thawed.

My own relations with Styra became very close and I still regard him as one of the finest people I have encountered. He was born in New Jersey but went back to Poland with his parents before the war. He was educated in Poland but was an American citizen and did courier runs to Lisbon until the fall of Poland. Then he returned to the U.S. and served in the OSS during the war, dropping into occupied Europe a number of times. After the war he became, as I have said, a civilian guard. He recently retired from the Foreign Service as Administrative Officer at our Embassy in East Berlin. A wonderful man.

I remember particularly his activities in connection with the "disappearance" of my secretary in Belgrade. At that time I was the vice consul in charge of citizenship matters and was busy interviewing dozens of claimants to American citizenship each day -- all in Serbian. The reason for so many claimants was that thousands of Serbian emigrants to the U.S. in the twenties returned to the "old country" in the thirties to avoid the Depression. And all of their children, born in the U.S., had possibly or probably valid claims to U.S. citizenship.

Anyway, my secretary, a perfectly sensible American girl, failed to show up one day and I assumed she was ill. When she didn't show up the second day, I initiated inquiries. It then turned out she was being held hostage in her apartment by a man (with a gun) who wanted "political asylum" or else. Well! Consternation! Then the Ambassador decided to send Styra to deal with the problem. He did. He suckered the guy into opening the door, kicked it in, disarmed him, and carted him out into the country and booted him out. Nothing like having a few of the (well-trained) tough guys around.

One might have thought that life would have gotten easier in Belgrade once Stalin and Tito broke off relations in June 1948. Far from it. The thaw on the Yugoslav side took years. But there was some interest during that period, nevertheless. For one thing, the Embassy -- that is to say, an FSO named Charles G. Stefan -- predicted in early June that Tito and Stalin were on the outs. In June the Chargé d'Affaires, R. Borden Reams, bought the argument and cabled Washington. The skies fell in! Washington refused to believe it. So did the Ambassador, an otherwise sensible man off at a conference in Rome. The Department demanded withdrawal of this telegram and sent Llewellyn Thompson, then Deputy Assistant Secretary for Europe, to Belgrade to make Reams see the light. Reams refused and Charlie Stefan and I drove Thompson to Budapest as a placating gesture. The morning after we arrived, the three of us were walking to the Legation from the Bristol Hotel and saw newspapers (otherwise unintelligible) with "Tito" in the headlines. We bought one and sat on the curb outside the Legation garage while a chauffeur translated and told us Tito had been bounced from the Cominform. Thompson had the grace to lean over and shake Charlie's hand and say, "You were right and I was wrong."

It wasn't until shortly before I left Yugoslavia in January 1950 that the Yugoslavs began to come to our parties or have anything to do with us. One party, given by the then Chargé d'Affaires Bob Reams had for me three amusing outcomes.

First, I had never, until then, played poker. But Bob insisted I join in a game involving a number of visiting Air Force officers and Cy Sulzberger. I reluctantly agreed, with the proviso I could,

from time to time, consult with the counsel. I did so, and for a few hands, I just lost moderately. Then, I was dealt, in a straight draw poker hand, four aces. I consulted with counsel. And asked for only one card. Needless to say, I won five hundred dollars on that one hand. I have never played poker since.

Second, I met a very attractive Yugoslav woman -- blonde, well-made. She insisted we dance repeatedly and, then, asked me to lunch with her two days hence. Agreed.

Third, I got into an ideological argument with a Yugoslav party official about my age (28), who insisted we go to his apartment to settle matters. Agreed.

First things first, I took the Yugoslav ideologue to his apartment. Astonishing. He had a large pleasant new apartment. But it was totally devoid of furniture! In what I assume would have been the living room, there was a thin mattress on the floor in the corner -- and a rumpled blanket. In what might have been the bedroom, there was a basket of grapes -- and a jug of wine. Strewn equitably about were grape skins. And, beside the mattress, a German pistol (loaded?).

Well, we sat on the mattress and ate grapes and drank wine and argued capitalism/communism until dawn. I don't think we persuaded each other of anything -- but it seemed great fun at the time. Especially since he didn't shoot me.

The invitation to lunch was something else again. I had been waiting for an international "femme fatale" to set her sights on me and I was sure this was it. So I got all gussied up and went off to the assignation in, as it turned out, an apartment across the square from the Opera.

I knocked on the door and my new-found friend ushered me in, clad in a lovely dress of Western cut. We sat politely in a roomy salon and had Scotch and munchies. Then she ushered me to the dining room and we had a pleasant lunch with wine, which she served. All very nice. Then we returned to the salon for coffee and liqueurs. My hostess vanished for a bit. I sat on the sofa and savored the coffee. She returned -- you've guessed it -- in a filmy negligee. She was attractive. She sat next to me and caressed my thigh. I was ready to reveal all the state secrets I knew (none) and then the garlic and odor of stale perspiration hit me. Suddenly, I wasn't ready to reveal I didn't know any state secrets. I just up and fled.

As a matter of fact, on a higher plane, there were, even before this, amusing moments in our relations with the Yugoslavs. It is worth recalling that Tito was not always our friend. In early 1947 his air force (such as it was and it didn't take much) shot down some of our DC-3 mail planes from Vienna to Trieste and, also in 1947, there were efforts by the Yugoslavs to seize Zone A (Trieste) from the U.S. and British. These efforts were turned aside.

Still, in August 1949, it was somewhat astonishing when the Yugoslav Foreign Minister called in the Ambassadors of Yugoslavia's "friends," i.e., the U.S., U.K., and France, to ask them to protect Yugoslavia from the Soviet Union. I became involved in this as interpreter for Ambassador Cannon and I remember his insistence on being sure this was exactly what the Yugoslavs were asking. It was.

Whatever else I was to Ambassador Cannon, he early on decided that I was his “nightclub attaché.” This meant that I had the dubious pleasure (there was only one nightclub) of accompanying those few American visitors who wanted to see the Lotus to the Lotus. Some were not satisfied with the faded glories of the Lotus and wanted more action. I remember once in the summer of 1949 that Congressman Wayne Hayes, then every junior member of the House, came to Belgrade. I was his “control officer” or “escort officer” or whatever. I was supposed to keep him happy. Given the reports we had had of his adventures in Prague, pursuing a young lady (naked) down the hotel corridor, this seemed like a large order. Anyway, he soon lived up to advance reports. He asked me to have the American secretary assigned to him come to his hotel room for fun and games.

I suppose I might have agreed to do what I could, but, as it happened, this young lady-and I (a bachelor) were happily engaged in our own affairs. So I told Wayne to arrange his own business -- I was no pimp. Our relationship was never the same again.

In the summer of 1949, I went on a jeep tour of Montenegro and Dalmatia (mainly because nothing but a jeep could make the trip). I went (alone) down through Cetinje to the coast and up through Dubrovnik. I say “alone” with some hesitation because I was pursued by another (secret police) jeep (probably stolen from the Embassy). Anyway, when I got to Dubrovnik I stayed at the Europa Hotel -- pre-war Italian. And I was the only guest. It is still there -- but with more guests. In my day, I wandered alone through the town, along the walls, and fully enjoyed the place. Now, of course, it is wall-to-wall tourists -- German, Italian, Austrian, American. But for three days, I had it to myself (and certain hangers on). My wife and I went back in 1967 and enjoyed the place, but shared it with thousands of others.

Presumably, the hazards of driving in Belgrade have lessened over the years. In 1949 I bought a Buick sedan (\$1600) and then hired a Yugoslav chauffeur. This, it appeared, was not the thing for a Third Secretary to do. I remember the first time we drove up to the Embassy (newly removed) and, as I got out, I was gaily hailed by the Ambassador and DCM from the second floor balcony. Needless to say, I drove myself from then on. Besides, I thought I could drive and my chauffeur couldn't.

But perhaps I was wrong. A few months later, I was proceeding home one night and suddenly the bottom fell out of everything. We were just across from the Ministry of the Interior (Rankovich, in those days) and there was a huge unlit hole in the street. It blew the right front tire and scared the hell out of me. And the car had to be left for later rescue as I took a cab home.

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.

COLE BLASIER
Consular/Political Officer
Belgrade, Yugoslavia (1951-1954)

Cole Blasier attended the University of Illinois and Columbia University. He Joined the Foreign Service in 1951 and served in a number of posts including Yugoslavia, Germany, and the USSR.

Q: Well, we may be getting ahead of ourselves. When you entered the Foreign Service, your first post was Belgrade.

BLASIER: Yes. In preparation for Belgrade I was assigned to the Foreign Service Institute and Serbo-Croatian language training. My knowledge of Russian helped with Serbian.

At that time, January 1952, Yugoslavia was one of the most strategically important countries in Europe and in the middle of the Soviet-American confrontation in the Cold War. Tito openly challenged Stalin's leadership of the international Communist movement.

Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, once allies, were involved intermittently in sporadic armed skirmishes along Yugoslavia's eastern borders. Stalin had lost a hoped for a window on western Europe and the Adriatic and faced an upstart political model threatening his control of communist countries in Eastern Europe.

Tito had to defend his borders and, potentially, the whole country from Soviet Bloc hostility, even attack. In 1952 he had not yet firmed up relations with the United States and other Great Powers and had territorial and political rivalries with his neighbors, Italy and Greece.

Our main job in Belgrade was strategic, to keep Yugoslavia and Tito from returning to the Soviet bloc. There was vocal opposition to this policy in the United States by minorities, partly on the grounds that Tito had a bloody record in consolidating his power, and that he was and remained a staunch communist. One of our jobs in the Embassy was to monitor Tito's foreign relations with respect to negotiations with foreign governments and their domestic repercussions.

The Ambassador and senior members of the Embassy did the monitoring, but negotiations tended to be conducted through Washington or by special envoys. I followed them quite closely, and my assignment was to report Yugoslav reactions, especially as shown in the local press or through contacts with foreign embassies. My most interesting work, however, was to report on Yugoslav domestic politics.

In order to refurbish his credentials as a Communist, symbolize his repudiation of Stalinism, and strengthen his hold on the country long term, Tito reorganized the nation's political and economic structure as a new form of Communism. We followed this with great, if some times skeptical, interest. The specifics included assigning the Communist Party with a mainly "educational" role (it was mostly window dressing), the decollectivization of agriculture (a form of partial privatization), and the establishment of workers' councils (workers "management" of industry) - all an anathema to Stalinism.

Q: And you were assigned in what capacity in Belgrade?

BLASIER: First, I was assigned as a visa officer in the consulate. After six months in the consulate I joined the political section in June 1951, and remained there for two years, the latter including a six months extension.

Q: And your ambassador was George Allen?

BLASIER: George Allen, that's correct, and much later James Riddleberger.

Q: And Jake Beam as Allen's deputy?

BLASIER: That's right.

Q: When you were in the consulate, you must have polished your Serbo-Croatian in visa work?

BLASIER: Yes. With the help of my previous academic preparation in Russian and Serbian and two months experience with help from the consular staff in visa interviews, I was able to interview independently in Serbo-Croatian. I also hired a tutor and got up every morning before 6:00 A.M. for a two hour lesson. My wife joined me at first and then took up French. Actually she learned to speak Serbian quite well on her own, and dealt with our maids and tradesmen in Serbian.

Q: Well, can you situate this for us? It must have been at least two years after Tito's break with the Soviets and about the time of Tito's break with his most charismatic lieutenant, Milovan Djilas.

BLASIER: Yes. Belgrade still showed a lot of war damage in the winter of 1951-52. It was dark, unpainted, gloomy city, bullet ridden downtown, and very short on housing for everybody, including all the diplomats that were there. And, there was some mutual suspicion between the Yugoslavs and the western diplomats. My wife and I lived in the Excelsior Hotel for six months

in a single room. We had a private bath and took our meals in the dining room. And then Peg Glassford, the future wife of Jake Beam, was reassigned and we moved into her house where we were very happily settled for the rest of our tour.

By this time a lot of the U.S. domestic political opposition to our collaboration with Tito had passed. The turning point in our relations with Tito and changes in Yugoslavia occurred during our assignment. Our warming relationship with Tito was fueled by economic and military assistance, as well as the political shift in the Yugoslav leadership and the construction of the new "Yugoslav communism."

Q: What was the opposition to U.S. policy about?

BLASIER: Some of the opposition had been defeated by Tito in a civil war. They had their own axes to grind. They used Tito's communism as a reason why we shouldn't support him. It was a pattern which we have also seen with respect to immigrants from other countries, where they hope to shape U.S. policy towards a surviving dictator. That happened with Cuba and elsewhere.

Q: How did you defend U.S. collaboration with Tito?

BLASIER: By the time of our arrival in Belgrade, Congress was appropriating funds to support Tito and collaboration with the Tito regime was beginning. Our policy was defended as an important way to contain Stalin. Many of us accepted that because even though Tito was a Communist and a ruthless dictator, he represented the best opportunity we had to split the international communist movement. Yugoslavia blocked the southwestern expansion of the Soviet bloc and Soviet access to the Adriatic.

Tito was more accessible to westerners than Stalin, less paranoid, able to delegate, and more flexible. Yugoslavs were less fearful and suppressed than the Soviet peoples, even after Stalin's death. The Soviet and Yugoslav communists were not the same breed of cat. Yet we had to live with the fact that Tito exploited his people, consistently overriding opposition and living like a king in a poverty stricken country.

Q: No doubt your graduate studies of Communist countries and your face to face experience with Yugoslavs in the consulate caused the post management to co-opt you into political work.

BLASIER: Yes, my work on Communists in Chile, Cuba, and Eastern Europe. Also I had studied Yugoslav issues with Professor Mosely at Columbia, a leading specialist on the USSR and Yugoslavia who participated in the wartime negotiations over Europe and Trieste. My experience helped me get the opportunity to work with Ambassador George Allen. It was his talents as an ambassador and as a person, that drew me to him - not his knowledge of communism. He was a colorful, warm, broad-minded person, an excellent diplomat who didn't fit the usually misinformed stereotypes.

And his deputy, Jake Beam, was a perceptive observer and a genial colleague. He gave his whole life to the service and was rewarded by many ambassadorships. Much later Henry Kissinger humiliated him by a high level visit to Moscow without informing Ambassador Beam in advance

of his visit. Beam found out through the Russians. In his memoirs Kissinger expressed regret and said that he never visited Moscow again without having our ambassador participate in the meetings.

My knowledge of Serbian, useful within about six months of our arrival, was important for the political section and elsewhere. At one point, the station chief relied on me to make or take lengthy telephone calls with one of his sources, and on which my immediate superior, Turner Cameron, frowned. I was approached no more.

Q: I'm going to take you up on your offer to describe George Allen and his modus operandi...

BLASIER: Allen was a jaunty guy. He appeared on one fourth of July in a white suit, as Tito did on some occasions. In the winter he wore a rakish hamburg, with a broad curled brim. He liked to dance. His wife Kitty, was a great asset to him, especially kind to young people.

Unlike some contemporary ambassadors, Allen looked on the foreign service as a band of brothers where the older members bring the younger along to ensure the continuity and quality of the service. I think he may have been consciously training us younger officers. He occasionally invited some with their wives, like Peter and Pam Walker, to the residence for afternoon badminton. My wife and I were frequently invited to lunches with visitors from abroad. One was Josef Korbel, Madeleine Albright's father and former Czech ambassador to Belgrade.

Ambassador Allen taught me some valuable lessons by doing, not by lecturing. Not long after I was moved to the political section, I was under the supervision of Turner Cameron, a conscientious foreign service officer, much schooled in protocol by Ambassador Jefferson Caffery in Paris. Not long before Christmas I got a note from Allen asking me to draft a Christmas message to the Embassy staff. Conscientious to a fault and under Cameron's influence, I sent a draft to Allen which might have passed muster by Amy Vanderbilt. That ended my exchange with Allen on that subject. He wrote his own warm, Christmas message, seemingly addressed to each one of us. This was a stern reminder to get my priorities straight.

When I was assistant to Allen at the summer capital in Bled, I was responsible for getting our "pouch" to the Embassy in Belgrade in the Embassy plane - we had no other secure communications. Instead of instructing the plane not to take off until I arrived, I got to the landing strip before its scheduled departure but just as its wheels were rising off the tarmac. A dumb gaff on my part, and I was humiliated. Allen did not make one word of criticism. Don't worry, he said, I'll get it there another way. Throwing caution to the winds, he asked his trusted friend and my acquaintance, Meyer Handler of the New York Times, to take it on the latter's return trip to Belgrade. After that I would have done anything for Allen.

When I was Allen's aide in Split for the visit of the Seventh Fleet under Admiral McCain (the Senator's father), McCain's staff officer informed Allen that there were only 12 places for Americans at the shipboard dinner, and there were 13 names on our list. Lt. Del Landry USN, the assistant naval attaché, and I were lowest on the list. Allen called Del and me aside and said that in cases like this he favored the officer in the service involved, in this case the Navy. That meant Del. This seemed reasonable to me, and I learned not only something about protocol, but

graceful solutions to touchy questions.

Allen did virtually all of his work in English. He had used some French in the past and always spoke to his butler in elementary French. Previously, as a language junky, I had been critical of the foreign language skills of so many of our ambassadors. Then it dawned on me that many of our best ambassadors haven't spoken foreign languages fluently, Allen among them. This is not a reason to deemphasize foreign language training, but only to judge ambassadors on the whole range of their skills.

Allen spent many Washington assignments during the war, which paved the way for his first ambassadorship in Iran in 1946. Most of his posts since 1933 were, of course, in Democratic administrations. After Eisenhower and the Republicans won the 1952 election, he went to Washington to "consult."

Shortly after his arrival he got a call from the White House: "Is this George Allen?" He said yes. "The president would like to see you." When he walked into the President's office, Eisenhower said, oh, there must be some mistake. I wanted to see another George Allen. [that probably was George Allen known as the court jester of presidents.] This provided an amusing introduction and the two had a good talk. Not long after Ambassador Allen's return to Belgrade, his appointment as Ambassador to India was announced.

My wife and I were also privileged to make the acquaintance of Jacob Beam, Allen's deputy who became chargé. Not yet married and alone at the post, Beam occasionally dropped by for a drink. On one occasion he broke the news to us that he would represent the United States in Moscow after George Kennan had been declared persona non grata. Another time he told us that he had been appointed to represent the United States at Stalin's funeral.

Jake was always interesting to talk with, especially when he told about his service in Berlin in the Nazi period under Ambassador Dodd. He described how he was able to prove mass deaths of Jews by visiting cemeteries and counting up inscribed headstones. He was a quiet, shy unassuming person, a keen observer and a steely analyst.

Jake was one of the most unselfish and loyal officers I have known and one would never have thought of him in terms of a party affiliation. When Foster Dulles, the new Secretary of State, sent us his infamous message demanding positive loyalty, Beam was cut to the quick. He said he had joined the service under Secretary Henry Stimson, a Republican.

Q: Were the ethnic antipathies that presumably always existed in Yugoslavia, visible during your time there?

BLASIER: Yes, of course we were aware of them. Yet, the people of Sarajevo, one of the most mixed populations, seemed to be living together peacefully. One of our best Yugoslav friends were a couple in Belgrade - he a Serb, she a Croat. They were always joking about this aspect of their relationship, but occasionally one would note an edge. My view has always been that these neighbors can live together peacefully provided the government is tolerant and magnanimous; otherwise, there can be big trouble. Trouble makers like Slobodan Milosevic must be denied the

opportunity of capitalizing politically on ethnic divisions by promoting divisive and bloody conflicts. Tito followed the opposite policy, one of reconciliation, also for political reasons - to maintain his authoritarian controls. His policy was symbolized by the oft repeated slogan: "bratsvo i edinstvo" (brotherhood and unity).

Tito held the country together ultimately by brute force. Yet he preferred to use it as a last resort. He was more flexible and gave his lieutenants and the population more slack than Stalin. Tito was more self-confident than Stalin and lacked Stalin's paranoia. Tito tried to hold the country together by solving ethnic problems, if not that way then, by force; Milosevic inflamed them. Tito showed that with a viable political structure imposed on these people, they could get along.

Q: Well, at that time Tito's lieutenants were Kardelj, and Rankovich, weren't they?

BLASIER: And Djilas.

Q: And Djilas. But Djilas was already beginning to show some signs of independence.

BLASIER: Yes. The publication of Djilas' heretical views in the magazine Nova Misao led to his expulsion from the Central Committee and the loss of his political and other positions. He believed that Yugoslav communism had spawned a new class, the country's leadership, which enjoyed much of the power, wealth, and privileges of the old capitalist class.

Djilas lived near us on Voje Vuchkovicha Ulitsa and I saw him several times on his evening walks. I remember once I came up behind him and greeted him in Serbian: "Good evening, sir, how are you?" He was very frightened.

Before his fall I went to a Communist Party youth congress, and was seated with Dick Harmstone, another officer from the embassy, in the front row of the balcony of a large auditorium. Everybody was waiting for Tito to come in. "Tito-Tito" they were chanting; it went on for nearly an hour. I clapped politely at the beginning and then stopped clapping. Harmstone stopped clapping. For the next forty minutes there were only two people in that huge room who weren't clapping. We were on the front row of the balcony where everybody could see us. I wanted them to see us; that we weren't clapping. At last Djilas came, substituting for Tito. He spoke with real panache. He was a favorite with the youth and they liked him. He made some sense. His biggest trouble came after I left.

Q: You left when?

BLASIER: I left in June of 1954. I was there when Stalin died, but before Khrushchev arrived. I heard many stories about Khrushchev's drunken performance outside the Majestic Hotel.

Q: Well, I understand there was a United States food program of some sort that had been set up and a military mission. Am I correct?

BLASIER: Yes, there were several missions. There was a large foreign economic assistance mission, a military assistance mission, and the United States Information Agency. There were

also agricultural attachés, military attachés, and CIA representatives. We could only guess who the latter were - except for the Chief of Station. There were contradictions in the relations between the military aid mission and the military attachés. The military aid mission sought to build up the Yugoslav armed forces, and the attachés to collect information, some secretly, on the same forces. The military aid mission disliked informing on their Yugoslav colleagues.

Q: So what was the work in the political section beyond reporting?

BLASIER: If I may, first a word about reporting. After I left the consulate and joined the political section, my duties were mainly reporting. I began by writing the WEEKA, a telegram sent every week to Washington summarizing the major political events. I also wrote short telegrams every few days on particular subjects. My main interest was writing fairly long analytical reports on major political and political-economic developments. Some of those topics included decollectivization, workers' councils, the Serbian church, the Djilas controversy, developments in the leadership, the Trieste Crisis, Macedonia, the Balkan Pact, Soviet relations, etc. Who knows whether these strenuous efforts were read by anybody besides the desk officer, Ollie Marcy, but he did write me a strong commendation.

My relationship with my immediate supervisors, the chief of the political section, first Turner Cameron and his successor, Edwin Kretzmann, was crucial to this effort. Both gave me my freedom to interview and write.

The relationship with Kretzmann was especially sensitive. He entered the service as an FSO-3 and rose to FSO-1 in Washington. He reported to the deputy Chief of Mission, Woodruff Wallner, an old European hand, only just promoted to FSO-1. Kretzmann, then 58 years old, had limited foreign experience. He did not know Eastern Europe or its languages. He was a facile writer but always working with unfamiliar subjects. His situation was professionally difficult. He was always generous and helpful to me and we became good friends.

My reporting responsibilities were not just a "desk" job. At one time or other I visited all six constituent republics. My wife and I entertained frequently and went to a round of cocktail parties. At those parties I would check with colleagues from various embassies about the major issues of the day and these conversations were often reported in telegrams or dispatches. Ambassadors occasionally invited us to dinner where a junior American was required; we were friends with many of their staff, the British, French, and Germans especially. With permission, we exchanged dispatches with the British. Duncan Wilson, the British Deputy, later wrote a major book on Yugoslavia. As mentioned earlier, I also acted as an aid to the Ambassador on various occasions, including at the summer capital in Bled and during the visit of the Seventh Fleet to Split.

The Ambassador was constantly on the prowl, especially in high Communist circles, and almost every morning he came in to send short cables on the previous days' findings. His telegrams were often a page or less. Something new, something important that he'd got from the top leaders or something they were feeding him.

George Allen was an ideal diplomat: knowledgeable, down to earth, sophisticated, and wise.

Once he told me we shouldn't care whether Yugoslav communism succeeds or fails - we just have to deal with it. Academic or ideological issues didn't really interest him much, but he was glad to have our political reports, which I suspect he skimmed faithfully, to keep current.

My wife, child, and I lived off our salary which started at \$4,600 a year. Our entertaining probably cost more than we could afford, but we did it anyway, keeping detailed records, and submitted them with a prayer. We followed that practice later in Bonn. In both Embassies we were reimbursed to the penny.

Q: A part from political contacts, what else was important in our relations with the Yugoslavs?

BLASIER: Our economic aid program was probably the most important. That was one way Washington hoped to tie Tito to the West and to us. The chief of the aid mission ran these programs and I suspect that decisions about the level and direction of aid to Yugoslavia was made in Washington with help from the aid mission in Belgrade. The chief of the Economic Aid mission appeared to conceive of himself as a special envoy to Belgrade, reporting mainly to Washington with independence and prestige of his own. The head of the military aid mission may have had similar but less pronounced conceptions of his role.

As far as I know, Allen got along with these missions somehow, supporting them sometimes, and checking them on others. Naturally the foreign service officers were under his direct purview (less those assigned to the aid mission). I noticed that he carefully cultivated the military attaché and the Press attaché, the latter acting as his press advisor and press representative.

Allen did not "command" all these disparate elements, but was in a permanent state of civilized negotiation. I think he considered this his job and in so far as personalities were concerned he could master most situations - maybe not all. Allen "ruled" by his presence, his public image and manner, his good humor, his humanity, and his ability to seize the initiative when decisive action was called for.

Q: As an observer of what was going on in Yugoslavia, what trends and developments did you discern at this time?

BLASIER: Tito was trying to build his own system which would have a validity and a viability of its own, and not simply be a poor copy of the Soviet system. He wanted this both for his own ego and because of his heritage as an ex-Soviet style Communist. He wanted Yugoslavia to have significance in the history of Communist movements. I doubt that he ever intended to give up his ruthless authority.

Tito claimed to be starting Yugoslavia off on a new kind of socialism which could be more humane, more democratic, more economically viable, etc. I first learned of a big step in that process when George Allen returned from a reception where he learned, perhaps from Moshe Pijade, that the Yugoslavs were giving up Soviet style agriculture (the kolkhozes)-

Q: The collective farms?

BLASIER: Yes, this was really big news for us, for the USSR and for international communism. To this day, Putin has not yet been able to come to grips with the organization of Russian agriculture. The Yugoslavs also experimented with labor unions, workers' self management, and the workers' councils, much of which worked out more in theory than in practice.

Q: Well wouldn't an answer be a vital element of this desire by Tito to institutionalize his changes; wouldn't it be to prepare a successor to himself for when he died?

BLASIER: Yes, he did come up with some legislation and complicated organizational maneuvers, but it could only be temporizing. Facing a choice, Tito was prepared to risk Yugoslavia's future, but not his hold on power to the moment of his death. His elaborate arrangements to ease an eventual transition were mainly window dressing. But these arrangements lasted longer after his death than I expected.

Q: Weren't the Soviets, through their proxies, sort of nibbling at the Yugoslav borders; sort of incidents from time to time?

BLASIER: Yes, I kept totaling those incidents up, especially along the Rumanian and Bulgarian borders. Tito responded tit for tat on these encounters. If he hadn't done so, there might have been significant military encounters. After Khrushchev visited Belgrade these problems stopped.

Q: When Stalin died, what was the reaction? What did the Yugoslavs do?

BLASIER: This was big news for everybody, especially the Yugoslavs. They were glad not to have to deal with Stalin any more, but they were uneasy about what might come later.

Q: Did they send a suitable representative to his funeral?

BLASIER: That's a good question. I don't remember.

Q: There were major changes going on in the outside world. Can you describe a little bit how Yugoslavia figured into these changes?

BLASIER: Yes. Tito wanted to be sure that Moscow would be deterred from a Soviet attack to restore Yugoslavia to the Communist bloc. I don't think Tito was expecting one immediately, but he could not be sure. Defense of Yugoslavia from Soviet attack was a long term objective. The members of NATO weren't going to let him into NATO. Yet strategic objectives could be met by the Balkan Pact, a mutual Defense Treaty between Yugoslavia, Greece, and Turkey. Since Turkey and Greece were both in NATO, membership in the Balkan Pact provided unspecified security for Yugoslavia. Tito had boundary disputes with his neighbors on both the west and south, Italy and Greece.

I followed closely Yugoslav press coverage of both. The most important was the crisis with Italy over Trieste. The American Embassy in Rome backed the Italians on the Trieste issue with heartfelt support from Ambassador Claire Booth Luce, whose influence with Washington was considerable. Our tactic was to smother Washington with full reports on the Yugoslav actions

and points of view while minimizing direct confrontation with Mrs. Luce.

At one point there was risk of a war between Italy and Yugoslavia. Both countries mobilized, there were mass Italian and Yugoslav demonstrations. Mobs gathered menacingly around the American reading rooms, insults were exchanged and our press attaché got punched in his already large nose, which covered nearly a full page in Life magazine. As a young and relatively hefty member of the Embassy staff, I was called on to help "defend" the reading rooms. I did not advise my wife in advance of this assignment and put on an old gabardine suit, should tomatoes or other debris be hurled. The senior USIA officers and I marched heroically up and down in front of the menacing mobs, certainly some of whom considered this play acting. During these tense days several members of the Embassy staff approached me confidentially, to find out whether they should send their families out of the country.

The dispute between Italy and Yugoslavia was settled by negotiations in October 1954 after my departure from Belgrade. Italy got the city of Trieste and Yugoslavia got a good deal of surrounding territory.

Yugoslav relations with Greece were also intermittently stormy over the boundary with Macedonia, press coverage of which I also followed. In this connection I paid a visit to the capital of Macedonia, Skopje.

Q: As I recall you had not yet finished your Ph. D dissertation. Is that correct?

BLASIER: Yes. As my tour in Belgrade was coming to a close, I was forced to fish or cut bait on the doctorate. I had already completed all requirements except the presentation and defense of the dissertation. Most of the research and writing was completed. My only chance was to complete a presentation copy in Belgrade so it could be sent to Columbia University in time for a defense that summer during home leave.

WILLIAM N. TURPIN
Economic Officer
Belgrade (1952-1955)

William Turpin was born and raised in Georgia and attended Dartmouth College, Mercer University, and Oxford. After serving in the Marine Corps, he entered the Foreign Service in 1949. In 1952 he was appointed as Economic Officer to the Belgrade Embassy.

Q: Yes. Then you went to Yugoslavia. You were in Yugoslavia from when to when?

TURPIN: From March of 1952 to December of 55.

Q: You went to Belgrade. What were you doing there?

TURPIN: Economic officer.

Q: What was the situation? You were there at a very interesting time.

TURPIN: Indeed. Theoretically everybody kept saying then that Tito had defied the common form and had left the communist block voluntary. Well he didn't. He was thrown out kicking and screaming. But they were trying, we had a tri-partite relationship, the British, French and Americans, mostly American money, and a fairly large - I don't know what the aid mission called itself in those days, but it was one of those things - headed by an ex-trade union organizer from the State of Washington, whose assistant was an economics professor who sat proudly behind a desk which had a huge sign on it saying "E.A.J. Johnson, Chief Advisor to the Government of Korea." And I've always thought it a remarkable achievement that the Koreans managed to get themselves back on their feet in spite of the advice of Dr. Johnson, which I'm sure they never took.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you were there?

TURPIN: Jamie Ruberbaker came out while I was there, with his Dutch Indonesian wife. They were real pros, both of them, and just terrific. Great fun to work for and ran a good ship.

Q: How did he operate? From what you were seeing, did he have much contact with Tito...

TURPIN: Oh, yes. Yes. And particularly the foreign minister. And he said, his wife learned Serbo-Croat, tried to anyhow, I don't know how far she got. She started and she probably did very well at. And he said, he'd always, he was very sorry he didn't have time to do it, but Tito spoke perfectly good German and the foreign minister spoke perfectly good French, so it'd just be a waste of my time. That's I think who he operated with most of the time. And, I don't know what he did ; I was down at the grass roots level.

Q: Was the embassy an apartment building?

TURPIN: No. We had various places around, apartments and houses and what not. But it was quite well located. It was the pre-war legation as far as I know. And Belgrade was sort of a pseudo-Paris built in the late 18th, 19th century. It had its charms. The street names were a little hard to remember. But you could always tell what the political views were of anybody you were talking to by what they called the street. If it was the Krumaska, on which we later lived, the crown, then they were unreconstructed royalists. Or Servena Armina.

Q: Yes. Red Army.

TURPIN: Red Army. Then they were pro-communism. And if it was Proletoski Brigada.

Q: Proletarian Brigade.

TURPIN: Yes. Proletarian Brigade. Anyhow, we did live out among the population, certainly. I was the only person in the embassy until just before I left who could really speak Serbian. .

Q: Where did you pick up your Serbian?

TURPIN: In Serbia, mostly. I had a week or so at the Foreign Service Institute, which did nothing but convince me that I could speak Serbo-Croat, which I couldn't. But I went on doing it anyhow.

Q: Did you have an instructor while you were there?

TURPIN: Yes. I had a very nice lady whose husband represented *Gone with the Wind*. Margaret Mitchell. She was a very attractive half-Hungarian, I guess half-Serb, I don't know. Terrific lady and a very good teacher. And I had lessons every day....

Q: Was that Ms. Anjelitch?

TURPIN: Of course it was. Yes.

Q: Oh, yes. Well, she was an institution, with George Kennan and with everyone else. She was a delightful and very strong.

TURPIN: She was very, very good indeed. The only thing I can remember that she ever did wrong, if I can use that term, was that as you know Serbian has two letters for "tch," one of which is the one that ends up "petrovitch" and the other one is "chashakup." And there's a similar thing with the "dj" (pronounced "dee jay"). Most of the dj words of the second kind are Moslem or Turkish and the other ones perfectly normal Serbian. I could never, never, never tell the difference. And Ms. Anjelitch always swore that I was making it, which I've always assumed meant she was hearing what she expected to hear. Anyway, she was great. I had a two good Serbian economists working for me, both of whom spoke pretty good English. And one was the son of the guy that old man Seeton Watson said was the best pre-war Soviet politician in the bunch, name of Stoyanovitch. And his wife was an extremely attractive lady who labored for Radio Belgrade, and was the source of some of my better Yugoslav stories.

Q: How was the Yugoslavian economy at that point?

TURPIN: Terrible. They at least had knocked off forced collectivization. We were feeding them. And we were equipping their army, navy and, such as it was, air force. And, generally speaking, we were keeping their heads above water. They hadn't the faintest idea, [but] I was an economic officer, so my main interest at least was reporting on how they were running the place. And the problem with that was they hadn't a clue. Just about the time we got there, Boris Kidrich, a Slovene, who was their economic, supposedly their economic brains, died. And after that they didn't have anybody who could even pretend to work out a theory of what they were doing. So they went off on this workers self-management kick, which was kind of the backbone of what they were doing. But they'd revise their economic system every six months. Without the dimmest notion of what they were doing.

On the other hand they would tell you. I mean, you'd go talk to somebody and he would say,

“well so and so.” “Yes, I know, I read that in the paper this morning. Now what’s really going on?” “Oh, that’s quite different,” he would say, and tell you. The only place, I could go anywhere I wanted to, except the Belgrade city waterworks. I could not make that one. I’ve forgotten why I wanted to go there.

And I paid a visit to their aircraft factory and asked as I always did, the director if I could see around the place. He said, “no. We have to get permission. But don’t worry about it.” He said, “your attaches have been all over this place.” And I said, “well what I’m interested in is how this works under the new system.” “Oh,” he said, “that’s quite different. I can tell you that.” And did. So I think as far as anybody knew, understood that system, I did.

One time they had one of their revisions and my boss came in and said, “have you read this thing.” And I said, “yes. And I read it in the paper and I read in the joint translation service and I went over it with Stoyanovitch.” “Do you understand it?” I said, “no.” He said, “what do you propose to do about this.” “Well, I’ll have Merial call up the guy who wrote it and see if I can come talk to him.” So I had a secretary who was, just, in many ways, absolutely brilliant. And she said, “yes, come over about six o’clock this afternoon or some such time.” And I went to the assistant secretary for the economy and we sat and I’d say “well now this appears to me...” He’d say, “yes, by golly it does, doesn’t it. We don’t want that.” Now how would say... We sat there for several hours.

Q: Well, this is one of the problems when you would read speeches because of the jargon. You would read (unintelligible name) and come out not knowing what the hell they were talking about because it was filled with jargon.

TURPIN: And it was sort of quasi-Marxist jargon and quasi-God knows what.

Q: Yes.

TURPIN: As I said, I am firmly persuaded they didn’t know what they were doing and were looking for something that would be socialist but not socialist. And that’s not all that easy. And not capitalist, of course. Not all that easy to figure out, especially if you were missing Boris Kidrich, who would have said something, whether it made any sense or not.

Q: What were you picking up as you talked about attitude towards the Soviet Union at that time?

TURPIN: Well, you didn’t get the impression that anybody felt strongly, was warmly in favor of it. I think Djilas’ summary in Conversations with Stalin is, as far as I know, more or less what everybody thought. And it is true that every Serb that you talked to was anti-government. It was said that the communists were all Croats. And the Croats said they were all Serbs. And we were just having pre-war Yugoslavia all over again. I don’t think there was enough ideological anything. I don’t think they were unfriendly towards Americans. Not individually anyway. And as far as I could make out, not as they later became, hostile to every active policy we followed. I don’t think that was a big deal. And you would certainly, when I went to Moscow I thought I could do what I had done in Serbia and I couldn’t. I mean in Yugoslavia. You couldn’t get around and in Yugoslavia you could. I mean Merial would just call up. I was civil air attaché,

labor attaché, church attaché, among other things. And whatever was going on, I did. My immediate boss was an extremely great fellow, but he was much more of an economist and he concentrated on the numbers. And I concentrated on trotting around.

Q: Did you cover all of Yugoslavia, including Croatia and Slovenia?

TURPIN: I wanted to travel a lot more than I did, but it was centralized, there was no two ways about that. I did go to Zagreb several times, to Trieste, which of course was not part of it, and to Ljubljana, Split and Sarajevo. But I never did any of the tourism I wanted to do.

Q: Did you get down to Skopja in Macedonia?

TURPIN: No. Landed there once but I didn't do anything. No, I was busy in Belgrade most of the time and would go out on trips when I could.

Q: Were we trying to get trade opportunities either way?

TURPIN: Yes. Not very hard. But I mean, you know, they didn't have much to export. And they would import anything they could pay for. So there wasn't a great – there was a problem, because the Germans kept insisting that we prefer American. And we took the line that even though the German stuff was cheaper, ours was better, which I never exactly believed, but, anyway, that was the German complaint, and the French to some extent, that we were favoring American manufactures over Europeans.

And we did get them in touch with the army. They were buying beef and selling shell casings, which led to one of the most interesting encounters I had. Fellow came into my office one morning at the crack of dawn because I worked seven to two. He said, "look," he said, "I'm in a terrible jam. I don't know what you can do to get me out of it. I've got a client who is a scoundrel. He is in the scrap business and if you're not a scoundrel you wouldn't be in the scrap metal business. And we have got a very sticky problem with the Yugoslavs. Will you come with me and talk to them?" And I said "sure" and went over there. "Now these 1-05, I think they were howitzer shells that you sold us from the army of Germany." The guys said, "yes, that's right" – this was before they got onto the thing they were arguing at us. Said, "well" and threw out a bunch of pictures and they had these damn things ready to go into an open hearth and the Americans had not removed the explosives.

Q: Oh God.

TURPIN: That set the conversation off on a pretty unfortunate basis. The guy, the lawyer, was very complementary of my efforts afterwards, but I don't think there was much anybody could do about that one.

Q: The nationality divisions exploded during the 1990s. But how about at that point? How did we see the situation?

TURPIN: We thought Tito had it under control and I think we were right. Now, somebody at DACOR about four or five months ago...

Q: Yes, Albanian Shiftars is a pejorative name.

TURPIN: Well it's the Albanian name for themselves, Spetaki.

Q: Yes, but used by the...

TURPIN: Well, all of them, Slovenes, Croats. They were street sweepers and regarded with...

Q: But, I'm trying to go back to the time you were there. We felt the situation was pretty much under control. I was there in the 60s and we knew there were problems but thought these people where too civilized to go in for ethnic cleansing or whatever you want to call it.

TURPIN: That's right. We did. It just, in the 50s, it didn't come up. Nobody was going to bring it up with you. There just wasn't any hassle. It was just not one of the things you talked about. Djilas' difficulties, of course, were. I was in the Skupshtina the night...

Q: Skupshtina being the national assembly.

TURPIN: Yes. The night that Djilas was deprived of his member ship of the Savo River Fishing Club. He had other troubles that were much more severe. And I think, I still think, he's one of the great figures of the 20th century. And if he had, well if he had, who knows? But, that was of course a big... he published of course that article (recites name in Yugoslavian) Anatomy of Morals in which he took the Yugoslav parties, particularly their wives, to task for being nasty to one another. Everything. He thought they were corrupt. They were all riding around in Mercedes and just making a good thing about it. And in particular the resented the atmosphere of their wives, most of whom were old partisans, to the wife of the chief of general staff, who was an ex-movie actress. And they were very severe on her, apparently, for not having participated in the war, when she was about thirteen. And that caused a considerable stink. And I am pretty sure. I am absolutely sure, that a guy I was talking to on the train to Trieste one time was his brother, who was a prominent atomic physicist.

Well, it was an unpleasant time because, well, it's hard to talk about politics in Yugoslavia. You certainly can't divide them up between liberals and conservatives or any other normal [division]. I don't think there was enough loyalty to the communist party or to, really, Yugoslavia – I mean after all King Alexander said "I'm the only Yugoslav" business and Tito more or less repeated the remark later on – in fact it's true. They were Serbs. They were Croats. They tried to make Macedonia into a separate nationality. And there was a professor of Macedonian from Harvard who appeared in my office on one occasion and I think he was the only person outside of Macedonia who thought there was such a thing as Macedonia.

Q: Well, this would enrage the Greeks and enrage the Bulgarians...

TURPIN: And the Serbs. Because they all fought two wars to get it. And they told me – I don't know if it's true or not – that in the good old commie tachi that what they made out of committee, and these were bomb chunkers and people who remembered the vido don uprising of I think 1904 when, and they told me that every family in Macedonia had a Greek, a Serbian, a Bulgarian and a Macedonian nationalist among the brothers. So that which ever one won, the

family farm stays intact.

Q: When you left there in 55, wither Yugoslavia and your feelings?

TURPIN: Well we thought, I mean I think everybody thought, it was, with our help, pretty well on... certainly the standard of living had risen in those two years. Agriculture was doing better. Indeed, they were developing some industry, some expertise. Nobody would have bought shares in it. But I think everybody thought that things were on the up and up.

Q: What other things did you notice at the time? I certainly notice that people who serve in Yugoslavia – I'm talking about American Foreign Service people – feel a certain kinship to the Yugoslavs. I mean, it turned into somewhat of a Yugoslav mafia which, in a way, sort of hindered us when we had to deal with the breakup, I think.

TURPIN: Well, it hindered us because the ambassador, I think, because Ambassador Zimmerman and most of his crowd were so, so pro-Croat. They hated the Serbs. They ignored 600 years of Serbian history. The only thing anybody ever talked about was Kosovo. And I grant you that if you went out in the sticks in my day and were talking to a peasant and said something about Kosovo, yes, you were in the family. But, they never, we never mentioned the two Balkan wars, the Congress of Berlin, the Bosnian crisis of 19-something, any of that stuff. All of which convinced the Serbs that – not to mention World War 1 – that A) the west was against them, and B) they certainly wouldn't do anything to help them. And that they had been done in time and time again by the great powers.

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 seriously 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.

ROBERT GERALD LIVINGSTON

Student

Belgrade (1953-1954)

Zagreb (1955-1956)

Robert Gerald Livingston was born and raised in New York City. Prior to attending Harvard University and the University of Zurich, he served in the US Army during World War II. He entered the Foreign Service in 1956 and held a number of posts including Germany, Austria and Yugoslavia. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.

LIVINGSTON: That's right. The CIA recruited a lot of Ivy Leaguers. It was Allen Dulles and the whole Ivy League concept. He was a Princetonian. In any case, Cy Black, I remember that because I remember the panel interview. I can't remember who, besides him, was on it and I can't remember how many years the grant went on for. Maybe I had to renew it, but it was basically three years. I did my generals rather quickly. I got them through in a year, I think, or a year and a half. And the only place you could go, really, was Yugoslavia. And Yugoslavia had a grant program. Yugoslavia was gradually opening up in 1953. There was a professor at Harvard named Albert Lord, whose specialty was the epic poems of the mountains of Yugoslavia and their connections, if any, to the Homeric epic and the whole idea of the oral tradition. My minor was the south Slav literature so he got me then a grant to go through the Yugoslav government, I was the second American college student, I think, or the third, to go to Yugoslavia after the war. So I went to Belgrade as a student in '53 because I was there when the central committee expelled Djilas. That was the spring of '53, I think, and I remember they sealed off the student dormitory that I was in. And so I got interested in Yugoslavia. I had to pick a Ph.D. thesis, and I picked a politician of the interwar period in Yugoslavia who was assassinated on the floor of the Parliament. It looked like a nice compact life to study. He had only really 10, maybe 20, years of real political activity. He was a big exponent of... well, he wasn't a big exponent of Croatia... he was an exponent of Croatian nationalism but his main thing was that he was able to do something that was rather unusual. He was able to organize the peasantry. Generally peasant parties like the Social Revolutionaries in Russia have not been very successful because the peasants are very dispersed, are much harder to organize than the workers which the communists could. But he was able successfully to organize a very strong peasant party and he and a guy named Stambolisky, who did the same thing in Bulgaria, were the main forces in something called the Green International in the '20s. So I got him as a topic, and when I got married, my wife and I went back to Yugoslavia, this time to Zagreb, to the capital of Croatia, and I did my research there on this guy. I haven't been back to Yugoslavia in a long time but I imagine every town in Croatia has at least one street named after him. His name was Radi_.

Q: Radi_, yes. You were in Yugoslavia when?

LIVINGSTON: Basically, I was there from the fall of '53 to the summer of '54.

Q: What was life like for you?

LIVINGSTON: Well, I lived in the student dormitory, and I had a guy who even then I recognized as sort of an informer. He was a White Russian. There were quite a lot of White Russians in Belgrade who'd fled to Yugoslavia after the first world war from Russia. Of course, the Yugoslavs had a tremendous hold over these guys because they could turn them back over to the Soviets and they did turn back some. But they generally didn't. This guy was my roommate, and I was quite cautious. He was a helluva nice guy. Volkov was his name. My guess is that he was reporting, and I knew that then.

Q: Here you were an ex-CIC intelligence person doing studies there. Did you find either the Yugoslavs coming at you or the Americans coming at you for anything?

LIVINGSTON: No, I steered reasonably clear of the embassy although there was one guy at the embassy I saw from time to time. I steered clear of it, as a general rule, and I tried to get to know the country and speak Serbian as much as I could and to get around. There were some other foreign students at the time, some Brits, a few Germans. I went around with a German girl. I remember going down and visiting all the monasteries in southern Serbia with her. There was a Dutchman. I think I was the only American, though there may have been other Americans. I hung around mostly with foreign students. There was some sort of an office for foreign students, and they liked to keep track of us.

Q: What about classes? What was your impression of what you were getting from the university system?

LIVINGSTON: Well, I spent a lot of time studying. My language wasn't so good when I got there, although I'd studied Serbo-Croatian. I went to some classes, mostly language classes. I tried to learn Turkish because I thought originally I was going to do some work on 19th Century Serbia. So I thought I'd probably need Turkish sources. I went to some classes on Serbian history but basically I goofed off. I traveled around and I did goof off but I traveled around and studied the language. I tried to learn the language during this time, and I did learn the language.

Q: How were Americans received in those days?

LIVINGSTON: Well, I think in a rather friendly fashion, you know. I had a Serbian girlfriend who was a librarian at the university, and I remember going out on an expedition with her and her students to Pan_evo or maybe even beyond Pan_evo, somewhere in the Vojvodina.

Q: You're talking about north of Belgrade.

LIVINGSTON: Yes, but it was out in the country and I can't think of exactly where it was. I would say the students who were along were somewhat hostile to me. I think it was partly because they thought I was a rich American taking their girl. Then I had one connection there who was the family of an émigré who was a student and subsequently became a professor of Byzantine music at the University of Virginia. He was a student of Lord's like I was and his family were anti-Tito. His sister and his mother still lived in Belgrade, and I saw a lot of them. That was about the only family I really saw a lot of. She was a woman of about 60 and her daughter was maybe 40 or something. I visited them a lot, and I also saw people in the Serbian

Orthodox Church. There was an assistant to the Patriarch with whom I got to be quite friendly. I won't say beyond that that I really saw many other families. My roommate never took me to his family, and I never saw many other families. I spent a lot of time going to theater, going to opera, trying to study the language, going to movies, things of that sort.

Q: What about trying to do your research?

LIVINGSTON: Well, I didn't have my subject then. That was '53-'54. I didn't get my subject until I got back.

Q: I was just going to say that, Staepan Radi_, being a Croatian nationalist, I don't know where he...

LIVINGSTON: Serbia wasn't the place for that...

Q: This wasn't the place for it and also under Tito, too.

LIVINGSTON: No, I hadn't selected my topic yet. I don't think I'd passed my generals yet. No, because I studied for my generals the first year we were married, the summer of the year we got married. We got married in May of '55, so I hadn't passed my generals yet. So I guess my time in Belgrade must have been '53-'54, not '52-'53. I got my degree in '52 and I must have studied another year and went off to Belgrade in '53-'54. The Djilas thing was in the fall of '53, I think.

Q: How was the Djilas thing? Did you get any feel for it...?

LIVINGSTON: Well, the authorities were totally wrong in that there was no particular sympathy for him among the students....I remember reading his articles and trying to make my way through them. I was really surprised, he was quite critical. I didn't detect, although I must admit that I didn't have the feel for it, I didn't detect any particular pro-Djilas sentiment among students. I think probably the students were careful with me and stayed away from me, except for this guy and one or two others. They were all communists or they wouldn't have been able to get access to that dormitory. That was the best student dormitory in Belgrade, though it wasn't so great. I assume that not everyone could have gotten in there unless they were loyal communists. Presumably they'd all been educated to be skeptical of Americans. So I think they stayed away from me probably.

Q: You came back in...

LIVINGSTON: I came back in '54.

Q: '54. Where did you meet your wife?

LIVINGSTON: I met my wife in Widener Library. It was probably when I was there the first time, it was already '53 because when I went back to Yugoslavia I knew her. When I went to Yugoslavia for that period, I knew her, so I met her in '53.

Q: So you went back by '55...

LIVINGSTON: By '55, I had finished all my course work and my generals. I haven't recalled this for years. I must have been back at Harvard in '54-'55. It was the summer of '54. I probably went back to summer school in '54-'55 and I completed all my coursework for the Ph.D. We got married in May of '55, and then I went down to Cape Cod and studied for the generals during that summer. I passed the generals in September of '55 and went right away with my wife to Zagreb. That's when I did the research. So I was there in '55-'56. I went into the Foreign Service then in October of '56.

Q: In '55-'56, what was Zagreb like at that time?

LIVINGSTON: Well, it was still fairly gloomy. My wife taught English. I went down to the archives to work on Radi_. It was a little hard on her. It was hard finding a place to stay. But by luck we finally found a woman, Jewish she was actually...and her daughter... who had a villa, half of which had been taken away. She was afraid that the rest of it would be taken, so she was happy to rent rooms to a foreigner. So, in that sense, once we hooked up with her, we had a great time. We had a very nice room and we lived with this woman and her daughter. She had been widowed. I think her husband may have been Serbian. Her name was Muršec, so I thought it was a Serbian name. She was a little vague about what happened to her husband. She was a widow and her daughter, named Miriana, had this apartment that was rather nice. They were obviously bourgeois before the war. He may have been a dentist, her late husband.

Q: Did you find a difference in attitude of the Croatians you were working with and the Serbs? Was it a different world?

LIVINGSTON: I don't know. I was really full of steam. I had to try to get my research done and so we didn't intermingle as much as we might have. In contrast to Belgrade, where I tried to learn the language, there I kept my nose to the grindstone because I already had the idea I wanted to get into the Foreign Service. So I wanted to get this done with as quickly as I could and do the research as quickly as I could. So we had this family that we saw everyday. My wife taught English. She taught English to a psychiatrist and she got quite friendly with her. We went out every night to a restaurant. So we ate out at restaurants; it was cheap. The city was reviving, but it was still dark and gloomy. Just two weeks ago, I was in Riga in Latvia. And it has a little bit the same atmosphere, Riga in 1998, as Zagreb did in 1955.

Except everybody in Riga in 1997 had cellular telephones. The street lights were not so strong and pavements were misty and dark but we went out. We went out in the country on weekends occasionally and that was fine. In Belgrade, I had the feeling I was being watched a little bit, anyway, whereas in Zagreb I didn't have the feeling I was being watched. I did go down every day to work with historians at the historical institute of the university so I had a pretty regimented life.

Q: Did you find working on Radi_ was at all disquieting to the people you were dealing with because Tito...

LIVINGSTON: No, I did not. I think they rather liked it. Radi_ was not anti-Paveli_. He wasn't Ustashe. So I think that they tolerated it. I saw Radi_'s family and his daughter, and as part of my research, I was able to verify some things. They had his passport. For example, there was a question, "When had he gone to Moscow?" That was one of the things the Serbs held against him, that he'd gone to Moscow and sure enough it showed in the passport when he'd gone. So I was able to talk to the family and get some information out of them. There I did, in contrast to steering clear when I was at the Embassy in '53, there I did have fairly close contact with the consulate. There was a young couple at the consulate, a fellow named Peter Walker who still lives around Washington, if he's still alive, and a rather old-fashioned type consul general. Martindale was his name. He was consul general in Zagreb, and they used to invite us quite frequently. We used to go, too.

DAVID E. MARK
Desk Officer for Yugoslavia, Bureau of European Affairs
Washington, DC (1954-1957)

Ambassador David E. Mark graduated from Columbia University in 1943. Shortly after completing a year of their law school, he was drafted into the U.S. Army. Ambassador Mark has also served in Korea, Germany, Romania, Switzerland, Burundi, and various other post at the State Department in Washington, DC. He was interviewed by Henry Precht on July 28, 1989.

Q: So after Bucharest you were off to . . .

MARK: In Bucharest, I got a phone call one day and I was told that I was to become the new Yugoslav desk officer in the Department. Of course, I had never served in the Department, but needed this experience; therefore, I was to stop in Belgrade on the way back to Washington. So I got a quick look at Tito's Belgrade, talked to some people there, and then went back to Washington and began the learning process of what it was to be a desk officer in what was then the East European office of the Bureau of European Affairs.

Q: You'd been in the Foreign Service then about eight years?

MARK: I had been in the Foreign Service eight years, seven and a half years, right.

Q: And this is your first assignment to Washington?

MARK: First assignment to Washington. And, of course, it was a time in which I learned a great deal, and particularly because the Yugoslav desk was one of the most active in the Department at the time. And that was because John Foster Dulles, as Secretary, envisaged Tito as the soft underbelly of the Soviet empire in Europe, envisaged Tito as a means for corrupting and getting Western influence into the East European camp. Of course, Tito had defected from Stalin, so to speak, in '48, '49. It had taken us several years to accept the fact that he was a genuine defector, and then to begin the process of establishing relations with him, of using him for our purposes,

but at the same time providing him with the support that he needed to keep going -- economic support and military support. We got heavily into supplying Tito with aircraft and with military technology and so forth, but there was strong domestic U.S. opposition to this in the --

I was saying that there was a lot of opposition to our policy of supporting Tito, before I arrived in Washington, and this opposition, particularly in '53, had been promoted in a way by Clare Boothe Luce, who was our Ambassador to Italy at the time and who was backing Italy in a very difficult struggle over ownership of the Trieste territory. I mean, this was almost a "casus belli" between Italy and Yugoslavia. We were doing our best to negotiate some sort of solution, and we ultimately succeeded, but we had to browbeat Tito, and naturally, it didn't sit well with Mrs. Luce and others that we were supporting Tito at the same time, even on the military side.

At that point, Yugoslavia was still a fairly classical communist regime, and Tito had a cult of personality a mile long. But nonetheless, our strategic interest in using him and John Foster Dulles' vision of how he might prove valuable to us was predominant in our policy. The policy not only didn't have unanimous support in the Congress or in the country, it didn't have all that much support in the State Department, either. I would say that among the people between Mr. Dulles as the Secretary and me as the lowly desk officer -- and there were a lot of people and layers between us -- there was almost no support.

Under Secretary Robert Murphy at the time had an understanding for what Dulles was trying to do, but his own innate anti-communist feelings were so strong that he wasn't all that sympathetic to the effort. He was just understanding of it and ready to follow the Secretary's orders. The Assistant Secretary for European affairs and his deputies were not understanding at all. In any event, matters --

Q: Did Dulles then stand alone with you against --

MARK: Well, that's what it came to by 1955. The situation deteriorated -- that is, in terms of U.S. policy -- because Tito, who had by now established pretty clearly that he was going it alone and was able to do so, didn't want the tension that had existed with Stalin to be continued. So he began making overtures to the new Soviet leader, Khrushchev, first to Malenkov and then to Khrushchev.

This culminated sometime in mid-'55 in a Khrushchev visit to Belgrade, and, of course, Khrushchev said all kinds of things to try to entice Tito back into the fold, or at least to act in friendly fashion, and the more that Khrushchev talked, the worse it looked for our policy of using Tito as a fifth column within the Soviet camp, and the more that opposition developed to the whole approach. This meant that the lack of support in the State Department itself became more important.

As the support diminished in the government and in the Congress, I felt that implementation of Dulles' policy was becoming weaker and weaker, and that something drastic had to be done to reverse the trend. This was, oh, sort of late spring, summer of 1955. Something drastic had to be done to redeem the relationship, and I felt that we had to send some very high-level person to Yugoslavia. So I wrote -- it was in May or June, I think -- a memo to Dulles, through the proper

channels of course, urging that a mission be launched and urging also that it be the Army Chief of Staff, General Lawton Collins, I believe at the time, to do it.

Q: Why did you prefer a military representative?

MARK: I thought that he was someone to whom Tito would listen, since he had that background in European affairs. It would impress Tito with our seriousness. Also military supply was one of the key issues, i.e., whether we were going to keep up our military supply, given the charges that Tito was now headed back toward Moscow's camp.

Q: But was there a military threat that we were dealing with, or was this just reassurance for Yugoslav independence from the Soviet Union?

MARK: Well, I think -- you mean the reassurance --

Q: I mean the military supply was a symbolic gesture on our part, wasn't it?

MARK: Oh, no. It was important. I mean the Soviet armies were poised. There's something known to defenders of Western Europe, and particularly northern Italy, as the Ljubljana Gap, Ljubljana being the capital of the Yugoslav republic of Slovenia. And this is apparently a fairly level area that has been the path of invasions many times. The Soviets were in a position to overrun it fairly readily, so that our building up Yugoslav forces, and tanks were involved, as well as artillery, was not a gesture. It was serious business.

Anyway, it was a critical time. I had seen Dulles before. I had been at meetings in his office on Yugoslav affairs. With this memo, he took to dealing with me fairly often on a direct basis. He would just phone down and ask me up or ask for something. I remember once being called up there and his brother, Allen Dulles, head of the CIA, was also present, and we were soon discussing the issues.

Q: That was rather extraordinary, wasn't it?

MARK: It was pretty heady stuff.

Q: He didn't consult many junior or middle-grade officers, did he?

MARK: No. It was pretty heady stuff, I must say. And, of course, the other people in my office knew about it, so that it was, you know, it was appreciated that at least Dulles liked the kind of policy line I was taking. And I, frankly, thought his strategic point of view made great sense in terms of supporting Tito, if not because he was going to be an effective fifth column in Eastern Europe, then at least because he would be a symbol of how a communist state could make it on its own and could develop independent ideas. I mean, the Yugoslavs were already beginning to develop some ideological heresies, such as factory management by workers and government decentralization in some economic matters. It wasn't really very much. It didn't convince ex-Tito ally, Milovan Djilas, who wrote the heretic book, The New Class, exposing fully the huge perquisites of the Communist Party apparatus. It didn't affect that. But nevertheless, it was a

change, and Yugoslavs soon began tourism to Western Europe, which people in the Moscow satellites soon learned about.

Well, in any case, after much ado, Dulles decided to send Robert Murphy, not Lawton Collins, over to deal with Tito, and we made preparations for the Murphy trip. I was to go along, of course, and I was to carry a special diplomatic bag which had some documents for Tito, including a letter signed by Dwight Eisenhower that I had drafted inviting Tito to come to the United States. But while I was on the train in Italy, before I even got into Yugoslavia, Eisenhower came down with his ileitis attack, his intestinal attack, and was very ill. So it was decided that we couldn't -- we didn't know what was going to happen to Ike -- and so we couldn't deliver the letter. So that was scrapped for the time being.

Q: Still, such an invitation, I would think, would not sit well with a lot of Yugoslav émigré societies in this country.

MARK: It didn't. I haven't mentioned the Yugoslav émigré situation. I mean, they were on top of us all the time, and, indeed, the main effort of the Yugoslav secret police representatives at Tito's embassy in Washington was to keep track of the émigrés in the U.S. and to nourish pro-Tito cliques.

We particularly had one case in California. I think the man's name was Artukovic, who had been a Minister of the Interior in the rump Croatian separatist state that Hitler had set up, and who had executed many thousands of people, or who at least had approved their execution. He was in the States and we tried to extradite him to Belgrade and this provoked a terrible court battle. I think he was finally extradited as a very old man to Yugoslavia in 1988. He's been on trial there. Maybe it was 1987. That was a sideline, but it was an extremely complex matter, which took a desk officer's time, a lot of a desk officers' time.

But anyway, to get back to our meeting in Belgrade, Murphy handled it very skillfully, as he always did, a consummate diplomat. Our ambassador was James Riddleberger, one of the most senior ambassadors at that time in the Foreign Service, who later became the administrator of what's now AID abroad. And I think Tito understood our point of view pretty well and understood better the balancing act that he had to carry out in view of U.S. domestic pressures.

Q: Did you attend the meeting with Tito?

MARK: No. I didn't attend the meeting with Tito. I flew back with Murphy in his plane to Paris - - this was the plane that General Norstad, who was then the Air Force Chief of Staff, had put at our disposal -- he was chief of staff or Air Force commander in Europe, one or the other -- and just before Paris, the pilot announced that the landing gear of the plane would not come down, or at least that the light wouldn't go on saying that it had come down, or maybe it wasn't locked in place, or whatever.

So we circled Paris for about 45 or 50 minutes, and Murphy got to reminisce about how he, as a young man, and trained in the law too, like me, had made the decision to join the Foreign Service. And he'd given up fortune -- didn't have very much by way of it now, but had really had

a fantastic life. I mean, during the war he'd landed by submarine in North Africa -- and so he was very glad that he had chosen the Foreign Service as a career. You know, it was all very nice to be a lawyer, but that was pretty prosaic compared with the opportunities that he had had.

Q: What's your estimation of Murphy? How did he shape up?

MARK: I think he was an extraordinarily skillful diplomat, I mean negotiator. I mean, and not just because he was Irish that he could charm the bejesus off anyone. Even if he had been of Greek ancestry, he could have done it in Belgrade. He was just extraordinarily talented in dealing with people and in playing his cards in practical situations. I saw no evidence that he was a great strategic thinker, though I may be wrong. He wasn't particularly appreciative of Dulles' policy toward Yugoslavia, but he carried out his instructions earnestly and very capably when he had to do so.

I should add that the landing gear turned out to be perfectly okay. It was just the signal light that hadn't worked, and so we landed safely in Paris without any further trouble.

It wasn't the last of my connections with Murphy in the case of Yugoslavia, because 1956 was an election year, a presidential election year; Ike was running for reelection. And the leader of the Republicans in the Senate at the time was Senator William Knowland of California, who was strongly against Dulles' policy of playing up to Tito. This was just before the Russians invaded Hungary.

But, in any event, during the summer of 1956, the AID bill was up in the Senate, and Knowland was opposing the Yugoslav part of it. And so Murphy and I went up to Philadelphia one day to go to the old Bellevue Stratford Hotel in the middle of the city to spend two hours in a smoke-filled room with the senator, sort of arguing out the terms under which State Department policy towards Yugoslavia would be allowed to continue. We got a certain degree of freedom of action, we got some aid, but there were also all kinds of conditions laid down by Knowland which we felt obliged to accept.

Q: Did he -- Knowland -- feel strongly himself on anti-communist grounds, or was he responding to the Republican right, or to ethnic groups, or all of the above?

MARK: All of the above. All of the above. I should say that the issue had come up again of a Tito visit to Washington by this time. Knowland was against it and we scrubbed it. But, before this had happened, I had drafted another letter of invitation. I revised the first letter, and Dulles got Ike to sign it, and it was sent over to Tito, inviting him to the States. I guess Knowland knew about it. I mean, he got us to kill any visit at that time.

We killed it by putting on such conditions of implementing the visit that we knew Tito couldn't accept. We were going to limit his stay to three days in the States, and so forth and he wanted much more, so he canceled it. He did come later in Ike's term in '59. After all, by that time we had had Khrushchev in Washington, so why not have Tito?

But there was one other aspect of it. The fact of the existence of the invitation letter had leaked

out, and Joe McCarthy was still going in the Senate at the time, although he was not the powerful Joe of a few years earlier. And he said to Dulles, "I know, Mr. Secretary, that you didn't write that letter yourself, that you didn't send it. So who was the commie fink inside the State Department who did all that for you?"

And Dulles said, "Well, of course I didn't write it myself, but I protect my people and I'm not telling you who it was who did that, who wrote that letter." As it happened, the letter had gone to Belgrade at a time when Dulles was in the hospital. I think it was his first bout with cancer. And since he had been in the hospital then, he said to McCarthy, "Well, naturally I was in the hospital at the time, and maybe if I had known about it I wouldn't have let the letter go up to the President for signature. But I'm standing by it and I'm not telling you who it was."

Well, of course, that was just an out-and-out lie. He had been in the hospital to be sure, but the letter had gone to him in the hospital. Not only had it gone, but he had fiddled with the language of the operative paragraph of the invitation, so that he had gotten the nuances to sound exactly as he wanted before it went to the White House.

Q: Are you saying that John Foster Dulles wasn't the militant anti-communist that he's sometimes thought to be?

MARK: Oh, I think he was a militant anti-communist. He saw the merit of using fire to fight fire, and he thought of Tito, as I said earlier, he thought of him as the means of undermining the Soviet position in Eastern Europe. Of course, the crisis in Hungary was going on at the time, late 1956. This was just before that, this was some months before, but the tendencies with Imre Nagy in Hungary were very clear. And so Dulles was not above telling a little white lie about his involvement with this letter at the time that the thing was sent.

And, as a matter of fact, when the Russians later invaded Hungary, when Dulles' policy was succeeding only too well there and in Poland, and in Eastern Europe generally, we decided not to back the anti-communist up at all. We wouldn't even release some rifles that we had in Vienna to the Hungarian rebels. I remember working all night once in the State Department in October of '56 when the crisis was on. The White House made the decision right then and there that there would be no military backing for the anti-communist fighters.

Q: Some people in the State Department were pushing to send them weapons across the line?

MARK: I think there was some pressure, but Dulles wouldn't do it either despite prior speeches about "rolling back the Iron Curtain." And, of course, Tito was scared to death at this time. There was a secret -- I don't know whether it's still secret or not -- but there was a communication of his to Eisenhower at the time in which he asked for a military security guarantee from the United States in case the Soviet Union, driving through Hungary, invaded Yugoslavia, and we gave it to him. Ike gave it to him.

Q: In writing?

MARK: No, I don't think so. I think it was all verbal, but we responded positively.

Q: Do you think we would have maintained our word on this?

MARK: I think we probably would have. I mean, we just considered that that's where the Iron Curtain was at the time and one didn't allow the Iron Curtain to be moved because it could have had all kinds of implications for the politics and morale of Western Europe.

I should note here one other sidelight. I pleaded in 1955 to have a U.S. consulate general established in Sarajevo, Bosnia, because with its ethnic mixture, that city seemed like a microcosm of the country as a sensitive sounding board. And I got my way in 1956, but the new outpost was unfortunately closed down late in the 1960s during one of the State Department's periodic budget crises.

Well, I think I stayed on the Yugoslav desk only a little while after that, because in mid-1957 I was assigned to Moscow at long last.

Q: To pause there for a minute now, you've now been in the Foreign Service 10 years, 12 years?

MARK: '46 to '57.

Q: Eleven years. What was your estimate of the Foreign Service at that time? Were you convinced that you made the right choice?

MARK: Oh, yes. Absolutely. I was hugely enthusiastic about it. I worked all kinds of late hours at night. I had met lots of people I was interested in. While I was the Yugoslav desk officer, Walt Stoessel was in charge of Soviet affairs within this Office of East European and Soviet Affairs. They hadn't split as of that time. And, you know, just watching him operate, seeing him operate. I mean, he was a diplomat's diplomat, and I sort of not literally but figuratively sat at his feet watching and learning. And, of course, I was interested in the Soviet Union. It was no wonder that he later rose so high in the Department; to Deputy Secretary of State.

And lots of other people were there, who just had enormous experience. My immediate boss as head of East European affairs was a man named -- I can't even remember his first name now. He was known as Butch Leverich, and I learned much from him. And even the other people -- Jake Beam (later Ambassador to Warsaw and Moscow) was deputy assistant secretary for Eastern Europe within the bureau -- it had become a bureau by then -- so that I was enormously impressed with my colleagues and my bosses, with the subject matter which I was dealing with, and which was being dealt with in Washington, with service for officers mixed between the field and the United States. Besides, since I was still a bachelor, why, I had unlimited time to give to 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.

MONCRIEFF J. SPEAR
Economic/Political Officer
Belgrade (1955-1957)

After serving in the U.S. Army in World War II, Moncrieff J. Spear entered the Foreign Service in 1950. In addition to Yugoslavia, he served in Germany, the Philippines, Thailand, the Bahamas, Vietnam, and Washington, DC. This interview was conducted on April 6, 1993.

Q: And then you were transferred to Belgrade, Yugoslavia.

SPEAR: Yes, because of the interest in communist affairs which I had developed while working in "Eastern Element" [in Berlin]. I was very anxious to get into Eastern Europe and fortunately was able to get the assignment to Belgrade. I originally started work in Belgrade in the Economic Section. One of my jobs there was to supervise what was known as the "Joint Translation Service," which we and the British Embassy ran together. I had been taking early morning courses in Serbian. One of my jobs was to get up at the crack of dawn every morning and go in and scan the Yugoslav press for articles. We had a crew of Yugoslavs who would translate the articles from Serbian into English. I would polish them up, and once a day we would put out a fairly substantial booklet of all of these articles. I know that there were a number of foreign

missions around Belgrade which simply bundled these up and sent them back to their capitals as their political and economic reporting on Yugoslavia.

Q: You simplified their work. Tell me, Monty -- now this is many years ago, but was there, or did you have, an inkling of the present troubles which have so affected the Yugoslav republics in recent years?

SPEAR: No, I must say that the whole tragedy has really come as a shock to me and, I think, to many of us who served there. Of course, this was the period when the Tito dictatorship was keeping Yugoslavia under control with a pretty firm hand. It was a pretty tight police state, a dictatorship, although certainly, on the economic side of things, conditions had eased off considerably. I think also that it was the external threat from the Soviets which kept a lot of these nationalistic and ethnic conflicts tamped down.

Q: You mentioned, of course, the Soviet attitude toward Yugoslavia. What was the behavior of the Soviets in Belgrade -- their Embassy there? Were they quiet, were they boisterous, were they propagandizing?

SPEAR: Well, the relationship had its ups and downs. At least our relations, as far as we were concerned in the Embassy, went up and down as the U. S. and Soviet relations fluctuated. I remember particularly, right after the period of Geneva, when Eisenhower and Khrushchev had met [1955], and there were the beginnings of what was later known as detente. Suddenly, the Soviet Embassy went on a big spree of entertaining American officers. First, of course, Ambassador and Mrs. Riddleberger were invited to the Soviet Embassy. Then they began inviting other officers in the Embassy. I remember Lois and I going there for dinner one evening. The Soviet Embassy was a weird old place. It reminded me of a Charles Addams' cartoon of a haunted house, with all of the thugs peering out from behind iron gates, before they let us in. Throughout the evening the Soviets were trying to pump us for information and trying to fill us up with vodka and get us drunk. [Laughter]

Q: Well, those are the hazards of the career.

SPEAR: It was awfully difficult to write the MemCon [memorandum of conversation] the next morning.

Q: Now, after several years in Belgrade...

SPEAR: Well, before you do that, could I go back to some of the highlights there? One was that this was a period of intense, ideological conflict going on between the Yugoslavs with their nationalist variety of communism and the Soviets, who wanted to have a monolithic, communist camp. As a result, there were bitter exchanges between the Yugoslavs and the Soviets. At one point, I remember, we were at a big Indonesian reception because Indonesian President Sukarno had just been there. You may recall that Tito tried to enhance his position by trying to build up the 'third World Movement.' At this reception, the word spread through the room like wildfire that Khrushchev had arrived in Belgrade. And he and Tito went off to Tito's island of Brioni and held several days of discussions, trying to resolve their ideological and political differences.

This, however, simply provided the prelude or laid the framework for what burst out shortly thereafter, the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. Tito originally had backed the revolution, thinking that this would result in another, "national" communist state. But then, when events took on an anti-communist cast, he changed and backed the Soviets. And, of course, this caused all sorts of problems. The revolution set off a flood of Hungarian refugees, the majority of whom got into Austria and went to the West. But quite a large number got to Yugoslavia. There was a great question there as to whether the Yugoslavs would return them or not. I know that Ambassador Riddleberger had some very tense negotiations, all the way up the line to Tito, and eventually got these people released so that they were able to come to the United States as refugees.

Q: Didn't our relations with the Yugoslavs cool off as a result of the Hungarian Revolution?

SPEAR: Tom, I don't recall that. I would think that there were probably two factors at work there. On the one hand, of course, there had been some question as to whether, with the Soviet tanks rolling into Budapest, they would stop when they got to the Yugoslav-Hungarian border, or whether they'd decide to go ahead and clean up two messes at one stroke. I think that that consideration tended to throw the Yugoslavs back onto the United States and to make them seek support from the United States and have warmer relations with us. On the other hand they were upset that, in their view, the Eisenhower Administration had seemed to show support for "rolling back the Iron Curtain." The Eisenhower Administration denied this, but the Yugoslavs feared that some of the statements made [particularly by Secretary of State Dulles] might have triggered [some movement in this direction].

Q: Any other comments about your time in Belgrade?

SPEAR: No. After that I was transferred back to the Office of Eastern European Affairs in the Department. This would have been in the summer of 1957.

Q: And there, of course, you followed some of the problems you'd been working on in Yugoslavia.

SPEAR: Exactly. I was working with Jim Sutterlin as the number two man on the Yugoslav desk. I also had responsibility for Albania, which was rather intriguing. I remember a couple of things most clearly from that period. Washington, D. C., was phasing out its trolley cars at that time and going over to buses. The Yugoslavs were interested in buying those trolley cars for Sarajevo. Over the years, from time to time, I've seen pictures of those Washington Transit trolley cars in Sarajevo. Most recently, I'm sad to say, I have seen TV images of some of them sitting in the middle of Sarajevo, all bombed out from the Serbian shelling.

I also had some interesting dealings when I wore my other hat as Albanian desk officer. We had an Air Force plane from West Germany that was flying to Athens, but which came down in Albania. We had some rather tense negotiations until we were able to get the pilot out. The Air Force decided that they didn't want the plane, and I understand that it's still sitting in Tirana, or was, until the communists were ousted in Albania, as a monument to American imperialism.

Q: Well, if we didn't have any relations with Albania, how did you negotiate that?

SPEAR: Well, this was all done through the French and the Italians. They had missions there and they represented our interests and carried on these negotiations for us. There also was an Albanian Mission at the UN in New York, which was very active in trying to infiltrate the Albanian-American community, particularly around Boston. I was invited several times to go up to Boston when the major Albanian-American organization would have its annual meeting. I addressed the group at times. After warning them about some of the activities of the Albanian UN Mission, I found myself roundly denounced over the Albanian radio and in the Albanian press.

Q: Did our Congressmen pay much attention to Yugoslav or Albanian matters in those days?

SPEAR: As to Yugoslav affairs, I'd say yes, because, of course, we had a Military Mission there, with military assistance going to the Yugoslav Army. And, of course, we were providing very large shipments of PL 480 [Public Law 480 - surplus agricultural commodities] grain and wheat there. So this, of course, attracted quite a lot of attention from the Congressional committees handling that.

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.

ROBERT GERALD LIVINGSTON
Analyst, Yugoslavian Affairs, Bureau of Intelligence and Research
Washington, DC (1956-1958)

Robert Gerald Livingston was born and raised in New York City. Prior to attending Harvard University and the University of Zurich, he served in the US Army during World War II. He entered the Foreign Service in 1956 and held a number of posts including Germany, Austria and Yugoslavia. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.

LIVINGSTON: So let's see what happened. Hang on. It must have been January... No, that's not quite right. What happened there? I'll tell you what happened. I got assigned to the Bureau of Research and Intelligence working on Yugoslavia as a matter of fact, and I worked on Yugoslavia. It must have been for a year or so. That was '56-57 and I worked on Yugoslavia and I remember writing NIEs and how terrified I was because I was too academic. They really had to be absolutely right, you know. That was during the great NIE phase...

Q: NIE is National Intelligence Estimate.

LIVINGSTON: ...and I guess the Agency was responsible for them but they farmed them out and I remember trying to do one on Yugoslav workers' councils. I remember agonizing in the spring of '57. You know, it wasn't going to be the "last word" and there weren't enough sources and I looked at it very academically. It really has to be accurate... I didn't have enough perspective to say, "Nobody's going to give a shit about this at all." (Laughter)

Q: It was true. We were creating the "great American encyclopedia."

LIVINGSTON: Yes, exactly right, but I wasn't smart enough to realize that. I was kind of New England, academic, Harvard, dedicated to doing well, and I was also worried because I hadn't finished my dissertation. I thought, "My God, you know, I'm doing this thing and I should be trying to finish my dissertation." So I worked there for about a year; then I was assigned to Salzburg. Many people in the old Foreign Service may have gotten exactly assignments that had nothing to do with their expertise but, I must say, the State Department assigned me to areas where I had expertise. They assigned me then to Salzburg, where I'd been with the CIC, and I worked on paroles and background checks for Hungarians who had fled from the revolution and were under parole provision and were being admitted to United States. I wasn't actually the visa officer. I was a guy doing background checks on these guys and I was there for a year.

WILLIAM D. BRODERICK
Serbo-Croatian Language Training and Area Studies
Washington, DC and Berkeley, California (1956)

**Bureau of Intelligence and Research
Washington, DC (1957-1959)**

**Economic Officer
Belgrade (1959-1962)**

William D. Broderick served in Bolivia, Columbia, Canada, Yugoslavia, and in Washington, DC at the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, the Bureau for Latin American Affairs, and the Foreign Service Institute. This interview was conducted on October 8, 1990.

Q: Where was your next assignment?

BRODERICK: I came back to the Department for language and area training -- Serbo-Croatian - and spent six months in Washington and a year at Berkeley. I started in January 1956. We studied the language here and had tutors out there while we studied politics and economics, history of the Balkans and things like that. It was a marvelous year. I thought I was going to be assigned to Belgrade directly but I was assigned to INR and worked on Yugoslavia for two years. It was disappointing to me at the time, but it was a very useful preparation for me to go to Belgrade.

I was disappointed the other day in talking to John Sprott, who is deputy director of the FSI, who said that they only have two people assigned to area training this year, that Personnel in its typical method of operation usually offers as candidates for area training people for whom they cannot find any other assignment.

When we went to Berkeley there were four of us for Yugoslavia, there were four others up at Harvard for the Russian area training and of course there were others for the Middle East and elsewhere. You mentioned history, and the need to know how things operate. If you don't know the language of Yugoslavia and if you don't know anything about its history, you are not very well prepared to deal with anything that is going on in the country.

Q: In INR what seemed to be the principal concerns of the U.S. with Yugoslavia?

BRODERICK: This was a period in which we had been giving substantial aid to Tito after the break with the Russians in 1948 and we had provided huge military assistance as well as, under PL 480, economic assistance. The objective was to insure that Tito stayed separate from the Russians and at least followed kind of an independent foreign policy. It was getting harder because this was the era in which Khrushchev was trying to mend his fences. He came to Yugoslavia, a rather famous visit, and he did what King Henry IV did at Canossa [Italy, 1077]. He did not stand in the snow barefoot, but he publicly apologized; that was Tito's essential condition for his coming to Belgrade. He did his penance. Tito's instincts were always basically pro-Russian. He did not like the way the Russians wanted to treat Yugoslavia, but he was a born Communist and was suspicious of capitalists. So while we still had the aid program, relations were cooling to some extent.

One sidelight about INR -- Tito took the leadership in developing a kind of "third force" -- he saw himself and Nasser and Nehru as the potential leaders of the third force, of the third world countries who could do well by negotiating between the Russians and the Americans, do well politically and economically. One of the things I wrote in INR was a piece about Tito's travels, trying to analyze what he was seeking to do and whether he would be successful. It was a very straight-forward piece, but I gave it a title that I never thought would survive the clearance process. This was in the days when there was a television program called "Have Gun, Will Travel" and I titled this, "Have Heresy, Will Travel". Remarkably everybody cleared it and more remarkably, some months later I ran a check on the CIA files to see what they had on Yugoslavia as I was writing a piece on the economy and discovered that this article was indeed in their files. They had catalogued this under "religion".

We had another example of the cooling relationship, although they were still friendly. Three or four years earlier, during the Sixth Yugoslav Party Congress my predecessor in INR had been invited, this would have been in 1952, to attend the Congress as an observer. With the Seventh Party Congress coming up, through the embassy in Belgrade we were trying to get me an invitation, but relations were not quite the same, so it took a long time. Finally reluctantly the Yugoslavs issued me a visa to at least go to Belgrade and I did have some kind of pass for the Congress, I think it was actually a press pass; I went up with our consul in Zagreb, Pete Rabenold to Ljubljana, where the Congress was being, and we were using these passes we had, trying to crash the Congress. We got into the press area, inside the building, but about the time we tried to get in the door into the actual Congress we saw the chief of protocol from the Foreign Office come up to us. He very diplomatically and skillfully told us that we had been previously misinformed, that we were not supposed to be where we were, much less in the Congress, and politely took away our passes and threw us out. So I never got to see the Party Congress in action.

George Kennan served as ambassador in Belgrade. Actually when I was in INR and when I first got to Belgrade, Karl Rankin was ambassador. Karl Rankin had been ambassador to Chiang Kai Shek for about five years. Even though his way of thinking about the world ran about parallel to Chiang Kai Shek the Department assigned him to Belgrade. He had wanted to be assigned to Greece where he had served before the war; he also had been in Belgrade as the commercial officer before the war. So he got Belgrade instead. He never liked the place and never got along with the Yugoslav hierarchy. While I was there at one point, the Yugoslavs were carrying on a big effort, as part of this third force campaign, to develop aid programs all over Asia and Africa with relatively limited resources. They would send out doctors and engineers in relatively small teams, and so forth. I think Rankin among others had expressed some concern that this was inimical to U.S. interests and that we should do something to try to stop it. So I and a colleague in the AID office in Belgrade jointly looked into this and got all the information we could and wrote a piece, fairly lengthy, six or seven pages, in which our conclusion was that this is not a threat of any sort to U.S. interests around the world. In fact, we said, there were ways that we could make use of what the Yugoslavs were doing in our own interests. This probably was an overstatement of what we could do with it, but anyway it had to go to Ambassador Rankin for clearance. I was petrified because I knew what his political outlook was. My office phone rang one day and I picked it up and said, "Hello". At the other end was said, "Rankin here, would you

come down to my office, I have this dispatch you have written." So I went down in fear and trembling. He said, "I would like you to take some notes as I go through this; here in the first paragraph you have used a semi-colon where you ought to have a comma, and you have used the word "presently" where I think you mean currently." Well, we went through the whole thing like that while he corrected and improved my grammar and my style -- there was not one word about the substance of thing, which he then signed and sent off to the Department where it sank without a trace, as most things sink there. So there was no threat to my position or to Rankin's position.

Q: It sank without a trace?

BRODERICK: That's right. The Ambassador called a meeting one day of the staff and said that all this business of language training, learning Serbo-Croatian was a real waste of time, where the heck could you use it except in Yugoslavia. If you wanted to study a language you ought to learn a useful language like French or German. There were about six of us there who were language officers. Then he said that he was a little worried that we were not staying well-informed in what was going on in the world and we should be doing more reading; he asked us to send him a brief report on the books we were reading or had read.

Q: Like going back to high school.

BRODERICK: I was a little upset with this. I read and reported to him on two books; one was a Yugoslav novel in English, a translation, and the other I had found in the Yugoslav bookstore [Yugoslovenska Kniga] *The Further Adventures of Hyman Kaplan*. I don't know if you know it?

Q: Sure.

BRODERICK: Well, it is hilarious and I had read the first volume years before, so I sent him the reports and never heard from him again.

Then Kennan came, fortunately. He had come on a visit a year before he was assigned as ambassador. He was attending a Salzburg seminar, and came down to Belgrade, perhaps to the Institute of International Affairs there. Our DCM, who was chargé at the time, Elim O'Shaughnessy, had served with him in Moscow. It was summer and almost everyone was away so O'Shaughnessy and his wife invited me and my wife to dinner with Kennan, Kennan's wife was not with him. Kennan loves to talk and he is a marvelous talker. He got going that night on all sorts of things which I will not repeat because they later showed up in his memoirs, but how he got PNGed from the Soviet Union and so forth. I thought that this is a fascinating man but I will never see him again.

Q: Could I just say for the record, PNGed means being declared persona non grata.

BRODERICK: But the following May he returned as ambassador. He told the story that he had been lecturing at Harvard; in the dean's office one day, a young undergraduate in a quavering voice said, "Mr. Kennan, the President of the United States would like to talk to you" and handed him the phone. It was John Kennedy asking him if he would be ambassador to Yugoslavia. He,

of course, accepted, and came, and was very impressive, but very frustrated during the time he was there. He had great trouble trying to decide whether he was more furious with the Yugoslavs or with the U.S. Congress. This was a period in which we were having things like boycotts of Yugoslav furniture which was being exported to the United States. The Croatian nationalist movement and the John Birch types were agitating against the Tito government. And Congress was sort of responding to this.

He was a pleasure to listen to. He is the only man I know who speaks the way he writes. You could take his speech down verbatim and it would look good on a page. He had lots of interesting stories. He also decided after he had been there a short while that there ought to be some short manual you could give to new arrivals to the embassy which would tie in what they would see when they went around the country to the historical background of the country. For example there were some Roman ruins up the road from Belgrade at a place called Smederevo; there were the ruins of Diocletian's palace in Split; there was Dubrovnik, the Ragusa of the old days of the Venetian empire. So his first thought was to invite six or seven of us who were language officers up to his residence. He stood in front of his fireplace and we all sat at his feet while he developed this idea. He then wanted each of us to take one area and do it. I suggested that rather than do an area I would deal with the Yugoslav economy and try and tie it into visible monuments. Economics was not an area he was interested in, but he accepted this. As he talked he got more and more wound up in his subject and from being something that might have been a twenty or twenty-four page manual, it began to sound more like a doctoral dissertation. He said, "I can get my friend, Roman Jacobson, who is the Librarian at Harvard, to make his resources available", and on and on like this. So we left sort of staggered.

Q: What was your position at the embassy?

BRODERICK: I was assigned to Belgrade as the head of the economic section. There was a titular head, but he also ran the AID program so I ran the economic section.

Q: How many were there in all in the economic section and AID?

BRODERICK: We had six or seven in the economic section, and a local staff of two that ran the commercial office. The AID mission was fairly substantial, maybe thirty professionals. It was mainly a technical assistance program, the idea behind it being that whatever technical skills we could develop in these Yugoslavs in various areas was a plus for the economy. Our real purpose was to expose them to a Western society, the United States or in some cases to Western Europe. They would bring that experience back and it would have in the long run, nobody knew how long, a kind of eroding effect on the system. It seems to have worked.

Q: We brought them to the United States?

BRODERICK: Yes. They would work in some field of agriculture or engineering or whatever. One very interesting story in that regard is with public administration. It was another area in which we were providing technical assistance. In the AID mission we had a man who had been a city manager in the States and was there on a two year assignment. He was choosing people to go to the United States. He chose one who was sent to Berkeley who got his master's degree in

public administration, came back to Yugoslavia and was eventually mayor of Belgrade and just two and a half years ago was assigned here as Yugoslav ambassador to Washington. Sometimes there is a payoff.

Q: Was the AID program basically an exchange program, or were they doing other things?

BRODERICK: There was some financing, through the EX-IM bank, of diesel locomotives to upgrade the quality of their rail transportation. One of our intentions was that this would be a visible demonstration of U.S. aid to Yugoslavia for the people to see. On one occasion we were on a train when the train stopped and the Yugoslavs -- I wasn't with this group, but I heard the story -- the Americans were talking with the Yugoslav officials and were saying that the Yugoslav people knew that the aid was coming from the United States and the officials were pooh-poohing it, saying that the general public were not even aware where these things come from. Well, the train stopped at a station and one of the peasants in the car was heard to say, "the Kennedys had to stop for a drink of water." That is what they called the engines.

Q: How did Ambassador Kennan feel in regard to the rise of the Third Force movement that Tito was interested in?

BRODERICK: Well, he did not like it much; in fact during his tenure there was a big third world conference in Belgrade. Tito was the host. Kennan got very upset with Tito. I can't remember what the issue was, I think it was some commitment that Tito had made to him about nuclear testing; right around that time the Russians had violated the test ban treaty or whatever agreement existed and Tito, who was supposed to say something critical about it, didn't. Kennan, who took a lot of things personally, got very upset with this and was quite testy in a press conference he gave. He was also quite critical of the Western press for reasons I can't recall right now.

The conference was kind of a Potemkin village operation; when the conference was going on you could all of a sudden buy the New York *Herald Tribune* at all the hotels in town, which was not available before that. They went around cleaning up the city and widening the streets. As somebody said, "If you stood still for twenty minutes on the street you would be painted green." They made a big effort.

On the trivia side, there is the story that I want to tell about Elim O'Shaughnessy, who was a real character. Despite the name, he was a real Eastern Establishment traditionalist. He had been a bachelor for many years, but by the time he was in Belgrade he was married to a very nice wife; Mary Cutler was her name -- the daughter of Robert Cutler who was one of Eisenhower's NSC staff. Anyway, O'Shaughnessy was planning to go to Trieste, and he said on the morning of this particular day to the political counselor, Oliver Marcy, who was a very emotional kind of guy, "Ollie, would you check and find out the name of the American consul in Trieste for me?" and Marcy said, "Sure". At the end of the day Marcy came into his office and Elim said, "Ollie, did you get the name of the consul in Trieste?" Marcy had forgotten; it had gone out of his mind completely. He exclaimed, "Jesus Christ!" O'Shaughnessy shook his head slowly and said, "No, that does not sound like it." That was the kind of dry humor he had.

Another story about O'Shaughnessy and his Eastern Establishment biases -- in the embassy at the time was Andor Klay. I don't know if you have ever come across Andor, who is still in the Washington area -- he was born in Hungary as was his wife. He came to the States in the early thirties or late twenties and worked for years and years in INR as the Hungarian analyst. In the Wriston days he became a FSO and was sent to Belgrade. Now Andor spoke English fluently but it was accented. He and his wife, it was rumored, spoke to each other in Hungarian at home. He said after he got there he went to pay his courtesy call on Elim O'Shaughnessy who was chargé at the time. As Andor described it, "After I had been talking to Mr. O'Shaughnessy for only a few minutes, it became clear to me that as far as he was concerned I was entirely uncalled for".

Q: How long were you in Yugoslavia?

BRODERICK: Three years. I was in the economic section, which I found very interesting. At the time I had wanted to be a political officer, but was assigned to economic section to my disappointment. After arriving in Belgrade, however, it became clear to me that politics in Yugoslavia was cut-and-dried, it was the economy that was interesting because that was where they were experimenting. Politically it was strict Marxist orthodoxy. They were developing things like workers councils, decentralizing management and all that sort of thing. So I enjoyed it immensely and decided that if I were going to be an economist in the State Department I had to learn something about economics and applied for University economic training. Just about that time we had a visit from a man who was a professor of economics at the University of Michigan, with Eastern Europe as his specialty. I asked, "What is the best place to do advanced economic training?" and he said, "Why not Michigan?" It sounded great to me so I applied and got it. I spent a marvelous year at Ann Arbor and was close to Detroit and all the relatives. It was not quite as nice as Berkeley had been because economics was quite a shocker to me, the discipline of which I was quite innocent. The first month I took an exam in a graduate course in international finance. When they passed out the papers and I read the questions my first reaction was, not only do I not know the answer to the question, I don't understand the question. Anyway it was an uphill struggle. I improved after that, and I was assigned from there to La Paz -- which had not been high, or even low on my list.

John W. Shirley
Junior Officer Trainee, USIS
Zagreb (1957-1958)

Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS
Belgrade (1959-1960)

John W. Shirley grew up in Yugoslavia and Hungary with his American father during World War II. In 1946 he entered the air force where he considered becoming a professional soldier. Before his service he attended Georgetown University. He entered the Foreign Service in 1958.

SHIRLEY: When my JOT year in Zagreb was over, Heath Bowman, who was Country PAO, asked me to come down to Belgrade to replace Phil Arnold, as Assistant CAO and an Exhibits Officer. I happily accepted because I had already come to have enormous respect for Heath, who, in many ways, was the most professional PAO I ever worked for, but also with some feeling of trepidation, because I knew nothing about exhibits. I felt ready to make foreign policy decisions, but I wasn't quite ready to build exhibits!

My year in Belgrade -- mid-1959 to September of 1960 -- was a happy one. It was a splendidly exciting time to be in Yugoslavia. Everything we did, from a small window exhibit to a pavilion-sized show was seen by tens of thousands of people. We were a window on America, a window on the world.

Q: I'd like to ask a couple of questions now, partly going back to Zagreb, but also getting into Yugoslavia. First of all, what was the nature of your effort in Zagreb? Was there something in particular that you were aiming at, or were you just taking events as they came along, running a standard USIS program?

SHIRLEY: I arrived in Zagreb thinking that I was going to be trained, but I didn't get much of that. I was initially assigned specific projects. Fairly soon, perhaps after two or three months, I was engaged mainly in picking up the pieces dropped by the BPAO and in running the post. Towards the end, things got awkward, particularly when Heath Bowman began communicating with me directly instead of going through the BPAO.

I remember that the first thing I was required to do was to write a report on Zagreb's English-teaching program, which ten years later I would have considered an excruciatingly boring task, but which at the time I thought was splendidly stimulating. No, Zagreb was a good time.

Being Exhibits Officer in Belgrade was intimidating. The only talent I brought to the job was good taste, which Heath said I had. Did I find it satisfying? Yes, I did, for the reason I mentioned to you before. People were so hungry for anything Western, and particularly American. Attendance at exhibits was huge and perhaps with the exception of the Voice of America, the tool through which we could reach the largest number of Yugoslavs. Money spent on exhibits in Yugoslavia was money well spent.

Q: This, of course, was some years after Tito had broken with the Soviet Union. And I wondered what kind of experience you had in Yugoslavia with reference to the attitude of the people toward America. You said they were extremely interested in learning things about the United States. Was there any overcast or overtone of antipathy toward the U.S., or was it basically an open feeling about the Americans?

SHIRLEY: People who have experienced communism like Americans, because to them Americans are the antithesis of communism. Yugoslavs had certainly experienced communism in an extreme form between 1944 and the break with the Cominform in 1948. Tito gradually loosened the screws, and by the time I got there in 1958, ten years after the break with the Cominform, things had eased considerably, but the system was still communist, indeed it still is today, 35 years later.

Almost everybody in Yugoslavia had an uncle or a cousin or an aunt in the United States. People were conspicuously friendly to Americans. It's always easy to be an American in a communist country because the population looked to us as their only real source of hope.

Q: I gather, however, that the government still had its suspicions, and I base this on a very limited experience. When I was in the War College, since I had never been to Europe, I elected to take the European trip. They always broke the War College into four or five groups and visited different regions. I chose Europe, and that was the one year we went both to Soviet Union and to Yugoslavia.

Although the people seemed friendly enough, and the army seemed especially friendly and very critical of the Soviet Union; nevertheless, we were watched. We were stopping with a group of about 30 or 35 of us as part of a War College group, and we were there at the official invitation of the Yugoslav government. Nevertheless, I could see the gumshoes sitting across from me in the hotel lobby and watching me. There were several instances indicating that we were being watched. So I just wondered. That apparently was a governmental activity and had nothing to do with the general feeling.

SHIRLEY: Yes. But in the late 1950s, I cannot say that I ever felt that I was under personal surveillance, certainly not constant surveillance.

Q: I think this was occasional, but . . .

SHIRLEY: I did not experience constant surveillance, as I did during periods of service in Poland much later on. If I had had an affair with a Yugoslav girl, or if I had been drinking too much, something of that kind, they probably would have come at me to see whether I could be blackmailed. But I had no such experience.

Q: I know that you speak a great number of languages, an unusually large number. Did you pick up your Serbo-Croatian initially during your period of residence in the country, or did you study it and gain most of it thereafter?

SHIRLEY: By the time I came into the Foreign Service, I spoke French, German, Hungarian, and Serbo-Croatian. I had lost a lot of my Serbo Croatian, but it came back to me fairly fast. Within about 90 days, 120 days, I was probably speaking at the three-plus, three-plus level. I subsequently learned Italian and Polish, so I guess that makes a total of six. But McKinney Russell is the Agency's great linguist. I was merely a polyglot.

Q: I'm curious, and if you don't mind, what was your father doing in Eastern Europe at the time that the war began?

SHIRLEY: My father was and, thank goodness, remains, an eccentric American who was living on his boat in Split. He fell in love with the Czech wife of a White Russian emigre at the beginning of the war.

Q: That's an interesting reason and no doubt a very satisfying one for one individual, at least.

SHIRLEY: No. It was a disaster. He caught up with the lady after the war, married her, spent a perfectly miserable six or seven years with her, and then divorced her.

I would like to add that I have worked for PAOs whom I have greatly admired, and I don't want to pick out a single one as the best. But Heath Bowman, who was never appreciated in the Service as he should have been, was an extraordinarily effective officer and to have worked for him was an immensely valuable experience. He was intelligent, methodical, strict and sometimes irascible. I learned much from Heath. Most of all high standards. He was exacting and he expected people to work at their best all the time. That spirit I subsequently tried to adopt myself, and to inculcate in others who have worked for me.

Q: You said you had this one final comment to make.

SHIRLEY: That was it.

Q: My question was that you were in Belgrade handling the exhibits program. Did you ever have the Atoms for Peace exhibit?

SHIRLEY: No.

Q: Well, it would have been that time, because that was the period from about '55 to '58 that the Atoms for Peace exhibit was being shown very widely around the world.

Well, were did you go then from there? Is that when you went to Trieste?

DOUGLAS S. MARTIN
Security Officer
Zagreb (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.

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.

ROBERT C. HANEY
Consular Officer
Belgrade (1958-1962)

Robert Haney was born and raised in Iowa. He attended the University of Iowa, Georgetown, and the Army University at Biarritz for Russian language training. During World War II he served in the army in Europe. In 1951 he entered the Foreign Service as a reserve officer, eventually being assigned to Belgrade in 1958

Q: Why would there be a connection with the Soviets?

HANEY: Well, the Soviets and the Yugoslavs were not on good terms. It was not Tito, as some people believe, who said, "The hell with your Cominform. I'm pulling out." He was kicked out. Tito had led his country in expelling the Germans in World War II without the help of the Soviets. Of all the communist countries in Europe at the end of the war, Yugoslavia was the only one that had freed itself. Yugoslav-Soviet relations had been uneasy for some years. The Soviets kept pushing the Yugoslavs for more slots. They had already opened up branch information centers in Skopje and in Ljubljana. The Yugoslavs, we guessed, didn't want to give the Soviets any grounds for stationing more people in Yugoslavia.

The Yugoslav denial of the visas obliged Mary and me to reverse course and forget about Yugoslavia and the American Security Storage Company. We had to tell the people who were expecting to move into our house that we would have to invoke the escape clause - we weren't going anywhere. I went back to work, floating around in the European Division. Suddenly, the Yugoslavs sent word that they were ready to give us visas. I never did find out what changed their minds. So then we went to Belgrade in the summer of 1958.

Q: You were in Belgrade from 1958 until when?

HANEY: Until 1962. The first year, I had learned enough Serbian - we were in the Serbian-speaking part of the country - that I was able to get around comfortably, and I began to get the feel of the country. When my two-year assignment was about up, I asked to be extended for one more year. So Washington said, "Fine, you can stay for the third year." (I think the reason was not that they were doing me a favor, but that they didn't have a replacement ready.) So we stayed on. Then Mary got a speaking engagement in Sri Lanka. The PAO in Colombo and his wife were old friends of ours, so we took a short break down there in lieu of home leave.

As our third year in Yugoslavia came to a close, George Kennan was named ambassador. The chance to serve with someone so distinguished was compelling, so I asked to be extended another year. They granted me the extension. That's how we happened to be there for four years.

Q: So you were there from '58-'62.

HANEY: Yes.

Q: When you arrived, what was the state of relations between the United States and Yugoslavia?

HANEY: It was pretty good. We had a number of programs going, including a "counterpart funds" program. We sold the Yugoslavs agricultural products that they needed and took payment in dinars, which were not convertible, and we used the dinars subsequently for people who were working on behalf of the United States in Yugoslavia. The same was true in Poland. The Yugoslavs were experimenting with something that the Poles had tried out that didn't work - "workers' self-management." The Yugoslavs did a somewhat better job of it, but their economy was a nightmare because the dinar had values ranging from 24:1, which is what we got, to 1,000:1. If you were buying rubber from Germany for tires for the bicycles that you manufactured in Yugoslavia, you would pay 1,000:1. Other hard currency expenses for raw materials or manufactured parts might run the gamut of the exchange rate scale. How you calculated the actual cost of the bicycle and what price you should ask for it, I have no idea. In the end, it wasn't a very good process. But they were moving toward somewhat greater freedom in the economy and the ability of people with small enterprises to do their own thing.

The State Department was in charge of major American cultural events that visited Yugoslavia and other countries under the sponsorship of the embassy and were managed locally by USIS. Helen Hayes and a small company came and performed several American plays. The basso, Boris Kristoff, appeared in the Belgrade opera company's production of "Boris Godunov." Kristoff sang in Russian, the Yugoslavs in Serbian. Stravinsky visited and conducted the local symphony orchestra. Leonard Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic performed in Zagreb. We were also sending people to the United States on exchange grants.

We had a fairly good working relationship with the Yugoslavs. When you went over to the Foreign Secretariat (the Yugoslav equivalent of a foreign ministry), if the American desk officer was in agreement with what you had to say - a proposal, a request or a notification - he would send for coffee and šljivovica. But if you brought a complaint of some kind, he had a drawer in his desk that he would open, pull out a neatly typed counter-complaint and lay it on.

One should not forget that it was a communist country. One American officer newly arrived in Belgrade had spent some time with American exhibits programs in the Soviet Union. He had been duly impressed by the restrictions and surveillance that the regime there imposed on foreigners. After a few days in Belgrade, he said, "Gosh, this place is great. Like a breath of fresh air."

On his first Sunday in Belgrade, I was on embassy duty, and I got a call. It was my friend with Soviet experience. "Where are you?" I asked. "In Novi Sad," he said (a city on the Danube

halfway between Belgrade and the Hungarian border). "Where in Novi Sad?"

"I'm in the police station," he said.

"What happened?" I asked.

He said, "A friend and I drove up here to take a look at Novi Sad. We came to a bridge across the Danube. The bridge is shared by trains and cars. They had stopped automobile traffic while a train crossed, so we had to wait."

The pair of American sightseers got out of their car and noticed a castle on a hill behind them. My friend took out his camera and snapped a picture of the castle. When the train had passed, they got in line and drove across the bridge as far as the guard's shack on the other side of the river.

The guard motioned for them to halt and approached my friend, the driver, who had rolled the window down. "Give me your camera," said the guard. "No," said my friend, "I'm not going to give you my camera."

"Okay," said the guard, in a somewhat sharper tone. "Then take out the film and give it to me." My friend replied, "No, I'm not going to give you my film. I've got lots of shots on that roll from our trip all the way from Spain to Yugoslavia."

He kept his camera, and the local police kept him. When they arrived at the police station he was allowed to call our embassy in Belgrade, where I took the call.

He asked me, "What do I do?" I said, "If you don't want to stay where you are for an unpredictable length of time, give them the film. Ask for a receipt if you want, but there's no guarantee you'll get it back." That was the last he saw of his film. To somebody familiar with the restrictions rigidly enforced in the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia at first glance looked like a walk in the park. But it was still a police state. In the case of my new friend, it was a good lesson learned early.

Q: Who was the head of USIS there?

HANEY: When I arrived at the post the PAO was Heath Bowman, who had been Deputy PAO in Paris during my tour there. Bowman was replaced by Walter Roberts, who persuaded Washington to award him the diplomatic title of counselor for public affairs a few months after his arrival. (The rest of us were all "attachés.")

Q: You were saying you got very much involved with the Press Law.

HANEY: The Yugoslavs did not feel that they had sufficient control over Soviet information programs. The Soviets had information centers in a couple of Yugoslav cities where we didn't have a presence. They had begun what looked like a slow, creeping expansion. So the Yugoslavs decided that the best way to bring them under control was to write a new law, the Press Law, that

would govern the information and cultural activities of *any* foreign country aiming such programs at a Yugoslav audience. The law would apply, in the case of the United States, to our library, distribution of the daily wireless file, circulation of a monthly magazine in Serbian, and to visiting American lecturers and artists. In the case of the British, the law would cover the British Council. The French had an information center and a major French-teaching program.

The Yugoslav law termed the foreign organization that carried out these activities an *informativna slu_ba* (information service). Every embassy engaging in activities specified by the law was required to name a person in charge, the *odgovorni urednik* (responsible editor), who could not hold a diplomatic passport. In other words, he or she could be prosecuted under Yugoslav law for any infraction of a state-to-state agreement to be negotiated separately with every affected embassy. Diplomatic status could not be used as a shield.

When word of the new law first reached foreign embassies in Belgrade, French, British and American diplomatic representatives got together to forge a common front. Then, as bilateral talks with the Yugoslavs began, it became apparent that the Yugoslavs were not about to cut any slack for anybody. In the end, the French came down to where they will always end up: "Just so long as we can continue to teach French, we don't care what else you do." The British bottom line was, "Okay, we'll get somebody non-diplomatic to head the British Council, but the British Council must continue." The American embassy managed to retain the information center and reading room, wireless file, monthly magazine - all our activities, in fact. And, with her agreement, we proposed to designate the wife of the *New York Times* correspondent in Belgrade as our "responsible editor."

But we had a great deal of difficulty persuading Washington that if we only enlisted an *odgovorni urednik* as nominal head of our *informativna slu_ba* it wasn't going to constrain our operation in the slightest. Somehow, anonymous "Washington" thought this would be such a slap in the face of Uncle Sam that we couldn't possibly allow it. There was real wild talk at home about how we should retaliate. Our PAO was so alarmed at the prospect that the whole of USIS was going to have to close that he took off without clearance from the Agency and headed for Washington to try to persuade people there that paying lip service to the Press Law by naming a "responsible editor" wouldn't cost us a thing, and we could continue business as usual. The real target of the Yugoslav Press Law was the Soviet Union.

The deadline approached, and our PAO was in transit somewhere between Belgrade and Washington. USIA and State continued to withhold permission to name a "responsible editor," sign off on the Press Law and get on with business. On the last day before the Yugoslavs would presumably lower the boom in the absence of agreement, I drafted a note that we would put on the door of the information center the next morning. It was short and blunt. I can't remember the exact words, but the gist was, "Our Information Center is closed, and all related activities have ceased." I took the draft up to Ambassador Kennan for his approval. I told him, "I think maybe this will get Washington to move. I propose we send them a NIACT saying, 'Here is the text that we are putting on the front door of the information center tomorrow morning.'" The Ambassador concurred.

Q: Were we getting assurances from the Yugoslavs on the side?

HANEY: The Yugoslavs had never really nudged us in the ribs or winked. But it was obvious that their major concern was what the Soviets were trying to do. To avoid making their concern appear to be a strictly bilateral matter, the Yugoslavs worked out a way to make it apply to everybody. But the Press Law was written in such a way that it would have no real effect on bona fide information and cultural activities that bore no hint or threat of subversion. The Yugoslavs were concerned about a hostile Soviet influence.

The Press Law negotiations were fascinating. Together with the DCM, I attended all of the bilateral meetings, which were conducted in Serbian. And I did all of the reporting to Washington. The files on our talks grew so thick we divided them into two parts, the "Old Testament" and the "New Testament." To me they represented an interesting and revealing look into the official Yugoslav *Weltanschauung*. I thought they would prove useful to our successors at the post. Some years later, for old times' sake I stopped off in Belgrade on my way back from inspection duty. I had lunch with the current PAO, and I mentioned our experience during the Press Law negotiations. When I asked about the Old and New Testaments, the PAO told me, "Oh, we threw all of that out."

Q: We had a library on _ika Ljubina, right in the middle of Belgrade, on the Corso, which meant you couldn't go near the heart of the city without going past the window displays. We also had centers in Zagreb and Ljubljana.

HANEY: We didn't have anything in Sarajevo. Or in Skopje, not in my time. Only in Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana.

Q: Did you get involved with the Yugoslav press much?

HANEY: Not very much, no, except that I read it faithfully every day. I knew several people in the press. But they were so party-line that there was little point in cultivating them.

Q: And the press was no more than political—just about as bad as the Soviet press with all that communist verbiage. They did rattle on.

HANEY: Yes. Texts of Tito's speeches in the Belgrade press presented a curious linguistic problem. Tito was a Croat; he spoke Croatian, in which the letter *yat'* in Old Church Slavonic is represented by *ije* ("ee-yeh"), and the particular version of "Serbo-Croatian" spoken in Croatia is thus termed *ijekavski*. In Serbian, *yat'* becomes simply *e* (pronounced "eh"), and that version of the language is called *ekavski*. Tito wrote in *Latinitsa*, using the Latin alphabet. Serbs (like Russians) write in Cyrillic. When the party organ, *Borba*, quoted Tito, his remarks were printed in Cyrillic, like the rest of the paper that was published in Serbian Belgrade. But Tito's Croatian pronunciation was faithfully rendered in a Cyrillic version of *ijekavski*. That was the only time you'd ever see Cyrillic *ijekavski*, which is something of an oxymoron.

Q: Did you get involved in an exchange program?

HANEY: That was the province of the cultural attaché. Other members of the USIA staff

weighed in and helped evaluate the post's nominations.

Q: Belgrade had a rather lively cultural life at that time.

HANEY: Yes.

Q: Did you get involved with this?

HANEY: Belgrade had a very active opera. I recall the embassy's preparations for a visit by C. Douglas Dillon, then Secretary of the Treasury. He had expressed the desire to see something of cultural life in Belgrade. I went to the Foreign Secretariat to see what might be going on during Dillon's visit. Perhaps he could go to the opera. It turned out that the opera scheduled during his stay in Belgrade was not a very distinguished work. So undistinguished, in fact, that I can't recall now what it was. The woman with whom we were dealing in the Yugoslav secretariat told us, "It's such a shame. In the old days, you could just tell the opera to cancel the scheduled program and throw in 'Boris Godunov.' But we can't do that anymore."

Q: It made a splash around the world. How did you feel about your time in Belgrade? Did you feel that this was a different country, that it was communism with a pleasant face and a place you could deal with? Or once you got there, did you find the constrictions were such that it wasn't as open as you thought before you got there?

HANEY: I don't believe that communism can ever be considered to have a pleasant face. But the official Yugoslav ideology really didn't weigh that heavily on people who were living there as we were. We were free to travel. I wandered all over the place.

But my initial reaction to being in Yugoslavia had nothing to do with ideology or constrictions. For the first and only time in my life I experienced what people call "cultural shock." Nothing in Yugoslavia had been rebuilt since the war, and there had been quite a bit of damage. Housing was tight. So my wife and I and two small children lived in the Hotel Majestic, in downtown Belgrade. It had been a fashionable place in the years before the war, but the street that ran past it was still paved with cobblestones. There were no screens on the windows, so we didn't leave the windows open because we were afraid the kids would crawl up on the window sill. Even with the windows closed in the heat of the summer, we were awakened early when the farmers brought their produce in to the local market. The iron-rimmed wagon wheels and the horses hooves on the cobblestones made an ungodly clatter. When they had all passed and we had gone back to sleep, the hose brigade arrived to flush the streets, another noisy procedure.

I found a short-wave/medium-wave Telefunken radio at the office that I took back to the hotel to monitor VOA, the BBC and local stations. Much of the music broadcast locally was thoroughly Eastern - fit for kola dances, or wailing songs accompanied by unidentifiable strings and insistent percussion. For my first few weeks in Belgrade, I felt distinctly uneasy. Not because of the communists, not because of our makeshift accommodations - it was that damned music. Call it "cultural shock." Happily, I got over that and, with the exception of our daughter, who favors Warsaw, every member of the family would agree that the best post we ever had was Belgrade.

MICHAEL H. NEWLIN
United Nations Affairs (IO)
Washington, DC (1958-1963)

Ambassador Newlin was born in North Carolina and was raised there and in the Panama canal zone. After graduating from Harvard he joined the Foreign Service in 1952 and was posted to Frankfurt, Oslo, Paris, Kinshasa and Jerusalem, where served as Consul General. During his distinguished career, Ambassador Newlin served in several high level positions dealing with the United Nations and its agencies and NATO. He served as Ambassador to Algeria from 1981 to 1985 and as US representative to the United Nations Agencies in Vienna, 1988-1991. Ambassador Newlin was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2006.

NEWLIN: So I was about ready to go off then. In those days of course it was the height of the cold war. The only Eastern Europeans we could have any sort of contact with were the Yugoslavs because Tito had broken with the Soviet Union. Milena and I got very friendly with a Yugoslav diplomat and his wife. I think they had a child with them too. They weren't like the Soviets were, you had to leave somebody behind. After awhile, I think it was over lunch, he indicated that he was an intelligence officer and that he wanted to defect. So I said, "Well I assume you have given this a lot of thought. It is a major step." So I then went back to the Department, and I went over to EUR and talked to the Yugoslav desk officer. He said, "Well we have to tell the FBI right away." The next thing the FBI got in touch with me. One evening, I picked up an FBI agent in my car and then I drove around to a place the Yugoslav and I had agreed. The Yugoslav got in. The FBI agent said, "I understand you want to defect?" He said, "Yes I do." The FBI said, "Well what proof do you have that you are what you say you are?" So the man produced a copy of a recent classified telegram from the State Department. So it turned out that it was a legitimate thing and my Yugoslav friend and his family defected. Then pretty soon after that I was off to Paris. I am told that later there was a message from J. Edgar Hoover to Dulles complementing me on this event. Then some time considerably later, here is a message from the deputy undersecretary of state for administration.

Q: Yes, this is dated November 2, 1965.

Dear Mr. Newlin,

It has been brought to my attention that through your alert response to a situation in May, 1962, the Federal Bureau of Investigation was able to conduct a successful operation dealing with Yugoslav intelligence matters. I am referring to your reporting of a conversation with a representative of the Yugoslavian embassy, Washington DC, and your evaluation of this individual. I wish to commend you for your alertness, your professional handling of this delicate situation. A copy of this memorandum is being placed in your official personnel file.

Sincerely yours,

William J. Crockett.

Well very good.

NEWLIN: All right, off to Paris.

Q: You were in Paris from when to when?

NEWLIN: I was in Paris, oh something funny. Personnel developed sort of hiccups over this assignment because it was all handled outside regular personnel procedures. But finally when they got the word that Finletter agreed, they did not want to second-guess him. Eventually Personnel called me and said, "Mike we are ready to write your assignment orders to Paris. We are in the process of trying to save money, so we are going to assign you to Paris for five years to save money of transferring you after four. Is that agreeable to you?" I said, "Yes that sounds all right."

NICHOLAS G. 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 Neryere, 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.

RAYMOND ELLIS BENSON
Branch Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Zagreb (1959-1960)

Press & Information Officer, USIS
Belgrade (1961-1964)

Raymond Benson was born in New York City in 1924. He served in the U.S. Army between WWII and the Korean War. He graduated from the University of Wisconsin and attended the Russian Institute at Columbia University. He joined the United States Information Agency (USIA) in 1957. His overseas posts include, Zagreb, Belgrade, Hamburg, Turkey, and Moscow. Mr. Benson was interviewed by Robert Daniels in 2000.

Q: Did you then apply or get invited to make the switch to the Foreign Service from IRI?

BENSON: Well, here's what happened. The geographic officers in IRI, I being in charge of Yugoslavia and Albania, related to other units of USIA which dealt with that country. For example, should we continue VOA broadcasts to Slovenia, a question which indeed arose? Slovenia is so small, there are so few people, and so on. Budget has to be presented, budget has to be defended. We are going to be under attack or there will be questions. So requests would come to us, meaning to me, would you defend and how would you defend. In fact, it would be put in a different way: We would like to defend the continued broadcast to Slovenia. Give us material. And you would write a paper. It took some research, you know. Actually it's an easy defense at that time in terms of the GNP, financial profile, people in important positions, the degree of education of the populace, and so on and so forth. And there were other parts of the Agency which would be interested in Yugoslavia, and they would come to me for either a critique of what they were saying or seek back-up. Importantly there was the so-called Area Office. The Area Office is the closest thing to the front office in terms of policy matters.

Q: Area office in the sense of State Department regional bureaus?

BENSON: Well, Yugoslavia at that time was in Western Europe. But that was an Area Office. There was Africa, there was Latin America, and so on. In came a new fellow in 1957, Jerry Gert. He had served in Austria, and he came in and he was giving the billet over in the Area Office of Austria and Yugoslavia, and he came by to meet with me. We became lifelong friends. We correspond now several times a week by email. He's in Napa, California, a great man, born in Danzig. There's a story there that I hope somebody has taken from him, because his coming to America and being in the Army, being in Intelligence, de-Nazification, hired by USIA--it's a beautiful story.

So he came by and he talked with me. He was a bachelor then, and we had him over a lot. And he became aware of the fact that moving from POC to IRI I had heard that I could join the Foreign Service. We told him that I would like to do that, I thought. Shirley and I had decided we

would like to do that, we thought. I said to him one day, of course, it would be obvious for me to serve in Yugoslavia; I know the language and know a great deal about the country. He said, "It will never happen. They'll send you to Hong Kong. That's the way the Foreign Service does it. You get somebody who knows Chinese and they'll go to Paraguay. That's the way the Foreign Service does it."

He carpooned with the Deputy Director of the West European Area, and one day he said to this fellow, Walter Roberts... You know that name from the BIB (Board of International Broadcasting). He was the staff director, and when he retired from USIA [Ed: Walter R. Roberts was the Counselor of the American Embassy in Yugoslavia from 1960-1966 and Associate Director of USIA.] He also is the author of *Tito, Mihailovic and the Allies, 1941-1945* published by Rutgers University Press, in 1973. So he said to Walter, "Perfect man for the job but, of course, he can't go there. They'll never have him, or you will never have him." Walter said to him, "We've got a problem in Zagreb, because the PAO (Public Affairs Officer) in Belgrade wants to get rid of the present branch PAO. He can't stand him." Jerry said to him, "Well there you are. It makes the point. And, of course, he can't go there." So as the story is told by these old friends of mine, Walter went home and he said to himself "why can't he go there. We don't have anybody in USIA who has been to the University of Zagreb and knows every cobblestone in the town. I've never met this guy." So the next day I get a call to come over and see Mr. Roberts. So I go over and see Mr. Roberts, and he says, "What would you think of joining the Foreign Service." I said, "We think we would like to." He asked, "Would you object going back to Yugoslavia?" So I almost fainted on the spot. He told me that PAO wants to get rid of the Branch PAO. Heath Bowman was the PAO in Belgrade, a grand man. I don't recalled the name of the Branch PAO.

So the issue was left open for later discussion; but he's thinking positively. Next thing I hear, Heath Bowman said, "Not on your life, because, sure, he knows Serbo-Croatia and I'm sure he's been in Zagreb, but he's never been abroad. He doesn't know the first thing about USIA work abroad, USIS, and I can't have that. I've got a lot of problems in Zagreb, and I'd like this to be corrected." So Walter calls me in again, and he says, "What if we could find a temporary assignment for you somewhere en route to Yugoslavia which would satisfy Heath Bowman? For example, we have an assistant public affairs officer slot in Torino. Would you like to go there? It would be about two months, two and a half. You'd have to go quick, and then you would just go on to Belgrade. Bowman has been the country public affairs officer in Italy. He thinks that program is the best in the world." It really was very good. You know why? Because of the election of 1948, during which the Communists, it was felt, were in danger of winning. So a lot of money was poured into the country and a lot of it went to USIA to use from whichever budget it came. Those were the days. So these were big branch offices. Torino had four Americans!

Q: But you're talking about 10 years after the 1948 election.

BENSON: You don't turn off a bureaucracy so quickly. It eventually was. And Genoa was a branch office of the consulate in Torino, staffed with Italians. And Milano was a huge office. So then I hear from Walter again that he has agreed with Bowman that "if you would go to Torino en route for that length of time, it would be okay." With that I was paneled, meaning I took the Foreign Service oral exam. There was no written exam at the time for USIS (U.S. Information

Service) officers. In two shakes of a lamb's tail, toward the end--I think it was November sometime--in 1958 I was sworn in. I didn't go until January of 1959, and went to Torino first and then on to Zagreb, via the briefings at the Embassy in Belgrade.

Q: Did you experience in Torino give you anything positive that you felt met what Belgrade wanted?

BENSON: I think so. Yes, there's no question about it. All experience is cumulative, and the USIA program, in fact, didn't stop in Italy. Whatever you wanted to do, you could do, exhibits out in the field, reproductions of American art, loan libraries, film showing, you name it. It was a marvelous staff of young Italians, a good staff of Americans although the PAO was a phenomenal guy, very interesting man, unique background. I think the answer has to be yes, although, without praising myself too highly, I knew a hell of a lot about Yugoslavia. So when I got into the country, my specific knowledge of Yugoslavia came to the fore, as far as a decision is concerned about how to do something. Whatever knowledge I had gained in Torino, although I couldn't throw that away, it did make me feel--it's not exactly what he had in mind--it made me feel when I came into Belgrade that I had some background.

Q: Just in terms of how they ran the office and all that.

BENSON: Yes, the nomenclature. And he, in fact, didn't relax his concern. He wanted me in Belgrade for a full month of briefing and seeing how things are done before finally I could pass on to Zagreb, also very useful. There I got to know everybody with whom I would be communicating. In those days we communicated by telex.

Q: So it's a good idea for anybody going to a post outside the capital in any country to work in the capital and get to know the workings of the embassy.

BENSON: I think that is without question the case. It did not happen to me in Hamburg, where I had a tour from 1965 to 1968. I think I went there first and stayed for quite a while before I went down to the embassy in Bonn, but, you know, by then I had been promoted a bunch of times and I had been in the field from 1959 for four years. And we had a very rich program in Yugoslavia. It's a phenomenon of the period that the Yugoslav USIA program was very, very rich. There were very few things that you could not do, and it had bottomless funding because of PL-480. Public Law 480 is the law by which Ghana, India, Poland, Yugoslavia, other countries received large cotton, grain at concessional prices, paid for in local currency, so by 1959 we had vast amounts of local currency. This money could be used for United States government purposes or for--that's not quite the way to put it--for projects which the United States would agree served its purposes.

Q: Something like the Marshall Plan Counterpart Funds.

BENSON: Yes, the Marshall Plan Counterpart Funds deriving from the CCC, that's the Commodity Credit Corporation.

We had a lot of that money so that we could do a great many things in Yugoslavia. If you knew how to deal with people there--Heath Bowman did and I did and other people did--you could do just an awful lot of things.

Q: Could you spell out some of the particular things you worked on and what was the most successful of them.

BENSON: Well, the most successful, of course, had nothing to do with the PL-480 that is to say with the availability of funds based on PL-480, food and commodity aid. It had to do with Heath Bowman's idea that the international visitor program, which you may have heard of, had not yet been extended to Yugoslavia and he believed it was be time to do that. I arrived in 1959; the thing was just beginning. In fact, that was one of his most intense briefings of me, and it was in our conversation on this that I think we became fast friends. He got a budget for it and established criteria. These were Communists.

He established criteria by which the post would develop a program for these people when they got to the States or worked telegraphically with USIA officers who would be developing the program for these people, so they wouldn't just arrive, as perhaps a Frenchman would, and Washington would whip up a program for them within an hour or so. So he is a man of great culture and intelligence, Heath Bowman. He set out categories of people whom we would invite first: republican ministers of higher education, republican ministers of education, republican ministers of culture, rectors, other categories of this type. Now, of course, the political section had input, because you have to set up an embassy committee to pick international visitors, and there were obviously other people and criteria. There were economic planners; there were political figures, the head of the Spufshina committee on something or other. It wasn't hard to set up the categories. This should not be buckshot or *ad hoc*. That was very much the kind of mind he had, and I appreciated it a great deal.

When I went off to Zagreb, I had a list of categories and of people. At that time the Zagreb consulate also was responsible for Slovenia. We did not have a consulate or information office in Ljubljana, and so beginning with the Mayor of Zagreb, then to the Minister in Slovenia of Higher Education, then Minister of Education. The former was Clemenshechen; the latter was Ponshesh. Većeslav Holjevac was the Mayor of Zagreb. Then we set up a method of dealing with these people, Heath Bowman and I and others, which maximized the contact I would have, in this case I, with them to plan their trip. You think it's 1959. It's pre-history in terms of their exposure to the United States or in some cases to the West. You come in and you say, "I have the honor, sir, to tell you that we think it would be a wonderful if you would have the time, within the next year or fiscal year following, to accept an invitation from the United States government through the ambassador which I will present to you," and you would get a response something like, "Who, me?" or "Oh, boy, yes." Then we would offer, "What are you interested in? What part of the United States do you think you would like to visit?" Many of them had relatives which were discovered suddenly. It was a great program.

Q: The Yugoslav government had a kindly view towards this?

BENSON: The Yugoslav government, of course, yes. You can't drop in on the Minister of Higher Education of Slovenia without the Foreign Office American Desk having been told that there is such a program, which will involve certain people, we're not certain who, and without any details I am quite certain that that Yugoslav American Desk officer said, "Do it." The second sentence might be: "You mean you're paying for everything?" And the third one might be: "God, are these guys lucky." Things were changing in Yugoslavia. So that was a tremendously successful program, and it kept me busy, and it was delightful work.

Q: Was the Fulbright program operating in Yugoslavia at that time?

BENSON: No. But on my second tour, being 1979 to 1982, I was the co-president of the Fulbright Commission in Yugoslavia, and earlier served in that position while stationed in Turkey. There's always one from the host country.

Q: Yugoslavia at the time being the only Communist country with a Commission, the others being done by our embassies?

BENSON: That's precisely correct, with Poland being a little bit different. Now, I'm not certain that I can recall exactly what the differences were, and I hope somebody is being interviewed who can. There the relationship was between the embassy committee which would do this in Poland, I believe, and the Ministry of Education or Higher Education, which had an office or had people who constituted liaison with the embassy on this matter.

Q: De facto in Poland, it was working like a bi-national commission.

BENSON: Yes, pretty nearly. The one in Yugoslavia worked well, but there were...at that time Gauver Altman and I were co-presidents. You know him.

Q: I know Altman. He was co-president of the Commission with you. What was his background?

BENSON: This is later on. We're talking about 1979.

Q: We'll come back to it. Could you digress a bit about Bowman? What was his background? Was he career Foreign Service?

BENSON: He was career Foreign Service, a man of extraordinary culture. I think he was Princetonian. He had worked for the WPA (Works Progress Administration) doing--do you recall those great guidebooks to America? He may have written one or two, and it occurs that it might have been Indiana, but I don't recall precisely. A great many people came into the Foreign Service or USIA from the OWI (Office of War Information), some from OSS (Office of Strategic Services), but particularly through OWI.

Q: USIA was really a reincarnation of the old Office of War Information, wasn't it? Now, did Bowman have any background on Yugoslavia before he went there?

BENSON: No, no; in Yugoslavia at that time there was nobody except two other persons, and they were the youngest of the young, who had background in Yugoslavia.

Q: In addition to yourself?

BENSON: In addition to myself. One of them, recently deceased, a very dear friend, had been in the CARE program in Yugoslavia right out of the University of Chicago. He was one of the *wunderkinder* (German: *gifted children*). This was, Philip Arnold, who went to Chicago after his sophomore year in high school.

Q: Under the Robert Hutchins accelerated program there.

BENSON: Remember those days? So when Phil got out, he was a kid, and off he went to Yugoslavia in the CARE program right after the war. UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration) was working there. UNRRA's Director General after the war was Fiorello La Guardia, whose mother, I believe, was born in Trieste when it was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

So he was seen as sort of like a native there. Yugoslavia had a good leg up as far as funding was concerned. So this fellow traveled the country as a young boy. He never spoke the language well. He had a very poor gift for language, but he knew the country well. In January 1957 he joined the Foreign Service, USIA. He went out while I was in IRI. I began giving him a briefing, because he came by for it, which they're supposed to do, then I realized that he knew 90 percent of what I knew, and so we didn't do a briefing, we just became friends.

Q: Other than a couple of people with field experience, could we say you were practically the leading U.S. government expert on Yugoslavia.

BENSON: No. When I first got to Yugoslavia, I was not in the least knowledgeable, but when I got to Yugoslavia and went to Belgrade for this first briefing that I mentioned, the Ambassador was Karl Rankin. People don't remember that name. Karl Rankin.

Karl Rankin was on his last tour as a career Foreign Service Officer. He had been a Foreign Service Officer before the war. He had been assigned to Belgrade when the bombs began to fall on Easter Sunday in 1941. It is Karl Rankin who took the bag of gold--Do you know about the bag of gold? Every embassy is supposed to have doubloons, if you will, so that in dire straits they will be able to pay for services and so on. He took them out of the country. Robert St. John, a war correspondent, wrote a best-selling book From the Land of the Silent People at that time [Ed: published in 1942. St John wrote another book on Yugoslavia in 1948, entitled The Silent People Speak.] about Yugoslavia and Greece at that time and mentioned Karl Rankin making his way south in Yugoslavia with the gold.

Q: Trying to keep ahead of the German army.

BENSON: And he did. He got out with his life and with the gold. For his pains he was assigned to the Far East, captured by the Japanese shortly after Pearl Harbor [December 7, 1941], while

assigned to the Embassy in Manila, and detained by the Japanese until repatriated 21 months later. His wife too, she suffered physically and showed the effects still in 1959-1960. He was a marvelous man.

Q: He was sent back to Belgrade as Ambassador. When did he go back there?

BENSON: Well, he served in Yugoslavia from February 1958 to April 1961. I got there in 1959. He was followed by George Kennan in 1961. He was a great man. He was an old-line Foreign Service Officer. He radiated, as we say colloquially in America today, 'been there, done that' cool, but around the coffee table of an evening talking away on a highball, there is nobody who is more interesting on just about anything, any subject. He was an erudite, as Kennan was. You wouldn't spend too many hours with Kennan talking away at a highball, but with this fellow you would. He was grand, and he knew a great deal about Yugoslavia. I think there were other officers there, Chris Hill's father...

Q: Chris Hill being the current Ambassador to Macedonia.

BENSON: I think he still is the Ambassador to Macedonia while he is also active in Kosovo, and was working with Holbrook and with others. He was in Rambouillet.

Q: What about his father?

BENSON: His father was in the political section in Belgrade when I got there, if not the head of it. I can't remember. There came to be people who were extremely, you know Larry Eagleburger was a junior officer with us in Yugoslavia in 1959 and he was later the Ambassador; he knew the country very well. He may not have traveled it as much as I, but I knew the language well.

Q: On this third tape, first side, we are returning to Ray's tenure in Yugoslavia between 1959 and 1964. I was about to put some questions regarding the general political context of your experience in Yugoslavia. Let's start with the ambassadors whom you worked.

BENSON: Well, over the course of this assignment I worked under Karl Rankin, George Kennan and Charles Elbrick. Rankin was there when I arrived in March 1959. He had been there a while. He remained until Kennan came in 1961. Kennan was certainly there prior to the first conference of the non-aligned nations, which was in the summer of 1961. [Ed: the First NAM Summit Conference was held in Cairo, from 5-12 June 1961. The first Conference of Non-Aligned Heads of State or Government, at which 25 countries were represented, was convened at Belgrade in September 1961.]

Q: That's right. In fact, that was going on when my wife and I first visited Belgrade in August of 1961. What was your impression from where you sat of the Tito regime and its foreign policy?

BENSON: Well, from where I sat, let's say beginning in Zagreb in 1959, I found that the USIA work was no problem, which surprised me. That is to say, whatever we wanted to do within civilized reason, we could do, and that really did surprise me. I think we have touched on the international visitors program in which important people from the two republics that were under

the Zagreb Consulate General, that is, Croatia and Slovenia, would visit the United States. This was not thought of before. That is to say, it was unthinkable before.

Q: Was there a turning point when it became thinkable?

BENSON: Well, I don't really know. Certainly this was one of my first--I think I said this last time--first tasks set before me by the public affairs officer, Heath Bowman. When I set out to visit these people and present the invitations and come back and discuss the program, openness and hospitality was the order of the day. I cannot remember anybody who refused, and if the person would refuse, it was just because of personal circumstances. Exhibits, field exhibits, books to libraries, whatever is the ordinary USIA field programming work could be done without problem. I visited Slovenia. We would drive up about three times in two weeks. It's a short drive, a beautiful drive. I would take one of my staff who was a Slovene, young man, and one of my American staff, and we had a delightful time of it. I made lifelong friends. I'm sorry to say they're all gone now. They were older than I, and they have deceased.

But welcome was warm, and we talked a lot of politics, especially with the news people from Dalo and Tevarish. Dalo was the principal Slovene daily and remains so. Tevarish was the weekly magazine of the Slovenian youth. Tevarish no longer functions. But Dalo was edited by Shinkovitz and Tevarish by Shtoola, and they're both deceased. They were wonderful men.

Now, what did I think of Tito's foreign policy as reflected certainly in the media? There was much to argue about, and we did, but as far as facilitating our work on the ground, we really didn't have a lot of problems. We had to be deft in what we tried to do, but we could do whatever seemed useful to us. I cannot recall a program initiative that Belgrade wanted me to undertake, or that we developed, that was forestalled. I was there during the first big cultural event, Leonard Bernstein coming with the New York Philharmonic, and (Vladimir) Bakarić, then the President of Croatia and a close friend of Tito's, came to the event. Bakarić's father was in charge of the jail in which Tito was imprisoned in the 1930s, while the young Bakarić was becoming a young Communist. In any case, it was a breakthrough. He and his wife came and sat at the head table with Bernstein and his wife. It was a different environment from the one, of course, when I was there as a student in 1952-1953. But one point, the non-aligned movement, which was crystallized at the conference in 1961, was attitudinally already present in 1959. Tito would have warm relations with the West, trade, commerce of various kinds. He looked for loans. He understood early that tourism on the Adriatic coast and in the mountains up toward Italy and Austria could bring millions. It ended up that tourism brought billions. The tourism infrastructure was being developed with loans from the West. But Tito felt that he had to, and there were other countries which had to, find some sort of practical middle ground in the Cold War, if you want to put it, on the one hand the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact on the other hand the West and NATO. And those were the views espoused. That led to the formality which was to the alliance which became the Nonaligned Conference, a standing conference.

Q: Now this was a time when the Sino-Soviet schism was coming to a critical point and Yugoslavia was, so to speak, the anvil on which the Chinese were hammering out their critique of the Russians, just as Albania was the anvil on which the Russians were hammering out their critique of China. How was this reflected on the ground in your experience?

BENSON: Well, in my experience practically as the public affairs officer in Zagreb and later as the assistant and then finally the information officer and press attaché at Belgrade, very little. There were no Chinese or Soviet diplomatic representatives, consular representatives, in Zagreb. There were in Belgrade. I have very little to do with them, very, very little, and in fact not too much to do with too many diplomatic representatives. USIA had its own special portfolio and Yugoslavia was open to USIA work. I knew the language. Meeting with media people, which was very much a part of my job, to talk with them about various issues of the day, international issues and so on, was easy. It was just very, very simple. Of course, back to your basic question, China's support of Albania was anathema to Yugoslavia. Whatever China's relations with the Soviet Union were, that issue was more distant geographically. Albania's collapse was forestalled by the Chinese.

Q: How?

BENSON: Yugoslavia's vague hope of being able to pick up dying Albania, as it had though it would after the Second World War. Yugoslav and Albanian partisans had close relations. Albania was in a sense a client state of Yugoslavia. The Soviet Union put a stop to that.

Q: Did you have any experience in Kosovo at that time or any indication of tension regarding it?

BENSON: No. I visited Kosovo when I was a student in 1953. I spent a couple of very interesting days in Pristina and at the Gračanica Monastery nearby. I did not visit Kosovo, of course, while I was assigned in Zagreb, and later I did not visit Kosovo out of Belgrade. I visited Kosovo, in fact, many times while I was assigned to Yugoslavia from 1979 to 1982, but that might wait for chronologically a later part of this interview, not in the 1960s.

It occurred to me, Bill, that, all of the excitement of recollecting old times, I would be in error, if I were not to add a little bit anyway to my experiences that student year. It's not to make this a personal reminiscence but to try to single out items of special interest, it seems to me, and those which relate to my later experience in Yugoslavia, especially with certain persons. It occurred to me that I should speak of Ivo Curčin, should speak of Corinne Spencer, among a few others.

Corinne Spencer, when I arrived in Zagreb in 1952, was the librarian at the American Consulate. She was one of the most remarkable persons I have ever met, and one should give her credit somehow for what she did, and I will pause to speak a bit about her. She as a young widow, a Texan, came to New York City and became the librarian of the art library at Columbia University. I think it was the Schermerhorn Library, but I will find that out. After Pearl Harbor she announced that she simply had to be helpful somehow and was brought into the Office of War Information, where she did library preparatory work, so that when in the richness of time the war was over and we opened libraries overseas. Indeed, we opened them in East Europe, we had a USIS library in Bucharest and we had one in Budapest certainly, and she was involved in setting up both of them and moved to Budapest. These were nascent information centers of the kind the USIS developed richly over the years. In 1948, that was the year Yugoslavia was cast out of the Cominform, there was a general tightening in Eastern Europe, as you recall. There were trials of so-called Tito-ites in East Europe and so on. Along with all of the above, the USIS

libraries were terminated, and Corinne Spencer was given the responsibility of packing up the Romanian and the Hungarian libraries, i.e. from Bucharest and Budapest, which she did. She got out of Hungary with crates full of materials on the train. I shouldn't say 'got out' in the sense that she was being pursued; she was allowed to pack it up and bring it out. And she offloaded all of this in Novi Sad, the capital, if you want to put it that way, of the Voivodina autonomous region in Yugoslavia, which is close to the Hungarian border. There the reading room in Novi Sad was begun, opened, by Corinne Spencer with many of the books from the Romanian and Hungarian USIS libraries.

Q: Was this all material in English or Hungarian and Romanian?

BENSON: No, no, no, these were USIS libraries in English. That reading room remained for many, many years until it was terminated, I think, in the 1990s for budgetary reasons, an absolutely ridiculous development. But the USIS decided that all of the materials Corinne had wouldn't fit in Novi Sad, and so they asked her to continue on to Zagreb, and so she continued on to Zagreb with the other crates of materials from Bucharest and Budapest. This, I know--I will go ahead a little bit--because in 1960 in my first full year in Yugoslavia as Branch Public Affairs Officer, the post was inspected. Heath Bowman, whom I refer to as the Country Public Affairs Officer, sent me a telex saying that inspectors will look in all of your closets, they will look on all of your shelves, and they will ask you to open all cartons and crates to see if you have not squirreled away Agency publications, books and so on, which you don't really need and are in this way wasting money.

So I began to look around this large area which we had under control and discovered two huge trunks in the basement which, it turned out, had been brought in by Corinne Spencer in 1949 probably. I will put in parenthetically now, but I'll come to it in a minute more fully. Corinne Spencer was still the librarian after all these years. She was upstairs in her office, and I went up to her and said, "What in heaven's name is all this? It's sheet music." "Oh," said she, "the sheet music, yes. You know, we had music libraries in Bucharest and Budapest." I said, "Corinne, these are enormous trunks and they're full of sheet music." "Well," she said, "the OWI and then USIS decided that we should have the sheet music of all works written by American composers, classical music." I said, "All?" She said, "All, up through the 1940s." And we later cataloged this collection and gave it to the Zagreb Conservatory. It was indeed all classical music of any worth written by any American composer up until the war.

Q: It's amazing. Were there similar collections held at other posts around the world?

BENSON: I have no idea. I don't know how far the OWI... The OWI concentrated its efforts in Europe. That's where the war was. Heaven knows, they might have sent it to Japan too. I don't know. And maybe there was a PAO who didn't have the same love of music who said, "Oh my God, we must get rid of this." But we didn't. We used it and we got rid of the empty trunks. Now, Corinne Spencer, when I was a student then in Zagreb in 1952 and 1953, was extraordinarily friendly to me and the other American student from Chicago. She would give us dinner every week and slipped me the odd box of Knorr soups and oatmeal on which I lived from her commissary run to Belgrade. But she introduced me--and this was extremely important--to a

young man, a young graduate student in English, Ivo Curčin. Through him I met a group of young graduate students.

Now, even though Curčin is now teaching, I think, in Canada--and there are other names of people whom I met, which I will add when we do the editing, because they all, Granco Vookmeer and Marian Nova, Amira Hertzog, they all became important in academic life in Zagreb later. Curčin's father, Milan Curčin, whom I came to know very well, he's a very much older man; Ivo was the child of his and his wife's later years, was the editor of a magazine, a journal, called Nova Europa, published in Zagreb. Milan Curčin and the Curčin family were Serbs who had lived in Croatia. As you know, there were groups of them who did for hundreds and hundreds of years. There were Croats, there were Croatians, Serbs from Croatia. During the war the Curčin family was befriended by the sculptor, Ivan Mestrovic, and lived in his palatial marble home in Split. The Germans did not trouble Mestrovic and, therefore the Curčins escaped any punitive action by the Ustashe [Ed: Croatian Revolutionary Organization, or Croatian fascists allied with the German occupation], which might have happened despite the fact that Ivo Curčin was one of the original Yugoslavs. By that I mean that the Nova Europa journal and the Nova Europa movement began before the First World War when the concept of Yugoslavia was fully developed intellectually. There were Czechs under Manfred Rieger and Croats under (Catholic) Bishop Juraj Strossmayer and Ljudevit Gaj, secular, who espoused the concept of the unity of South Slavs. It was heavily derived from the German nationalist, romantic movements of the early 19th century, and it is no surprise that Rieger, who is of Czech descent but of German background, and Strossmayer, who is a Croat, and the Bishop--by the way, Bishop Strossmayer left many progeny in Zagreb and achieved great importance in their cultural life of Croatia--these were men who were quite connected to German intellectual circles. Milan Curčin, of course, was not, but he was a great friend of Wickham Steed and the elder (Robert) Seton-Watson. These are people, along with others from Great Britain, who, unaffected by the German romantic movement, felt that the Yugoslavs, for good reason as they thought of the development of the Balkans after the war, they felt that South Slavs should be united in one country. The Nova Europa group had an observer's status, I was led to believe--I'm not sure, I've done no research on this--in Versailles. Certainly Wickham Steed and the elder Seton-Watson were there advising the British delegation on what should be done with the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Well, Milan Curčin was a grand old man, and it was a great honor to be admitted into his study once a month for a chat with him. He and I and Ivo would talk a bit from time to time. It remains a precious memory.

Corinne Spencer ran a salon in Zagreb --that's the only thing I can call it. She came to know all of the important people, the old aristocrats, the academics, the cultural people. This was the most creative contact person, which would describe it in vulgar terms. She had a grand piano. She had opera evenings. Singers would appear and do leder (German: songs). Nobody I have ever met in my experience had a life like Corinne Spencer. When I was there as a student, she lived in a suite in the Esplanade Hotel. When I came back in 1959, she was living in the Mestrovic Apartment in the upper town of Zagreb, the apartment overlooking the courtyard and his old studio. It was a huge, huge apartment full of gorgeous tile stoves. The place was heated with wood; therefore, it required a staff of servants which she, who had her own funds, paid for, and the place was toasty warm and it was simply gorgeous. Thus, when I came in as a young Branch Public Affairs Officer, Corinne Spencer, who welcomed me as her boss now about as warmly as anybody

could. She and my wife became intimate friends. She introduced me to every single important person in the cultural, intellectual and, if you want to put it, the old aristocratic world of Zagreb. It was simply amazing.

In later assignments I will go back to my friends of my student year. We really were close. We met several times a week. We met especially in the quarters of the Supreme Court of Croatia where young Granco Vookmeer was an assistant of a judge. He was getting his Ph.D. in international affairs and international law. We would meet there, and he would gather up once a week all of the international editions of the British newspapers, because they were printed--you may have seen this--on very fine paper, and this fine paper was worth a lot of money in Bosnia because they use it as cigarette paper. So every charwoman and the other people who cleaned up the offices of the Supreme Court of Croatia would gather the newspapers for him. Once a week we would gather there to chat, and he would make off with the newspapers. We became close friends. I ran into Granco when he had a fellowship at Harvard later, and we palled around in New York for a while. Here comes the crucial point. As I returned to the country in 1959 driving from Italy to Belgrade--I mentioned this before--I stayed two nights in Zagreb and I reserved one for myself to meet with my old friends. No one was home except for Marian Horvat, who was married to a woman, he met at my farewell party in 1953. He met with me. He said, "Let's have a drink together." I went to his apartment, and he said the following has happened: "The UDBA"--that is the Yugoslav secret police--"have been to see all of us, Ivo, Granco, and me, and they told us that you were returning and they would like us to resume our friendship, and they would like all of us, therefore, to report at least once a week on you and your activities and we had decided we would like not to do this, and we want you to know that it kills us, but we think we should not be meeting with you. All of us have our own paths to go." They were getting their doctorates. Marian was in radio and TV. He was very handsome, had a gorgeous voice, and he was an announcer and so on. "UDBA is convinced that you are from the CIA because during your student year it was reported to them..." --you know the local employees of the consulate would always be reporting, or at least many would, from time to time. It was the thing that they had to do to get permission to work for the Americans. Some of them did it with lust, and some of them did it unwillingly.

Q: This is, of course, a security weakness in the common American practice of filling a lot of low-level embassy and consulate jobs with nationals of the host country.

BENSON: Well, there were tens of them at the embassy. You couldn't have Americans in that number. Furthermore, you needed to have total bilinguality. But it was reported that I was frequently in the office of Consul Lou Bowden, and Consul Lou Bowden, it was thought, ran the CIA effort in Zagreb. Certain habits lead to this conclusion. Local employees were forbidden to cross the threshold and to walk into Lou Bowden's office. If they had papers for him, they were to be put on a table just to the inside of the door. They were to tell him, "Here they are," and when he left, he would lock the door.

All of this I hear from Marian Horvat, but "you"--meaning me--"were in there all the time chatting with him." Well, of course I was. Lou Bowden was graciousness itself. He was a graduate of the Russian Institute. His major professor had been Phil Mosley, and he had worked on Albania, as I recall it. He was a great guy, and he was not probably disinterested in what I was

doing. He envied me the opportunity to run around Zagreb as I did. He was a sublime linguist, an absolutely special kind of guy. Married a Croatian girl, I should say, and it sort of derailed his career. "Well," I said to Marian, "this will pain me deeply" --and it really did--"but nothing can be done and I do understand, and it would make me terribly uncomfortable. Of course, I suspect that they would have been aware of my coming back, and so on and so forth," and so we figuratively shed a tear, and that was the end of that. I met them by chance briefly, these old friends, from time to time, and sort of the warm welcome was exhausted that one night on my way in.

Corinne Spencer superintended a huge library and cultural program that I've suggested. Back in 1952 when I came in, her boss was Tess Mravince, another OWI person, Slavian descent, from Pittsburgh, theater person and a wild woman--she had all kinds of Croatian boyfriends. Zagreb at that time had the residue of OWI preparations for what they expected to be the continuation of their plans in East Europe. It had a mobile film unit in 1952 and 1953. I forget the name of the man who ran it. It was just what I say. It had shelves inside stocked with cans of 16-mm film and a projector or two. It had screens which could be set up, a local employee, and off would go this guy into the countryside, having made arrangements in advance, and set up this screen in a town square and showed them films of anything from O'Flaherty's great documentaries to OWI films on American history. This effort died, thank God, before I got back in 1959. Zagreb was a very, very busy post. It was in 1953 that it moved from the offices of the nationalized Standard Oil of Indiana to the building which it is still in now as the embassy. But enough on that.

In 1959 I arrived there, and I think is to be mentioned in this oral history it should not be forgotten that the USIA had singled out Zagreb as a place to which they would send junior officer trainees. Zagreb was the only East European consulate. There was a bit of a thing in Poznan which became a consulate, and there was finally a USIS officer there.

But let me go back to telling the USIA story a little bit. I said that the Agency, USIA, had singled out Zagreb to be the site of junior officer training because it was the one consulate in East Europe at that time that had a fully functioning USIS program. While this went on, which it did for years, the number of USIA officers who passed through Zagreb as junior officer trainees would define the Agency's later elites. It began with Philip Arnold [Apr 1957-Feb 1958], it went to Jock (John) Shirley [July 1958-Apr 1959], (Jaroslav) Jerry Verner [Nov 1959-Feb 1961], Mike Eisenstadt, (Myron) Mike Hoffmann [Aug 1964-May 1967], Bruce Koch [Dec 1961-June 1965], Dell Pendergrast [Sept 1966-May 1969], John Kordeck [Feb 1965-Aug 1966]. I am not certain, but I think that might run out the string. Now, this went on for years and years. Every one of these became a leader in USIS, and I was graced while I was there with Jerry Verner and Mike Eisenstadt. Jim Conely [Oct 1959-June 1962], who came to work with me, was one year away from being a junior officer trainee, which I think he enjoyed in Latin America somewhere [Rio de Janeiro Aug 1957-Sept 1959]. I thought I would put that on the record, and we'll work that up a bit, because it was an extremely intelligent concept for USIA.

Q: Did many of these people who trained in Zagreb then go on to USIA posts, or diplomatic posts for that matter, elsewhere in Eastern Europe?

BENSON: Let's see. Jerry Verner went from Zagreb to Poznan. He later was in Warsaw. He later was in Moscow on two occasions. He was the Public Affairs Officer in Kabul years before the troubles there. Phil Arnold was in Poland and became Public Affairs Officer in Vienna and in London and in Bonn. Jock Shirley rose to be the Counselor of the USIA, the highest ranking Foreign Service position, nonpolitical position, within USIA. He finished his career as Ambassador to Tanzania. He served in Poland too. John Kordeck served in Belgrade later and in Poland. Bruce Koch became the Public Affairs Officer in Prague at one point. Mike Hoffmann served in Belgrade on several occasions. He served with me there. Mike Eisenstadt--by the way, who was born in Danzig--I cannot recall whether he served elsewhere in East Europe. I think he did serve in Poland.

Q: I hope some of these people have been or will be interviewed for our same Oral History project. Anything more about Belgrade from 1961 to 1964?

BENSON: I'll go back to Zagreb prior to going to Belgrade. I have, I think, a point to make that is stimulated by your question about liberalization and easing up in Yugoslavia, which is that when I came to Zagreb in 1959 through 1961 and indeed in Belgrade in 1962 through 1964, basic USIS contact work was absolutely open. And what does that mean? It means news media, print and other news media, oral elements of cultural life welcomed contact with me and my staff. Now, this doesn't mean that the news media, the newspaper people, would reflect our long conversations, sometimes very confrontational, in what they wrote, or that they would come to our offices and ask for material because I had been so convincing or my press people had been so convincing that they felt that they should like to publish this. That didn't happen, but the exploration of our views and the pleasure with which they polemicized back and forth, debated, was patent. For us young Foreign Service Officers it was terribly exciting. Some of these were extraordinarily intelligent people. Very many in the media--they were substantially older than I--were heroes of the partisan war, very convinced socialists.

Q: And your debates were conducted in Serbo-Croatian?

BENSON: Generally. At that point in the 1950s and 1960s there were not too many who knew much English at all.

Q: Remarkable that there are enough Americans fluent enough in a language like that to have that kind of energy.

BENSON: Well, God bless the Foreign Service Institute (FSI), which I never attended, by the way, for any of my languages, but people who worked with me did and, of course, not everyone spoke it equally well. Take a guy like Jerry Verner who knew Russian very well, he was a Russian Institute graduate, worked with Geroid Robinson. He knew Russian very well and had been on the great Sokolniki exhibit of 1959 [Ed: Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev and Vice President Richard Nixon officially opened the exhibition and later engaged in the "kitchen debate."], came to Zagreb and spoke Serbo-Croatian almost immediately. He came directly from Moscow in 1959, by the way, wearing the blazer of the exhibit, which he wore till it fell off his shoulders. He spoke Serbo-Croatian very quickly, with a Russian accent all the rest of his life. Not to be *ad hominem* about their abilities in Serbo-Croatian, but, yes, they could, and those who

couldn't, faded from the scene quickly. But most of these people had had a year of FSI Serbo-Croatian, where the courses, by the way, were run by the Serbs, who felt that those who went off to serve in Croatia were deviating from the main path which should lead to Belgrade.

But here in Zagreb from the very beginning, as I point out what was there in 1952 and 1953, Zagreb was a center of USIS activity, surrounded by inquiring UDBA officers perhaps. In fact, I came to know two very well whose assignment was to track the library, and one of them, who became a very good friend actually later, the head of tourism in Croatia, now retired, said it was the most beautiful assignment he could have imagined. He, as a young student leader, volunteered to be the person who would go to the USIS library and read and observe who came to use the library. Finally they decided they had to move, and they did move into the building.

Q: At that time in the early 1950s when Tito had broken with Stalin but had not eased up that much domestically, did people get in trouble for evidence of too much pro-Americanism?

BENSON: Well, that's a good question, and the answer has to be not exactly nuanced, but there are many levels that one has to consider. If you were like this young fellow who was in watching the library--his name was Jargo Kralyovich--and you hoped for a career, you want to move up and you want to use the library and improve your English--his English became superb, of course--the only way to do it is the way he did it, because it would become known. Let's take another scenario: Jargo Kralyovich, a good student at Zagreb University, is seen frequenting the U.S. library all the time reading the magazines and the newspapers. It would not only not advance his career prospects, but it would kill them. If you were an ordinary citizen or--let's put it another way--an ordinary student at Zagreb University who wanted, or whose family wanted you, to make your way somehow or other but definitely not by joining the system and rising within it, they would come in and use the library. The consulate sponsored English language courses, which the consular officers would help teach, and people would pay to attend, and Croats who knew English very well and--. When I got there in 1959, these classes were booming. In fact, I would go in and speak from time to time and try to enunciate then better than I do now. The fee was minimal, but there was a fee. We got textbooks from USIA, which had an English language teaching division back in the States.

Back to your question, people who had a mixed background--and this gets to be complicated--with pre-war and then Ustashe period background, not that they were Ustashe but what did they do during that period. Now it's after the war, and these are older people, some of Corinne's friends. Now they are visiting the American library all the time. Whatever they were doing, be it simple administrative job or in a store--some of these wealthy aristocrats would--not wealthy by old-time aristocrats, they were not wealthy anymore--would be salespeople, especially in downtown stores. There was some tourism, and these people knew many languages and were highly educated. There were decisions that everybody had to make at that time in 1952, 1953, 1954 and so on. In 1959 and 1960 when we returned, Bill, things were substantially looser. In 1952 and 1953 when I was there, they had practically sumptuary laws. There was certain behavior which was bourgeois. Women should not use make-up or lipstick. Women should not have silk stockings.

Q: So they were still in the aftermath of the Revolution at that point?

BENSON: Absolutely. In fact, one of the hot black market items around town was this kind of thing, powder, make-up, lipstick, silk stockings. I did a little bit of that. Playing cards were forbidden.

Q: Like the Puritans in 17th century England.

BENSON: Well, there you are. Playing cards were forbidden because the government decided anti-regime activity could be fostered in the re-creation of the several Zagreb bridge clubs which before the war had been very well known. They had true clubs where the aristocracy would meet in wood-paneled rooms and play bridge. You could get a great deal of money for a deck of playing cards, which I managed to sell a few of. By 1959 and 1960 all this nonsense was finished.

Q: Was the turning point the Soviet repression of the Hungarians in 1956 and the kind of a second break between Moscow and Belgrade?

BENSON: I think you're right, the turning point, but, you know, it was incremental. It's quantity and quality. That's what was going on. In 1948 Yugoslavia was thrown out of the Cominform.

Q: Having been the most radical of all the East European countries up till then.

BENSON: Well, they were not yet the most radical, I don't think. They were the most obstreperous in a certain way because Tito had the authority and power, which in the other East European countries was still forming, so he could command the country. One of the things he did not want to have happen is the Soviets' commanding it, and this is a long story and perhaps a little bit aside, though you know all of it or a lot of it and I know not all of it but a lot of it. The break with the Cominform, being thrown out of the family, was a tremendous shock to the Yugoslav leadership, and for a period of time, to go briskly over this period in Yugoslav history, they tried to in fact answer all of the criticisms which the Cominform resolution and the polemic with the Soviet Union had visited on them. So there was an enormous push to industrialize, very unwise investment decisions, I mean six steel plants in different republics. They needed two for the whole country maybe; one might have been better.

Q: But with Yugoslav federalism, every republic had to have one.

BENSON: You've got it, exactly. You see, once you began this and you're trying to get it through the councils of State at the center, then you have to pay attention because investment decisions have to be made, money has to be invested, and you end up splitting your attention because of the need to compensate for the various national voices at the table. That was a very important thrust led by Slovenian Boris Kidric. Then collectivization, and there was a forced drive to collectivize. I think we may have referred earlier to the four stages of the Zadruga.

The Yugoslav collective farm, *culhaus*, the stages being distinguished primarily by the relationship of the owners of the land to that land. In the highest form you gave it up and had no income which was proportionate to the amount of land which you contributed. These two moves,

certainly the latter, almost ruined Yugoslavia. In 1952 when I was a student there, there had the, epochal for them, Sixth Congress. If you would say to an old Yugoslav--God knows where they are now--I was in Zagreb during the Sixth Congress, "(speaking in Serbian) I was in Zagreb during the Sixth Congress." "Oh!" Instant recognition. This is the one in which, led by (Milovan) Djilas and with (Edvard) Kardelj, the Slovene leader, and (Vladimir) Dedijer in the lead, they began to talk about loosening up and about developing in the direction of what we came to know as worker self-management, which we're not going to go into here in any great detail.

Q: Had American military aid or any gestures of supporting Yugoslavs' independence against Moscow taken effect by 1952?

BENSON: Yes, a notable story, it seems to me, in American post-Second War diplomatic history was the action of our ambassador in Belgrade, (George V.) Allen [Ed: who served from January 1950 to March 1953]. He was the ambassador whose reporting telegrams on the break, i.e., Yugoslavia's being cast out of the Cominform and the reaction within Yugoslavia, were crucial in convincing the people in Washington that this was going to be for real. It was a complicated situation because Yugoslav leadership was in a state of absolute shock. It's been widely described. You know, they were very loyal and orthodox Communists and were being told that they had not behaved well and, as I said, began a very important for them and critical and almost ruinous drive to industrialize and collectivize. But Allen saw in what was going on and felt in the future that it was inevitable that Yugoslavia would in fact move further and further and further away from the Soviet Union and that it was in peril, and that to help this movement away we had to help them. Now, at that time we essentially turned to using PL 480, Public Law 480 through the Commodity Credit Corporation, so food supplies and commodities, cotton and other bulk commodities, but food supplies, oil, wheat. This was crucial. Indeed there was the beginning of some kind of military relationship.

Q: This was still under the Truman Administration with Acheson as Secretary of State, which would have ended in January 1953.

BENSON: Oh yes. Very intelligent and very effective.

Q: Was there any cooling of this American effort as the Eisenhower Administration with Dulles as Secretary of State took over? You would have been in Zagreb at the time.

BENSON: I didn't detect any cooling. I don't think there was any cooling. In fact, I think that Yugoslavia was moving more and more to loosening up internal...

Q: I mean any cooling on the American side.

BENSON: I got it, but what I'm getting at is that we were aware and reporting from our diplomats was, I'm convinced, good. Again, this is a bigger subject than we might be able to cover here. Despite the pressure placed on the relationship between the United States and Yugoslavia by the nonaligned efforts of Tito, which he argued were supposed to be creating a very elaborate and solid and substantial center between the United States, NATO on the one hand and the Warsaw Pact on the other. Turned out that in crucial issues, i.e., UN votes,

UNESCO votes and in all UN organs, the non-aligned, Yugoslavia voted with the Eastern Bloc. While they were liberalizing at home; Yugoslavs now had passports; they traveled freely; they were acquiring loans and building up their tourism; opening the country; allowing their people to go out for study...

Q: What about the three ambassadors that you worked under in this first tour in Yugoslavia? How would you characterize them as to their respective styles and accomplishments?

BENSON: Well, as we mentioned previously Rankin was on his last tour of duty had served in Belgrade in 1941, and made his way south to Greece in front of the Germans. When I met him, Rankin was a very vigorous fellow. We spent a long three or four or five days together in Split when the flagship of the Sixth Fleet visited. By the way, that's another aspect you might keep in mind to illustrate the relations between the United States and Yugoslavia. The flagship of the Sixth Fleet was berthed in Villefranche in France to the east of Nice in a beautiful harbor, and it had called the Sixth Fleet into Rijeka soon after the war and not since. I don't know if the visit in Split that I'm referring to was the very first, but it might have been the second. In any case, this was a very noticed diplomatic move by Yugoslavia, inviting the Sixth Fleet with all the sailors and the officers. Protocol was very, very heavy. The Ambassador always would go down to the coast, the Consul General from Zagreb, very many of us, would join. I went down with a whole staff of officers in a hotel to set up a mimeograph machine, and we wrote press releases on every single event which took place, however minor, in the sequence of visits, basketball games and volleyball games between the shore-based and crew-based teams, and these we sent out throughout the country. I had a photographer with me, and the ship also provided a photographer, and we could use the ship's darkroom facilities. We wrote captions and sent them out all over, and they were published, at least a picture and a caption. They usually ignored our stories. There was much protocol and toasts between the Yugoslavs and the Americans. Admiral Anderson, later the Ambassador in Portugal, a submariner, gave a toast in which he irritated the Yugoslavs--it was this very occasion--by speaking of peace "**with justice, and I mean justice.**" The Yugoslavs could have easily said, "Of course, what kind of peace could there be without justice? But they took it as a slap in the face, which is very much what he intended. The protocol dinner was after that a rather cold one. But over the years I went down to the coast for five or six of these visits. [Ed: The USS Des Moines, flagship of the U.S. Sixth Fleet, visited Split October 17-20, 1958. Vice Admiral George W. Anderson, Commander of the Sixth Fleet, was on board.]

Q: This was all in the course of the early 1960s?

BENSON: Yes, yes. Finally it wasn't only the flagship. The next visit, I think the summer of 1960--yes, it was the next visit--was also in Split, and the USS Forrestal came in--that's a nuclear aircraft carrier--surrounded by its acolyte destroyers. That's a big deal. It came into the inner harbor of Split. In any event, Rankin at this first visit, we spent much time together. He came a day early. He had everybody into his suite at the hotel. He was a regular guy, very soft, very old style diplomat. He felt at home in Yugoslavia. He was always recollecting the days when he would walk down to the central square in Belgrade, i.e., 1939-1940, and go shopping for berries in the spring and that sort of thing. He impacted little on what we did in Zagreb. I don't think he bothered the public affairs officer at all. For an old-line Foreign Service Officer, you have to think of it, we're now in 1959-1960. USIA was a strange beast.

Kennan had his, I wouldn't say problems, but he was bemused at all of these people. We had more people on the ground than five embassies in the pre-Second World War era. Kennan remembered the days, and he had pictures to prove it, when all the senior officers of the State Department would line up on the steps of Old State and have their picture taken. That was a Foreign Service in which everybody knew everybody's middle initial and pedigree. Now he had a staff of USIA officers which was larger than all of that. But Kennan had remarkable attributes, of a personal nature, which we became familiar with in Zagreb as he made his initial calls.

Q: Kennan had already taken over while you were stationed in Zagreb?

BENSON: Yes, he came in April 1961 and we moved to Belgrade that year in time for the July 4th weekend. In any case, it was warm. Ted Montgomery was still there. He was the Consul General in Zagreb. For some reason that I never understood, and I never inquired, Ted Montgomery did the minimum and a little bit less than that to host his new boss, Ambassador Kennan, coming into town with his wife and youngest son. They stayed at the Esplanade Hotel. They were there for a couple of days. Montgomery visited, as I recall it, Bakarić, the head of state, and Holjevac, who was the Mayor of Zagreb, and possibly another minister or two, I don't recall, but there was no social event, no proper social event, to welcome the Ambassador. He said to me, "Why don't you take him around." So I said, "What do you mean 'take him around'?" "Well," he said, "there is Otočec, which is in Slovenia just across the border, which is a beautiful place, a monastery on an island in a river where one would go for lunch. It's close to Croatia. And then, you know, there are the museums." So Kennan quickly understood obviously what was going on and what was not going on, was delighted to see a little bit of Zagreb in a way that he wouldn't be able to if he were full of protocol. So we went up to Otočec and spent a lovely afternoon.

Kennan was a very 19th century man in certain respects. He always traveled with a little case with India ink and several pens and a drawing pad. I mean it was real professional paper. Whenever he would have the time and would see a sight, generally an architectural embellishment, a gargoyle or what have you, which he thought would be interesting, he would stop and draw it and label it. So he sat at the luncheon table in Otočec and did the gargoyles and the rain gutters, and so on, very content with this warm day. We went to the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb, where I knew the curators, and he was greeted very, very warmly. It was in the upper town in the old ancestral home of the Kulmer clan, Graf Kulmer, and the young Kulmer lived elsewhere. He was a modern artist. He was not there that day. I discovered that Kennan is color blind but goes to museums all the time with his wife, who would describe the colors. Now, how Kennan, who was color blind, would be able to relate the value in the etching or painting of green to yellow I do not know, but he insisted on this. It knocked the Yugoslav host out, it really did, that he cared so much that he would insist on this and that his comments were so thoughtful. We had a fine time.

Q: What was the Yugoslav reaction to the election of John Kennedy, who was very popular in Western Europe?

BENSON: Well, the election of John Kennedy was very popular, and John Kennedy personally was very popular for reasons which are familiar to you. You know, he somehow had an impact. He came through to people, especially in Europe, very, very easily. This is especially true of his last months, the last six or seven months. The Bay of Pigs was from the Yugoslav point of view a disaster, not because the American effort failed, but because in their view and the newspapers' they were absolutely livid about it all; it should never have been attempted. The missile crisis was something else again, because it's once again Cuba, with whom Yugoslavia had warm relations up to a point. Yugoslav relations weren't like the Soviet Union's, with whom Cuba was allied, but the guilty party for having initiated the whole thing was clearly the Soviet Union, and the Yugoslavs thought that was absolutely, shall we say, risky is to underplay it. It ended well. But the captivating aspect of Kennedy's international attitudes were manifested in his last six or seven months or so typified by his American University graduation speech that led to the nuclear atmospheric test ban treaty. And then there was his 1963 visit to Germany. That had several aspects. I'm not sure now in retrospect how the Yugoslavs pieced the whole thing out. There was the June 26, 1963 speech in Berlin which was very confrontational, or had a lot of confrontational moments, shall we say, and that was...

Q: That was the "I am a Berliner" speech.

BENSON: Yes, the "Ich bin ein Berliner" speech. And there was a speech in Frankfurt at the Frauenkirche, which was the church which played such a role in 1848, which was more peaceful in its intent and message. But finally Tito was the last official visitor whom Kennedy hosted in Washington before he went to Dallas. It was a trip in November, and I was on it. I was sent by the public affairs officer, who was then Walter Roberts, and I was a press attaché assigned to accompany the Yugoslav press corps or those Yugoslav press types who would be sent over. There were a few who were stationed in the United States. Several of them were friends. We had a wonderful time together and for as long as they lived.

Tito's visit was highly and widely reported in Yugoslavia. Daily articles in each newspaper. We had newsmen from Slovenia, Croatia, and Serbia; and then there were the news agencies and so on. A grand time was had by all.

There were demonstrations in New York. As a matter of fact, the trip was cut. He was supposed to go from Williamsburg, or from an airport near Williamsburg, which we visited, to the West Coast. It was suspected that on the West Coast there was good evidence that émigré communities were preparing a very hostile reception. Well out of my range of sight and earshot, the decision was made that he would not go to the West Coast. Tito became ill, diplomat illness, and remained in Williamsburg an extra day and a half, which was absolutely delightful. I was surrounded by the Yugoslav press corps who had nothing to do, so we did tourism and drank a lot of coffee and we might have had a few drinks. And then we went to New York. It was at the Waldorf Astoria. That was part of the schedule, but they added a day to it, and the émigré community in New York, various organizations, demonstrated, but were kept--you know the regulation, I don't know what it is--100 feet or 100 yards away. Police barricades were there, and the trip ended well.

Q: Who were the protestors in California and New York, Croatian Americans?

BENSON: That's what it was mostly. I'm sure there were others, but that's what they were. It was a good visit, and the reporting back home, I was told, didn't emphasize this negative aspect. So when Kennedy died, which was very shortly thereafter, there was national mourning, but that wasn't unique to Yugoslavia. This was so in other countries.

Q: Could you say anything more about Kennan's tenure as ambassador?

BENSON: Well, Kennan tended, I think, shall we say, to personalize matters, and I believe that he felt a little disappointed at the fact that Yugoslavia was associating with the unaligned movement, even beginning it and hosting the first conference of the unaligned, which he believed was really a movement which was not so centrist after all. If you took the votes of Yugoslavia and of the other unaligned in the UN, you would see that they were almost 100 percent against the positions proposed and actions proposed by the West. This was very unpleasant for Kennan, who thought that he could have an effect on this, to move their position a little more, shall we say, to the true center. But that never did happen.

Q: I wondered how Kennan got along with Tito, because they were such contrasting personalities.

BENSON: Well, they certainly were contrasting personalities. Kennan had a very alert sense of humor, but he was basically rather dour and quiet. He was not a *bon vivant*, and Tito was. I really don't know how they got along together. It was not a country when you exchanged drinks privately once a week. I think he knew him. I am not certain what language they spoke. You know, Kennan was truly and totally bilingual in German and in Russian, and so was Tito in those two languages. Kennan may have been equally fluent in French, but Tito, who knew a lot of French, didn't speak it really.

We organized one evening for Tito, the USIS office did, on behalf of George Kennan celebrating John Glenn's circling the globe. USIA, NASA put together a film on his journey. It was beautifully done, and a private showing was offered to Tito, and he thought that would be neat. So we translated the narrative text into Serbo-Croatian, and we went to the so-called White Palace, which is the home in which he lived in Belgrade, and in the private auditorium they had there Kennan and some other higher officers of the embassy were greeted by Tito and various of his colleagues. I was up in the balcony overlooking this auditorium with sound equipment and a text, and I read the narration in Serbo-Croatian. I have this document still, signed by Tito and by John Glenn. That was a very warm evening. Tito was a *bon vivant*, and he was delighted at this courtesy of bringing over staff and the film and the film projector and projectionist and all of that. He had drinks and a reception for this small group--I was not included--later. It was a fine evening.

Q: How did Kennan get along with Kennedy? Any impression there? I think Kennan was appointed by Eisenhower in his tenure.

BENSON: I don't really know how they got along actually. I saw no reflection of it.

Q: What about Ambassador Elbrick?

BENSON: Elbrick came toward the end of my tour, in January 1964. He was a total professional, a tall, elegant man. Not that Kennan wasn't socially inclined, but Elbrick was the kind of diplomat who loved to have people over, other diplomats and so on. It didn't involve me much. But one was conscious of a very lively ambassador. I think he had very realistic expectations. I think Kennan may have had slightly more hopeful expectations of what effect an ambassador could have. I think in Kennan's case he was hopeful of the effect he could have. I think Elbrick didn't see his role as being so much a prime mover on the ground because of his person. He was a very fine fellow, Elbrick.

Q: Did you feel, with these close contacts with the Zagreb and Belgrade media people, that, even though they would not reflect agreement with you in what they wrote or said publicly, you were laying down a basis of understanding of American viewpoints and background of American efforts?

BENSON: We certainly did feel that. We made materials available to them too, speeches, texts, this or that. What I think was equally important is that attitudinally we show them what American-style openness was. We were interested in them because of what they were, because they had a rich history. The best Foreign Service Officers were that kind. We would go to the theater and talk about it with them, and so on, and would come back again and again for discussions, learning as much as we were trying to preach.

Q: Don't you find that this openness is often a factor of attractiveness in the American approach that would be appreciated in many different countries?

BENSON: I think so. It's at the basis of what the USIA set out to do through this enormous structure--not enormous but I should say very well integrated structure. Our diplomats who are not in USIA also, it seems to me, although they were frequently very busy at a very official level with foreign offices and ministries of economics and foreign trade and all of that, but they were likewise bringing abroad this attitude toward life. This is the personal end of it. Much of this, I pause to say, is going by the boards these days as overseas contacts are technologized. The very exciting years of my Foreign Service career, certainly the earlier ones, which were so rich in this personal contact and discussion, discussion, discussion, much of this on social occasions at home, are being replaced by the Internet.

Q: So the impact of that kind of communication technology which is supposed to make communication better overloads everyone with information but diminishes the personal factor.

BENSON: It doesn't make communication better; it makes it faster. But it removes the interpersonal. The kind of discussion that you and I are having, we could theoretically have on the email, but we can't really.

Q: Is this happening more on the American side now as a result of using the electronic media for convenience and not putting the effort into the personal contacts in overseas posts?

BENSON: Absolutely. It is more “convenient” and presumably or potentially or theoretically cheaper. It may also be, Bill, that the interlocutors on the other side, the counterparts of the 200 people I knew in Zagreb and the 400 people I knew in Belgrade are themselves tied to their laptops today and don’t have time to go out for a four-hour lunch and a discussion of Timor or Indonesia or what have you.

Q: Probably then even among themselves there is not that much of a real personal exchange.

BENSON: It’s going on all over. You know, you’re familiar with this from your life at universities. Hugh Ragsdale, do you know him? University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa. He told me that the faculty club was about to be turned to other uses--big, beautiful, white clapboard building--because people don’t stop off after class to have a drink and talk with their colleagues. They all rush home to their computers. This is as an aside, but I believe it happens in the media world of Croatia and Belgrade too. I could not have those kinds of contacts today that I had then.

Q: When did the Fulbright program extend to Yugoslavia?

BENSON: The Fulbright agreement was signed at the end of October or early November 1964. I left in November of 1964, and it was signed just before I left.

Q: So it hadn’t been implemented then, but the program was there when you returned to Yugoslavia in the 1970s?

BENSON: When I came back in 1979, the Fulbright program was booming along, and I became *ex officio* the co-president of the Fulbright Commission; one was a Yugoslav and the other an American. Earlier I had been in Turkey and I was there the co-president with a Turk of the Fulbright Commission in Turkey.

S. DOUGLAS MARTIN
Analyst, East Europe, Bureau of Intelligence and Research
Washington, DC (1960-1961)

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.

Q: It’s sort of a typical Communist way of dividing and conquering and using the workers. Well, then, you went to INR in 1960. You were there for about a year.

MARTIN: I was there for one year, and during that year, all the Eastern European countries were in one office, including Yugoslavia. They would have two people doing political; in our section,

my boss did the political stuff, I did the economic. As soon as I arrived, they told me I would have to write a paper as part of the national intelligence survey on trade and finance in Yugoslavia. I spent the first six months reading everything, the radio transcripts, the newspapers, the reports from the field, and then I would write it, because I knew the outline. This was a very strict outline you had to follow, not like writing a book and being creative. It's collecting information in an organized way and then writing it down. I did it successfully.

They had a tough editorial system. You had to go through some tough editors. Actually I went through it pretty easily. The thing I enjoyed about that job was being an expert on Yugoslavia. I knew all the people on the Desk. They used to call us frequently to get information on what was going on in Yugoslavia but not what's going on so much as who was who, facts. They wanted facts, factoids, and information, and we had it on file. I was the one on economics. I'd become close already with Jules Katz, who was the economic man for Eastern Europe, and I'm still friends with him. I see him once in a while.

Q: What was your impression of the economic situation during 1960-61 in Yugoslavia? Was it noticeably different from that of, say, Hungary or Czechoslovakia or Rumania and Bulgaria?

MARTIN: Yes, the Yugoslavs were doing better. There were differences within the republics of Yugoslavia. Slovenia was doing the best, Croatia next, and then Serbia, then the rest of Yugoslavia, which really was underdeveloped. There was a big difference between the republics and the level of economic development. The more advanced were getting better and pulling away from the less-developed republics like Macedonia, Montenegro, and parts of Serbia. This caused problems. The US Government, for example, would buy meat in Yugoslavia. They inspected four plants and only passed. The army was buying a million and a half dollars worth of meat from Croatia, and they were very advanced. They wanted to cooperate with the army. They wanted to know how the army wanted sausage made, and they were going to make the sausage for the army the army way, whereas the other plants in Serbia were not flexible or responsive enough to do that.

The Zagreb Fair was successful in generating contracts. I found the Croats, and even more, the Slovenes, to be go-ahead kind of people, and they thought of themselves as Westerners. So there were differences, but in general the whole country was getting a little bit better.

In some respects it wasn't. For example, they had a tourist industry that they were pushing, and it was going very well, but they had a system in Yugoslavia called Workers' Self-Government or Workers' Self-Management. It had some good aspects, but it didn't work very well when it came to a hotel because if you have the waiters and the people who work behind the desk setting policy, they're not going to give the same kind of service as they would when you have a manager making people give good service. They had a case study made, and it was criticized in the press. They identified what was wrong with this worker self-management in that particular case. That was an example, but tourism was gaining, and all the benefit went to Croatia, very little to Slovenia, and just about none to Serbia.

Q: Well, the reason is that it's really the coast that we're talking about.

MARTIN: Yes, the Dalmatian coast, which is beautiful, but even there you could see faults. One of the nice things about going to the coast, you would expect, would be to eat fish. But the fish that they were getting out of the Adriatic were mostly being exported to Italy, so you had trouble getting fish even on the Dalmatian coast, which was really strange. But it was a beautiful place, the whole coast. We used to go there every year. We went to the island of Ra. We knew somebody there. Everybody knew somebody on the coast that they could rent something from. It was very historic. Later some people went to Greece, and later on, I said, maybe we should have gone to Greece, at least to look at the place, because Greece is just as nice, and maybe even nicer. But it's hard to beat the Dalmatian coast as a beautiful place.

Q: Well, in '61, you left INR. What did you do?

MARTIN: Well, one more point about INR, and that was, this "Trade and Finance in Yugoslavia," this report, I had to write. The Yugoslavs belonged to various international organizations, the OECD and so forth, I think -

Q: The OECD wasn't in existence then.

MARTIN: Well, they belonged to some other organization. They promised to give us full data just as all members of international organizations would. But we couldn't get the gold figures out of them. I had everything all set to go; I just needed the gold reserve figure. I was pushing Jules Katz, and he finally told me to forget it, we're not going to get it. They just don't want to give us their gold reserves. I think the Serbs in particular had a thing about gold because during the war they complained and ridiculed General Mihailovich for carrying around his gold reserves on the back of these donkeys. That was the most important thing to him, and they were ridiculing that in the biography of Tito.

They probably also didn't want to tell us because they had more than we thought they had. They were very good at getting the maximum aid out of us. Some historians say we gave them a billion dollars when we could have gotten away for \$500 million. They managed, and they were very clever.

They could be critical of our system. I remember one said to somebody from the Export-Import Bank, "Why do you have all these different organizations? You have an aid program, and then there's the World Bank, and then there's the UN organizations, and then you have the Export-Import Bank. Why do you have all these different organizations?" The fellow from the Export-Import Bank said, "It's because by having more organizations we get more money. If we concentrated everything in one US Government agency for aid, we'd never get nearly that much." I think that also applies to the US marines? That is why the marines are very valuable; because those three marine divisions are added onto whatever the army has. They give us more than we would have otherwise.

WALTER ROBERTS
Public Affairs Officer, USIS

Belgrade (1960-1966)

A naturalized American citizen of Austrian birth, Mr. Roberts in 1942 joined the US Coordinator of Information engaged in analyzing Nazi Germany's internal propaganda. His subsequent career concerned primarily US Government information activities with the Voice of America, the United States Information Service (USIS) and the Department of State. His service abroad centered primarily on European Affairs, and particularly Yugoslavia. Mr. Roberts was interviewed by Cliff Groce in 1990.

Q: So when you went to Yugoslavia, what was the situation as you found it, and what were you able to do with it, and about it?

ROBERTS: When I came to Yugoslavia I was soon literally hit over the head, and I'll tell you why. For reasons which are still, in my mind at least, unclear, the Yugoslav government, behind our backs, issued a press law. The press law, if you read it carefully, basically put USIS out of existence. What the press law required was as follows: there was not to be any contact of American diplomatic personnel with the Yugoslav population unless authorized by the Yugoslav government. Therefore it was for instance not possible for us to distribute our bulletins through our information centers because, under the new law, the only people who were allowed to receive Embassy bulletins were government officials.

There was a second, very important injunction. That was that those USIS activities which were directed at the population at large, i.e., libraries, exhibits, film showings, and so on, could only be run by non-diplomatic personnel. This, of course, would have put the Yugoslav local employees of USIS under enormous pressure because they would not have had the protection of the diplomatic establishment, and that's what the Yugoslavs were after.

The Yugoslav government proposed that the foreign office arrange meetings with each of the embassies in Belgrade to come to agreements as to how the press law would operate with regard to the different embassies. The British embassy, for instance, was in a much better position. As you know, the British Council is a non-governmental organization. The head of the British Council is not a member of the British embassy in Belgrade or anywhere else. So for them, this was not a problem.

Q: What about the British Information Service?

ROBERTS: The British did not go very far outside the diplomatic circle; they didn't do what we did in Yugoslavia.

In any case, the only way to survive was to find some sort of what I called a Balkan solution. And the Balkan solution that I invented for us was this--and it took a long time to persuade USIA in Washington and the State Department to accept the solution. What I suggested was that we find an American, resident in Yugoslavia, who would ostensibly run the information centers. I thought the wife of the New York Times correspondent might be as good a person for that job as anybody one could find, because the Yugoslavs would not want to put the wife of the New York

Times correspondent in jail if, for instance, a book were to be borrowed that would be contrary to the views of the Yugoslav government.

I flew back to Washington--Ed Murrow was at that time director of USIA and Chester Bowles was Under Secretary of State--and I talked to both of them and persuaded them that that was a solution for which I would take the responsibility if it were not to work.

Q: There was certainly no way you could convince the Yugoslav government--

ROBERTS: The Yugoslav government, in typical fashion, told us that the press law was not directed against us but against the Soviets. Which was not the case, because the Soviets did not really suffer. The only ones that were hit by the press law was the USIS. So very early in the game, I had a difficult time there.

Q: How long did it take you to reach that solution, or get it accepted?

ROBERTS: I think the solution was finally reached in the summer of 1961. I came to Yugoslavia in August 1960; I believe the press law was issued in November. It took us six to eight months to work things out.

Q: Well, during that period were you just unable to operate? What were your people doing?

ROBERTS: First of all, we had to stop our information operations that were directed at the Yugoslav population at large. For instance, we had to stop the bulletin.

Q: Which was based on the Wireless File.

ROBERTS: Which was based on the Wireless File. It was a one-page summary of the Wireless File, very rarely going beyond two pages. It was also based very much on VOA English. We monitored that. At that time, Yugoslavia was a very tightly controlled society still. The newspapers and the radio were run by the party and the government.

Q: Ten years later you found skin magazines in all the news stands.

ROBERTS: Exactly. Even in my time--by time I left, the situation was more relaxed.

We closed the library for a time, until the agreement under the press law was signed, and then Mary Underwood was ostensibly the director of the information centers--Paul Underwood having been the New York Times correspondent there.

Q: So she was willing to take on the responsibility.

ROBERTS: She was. I told her she might have to go to jail, but she was willing.

Q: Did she actually put in full time?

ROBERTS: I told her that we'd pay her, I believe the figure was \$5,000 for the use of her name, and that she need never come close to the information center because if she were to go there the Yugoslav authorities would think she was really running it. But the Yugoslavs understood our scheme completely.

You see, in Central Europe there is--or was--a position in each newspaper which was called "the responsible editor"--in Vienna, he was called "der Sitzredakteur." ("Sitzen" is a slang expression for serving in jail.) In other words, he had to go to jail for lese majeste, for instance. In the old Austro-Hungarian monarchy, if a paper wrote something that was offensive of the monarchy, the "responsible" editor was the one who was sentenced, usually to three days in jail. He had nothing to do with the newspaper. He got a good salary, and occasionally he would have to go to jail. But that's what he was paid for. My father was an editor in Vienna, and he had on his staff a Sitzredakteur. I remember that from my youth.

Q: Did you have to live with that situation throughout your tenure?

ROBERTS: Yes. Mary Underwood left when Paul was replaced by David Binder. Her place as nominal information center director was taken by the wife of another American correspondent whose name was Peters. What happened later, to my deep regret, during the tenure of one of my successors--and I don't know which one--was that the center directors in Belgrade, Zagreb and the other Yugoslav cities where information centers were established, such as Ljubljana, Sarajevo, Titograd, and Skopje, went there without diplomatic protection. They were officers without diplomatic passport. They were sort of resident Americans. Somehow we allowed ourselves to be bamboozled by the Yugoslavs into accepting the concept of their press law: that non-diplomats run those services that are directed towards the population at large, whereas the diplomats were confined to the governmental establishment. Even today our public affairs officers in the Yugoslav republics do not have diplomatic status. They carry an ordinary American passport.

Q: Well, of course, the VOA correspondents for the last several years--

ROBERTS: The same status. I have the feeling that it's the same status as the VOA correspondents.

Q: But there is an appreciable difference between the situations.

ROBERTS: Of course. The VOA correspondents are newsmen. This is an entirely different situation.

During my tenure in Belgrade, we had some very dicey times. For instance, we published a monthly cultural magazine called "Pregled." We had to submit to the authorities the list of people to whom we sent the publication--not that they couldn't have found out anyway. I remember one day I met a number of Yugoslavs at a party who told me that they had not received Pregled for a long time--people I knew to have been on the list. After I inquired further, I came to the conclusion that all of them had not received the last issue.

So I called the local employees of USIS and asked them to go down to the garage, as we called it, where we packed and labeled the mailings, to find out--to go step by step and see what happened. Well, we found out that everything had been properly addressed and properly shipped to the post office. We went to the post office, which corroborated that the shipment had been properly received. Finally I realized that something must have happened between the post office and the actual mailing. So I officially complained to the foreign office. The foreign office said that they didn't know, but that they would find out.

After two weeks, and after I had bothered the foreign office again, they still had no idea and assured me that everything was in good shape.

Then one day I got a phone call at home from the American desk officer of the foreign office, who said--I think it was a weekend--that he'd like to come over to my house, a most unusual request. As he sat down in the living room, he confessed to me that the Interior Ministry--you know, the police types--had thrown the whole batch of magazines into the Danube--all the thousands of copies.

Q: And they didn't tell anybody?

ROBERTS: They didn't tell anybody. They didn't even tell the foreign office--

Q: Was there some article in it that was of particular concern?

ROBERTS: Maybe there was. I don't remember. But I just wanted to say that those were the vagaries of running a program in Yugoslavia. Our relationship with Yugoslavia was, of course, of a different nature than our relationship with the other Eastern European countries. In Yugoslavia, we had a USIS program. In the other Eastern European countries, we did not. A great deal of credit has to go to George Allen, who as ambassador from '49 to '53 seized the opportunity to establish a special relationship with Yugoslavia after that country had been thrown out of the Cominform in 1948. Nevertheless, there was at the head of the Yugoslav government a man called Josip Broz Tito.

He was brought up in the Communist ideology in Moscow and had a great deal of preconceived antagonism against the United States, against what he regarded as the western imperialists. And of course, whatever happened in the Yugoslav government was dictated by him. He was an autocratic ruler. So while, of course, the relationship was different from that with other Eastern European countries, basically, I always said, at that time at least, that if Tito were to be woken up at 3 o'clock in the morning and told that war had broken out between the United States and the Soviet Union, his first reaction would have been, "Those damned Americans!" It would not have been "The damned Russians," even though it was the Soviets who deeply hurt him when they ejected him from the communist fraternity.

In 1963, Tito came on an official visit to the United States. He was the last head of state to see John F. Kennedy alive. The last. He saw the president, I believe, at the end of October or early November 1963, as you know, Kennedy was assassinated on the 22nd of November. Tito apparently got along well with Kennedy. When there were anti-Tito demonstrations in New York

just before Tito sailed back to Europe, Kennedy called him on the phone and apologized. Tito appreciated that very much.

After Kennedy was assassinated, Tito came to our embassy and signed the book of condolences--a most unusual gesture. Not only that, he wanted to talk. Now, we did not have an ambassador at that time. George Kennan had left in the summer of 1963, and Burke Elbrick didn't arrive until the spring of '64. We had a charge, Eric Kocher, and for all intents and purposes, I was the second ranking officer.

The security people of Marshal Tito came to the embassy, saying that Tito would come at a certain time in the afternoon, and that he also would like to call on the charge--whose office was on the third floor. I don't know whether you ever were in the American embassy in Belgrade, but we had there--and I was there a couple of years ago and we still have--one of the most dilapidated and antiquated elevators that you would ever find anywhere. And when the Yugoslav security people saw that elevator, they declared that they would not let Tito use it. Since he was in his seventies at that time, they wouldn't let him walk up the stairs, either. So a quick decision was made to convert my office, which was on the ground floor, to the reception office for Marshal Tito.

I have a great photograph: Marshal Tito, his foreign minister and his chef de cabinet sitting on my sofa there, with Eric Kocher and myself the receiving hosts. Tito had tears in his eyes when he talked about Kennedy. This was usually not an emotional person; this was a street fighter! He talked about Kennedy, he told us about the gift he received--I forget now what it was, but I remember that he spoke about the gift that Kennedy had given him and that he treasured it. It is my conviction, which I have shared with many people, including George Kennan, Larry Eagleburger, Brent Scowcroft and others who served in Yugoslavia, that the Tito visit was a watershed. I made that point in a talk in Belgrade in 1988 on the occasion of a Yugoslav-American symposium and nobody disagreed with my theory. From 1963 on our relations were much smoother.

Q: Including under the press law?

ROBERTS: Including under the press law. My recollection is that after 1963, the press law was no longer as rigorously enforced.

Now let me talk about another agreement--the Fulbright agreement. When I left for Yugoslavia in the summer of 1960, Bob Thayer, who then headed the office of international educational and cultural relations in the State Department, told me the priority for them was the conclusion of a Fulbright agreement with Yugoslavia. However, I found nothing but rocks and closed doors and chain link fences. The Yugoslavs wanted a Fulbright agreement, but on their terms. They were to select the people who would obtain grants. They didn't want American interference. They wanted the money, all right, but they didn't want to abide by the regulations under which all other Fulbright agreements operated. When I came on home leave in 1963 I had to report that I had totally failed to budge the Yugoslav authorities. But after Tito's visit to the U.S., I was told informally by the foreign office that they had received instructions to conclude a Fulbright agreement as fast as possible. By the summer of 1964, we had a Fulbright agreement, and it was

signed in early November in the presence of Senator Fulbright, who came to Yugoslavia for the signing ceremony. He still talks to me about it as one of the great things that happened--that Yugoslavia and the U.S. concluded a Fulbright agreement, thinking that I accomplished it, whereas in all fairness while I had tried very hard I didn't succeed until after Tito's visit to the United States.

Q: You don't mean that Kennedy himself raised this issue with Tito? Or was it a matter of atmosphere?

ROBERTS: My hunch is--and a member of the foreign office at that time more or less confirmed this to me only very recently when he was here in Washington--that when Tito came back from the United States, and particularly after Kennedy was assassinated, he probably asked whether there was an outstanding matter in our relationship with the United States. Where could Yugoslavia do something to further the relationship? And probably someone replied that there was this Fulbright agreement which had been in negotiation for three years. And Tito probably said, "Let's see whether we can't conclude that agreement."

I don't want to imply that even then the negotiations were easy. I give a great deal of credit to my associate, Harold

Engle, who was the cultural affairs officer, for his perseverance, his stubbornness, and his wisdom in getting the agreement concluded. I remember having to talk to the minister of culture, the minister of information and the number two man in the foreign office on repeated occasions during the negotiations to find common ground.

Q: How long did it take?

ROBERTS: I would say six months. But we got a very good agreement--the first Fulbright agreement with a communist country. Recently we celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Fulbright agreement and both sides--I spoke on behalf of the U.S.--expressed their satisfaction and pointed with pride to the large number of exchanges since 1964.

Q: How difficult was it serving, in effect, two masters--USIA on the one hand and CU in the State Department on the other, while you were in the field?

ROBERTS: I never found it to be a problem.

Q: So your two chief achievements in your days in Yugoslavia were the Balkan solution to the press law and the Fulbright agreement?

ROBERTS: Yes, I would say that. And I think I also was successful in having USIS play a major role in the Embassy. I was able to establish a close relationship with three ambassadors in the six years I was there, all of whom included me in every important matter.

At first I served under Karl Rankin, a very nice foreign service officer who had served in Yugoslavia before the war. So he knew Yugoslavia. As a matter of fact, Karl Rankin was the last

American to leave the legation--it was not an embassy at that time--in May 1941 after the Germans had overrun Yugoslavia.

The Yugoslavs didn't think very highly of him because he had been, in his previous assignment, ambassador to Chiang Kai-shek's China, and he seemed to have had a close relationship with Chiang Kai-shek. When official Yugoslavs were invited to the residence they saw these photos, which to them was a red flag, to coin a phrase, because in their view the Chiang government was a reactionary government. After all, Mao Zedong was the one whose government the Yugoslavs recognized.

The next ambassador was George Kennan, who served from '61 to '63. That was, of course, a great experience, to work with Kennan, and we became close personal friends, and still are.

Then in 1964, Burke Elbrick came. Burke had been an old friend from the days when I was deputy area director and he was assistant secretary of state for European affairs. At that time we had a weekly meeting--an arrangement that Bill Clark started in 1954. The area director and his deputy and the assistant secretary and his deputy would meet every Thursday at 5 o'clock in the State Department, as Bill Clark once said, "to discuss problems before they become problems." So when Elbrick arrived in Belgrade, he found his old friend Walter Roberts serving as PAO. Even though I had at that time been in Yugoslavia for almost four years--a long tour of duty for Yugoslavia in that period--Elbrick didn't want to let me go. I stayed on until it was really time to leave in '66.

One little anecdote. In 1965, Harriman--Governor Averell Harriman--came on behalf of President Lyndon Johnson to Yugoslavia, to try to persuade Marshal Tito to play an intermediary role between the United States and North Vietnam. Despite the fact that U.S. relations with Marshal Tito had enormously improved, this was a highly dubious undertaking since Vietnam was the sore point in our relationship. Tito was deeply unhappy with our role in Vietnam--he said so all the time--and he was, I think, upset that Lyndon Johnson put him, as it were, on the spot, sending as high level a figure as Harriman to Yugoslavia. He knew very well--he had heard from his ambassador in Washington--that what Lyndon Johnson was after was an intermediary role.

The meeting took place on the island of Brioni, where Tito had his residence. Tito was clearly in a bad mood. He opened the meeting by telling Harriman that the trouble with America was that it always supported the wrong people. Harriman, adjusting his hearing aid, inquired what Tito meant by that. Tito replied by naming Chiang Kai-shek, Syngman Rhee...Whereupon Harriman interrupted and said, "And Marshal Tito?!" Tito got all red in the face. He hadn't expected that answer from Harriman. But things soon calmed down. Tito, of course, didn't give an inch. It was very clear that this wasn't going to be a productive meeting.

Suddenly, out of the blue, Tito turned to Harriman and asked how old he was. And Harriman said, "Seventy-three." So am I, Tito said, and got up and walked out. Here we were, not knowing what had happened. We asked Tito's chef de cabinet whether the meeting was over. He said he didn't know, and suggested that we should wait a few moments. A couple of minutes later, Tito came back with a dusty old bottle of wine. It came from a former Austrian part of Yugoslavia,

from Marburg, which is now Maribor, and well-known wine country; the date was 1892. Tito opened the bottle, and everyone was served. The interesting part is that while Tito and Harriman were of the same age in the summer of 1965, they were not born in the same year; Harriman was half a year older. He was born in November 1891 while Tito was born in May 1892. In any case, it was a 73-year-old bottle, which Tito offered to drink with Harriman.

Q: How did it taste?

ROBERTS: It was a very heavy wine. In some respects it tasted more like cognac. The meeting ended on a good note. Everybody was a little bit high. There was the air attaché's plane, a DC-3, that took us from Brioni, from the Pula airport, down to Dubrovnik, where Mrs. Elbrick, Mrs. Harriman, my wife and the air attaché's wife were waiting in the Argentina Hotel. Suddenly, Elbrick, the perfect foreign service officer, turned to Harriman and suggested that a telegram be sent to President Johnson about the meeting. Harriman asked Elbrick to draft it and Elbrick in turn asked me. And this was the only time in my life when I drafted a telegram to the President of the United States. (Laughter)

Q: So when you left Yugoslavia, what was the next job?

ROBERTS: When I left Yugoslavia I went for one year as diplomat-in-residence to Brown University, which was a very good year for me. First of all, I learned to do the things that I do now: I taught a course there, and I learned how to teach. Secondly, it gave me the opportunity to do the basic research on my book on Yugoslavia, which was published a few years later, I got to know America again. I got to know New England, and particularly Rhode Island, where I still consider myself to be half at home. I reacquainted myself with Senator Pell, whom I had known in the early fifties when we both served in the State Department. Then I was assigned to Geneva in '67 for two years as public affairs adviser to the American ambassador at the European headquarters of the UN.

Q: What were some of the interesting developments there?

ROBERTS: I learned at that time something very basic: that one cannot be a good spokesman unless one is an integral part of the policy making process. And since we in USIA are not an integral part of the policy making process, we are only very rarely in a position to be good spokesmen.

For instance, I'm told, our present director of information in New York at the United Nations, Phil Arnold, is included in every meeting Ambassador Pickering has. Even in the morning staff meeting, where only three or four people meet, he is included. In such a situation, the USIA officer can do a good job.

I found the job in Geneva very frustrating. There were, in my time, many important bilateral and multilateral conferences, ranging from disarmament to GATT. Most of the U.S. delegations came from Washington with their own public affairs officers, which was the right thing to do because they were in a far better position to explain policy than we who were not in at the policy formulation process. On the other hand, what was then our role? Some delegations relied on us

for press relations, but they worked only when the delegation heads included USIS in their staff deliberations, which was not always the case. In these circumstances I did not enjoy the assignment, and after a while made it known that I would like to be transferred as soon as my tour was completed.

After Nixon was elected president Frank Shakespeare was appointed USIA director and Henry Loomis became deputy director. Soon after his appointment, Loomis called me in Geneva and said he wanted me on his team in Washington. And so I became deputy associate director for what was called research and assessment at that time.

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.

JOHN W. KIMBALL
Vice Consul
Sarajevo (1961-1963)

John W. Kimball was born in California in 1934 and received his bachelor's and master's degree from Stanford University. He was positioned in Saigon, Sarajevo, Brussels and London. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on May 24, 1999.

Q: You were in Sarajevo from '61 until the post closed when?

KIMBALL: It closed in August of 1963. In 1961, we picked up a new Volkswagen in

Copenhagen and drove south and then down the Dalmatian coast and inland through Mostar. We found out quickly there was no such thing as a paved road from Sarajevo all the way to any major place outside it. Nevertheless, we felt at home seeing the old Washington, DC streetcars circling downtown Sarajevo against a backdrop of minarets. The Consulate had been set up in 1957 by Steve Palmer mainly to monitor the region where Yugoslavia's ethnic and religious groups got mixed up together. The consul did some political reporting and the vice consul took care of what economics there were and the consular activities. Lyla did all the classified office work and kept an eye on the local employees. She also kept up with the task of assimilating the constant flow of revisions to the Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) that poured out of the Department, most of which had no relevance to a small post like Sarajevo.

Q: Was one sort of looking at, this one must be Muslim and this one must be Serbian, or that sort of thing trying to divide people up?

KIMBALL: No, and I've asked myself that a lot after 1992. What on earth were we thinking then? Yes, we knew that one of our employees, Vera Dragic, was Serbian originally and that she had come from Belgrade to live in Sarajevo. Yes, we knew that another, Hasan Ahmetbegovic, was Muslim. He lived halfway up Mt. Trebevic by all the picturesque mosques. Yes, we knew that the population was such and such percentages of religious or ethnic background. Yes, we knew that the head of the government in Bosnia had a Muslim name and there was a bit of a balancing act in apportioning the top party and government jobs. But in terms of what was going on day-to-day, no, there was no particular reason to question or report any ethnic tensions. Of course, our impressions were shaped in Sarajevo and to a lesser extent in Montenegro and the Dalmatian coast. We traveled a few times to southeastern Bosnia, Tuzla, and Banja Luka, but not at all to Bihac, which I regret now. But don't forget, and you remember well too, that everything officially was focused on economic development in Bosnia. Everything in the newspapers, all the propaganda, was just how great they were doing and how much more they would do.

Q: And also the government hand was very heavy when it got to ethnic things. There is a street in every town and a bridge in every town called Brotherhood and Unity. You couldn't walk down any street in Yugoslavia without seeing "Brotherhood and Unity" thrown in your face and they didn't mess with it.

KIMBALL: Yes.

Q: It's only really from these talks that I've had in these oral histories that I've realized how much we had absorbed sort of the Serbian point of view in Belgrade. It's sort of, well yes, the Croats kind of have this little national feeling but it's of a minor thing and all, particularly in that era. It was obviously simmering under the surface and you get it by sort of asides of contempt for somebody else or another thing but you just kind of put that down to, obviously they are not wild about each other but they certainly are not going to fight each other.

KIMBALL: That's right. And of course our contacts were circumscribed. I'm sure that people were encouraged not to talk to us. The ones who did talk to us were probably officially approved and would not wish to make ethnic comments for their own reasons, maybe in part because they believed it. After all, in retrospect, it wasn't a bad policy to try to squash ethnic hostility.

I can remember reading in the press that the Croatians and Slovenes in particular, and maybe the Serbs, resented the investment funds that were going into less developed areas like Bosnia or Montenegro. Perhaps that was a straw in the wind. But it seemed to be valid on economic grounds in those days. Bosnia was really backward. You would get out of Sarajevo and into the countryside and into the hills and you were back a couple centuries, as you well probably remember. It was amazing to see people in huts, tending sheep, spinning yarn on the side of the road, and living in what were in any American's eyes real poverty and backwardness. They did seem suspicious of any outsiders, no doubt including other Yugoslavs as well as westerners.

Q: Did you get down to Mostar?

KIMBALL: Yes. I had no experiences there but we would always pass through there on the way to the coast and often stopped to look at the old Turkish bridge, since destroyed, that figured in all the tourist literature. One of our jobs was to look into the economy and trade opportunities. For some reason I never took that task as seriously as my predecessors did in terms of interviewing the leaders of commercial enterprises and making reports about possible export opportunities. There was almost no interest shown by west Europeans or Americans in that period to doing business in Bosnia-Herzegovina. We preferred to go down to the coast and look up the welfare cases. We enjoyed trekking these little back roads up the mountain to find the huts that they or their relatives were living in, and trying to gain insights into their lives and living conditions. It was primitive.

Q: How did the hand of the embassy rest on our consulate in Sarajevo?

KIMBALL: Very lightly. In fact I never received any feed-back from the Yugoslav desk (in Washington) in two years. Moreover, my guess is even the consuls received only one or two official-informals from the Department during my two years there. People visited us from the Embassy of course. They came down on courier runs. I think you did once, didn't you?

ROBERT GERALD LIVINGSTON
Economic Officer
Belgrade (1961-1964)

Robert Gerald Livingston was born in New York in 1927. He received a Bachelor's Degree, a Master's Degree, and PhD from Harvard University and served overseas in the U.S. Army from 1946-1949. After entering the Foreign Service in 1956, his postings abroad have included Salzburg, Hamburg, Belgrade, Bonn and Berlin. Mr. Livingston was interviewed in 1998 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: Radi_, yes. You were in Yugoslavia when?

LIVINGSTON: Basically, I was there from the fall of '53 to the summer of '54.

Q: What was life like for you?

LIVINGSTON: Well, I lived in the student dormitory, and I had a guy who even then I recognized as sort of an informer. He was a White Russian. There were quite a lot of White Russians in Belgrade who'd fled to Yugoslavia after the first world war from Russia. Of course, the Yugoslavs had a tremendous hold over these guys because they could turn them back over to the Soviets and they did turn back some. But they generally didn't. This guy was my roommate, and I was quite cautious. He was a helluva nice guy. Volkov was his name. My guess is that he was reporting, and I knew that then.

Q: Here you were an ex-CIC intelligence person doing studies there. Did you find either the Yugoslavs coming at you or the Americans coming at you for anything?

LIVINGSTON: No, I steered reasonably clear of the embassy although there was one guy at the embassy I saw from to time. I steered clear of it, as a general rule, and I tried to get to know the country and speak Serbian as much as I could and to get around. There were some other foreign students at the time, some Brits, a few Germans. I went around with a German girl. I remember going down and visiting all the monasteries in southern Serbia with her. There was a Dutchman. I think I was the only American, though there may have been other Americans. I hung around mostly with foreign students. There was some sort of an office for foreign students, and they liked to keep track of us.

Q: What about classes? What was your impression of what you were getting from the university system?

LIVINGSTON: Well, I spent a lot of time studying. My language wasn't so good when I got there, although I'd studied Serbo-Croatian. I went to some classes, mostly language classes. I tried to learn Turkish because I thought originally I was going to do some work on 19th Century Serbia. So I thought I'd probably need Turkish sources. I went to some classes on Serbian history but basically I goofed off. I traveled around and I did goof off but I traveled around and studied the language. I tried to learn the language during this time, and I did learn the language.

Q: How were Americans received in those days?

LIVINGSTON: Well, I think in a rather friendly fashion, you know. I had a Serbian girlfriend who was a librarian at the university, and I remember going out on an expedition with her and her students to Pan_evo or maybe even beyond Pan_evo, somewhere in the Vojvodina.

Q: You're talking about north of Belgrade.

LIVINGSTON: Yes, but it was out in the country and I can't think of exactly where it was. I would say the students who were along were somewhat hostile to me. I think it was partly because they thought I was a rich American taking their girl. Then I had one connection there who was the family of an émigré who was a student and subsequently became a professor of Byzantine music at the University of Virginia. He was a student of Lord's like I was and his family were anti-Tito. His sister and his mother still lived in Belgrade, and I saw a lot of them.

That was about the only family I really saw a lot of. She was a woman of about 60 and her daughter was maybe 40 or something. I visited them a lot, and I also saw people in the Serbian Orthodox Church. There was an assistant to the Patriarch with whom I got to be quite friendly. I won't say beyond that that I really saw many other families. My roommate never took me to his family, and I never saw many other families. I spent a lot of time going to theater, going to opera, trying to study the language, going to movies, things of that sort.

Q: What about trying to do your research?

LIVINGSTON: Well, I didn't have my subject then. That was '53-'54. I didn't get my subject until I got back.

Q: I was just going to say that, Staepan Radi_, being a Croatian nationalist, I don't know where he...

LIVINGSTON: Serbia wasn't the place for that...

Q: This wasn't the place for it and also under Tito, too.

LIVINGSTON: No, I hadn't selected my topic yet. I don't think I'd passed my generals yet. No, because I studied for my generals the first year we were married, the summer of the year we got married. We got married in May of '55, so I hadn't passed my generals yet. So I guess my time in Belgrade must have been '53-'54, not '52-'53. I got my degree in '52 and I must have studied another year and went off to Belgrade in '53-'54. The Djilas thing was in the fall of '53, I think.

Q: How was the Djilas thing? Did you get any feel for it...?

LIVINGSTON: Well, the authorities were totally wrong in that there was no particular sympathy for him among the students...I remember reading his articles and trying to make my way through them. I was really surprised, he was quite critical. I didn't detect, although I must admit that I didn't have the feel for it, I didn't detect any particular pro-Djilas sentiment among students. I think probably the students were careful with me and stayed away from me, except for this guy and one or two others. They were all communists or they wouldn't have been able to get access to that dormitory. That was the best student dormitory in Belgrade, though it wasn't so great. I assume that not everyone could have gotten in there unless they were loyal communists. Presumably they'd all been educated to be skeptical of Americans. So I think they stayed away from me probably.

Q: In '55-'56, what was Zagreb like at that time?

LIVINGSTON: Well, it was still fairly gloomy. My wife taught English. I went down to the archives to work on Radi_. It was a little hard on her. It was hard finding a place to stay. But by luck we finally found a woman, Jewish she was actually...and her daughter... who had a villa, half of which had been taken away. She was afraid that the rest of it would be taken, so she was happy to rent rooms to a foreigner. So, in that sense, once we hooked up with her, we had a great time. We had a very nice room and we lived with this woman and her daughter. She had been

widowed. I think her husband may have been Serbian. Her name was Muršec, so I thought it was a Serbian name. She was a little vague about what happened to her husband. She was a widow and her daughter, named Miriana, had this apartment that was rather nice. They were obviously bourgeois before the war. He may have been a dentist, her late husband.

Q: Did you find a difference in attitude of the Croatians you were working with and the Serbs? Was it a different world?

LIVINGSTON: I don't know. I was really full of steam. I had to try to get my research done and so we didn't intermingle as much as we might have. In contrast to Belgrade, where I tried to learn the language, there I kept my nose to the grindstone because I already had the idea I wanted to get into the Foreign Service. So I wanted to get this done with as quickly as I could and do the research as quickly as I could. So we had this family that we saw everyday. My wife taught English. She taught English to a psychiatrist and she got quite friendly with her. We went out every night to a restaurant. So we ate out at restaurants; it was cheap. The city was reviving, but it was still dark and gloomy. Just two weeks ago, I was in Riga in Latvia. And it has a little bit the same atmosphere, Riga in 1998, as Zagreb did in 1955.

Except everybody in Riga in 1997 had cellular telephones. The street lights were not so strong and pavements were misty and dark but we went out. We went out in the country on weekends occasionally and that was fine. In Belgrade, I had the feeling I was being watched a little bit, anyway, whereas in Zagreb I didn't have the feeling I was being watched. I did go down every day to work with historians at the historical institute of the university so I had a pretty regimented life.

Q: Did you find working on Radi_ was at all disquieting to the people you were dealing with because Tito...

LIVINGSTON: No, I did not. I think they rather liked it. Radi_ was not anti-Paveli_. He wasn't Ustashe. So I think that they tolerated it. I saw Radi_'s family and his daughter, and as part of my research, I was able to verify some things. They had his passport. For example, there was a question, "When had he gone to Moscow?" That was one of the things the Serbs held against him, that he'd gone to Moscow and sure enough it showed in the passport when he'd gone. So I was able to talk to the family and get some information out of them. There I did, in contrast to steering clear when I was at the Embassy in '53, there I did have fairly close contact with the consulate. There was a young couple at the consulate, a fellow named Peter Walker who still lives around Washington, if he's still alive, and a rather old-fashioned type consul general. Martindale was his name. He was consul general in Zagreb, and they used to invite us quite frequently. We used to go, too.

Q: What sparked you towards going into the Foreign Service?

LIVINGSTON: I knew I didn't want to go into the CIA. The CIA had tried to recruit me, I can't remember what year it was. It was probably one year when I was at Harvard. They had rather amateurish ways of recruiting, like cops and robbers. After I got back, just before I joined the Foreign Service, three of them took me down to a restaurant on Maine Avenue looking out over

the water and we had a three-martini lunch. I thought, "This can't be right." Then they tipped their hand, and I figured out what they wanted me to do. They wanted me to go back to Zagreb and be a student there again, working for the Agency. Not a very good idea. I thought these guys aren't really very serious and they were all quite preppy types, as well. So I didn't really want to lead a double life and not be able to tell my wife what I was doing. I am really grateful myself that I didn't do it.

GEORGE JAEGER
Vice Consul
Zagreb (1961-1964)

Mr. Jaeger was born in Austria and raised in Austria, England and the US. Evacuated from Austria to Holland and England, he immigrated to the US. After serving in the US Army he was educated at St. Vincent College and Harvard University. He joined the State Department in 1951 and the Foreign Service (USIA) in 1953. Primarily a Political Officer, Mr. Jaeger served in Washington several times as well as in Monrovia, Zagreb, Berlin, Bonn, Geneva, Paris, Quebec (Consul General), Ottawa (Political Counselor) and Brussels (Deputy Assistant Secretary General of NATO for Political Affairs. His final assignment was Diplomat in Residence at Middlebury College. Mr. Jaeger was interviewed by Robert Daniels in 2000.

Q: You had received your assignments?

JAEGER: Yes, I knew by mid-February that I was going to be a Vice Consul at our Consulate General in Zagreb. Although I had hoped to go to the Political Section in the Embassy in Belgrade, I had never actually done any consular work, either in my first or second assignments, and so understood Personnel's reasoning in making this assignment.

Q: So you went over in the early fall?

JAEGER: The plan was to arrive in mid-October, after, what in retrospect, was a really delightful Atlantic crossing. I went over on the SS United States, the great liner which had done yeoman service ferrying troops in World War II. What's more, diplomatic officers in those days still traveled first class, even lowly Vice Consuls. So I was assigned a splendid cabin and was on several occasions invited to eat at the Captain's table. The most remarkable fellow traveler among the dignitaries on board was Salvador Dali, whom I discovered one morning on the bow of the ship gazing dramatically out to the horizon, his cape spread wide, fluttering in the breeze. He did not encourage conversation. On arrival in Genoa the local English paper provided still one more ego booster by listing Vice Consul George Jaeger among the 'notable arrivals'! Those really were the days!

Q: So, did the training actually work when you got to Yugoslavia?

JAEGER: That, of course, was the key question in my mind when I finally drove my newly acquired Volkswagen from Trieste to the Yugoslav border on my way to Zagreb. Except for Jankovic and Popovic, I had never spoken to a real Yugoslav and had no idea whether the strange noises they had taught us to repeat in Washington would actually work.

So I remember stopping at the Yugoslav border post with some trepidation. When the tough looking border guard came over, I said with as much firmness as I could muster: “Dobar dan. Kako ste?”, as we had been taught - and was greatly relieved when he clearly understood, smiled a little and gave the textbook answer: “Hvala, druze. Vrlo dobro!”

Q: Laughter

JAEGER: Our language training had actually worked!

Q: So, how did you find in Zagreb?

JAEGER: Although that autumn the weather was lovely, Zagreb in 1961 was grimly grey and silent. After the bustle of Genoa and even Trieste, what struck one first was the absence of crowds, the reserve on people’s faces, the colorless clothing, the clearly much lower standard of living than in the West. There were cars, but hardly any traffic jams. Streetcars jangled all over town and were still, for most people, the principal form of transportation.

At night the street lights were weak and left deep shadows. Only Republik Square, at the center of town, was bright, but with the stark, dehumanizing brightness of rooftop neon signs advertising soulless collective enterprises. They etched people and the surrounding, once elegant, 19th century buildings, against the dark in weird ghostly patterns, particularly when the large square was pelted by rain or snow and the glare was reflected in the slush. (Note: At this writing Republik Square has been restored to its earlier, pre-Communist name, Jelacic Square, after a 19th century Croatian leader who defeated the Hungarians and is again a lively, bustling place).

In short, even a few days in Zagreb left no doubt that this was still a highly controlled Communist police state, with a backward, limping economy, struggling to recoup the enormous wounds inflicted on it and its people by the ravages of World War II - in spite of the fact that Tito’s Yugoslavia was far ahead of its satellite neighbors and Croatia and Slovenia were by far the most prosperous parts of a country, where repression here never assumed the proportions that it had in the Soviet empire. Even so, for most people in Zagreb the name of the game was still personal survival, keeping your nose clean and making do. Only those in power and those favored could live well, and some of those lived very well indeed.

Q: Were there any bright spots? What did young people do?

JAEGER: Zagreb had restaurants and nightspots, but only the privileged were usually there. We often went to places like the Gradski Podrum, a popular brick-tiled cellar on Republik Square, where a gypsy band played the usual favorites for a scattering of customers - mostly officials, local journalists, people from other Consulates, or the odd tourists passing through. The fare was standard Yugoslav cuisine, things like raznici, cevapcici, the occasional ‘steak’ of dubious origin,

goulash or noodle soup, served up with fairly decent Dalmatian wines or thinnish beer, and followed, after some “Strudel” for desert, by one or more rakijas, Croatia’s then usually very raw plum brandy.

Students went to less expensive places for dancing and drinking from what, I later learned, was called, ‘internal exile’ - you shut out the grey Communist world by building yourself a happier, strictly private reality with your girlfriend in some little rented room.

To be fair, theater, occasional opera and museums were doing well and keeping cultural life alive with conservatively chosen favorites. The university too remained an important driving force and still had a number of significant Professors, although Communist political correctness remained key to academic survival.

Q: All sounds like a slightly upgraded version of standard Communist reality. Did you see any signs of tension or dissent?

JAEGER: There were occasional signs, although on the whole Yugoslavia in 1961 was still very disciplined. The newspapers, which we read daily didn’t provide much insight, since they only carried carefully censored news and ideologically correct speeches by Communist functionaries extolling the regime. Moreover, even the fairly limited circle of people who showed up at Consulate functions, or whom one met or called on in the course of business, spoke only rarely about what was going on. So it took some time for a neophyte like me to piece things together and, when occasion presented itself, to ask the right questions.

Q: We’ll certainly get back to that later. But for now, can you tell us a bit about how you found the Consulate, and about your work?

JAEGER: The Consulate General was housed in a typical 19th century apartment house dating back to the Hapsburg era. On one side it faced Strossmayerov Trg, a section of a long, tree-lined park, with trees and tended gardens. Its entrance was on a side street now called Hebrangova Ulica. After Croatia’s declaration of independence the building became the Chancery of the American Embassy. In fact, the office I was to occupy in my second year, with its French windows and balcony, was the Ambassador’s office until, after 9/11, the fortress-like new Embassy compound was built in a wheat field outside of town.

Q: So the old building was not very secure considering you were in a Communist country?

JAEGER: Hardly. Since there were no marine guards, the building was opened and closed every day by our devoted Albanian janitor and man-of-all trades Stojan, who also washed the floors and faithfully hung and took down the American flag from its flagstaff on the balcony which overlooked the street, the streetcar tracks and the park.

It was on that sidewalk, by the way, that thousands of people were to leave a mountain of flowers and lay down a bed of candles when President Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963.

The rest of the building's layout was equally relaxed. The Consular Section was on the ground floor, so that our local staff and visitors could come and go unimpeded. The Consul General's office, the secure file room and code room, and all other offices were on the second floor, protected, if I remember correctly, only by 'limited access' signs and locked with ordinary keys at night.

On the third floor was a bachelor apartment with fading, lumpy furniture and old-fashioned facilities, which for my first year in Zagreb was to be my home. I was lucky to have inherited Ivanka Skudas as my maid and cook, a intensely conscientious and good-hearted Slavonian woman who made the place livable, took care of my little establishment, cooked wonderful dinners for me and my guests when I entertained, and came with me when, in my second year, I was assigned a lovely suburban house on 'Tuskanac', a prestigious street on a Zagreb hillside, which even had a swimming pool.

The apartment became famous after I had left Zagreb when our then American secretary and code clerk became enamored of a Croatian 'riding master' whom she had "happened" to meet on leave in Vienna; moved him in with her in my former third floor apartment where he stayed unnoticed for almost a year (!) and eventually gave him the Consulate's crown jewels. Needless to say he was a senior officer in the UDBA, Yugoslavia's intelligence service.

Q: Well, things certainly have changed. What were the people like at the post?

JAEGER: My first Consul General, when I arrived in the fall of '61, was Edward Montgomery, a genteel, literate, thoughtful career officer, who unfortunately left Zagreb only a few weeks after my arrival.

He was succeeded by Joe Godson, who was a very different kettle of fish: A Jewish childhood immigrant from Poland, who had studied at CCNY, got a law degree from NYU, and was a product of the American labor movement, Joe was a tough, sardonic, extremely bright, combative and demanding man. He had become a protégé of Jay Lovestone, who shoehorned him into the State Department, because of his reliably strong anti-Communism.

Q: Lovestone was the right-wing communist who broke with Stalin and eventually became the intensely anti-communist director of foreign operations for the AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations)?

JAEGER: That's right, and at the time we are discussing, he was the Executive Secretary of the International Federation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), the West's anti-communist labor movement, which had extensive ties to official Washington and greatly influenced the appointment of Labor attachés. Godson was first made Labor Attaché in Ottawa in 1950, then moved to London for five years, where he reportedly played a major behind-the-scenes role in Hugh Gaitskell's battle with the left in the British Labor Party. He was then moved to Belgrade for two years, and then, in 1961, to Zagreb.

Q: What was Godson like to work for?

JAEGER: Well, it was usually a roller coaster. Joe and his chirpy, pleasant wife Ruth, a former Israeli Foreign Service officer, could be generous and even charming, particularly when everyone was in agreement and he liked what one was doing. More often, however, he was abrupt and demanding. We spent a great deal of energy after his arrival making sure that his residence was up to snuff and the Godson family's many needs promptly taken care of. Moreover, he didn't suffer fools gladly, which was a problem in a small post where none of us escaped his scathing outbursts for some "stupidity", and where some, like Chips Chester, the gentle scion of a rich Milwaukee family, who looked a bit like a member of the British Royal family, were on his black list almost as soon as they arrived.

But then there was the positive side. Godson had genuine credentials as the battle-scarred veteran of major political labor wars in the US, Britain and elsewhere. As a result, he had an almost uncanny understanding of what made the Yugoslav leaders tick, and, unlike the rest of us, read the daily Communist press in plain text - that is, he instinctively picked up the nuances which, under the veneer of endless propaganda, told some of the actual tale.

Perhaps it was because they knew about his past or saw something in him of themselves, Communist heavy-weights like Vladimir Bakaric, the Secretary of the Croatian Communist party, who had been one of Tito's closest associates in World War II and was the undisputed boss of Croatia in our time, respected him, accepted his invitations and tolerated him when, on occasion, he turned his acid scorn on them.

Q: Were you present at any of these exchanges?

JAEGER: Yes, although they took place in my second year in Zagreb, when I had become Godson's deputy and Economic Officer.

For one, there was the famous evening when Martha Graham's ballet put on a splendid USIA-arranged performance. Godson had invited Bakaric and some of his Croatian Central Committee colleagues to join him in the center loge and had asked me to come along. Afterwards there was a lavish dinner at the residence, with a lot of wine and 'slivo' (plum brandy), which lasted into the wee hours.

As things got increasingly raucous, and the discussion more and more animated, Godson told Bakaric that it was just outrageous that a country that claimed to be a communist success still couldn't produce enough agricultural products to feed its people and had to import what it lacked at great expense! "Why don't you just break up what remains of the collective farm system and let the farmers farm?"

Bakaric gave him a long searching look, then replied like the real partisan he was: "Mr. Consul General" - long pause - "do you think we ran this revolution only to be hung from the lamp posts by our peasants? They will stay where they are." In other words, Bakaric understood perfectly well, that their still partly collectivized agricultural system was operating far below capacity, that the regime was very unpopular with the farmers, and that the continuing large deficits in wheat production had to be made up by imports. Party control, and its leaders' survival, clearly continued to come first.

Q: That's a curious exchange. I thought collectivization had largely been suspended within two or three years after the break with Moscow. Tito then liberalized agricultural policy, and left the majority of the peasants, as I understand it, independent, but probably hampered by the inability to hire labor, the pricing system, and so forth.

JAEGER: Actually Tito had abandoned only unprofitable collective farms, while others were retained.

Q: That's right. They were retained both in Croatia and in the Vojvodina where agriculture lent itself to large-scale farming.

JAEGER: At the same time, there was, as you say, an important private agricultural sector at the time of this exchange, although the great majority of private holdings were still limited to ten hectares and many were obliged to work with "agricultural cooperatives" because they lacked farm machinery and other services. The bottom line was that the farm economy was still sharply restricted and that deficits had to be made up by imports, which I suspect the US helped finance.

The important point was that Bakaric did not try to defend their policy on economic or ideological grounds, but was, in effect, saying 'don't be naive', we need to keep farms under control to assure continued Communist party rule.

As it turned out, agriculture was to be increasingly liberalized in subsequent decades and, as a result, returned to prosperity - while the Communist party disappeared as Bakaric had foreseen.

Q: Well, that is fascinating. What was your second experience with him?

JAEGER: Toward the end of my tour, the US had just given the Yugoslavs a small plastics plant on the outskirts of Zagreb. Although we were invited to the ribbon-cutting, not a word of thanks appeared in the Yugoslav or Croatian press. Indeed, the U.S. role was hardly mentioned in what was pretty extensive coverage.

Q: Well, the Yugoslavs never did show much appreciation for the American aid they were getting.

JAEGER: Precisely. At a dinner, on the night of the dedication of the plant, at which there were only five or six of us present, Joe Godson confronted Bakaric: "God damn it, Vladimir! We're giving you all this stuff, and spend millions, and you never once tell your people how much we are actually doing for you!"

Bakaric again countered with a touch of acid irony: "Gospodin Godson, I thought you were a smart man! Its enough that we know who pays for what!"

Q: Laughter

JAEGER: Clearly, Tito's old guard was still anxious to deny Moscow unnecessary talking points. They were tough, unembarrassed and focused on survival. And, Joe Godson, the professional

anti-Communist, understood them well, was able to make convivial contact with them, asked blunt questions, and, in spite of their equally blunt rejoinders, remained respected and usually got our message across.

Q: Well, he must have been quite a character. Who else was in Zagreb at the time?

JAEGER: Joe Godson's deputy and the post's Economic Officer was Woody White, a nice, rather wobbly man who went with the flow and tried to keep things on an even keel. My immediate boss in our two-man Consular section was David Milbank, a well-educated, hard working young officer who taught me the ropes and made sure I knew what I was doing, since I had forgotten most of what I had learned two years earlier in the Consular Course in Washington.

The undisputed seniors among our locals were Mrs. Gregoric, whose booming voice remains unforgettable, and her more compliant colleague Mrs. Herzog. Having served there for decades they were both genuine authorities on all aspects of consular regulations. It took real courage for a raw Vice Consul to overrule their recommendations, which they appended to each file, and to overcome their subsequent displeasure!

The powerhouse in the place, however, was Neda Zepic, a thoroughly competent, younger can-do person, who knew lots of people, had lived in Vienna, had a quizzical, sharp-edged sense of humor and endless energy and laughter. While the old guard never really liked her because she made herself so useful to all of us, from Joe Godson on down, we appreciated her greatly for helping with all kinds of projects, even though, unfair as this may have been, one could not be wholly trusting, since we had no idea which of our staff, if not all of them, were regularly reporting to the UDBA (the Yugoslav intelligence service). Indeed, one junior staffer, Anna Aschberger, had to be fired after admitting that she had been an agent - although it was hard to see what else a local could have done under the pressure they were often put under to report.

Be that as it may, Neda has remained a life-long friend of generations of FSOs who worked with her and came to know her. My wife Pat and I visited her in Zagreb in the late '90's when, long retired, we were assisting with Bosnian elections. Among other things, Neda, now walking with a cane, proudly showed us a warm personal letter of thanks and commendation for her service from Under Secretary Larry Eagleburger, who had been a junior member of the Political Section in Belgrade in my time.

Q: What was the consular work like?

JAEGER: Part of it was dealing with the sheer numbers and variety of people who crowded into our small, musty consular space, having often traveled long hours from all over Croatia and Slovenia. Many wanted to visit or emigrate to America, where most had relatives; many more came for passport renewals or to resolve Social Security problems; a few professionals and students turned up who had American job offers or scholarships; and there were the occasional American travelers, who needed help when they had somehow got trouble.

All were first interviewed by our staff, and given the right forms and papers to fill out before David Milbank or I would see them; a necessarily slow and tedious process, since all work

was still done with clanky typewriters, usually in triplicate with dirty carbon paper and preserved in stacks of ancient file cabinets, while the street cars clanged by outside.

Q: What were the biggest problems?

JAEGER: We had frequent difficulties with the many visitors visa applicants who lacked compelling evidence that they really planned to return and whom we therefore had to refuse. Many of these decisions were necessarily intuitive.

The most difficult, however, were the citizenship cases because so many Yugoslavs who had gone to work in the US, returned to Yugoslavia to retire on their Social Security pensions, which, at a time when the dollar was so strong, made them relatively rich. Many of them would then foolishly do things forbidden under US citizenship law as it existed at the time. They would swear oaths of allegiance to Yugoslavia to vote in local elections, take some official job or sign up for government programs open only to Yugoslav citizens. Some young ones even got themselves drafted into the army.

Q: So you had dual citizenship problems?

JAEGER: That's right. The issue would come up when they were questioned in connection with renewal of their passports, or produced passports they had allowed to expire. These poor people, many of them septuagenarians or older, would try to explain: Well, you see, we forgot, or we didn't know, we just did what is normal and swore an oath, or whatever the thing may have been. The trouble was that this unavoidably triggered an 'investigation' and the writing of elaborate 'citizenship opinions', which in many cases led to their having their American citizenship taken away. It was often a heart-rending job which I was glad to leave behind!

Q: Were there any memorable cases of Americans who got in trouble?

JAEGER: The most famous was the case of the lady who was hit by the toilet!

It involved an elderly American woman and her husband, rare tourists on a swing through Yugoslavia, who were staying at the Palace Hotel near the Consulate General. When using the facilities she pulled the cord and the whole water closet on the wall above her crashed down on her head. As a result she had a bad concussion, spent some time in the hospital and of course raised the issue of compensation for the hotel's evident negligence. The Palace Hotel agreed there was a problem, but argued that there were no provisions under its five-year plan to pay for the damages involved. The issue eventually had to be taken by Joe Godson to the Central Committees of Zagreb and Croatia, until their claims were satisfied.

The second case was even more bizarre. I received a call one afternoon that an extremely large American woman had fallen off the end of a train in the railway tunnel through the Alps connecting Slovenia with Carinthia in Austria, apparently thinking she was backing into a toilet! She was rescued with some difficulty, taken to a hospital in Ljubljana and put into an enormous plaster body cast, since her spine was broken. The problem then was that the cast's circumference was so wide that she could not be put on any passenger train. After several intense

days, the problem was eventually solved with the help of relatives who arranged to fly her to Athens on a plane whose rear gate could just accommodate her.

Still another involved the Yale Glee club, en route from Zagreb to Belgrade, which was arrested 'en masse' in a village some fifty miles south of Zagreb, because one of their number had tossed a bottle out of their bus window and hit a young peasant bicycling by who suffered a concussion. After first springing the innocent members of the Club, it took me two days of difficult, face-to-face negotiation with a very stubborn official to get the young perpetrator released from the local hoosegow, after making extensive apologies and helping to negotiate the payment of some quite considerable compensation.

Q: Sounds like the life of consular officers rarely has a dull moment! What happened in your second year in Zagreb?

JAEGER: My next promotion came through, to FSO-5, which raised me to the exalted rank of Consul, and I succeeded Woody White as Joe Godson's deputy and Economic Officer. "Chips", more formally known as John Chapman Chester, replaced me as head of the Consular Section; Jim Fletcher had arrived to take David Milbank's place; and Bob Barry [Robert Barry] and his lovely wife Peggy blew in in a blinding blizzard around Christmas time as an extra hand. Taken together it was a first-rate team. Chips, happily married to his socially and intellectually gifted wife Clara, later became DCM in Malawi and spent many years as a staff member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Bob Barry, thin, brilliant and reserved, was to be even more successful as Consul General in Leningrad, Deputy Director of the Voice of America, Ambassador to Indonesia and Bulgaria and, after his retirement, head of the OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) Mission in Bosnia and a succession of other trouble spots. Both have remained lifelong friends.

Q: How was it working directly for Joe Godson?

JAEGER: Not always smooth sailing. Part of it was shielding the staff from Joe's frequent outbursts of sarcasm and wrath, particularly Chips, whom he considered 'naive' and 'born with a silver spoon'. Perhaps because of this, I was probably too painstaking from Chips' and Bob's perspective in making sure that all was done properly and on time.

Then there was Godson's endless war with the USIA!

Q: Laughter

JAEGER: Our Branch Public Affairs Officer Nealy Turner was, I thought, a competent and rather nice man, who ran his little operation with brio and élan. It included the very active and popular USIA Library under Corinne Spencer, a delightful old hand who knew Zagreb and its people inside out; visiting art exhibits and performers; student exchanges and some limited PR efforts. The trouble arose from USIA's constant tendency to assert their independence from the State Department, which, in Zagreb, translated into an all-consuming turf battle. Nealy took the view that he worked for his USIA superiors in Belgrade, while Joe felt that, as the Consul

General, Nealy was part of his staff and should clear all his activities with him - a classic management problem which should have been worked out on an informal, cooperative basis.

Instead there were memorable shouting matches, slamming of doors and an ongoing war of personalities between Joe and Nealy and wounding quarrels with the Public Affairs people at the Embassy in Belgrade - notably Walter Roberts, the equally self-important and assertive Public Affairs Officer. The frequent, often angry telephone exchanges between Joe in Zagreb and USIA in Belgrade must have been fun for the UDBA eavesdroppers to listen to.

On the other hand, working for Godson was also an education in competent, albeit tough-minded political analysis and all sorts of lessons in how and how not to deal with our Yugoslav Communist hosts.

Q: You mentioned the UDBA, Yugoslavia's secret police, several times. Was it an ongoing problem?

JAEGER: It set the stage for our work. The general impression of the Tito period is that it was pretty benign, that he was a 'soft' communist, kind of Western, and that this justified or explained why we were giving him aid. The reality at the time was quite different. Actually the UDBA remained a powerful force as Tito's control device and his means of keeping himself informed. We were giving him covert and overt aid, not because he was a nice guy and a Jeffersonian democrat but because he was effectively blocking out the Soviet Union.

Q: To what extent was the UDBA infiltrated or controlled by the Soviet KGB?

JAEGER: That came to light only in 1966, some years after I had left, when Rankovic, one of Tito's closest wartime associate, and the Minister of the Interior, was implicated in bugging Tito's bedroom. In the ensuing scandal it was learned that Rankovic had been a KGB agent, that the UDBA had been controlled by the KGB for a long time and that the Soviets had played a very powerful intelligence game in Yugoslavia throughout this period.

Q: Was this when Rankovic was finally fired?

JAEGER: Yes.

Q: How did UDBA operate against you in Zagreb?

JAEGER: Our perception was that they had six or seven intelligence officers working full time against our four or five American officers and one American secretary. Part of this involved standard wiretapping and bugging - for instance, official visitors always ended up in the same numbered rooms, i.e. 9, 19, 29 etc. on various floors of the nearby Palace Hotel. Another part was the constant pressure on our local staff, as well as on many of our social guests and neighbors, to report our official doings and personal proclivities. And there were their direct operations. One of their consistent objectives was to find out whether one of us was a CIA officer, and, if so, who it was and what he was up to.

Curiously we got little sympathy or help from the Embassy, which tended to downplay our reporting of these pressures and thought we were exaggerating. Perhaps the UDBA was more reticent in Belgrade with its large number of diplomatic establishments or the Embassy did not want to undercut Washington support for aid to Yugoslavia. Whatever the reason, the Embassy generally thought we were a little hyper. We did not.

Q: Any examples?

JAEGER: Among the more notable events in Zagreb during this period was the visit of Commerce Secretary Benson for a high-level trade negotiation with Yugoslavia. Although we strongly counseled that their strategy meetings be held outdoors or in a more or less secure area in the Consulate which was regularly swept, he insisted on meeting in the Palace Hotel where they all stayed, and was then upset when the Yugoslav delegation seemed to outmaneuver him at every turn. After they had left our Admin officer found that the chandelier in their meeting room had been studded with listening devices.

Their direct operations were often nastier. For instance, men in raincoats would try to frighten the wives of some of our people while their husbands were away on official trips and start reading poems about children drowning in rivers. This happened to Mrs. Koch, the wife of the junior USIA officer. Chips Chester reported that his wife received an anonymous, totally untrue letter claiming that he was having an affair with one of our local staff. Sometimes just plain threatening letters were found, or curious near-accidents reported. And we were, of course, routinely followed by teams of cars when we made trips.

To protest these incidents, either Joe Godson or I we would call on Peter Nemas, the Protocol Chief for Croatia who represented the Foreign Office and had close ties to the UDBA and got brushed off with comments like: "This is all just in your Western imagination. These things are not really happening." The frustration was that they were, and that we had no means to stop them.

Q: What were the most serious incidents?

JAEGER: The most egregious, and from the UDBA's perspective most successful operation, was the seduction of an American secretary and code clerk, which I have already mentioned. The most brutal, during my time in Zagreb, was aimed at the British Consulate General, then headed by Basil Judd, a genial, old diplomat, who had made his career in the Middle East. Judd's problem was that his attractive, rather younger wife was noticeably promiscuous, a fact which had not escaped the UDBA's attention. One day she went to a famous old castle with her latest lover, an UDBA plant. Their tryst was interrupted at its high point by a team of UDBA interrogators who burst into their room, refused to let her get up or get dressed and, in this condition, interrogated her for many hours, all the while taking photographs. What they most wanted to know was who the intelligence officer was on the British staff and what he was doing. Some said she spilled quite a lot of beans. Be that as it may, she was left with a complete nervous breakdown and had to be sent to a British sanatorium. Judd, of whom more later, left promptly thereafter and retired.

Q: That's pretty rough stuff. Did anything ever happen to you personally?

JAEGER: There was one, quite serious incident in my second year, when I had planned to spend a winter weekend in Villach, across the alps in Austria. Since it had snowed I had asked the Croatian Deputy Tourist Minister - who, I later learned, was also a senior UDBA officer - when I ran into him at a reception, which of the Alpine passes would be open. He promised to call back and assured me that the Wurzen Pass was clear.

So I set off in my little Volkswagen on a clear and very cold Friday night and got up to the first level with growing difficulty, since even to that point the road turned out to be hazardous and was covered with increasingly deep snow. Once on the plateau, where the actual ascent over the pass begins, it became clear that I had been misled, since the road over the pass was snowed in and impassable.

It was at this point, while I took a few minutes to look at the extraordinarily bright, starlit sky and the icy mountain peaks, that I somehow sensed something was wrong and instinctively jumped back into the car and slammed the door. A second later, the whole car, hood, windshield and all, was covered by a pack of ferocious dogs, which a guard had released without warning to go after me. I gunned the motor, dogs went flying in all direction, got clear and managed to get back down the mountain road. It was a very close shave. Some days later, I again ran into the Deputy Tourist Minister in Zagreb, who asked me with a little smile, how I had enjoyed my trip over the pass!

Q: Life in those days in Zagreb clearly wasn't uneventful! Looking at the bigger picture, what was your general impression of the political atmosphere in Yugoslavia and the opinion towards the U.S. at that time?

JAEGER: The party-controlled media consistently downplayed and were often critical of the US, and only doled out occasional positive reports. Even so the US was widely admired by ordinary people for its democracy and freedom and seen as the dream land of opportunity, where one didn't have the kind of problems they had in Yugoslavia. This was reflected in the consistent success of our USIA Library, the number of people who listened to VOA and RFE, the many visa applicants, the interest shown in American exhibits and musical or ballet performances, as well as in the casual comments many people made. It became most apparent in the huge outpouring of sympathy over President Kennedy's assassination in 1963.

On Yugoslav domestic issues opinion seemed even more tightly controlled. Although we met lots of people at dinners, parties and receptions, as well as in many informal situations, and heard lots of rumors, few were willing to discuss what was going on in concrete terms. Apart from occasional grumbling, regime jokes or criticism by innuendo, it still paid not to rock the boat. UDBA pressure clearly was effective.

There were some few - I remember notably a young doctor and his family - who did speak fearlessly of their unhappiness with Yugoslavia's poorly functioning autocratic system and were willing to offer detailed examples. Generally, however, the most outspoken tended to be working class people and peasants, the people who bore the brunt of the country's problems and had the

least to lose. They sometimes complained very explicitly about 'conditions' and did not care who was listening.

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 Alstom (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.

ROBERT L. BARRY
Junior Officer Trainee
Zagreb (1963-1965)

Ambassador Barry was born and raised in Pennsylvania. He attended Dartmouth College, Oxford University, St. Anthony's College, and Columbia. He served in the US Navy and entered the Foreign Service in 1962. He served in Yugoslavia, the USSR, Sweden, and Indonesia. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1996.

Q: Tom Niles came in his first job, with me, I was chief of the consular section. You went to

Zagreb, what were you doing?

BARRY: Well, I was the junior officer trainee, which meant that I was supposed to circulate through all of the different aspects of the consulate. I started out in the consular section. Chips Chester was the head of the consular section. Then I did administrative things. There was a guy who was named Frank Newton; he was the administrative officer. Then I did political economic work first with George Jaeger and then Sam Lee who was the number two political economic officer. Actually Joe Godson was the consul general there first and he was a fascinating person. He was an ex-labor person who came in through the AFL-CIO. He was labor attaché in London and labor attaché in Belgrade and then was consul general in Zagreb. He had very good Serbo-Croatian and was on good terms with Vladimir Bakorich, the local head of the party and one of the key associates of Tito's. Then the second consul general while I was there was Carl Sommerlatte who had been in the Soviet business before that.

Q: When you got there, it was still '62 when you arrived?

BARRY: No, by this time we're in February of '63, by that time we had been through the A100 course then on the Yugoslav desk waiting for the language course to begin. The language course began in the fall, took 16 weeks of language and then out there.

Q: What was the sort of political economic situation that you saw from the Zagreb perspective?

BARRY: Well, in the first place when we arrived there it was the deep freeze. I don't know if you remember the winter of '63 in Central Europe, but it was the coldest winter on record. It was so cold that we took the train from Paris to go to pick up our cars in Germany and all of the heating in the cars froze, the pipes burst, the toilets were frozen. My wife was pregnant at the time and we were also cold and I think Tom Niles and Peggy and I all sort of huddled together for warmth in one lower bunk in the railroad car. When we got to Zagreb all of the coal was frozen into the railroad cars. So, there was no coal available to heat anything, so the Palace Hotel which we stayed initially, the waiters were all wearing overcoats and getting out of bed itself was a hazardous operation. We finally moved to the Esplanade Hotel which did have heating, but that of course, cast a pall on the whole economy because the industry had come to a grinding halt and food was short and all that. It was a rather atypical introduction to the place. It was actually not so much different than being there in '56 in the first place although a lot of progress had been made in the interim.

Politically, I would say, this was before the Croatian cultural revolution or whatever you want to call it was before the crowd around Bakarich made a play for more political and economic autonomy. Although they still complained bitterly about the fact that the products of Croatia and Slovenia, the hardworking honest toilers of Zagreb and Ljubljana were sent down to develop the backward Serbs, the good for nothing Albanians and all that. There was strong tension in the air about the fact that they were essentially paying to develop the rest of the country. When the summer came the economy was no so bad. There were no shortages of food or anything like that. There was a strong secret police element in most things. They kept a pretty close watch on various signs of restlessness among the Croatian natives. The Cardinal at that time, of course the Croatians are always Catholic during the war period the Cardinal had been notoriously pro-

Ustasi and pro-Nazi and this was the successor who was there then who was quite nationalist. I would go to the churches around town and listen to the kinds of things people would say from the pulpit particularly from the Franciscan Monastery. It was really quite nationalist in what they had to say about the Serbs.

Q: When you say nationalist, you mean Croatian nationalist as opposed to Yugoslav nationalist?

BARRY: No, I mean Croatian nationalist. This was, the Croats thought of themselves as the 1,000 year culture.

Q: Instead of being 500 years under the Turkish yoke, which is what I got in Belgrade?

BARRY: Right. There were still lots of remnants of the Austrian/Hungarian monarchy there because Croatia had been part of Hungary in the pre-1919 federation. There were still a lot of countesses and counts who were left over from that period who were more attached to that sort of north-south axis rather than to the forced marriage with the Serbs. It was still worth your life to employ a Serb and a Croat together in your household. I guess it was Mrs. Peggy Beam, the ambassador's wife when they were there earlier. The Serb and the Croat in the household were after each other with knives and things like that. There was a lot of nationalist particularism, but on the other hand, most of the people we knew thought of themselves first and foremost as Yugoslavs. Peggy stayed there to have our first child and we had a Yugoslav doctor, a Dalmatian who could not have been more pro-Yugoslav and put down the Croatian particularism and all that. I mention that simply because we're in touch with the same person today and you couldn't imagine a more ardent Croatian nationalist who has nothing good to say about anything except Tudjman. So, it certainly was not evident to any of us then that this was, that the problems of history and nationalism were ever going to come back to the degree that they had during the World War II. People were still getting over the experiences of World War II, some of the horrors of the death camps and the terrible things the Croats and Serbs did to each other in that period. I think the general impression among us all was that this was an antagonism that would not ever come back and that although there were still some remnants of these old feelings leftover from the 1940s and before, that federation would last.

Q: How about in your work, did you have any, can you talk a bit about consular cases or what type of consular work you were doing?

BARRY: Well, a lot of this was kind of similar to Lawrence Durrell, if you've read, as I'm sure you have "esprit de corps" and some of those stories he wrote about old Yugoslavia. One of my first consular cases that I can recall was that I heard from a truly irate American who was staying in the Palace Hotel that I had to come over there right away to deal with the situation that had developed around his wife. I got there and found a huge mob scene going on. I began to sort it out and figure out what happened. What had happened was that this woman had been preparing to go to bed and in the process of doing so was in her bathrobe and had put a lot of pink plastic curlers in her hair. She then went into the WC [water closet] and sat on the toilet and in reaching up to flush it, pulled the overhead chain that caused the water closet to fall on her head. This upset her husband, who called the management of the hotel and raised an ungodly squawk. The management of the hotel reacted by calling everybody. They had a doctor, they had the local

tourist board, they had the police and they had of all things the plumber who had originally installed the plumbing in the Palace Hotel back in the time of the Austro Hungarian Empire. They're all in there yelling at the top of their lungs, the poor woman was suffering some kind of concussion from having this thing fall on her head. I managed to finally clear all these people out and work out what the story was. The story from the hotel was, it was not their fault. This facility was installed in the good old Austro Hungarian days. This was the man who did it, he's a well-known craftsman, the best materials were used. She must have mistreated the facility by somehow pulling it at a strange angle from which you probably would have had to stand on the toilet itself and pull it over here and subjected it to this unpredictable strain which caused the thing to fall on her head. We're not going to charge you for it. Otherwise, we'd naturally make her pay for repairing it. So, this led to a long negotiation after which the final outcome was that she was allowed to depart the hotel without having to pay for it. She stayed there that night, but that was one kind of tourist mishap.

Another was a very large woman, an American citizen of Greek origin who in fact spoke nothing but Greek. She was so large, in fact, that she could not turn around inside a train car which had caused her to... While she was going to go to the bathroom in the train at the time the train was passing through the large tunnel that goes between Austria, or Italy I guess it is and Slovenia... But this was a dark tunnel. The lights in the train kept going on and off and as she thought she was backing up into the WC on the train. She in fact was backing out of the train into the tunnel. She found herself lying there in the tunnel bruised and broken here and there. We had to go and retrieve her. She again, did not speak anything but Greek and we didn't speak any Greek except my consular assistant spoke some classical Greek. So, classical Greek and modern Greek exchanged, this woman had then to be placed in a very large caissonlike cast that went sort of head to toe which further made her difficult to move around. As I recall we had to try to find a plane which was landing in Zagreb that could fly her to wherever she wanted to go that had an exceptionally large hatch so that she could be moved into the plane.

I guess another memorable occasion was when Jackie Kennedy visited, this was after John F. Kennedy's assassination which I'm sure you've experienced also. It had a terrific impact.

Q: It really did. I mean I was abroad and I came back the next day and I was on leave with my wife and all the flags were half mast and going across the customs guards, I mean they were weeping and it was something.

BARRY: We had so many candles put in front of the consulate that it broke the glass in the front of the consulate and there were people out there all night praying and things like that. It had a very deep and lasting impact. I remember it was our pediatrician who told us about Kennedy's death, which we had trouble absorbing at the time. Anyhow, it was several months after that that Mrs. Kennedy came to Yugoslavia on Charles Wrightsman's yacht. I was detailed to sort of go along as escort officer or helpmate because she did have the Secret Service with her, not on the yacht, but in our little Volkswagen which we sort of bounced along the coast while Mrs. Kennedy and Lee Radizwill were on the yacht. In fact, she didn't get off except once in Dubrovnik and we joined her in Dubrovnik. They had kept it very secret that she was there and didn't want to be bothered by anybody. But the word got out and there were thousands of people in the streets in Dubrovnik trying to get a glimpse of her. In the event, she walked around the city

a little bit. She said she couldn't stand the crowds of people and went back and spent time on the boat with her afterwards. She was talking about how she didn't mind being the center of attention when her husband was alive, but now that he was dead, it was too much to have to put up with all this crowd scene. So, it was a fascinating time to be able to have an opportunity to spend some time with her.

Q: Did visas cause any particular problems for you?

BARRY: Oh, yes. Well, visas are always a problem. The idea was that people were not bona fide non-immigrants and indeed many of them were not. In many ways there were little areas of Croatia in particular which had closer ties with the United States than they did with the surrounding countryside in Yugoslavia. These were people whose ancestors had immigrated long ago or whether the husband had left and gone to sea or something like that, hadn't been heard of for a long time, they depended on social security payments often. Other times things pension checks had been sent from the United States and we'd go to verify these social security recipients were still alive. We'd go back into these isolated villages in the Lika and you had to walk several miles from the nearest road. My consular assistant and I would show up and people would assume that we were relatives from the United States and they were all dressed in clothes that had been sent to them from the U.S. It was that kind of disjunctive economy, so naturally because so many people had ties in the United States, most of the people who came for non-immigrant visas were considered to be ineligible.

Q: When you were working in the political section, what type of things were you doing? What sort of contacts did both you have and Joe Godson have?

BARRY: Well, Joe of course, had very good contacts with the top political leadership in Croatia. Bakarich, who was the head of the Croatian communist party, and other people who were in charge of the government there. He could get some good information from them about what some of the problems were, some of the disagreements were between the federal government and the Croats. They were not shy about complaining about the fact that the economy was being run badly, that they weren't getting their fair share and things like that. I spent more of my time covering what was the beginnings of the sort of intellectual basis for Croatian particularism which was a group around a magazine called Praxis. This was a philosophical journal that got started about '64 I guess and the people around them were people at the university and people in the social sciences who were basically in favor of more pluralism and in favor of reducing the dominance of the Serbs, sort of smarting under Serbian dominance. This later became a cause celebre after I had left when Tito decided to crack down on this tendency of Croatian intellectuals. I spent a lot of time also following what was going on in the religious circles. I got to know some of the Catholic clergy there and spent some time up in Slovenia, too because that was part of our consular district calling on people and talking to people there. They had a similar kind of intellectual quasi rebellion going on in Slovenia at the time. But this was, these were not big issues at this point. I don't really remember what the differences were between the Belgrade embassy and Zagreb consulate at the time. I know that Joe Godson in particular, Joe asserted his right to send in reports without clearing them with the political section in Belgrade and I think that caused some unhappiness at the time because it tended to differ from the view in Belgrade about some of these issues. I guess also we spent a fair amount of time on commercial things, for

example, the annual Zagreb fair which always had large numbers of American companies present and Tito always attended and things like that. It was a time when the ambassador always came up in Belgrade. In fact, I remember the first one of those occasions was one in which Ambassador and Mrs. Kennan came up from Belgrade and we all went to a play given in Serbo Croatian based on Eugene O'Neill's The Iceman Cometh which in Serbo Croatian turns out to be as I think I will never forget I Leder Dodge. O'Neill has got a great deal of dialect in his English language and it was all faithfully translated into incomprehensible Serbo-Croatian and it also was quite long. I think it went on for four hours.

Q: If this is the one I think it is, the New York critics said "The Iceman Cometh, the critic goeth."

BARRY: Well, that's right except the critic in this case was my wife who was something like eight months pregnant who was sitting there on this hard bench with the Kennans and other such dignitaries. She didn't feel as if she could go, so we sat through all that at the time. But there was also a good deal going on in the cultural scene in Zagreb. The Croats all naturally feeling that they were cultural and the Serbs weren't, but whether it was, they did have very good music there, they did have a good opera. They had a lot of theater and the theater was sometimes, it was often I would say of the read between the lines type, so there was something to be gained from trying to interpret what was going through peoples minds by the plays they showed and the kinds of statements were being made by those plays.

Q: Did you get any feel for how the people in Croatia and Slovenia look at the Soviets at this time?

BARRY: As the good friends of the Serbs and therefore, not to be trusted too much, I guess. This was still of course in the period of tension between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. I think it was around '65 if I recall correctly when Khrushchev came to Belgrade and there was a plane crash.

Q: There was a plane crash at Dedinje, I think, of some Soviet military people who had taken part in the "liberation of Yugoslavia" and the whole plane just came in and hit the hill.

BARRY: Yes, as usual there's always conspiracy theories and there are conspiracy theories around that as well, why did it happen. But I think it's fair to say that the Croats were always more in favor of the break with the Soviet Union than perhaps the Serbs were. They believed that trade with the Soviet Union was always to their disadvantage. If they were helping to subsidize the Serbs they were also helping to subsidize the Russians. There was a Russian consulate in Zagreb. There were a number of others. There was Austria, there was French, there was British, there was Italian and all that, but the Russians I guess kept a pretty low profile at the time.

Q: Did Slovenia play much of a role as far as you all were concerned or were you pretty well hooked to Croatia?

BARRY: Well, we spent some time in Slovenia. We did a fair amount of commercial work and we'd go traveling around with some of the firms, Sloveniales and there were joint ventures.

There were joint ventures between Dow and INA at the time, which was just getting started. There was the petrochemical industry. There was some, there were a number of American companies that were interested. Most of them were interested in Slovenia and Croatia it seems to me. We spent a lot of our time pursuing those, but I think in terms of the political role that Slovenia played, it played it more in Belgrade than it did in Zagreb. We'd go up and visit some of the players in Slovenia who used to sort of commute back and forth to Belgrade.

Q: Did the security service, the UDBA, cause any problems for you all?

BARRY: Well, I remember assuming that they were omni present in the sense of tapping our phones and probably wiring the consulate, but I don't recall any particular incidents of harassment. This was a period of U.S. Yugoslav relations were pretty close where we had an active PL480 program, a military training program, all those kinds of things, so I don't recall the security people were heavy handed.

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 benefitted 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 Croatians, 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 Croatians 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 Croatians 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- Wurttemberg, 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 Croats 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. Sop, 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.

RUSSELL O. PRICKETT
Economic Officer
Belgrade (1964-1968)

Mr. Prickett was born and raised in Minnesota and attended Hamline University and Harvard Law School. He entered the Foreign Service in 1959. During his career he held posts in Switzerland, Yugoslavia, and Japan, also working in the State Department's Office of Economic and Business Affairs and Trade and Finance Division. Mr. Prickett was interviewed in 1999 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

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 Mihailovic, a colonel who had been elevated to general rank when the monarchy fled from Yugoslavia during the war. Well, Mihailovic 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 Vujiæ. She was the wife of a Serbian engineer. They lived over in Panæevo 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.

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 Ustashi 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 Germanies. 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 Affairs
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 communiques 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 Croats 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.

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 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...

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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Yugoslavs wanted to discuss.

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.

ROBERT RACKMALES
Consular Officer
Zagreb (1967-1969)

Robert Rackmales was born and raised in Baltimore. He attended John Hopkins University, graduating in 1958. He attended graduate school at Harvard University. He entered the Foreign Service in 1963 and has served in Canada, Nigeria, Somalia, Italy, and Yugoslavia. Mr. Rackmales was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1995.

Q: When you arrived it was what? A fairly full blown democracy, would you say?

RACKMALES: There was a civilian elected government. It was closer to a fully functioning democracy than has existed since. The thing that did it in though, the same thing that did in Yugoslavia, was that politics became purely ethnic. The political parties turned into engines for promoting nationalism or tribalism, whichever word you want to use. Tribalism seems to be used more in an African context, nationalism in European context, but it's the same thing. I remember one close exposure to this phenomenon. I had gotten to know the head of the Nigerian Timber Association who was British. He took me to some of the saw mills, so we got to meet with and talk to some of the workers in the midst of the 1965 election campaign. Their passions were so high that we were literally threatened with machetes and forced to say of course we were supportive of their ethnic party. These were regional elections in the western region, and I was given the job of following those closely. I was the only one working full time on these regional elections. I wrote a long evaluation just before the election which went in and was commended by the Department, but my final conclusion got watered down by the embassy. My conclusion was that these elections were going to trigger large scale violence. The embassy fudged it because we were supporting Nigerian democracy, we didn't want to make it seem as if this was a country in trouble. So the prospect for violence was played down. In fact, large scale violence did break out, and eventually led to the coup that took place about six months later that

overthrew the government. It was an early exposure, both to the force of tribalism/nationalism, and also to the unfortunate reluctance of some embassies to give Washington bad news.

Q: Could you talk a bit about your experience of learning Serbian because I think this is an indoctrination into the culture of Yugoslavia.

RACKMALES: Well, I did learn Serbian in fact although officially it was called Serbo-Croatian. Both of our instructors were Serbs, named Jankovic and Popovic.

Q: You learned...

RACKMALES: ...the purest Serbian.

Q: As an aside, I took that course too a couple of years before, and these are unforgettable. What was your impression of these instructors, and what they were trying to do?

RACKMALES: One of them was a good teacher, Jankovic, I had a lot of respect for him. He was an ideal language teacher, because he didn't force the students to use the language, but he did much more than Popovic who really wasted a lot of our time by launching off into long anecdotes in English. FSI let him get away with that. He was a character and as a cultural study, it was extremely interesting. You had to like him for his spontaneity, and sense of humor. But in terms of language learning, it left a lot to be desired. I think 80% of what Serbian we learned, we learned from Jankovic. But we did get a certain exposure to Serbian mores and way of life.

Since I was destined for Zagreb I had to fine-tune my language after I got to Zagreb because I arrived at the point when the first stirrings of Croatian nationalism were starting to manifest themselves and people became more sensitive about the differences between the language variants. You wanted to be sure you didn't use the Serbian variant if you could help it.

Q: I used to sort of say, well, if I were trying to get out, I certainly wouldn't try to go this way, but I might go that way, or something like that. We tried to do our best but it was a very difficult position for all of us. What was the view of you all in the consulate general, the officers sitting there looking at whither Croatia and its relations within the greater Yugoslavia. We're talking about '67 to '69.

RACKMALES: It's a tough question because I have to guard against reading back into my views, at that time everything that has transpired since then. I don't think that we were seriously concerned at that point of a breakup of the country, or anything like what in fact happened in the '90s. In Zagreb we were encouraged by the openness, and flexibility with which the Croatian leadership was handling the use of nationalism. We recognized the risk of violence, inter-ethnic violence in that period of the late '60s. Many soccer games between Serbian and Croatian teams would end in some sort of bloody riot. But I think we felt that the answer was in a more liberal

leadership that would channel these emotions into politically acceptable forms. Of course, this was several years before Tito cracked down on nationalism and liberalism in '71. He purged the leaderships of both the Croatian and the Serbian party of those who had shown any tolerance for manifestations of nationalism, a misguided decision that helped bring on some of the later tragedies.

Looking back in those years, '67 to '69, the consulate general was tracking the impact of nationalism and on the whole felt that it was manageable in that time and in that context, and with a leadership that was showing a certain openness and flexibility in handling it, while staying within the broad parameters that Tito had laid down to that point.

Q: Having been in Serbia, the Serbs took great delight in telling me how awful the Nazi-supported Croatian regime was. How did the Croats that you would talk to treat what happened during World War II from that respective?

RACKMALES: In most cases diffidence. Some would speak about how their families were persecuted and that sort of thing. There was a certain amount of joking over some of the language, the extremes. This was again a safety valve. You were not supposed to use any non-Croatian expression during the Pavelic period. So you couldn't say "telephone". You had to use a made-up Croatian term.

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.

JACK SEYMOUR
Consular Officer
Zagreb (1969-1971)

Mr. Seymour was born in the Philippines, the son of a U.S Navy family. He earned his bachelor's degree from Dartmouth University in 1962. He joined the Foreign Service in 1967 after serving in the U.S Army for three years. His career included postings in Canada, Yugoslavia, Poland, Germany, and Belgium. Mr. Seymour was interviewed by Raymond Ewing on November 20th 2003.

Q: Okay. So, how long were you in INR on the Canadian desk?

SEYMOUR: A good two years, and then from there I went to Zagreb.

Q: And how did that assignment come to be? They knew that you had Serbo-Croatian?

SEYMOUR: Well actually, it was a little bit the reverse. I forget whether we had the open assignments at the time. I don't think we did. But I was working on my next assignment with my career counselor and he was telling me this was open. It was a counselor position in Zagreb and he would put me in for it, and he did. Because there was not the open-assignment process with the monthly job-opening lists, I'm not sure that the posts really knew too much what was going on unless it was communicated back through the European panel representative and the European bureau. At any rate, I did get paneled for that job in about January 1969, and that's

when I began going over to FSI to listen to tapes. A couple of months later Steve Steiner, who was at the consulate came to Washington for consultations and looked me up. We had lunch or something and the main question he was interested in was did I have the language. When he learned that I had studied the language earlier and had been tested at FSI, he was much relieved. He said the Consul General had been very concerned about that. Then Steve was intrigued at how I had gotten the language, but when I explained, it was of course clear right away.

Q: That was January of 1969? So you actually went that summer to Zagreb?

SEYMOUR: Yes, to a consular position. The Consulate General then was a pretty big post, 10 Americans and 20 or more Foreign Service Nationals. Still, it was small compared to the Embassies where I later served. We were all sort of in it together, a small community of Americans and a small consular community as well. The Consulate was in an Austro-Hungarian-vintage building on a main square in the town, and I happened to occupy, as chief of the two-man consular section, a huge office on a corner with two large windows. One opened onto a balcony overlooking a park, and our flagstaff extended from the balcony railing. Every morning shortly after I came into the office, a Yugoslav employee would come by with the flag, the daily newspapers, and a cup of Turkish coffee. He put the newspapers and coffee on my desk, went to the balcony and ran the flag out the staff there. It was a pretty civilized routine.

Q: Let me go back just one more time to Martin Packman and the advice he gave you on drafting and particularly drafting in the State Department, in the government context. He was teaching you to write more concisely and focus exactly on your main points.

SEYMOUR: Yes, when I first arrived, he asked me to take some time and do a sort of a study of the overall situation. I think he thought it might be an intelligence memorandum, that is, a longish paper, a think-piece, as opposed to a shorter, one-to-two page intelligence note. Well, came back to him maybe three weeks later, he hadn't given me a deadline or anything, and I gave him 50 pages double-spaced on a Friday afternoon, and he almost literally fell off his chair when he saw this huge packet. He laughed and said, it looked interesting and he would take it over the weekend. On Monday he showed it to me, and he had turned it into three different assessments. He had just cut and pasted and reorganized every which way. It was a terrific job of restructuring, and I appreciated that, but I also felt badly for spoiling his weekend and for putting him to lot of editorial work that I should have done. I could tell he had he actually enjoyed it--but I saw the light after that.

Q: Didn't he later teach drafting here at the Foreign Service Institute for some years?

SEYMOUR: I think he did, I think he did and am sure he was an excellent teacher. He was that kind of person.

Q: Okay. Let's go back to Zagreb. You were married at the time?

SEYMOUR: I was. There are stories about all that but I returned to California where my wife had just finished graduate school at Stanford, and we got married and returned to Berlin where I finished my army tour. So when I entered the Foreign Service I was married.

There is one interesting thing about the assignment to Zagreb. As I mentioned, I was paneled to a consular position. This was just before the cone system came into effect; in fact, that happened while I was in Zagreb. In those days, a junior officer would spend up to six years going to a couple of different posts in several different functions—political, consular, maybe, econ if that applied—to get a sense for the work and where his or her abilities lay. At the time in Yugoslavia, we had the two slots in Zagreb and three in Belgrade and all occupied by would-be political officers who were chafing because they were doing consular work, felt shunted aside already, and had all sorts of complaints about that. Then, in the second of the two years I was in Zagreb word came that we would now have a four-cone system and that people would be assigned to each cone more or less permanently and could expect to most of their successive postings to jobs in that cone. Well, all of a sudden, we realized that we had lost those slots where would-be political officers where could get really valuable training and get out into the countryside, really see the people, and learn at an early stage in their careers. The change reduced the slots for junior political officers in Yugoslavia to one part-time position in Zagreb and, I believe, another one or two in Belgrade, a loss of at least half. This led to dismay and second-guessing, and I think we were a bit wiser after that about how personnel-system changes can work in unexpected ways. But I think that particular problem has been worked out to a certain extent.

Q: Yes, one thing that's been done is that first tour, to some extent second tour junior officers often do get assigned to consular jobs even though they're not in the consular cone because it's the junior consular positions that give them an opportunity to use the language, to sometimes travel around a bit and certainly have a lot of contact with nationals of the country, sometimes more than a junior political officer really can do.

SEYMOUR: You know, that's really true and that's how it was at the time in Belgrade. And another thing I found later on is that those two years of consular work were extremely valuable when I came to work on a country desk where I'd say about 50 percent of the activities or the inquiries I handled involved consular work in one way or another.

Q: I guess I am a little surprised that two years into the Foreign Service with a Washington assignment behind you but still as a pretty junior officer you were the chief of a two-man- two-person section and you basically did the whole range of consular work, American citizens' welfare and whereabouts and visas for Yugoslavs or Croatians going to the United States, the whole thing.

SEYMOUR: Yes, with the vice consul and an excellent Foreign Service National (FSN) staff, we did passport and citizenship and a lot of federal-benefits work too. Many of my really interesting experiences and, sometimes, fond memories involved the Social Security cases that sent me out into the countryside. I don't know whether you want to indulge these kinds of stories, but I recall many good experiences, essentially as a case officer for the Social Security Administration when a consular officer is asked to check into questions that arise—to ensure that the people, the right people, were really getting their checks or to clear up discrepancies in applications. For example, a married Yugoslav has gone to America and dies there and turns out he also married an American, so is his wife back in Yugoslavia whom he left, eligible for any part of his pension?

Questions of this nature came up and the Social Security Administration would send us out to investigate.

I remember three situations in particular. The “cases” would accumulate and it was hard to keep up with them because we didn’t have the staff for it, and also the distances could be considerable. At one point, we had three cases from three different islands off the Adriatic Coast in Yugoslavia. And I figured that to do those one by one, for me to go to each island would be extremely time-consuming. Generally, our first effort would be to invite the people to come to the consulate, but often they were too old, too poor, or too far away and could not make the trip. We usually did not have a deadline but we did not want too much time to lapse, so I decided to invite them each to come to Zadar, a town on the coast about a days train ride from Zagreb, where I took a hotel and went down the night before. Each came at the appointed hour and I did the interviews and got the necessary information. I think the hotel people were a little bit suspicious about what was going on, but there was no problem or interference as far as I’m aware. At any rate, we got the interviews done that way and I was kind of proud of myself for having figured out an efficient way to do it. To have gone to each of the islands would have taken the better part of a week, I’m sure.

Another memory I have is going to interview an old woman in Slovenia whose native language, only language, really, was Italian, so I conducted the interview with the assistance of her daughter, who spoke Italian, which I did not. Though Slovene, the daughter understood Serbo-Croatian and converted what I said in that language into Italian for her mother. It worked well, and I thought that was an intriguing linguistic situation, which also demonstrated the rich layering of cultures in the former Yugoslavia.

At the Consulate, we did have one or two FSNs who spoke Slovenian, and, as we were accredited there, we did have considerable correspondence in Slovenian, which they handled. I got so I could understand their drafts as I picked up words in Slovenian, but we had no training in it at post and my ability was limited. Serbo-Croatian was the standard language in Yugoslavia at that time, although it would be quite different now and, as I believe I mentioned, I was working on adapting my Serbian Serbo-Croatian to the Croatian variant. I ultimately achieved a 4-4 in the language and felt quite comfortable in it.

After a time, though, I ordered that we reply in Slovenian to all letters that arrived in that language. By then, I could read enough to understand what I was signing, and I could always question the Slovenian-speaking staff member about any questions, so it worked well, and I think we made a better impression on our Slovenian constituents.

A third memory about these Social Security trips—and still more are coming are coming to mind but I’ll close with this one—involves my first real effort to take care of one of the cases. It meant driving to a town called Ilovačak about 50 miles away from Zagreb and, on the map, looking like an easy trip. We had a consular four-wheel vehicle that I could have used and in fact was advised by my staff to use, but I figured it was close and I could drive my own car.

So I did, but after turning off the main road and off the secondary road, and a few more turn-offs, I came eventually to a dirt road and then a deeply-rutted wagon track. I went as far as I could

with the family car and saw an old woman watching a couple of cows and I asked, “How far off to Ilovačak?” She thought a bit and replied that if I continued around on the road it was perhaps another three kilometers, but then she pointed across a small valley to a cluster of houses over on the next hill and said that was it. So I asked if she would mind watching my car along with the cows, to which she agreed with a smile, and I set off down the valley. And you have to picture this, I am in a suit, carrying a briefcase and hiking down the hill and there’s a little stream at the bottom. I jumped across that and met two or three school kids coming home with knapsacks tittering at me. Finally, I got up to the other side. Approaching the first little house, I asked three older men sitting on the porch where I could find the home of *Gospodin* (Mr.) so-and-so who has died back in America and one replied, “Oh, he’s right here.” It turned out that was a relative with the same surname; I think in the small town nearly everyone was connected one way or another. But I repeated that it was the one who had died, and they quickly pointed me to the right house and I went on and finally made it.

I was about three hours late. But the family had spread a big lunch for me, a chicken and peppers and *šljivovica*, the ubiquitous plum brandy—homemade—and apples, all of which they insisted I have before we got down to business, which was to check their papers and establish that the woman had in fact been married to the deceased. It was a wonderful meal and I ate, being watched by the widow, an elderly woman, and a man and his wife, her son and daughter-in-law, I believe, and their two young children. The peppers were so hot that the *šljivovica*, smooth but very strong and the only liquid on offer, was cooling by comparison. But I finally finished the meal and when we got to the business it was quickly evident that they had been married. They showed me a marriage certificate and family pictures, including one of the deceased in the casket, apparently sent from America. So I was able to do my report and substantiate it pretty well. Afterwards they wanted to ply me still further with food, obviously anxious to be good hosts to a government man because they had a stake in the outcome, but I also had the impression they were curious and honored to be hosting someone they saw as an “important” American. When I politely declined their offers, they insisted I take home a roast chicken, some apples, and a bottle of their excellent “šlivo.”

Eventually I broke off and the man offered to walk with me back to the car with the loot and then to show me the way to the main road. This I more or less knew but he insisted, I think from curiosity and perhaps to have the experience of driving in the car. I finally returned home much, much wiser about doing these things.

Q: Okay. Your story about going to the hotel in Zadar reminded me of a trip that we made about the same time, it was the early '70s, I was stationed in Rome, and we took a family trip and went up through Trieste and down the Yugoslav coast and took the ferry back to Italy from Zadar. And I think it was in Zadar, and I didn't speak any Serbo-Croatian and no experience in Yugoslavia but looked at a newspaper and it seemed to be saying something about Kissinger in China. I just couldn't understand that at all. And a few days later I realized exactly. I didn't believe it. I realized what had happened.

SEYMOUR: Wow!

Q: The consular district of the consulate in Zagreb was basically Croatia and Slovenia?

SEYMOUR: Yes. I remember making my introductory calls on the respective Croatian and Slovenian officials responsible for international affairs, which meant mainly dealing with the consulates, tourism, perhaps some commerce and investment. When the one in Ljubljana, the Slovenian capital, gave me his card, I noticed he had a strange, not very Slovenian-looking name, and after a little bit of talk I asked him about it and got an interesting story. His family was Irish and one of his forebears had come with Napoleon's troops to what was then called "Illyria" at the turn of the 18th century and settled down there, so he had an Irish name that was converted to be like a Slavic one.

Q: Yugoslavia has certainly been a crossroads, or what was Yugoslavia. You mentioned that many of the junior officers doing consular jobs in Zagreb and Belgrade, too, were really hoping to be political officers. I assume that was probably your aspiration as well. Did you get involved either in doing political reporting or have many reflections on the political situation at the time?

SEYMOUR: Not very much. I was actually pretty busy managing things consular, but I do have some reflections about the political work. I remember Harry Dunlop was the political officer and Will Crisp worked for him at one time, and, later, Leon Firth, and we often talked and shared impressions about the politics of Croatia and Yugoslavia. During the second year into my tour, in about 1970 there developed what came to be called the "Croatian Spring" because of its similarity to what had happened in Czechoslovakia in '67 and '68—the "Prague Spring."

Essentially, the Croatian Communist Party or League of Communists as the parties were known in Yugoslavia became caught up in a popular, nationalist movement. From early in my tour I, we all, encountered a kind of Croatian national feeling mixed with resentment that Croatia deserved a better deal in the federation. A typical complaint was that Croatia, like Slovenia, was more advanced and was earning more money from tourism and exports than the other republics but was paying too much back to the poorer ones. It actually reminded me a bit of some of the disputes and complaints I had followed in Canada between the provinces and the federal government. That is, the question of getting a fair share in the redistribution of earnings or wealth quickly becomes a political issue. As in Quebec, economic fundamentals were complicated by nationalistic feelings and social or ethnic differences.

The nationalism caught fire in Croatia at that time, with an increasing use of symbols and increasingly outspoken public discussion. Pretty soon the Croatian party leaders faced the dilemma of whether to ride this or to suppress it. They had an interest in riding the movement, if they could control it, because that would increase their clout in Belgrade, and several key leaders were beginning to mobilize the mounting public nationalism in that way.. It was already getting pretty out of control, though, and acquiring an anti-Yugoslav, anti-Serb tone, and that provoked reactions. Federal authorities and Serbian party leaders and others began to suggest that the Croatian leadership had lost control of events there.

A year or so after I left, in late 1971 or 72, Tito cracked down on the Croatian leaders. He did it deftly, as I recall, suggesting publicly that the Croatian Party leaders were unable to control a threat to Yugoslavia and the Army would have to step in. Harry Dunlop was still at the Consulate General during that time, and I talked with him later when he returned, so most of what I know

and remember comes from his reporting that I read while in the Operations Center and from talking with him when he returned to Washington. However, I remember from conversations earlier with people in Zagreb while I was still there how excited they were about the tantalizing chance for liberalization and greater political and economic leeway for Croatia vis-à-vis what they saw as an oppressive, Serb-controlled federal structure.

Students and intellectuals were carrying the movement for the most part on the popular side, but they were lionizing several of the party leaders who were also going along with it. Both the people and these leaders sought to capitalize on the movement to press for a better deal for Croatia in federal party and government councils: increased control of policy and of economic institutions. That connection of leaders with the popular movement which itself was in the Titoist lexicon moving from acceptable national pride to “chauvinism,” putting one’s own nation or republic above any other or above Federal Yugoslavia. Such chauvinism, a huge “no-no,” was viewed as an existential threat, and it became the kiss of death for these Croatian leaders. In the face of Tito’s threat to unleash the army to protect the Yugoslav nation, they were overwhelmed, in effect isolated, and had to stand down. They were removed and hard-line centralists put in their places.

Q: People like Tudjman or was he somewhere else?

SEYMOUR: No, he was not on the scene. One of the new hard-line leaders had been the editor of the main Croatian daily, Vjesnik, who had been my host when I represented the Consulate General at an “Akademia” celebrating 900 years of Croatia on the Adriatic, but that’s another story. A key leader of the nationalist movement was a woman Savka Dapčević-Kučar, I believe. Another was Mika Tripalo, or something like that. And then there was a third. These were the ones who were voicing from the party the demand for a fair deal. They were trying to be more circumspect, but the popular movement was becoming more nationalistic. People were displaying the Croatian checkerboard flag and that kind of thing and pressing too far to the point of “chauvinism” and antagonism to what they saw as domination by Serbia and federal Yugoslavia. Tito and the central party leadership cracked down on that. That was the main political event of the time I was there, although in the year or so before I arrived in Zagreb there had been a similar movement among Serbian intellectuals and students, which was similarly suppressed, though it had not spread so far.

Looking back, the Croatian Spring foreshadowed some of the forces that drove the breakup of Yugoslavia later on. Interestingly, though, the Slovenians, who were in the forefront in the 1988-90, were sitting quietly on the sidelines in 1970, much to the annoyance of the Croatians who thought they were “fighting” for Slovenia’s interests as well.

Q: Okay. Why don't you talk a little bit about the Third Country nationals, particularly from behind the Iron Curtain, because Yugoslavia was considered on other side of it? Who happened to turn up in Croatia?

SEYMOUR: Yes, from time to time, people from Bulgaria or Romania, maybe Czechoslovakia would come to the consulate wanting to get out, wanting to go to the States, wanting asylum or whatever. Usually their passports would be validated quite the reverse of ours, which were good

for any country except few specified ones like Cuba, China, and one or two others with which we had no or very tenuous relations. Theirs were valid only for the countries specified, usually just the Warsaw pact countries, which would be specifically listed by a stamp. Then there would be an additional stamp for Yugoslavia, which had allowed them to enter that country. Once in Yugoslavia, some would try to go farther.

At that time we had an arrangement with the Austrian consulate because Austria had refugee processing facilities. I reaffirmed this agreement with my Austrian counterpart: if we would provide a letter to the Austrians saying that based on a personal interview we had reason to believe that the bearer would qualify for immigration to the United States, then the Austrians would give the bearer a visa. We understood from practice that the Yugoslav border officials would then generally wave them through. So it was a way, a small way perhaps, in which we were able help some people from time to time.

Q: So these individuals would reach the refugee facilities in Austria and then presumably would apply for admission to the United States. Did you ever have a problem where they would be turned down and then there would be a dispute between your interpretation and somebody else's?

SEYMOUR: Well, at least during my two years there I never heard of any difficulty like that.

Q: Okay. You want to talk a little bit more about some of the issues involved in dealing with permanent US residents or American citizens?

SEYMOUR: Well, at the time we had many American tourists of all different kinds, and sometimes the knapsack ones would get in difficulty losing money or getting in trouble of some kind, and I remember having to vouch for them to the Yugoslavs on occasion. They could not believe that often these kids came from rather well-off families or were students at good colleges just seeing Europe on a shoestring. We set up a modest slush fund to help out some people from time to time, and in most cases they paid the money back.

Being far from the coast where most of the tourists went caused difficulties for us from time to time. Driving fast, it took about six hours to get to Rijeka, possibly eight to Split and 12 to Dubrovnik. And those were all within our district. So whenever we had deaths or other problems needing personal attention it was a strain. And I recall one situation that brought a number of different interesting issues to light.

Briefly, it was an American from New York or New Jersey who drove off the road in a small sports car on the coast near Zadar and was killed. At that time President Nixon was coming to Yugoslavia and making for the first time ever a presidential stop in Zagreb, so we were turned inside out over that. I was having to handle the incident with the authorities in Zadar by phone, and several different problems came up. One is that the man had two passports under different names. Not having concrete identification, we could not issue a death certificate, but the family was naturally pressing very hard for this. They were of poor means and were concerned about how his widow would be taken care of. They were Jewish and especially concerned that there be quick attention to the burial. There was a brother, brother-in-law I think, who was pressing us

very hard for fast action on the death certificate. I was about at the point of asking the Department for permission to issue a "provisional death certificate" based on the name that we thought was the most likely one. Fortunately at about that point we learned through Interpol and the FBI that using fingerprints, I think, they were able to determine definitively who it was.

There remained the problem of burial. The authorities in Zadar had taken care of that, assuring me they had given a dignified burial and had set up a marker and so on. The family was concerned, however, that his remains had been thrown into a potter's field so at the next opportunity I planned to go down there. They also wanted the Jewish rites to be read over the grave and I discussed this at some length with a colleague of mine, Leon Furth, who was doing political and administrative work at the consulate. This is Leon Firth who later went on to become advisor to Senator and then Vice President Al Gore.

Q: And presidential candidate.

SEYMOUR: And presidential candidate Al Gore. And Leon was extremely helpful in explaining what the Jewish custom would be and various ways to do the right thing. If there was no rabbi present, which there was not in Zagreb, then a minion of 10 Jews could read the rites. Barring that, any senior Jew could perform the rites, and Leon offered to do so. I being very conscientious put all this into a detailed letter explaining the possibilities to the family and I showed that letter for approval to the Consul General, Orme Wilson. I think his father had also been in the Foreign Service and Orme was very traditional, very upright a very good officer; I admired him a lot. But he was livid with me over this letter. He came around to my area waving it and saying it was no one's business the religion of any officer at a Foreign Service post, that we are Foreign Service officers of the United States and one was as good as another and that I should not be getting into this at all in discussion with the family. So the letter was reworked and shortened considerably and in it I offered to go down and view the grave and report back to the family.

I did that and was quite impressed that it was not by any means in a potter's field, it was on the edge of the main section of the cemetery. I took numerous photos to show this. On the train going back, however, I was writing my notes for the report to the family and explaining all about the wonderful pictures I would be sending them, when suddenly I realized that in this Catholic, though Communist country, the local authorities, trying to do the right thing, had put a cross over the grave, and that I had failed at the time to make that connection and would have to rework everything. I got on the phone to the authorities as soon as I returned to Zagreb and told them they had to fix the marker as well.

So the consular experience was extremely valuable to me in many ways. I enjoyed it and learned a great deal about life.

Q: This individual had two U.S. passports in different names?

SEYMOUR: Two U.S. passports. He apparently had been passing bad checks and doing other things. He was a bit of an operator evidently.

Q: You mentioned that Orme Wilson was consul general at the time. Was he there throughout your tour or was he-?

SEYMOUR: No, I was there two years, Bob Owen was the first consul general and then Orum Wilson succeeded him during my second year.

Q: You mentioned the visit of President Nixon to Zagreb. You want to talk a little bit more about that in terms of your involvement?

SEYMOUR: Yes. Well, the whole Consulate was involved and the Embassy too. Politically, of course, we at the Consulate were interested in this effort to give a nod to Croatia and in a way there was some tension, I think, between us and the Embassy over this. We, the US, had to be careful not to go too far. But the Croats were certainly extremely proud and pleased that the President was coming to their republic and wanted to do everything right. He did not overnight, which made it much easier, but he did go to Tito's birthplace at Kumrovac, which is not far from Zagreb but involved a motorcade journey of perhaps an hour or so. I recall that the advance team laid communications wire the whole way so the President would never be out of touch with the White House. That was my first experience with an advance team and it was really something. I was generally a go-fer during that time. I wasn't necessarily in charge of any particular aspect of it. But I recall some interesting experiences.

One in particular had to do with security arrangements. When our security people came in the advance team, we arranged meetings with their Yugoslav counterparts, which was really the first time that these people were brought out for us. There were numerous meetings, and I recall at one point they were discussing the motorcade from the airport and how many people would be in the crowd along the route. The U.S. security advance team chief asked the Yugoslav head of security for an estimate. The Yugoslav thought for a minute and replied, "I cannot answer that, that's a political question." And sure enough, when the day came, the school children were turned out and the factory and office workers were bussed to the route in numbers sufficient to make the political point that they wanted.

Q: Okay. President Nixon's visit to Zagreb, I wonder if that was in September of 1970. Does that sound right to you?

SEYMOUR: It does.

Q: Yes. Because he came to Rome and it may have been the same trip.

SEYMOUR: I think it probably was the same trip.

Q: And he also went to Belgrade?

SEYMOUR: Yes he did.

Q: Yes. All right, I guess I wanted to ask you a little bit about the relations between the Consulate General and the Embassy; I think you've talked a bit about it in terms of the

President's visit. In terms of your work, you had pretty full autonomy or did you, were you supervised by the head of the Consular Section in Belgrade as well or?

SEYMOUR: Well, I had full autonomy and was supervised by and my efficiency reports were written the Consulate in Zagreb. The Consul General was my rating officer, and the DCM in Belgrade was my reviewer. However, there was a Consul in Belgrade who was more senior than I.

Q: In Belgrade at the Embassy?

SEYMOUR: At the Embassy. I think he had had one additional tour and, being at the Embassy, he was closer to policy, could speak with Embassy authority, and had influence on overall consular policy and procedures in the country. It also was really important to coordinate closely, because often, for example, visa applicants, especially from the poorer parts of Yugoslavia outside our consular district—parts of Bosnia, southern Serbia or Kosovo, and Macedonia, or Montenegro—would show up in Zagreb. We always called Belgrade and to see if they had been there first and we also asked them that. Usually they would say no and then we would ask why not, because they lived in the Embassy's consular district and except for parts of Bosnia were usually closer to Belgrade. Often they had already been turned down by the embassy and were trying to circumvent that. But a lie to us about visiting the Embassy would of course prejudice their chances of approval in Zagreb. So it was really important to check with Belgrade and vice versa to know this. Similarly, with welfare and whereabouts cases it was important to check to make sure we had covered the whole country, for example, in looking for a lost tourist, so we communicated closely.

One way we consulted was through the weekly pouch run. Someone had to accompany the pouch, and we and the Embassy traded off. This was always a good opportunity to spend a day or more comparing notes with our consular counterparts. But the traveling was no mean thing. When the weather was good we sometimes drove or flew but in bad weather we usually took the train, which often meant an overnight. I remember once having to meet Erwin von den Steinen, my counterpart, on the platform in the railroad station in Zagreb in November. He had tried to come by plane because he hoped to get back to Belgrade that same day for appointments the next day. He was thwarted by a dense autumn fog in Zagreb. We had tried to persuade him that the weather was bad and it wasn't a good thing to come by plane and to just take the train instead, but he insisted despite several flight delays. Finally he gave in but had to take a late train that didn't arrive until about 10 o'clock that night. I went down to meet him, and somehow we actually missed each other on the platform; because of the fog and the dark night. We met up ultimately, but he was not very happy.

Lifestyle differences sometimes caused irritation between people at the Embassy and Consulate. There was a commissary run that came once a week to supply our very, very small commissary. Otherwise, we generally got our food from the "*dolac*," a huge open-air market in Zagreb where my wife and others went two or three times a week just as the Yugoslavs did. It was the main place to get any substantial food, and, of course, that could be a chore, but the "*dolac*" was a fascinating place. Still, our lack of a regular commissary like the one in Belgrade, which was

supplied in turn from Western Europe, was considered a hardship, and there was a bit of tension over this.

At the time Zagreb had just retained its 10-percent hardship differential status, while the Embassy had just lost its hardship status altogether. Zagreb stayed on the list, because there was no American doctor in Belgrade but not in Zagreb and also because of the food supply situation that I just mentioned, and maybe some other things too. But the problem was that in way Zagreb was a much more attractive city, and it was much closer to Italy and Austria. Belgrade was a little bit farther east and at the time a little bit less pleasant as a city to live in, I guess, and so there were these tensions between the staffs at the two places.

Q: Did you have much to do with the Embassy in Vienna or the, I don't know if you did with the Embassy in Rome or the consulate, was there a consulate in Trieste in those days?

SEYMOUR: The consulate in Trieste had been closed a few years before I arrived. There had been one for a long time, and I understand it had been really valuable to have it there. But for expense reasons, I guess, it was closed. Also there had been a consulate in Sarajevo until 1966, but that was closed too.

Q: I think the consulate in Trieste was reopened later.

SEYMOUR: Was it?

Q: Yes. Because I know in '84 I had some involvement with them. They were open; I think it was a one-man post at that point, very small.

SEYMOUR: Well, I think that would be a good place to have one. We did have contact with the Embassy in Vienna. In particular, our visa officer, my colleague was nearly every day in telephone contact with the immigration office attached to the Embassy there. They did have an INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service) officer there which was good because it helped a lot with the waivers that we had to get fairly often because so many of our visa applicants were "involuntary" members of the Party or affiliated youth or labor organizations. In some cases, we could make a ruling, but in certain cases we had to contact the INS for a waiver. So it was good to have them nearby. I imagine that the political officers, I think I mentioned Harry Dunlop, were in fairly close touch with their counterparts in Vienna, as well. I do remember when I served later on the desk that the people in the Austrian Embassy in Washington were very close Yugoslav watchers and generally had good contacts and good information.

Q: How about with the Embassy in Budapest?

SEYMOUR: No, not so much. I can't really recall much business with them. One thing I remember about Hungary is that an American without a visa would not be allowed into the country, which was unlike the situation in Yugoslavia, where an American tourist without a visa could generally get one easily at the border. Occasionally American tourists came to us to complain that they had been put off the train in Szeged on the border and were very unhappy about that. But I don't recall any real contact with our Embassy Hungary. We always took pains

to alert travelers who came our way that if they were going to Hungary, they needed to get a visa beforehand.

THOMAS P. H. DUNLOP
Political/Economic Officer
Zagreb (1969-1972)

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. He served in many posts including Yugoslavia, Vietnam, Korea, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed on July 12, 1996 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

DUNLOP: I was the number two person in a small Consulate. I think that at most we had 10 Americans assigned there. We had consular responsibility for two of the six constituent republics of Yugoslavia: Slovenia and Croatia.

Q: You were there from when to when?

DUNLOP: From June, 1969, to June, 1972. This was a really interesting and key time. I think that we understood that to some degree, although perhaps not as much as I now look back on it.

My wife Betty and I got to Zagreb in June, 1969, which was four years after President Tito had instituted what he called "the reforms." I think that there was some tendency to put quotes around the term, "the reforms," but I think that they were really solid changes in how business was done. They were not just cosmetic reforms. They were mainly in the economic area, but there were some on the political side. Tito had very publicly dismissed his much-feared, if not to say "hated" chief of the Secret Services, Alexander Rankovic, in 1965. Police pressure on the population diminished. The fact that Yugoslavia was a totalitarian state, marked by the power of the police over people's lives, did not change in essence. It was not a "state of law." It was a state of one-party law. On the other hand, the manifestation of that was less.

The Yugoslav people could begin to travel abroad and had less difficulty getting passports. They were permitted to form companies and to enter into joint ventures with foreign companies, although the laws on joint ventures were not very permissive. There were a lot of things about that which made that kind of arrangement unattractive to foreign companies. There was no great flood of foreign investment. Nevertheless, there was some, and that marked a big change. The most important single thing that Tito did between 1965 and 1969 was to devolve economic decision making from the central government and structures which had been in place in Belgrade since World War II to the capitals of the constituent republics. In our case, this meant Zagreb [Croatia] and Ljubljana [Slovenia].

This change was real. Tito had been unhappy with the economic performance of Yugoslavia, as well he should have been. Yugoslavia's so-called "Special Road to Communism" was not

producing the "bottom line" results that he thought it should and could have done. So he listened to the advice of people who said, "Look, this top-heavy bureaucracy in Belgrade is not what we need. Let's dismantle that. Let's really give economic decision making authority, in significant measure, to the six Republics out there." And that was done. What I think that Tito did not anticipate, and those around him either didn't tell him or didn't know, either, is that it is very difficult to give away some economic decision making power without putting at risk your political decision making power.

When I got to Zagreb in 1969, this process of devolution of authority was picking up momentum, on the political side as well as on the economic side. The political process of devolution was, it turned out, unacceptable to Tito. But that was not apparent at all at that time. There was a cadre of able, younger people at middle and upper middle levels of the communist parties in the republics who were really ready, willing, and eager to take this authority and to "run with it." In Croatia the names of the two people most associated with that were a man by the name of Mika Tripolo and a woman by the name of Savka Dapcevic Kuchar. In Slovenia there was a group of such people, but the most prominent was a man named Stanic Kuvete. There were people like this down in Belgrade in the Communist Party of Serbia, Latinka(?) Perovic, for example. There were some of them down in Macedonia in the Macedonian Communist Party. They weren't too evident in Bosnia or in Montenegro. However, there was enough going on in Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia to give a distinctly different cast to the political environment in which the country was operating.

During the first two years that I was in Zagreb, 1969-1970 and 1970-1971, this momentum, which was well under way when I got there, continued. For the first time that I was aware of, anywhere in the world, although there may have been instances that I am not aware of, a Communist Party political leadership became a popular political leadership. Dapcevic Kuchar and Mika Tripolo became popular figures. I can remember as a Political Officer, though I was also doing other things too in the Consulate in Zagreb, standing there in what they called then the "Trg Republik, the Republican Square, the main square in downtown Zagreb, for one of these ritualistic, pro forma celebrations of something like "Republican Day" or "Liberation Day." The tradition was, in these circumstances, to close down the factories and shops, and herd all of the people into the streets. The people were usually happy enough to get out of a day's work, although not particularly happy to be standing around listening to endless speeches. Before the "reforms," the people would stand there stoically, listening to these speeches and checking their watches. At least, figuratively speaking, they hoped that the speeches would end in time for them to go out and do some shopping, take a walk, or do something like that.

That had been the pattern. I remember that it was probably in the spring of 1970, though it could have been in the spring of 1971, when one of those events was being held. On this occasion Savka Dapcevic Kuchar was going to speak. They had a big platform built down at the Trg Republik, and many of the good people of Zagreb had been mustered. There may have been 250,000 to 300,000 people there. This time the atmosphere was different. There was electricity in the air. The flag of the Republic of Croatia was distinctive. Each republic had its own arrangement of horizontal bars of red, white, and blue. I remember that in the Consulate we had developed the practice of beginning to count the number of flags. The Croatian flag far outnumbered the Yugoslav flag, with the red star in the middle. It was still illegal to fly the old,

Croatian coat of arms in the middle of the flag.

Q: That's the one with the "checkerboard" in the center...

DUNLOP: The "checkerboard." It looks like a Purina dog chow box. It had the three crowns under the old, Austrian structure of political divisions which made up Croatia in those days. The Croatian flag was very much in evidence. As usual in the case of these events, that crowd had to stand around and wait for the principal speaker, who was to be Dapcevic Kuchar, while somebody tried to "warm up" the crowd. Finally, they began to boo and hiss him. He was somebody, perhaps a deputy party chairman from somewhere. The crowd started shouting, "Savka, Savka, Savka." They wanted Savka Dapcevic Kuchar to show up on the podium. She was pretty good looking. She wasn't a "stunning beauty," but she was young, which was a change from the previous leadership, she had red hair, probably a little bit "enhanced", and she had a nice kind of smile. People never called her "brilliant," but she was certainly politically astute.

I was standing close enough to see her walk out on that stage. The crowd exploded. She didn't know what to do! This was the first time that this had happened. Of course, it doesn't take too many "nanoseconds" for politicians to adjust to that, and this was a fun time for her. All of us in the Consulate thought that this public support for reforms in the Croatian communist party was a good thing. In the Embassy they paid less attention to it. We thought that this was a reflection of change in a good direction, a change in which the people's will, as it were, was beginning to be listened to and responded to.

What did the people of Croatia want? They wanted identity, they wanted to be thought of as Croatians, not Yugoslavs, they wanted control over their tourism earnings. They had the biggest chunk of the Adriatic Coast of Yugoslavia. They had made all of these Austrian schillings, Swedish kroner, and, above all, German Deutsche Marks, which were pouring in down there from tourist spending. They wanted what they regarded as a "fair cut," which would probably have amounted to most of it. They wanted to be able to decide that, if they needed a new railroad or new highway, they could allocate their own resources and not have to go to Belgrade, hat in hand. We couldn't see anything particularly wrong with those desires. The same thing was happening in Slovenia, and not much less in the Serbian and in the Macedonian Communist Party.

Q: Just to get a feel for this, what did the Consulate staff consist of?

DUNLOP: Well, we had a Consul General. When I was there, I served under two very nice guys, who changed in the middle of my tour. I was the number two guy in the Consulate. I had to do all of the operational political reporting, or, at least, to be responsible for it. I also did a lot of economic and commercial reporting. Any trade delegations which came our way were the responsibility of the Consulate, i. e., me. We had a big trade fair, the Zagreb Trade Fair, each fall, which, I think, was the biggest one in Yugoslavia. Certainly, it was the oldest one and probably the one with the most Western participation. The U.S. had a pavilion. We had to assist either the Department of Commerce or USIA [United States Information Agency], whichever was the action agency back in Washington, to set up and operate the U.S. Pavilion.

We had a fair number of trade delegations. This idea of "joint ventures" had attracted some attention among American businessmen. They were beginning to poke around in Croatia to see what the possibilities were. So we had the economic, political, and commercial function all wrapped up in me. I had one Junior Officer there, who was assigned to the Political-Economic Section of the Consulate, so to speak. He was my assistant. Then there was the Consular Section, with one assistant. That makes five officers. On the administrative side we had one officer who handled the administrative work. That makes six. USIS [United States Information Service] initially had three officers there. Later on, they added one officer, because we opened a Consulate in Ljubljana, Slovenia. USIS had a secretary, and the Consulate had a secretary. That added up to 10 Americans assigned to the Consulate in Zagreb. USIS opened an office in Ljubljana and got a third person assigned.

Of course, the administrative people were responsible for hiring and paying our Foreign Service National [FSN] employees. I think that we had about 35 FSN's at the Consulate in Zagreb. We had a good staff of FSN employees in Zagreb. As in the case of the Embassy in Belgrade, they were perhaps somewhat older than we would have liked, but they were quite energetic and willing to take some initiative on their own and do some things that were important. I had a good economic and commercial FSN, a man named Georges Njers. He was a Yugoslav of Hungarian origin. We also had a couple of Slovenes in the Consulate in Zagreb. The rest were Croatians, except that our chief driver and general handyman was an Albanian.

Q: Regarding your relations with the Embassy, you know I spent five years in the Embassy in Belgrade. At the time I used to say that the Serbs had spent 500 years under the Turkish yoke. After all of that the Serbian response, if something didn't work, was to blame the Turks. They have somehow come out of that. Did you notice a difference in viewpoint? How were the Consulate's relations with the Ambassador and other senior Embassy officers in Belgrade?

DUNLOP: Yes, that's very worthwhile talking about. I'm glad that you asked me. Like you, I had a total immersion in "Serbdom." Our language instructors at the Foreign Service Institute were both Serbs, as you recall. I understand that this is no longer the case, and properly so. I had spent my two and a half years in the Embassy in Belgrade [1963-1965] almost exclusively in contact with Serbs. I didn't travel very much in the other parts of the Yugoslav republic, except to Bosnia and, maybe, to Macedonia. However, I certainly had not lived or been in contact with the people of the other republics.

Up in Croatia, I learned of the existence of the historical memory, although not at first hand, thank God. I learned of the atrocities committed by the "Ustashi," the fascist goon squads that the Croatians employed, especially during the early years of World War II. These were horrendous atrocities which took place against the Serbs. So I didn't arrive in Croatia with any pro-Croatian point of view. You know, intellectually we tell ourselves that we are very "objective." It is a very human thing, if you are sensitive to what people are really thinking and feeling, to try to understand the situation in which you live and to try, as it were, to get inside other people's skins. That's what Foreign Service Officers are supposed to do. There comes a time when you begin to understand why the local people think and act as they do. I suppose that realization can "color" your objectivity to some degree, although we all try not to do that.

There was a difference between the viewpoints of the Embassy and the Consulate in Zagreb on the political issue between Zagreb and Ljubljana, on the one hand, and the central Communist Party leadership on the other. Here I am not referring to the leadership of the Serbian Communist Party, but to that of the central Communist Party in Belgrade. This issue began to get sharper and sharper over the years that I was in Zagreb. To some extent the Embassy tended to dismiss, or so we thought, the importance of what was happening, politically, in Croatia and in Slovenia. In the Consulate in Zagreb we said that, "These are real people, with goals and objectives which they are working hard at. So we need to pay attention to that." Perhaps, in this connection, I am somewhat gilding the clarity with which we expressed ourselves. However, the Embassy's view tended to be, "Well, that is the view of the 'boondocks,'" that is, of the sticks. That's Croatia, and Croatians always bitch and moan about the Serbs. This is all in the realm of domestic politics. It may be interesting but it's not all that important.

This difference was particularly reflected after Malcolm Toon replaced Bill Leonhart as Ambassador to Yugoslavia. Bill Leonhart was the Ambassador when I arrived in Zagreb. Malcolm Toon replaced him about half way through my tour [about in 1970]. Ambassador Toon was an old Russian hand and had broad experience with the old style, communist governments and ways of doing things. Although I may be doing Ambassador Toon a disservice, I don't think that he had quite understood the diversity of Yugoslavia, at least by the time I left Zagreb. He stayed on beyond the period of my service in Zagreb, and perhaps I'm not doing him justice by saying that. However, I think that we in the Consulate in Zagreb felt that the Embassy tended not to pay enough attention to what we were reporting was going on up in Slovenia and Croatia.

That's a comment on the professional side of things. I think that, when you have Consulates and Embassies in a given country, that's not uncommon.

Q: That's like the people in our Embassy in Rome, tending to dismiss the views of the people in the "Mezzogiorno" in Italy [southern Italy].

DUNLOP: Well, in a way, I think that's healthy. You get two different points of view. That is one reason why I regret the closing of Consulates, to get onto a broader issue. I think that the United States Government is doing itself a real disservice, in the most classical sense, in being "penny wise and pound foolish" in closing Consulates. You need that diversity of insight that comes from the Consulates. You don't need to say that everything that the Consulates say is "right" or "correct." Obviously, that's not true. You need to have something against which to bounce off the collective view of the Embassy.

Q: Did this divergence of opinion, I think that "clash" is the wrong word, between the Embassy and the Consulate in Zagreb ever reach the point where there was a serious difference?

DUNLOP: Yes, there was. As we got further into the three-year period that we are discussing [1969-1972], political tensions between the Central Government in Belgrade, on the one hand, and Croatia and Slovenia, on the other, became more apparent. What the Croatian and Slovenian leadership were doing came under severe attack in the "conservative" Communist Party press and among "old line thinkers" back in Belgrade. What was unclear at the time, although we in

the Consulate in Zagreb thought that it WAS clear, was whether Tito was fully aware of these developments. We thought that Tito was fully aware of these developments and was not unhappy that they were taking place. He gave every indication of support for the new, young, energetic, and pushy party leaders in Slovenia, Croatia, and Belgrade. It turned out that, if that had been true for a while, he later changed his mind. He finally came down like a ton of bricks on the Croatians and Slovenians in northern Yugoslavia. Before that happened, there was an attempt by the Embassy to interdict Consulate Zagreb reporting, in the sense that we were instructed to send our airmails and telegrams through the Embassy in Belgrade, for clearance before they were sent on to the Department.

There is a Foreign Service Regulation in 3 FAM [Volume 3, Foreign Affairs Manual] which states that is not to be done. Orme Wilson, who at that time was Consul General in Zagreb, really hit the ceiling over this issue. So did I. He went down to Belgrade, clutching 3 FAM (whatever the paragraph), and made a very strong pitch about this. This did not improve people's personal attitudes. There was some friction. However, we were 420 km away from Belgrade. The road was a difficult one, with a lot of potholes in it. We still had a lot of autonomy. However, there was this sense in the Embassy in Belgrade that the folks up in the Consulate in Zagreb are saying that the political situation in Croatia is much more "tense, important, and significant" for the future of the country than the Embassy thought it was. They said that it was an irritant to the Embassy to have its views be reported to the Department in Washington and then have this somewhat different, or differently shaded view, also reported to Washington by the Consulate in Zagreb.

Something else was going on there, and I am not sure how much I know about it, or, perhaps even whether we should talk much about it here. There was a tremendous personality conflict going on in the Embassy in Belgrade for part of this time, between the Ambassador, in this case Bill Leonhart, and his DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission], Tom Enders.

Q: Tell me what you were hearing about this.

DUNLOP: Well, this is one of those legendary personal Foreign Service disputes, soaked in animosity and later on in malevolence, that should never happen between grown people or responsible officers of any organization. I don't care whether this involves a School Board or whatever other type of organization. However, Leonhart and Enders allowed themselves to get involved in a most horrendous personal cat and dog fight. It cost both of them their jobs in Belgrade and it may have, and probably did, cost Bill Leonhart any other chance of becoming an Ambassador again.

I got this all second or third hand (thank God!), but the dispute between them was, apparently, totally personal. A little bit of it we in the Consulate in Zagreb experienced personally, and I can tell you how it looked up there. Because of the distance between Zagreb and Belgrade, this is what friends of mine and Betty's would tell us was going on in Belgrade. Within a few weeks of Enders' arrival, he took some action, or was considered by Ambassador Leonhart as taking some action, to "undermine" the Ambassador's authority. Ambassador Leonhart became very upset about this and gave Enders a public "dressing down" at an Embassy Staff Meeting. Enders told Ambassador Leonhart to "go take a flying leap"! So things went from bad to worse from that

point on.

Q: What did the wives of Ambassador Leonhart and Enders think of this?

DUNLOP: Tom Enders' wife is originally Italian, named Gaetana Enders, I guess, who also has a kind of legendary reputation around the Foreign Service as not the kind of person that you want your boss' wife to be. She was reportedly interfering, domineering, and all the rest. Mary Leonhart, on the other hand, was a real "sweetie." In my view and, I think, that of a lot of other people, out of these four people, Ambassador and Mrs. Leonhart, on the one hand, and Tom and Gaetana Enders, on the other, only one of them acted like an adult, human being. That was Mary Leonhart.

I got this anecdote from one of my friends, whom I believe. One day, at the height of this horrible animosity, Gaetana Enders telephoned the wife of my friend at home. My friend was at work at the Embassy. His wife answered the phone. Mrs. Enders said, "This is Gaetana Enders. Is this Mrs. So-and-So? (I won't give her name.) She said, "Yes, it is, Mrs. Enders. What can I do for you?" Mrs. Enders said, "I understand that your husband is being rather "ambiguous" in this situation. That won't do, you know. That will not do. I want you to understand, and I hope that you can make your husband understand this: Bill Leonhart is through in the Foreign Service. His career is over. It's done. My husband has a long and distinguished career ahead of him in the Foreign Service. He will remain an influence in the Foreign Service, as long as your husband is a Foreign Service Officer. Please reflect on that and make sure that your husband fully understands that." Then she hung up. A situation like that cannot get any worse.

Anyway, that situation did not help matters in the relationship between the Embassy in Belgrade and the Consulate in Zagreb. I wasn't really the top leader of the Consulate in Zagreb. I was just another guy working in the trenches. This struggle was between Consul General Orme Wilson in Zagreb and the Embassy in Belgrade. Orme never really told me this, but I'm sure that at one point or another each side (Ambassador Leonhart and DCM Tom Enders) must have asked him what side he was on. [Laughter]

Q: Oh, God! Were there any further developments? At some point a difference like this usually brings the Inspection Corps to intervene. Somebody comes and takes a look.

DUNLOP: Again, I'd have to say with great pleasure that we were physically a long way from Belgrade and tried to stay out of that situation. If I had been in the Embassy in Belgrade, I would have known more of the details of the upshot of all this. However, I don't remember any intervention by the Inspector. I recall that I was told that at one Staff Meeting held at the Embassy, some time into this horrible mess, Ambassador Leonhart told Enders that he had to leave the country in 48 hours. He told him that for the first time, at a Staff Meeting in public. Enders left and, very shortly thereafter, Ambassador Bill Leonhart also left. He wound up at the National War College as the Diplomatic Adviser, where he was probably very good.

Leonhart and Enders were both brilliant officers. No one has ever suggested that, out of each other's sight, they weren't perfectly and even extraordinarily effective people. There were some other allegations about weaknesses in Leonhart's performance which were not related to this

dispute, but which Enders tried to use against him. Let's say that it was an allegation that Leonhart drank too much. I have seen Ambassador Leonhart perhaps four sheets to the wind. However, people can drink a lot and still do a pretty good job in the office.

Anyway, this conflict obviously didn't escape the attention of the Department. However, whatever the mechanics of Enders' having been publicly dismissed from the Embassy in Belgrade and sent home, and then Ambassador Leonhart's departure shortly thereafter and then retirement, there was a long period when the DCM was in charge. There was no Ambassador waiting in the wings, as it were. Malcolm Toon did not come out as Ambassador to Yugoslavia for four or five months.

Q: Who was the DCM and later the Chargé d'Affaires?

DUNLOP: Ooh. Who was the long-suffering DCM? Robert Clayton Mudd was the Political Counselor, but I have a mental block on the name of the DCM. I'll remember it after a bit. I don't remember his name right now.

I wouldn't say that the tension between the Embassy in Belgrade and the Consulate in Zagreb ever reached crisis proportions. However, Orme Wilson was really steaming when the Embassy told him that they would have to review our reporting before it went on to Washington. This actually didn't happen until after Ambassador Toon arrived, which was well after the Leonhart-Toon debacle. The strictures on Consulate reporting was Toon's doing, not Leonhart's.

Q: Tell me. Can you talk about getting around in Croatia and Slovenia on your various trips? Can you also discuss your access to various organizations, both private and public in Yugoslavia?

DUNLOP: The difference between Croatia and Slovenia was significant. The difference between these two republics and the rest of Yugoslavia was also significant. In terms of ease of getting around physically, the roads in Croatia and Slovenia were better than elsewhere in Yugoslavia. Trains tended to run on time. There were more hotels that were "bearable," and fewer rest rooms that were not, speaking in comparative terms of the facilities in the southern and eastern parts of Yugoslavia. So travel was easier.

Access was also easier. That may not have been the case before the "reforms" introduced by Tito in 1965. Both Croatia and Slovenia had a reputation for local security services which were very tough on diplomats, until the time that Rankovic was dismissed. I think that there was a logical reason for that. Those were the two parts of the country that the central government in Belgrade worried most about. It realized that the level of disaffection was probably highest in those areas and wanted to isolate diplomats as much as possible. By the time I got there [in 1969] that was all over, with the exception of one or two incidents, when we could tell that we were subject to surveillance. Every time that Betty and I overnighted in a little resort area, Prizren, and we may have done this three or four times, we were always assigned the same room, whether we gave them advance notice or not. This room must have been electronically monitored [bugged]. It was a nice little area, half way between Zagreb and Split. If you wanted to go down to the coast but couldn't leave Zagreb until after work, you could get to Prizren easily, break your journey there,

and all of that.

People in Croatia wanted to talk to Americans. I'm not saying that they wanted to talk to Americans and welcome them in a personal sense much more in Croatia or Slovenia than in Serbia. I think that, given the same opportunity, that was also true in Serbia. However, the Croatians and Slovenes certainly felt less constrained than I remembered from four years before in Serbia. Much of this probably was due to the fact that Croatia and Slovenia had a Western tradition. However, a lot of it, I think, was due to the fact that the police were no longer making it clear that our people were engaged in unwelcome and potentially dangerous activity.

There was also a big difference between Slovenia and Croatia. Slovenia was really a "Westernized" part of Yugoslavia. There were still some very "Balkan" elements about parts of Croatia, although it had also been part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and had experienced all of the trials and tribulations of the Reformation, the Counter Reformation, the Enlightenment, and all of that. There were still some areas where Croatia was pretty primitive, and people looked at the world through "Balkan" eyes. However, that was not true in Slovenia. The Slovenes were very sophisticated people. They had one of the highest literacy rates of any country in all of Europe, much less Yugoslavia. They were very proud of their literary and artistic traditions. Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, is a lovely little city which had been maintained more nicely than some. There was a lot of access to Slovenes. In Slovenia people were particularly aggressive in the economic field. They really had carved out a different relationship with the rest of the country, pretty early on. The "Reforms" brought in by Tito in 1965 helped this situation. The political leadership of Stane Kavere helped to implement these reforms, but the Slovenes were going to do that, anyway.

Of course, as you know now, the Slovenes were the first and only republic to break away with relative ease from the old Yugoslavia in 1991 or 1992, I guess. We always liked to go up to Ljubljana because it was a little bit different. The restaurants were a little different, the scenery was different, and it was just fun to go up there. People seemed genuinely happy to see us.

Q: Harry, what was your impression of the leadership qualities of these two figures?

DUNLOP: I was impressed with them. I was particularly impressed with Stane Kavete, but also with Tripolo. Tripolo had a wonderful, popular touch. I guess that some politicians are born with that, and some are not. Tripolo rarely made a misstep in public. He loved student agitation in the universities. This was, after all, about the same time as the 1968 problems with university students up in Paris and, of course, the turmoil in the American universities.

Some of that kind of ferment was also going on all over Yugoslavia. I am sure that there were some young folks who were also active in that way in the universities in Ljubljana [Slovenia], and Zagreb [Croatia]. Those were the two main universities in those cities. These young people would have liked to have created the same degree of turmoil and chaos as existed in Paris. They never quite succeeded but they were able to cause some difficulties. I remember that there was a student strike in Ljubljana which went on for quite a while.

Kavete and Tripolo knew how to walk into the middle of a situation of turmoil and get the

student leaders to sit down, reason with them as intelligent equals, and defuse some of the tension. These leaders were people who did not owe their positions of influence in the Communist Party to their activities during World War II. Some of them were old enough to have been active during the war, but as very young folks. They may have been committed "Partizans" and done brave things as children or near children but that wasn't how they earned their "stars," their "stripes," their "spurs," or whatever. Their achievements had come from their own ability and energy, their political acumen, and their ability to see that a change was needed. And they tried to effect that change.

They were an impressive bunch. I didn't personally know leaders like them in Belgrade at all, but there were some down there. I'm not talking now about the overall structure of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia but of the Communist Party of the Serbian Republic. It had Tomsic and Perovic, folks like that in it. I think that they would have been capable of successfully carrying the Communist Party through the death of Tito and the transition process to new leadership that followed it. But they were purged, and no one was there to do that after Tito's death.

The older Communist Party leaders who were given that task obviously failed at it. These other, younger leaders of whom I speak might have done better. In fact, I am quite sure that they would have done better.

Q: What was your impression at this time, 1969 to 1972, of Tito's "grasp" on the direction of events? How did you see this in the Embassy?

DUNLOP: I can tell you what I personally did. I had come away from my assignment to the Embassy in Belgrade [1963-1965], not in opposition to our policy toward Yugoslavia, because I thought that our policy of support for Tito was the correct one. It had proven its worth, and I still think that. However, there tended to be a tendency in the Embassy to blur over Tito's deficiencies. I saw no reason why, among ourselves, we didn't look at those inadequacies a little more objectively. However, I think that this may be an American trait. We tend to deal with some people who may have some unpleasant sides to them. We tend not to think or talk about those faults.

However, when I returned to Yugoslavia for my assignment to the Consulate General in Zagreb [1969-1972], I began to see this situation from another perspective. As I assessed it, Tito was just not paying much attention to the overall situation in any detail but just acted as the "spiritual guide" behind Yugoslav Government policy. However, for the first and only time in my career I became a real "admirer" of Tito, because I mistakenly thought he would permit the younger generation of party reformers to work their will. How wrong I was!

For example, Tito would come up to Zagreb to take a look at the situation as a sort of "stern uncle." He would walk around and inspect the troops. Savka and Mika would trail along in his wake, attentive to his every word and gesture. He would be seen in earnest discussions with them at meetings. He would give little speeches and let little remarks sort of drop off casually, as he was wont to do, in the hearing of the press. These were obviously well planned. They were little "sound bites." It all seemed to me to be very supportive of his general stance.

Once in a while he would say, "Now, we've got to watch this. This is still Yugoslavia. You owe an obligation to help the less fortunate, underdeveloped areas. We can't let you keep all the money that you earn. After all, it's the Yugoslav state which allows you to earn money, and it's the Communist Party, in its benevolence, that is still in charge of things around here." I really felt that he was very supportive, and wisely supportive, of the evolution which was taking place within the party framework but which was definitely a "modernizing" element.

However, on December 12, 1971, to my utter astonishment, Tito convened, initially a secret, and later on a public meeting of the Communist Party Presidium [top leadership], or whatever it was called at the time. The meeting was held at Tito's hunting lodge Karageordeva, in Voivodina. He exploded with wrath at the Communist Party reform leaders. They were not just from Croatia but also from Slovenia and Belgrade. He conducted one of those sessions where people were called on to confess their sins and faults. The "sins and faults" mainly involved nationalism. This was what people were being accused of. That is, of being Croats first, Yugoslavs second, and Communist Party members last.

In my view there was no reason why they couldn't be all three, and I felt that this was a balancing act which they were successfully performing in Slovenia and Croatia, at least. At some point Tito decided that they were not doing this successfully. The mystery to me, as somebody who was interested in what was going on in Yugoslavia, was why did Tito change his mind. There was no significant series of events that had escalated "national euphoria," the phrase which was then coined to describe this alleged wild-eyed nationalism which would allegedly lead eventually to communal clashes and perhaps even bloodshed.

The conservatives in the Communist Party, both in the central party and the Communist parties of both Croatia and Slovenia, had begun to spread rumors about actual communal clashes. So far as we could find out in the Consulate General in Zagreb, and we made it our business to try very hard to look into these charges, there was no substance to any of the more lurid of these accounts. There were stories about police stations burned down, people assassinated, and so forth. Serbs allegedly had been subjected once again to "Ustashi" [Croatian fascist] terror down in Lika, the area of Croatia where the Serbs were in the majority. We found no evidence of that.

Tito didn't seem to believe that was happening, either. However, something happened, at least in his mind, to make him "purge" the Croatian and Slovenian Communist Party leadership. It was a brutal purge. He didn't have anybody shot, but the purge went down at least to the second level of the Croatian and Slovenian Communist Parties. By the time this purge was over, at least 2,000 Croatian Communist Party officials in Croatia had been dismissed from their party positions or responsibilities, as well as any other jobs they may have had. The Director of the Zagreb Fair, a personal acquaintance of mine, was dismissed from this job, for example.

The process of constructive modernization, as I saw it, was brought to a screeching halt. This happened in 1971, just before the Christmas and New Year's holidays period. This was just nine years before Tito's death in 1980. Nothing important happened in the country during these intervening nine years to re-start some fashion of bringing younger people into more senior positions. This was to prove a tragedy for Yugoslavia.

Q: What was the reaction of the Director of the Zagreb Fair to all of this? Obviously, you people in the Consulate in Zagreb were casting your nets wide to determine what had happened to these 2,000 people. These were obviously leaders. That is a huge number of people anywhere, particularly in a small environment, such as Croatia.

DUNLOP: I can't dredge up the name of a man I was talking to. He was the equivalent of the Director of the Zagreb Chamber of Commerce, but they used a different name for it. We had a lot of dealings with him for commercial and economic reasons. I remember his talking to me very sadly, when I went over to see him. I called up first to see whether it would be a problem for him to see me. I asked whether there was any reason why I should not come and see him. He said, "No." So I went over and saw him. He said, "You know, Yugoslavia has a curse derived from 500 years under the Turks!" [Laughter] What he meant, of course, was that Croatia had a curse of 50+ years under the Serbs.

Q: For somebody who doesn't understand this, as I alluded to at the beginning of this interview, both Harry and I had an extensive exposure to the Serbian way of looking at things. When anything bad happened, it was the 500 years under the Turks which was the cause. This even applied to the situation when the elevators in buildings didn't work. People would say, "Well, we were 500 years under the Turks." We always thought of this as happening in Serbia, because that's where the Turks had been. The Austrians occupied Croatia. This was a curious reflection.

DUNLOP: What he was doing was using the old practice of the Croats of blaming the people who lived to the East and South of them. The Croats thought that these people to their East and South really weren't part of Europe or of the West. They felt that they didn't think as the Croats did. They felt that the less the Croats had to do with them, the better. Of course, this culminated in more recent events in a tragic way.

I still firmly believe that the intercommunal conflicts in Yugoslavia could have been resolved without all of this current bloodshed in the 1990s. I think that one of the reasons why they were not was the purging of these modernizers by Tito in 1971. At that point I came to the conclusion that Tito had made the greatest single political mistake he could possibly make. That is, he not only failed to provide for his own succession, but he also beheaded those who could have modernized and Westernized the party after his death. I still think so.

Q: I would like to turn to another aspect of your view of the "nationalities question" during the time you were in Zagreb. However, before I get to that, could you tell me whether there was any reflection in the work of the Consulate in Zagreb of the rather affluent Croatian community in the United States? I am particularly thinking of Croats in California in the construction and building trades. Did you find that these Croats had any impact at all on what you were doing?

DUNLOP: That was one constant concern that we had. This was not just a concern of the Consulate's but also of the Embassy in Belgrade. That is, the relationship to Communist Yugoslavia of the Serbian and Croatian communities and, to a lesser degree, because there were fewer people involved, of the Slovenian and Macedonian communities in the U.S.

I think that it is fair to say that there was almost no "pro-Tito" faction of any significance in any of those communities. They all detested Tito and all of his works. However, there was somewhat more of an acceptance the reality of Tito in some of these communities than in others. The Croatians were much more active and, in some cases, violent. While I was in Zagreb, there were incidents in the United States where the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigations] uncovered "extortion rings." For example, Croatian businessmen who were doing well in the United States would be visited by some young man who would say that he represented the "Fatherland." He would say to the businessman, "You haven't made your contribution lately." Threats would follow. I think that there were actually cases of bombs and violence used, and maybe even a murder or two. An incident in New Jersey comes to mind.

We also had even more violent, anti-Tito Croatian activity centered in Europe. There doesn't seem to have been too much connection between the European and the American versions of Croatian violence. There could have been, but we didn't know about it.

We in Zagreb had one rather personal involvement with this. Before I get into the anecdotal side of this, I recall that the U.S. Government was always being pressured as hard as the Yugoslav Government could manage to "suppress" these anti-Tito and anti-Yugoslav emigres in the U.S. As far as the Yugoslav Government was concerned, they were all "traitors" and should be treated as such. If the U.S. Government wanted good relations with Yugoslavia, we had to treat these "traitors" as the Yugoslav Government wanted them to be treated. Well, of course, American citizens and legal residents of the U.S. have rights of free speech under the First Amendment to the Constitution. So that was an area of significant tension between the U.S. and Yugoslav Governments. I was personally very sympathetic to some of the things that the Yugoslav Government wanted us to do. For example, there was a man named Ante Pavelic, who had been Minister of the Interior under the Ustashi, fascist government during World War II. He was directly responsible and involved in some of the most atrocious events of those times. He had made his way to the United States under false pretenses. He was given a passport by the Vatican which issued passports to a lot of people like him. He went to Argentina, established a new identity, and then came to the United States, where he became a prosperous used car dealer in Southern California, before he was uncovered and identified. The Yugoslav Government wanted to have him extradited as a war criminal. There were judges in Southern California who didn't want to send anybody back to a communist country in those days, and they didn't. I thought that attitude was wrong and that Pavelic should have been returned to Yugoslavia and subjected to a hopefully fair trial before he was hanged! He was certainly guilty of significant offenses.

At other times the Yugoslav Government was very heavy handed in what they insisted that we do. We were always concerned about the counter measures which the Yugoslav Government might take. The Yugoslav secret service operated on American soil to defend their country, in their view. I don't know whether any of that became public knowledge, but they certainly had a little war going on in Europe. There were cases of people who were shot down in the streets. A Yugoslav air transport aircraft was blown up, with heavy loss of life. The Croatian emigre community claimed to be responsible for this.

Q: Were there attacks up in Sweden when you were in Zagreb?

DUNLOP: Some of that happened, and there was a TWA [Trans World Airlines] aircraft hijacked which circled Charles De Gaulle Airport in Paris for a couple of hours while Croatian emigres on board broadcast their Croatian nationalist message.

The incident which my wife Betty and I became involved in occurred on one nice day in early spring. I was in my office at the Consulate. I guess that my boss was called by the Foreign Ministry of the Croatian Government and informed that they had a big problem. Would we please come over, and they would tell us about it. My boss asked me to see to it, and I did. The big problem turned out to involve two American girls in their late 'teens or early 20's. One was about 19 and the other was about 21. I've forgotten their names now. They had been contacted, recruited, or may have volunteered to undertake certain Croatian nationalist activities. They were contacted by young Croatians in Vienna who were reportedly involved in various improper activities. One of the girls became the lover of one of these guys. He persuaded the two girls to undertake a "mission" on behalf of these Croatian nationalists. The mission involved was doomed, so far as the girls were concerned. He gave them some leaflets with some very violent calls to the Croatian people to rise up and overthrow their oppressors. They gave these two girls a satchel full of these leaflets and put them on a train from Vienna to Zagreb, with instructions to go up to the observation platform in the tallest building in the city and throw these leaflets out. They did this and were picked up almost immediately. [Laughter]

Q: I have to laugh. I assume that these girls were not of Yugoslav extraction? They were just...

DUNLOP: They looked and talked as American as apple pie, eighth generation WASP's [White Anglo-Saxon Protestants]. I don't know what their actual ethnic makeup was, but, no, they had no previous connection with Yugoslavia before this incident. The Yugoslav authorities in Zagreb were absolutely furious about this. They threatened to put these girls into prison on one of their lovely resort prison islands and keep them there for the rest of their lives.

We were confronted with a situation in which two American citizens deserved the protection of the United States Government, at least to a certain degree. They had committed an act that would be a crime in most countries, though perhaps not punishable by life imprisonment in a concentration camp, but it was nonetheless a crime. What would it be in the United States? Perhaps "incitement to riot," or something like that. Maybe it would be regarded as a misdemeanor offense, punishable by a fine of \$200 and 10 days in prison.

Anyway, the Croatians also had a dilemma. The more they made a "cause celebre" out of this, the more publicity they gave this incident. That is, this incident was evidence that there were Croatians who really hated that government and were actively involved against it. I guess that this is the dilemma which governments under that kind of pressure face. The Croatian authorities eventually brought the two girls to trial and sentenced them to the amount of time that they had already spent in jail awaiting trial, imposed some kind of a lifetime "ban" against returning to Yugoslavia, and then remanded them to Betty's and my custody. This is because their sentence was subject to automatic appeal. Until that process was completed, they could not leave the country but did not have to stay in jail. So these two girls came and lived in the nice little house that we had in Zagreb for about eight to 10 days. The weather was good, there was a lot of sun, and these young women went out and got a good tan. I felt that they were rather intelligent. They

certainly were no problem to have around the breakfast table.

Betty and I gave them hell for being stupid and ignorant. We really did. We pointed out that they had their whole lifetimes in front of them and had a narrow escape. These questions were beyond their understanding. We said that there were two sides to every issue. Certainly, there were some things that the Yugoslav Government could be criticized for, but you can't go into another country and start a revolution and not expect to pay a heavy penalty if you're caught. All of that stuff.

Well, finally the time came when we could take them to the Zagreb train station. I think that I repeated my lecture on their behavior for the "nth" time in the car going to the train station. They went back to Vienna.

Then, about eight months later they tried to come back to Croatia! The Yugoslavs caught them at the border and turned them away.

Q: Did they have more leaflets?

DUNLOP: I don't know. Maybe they had more messages to carry into Croatia. Anyway, these young women obviously had not learned their lesson. So that was the story.

Q: What happened to them after that?

DUNLOP: Well, I lost track of them. We didn't expect to get Christmas cards from these girls. However, we hoped that we had convinced them that there were better ways to spend their back packing time in Europe. I guess we underestimated the power of love, or something.

The degree to which foreign influence or the emigre or anti-Yugoslav influence was alleged to have insinuated itself into the Croatian leadership was also one of the charges brought by Tito against Savka, Mika, and the others at the Karageordeva "purge" meeting in 1971. Tito said that they had allowed these emigre "enemies," these "fascists," to take advantage of them. He said that if they didn't know it, they should have known it.

There was no evidence of that at all that we ever heard about in the Consulate in Zagreb. I can only guess that, maybe, and I can only guess about this, at some point there were people around Tito who saw the political leadership in Croatia as becoming more and more self-confident. They may have felt threatened by it and may even have fabricated some of these accusations and passed them on to Tito. Unless he really believed the worst of these accusations, I don't know why he would have acted as he did.

Q: It almost sounds like some kind of "Iago" [from Shakespeare's "Othello"] was sitting at his ear, whispering these accusations.

DUNLOP: That's an analogy that I never thought of, but they might have said, "My God, she's a beautiful woman, sir. She's very attractive, sir, and very desirable, sir."

Well, it was sad. This happened at Christmas time of 1971. We were scheduled to be transferred from Zagreb to an onward assignment in 1972. It made the last six months of our time in Zagreb much less happy, professionally. Personally, we didn't have any difficulties.

Q: Did you ever run across Franjo Tudjman when you were in Zagreb? He is now the President of Croatia and perhaps may be having a completely benign influence on what has happened. There may be some raised eyebrows about this, but as President of Croatia he has been known to be virulently nationalistic. Did he ever appear on the public scene during your time in Zagreb?

DUNLOP: Yes, I remember when he reappeared on the scene in Croatia, but not as a key member of the Croatian Communist Party leadership. What had happened to him was that he had gotten "crosswise" with the Communist Party over some probably Croatian issue, though what it was, I don't know.

Way back in the 1960's, before I got to Zagreb, he had actually spent a couple of years in prison. He was a military officer and, I think, was a general. He was court martialed, stripped of his rank, and sent away to prison. He had come out of prison and was writing columns for a periodical with a political voice, published by the "Matica Hrvatska". This organization's newspaper eventually expressed a spectrum of political beliefs. Some of them were pretty radical and nationalist. Tudjman wrote a column in this paper. I can remember asking around who this guy was. I was answered by a combination of shrugs and eyes to the ceiling, suggesting that "Franjo was up to the same old thing again." He certainly was not an influential figure in Croatia in those days. He certainly is now.

Q: I think that a major subject of speculation for all of us who served in Yugoslavia was what would happen after Tito died or left the scene. We wondered how Yugoslavia would hold together after Tito. Would the various nationalities or ethnic groups exercise a centrifugal influence? What impression did you take away from Zagreb?

DUNLOP: In 1972?

Q: Yes.

DUNLOP: OK, because I came back to Yugoslavia later on and have had some other exposure to the country. I guess that my views have evolved a little bit. I don't think that I now have the same view I had when I was in Zagreb. I think that when I was in Zagreb, I felt that there were reasons which supported Tito's policies. This was when the Soviet Union was still a major, looming factor in everybody's mind, and not just that of the Yugoslavs, no matter what their national or ethnic group.

Q: Oh, yes.

DUNLOP: I think that one of the great assets which Tito had in holding the country together was the Soviet "threat" and his image as someone who could "handle" the Russians, or the Soviets. I think that, when I left Zagreb, I felt that the Soviet "threat" was a unifying force. Maybe this was not the best way to hold the country together, but nevertheless it was a real, centripetal force.

I felt that there were some major intercommunal issues that needed to be resolved. I felt that they were on the way to some kind of satisfactory resolution before the meeting at Karageordeva in 1971 and which obviously congealed after that meeting. At some point these issues would have to be faced. I am not absolutely certain that I felt like this when I left Zagreb, but this is the way I think now. I think that the beginnings of this view had formed in my mind.

It seems to me now that the Serbs and the Croats each had a non-negotiable demand, but they were not totally incompatible. Their differences could have been resolved or met with some ingenuity and some political skill. The Croats were dead set on independence, on the recognition of a sovereign, Croatian state. That view was never articulated by the Savka and Tripolo leadership, but it was quite implicit in what they were doing and in the direction in which they were going.

On the other hand the Serbs, with their history and myth, or ethnic mythology, of being "persecuted" whenever they were not in full control of Yugoslavia. They insisted on a system which would protect themselves from the "persecutions" which they felt that they had suffered under the Turks, under the Austrians in Bosnia, and then under the Croats, whenever the Croats had a chance to get at them, as was the case during World War II.

A resolution of these differences was not going to be easy, since the various ethnic groups lived as intermingled as they did. However, it seemed to me that with imagination and skill there was some way that could be done. There would have to be the "reality" of Croatian independence and the "mythology" of some sort of Serbian influence that would overcome this Serb feeling of insecurity. This might have required population transfers. I mean by that, voluntary and protected population transfers.

In 1992 I had come to the conclusion that the United States should support a policy that would say to any person resident in the former Yugoslavia, except Slovenia, which had now gone its own way, "There's going to be a sovereign Croatia and a sovereign Serbia. There will be a line drawn which will delineate the border between those two states. If you live on the 'wrong' side of that border, from your point of view, you're going to have 10 years to make up your mind to move. If, at any time during that 10 years, during which time your rights will be protected by some international guarantee, you decide to move, you will be assisted to move. You will be helped to move in a dignified way to the part of the country where you wish to live. If, on the other hand, you find it tolerable to remain where you are, at the end of that 10-year period, you will become a citizen of that country. You won't have to give up your ethnic rights, which will be protected in credible fashion. However, you will be expected to be a loyal, productive, and contributing member of that nation. If you are a Serb in what is defined as Croatia at the end of that 10-year period, you will be expected to meet all of the obligations of a Croatian citizen living in Serbia at the same time."

In my mind, at least, as of 1972 the United States was not at the point of articulating the concept of "population transfers." However, I did believe that the Croats were dead set on independence, as were the Slovenians. Some way was eventually going to have to be found to let that happen, with some solution to the sense of insecurity that this outcome would bring to the

Serbs living in Croatia or Slovenia.

Q: I think that you mentioned something, and you may have mentioned it in the first part of this interview, when we began to talk about Yugoslavia, that as far as the United States is concerned, the Soviet threat to Yugoslavia was such that if there was instability in Yugoslavia, it might trigger Soviet adventurism. This could mean war. So that, in many respects, Yugoslavia and Berlin were the two points where there was a chance of instability...

DUNLOP: They were potential "flash points," yes.

Q: For that reason we had a real stake in wanting to see Yugoslavia hang together. Of course, the Yugoslavs probably felt the same way.

DUNLOP: I agree with that. I supported that policy at the time. There was indeed a general consensus in the U.S. for this policy, with the exception of some extremist émigré circles. It was institutionalized, so to speak, and every American official who ever spoke publicly on Yugoslavia for 30 years would express the view that, "We support the independence, territorial integrity, and sovereignty of Yugoslavia." That meant, "Soviets, keep out!" We made that point clearly through aid, both military and economic, during the 1950's, and through diplomatic and other ways in the 1960's and 1970's. I knew of no one who expected the Soviets to go away at any particular time. I knew of nobody who anticipated anything like the developments of the late 1980's and 1990's. The policy we had toward Yugoslavia from 1950 to, say, 1985 was an appropriate, entirely serviceable policy. However, I believe that we held onto this policy after it was no longer serviceable.

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 Secretariat, 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 preceded 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-slay, 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 slay, 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.

RICHARD M. MILES
Consular Officer
Belgrade, Yugoslavia (1970-1971)

Political Officer
Belgrade, Yugoslavia (1971-1973)

Ambassador Miles was born in Arkansas in 1937. He earned an associate degree from Bakersfield College, Bachelor's degree from University of California, Berkeley and a master's degree from Indiana University. He joined the Foreign service in 1966. His overseas posts include Oslo, Belgrade, Moscow, Leningrad, Berlin, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria and Georgia. Ambassador Miles was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

Q: Well then, '69 whither?

MILES: Well, then things got more exciting for me and they've remained exciting pretty much ever since. In those days—that was before they had the computer list and you had to try to figure out which assignments were available and how to get the assignment you wanted. One way, especially when you were starting out, was to apply for language training. And so I applied for Russian training to get more Russian, Serbian, Serbo-Croatian they called it then, and a third language, I don't remember what it was—Polish, I think. And to make a long story short, I got Serbo-Croatian training, which meant I would go on to Belgrade, although when they started you at the training you didn't always have a specific ongoing assignment. That came later as they sorted things out. Maybe in the back of the minds of the country director or something they might have known what they would like to do with you, but it wasn't clear to us in the training what that was going to be.

But anyhow, I did that for one year. Four or five people in a small room with the instructor for a year! It was enough to make you scream. You certainly get to know a person during an experience like that.

Q: Who were your instructors?

MILES: Well, old Ivanovic had retired already. We met him—he would come around and say hello to us once in a while. It was a Serbian Orthodox priest named Milosevic, Father Milosevic, and a Croatian fellow whose name escapes me, unfortunately. And I thought the written materials were pretty good, so I learned, building on my Russian, I learned pretty good Serbian even before I went out to Yugoslavia. And then when I finally got my assignment, I was in charge of the Consular Section, which was really quite something for a second assignment.

Q: Oh, yes.

MILES: And Belgrade was a busy place. I mean, the Consular Section had half the personnel that we had in Norway. And yet Yugoslavia had a population five times the population of Norway. Every consular problem in Yugoslavia was a political problem and there were many of them. Some of the Yugoslav-Americans would come back and raise hell, think they could throw their weight around because they were Americans, insult Tito, you know, get drunk and sing Ustasa songs or God knows what; it was just one thing after another. And then the visas were always a problem, too. So from having been in that warm bath of consular work up in Norway with too many people to do too little work, all of a sudden I was in a very cold bath and not enough people to do the work. Well, that's life in the Foreign Service.

Q: Alright. You were doing this from '68?

MILES: Sixty-nine to '70 was the language training and then '70 to '71 I did the consular work. And then we had the OIG [Office of the Inspector General] inspectors come out and they found one of the political officers who had not had any management experience and meanwhile there I was, beaver away down in the bowels of the building in the Consular Section—it was actually located halfway below ground level—and so they said to the Ambassador, “Why don't you switch these two officers?” “And that's how I got into political work. We didn't exactly have career “cones” [career concentrations—administrative, consular, political, etc.] then; you had to rely on lobbying and luck to be able to do the work you really wanted to do. Anyhow, I moved into political work and I stayed there happily ever after.

Q: Okay. Well, just for the record, you had the job I had. I was chief of the Consular Section. Instead of one year I had it for five years. I loved it.

MILES: Whoa! Five years! Well, I liked it too. My wife Sharon and I traveled all over Yugoslavia that first year doing everything from visiting prisoners to helping old people's problems with the U.S. Social Security Administration. Every month the Consular Section delivered about 5,000 social security checks to pensioners who had returned to Yugoslavia. Of course, all this was good for polishing up my Serbo-Croatian.

Q: From '62 to '67.

MILES: Well, you probably were replaced by Erwin von den Steinen and then I replaced Erwin.

Q: Yes.

MILES: I'll never forget Erwin. I remember him well—kind of an eccentric guy. We had about a 10 day overlap and we went out to the prison there in Sremska Mitrovica to visit an American prisoner. We were waiting in the prison cafeteria—a lugubrious place, if ever there was one—and had just gotten our coffee—Turkish coffee, which came in those little brass or copper pots, “*dzhezva*”, I think they called them. At least it's pronounced that way. So, as Erwin was talking to me, he picked up the *dzhezva* with the Turkish coffee in it and, as he was talking, he was tilting it up to pour the coffee into a cup. But, you remember, well-made Turkish coffee has this

heavy crust of foam on the top, so the coffee didn't pour out right away. And I was kind of looking out of the corner of my eye, thinking, is this a magic trick? I mean, I had not been in Yugoslavia a week yet so I didn't know about Turkish coffee and I thought, what is he doing? Is he showing me something? What am I supposed to do here? But he just wasn't paying attention. He was too busy talking. Anyhow, Erwin got the *dzhezva* almost totally upside down over the cup and then the coffee came out with a great sploosh all over everything, cup, saucer and table. What a mess. A little story but I'll never forget that scene—or Erwin.

Q: When you got there in 1970, what was the political situation? How would you describe both the Political Section and Yugoslavia and Yugoslav-American relations?

MILES: The relations were pretty good. The Yugoslavs had already had their rapprochement with the Russians, the Soviets, by then. You know, they had had a great falling out in the late 1940s; they had clung to us like a drowning child to a lifeguard. We had provided military and civilian equipment, training and all sorts of things. This political and material support helped them resist Stalin and the Red Army. And then under Khrushchev they did have a rapprochement in the 1950s so the Soviet-Yugoslav relationship would kind of go up and down. It waxed and waned. Tito, of course, was one of the founders of the non-aligned movement and we sometimes had trouble with the non-aligned movement and its leaders—especially rhetorically. I don't think the movement ever caused us much trouble in any other way. But this was the heyday of the movement, and of the several charismatic leaders of the movement, people like Tito, Nkrumah, Indira Gandhi, Sukarno and Nasser. Tito just gloried in it and spent a lot of state money on it and, therefore, it had a certain influence and weight in the world.

In the 1970s our military relationship with the Yugoslavs was not as close as it had been. We sold them some military equipment and we provided some training in that context. We had good economic relations with them and we spent a lot of time just trying to figure out where they were going, what might the future look like, and what influence might Yugoslavia have especially on the satellite countries of the Soviet Union—Bulgaria, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Poland and so on—which frankly was not much. But we were busy trying to ferret that out and, of course, we spent a lot of time on Yugoslav internal developments. They were rather stormy in the early 1970s—well, they've always been stormy, I guess. Anyhow, there was plenty to do and for me and my family, it was a great time, actually. We lived in a house in a Serbian neighborhood with lots of Serbian children. Our daughter Elizabeth, who was only a year old when we arrived, learned Serbian along with English as a first language. We had a live-in maid who only spoke Serbian, so both the children spoke Serbian pretty well.

Q: Did you get any feeling for the ethnic animosities and all?

MILES: Well, yes and no. Anyone who lives there more than two weeks begins to understand that there are difficulties that go way back into the past and you must know about them and beware of them. You quickly learn how ordinary people felt about other ethnic groups. For example, we rented a little house in Cavtat, on the Croatian coast, right below Dubrovnik—a beautiful little place—and we wanted to take our Serbian maid down to help care for the children and, my goodness, the maid was nervous as a cat. She and her family were Seventh Day Adventists and she didn't spend a lot of time on makeup or fancy dressing or anything like

that—but let me tell you, when she came down to the coast with us, she was dressed to the nines. She far outshone us. I mean, it was kind of like Elizabeth Taylor going on tour or whatever. Yet even when she was there, she was so nervous about being surrounded by Croats that we finally sent her home. She just couldn't function in Croatian society; it was very interesting to see that.

I can give you another example of ethnic animosities which was a constant irritant for my family and involved our son Richard's playmates. Our Serbian landlady lived in the basement apartment of our house. Richard, who was 5, 6, 7 on our first tour in Belgrade, played with the children of a Roma family who lived in the neighborhood. The landlady would become almost apoplectic when the Roma kids would come into our garden to play with Richard. She'd scream ugly things at them and call them the equivalent of the N-word and chase them out of the garden. Sharon had rather strong words with the landlady, but until the day we left, the landlady showed pretty open hatred towards those Roma children. So you begin to learn from things like that. And then in some of the consular work, too, I would run into problems resulting from ethnic differences

I remember a case of an American who I still remain friends with, a musicologist, who was collecting folk songs up in the Bosnian mountains. The authorities believed that he was inciting the villagers to sing Ustasa songs, songs of the pre-War and World War II fascist movement in Croatia and Bosnia. In Yugoslavia at that time it was forbidden to sing those songs, forbidden by Yugoslav law. And so they arrested him and seized his equipment and his tapes and we had a hell of a time getting him freed and getting his tapes released.

So it didn't take long to figure out that there was something strange in Yugoslav society. I can remember once as a political officer going up to Ljubljana to interview would-be camp counselors going to America on a summer program. I was in the Political Section at that point and I did ask some normal things like, "What do you do if you have a bunch of kids out in the woods and it's raining and you want to light a fire? How do you go about it?" But I was really interested in their political attitudes and so I would also ask questions like, "Are your parents both Slovenian?" And if I found one where one was a Slovene and one was a Croat or a Serb, I would ask, "What would you consider yourself then?" I was curious about that answer. And I would get usually quite vehement responses: "I am a Yugoslav. I don't consider myself either a Croat or a Slovene—I'm a Yugoslav." Well, this was good to hear but, unfortunately, it was also misleading. We made too much of the idea that the new "Yugoslav" man was going to overcome the ethnic divisions of the past. And as we have seen demonstrated in recent years, these ethnic differences and historical animosities in Yugoslavia were deeply imprinted on many young people by their grandparents and by their peers and we were misleading ourselves about the decline of ethnic separation and animosity in Yugoslavia. We heard what we wanted to hear.

There was an interesting byproduct of those interviews. I stayed in Ljubljana a couple of days and once while I was at an outdoor café, I could tell that I was being photographed by the security services. A half a block down the street, somebody with a long telephoto lens would be photographing a church and then he would kind of swing the camera around in my direction, snap me and swing back to the church; it was not very cleverly done—maybe they wanted me to notice it and to back off from what I was doing. So I thought, okay, well, big deal, I'm not doing anything very unusual here, and I thought no more about it. But then about a year later, the internal political situation was more sensitive. I again went to Slovenia to do camp counselor

interviews but, due to the changed political situation, I refrained from asking any overt political questions. Nonetheless, an article appeared in *Politika*, the major newspaper in Belgrade, an article along the lines of, “Why is Mr. Miles asking provocative questions?” The implication was that I had only recently asked provocative questions in Ljubljana. And, indeed, the article contained verbatim some of the questions I had asked a year previously and the writer wondered rhetorically why was I doing this. And the cartoon in the middle of the article was—this was about a half-page article—and the cartoon was a baldheaded guy with glasses, in other words, me, sitting at an outdoor café reading the local Slovenian newspaper and he had two little holes cut out where his eyes could peek through the newspaper. In other words, this fellow, Miles, from the American Embassy is a spy. So the relationship kind of went up and down.

Nonetheless this was not a difficult time for the United States. The real issue in Yugoslavia at that time was the domestic political situation. The early 1970s was a time of the so-called “Croatian Spring” and the subsequent crackdown on the students and the people in Zagreb who had been demonstrating out on the streets and a crackdown also on the Croatian political leadership. The fear in Belgrade was that they were all Croatian nationalists, really. And then a little bit later, just to balance things, Tito cracked down on the so-called “rotten liberals” in the Serbian Party. Well, this was all pretty exciting.

We had a consulate general up in Zagreb, which did report on the events in Croatia, but the Ambassador was keenly interested in what was happening up there. At one point, and I have never seen this happen before or since, he even ordered the Consul General up there—that was Orme Wilson. I don’t know if you ever knew Orme? Very old school. Anyhow, the Ambassador ordered Orme to send all of his proposed cables down to the Embassy for clearance before sending them out from Zagreb. You know, consuls general have the right to send out their own messages, they do have that right, but in this case the Ambassador wanted to take a look at the cables first and to censor them. Well, the Ambassador has that authority but I have never heard of it being used in that way. Anyhow, that’s what he did.

Q: Who was the Ambassador?

MILES: Well, you embarrass me.

Q: Silverman?

MILES: No. Something—what the hell was his name? He later was on the intelligence board. Oh, it was William Leonhart. Later Mac Toon came to replace him.

Q: Who was his DCM, do you remember?

MILES: Tom Enders.

Q: Tom Enders.

MILES: There was a big scandal involving the Ambassador and the DCM.

Q: Were you there when Tom Enders got fired?

MILES: Not only was I there, my wife Sharon and I had hardly arrived when we were right in the center of that whole business. If you remember, on Pushkinova Street there were three homes in a row that housed American Embassy families. There was the DCM's house, another large house where the political counselor lived, and then in between was a much smaller house. We lived there. It was an unusual, octagonal house, a rather interesting house, actually. The writer Lawrence Durrell lived in it when he worked for the British Council in the late '40s, early '50s. Elizabeth corresponded with him later over that house.

Q: That's where the CIA guy, in my time...

MILES: Really? I know those houses well. Years later, when I went back as political counselor, I had that large house I mentioned earlier. So I lived on that same street for six years.

Well, at that time we lived in the smaller house in the middle and of course the Enders were right next door. It was immediately obvious that the Embassy was split right down the middle with the pro-Enders-and-his-wife-Gaetana crowd on one side and the pro-Ambassador-and-his-wife-Pidge crowd on the other. We were smart enough to not get involved in the line that had already been drawn in the sand by the time we got there. The Ambassador's wife and the DCM's wife were both very high powered women, and both tried to recruit Sharon into their respective camps. But we basically just avoided it, which was difficult since we were neighbors. The whole thing was incredibly stupid and what the Yugoslavs and the diplomatic community must have thought of it defies imagination. There were all sorts of real or imagined slights and slurs on both sides and, as far as I could tell, the whole thing resulted from putting four people with overweening egos into a very small space where there was not enough to occupy them in a healthier manner. I could give you some examples of childish behavior on both sides but really this whole business was of interest only to the parties involved and, other than to make the Embassy something of a laughing stock, it played no role whatsoever in our relationship with the Yugoslav government.

I'll never forget one incident though, and, remember, I was still relatively new in the Foreign Service—I had only been in the Foreign Service three years at that point—and I can remember one staff meeting shortly after I arrived at post when the Ambassador and the DCM were both there. Now Enders was a big, huge, beautiful, Greek god kind of a guy—he just exuded charisma. The Ambassador was a short, dark guy with not enough charisma to match his oversized ego. Anyhow, the Ambassador said, “The DCM has some difficulties with the policies that I've been enunciating and some of the analyses which I have made and I'm going to allow him to have his say in this meeting and then I'm going to ask him to leave the meeting.” Now, this was a country team meeting. I couldn't believe it. Here I am, a lowly junior officer, thinking what the hell is going on? Enders then said that he thought the Ambassador was not on the right track and that he was personalizing their differences which was unfortunate. He then left the conference room, at which point the Ambassador pretty much tore apart Enders' past history, character and future prospects. Embarrassing, really.

Well, Enders was recalled shortly afterward, He and his wife held a big farewell party with a

zillion guests, which the Ambassador had forbidden him to do. So the DCM left, was assigned to be our Ambassador to Cambodia or something like that—not a very happy place in 1970—but later got a nice job as Ambassador to Canada.

Q: He was Ambassador to Canada.

MILES: Ambassador to Canada. Not long after Enders' departure, Ambassador Leonhart, who had a drinking problem, was recalled himself; he was recalled right on the eve of President Nixon's visit. The Ambassador is dead now so I think it's alright to refer to his drinking. And I can remember the plaintive message that he sent to Washington saying something like, "I'll leave as ordered but I remind the Department that the President will arrive ten days after I depart and I'm willing to delay my departure until after the President's visit." And the answer came back, "Leave as scheduled." Really pretty contemptuous, but I think the Department was fed up with these shenanigans.

Q: Who took his place?

MILES: Enders'? Dick Johnson.

Q: Dick Johnson, yes. I took Serbian with Dick Johnson, Larry Eagleburger and David Anderson. We all took Serbian together.

MILES: Yes. I know them all. An above average crop. Well, of course, David is dead. Most unfortunate.

Q: Yes.

MILES: David was Ambassador in Belgrade when I was there in the mid-'80s as political counselor. He was my ambassador for about a year. The wonderful Harry Gilmore was his DCM; it was a dream team.

Q: Well now, let's talk about—on the consular side, how about visas? What was the visa situation?

MILES: I don't recall any particular difficulties. We didn't do nearly as many visas by mail as we had done in Norway, of course, and quite a few of the Yugoslavs had to come in for interviews. I didn't usually do interviews myself unless someone of some significance wanted to protest being denied a visa and then I would maybe do the re-interview. I don't recall any particular problems, to tell the truth.

Q: Well, I had problems. I remember coming in one morning and I saw a bunch of Macedonian women in peasant costume. I thought, oh God, you know, because they were all basically ineligible, but they still were entitled to an interview. And, of course, a large number of the women we did give visas to would go off to America and immediately get married. I would make little notes on the application—you are no longer allowed to do this sort of thing—like, "This lady is never going to get married in America or Macedonia either." Ten days after she gets to

the American shore she was married.

MILES: Yes. Well, we had the usual problems but I don't—there were no scandals or particular difficulties. I do remember one particularly vivid letter I received from a fellow whose visa application I had denied. After expressing his disappointment in no uncertain terms, he concluded by saying, "I will hunt you down and shoot you in mouth like rabbit!" I'm not aware that one hunts rabbits like that, but certainly his meaning was clear. Just before President Nixon's visit to Yugoslavia, I turned that one over to the regional security officer and I believe the police followed up on it.

Q: How did you handle the fact that we were in a communist country and we had an anti-communist immigration law?

MILES: Well, it was easy enough to get waivers. You just did the appropriate waiver form, I forget the jargon—"two ii's, two little eyes"—we called it, from the sub-paragraph of the appropriate paragraph in the Immigration and Naturalization Act. It's been so long since I did that work that I can't remember the details, but it was easy enough to put otherwise eligible applicants in for a waiver if you felt they deserved it. Washington made those decisions, of course, but they usually seconded the judgment of the consular officer. You did have to write the waiver data in the person's passport and some people didn't like that. But, if you wanted to go to the States, you had to comply with the regulations. It wasn't a problem, usually—more of a time delay than anything else. For the officials and so on it wasn't any problem at all. You know, they get their own type of visas. We still had to get the waivers but, for them, it was automatic—no interview—provided they were going on official business, of course.

Q: What about, during the summer, getting people from other parts of the Eastern Bloc trying to get into Yugoslavia and get out to the West?

MILES: Yes. Yes, there were always some. And in one case, I'm pretty sure that we had a Soviet provocation. A group of three or four people came in and claimed they wanted to defect from a Russian tour group or something of that sort and the way they were acting was quite suspicious. I had the feeling that the KGB was simply trying to see how easy it was to do this, maybe even to put some of their own people in the United States. I didn't think their behavior was the kind of a thing that ordinary Soviet citizens would think up on their own—one of the young women was rubbing up against the consular officer and... Now, I didn't do the interview, but I heard all about it, and that kind of thing didn't sound like normal behavior for a Soviet visa applicant. Anyhow, we didn't give them visas.

Q: Did you have any difficult issues in the Section?

MILES: One situation stands out although the uncovering of it didn't take place while I was running the Consular Section. There were still some of the residual property claims cases dating from the communist confiscation or nationalization of property owned by Americans. What was the name of that white-haired fellow? Matić, I think it was, who ran that little Property Claims Unit? Several years later, Tom Hutson was running the Consular Section in Belgrade and uncovered some evidence of unethical behavior by Matić. Tom didn't have enough on Matić or

didn't want to dig deeper, because Matić had performed pretty good service for us over the decades; but Tom also didn't want him around anymore, so he forced him to take an early retirement. And what Matić was doing was this. There would be a particularly difficult property claims case. Matić would write separately to the person involved in America and say who he was and then tell the American, "While your case is very difficult and we would not be able to resolve it in the usual manner in the Embassy, I might be able to help you using my own time after hours and on weekends." Well, in fact, he wasn't always using his own time. In any case, that was certainly unethical behavior and, as a well-trained lawyer, Matić knew that very well. Matić had started out with the Embassy in 1945 as an employee of the U.S. Army Graves Registration unit in Belgrade. He'd go bumping all over Yugoslavia in a jeep with an American from the unit and try to locate the bodies of American servicemen to send back for burial in the States. Judging from the letters of commendation he showed me, he did yeoman work. We owed him a little consideration.

And then we had the usual run of nut cases. I remember one fellow, and this case gave me the opportunity to meet the Yugoslav political actor and later, dissident, Milovan Djilas. I'll tell you about it. The Yugoslav government informed us that they had an American who had illegally—and mother-naked, I might add—crossed the Yugoslav border into Romania and then had been turned back to Yugoslavia by the Romanians. "He is acting in a bizarre fashion," they said, and would we please come up to the border and take him off their hands? So I sent a consular officer up to the border and when he arrived he found the guy was still naked in his cell and he had, indeed, gone across the border and back again. Despite the lack of clothes, he had with him a "Citizen of the World" passport that he had drawn up himself. I have no idea what happened to his regular passport. He claimed to be an American citizen and the officer believed that he probably was an American by the way he talked and acted. The fellow said he didn't want to see an American consul and would not talk to a consul. When the consular officer went into the cell where they were holding this fellow, he attacked him. So the consular officer thought, "Okay, this is not someone I'm going to take back to Belgrade in my car," and so we got him transferred down to what amounted to the neuro-psychiatric clinic in Belgrade, where I got to know this flaming nationalist who was the head of that clinic.

Q: Dr. Savic?

MILES: Yes, indeed! Dr. Savic. Very interesting man. I liked him.

Q: Delightful. And his wife, too.

MILES: I liked him very much. I never met his wife but I liked him very much.

Q: Oh, she is a dear.

MILES: I used to have hours of conversation with him. I would go over ostensibly to talk to this wacky American, but in fact I really went to talk to Dr. Savic. Well, one day he had Milovan Djilas in there and he was talking to Djilas—I mean, he had actually arranged it, because at that time we were staying a little bit clear of Djilas; the Ambassador wanted to be the only one to have that contact or to authorize that contact. And so, anyhow, Djilas was there, I was there—I

was not going to, you know, throw up my hands and run fleeing from the scene—and so Djilas and I had a very nice conversation. I remember the conversation well; it was right after the Calley trial and Djilas was very impressed with that trial.

Q: This was the trial of a U.S. Army lieutenant who was accused of, and found guilty of—what was the name of the village?

MILES: My Lai. There was a massacre there, yes. Well, Djilas was quite impressed with the way we had brought these officers and men to justice. Even though time had passed—even though this awful event had happened and had been covered up initially—nonetheless, through our system, we had brought Lt. Calley to trial and found him guilty and had sentenced him to prison. Djilas was quite impressed with that as an example of democracy in action. And even though the proceedings and the final results of the trial were imperfect, I think we can be proud of the fact that these men were brought to trial. I think we ourselves should be impressed with it.

Q: Well then, in the Political Section, who was the head of the Section?

MILES: It was Clayton Mudd at first. Clayton was a legend in the Foreign Service. He had actually been in Yugoslavia with the OSS at the end of World War II. If you Google him, you'll find some of the declassified reports he wrote at that time trying to track down some of the Croatian fascists who had escaped arrest at the end of the war. Clayton had an amazing ability to tell from a person's name what part of Yugoslavia he was from.

Then Don Tice came. I'm still good friends with Don. He is long retired and lives up in Chevy Chase. Both of them were good officers and good leaders. Excellent role models, I thought at the time, and I still do.

Q: What sort of things were you—what piece of the political pie were you looking at?

MILES: I followed the Non-Aligned Movement, or NAM as we referred to it. And I also kept an eye on Yugoslavia's relations with surrounding countries. Alan Thompson did the internal stuff, which was really where things were most interesting, but he was older and more experienced; Alan was the First Secretary. But the section was so small that we often shifted responsibilities depending on the work load, vacation and travel schedules and so on. It was not always easy work. But when the Yugoslav government would have its typical spat, back and forth with Bulgaria over the perennial Macedonian question or just over trivial border problems, I would be the one to report on that. And on the Non-Aligned Movement, which was at least something which Washington cared about, you could blow on that and make it glow a little bit. Otherwise my work was frankly kind of dull. I mean, I spent my time going around talking to the people in Yugoslavia who were interested in these things and that was about it. I did go down to Kosovo a lot. I was interested in Kosovo, and I did go around and talk to people about the theory and practice of what was known as workers' self-management.

Q: Is that your—

MILES: Yes. Workers' self-management. So I did spend a fair amount of time going around to

factories and talking to representatives of the workers' councils and management. And I did "youth": youth was a big thing in those days. The Department even had a special youth officer.

Q: Youth officer, oh yes. You were young enough, yes.

MILES: Yes. And so I did that and I met some interesting people in that process. Going back to the Leonhart-Enders feud though, I remember the Ambassador calling me up to his office and telling me—now, remember, I was a junior officer on his second assignment—and telling me something like, "The DCM is a poor manager and has screwed up the youth portfolio. I'm going to give it to you and I want you to show him how to do that job properly." Wonderful! Talk about poor management. Can you believe it? Anyhow, I did the best I could with that responsibility but my heart was never in it.

Q: One of the interesting things about that period of time was that the Yugoslav foreign service was one of our major sources in places all around the world, from Third World places but also other places like China and the Soviet Union, because the Yugoslavs did provide the bulk of good connections and they liked to talk.

MILES: Yes. At my level I didn't have such a lot to do with that, to tell the truth. That came later when I went back ten years later as political counselor. I don't recall anyone really standing out in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in those early days but that is probably more a reflection of my low rank and relative inexperience than on the competence of the Foreign Ministry. I would sometimes go over to the Foreign Ministry, accompanying the Ambassador or the political counselor as a note taker, so I got to know some of the higher officials in that way. I got to know Cvijeto Job then. Do you remember Job? And a few of the others. But I didn't spend much time talking to the Yugoslav diplomats myself; I was too low in rank.

Q: Were you pretty much under the impression that the Non-Aligned Movement was basically an ego driven organization? Because when one looks back it, we spent a lot of time talking about it, but it didn't amount to a pile of whatever you want to call it.

MILES: Yes, that's right. Yes, I think so, basically. I actually tried hard to find real substance in it, but these countries were just too disparate and they were not particularly democratic countries. I mean, Kwame Nkrumah, Sukarno and Nasser, you know, these guys, Tito himself—these were not democratic leaders by any stretch of the imagination. OK, Indira Gandhi, maybe. Anyhow, the Department did pay a certain amount of attention to the Non-Aligned Movement and we had a couple of people in the Department who spent full time on it and would go as observers to the international conferences and whatnot. One of them even wrote a monograph on it, but frankly, when all is said and done, the Non-Aligned Movement was kind of like a hot air balloon—highly visible and flying high but full of nothing.

Q: When did you leave Yugoslavia?

MILES: In '73.

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.

GILBERT R. CALLAWAY
USIS Officer
Zagreb (1970-1974)

Gilbert R. Callaway was born in Tennessee in 1938. He received a B.A. from Rice University, an M.A. from American University, and served in the U.S. Army from 1963 to 1965. His postings abroad included Caracas, Zagreb, Moscow, Bologna, Rome, Managua, and Madrid. He was interviewed in 1999 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: He had been desk officer and served in Belgrade. Can you talk about your impression of, well I suppose I would say Yugoslavia but we are really talking about Croatia at the time when you arrived there? This was brand new for you. You hadn't been in Europe before.

CALLAWAY: I had one short trip with the military, but I had never been in Yugoslavia. It was unknown. We had talked obviously with a lot of people, Jenkins, Luers, and others, who had served in that part of the world. I did a lot of background reading and took some courses at GW [George Washington University] and Georgetown before going out there, so from an academic point of view I knew a fair amount about the place. But what really struck us was how non-restrictive it was from what we had anticipated. Then I jump ahead to a subsequent assignment in Moscow where, after Zagreb, we felt we knew what it was like to live in a communist country, and we were knocked off our feet.

In Yugoslavia, you could travel freely and you could go wherever you like. [It was] clear that there were restrictions was not that Tito was a communist. My personal opinion was that Tito had become Tito by that time and this was Tito's country, Tito's revolution, Tito versus Stalin.

When Nixon paid his first visit, I think, to that part of the world, he went to Romania and I think it was on that very same visit, either coming or going, when he stopped off to visit Tito. He came up to Croatia because Tito had been born in Kumrovec, a small little town on the Croatia-Slovenia border. It was a shrine at the time. Tito was very much alive.

An interesting anecdote is that the press advance people - which is mainly who we were working with - are always trying to ensure that the accompanying press corps can practically sit in the lap of the visiting dignitaries. Finally, I had to go over to a guy and say, "Look, there is real security here and you had better believe me that when they say don't cross this line they mean it." The guy kept saying, "We can move up ten more paces. You just go tell them we are going to do this." I would negotiate, and go back and forth. Finally the Yugoslav security guys said, "That's it. No more." I said, "Why no more? Why not here rather than there?" They said, "Because now Tito is coming. We don't care what happens to Nixon. It's your worry." I took him over and translated for the U.S. guy and I said really if you go any further... That was sort of the attitude toward who Tito was, and what he meant to the country.

Then, during the time we were there, there was a relatively peaceful resolution [compared] to the kind of breakdown that we see today. There were a lot of autonomy movements within Croatia at the time, very active in pushing for more autonomy, particularly more economic autonomy. They were not even talking about independence at the time. All of a sudden - and I don't think anybody in Belgrade, Zagreb or anywhere else saw this coming - Tito just said, "That's enough. You are going to jail. You are out of office."

Q: That happened during your time?

CALLAWAY: Yes.

Q: Wasn't there also something, the theater or something, where the Croatian banner came up or something like that?

CALLAWAY: There were incidents like that. People wore the little pins that you see now, the little checkerboard symbols of Croatia.

Q: I spent five years in Belgrade and my time was '62 to '67. Somehow I realize only long after the time, it was a calm period, but we really were isolated from the nationalism. We were caught up in sort of, the Serbs were there and we were among the Serbs and we didn't get the feeling of other places. They were just seen as, those are just minor local disturbances and all. Did you get a feeling of the divide between Serbia and Belgrade, and Zagreb? Did this sort of permeate your work?

CALLAWAY: As I said it certainly did in the actions that Tito took on the national level, but it went beyond that. It was certainly sensitive at the time but I think a lot of water had gone under the bridge at the time. When I first went there we were able to send in reports directly from Zagreb on what's happening, and how are things developing. As things became very bad, and particularly after Tito made his move to remove certain people from office in Croatia, the embassy decreed that all reporting from Zagreb would go through the mission in Belgrade. This really chaffed us. The feeling was that we had enough maturity. We were reporting. We weren't advocating. The sensitivities continued right up until the time that James Baker traveled out there in '89 or '90, or whenever it was, and said this is one country and that's what we stand by.

It was Leonhart. We can talk about that. Tom Enders was his DCM for part of the time. We have traveled back to Yugoslavia a number of times. We really thoroughly enjoyed the country and we had a lot of friends. We went back most recently in the summer of '90 or '91.

Anyway, some incidents had already happened. As you will recall, at the Plitvice Lakes, some foreign tourists had been killed. Who did it? Was it provoked? Did the Serbs do it to bring shame upon the Croats or did the Croats do it to set up the Serbs? There was a lot of debate about who was behind it, and we talked with friends at the time.

I'm sure you get, "You served in Yugoslavia, explain to us what the hell is going on?" My response is, "I served in Yugoslavia and I probably understand less than you do." The kind of people that we dealt with even up until '90, '91, said, "There is going to be trouble. There are going to be hotheads. There is going to be violence. We will not go as far as independence. The economic viability of this country is too important. We have made too much progress. We need to stick together." They sincerely believed it and never would have instigated the kind of stupidity, I think, that has happened since then.

Q: Even the Croatians who worked in Belgrade all headed home on the weekends. You were really restricted to a Serb society and there was a certain, I won't to say blindness, but a lack of understanding I think on the part of leadership of what was going on. Although from a practical

point of view, nothing really happened for 25 years. Who was our ambassador at the time?

CALLAWAY: It was Leonhart. We can talk about that. Tom Enders was his DCM for part of the time. We have traveled back to Yugoslavia a number of times. We really thoroughly enjoyed the country and we had a lot of friends. We went back most recently in the summer of '90 or '91.

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Nor did we see it in those two-and-a-half years that we were serving there... We did know some Serbs and some other people, even more so in Slovenia because people were drawn from the southern parts of the country to come up and work in the factories. Even then Slovenia looked back to the Austro-Hungarian Empire and thought fondly about those days. They wanted to be more economically independent than the Croats did because they were economically better off. It was the same attitude that you heard in Italy: why is the south pulling all of our funds away from Milan? There were some of the same kinds of arguments. Why are we funding the south because they are lazy people who can't work very hard?

The idea of resorting to war to achieve independence I think was beyond the pale. They thought they had made a tremendous amount of progress. They thought they could live side-by-side. We had a nursemaid who came in and helped us with the kids every once in a while who was very Croatian nationalistic and she used to tell horrible stories about how she would sleep with the dead at night in the fields in order to avoid being slaughtered, reminiscent of the things you hear about Kosovo going on right now. And yet she had neighbors that day who were Serbs. It was in the past for her. It was a horrible past. It was a terrible thing, but it wasn't any part of her planned future.

There are people that I think that we don't see, as diplomats in whatever country. We deal with educated, rational people who, even if they may be communist and disagree with you in terms of what kind of a social system you want to construct, are going to try, as we did with the former Soviet Union, in every way they can to avoid killing each other. We, I think unfortunately, too often tend to neglect the people who are willing to do the kind of hotheaded things that we see today in Yugoslavia.

Q: Were you feeling at all the problem of having extreme Croatian nationalists, particularly in Sweden and other places, and also in Chicago? Did they sort of intrude on your territory at all

from time to time?

CALLAWAY: Not really. It was interesting. Once again it was something akin to what we were saying about the kind of people we would deal with. Most of the people that we were dealing with felt that these people went too far. They didn't want to see Croats setting off bombs in Chicago or demonstrating at rallies. The Serbs, of course, said they were Ustashi. To the extent that that's true or not, I'm sure some of them were. They had fled the country. They had gotten out. You didn't see that many people coming back into Croatia or paying visits back to Croatia to sort of cement a relationship. They were in some ways, as do many émigré groups, reflecting on Italy, or Yugoslavia, or Croatia, which no longer exists, they are remembering what it used to be.

Q: Despite your having to be rather precise in moderating what we were opening in Montenegro, Bosnia, and Slovenia, did you find that culturally wise and all, the Yugoslav government was pretty open to what we could do there?

CALLAWAY: Yes, especially with the hindsight gained after having gone and served in the Soviet Union. It was tremendously open. I don't think we realized how open it was at that time. But even having come to Yugoslavia and having served there, and then serving on the desk, looking back at Venezuela, which was my only previous Foreign Service assignment, we were limited in certain ways. There were student protests about Vietnam in Venezuela, but, as I mentioned to you, I managed to get the political counselor at the embassy to go onto campus and give a talk about Vietnam. That was pretty sensitive and there were a lot of doubts about that. I think Yugoslavia at the time, at least culturally and intellectually, was quite open. Politically, it was another matter. They simply were not going to recognize us putting diplomats into the various republics beyond where we had an established consulate (i.e., Zagreb).

Q: Did you find going on the desk, having served in Zagreb, were you getting a taste of the two outlooks between Zagreb consulate general in Croatia, and then sort of the Serbian outlook from our embassy and information office in Belgrade? Sitting back in Washington, did you get a feel for almost two different real perspectives of how they treated it, or did it reflect itself?

CALLAWAY: Certainly, but I think I had a feel for it when we were in Zagreb, along with the rest of those who were serving in the consulate there. We traveled to Belgrade a lot. It is not that we didn't get down frequently to Belgrade and consult with the embassy. We got down there much more than Belgrade came to us, but I suppose that is like Mohammed going to the mountain.

When I came back here, it was my first assignment in Washington. Working on the desk I was representing not only Yugoslavia but a couple of other countries as well. I worked extremely closely with the State Department; there were very close ties. There were very good people on the desk; Harry Gilmore and others at the time. I also worked with the Pentagon, the Central Intelligence Agency, and others, but mainly with the State Department. I began to see a bigger picture than I had in Zagreb. My perception now is that the differences were less than we perceived from Zagreb when we were thinking that they don't pay enough attention to us; we are

a very important piece of the action here; Belgrade is ethnocentric and thinking only in terms of Serbian relations with the United States. I think a broader perspective developed as I came back to the desk. I began to see a bigger picture not only within Yugoslavia itself, but in how Yugoslavia fit into the overall relationships that we were having with the Soviet Union and with other countries in Eastern Europe.

WILLIAM P. KIEHL
Serbo-Croatian Language Training, FSI
Washington, DC (1970-1971)

Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Belgrade (1971-1975)

William P. Kiehl was born in Pennsylvania in 1945. He received a BS from the University of Scranton in 1967 and an MA from the University of Virginia in 1970. Upon entering the Foreign Service in 1970, he was posted in Belgrade, Zagreb, Colombo, Moscow, Prague, Helsinki, London and Bangkok. Mr. Kiehl was interviewed in 2003 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: Sometimes with these language training you pick up quite a bit about the culture just from the teachers.

KIEHL: Oh, yes, certainly.

Q: Were you picking up any of the, again, the currents that run throughout? Particularly the Serbian experience?

KIEHL: I kind of felt sorry for the students who were going to Croatia, for example, because they got Serbian too! As I found out when I moved from Belgrade to Zagreb, that was not exactly an advantageous position to be in. Both Jankovic and Milosevic, of course, were Serbs, and they were very, I would say, nationalistic Serbs. Serbia was the center of the universe as far as they were concerned.

They never displayed any outright animosity to Croatia or Croats, or for that matter, any of the other people of Yugoslavia, at least in the class that I was in, but it was clear that Serbia was it, and of course, there were a couple of people in the classes who were going to Zagreb, and they just dismissed Zagreb as nothing. These poor people, they learned Serbian from Sabac, and then they arrived in Zagreb. I'm sure, as I used to tell people, when I moved from Belgrade to Zagreb speaking my Sabac dialect of Serbian, every time I asked for *hleb* [bread] or [soup] they would spit in my soup and drop the bread on the floor before they'd give it to me.

Now, my wife, who didn't have an hour of Serbian, they refused to pay for any until we were married, and of course we were only married a couple weeks before leaving so it wasn't worth it, she was trying to learn Serbian on her own, in Belgrade. When we went to Zagreb she went to

the university and took a course in Croatian for foreigners. She was the saving grace there, because even though I had converted as much of my *čorba* [Serbian for soup] to *juha* [Croatian for soup] as possible, she really spoke Croatian with a Croatian accent. So that helped a lot.

Q: All right, for the uninitiated, Sabac is a very small town on the south, isn't it?

KIEHL: Yes, it's actually about midway between Belgrade and Zagreb, off the main road.

Q: It's sort of a farming – Sabac, I mean the two I had were Jankovic and Popovic ...

KIEHL: They were both from there.

Q: They'd say, "We're related," and they felt this is the purest language, but people in Belgrade used to wonder, I mean, all these Americans came out with this small town, sort of hick dialect.

KIEHL: A hick dialect, and a somewhat archaic Serbian as well. In fact, about the only people who really appreciated it were some of the workmen who were in the maintenance department, because it was their language, too.

Sabac is a weird place. I remember driving through there, I had a little Fiat sports car, and we drove through Sabac and the only thing I remember was thousand and thousands of geese and ducks, all hissing at the car. And I thought, "There is the purest form of Serbian, right there."

Q: I think this is a good place to stop, because I have somebody coming soon. Why don't we pick this up, I'll put this at the end here, the next time? We'll pick this up. You are arriving in Belgrade in 1971, I guess.

KIEHL: That's right, June of '71.

Q: '71. We'll talk about your impressions. I'll ask you about your impression of Yugoslavia at the time, and what were the relations and all that.

KIEHL: Great.

Q: Today is the 22nd of September 2003. Bill, let's start with 1971. So, in the first place, what were relations like between the United States and Yugoslavia?

KIEHL: Well, actually they were quite good. After '48 when there was the split between Tito and Stalin, and then Yugoslavia went its own way under League of Communists of Yugoslavia, they needed to turn to somebody for help and the U.S. was more than happy to provide arms and support to the Yugoslavs in order to block the Soviets from gaining access to the Adriatic. As they used to say, the great fear was Soviet sub bases in the Adriatic. It's not ideal for submarines, but nevertheless, that obviously would have changed, particularly with regard to Greece and

Turkey, who would be outflanked as that part of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) if there were a strong Soviet presence in Yugoslavia and the Adriatic.

Relations were quite good. The U.S. didn't turn a blind eye to what was essentially, a one-party state, but Yugoslavia was evolving pretty quickly. A lot of the worker self-management councils were a sham, but a lot of them were actually functioning, kind of quasi-democracies. The dreaded UDBA (Unutrasnja Dravna Bezbednost, or Internal State Security), or the secret police of the Tito regime, the UDBA chiefs name was Rankovic, was a big wheel there but back in about 1966, the power of the UDBA was broken. While UDBA, or the secret police, were still a presence in Yugoslavia, they weren't the kind of presence that the STB (Statni bespecnost, or State Security Service) was in Czechoslovakia or the KGB (Komitet Gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti, or Committee of State Security) was in Russia. They did, as I remember, follow me around quite a lot, in my little Fiat sports car, but they were basically a benign presence as far as the diplomatic corps was concerned, although there was a non-fraternization policy in Yugoslavia at the time. I think the local secret police took advantage of that to try to suborn people using sex and blackmail mainly Marines and other vulnerable staff.

Q: The non-fraternization how did this play out?

KIEHL: Well, essentially, it restricted single officers and staff support from having anything other than an office or professional relationship with Yugoslav citizens, certainly. For that matter, it applied to married people, as well, obviously. There were kinds of personal relationships permitted, nothing of the intimate variety. Obviously you could have friendships with people, but you couldn't have anything that would be an intimate relationship or that sort of thing. I think that policy probably did trip up a number of people. Basically, I am the last person to know gossip at any mission I've been to, so I only found out about most of the scandals after I left Yugoslavia, and I'd just as soon not repeat any of it.

But obviously there were a lot of occasions over the years in which the non-fraternization policy made some people, perhaps, susceptible to blackmail where they wouldn't have been otherwise. I think in many cases that's just a foolish policy, because it enables people have been blackmailed where they wouldn't have to be blackmailed otherwise. It's like in a later era, not to digress too much, but in a later era when we pulled all the FSNs (Foreign Service Nationals) out of Moscow, for example, it was one of the stupidest ideas in history, and then we supplied the PA&E people and other contract people, many of whom, of course, were involved in intimate relationships, who wanted to go to Russia for their own agendas, but some of whom had never been outside Tulsa, Oklahoma before, and because these people were Americans they were not subject to as close a scrutiny as Russians would be. Under the FSN system we knew the spies, we knew all the Russian employees were spies, or were reporting to the secret police, and so you just acted accordingly, and restricted their access to information. But with the Americans replacing FSNs it made it much easier for the KGB to blackmail or to suborn in some way or another, either with sex or money or ideology or whatever, and then these compromised Americans were easier to slip through the net of security, in terms, I don't mean in terms of physical security, but obviously operational security, and I think it made for a much more dangerous situation, than having a couple of hundred Russians on the compound.

Q: Sure, you knew what you were dealing with.

KIEHL: Exactly.

Q: Do you recall, was this a period of time when Tito was clamping down on Nationalists, and Croatian nationalism.

KIEHL: Exactly, very much.

Q: What there an impact on what you were seeing at all?

KIEHL: Not so much. It was interesting, because the clampdown, the real clampdown on the Croatian party, and it was really a clampdown on nationalists within the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, and the Croatian party, which was a very, as it turned out, very nationalistic group of people who are good loyal Communists but nationalist Communists. Most of the pressure on them took place when I was in Belgrade in the 1971-72 period. Interestingly, by the time I moved up to Zagreb, the wheel had turned and Tito was purging the nationalists of the Serbian League of Communists, in the '73-'74 period. So I could observe it from the other city in each case.

In terms of Croatia, I did have a good bit of contact with Croatia, even though I was in Belgrade. The consular district, obviously, for Zagreb included the Dalmatian Coast, but for cultural purposes, and when I was a junior officer I was rotated through various sections, when I was in the cultural section, I handled the cultural aspects of the Dubrovnik festival, the U.S. contributions to that. So I was making a lot of trips back and forth to the Dalmatian Coast. Dubrovnik was an interesting city in that there's a very high percentage of Serbs living there, but nevertheless it was in a Croatian province, and you could quite easily see the level of nationalist fervor there, even in those days. For example, there was a very popular folk song of the era, called Mariana. [sings] Mariana, Moja Slatka Mariana.

I can't sing, but that's basically how the tune went. Well, there were alternate lyrics to that, which were highly nationalistic of Croatian independence and sovereignty and so on, and that was sung more often than the standard version, in the tavernas and wine bars of the area. Since my Serbo-Croatian was pretty good in those days, it was pretty evident. I mean you could understand the lyrics quite easily, that they were nationalistic lyrics rather than the original ones. People didn't hide that at all, even though there were a lot of Serbs in that part of Dalmatia, because of Dubrovnik. I think many of the leading families in Dubrovnik were actually Serbs. If it were so evident there, you can imagine in the smaller villages of Croatia and Dalmatia there were ever fewer restraints on that kind of activity.

Tito was very effective in stripping the party of its leadership, and essentially demoralizing it, and essentially put that nationalism on the back burner in Croatia, until of course, later events in the '90s.

Q: Let's talk a little about the embassy. Talk the about the ambassador, DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission), and how you served in relationships within the embassy.

KIEHL: Oh, sure. Again, I was the lowest of the low, I was, I think at the time, the only third secretary at the embassy, so at the very tail end of the diplomatic list. There were one or two other junior officers there, but by and large, it was a very experienced embassy in that sense. A fair number of senior officers, it was a big embassy, there were a fair number of senior officers and mid-level officers. To us junior officers they seemed like ancient human beings of a quite a different type. In that sense we could objectively observe events, because we were more or less still outsiders as junior officers.

Of course the ambassador when I got there was Ambassador Leonhart, who, at least to the junior officers, was a very distant person. He wasn't much in our lives, in fact. There were no meetings with the ambassador, as is commonly the case now, ambassadors and DCMs, for their own career interests are basically told, "You better take care of your junior officers." That wasn't the case then. The junior officers were not, I mean, they were just part of the furniture, in essence. So we didn't see much of the ambassador. In fact, we were invited to a cocktail party at the public affairs officer's house, and the senior officer for USIS there, or USIA ...

Q: Who was ...

KIEHL: That was Wallace W. Littell, "Pic" Littell. A legendary character and person, I might say, in USIA. Still very much with us and living in Florida, I believe. He was the fellow who opened up the first USIA post in Moscow in 1956. Of course, there and in most of Eastern Europe, there was no USIS or USIA. We had to transfer to the State Department, in theory, because USIA was considered an unfriendly agency by the Communist governments. USIS were not called USIS but the press and cultural section of the embassy, or P and C. Pic Littell hosted a cocktail party at his house, and there were a lot of Yugoslav intellectuals and so on there, and it must have been a pretty big party for the junior officers to also be invited. We were there chatting with people and getting to know some peoplit was probably one of the first of these cocktail parties we went to and my wife remembers meeting this older, short fellow, and she said, "What do you do here?" And he said, "Well, miss, I'm the ambassador," which sort of took her aback, because she had never seen the guy before. That tells you how distant the ambassador was from the low-ranking troops.

Q: The DCM?

KIEHL: The DCM, when we first got there, was Tom Enders, and it was kind of a Mutt and Jeff act, in a way. Ambassador Leonhart was fairly short and Enders, as you know, was I think about 6'10" or so, he was really tall. When the two of them stood next to each other it was almost, without trying, a humorous looking situation.

Of course he left ...

Q: Could you talk about what you were getting because that was quite well known, the sort of explosion that happened.

KIEHL: Yes, but you know, we were so far down on the totem pole, that we really didn't get any kind of basically third- or fourth-hand stories, and as far as we could figure it was just a personality clash. This was somewhat exacerbated by the differences in size, and so on, without trying to psychoanalyze it, we just sort of chalked it up as a personality clash and the winner in the clash, of course, in the short run was the ambassador, but probably in the long run was the DCM, as is usually the case with those kinds of clashes.

The new DCM who came in we got to know a little bit. Robert Johnson, and his wife, whose name escapes me at the moment, but I'm sure I can crib it in there later on. If my wife were here I'm sure she'd know her name.

Q: I want to say Donna but it wasn't Donna.

KIEHL: No, but it's something like that.

Q: Because we took Serbian together.

KIEHL: Oh, you did?

Q: I used to look at her across the table and fell in love with her.

KIEHL: She was an attractive woman of her age.

Q: A very nice lady.

KIEHL: They were both very nice people, and I think they were more interested in the junior officers in general than most of the other officers in the embassy, including even mid-level officers. I mean, nobody really gave a damn about anybody else in that sense. There was no such thing as mentoring going on. Although, there was something not dissimilar to mentoring in my rotations, and in those days, USIS officers only rotated in the USIS section. I did get to know people really well because we were working together, and that was nice. It was a little harder for my wife because she wasn't working in the embassy, and so she was out and about, looking at raw meat hanging on the hooks and learning Serbo-Croatian with a book, and looking at the street signs and trying to figure out what they were. A couple of the wives did sort of take her under their wing a little bit and show her the ropes about local shopping, and embassy life, et cetera.

When I think back this must have been terribly difficult for her. This is a woman with a master's degree who has essentially turned into a shopper. That's about it.

It was very much in the old style, the embassy and the Foreign Service then. It was still the age when you had the secret part of the OER (Officer Evaluation Rating) that you didn't see, and it also had a report on your family. So it was really an earlier age. Junior officers today coming into the Foreign Service I'm sure could not even imagine such a feudalistic system as existed in those days, when the ambassador or the DCM's wife said, "Cookies!" and the ladies would start baking. Unbelievable! We found it absolutely astounding, my wife and I, I must say that. The

other junior officers did, too, because, as I pointed out, we were of that '60s generation with hair down to here and it was such a culture clash. I walked into the embassy and everybody looked like a Marine, including all the foreign service officers. In that sense they weren't particularly representing America, circa 1970. They were maybe representing America 1955.

As I rotated around, I got to know people a little bit better, they got to know me a little bit better, so some of these barriers and these sorts of culture clashes did break down. The one office that I could not, and I'm not sure I even tried, to break down the culture clash, was with the defense attaché's office. The DATT (defense attaché) at that time took one look at me and said, "This guy's a Commie," or "He's an anti-war protester," or "He's Jane Fonda in disguise," or something. Basically, he had it in for me the whole time. In fact, I know that he tried to get me removed from the embassy. I think he tried it with another of the junior officers, too, who had longer hair and looked more like a hippy to him. That was unfortunate, but I didn't, frankly, make any effort to win him over, either, so I can't say that it was totally his fault.

Q: Tell me, Yugoslav youth kept a pretty close eye to what was happening in the West.

KIEHL: Yes. I was the perfect guy, in fact, I was the de facto student affairs officer for the embassy.

Q: What were you seeing and what were they picking up from us? What were you seeing with the youth movement there?

KIEHL: Well, there were two organizations with which I worked pretty closely. One was the Studenski kulturni centar. The other was the Dom Omladije, the House of Youth. House of Youth was a little more square and a little more party-faithful the Young Communists, essentially. They were aware of all of these trends in the world, and they were trying to adopt the dress, the look, the lingo, the music, the culture, to the point where with a lot of the Yugoslav kids, you couldn't tell the difference between Americans, western Europeans or Yugoslav young people.. And if they spoke English, you couldn't tell they were from the Eastern bloc, as you might say, or the Eastern part of Europe. They were ravenous for Western culture. The Studenski kulturni centar was even more, I would say, avant garde in that way. They were much more interested in forming a relationship with the embassy and getting things from the embassy.

I remember, there was a guy there, Zeka (Rabbit) Zecavic was his name. Last I heard he's passed away now. He was about my age but he drank and smoked very heavily, even for a Yugoslav. As time went on, he became a professor of political science at the University of Belgrade, but then, I think, just drank himself to death, or smoked himself to death, or both, as so many Yugoslavs did in those days. But in 1970 he was the head of the Studenski kulturni centar, and a pretty close friend and colleague. Even in those days we had Zeka, and Dunya Blasovic, who was a pretty, young Croatian woman who was the daughter of a senior Croat party official, who was later purged in the nationalism crack down. She was the program manager at the Studenski kulturni centar.

These young Yugoslavs we would have over to our apartment and we would have them over for fondue or something really "exotic" like that, and we would go out to restaurants and night clubs

with them, and had a great time with them. They were, of course, all young Communists, or members of the League of Youth but frankly there wasn't an ideological thought in their heads. They were just like any other young people of the time, but they were ravenous to soak up American culture, because I think they recognized it was a cultural desert otherwise. Yugoslavia had basically destroyed its own culture in the process of the civil war and Titoism and they were looking for something.

Q: American culture was the youth culture, "Don't trust anybody over thirty," you know all that. If anything, Yugoslavia was run by people well over thirty. Were they doing anything about this, demonstrating, being restive, or anything?

KIEHL: No, they weren't demonstrating. You remember, these are people who are part of the establishment, children of the establishment. They did their demonstrating by the values they adopted and what they did with their lives, rather than protest marches and so on. I mean, obviously, this is post-1968, when the real disillusion with Communism was really deep among young people of Eastern Europe ...

Q: Especially Czechoslovakia ...

KIEHL: Czechoslovakia, the Prague Spring. Just as the older generation, there was no great love for Russia, or the Russian form of Communism. They didn't protest the government. They were too close to it, I think, because their parents were party members and so on. They had no reason to protest the government, they thought they could change it from within, I'm sure of that.

They were really wrapped up in American culture, and I have to say, USIS at the time was well-endowed financially in Yugoslavia, because we had access to dinars, the excess currency fund, and so we would spend in those days, probably three or four million dollars a year, which is an enormous amount of money in 1970 dollars, in a place like Yugoslavia, on educational exchanges, and cultural presentations and that sort of thing. Basically, anything you wanted to do you could do, in terms of culture. We had the Belgrade Newport jazz festival. We'd bring the likes of Duke Ellington and Ella Fitzgerald and do Newport jazz with local co-sponsorship with the House of Youth and the, I think it was, the Belgrade radio station, Studio 202. And we'd subsidize the ticket sales so that they were affordable for people. Huge event we'd have the Alvin Ailey Dance Company come to the Dubrovnik festival, major philharmonic orchestras came to the country to perform.

We did very specifically youth-type things as well. We had a program with the Studenski kulturni centar which basically solidified my relationship with these folks, as much as anything did. At that time, there were a couple of young people, the Whitney brothers, I think it was John Whitney and his brother, I can't remember the brother's name, were young filmmakers out in California, and they did psychedelic films. They used two or three projectors on the same screen and they'd have repeating patterns of color and form. It was very '70-ish, drug-related kind of stuff, I was able to get John Whitney to come to the student center, and actually tour a little bit around the country to visit youth groups, and show the films, and talk about California, and the film industry. That was my ticket with the young people who led these student organizations. They just thought, "Wow, if he can get Whitney here, he can do anything. He's wonderful."

That's the kind of programs we could do. It was all using excess dinars, but every other department of government was also using excess dinars. There was an enormous amount to spend. The excess dinars came from sales to Yugoslavia of PL-480 wheat flour, and foodstuffs, but also there were a lot of arms sales to Yugoslavia, an enormous amount of money built up, much like India. Everybody in the world in those days, with the U.S. government, traveled the world on air tickets bought on JAT (Jugoslovenski Aerotransport) or Air India or whatever the Tunisian airline was. Everything was paid for in Moroccan or Tunisian money, or Yugoslav dinars, or Indian rupees, or Pakistani rupees, because of these huge excess currency funds which were mounting up in the local banks faster than the government could spend them. You remember the famous case where, I think it was Moynihan, gave four, five billion dollars to the Indian government, and said, "Here, take this. Get it out of our accounts, it's driving us crazy." It was accumulating so fast that we would have had fifty percent of all the Indian currency in another couple of years.

Q: Were we looking at, particularly, Skopje, Sarajevo, Ljubljana, and obviously Zagreb looking at the nationality problem and trying to do anything about it by making sure that we cover these places?

KIEHL: When I first went to Yugoslavia there was only the embassy in Belgrade, and consulate general in Zagreb. By the time I left there were branch offices in Ljubljana, Skopje, and Sarajevo. So in a matter of three or four years, the U.S. government had extended itself out into most of the now capital cities of the successor states of Yugoslavia. And in fact we then opened Podgorica, and eventually we had a place in Kosovo. We had a place in Novi Sad even when I was there, a reading room, it was run by a couple of FSNs, no American presence, and that was a legacy of World War II, opened in 1945 as the Amerikanska Iloba, the American exhibition, a little library, a reading room, even as the place was being liberated. And it just stuck. It was kind of historic and it was kept up for a number of years until they finally said, "Hey, we can't afford to keep this and Skopje going. Pick one."

I'm not so sure it was a conscious effort on the part of the U.S. government, to move out into these provincial cities, as much as it was a conscious effort of the provincial citizens, particularly the leadership in those provinces, to lure American presence into those cities. I'm pretty sure that's the case with Ljubljana and with Skopje. The local authorities there were lobbying pretty hard for that. There was an interest in Ljubljana on the part of the government because Zagreb had to handle Ljubljana as well, and it was really putting a strain on the P & C offices in Zagreb, especially the cultural section. The embassy itself didn't want, or didn't feel that it needed to have any kind of presence other than a P&C office in those places.

Q: P&C is ...

KIEHL: Press and culture. There was no thought of putting consulates there. There was a consulate in Sarajevo, some years ago. In fact, I remember a meeting in Zagreb where George Kennan actually came in and talked to us a little bit about his time in Yugoslavia, and at that time we were opening the American Center in Sarajevo, and he was saying, he was telling us, this is a first person account of the stones being hurled at the building and the vituperation, the

xenophobia, on the part of the Bosnians. It was one of the reasons we closed down the consulate some years before.

Q: It was about '60, it would have been '63, I think, because I remember he called me in. I was chief of the consulate section in Belgrade, and said, "Do we need a consulate there?" I said, "Consular-wise, no." I said, "Oh, hell." We had two people there and ...

KIEHL: They were hounded and harassed and it was really quite ugly.

Q: Yes.

KIEHL: The embassy had no interest in reopening any, certainly Sarajevo, or opening Ljubljana or Skopje, for that matter. There was an interest in the press and cultural service. The USIA thought this was, it was important to have a presence in these provinces. They had different language, they had different cultures, they were, granted, not as independent as they proved to be later, obviously, but there was a feeling that we should be there, we should have eyes and ears there, we should make sure that we know the people from there because they could become important in the future. I must say, that was very smart, whether that was Pic Littell's idea or not...I don't know- (end of tape)

So whether it was his idea, or whose idea it was I don't know, but it was a very smart idea. We wanted to open a USIS presence in Ljubljana, and in order to do that, we had to open Skopje. Was it Jankovic? No, it was Jovanovic. He was the Minister of Information, I believe, in the Yugoslav government. He was a Macedonian, by the way, and he insisted that we open an office in Skopje as the price for opening in Ljubljana. There was no interest in Skopje at the time, we just couldn't afford it. So the deal was we'd open in Ljubljana, and then a year or two later, open in Skopje, and then eventually, in Sarajevo. In fact, I was offered the job of opening the place in Sarajevo, but at that time, I was already entering my fourth year in Yugoslavia, and that would have meant spending the first six years of my Foreign Service career in Yugoslavia, and I thought that might be a mistake, and my career counselor thought it would be a big mistake. So I didn't, and that's OK.

The USIS officer who did eventually go to Sarajevo did have a miserable time. He was harassed and followed. It was a tough place to go as a young married couple. This guy was a single guy, and he ended up living in a rooming house.

Q: Who was that?

KIEHL: Vic Jackovich. But in the end he married the chief of police's daughter, which was an interesting twist. Anyway, you'll have to interview him sometime. I'm sure he'll have some quite interesting tales to tell.

Q: Where is he now?

KIEHL: His last tour was in Bagram, and he is now retired. I think he took the Bagram job as a last tour to put his kid through college.

Q: How were we treating, particularly, race relations at that time?

KIEHL: Well, that's a good point. We had a very active program. There wasn't much interest on the part of most Yugoslavs, I have to say, except among some intellectuals at the universities, in race relations, American race relations, but it was an important part of the country plan and the overall direction coming out of the USIA headquarters in Washington. We had a lot of programs that pushed that idea, that America was trying to make amends for its past injustices, and equal opportunity, and so on, very much the post-Civil Rights Act America. Frankly, there wasn't much interest among the Yugoslavs because they thought what we were trying to do was change the way they thought of each other. So they weren't too keen on that.

A lot of the jazz artists, of course, were African-American, and I remember when I was in Zagreb, we brought Sam Gilliam there to do his art and do a workshop at the art school, but he was not seen as an example of black America so much as artistic America, and the jazz artists sort of transcended race. There were probably people who were racists who loved the music of Duke Ellington and the great Preservation Hall Jazz Band. Unfortunately, in Serbo-Croatian, "negro," when they say the word "negro," it comes out as that other n-word, very close in sound, and some of the black artists who performed in Yugoslavia heard this and were highly offended. In fact, I remember it was one of the most amazing things, I was escorting Freddie Hubbard, the great trumpeter, he was performing in Zagreb, and one of the organizers of the local jazz society was talking and used this word. He was not using the offensive word, he was trying to say "negro" and it came out quite wrong, and this so incensed Freddie Hubbard that he refused to go on for the second half of the show. When I heard this I had to sit down with him and I basically had to explain the language to him.

Q: Like Montenegro.

KIEHL: Yes.

Q: "Negra."

KIEHL: "Negra," right. It calmed him down. It took a long time, I mean, there was the longest half-time in the history of that hall, I think, but after about a half an hour he went back on stage.

He also said something at the beginning about, "If any of you people out here are racists," that kind of thing, something quite nasty, actually, before he performed. Of course, the language works both ways, they thought he was saying something really nice about them and they all applauded, which sort of took him aback, it sort of deflated the whole thing and he performed.

I guess what I'm saying is that there was a certain naiveté about race, American black-white relations, in Yugoslavia, but it was so outside their normal stream of consciousness. Their race relations had to do with ethnic relations, not black and white, and there was no animosity, as far as I could tell mean, certainly the jazz people were treated like kings and queens, they got nothing but great respects from the jazz societies and so on, who mobbed them for autographs. You couldn't really say that, although, it's interesting, there were a group of black Yugoslavs.

Maybe you've heard about this when you were there, African-American sailors who settled in the southern part of the Yugoslav coast. Did you ever hear of that story?

Q: Yes, situated around Budva, or something?

KIEHL: Yes, exactly, and the Yugoslavs are very proud of that, so that would indicate to me that they didn't have any hang-ups about race, black-white kinds of race.

We put all this effort into America as making amends for past injustices and all these themes, and it basically didn't have much resonance in Yugoslavia because they weren't hung up on it like Americans were.

Q: They had their own problems.

KIEHL: In fact, they were right, in a sense, because the subtle message of those pluralistic society messages of America were also to resonate among the Yugoslavs as a pluralistic society there, but they saw through it pretty quickly.

Q: What about Vietnam protests. Was Vietnam much of an issue?

KIEHL: No, it really wasn't. The local press had lots of editorials about it. A guy like Nixon was admired much more in Yugoslavia than obviously he was in the United States, to the point where I remember being in Zagreb when Watergate happened and Nixon resigned, and people simply could not understand this. They were really floored, but what they assumed was, it was a coup d'etat, it was a plot to unseat Nixon. As that they accepted it, because that's the way it would be done there. It didn't come across, despite our best efforts at spin-control of Watergate and the Nixon resignation, as proof of the rule of law--that no man is above the law, et cetera. Again, it was that our value set was going this way and they looked at it from a totally different perspective and they said, "Ah, you're not much different that we are, anyway. That's exactly how we would do it. We would discredit the guy and then push him out of office, force him to resign."

Q: What about the Soviet cultural presence. Was this your adversary or, in a way, was it a no contest?

KIEHL: In a way, it was a no contest. They had certain advantages, obviously. They had, first of all, even more funds than we had, I think, just then. They had a huge cultural center in Belgrade, and they had lots of people. The only foreign diplomats you'd find outside the normal diplomatic circuit were Russians and Americans. Everybody else just played the inside game. That's probably true today in many places, as well, but there especially.

They were, of course, our great rivals, in an ideological sense, and so on, and there were, obviously, pro-Soviet Yugoslavs, but we didn't have much contact with them, and the Soviets didn't have much contact with the pro-American Yugoslavs, and there were far more of them. When we'd have cultural events and so on, they'd be much better-attended. The Russians had a lot of people. I think they must have spent a lot of money on people in the media, because the

press was much more pro-Russian than pro-American, in every respect. I was hounded quite a lot as being a CIA agent, of course, in all of the press, which had its pluses and minuses. For some Yugoslavs, they liked that idea, but it always made me a little nervous. If you were branded a CIA agent in the local press, who'd want to have any contact with you? In a way it could be damaging, but it didn't really prove to be.

So the Russians, while we they were the great ideological enemy on the world's stage wasn't a great tussling match in Belgrade or Zagreb. We had the advantages that we were the country that most Yugoslavs admired. They didn't admire the Russians, they were afraid of them.

Q: We had an awful lot of Yugoslavs who had cousins in the United States, or had been to the United States.

KIEHL: And there were a lot of Russians in Yugoslavia who had fled to Yugoslavia. In fact, we had one working for us in our library in Zagreb. She was a real "white Russian," you know?

Q: Yeah, I know. We had one in Calcis, a Madame Jukoff. Well, then. You went after two years to ...

KIEHL: Yes, it was about two years in Belgrade, and I had gone through all the offices there. I was probably the longest-running JOT in history, because there wasn't a job available as a follow-on job in Belgrade for me. Normally it's supposed to a year and it sort of stretched and stretched, and I was saying, "Can I continue to be a JOT forever, a rotational officer forever?" I worked in the press office and I worked on the magazine, *Pregled* and that was a big magazine. We had an American officer whose full-time job was just the magazine, and it was like 20,000 copies a month. It was a big deal. That was great fun, I really enjoyed that.

Exhibits, we had an exhibits office and I did exhibits for a while. In fact, recently, I was reminded there was an article in the Times by Milton Glaser, the graphic artist, and it touched me a little bit, some of the things he said. I wrote to him and I said, "You probably may not remember, I handled your art exhibit for you in Belgrade, back 30 years ago, and I was struck by some of the comments you made." We exchanged correspondence a little bit. That was, again, cutting edge stuff. We had the Pushpin Studios in New York, Seymour Chwast. I don't know if you know these names or not, but they were really great innovators in graphic arts in that period, kind of Peter Max-type stuff. That was really a very fulfilling thing. I decided, "This is really the right career move," when we had this kind of thing, because it connected us with the young people I was trying to reach, and when you connect with people like that, then you can get other points across, so it was really very fulfilling.

I even had a tour as the executive officer, which was administrative experience, which you rarely get in USIS until you become a PAO (Public Affairs Officer), and then say, "Well, how do I manage this money?" So that was really good. I was doing interesting things but it was getting into two years without a job, a real job. Fortunately, one opened up in Zagreb, because the guy who was the deputy up there, I guess either wasn't quite cut out for the Foreign Service or his personality grated people the wrong way or something, it was a mid-level officer up there. They

wanted to get rid of him, basically. I didn't know this at the time, of course, innocent young diplomat that I was..

I was sent up to Zagreb to be the branch cultural officer. It was a two-officer post, they suddenly made it a three-officer post, with a PAO, an IO (Information Officer), and CAO (Cultural Affairs Officer). The former deputy became the IO and I became the CAO. They gave me an apartment in a building next to the consulate, and after I was there for a while and I was enjoying this, the branch cultural officer in Zagreb, what a great deal, it was terrific, and I was applying some of the things I had learned there, and there was a wonderful fellow, a real Virginia gentleman named R. Dabney Chapman. I don't know whether you know Dabney, but he was a real wordsmith, and a colorful character, the kind of person that we had in the Foreign Service that you don't quite see so many of anymore. He was a great mentor.

A little while into the time I was there, perhaps four or five months, it was revealed to me. I don't know whether it was by Dabney or by somebody in Belgrade that the real reason I was there was to replace this other fellow, whose name I won't mention, because he was going to get fired. Then I went back up to Zagreb, and of course I couldn't say anything to anybody about this, and a couple more months went by and I'm thinking, "God, this is awful." Anyway, it was really kind of a tortuous situation. You could tell he was in real difficulties. He was kind of a highly-strung person anyway, and he was blowing up at the staff, and you could just see a kind of momentum happening there. Finally he was peremptorily yanked out of there. P&C Zagreb went back to a two-officer post again.

Just about that time is when the focus on a political light moved from Zagreb to Belgrade, and they started purging the party down there. So I didn't get a chance to be in any city where the purges were going on at the time, which has its pluses and minuses, I guess.

Q: The Croatianthis is from the Belgrade point of view, which I had the Croatians have always supposedly held themselves up to be culturally more astute. They were part of the Austrian empire ...

KIEHL: The Hungarian, actually.

Q: The Hungarian empire, as opposed to being, for 500 years, under the Turks. Did you find it different, cultural-wise, in Zagreb?

KIEHL: Oh, yes, there's no question there is a difference between Serbs and Croats. It's not just religion and some differences in the language. I hate to use these kinds of generalizations, but from my experience, of a couple of years in each place, the Serbs were much more initially friendly and more outgoing and accepting of an American or a stranger, but they were harder to get to know beyond that. Whereas the Croats were quite standoffish, but once you got through the shell, they really opened up to you, and they were much easier to get to know, probably, in some sense, because they had experienced the Reformation and the Renaissance, whereas the Serbs hadn't. In other words, they had a lot of the cultural values that we do, or the rest of Western Europe has.

Even though the Croats always thought of themselves as part of the Austro-Hungarian empire, they were really Hungarians. The Hungarian part of the empire was really the low end, you might say, the low rent district of the Austro-Hungarian empire, and the Hungarians didn't treat the Croats particularly well. The Slovenes were under the Austrian part of the dual monarchy, and they were considerably more enlightened, in a sense, by that, just as the Czechs were, versus the Slovaks. The Slovaks were under the Hungarian end of the monarchy as well. There was a great disparity. I don't know whether it was their philosophy, it's been said it was a conscious effort that the Austrians would integrate the native peoples under their dominion -- naturally, they would be speaking German anyway but would integrate them more into the day-to-day workings of the bureaucracy. So they would bring them in to the universities and to the bureaucracy to a much greater degree than the Hungarians did, who would prefer to treat the subject peoples as serfs, essentially, in a more feudalistic way. You can tell that there is a real, distinct difference between those peoples who were under the Hungarian part of the monarchy, and those under the Austrian end of the monarchy. You can tell, even today, in terms of the educational achievements and the quality of the educational systems, and the universities and the bureaucracies. Those who were under the Austrians are still more dramatically efficient, you might say, than the other end of the empire.

Q: What were the particularly strong points that you found as a cultural officer in the Croatian...

KIEHL: We had a much closer relationship with people at the university in Zagreb than we could have with the university in Belgrade. In Belgrade we had a lot of relationships with the university, in their political science department, the sociological department, the English department, et cetera, but they were more formalized and more regularized. In part, I think it's because it was in the capital city and people were under closer scrutiny and they didn't want to mess up by getting too close to the Americans or being seen as being too friendly. In Zagreb, because they were a little bit further away from the center, and the Croatian government had been demoralized and sort of atomized by the purges just before that, they weren't particularly strong. So the university seemed to have a lot more latitude, and we had a closer relationship with both individual members of the university faculty but also the departments. That was very important in the cultural dimension.

Also, there was a very good, high-quality theater and performing arts in Zagreb, both the formal type of symphony orchestra, opera, classic theater, but also experimental theater and the kind of things that young people would gravitate to, and again, they were ravenous for American input. Anything that we did was not only welcomed, it was devoured. It was quite easy, cultural work there was quite easy. The press side was much harder, because the press was still very suspicious of America, loved to run articles talking about plots by Americans internally, and American domination of the world, et cetera. They were really, in that sense, very much in the model of the Soviet press. About the only successful press placement we had in Zagreb was for the USA Pavilion at the annual Zagreb Fall (Commercial) Fair.

Q: Were you getting any reverberations from the Croats outside of Yugoslavia, in the United States, I'm thinking sort of in the mid-Atlantic area, Chicago, Cleveland area, and all that? Also, up in Sweden and Germany were trying to overthrow. I mean, essentially, were connected with the old Artukovic, who ...

KIEHL: Actually, there was a little bit of that. You'd hear about it, and so on, but there really wasn't much evidence of it in Croatia. I think there was more talk out in the émigré community than there was action inside the country.

Q: Did you get involved, while you were in either Belgrade or in Zagreb, in trying to explain our stand on Artukovic?

KIEHL: No, not really. It wasn't necessary, quite frankly.

Q: Artukovic being a major war-criminal in Yugoslavia, who was able, for decades, to stay in California because his brother had a lot of money, and they wouldn't extradite him. They finally did, but by the time he was well-past the age ...

KIEHL: Well past the age of mental competency. Frankly, it wasn't an issue when I was there, among the people we were working with. It was really, I think, more of an émigré issue than it was an issue in-country.

Q: How about exchange programs? How did you find the exchange program, both operating, but also the results, people coming back and all that? What was your impression?

KIEHL: In terms of exchanges, in those days, it was largely the International Visitor Program and the Fulbright Program. There wasn't a multiplicity of exchanges the way we have today, and the private exchange programs weren't too visible in Yugoslavia yet. Of course, the IV program, people at my level would be lucky to get one nomination a year across, but again it was a program that was run in a very traditional sense, the IV program there, in the sense that they didn't want to take any chances. They only had so many slots and they wanted to bet on sure things. So you had very conventional people being nominated for the IV program, and they'd go, and they'd have their 30 days in the States, and they'd come back, and then they'd be a permanent contact of the embassy.

Fulbright was a little more interesting, but then again, you're really only limited to the universities, again. Of course, all of the people in the English faculty and anybody who wanted a Fulbright grant in one of those key faculties like political science or sociology were going to get a Fulbright grant. They would go and have their Fulbright year or two or three and come back and again would be good contacts. It was a great contact-building program, both IV and Fulbright, but it wasn't as big a program as it could have been. When you think about, in retrospect, now, spending \$3 million dollars a year in dinars on Yugoslavia, we spent an awful lot of money on cultural programs, mass audience kinds of things, and not nearly as much money as we would today, for example, on exchange programs.

Q: But you admit, you'd get much more bang for your bucks, for long-term, with an exchange program.

KIEHL: That's right, exactly. It may have been the nature of it, because remember, these excess dinars have to be spent in country, so the dollar budget for press and cultural affairs in

Yugoslavia was something on the order of a million dollars, which is not a whole lot of money, but then you had the \$3 million plus in dinars. So you could spend a lot of money in country, and the money in country was much easier to spend on big cultural presentations, bringing somebody to the Dubrovnik festival every year, bringing the Newport Jazz festival every year to Belgrade. That spent a lot of money but it was all in-country, and it was money that could be spent in-country. It couldn't be spent by sending someone to the University of Southern California, because USC doesn't take dinars. They were ham-strung, in a way, everyone looked at the budget there and said, "Oh, well they have plenty of money," but we had the wrong kind of money, in a some ways. It actually became, I think, a more successful program. About the year I left was the transition between a dinar budget and a dollar budget, and suddenly it was a few thousand dollars in dinars, and all the rest was dollars. It was a much smaller budget in total, but obviously a much more flexible budget because you could use it for exchange programs more. Probably it was a much more effective use of money than these dinars that could only be spent in Yugoslavia.

Q: In Zagreb, were we looking at nationalism and how divisive a force it would be, sort of after Tito, or were we just sort of hoping things would work out?

KIEHL: Of course we were always asking the question. It was the proverbial American question. "What will you do after Tito?" What is Yugoslavia going to be like after Tito? What about post-Tito? Of course the smart Yugoslavs would say, "We're already in the post-Tito era. He's just a figurehead, we're running it." "We" meaning "we mid-level bureaucrats" or "senior-level bureaucrats," are actually running Yugoslavia. "Don't worry about it, it's already after Tito."

I think it was a considerable worry, because Tito was the glue that held the country together. Well, Tito and the League of Communists, and the strength of that organization imposing its will on all of these disparate parts of the country, but I think it would have held together if it hadn't been for the collapse of the Soviet Union, because the external threat of Russia was enough to keep the Yugoslavs together. It didn't need Tito. It needed a USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and without a USSR, of course, there was no need for the United States to support an independent entity that was composed of six constituent republics, et cetera. In theory, there's no reason why these people couldn't come to a peaceful splitting of the ways, quite frankly. They were forced together by an autocratic government of Tito and the League of Communists, and it maintained itself because of fear of domination by an outside power.

Once the League of Communists proved to be nothing more than a social organization, and the outside power didn't exist anymore, there was nothing to hold it together. Even though, as a country, we maintained the policy long into the breakup of Yugoslavia, that essentially was a policy that we followed, and quite correctly, throughout the period prior to that, it didn't fit the new circumstances.

Q: Did you ever run across Milosevic or Tadjman?

KIEHL: I was trying to think about that. I think Milosevic I might have met at one time or another, but Tadjman I can't recall ever meeting.

Q: We're really talking about two decades later.

KIEHL: Exactly. If I met them they were members of the League of Young Communists or something, having a coffee at Dom Mladih. It would not have made an impression on me.

Q: You left Yugoslavia in '74?

KIEHL: '75, actually. April of '75. Or was it April? Yes, I think it was April of '75.

Q: One further question: was there a great emphasis on trying to explain the whole Watergate thing? You were saying how the Yugoslavs thought it was a coup.

KIEHL: Yes. They couldn't figure out why this had happened, except in their frame of reference. In their frame of reference, this is a perfectly normal thing to do to get rid of, discredit, a leader and take over, and install a new leader. Sure, this makes sense. Why were we explaining it in terms of rule of law, they didn't really think we were serious. It was really incomprehensible to most Yugoslavs.

It was also a bit of a shock, because they actually liked Nixon. He was very popular overseas.

ALLAN W. OTTO
Consular and Administrative Officer
Zagreb (1971-1973)

Allan W. Otto was born in Illinois in 1938 and graduated from Northwestern University. Before joining the Foreign Service, he was a high school teacher for many years. In addition to Yugoslavia, Mr. Otto served in Germany, Yemen, Poland, and Mexico. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on September 15 and October 1, 1992.

Q: Southeast Asia and all that. Well, you left that office and went to Zagreb, from 1971 to 1973, in what is now Croatia and which was at that time Yugoslavia. What were you doing there?

OTTO: I was the consular officer. I doubled. I did part of the consular work and all of the administrative work.

Q: What was the consular situation in Zagreb?

OTTO: Zagreb's consular district included the Republics of Croatia and Slovenia. [The Embassy in] Belgrade handled the rest of the country. We did about 10,000-12,000 visas. There were two of us -- two officers in the Consular Section. The other officer did the visa work, and I did the American Citizen Services work. We covered for each other, of course. I also did the alien work. In terms of migration, I don't remember how many visas we would have been issuing -- probably around 500 to 1,000 per year. They went mostly to those areas in the United States which had

Croatian communities. The main difficulty at that time was just the normal kinds of things that occurred, because, in comparison to other Eastern European countries at the time, the Yugoslav Government did not restrict the issuance of passports for the purposes of travel. So if people could qualify for immigrant visas, they were able to get the passports necessary to leave, as well as...In fact, you could travel as a non-immigrant. There were no particular problems. We had our own -- they were still considered to be communists, and we had to go through our own procedures. Very often you had to get waivers because just about everybody was a member of some proscribed organization.

Q: Did you have the non-immigrant problem? I'm speaking now as someone who ran the Consular Section in Belgrade from 1962 to 1967. We had places -- for example, little pockets, particularly in Macedonia, I think. There's a little town called, I think, Lugroino [sp?]. A very poor area where, it seems, everybody wants to get out. These Macedonian maidens would arrive on our doorstep at the Embassy, asking for visas to go visit an uncle, usually in Gary, Indiana, or some place like that. The odds were, very heavily, that once they would arrive as non-immigrants, they would immediately get married. Did you find yourself -- was that a problem there, or was it more a local problem?

OTTO: I don't think so. I cannot, offhand, remember any particular towns, either in Croatia or Slovenia, where we were pretty sure that there was a [visa] pipeline. Also, I don't remember what our refusal rate was, but certainly we refused [visas], too. The Slovenians and Croatians, in comparative terms, were reasonably prosperous at the time. There was no particular economic reason why people would want to migrate, at least in any kind of numbers. If you were in the northern part of the country, and you had the desire to go to the United States or immigrate to work, you likely could get refugee status.

Q: Go up to Austria and...

OTTO: I know that I can remember at least another instance. We talked about the irony of a refugee program that allows a person to go to Austria, apply for refugee status, and then return to Yugoslavia while his refugee case is being processed. [Laughter] That doesn't seem to be the way that the Refugee Program was designed to operate. I don't remember any kind of real pipelines. As I said, I think that as a regular matter, due to visa work, maybe if I was doing it more often, some things would come back to me. I know that we didn't think that we had much in the way of fraud. I don't remember whether we had any kind of terrible feedback from the Immigration Service about people picked up violating their status. I think that in contrast to Alex Polk -- but that was a different story.

WILLIAM A. WEINGARTEN
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: 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: 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 tot 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 hat 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: 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 Sciptars 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.

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 R. Hutson was born in Nebraska in 1939. After receiving his bachelor's degree from the University of Nebraska in 1962 he served in the US Army from 1962-1967. His career has included positions in Teheran, Belgrade, Winnipeg, Moscow, Lagos, Taipei, Belgrade, Bishkek, and Mazar-e-Sharif. Mr. Hutson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in April 1999.

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 Lawrence 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.

HARRY JOSEPH GILMORE
Yugoslavia Desk Officer, Department of State
Washington, DC (1973-1975)

Ambassador Harry Joseph Gilmore was born and raised in Clairton, Pennsylvania in 1937. He attended the Carnegie Institute of Technology (Carnegie Mellon University) for a year before transferring to Pittsburgh University, where he graduated in 1960. From there he went onto graduate school at Indiana University's school of Russian and Eastern European studies. While applying to a National Defense fellowship, Gilmore took and passed the Foreign Service exam and was accepted into the Foreign Service soon after in 1962. He served in the United States and at posts abroad including Ankara, Turkey; Budapest, Hungary; Moscow, Soviet Union; Munich, Germany; Belgrade, Yugoslavia; Berlin, Germany; and Armenia, where he served as Ambassador. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in February 2003.

GILMORE: I was actually assigned to be the Yugoslav Desk Officer. I went to the Yugoslav desk in May of 1973, at the very end of May. The Naval Academy academic year ended early, and I'd had dispensation to study the summer between my two academic years at the Naval Academy, so I owed it to the Department to come aboard early. So I began my assignment as Yugoslav Desk Officer in May 1973. I took over from Herb Kaiser, who was an excellent mentor. As I said, I was originally supposed to be the Hungarian desk officer. I knew Hungarian pretty well and had served in Budapest, but I ended up doing the Yugoslav desk to my great satisfaction over time.

Q: You were working on the Yugoslav desk from 1973 to when?

GILMORE: Until the summer of 1975, when I went to Munich. So, two years, and a little bit.

Q: When you arrived on the Desk in the Office of Eastern European Affairs of the Bureau of European Affairs (EUR/EE), what was the situation in Yugoslavia?

GILMORE: I knew something of Yugoslav history, because I'd had an excellent Balkan history course with Charles Jelavich at Indiana University. But I didn't know the country yet on the

ground. Seen from the desk when I first came aboard, U.S.-Yugoslav relations were pretty durable and very active. There was a strong interest on both sides in maintaining the relationship. The U.S. was very much interested in preserving the independence, unity, and territorial integrity of Yugoslavia. It was in our geopolitical interest that Yugoslavia, as an independent non-aligned Communist country, not part of the Warsaw Pact, and not about to be part of it, do well, relative to the countries of the Warsaw Pact. Yugoslavia was an example of diversity in the Communist world. It exerted a kind of magnetism on some intellectuals in Hungary and Poland. Yugoslavia was a model of how a country could be different from Moscow and its Warsaw Pact allies and still be, as they would say, Socialists. We would say Communist.

There were difficulties too. The Yugoslavs were very, very preoccupied with anti-Yugoslavia Croatian- and Serbian-American groups that, in their view, were prone to terrorist acts. In fact, there were a number of cases of bombings and attempted bombings of Yugoslav diplomatic and consular establishments in North America – the U.S. and Canada, by both Serbian and Croatian extremists. The Yugoslavs were preoccupied with threats from these groups, and that was a tough issue to handle. It was also a time when we were expanding our presence in Yugoslavia through the establishment of America centers, which were USIA American centers in the individual Yugoslav republics and the autonomous provinces of Serbia, Vojvodina and Kosovo. USIA went out of its way to pick able officers to staff those centers. The Yugoslavs were receptive. We also maintained, intermittently, a dialog with Yugoslavia about the non-aligned movement.

Let me back up. The dialog was not focused on the non-aligned movement, per se, but on issues of concern to the non-aligned movement, which was pretty sophisticated and pretty mature. The Yugoslavs leadership cared deeply about the non-aligned movement, and sometime went along with the non-aligned consensus when it didn't seem consistent with their interests. But we had maintained dialog on a number of issues. Under Secretary for Political Affairs Sisco, would see the Yugoslav Ambassador from time to time, and the Assistant Secretary of European Affairs saw him fairly often.

Q: Who was that?

GILMORE: It was at one time, Art Hartman. A very able officer. Arthur Hartman. Hartman I remember particularly. I had great admiration for him. [Ed: The assistant secretaries of European affairs during this period were: Walter J. Stoessel, Jr. (August 1972-January 1974), Arthur A. Hartman (January 1974-June 1977).] Also, the deputy assistant secretaries of European Affairs saw the Yugoslav ambassador on a very regular basis. But the U.S.-Yugoslav relationship was not an easy one. You had to work at it.

Q: Given the strength of, say, the Croatian community and to a lesser extent, the Serbian, both these expatriate communities in the United States, which have settled in Cleveland, Chicago, and to a certain extent in the West Coast...

GILMORE: There was an important Croatian community in Pittsburgh, but it was an older community which was not hostile to Yugoslavia, and more established, not as radical.

Q: But, given that, and then the politics, I'm talking about American politics with Congress, did you find yourself having problems with this?

GILMORE: Well, it was a very delicate thing to be talking to the Yugoslav counselor for consular affairs, who was the expert at the embassy on émigré extremist groups. He was the number three officer, by the way. One had to be conscious of the sensitivities on the Hill of some congressmen and senators that their Croatian- and Serbian-American constituents' rights might in some way be undermined. On the other hand, one had to be very careful too with the representatives of some of these émigré groups when they would come to meet with us. They would often deliberately misrepresent to the émigré press what they heard. In fact, I quickly learned to have another officer with me when I received people from the more extremist Croatian and Serbian groups, because they told fibs about what was said. I would make it very clear that our policy was recognition of the unity and the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia, etc. And then I'd see in the newspapers like *Danica*, a Croatian newspaper in Chicago, I'd see an item distorting what I'd said. In effect, *Danica* would report that the U.S. was on the side of Croatian separatism. I had to watch carefully.

Several members of Congress had sizeable constituencies of Serbian and Croatian Americans, and their offices took a close interest in U.S.-Yugoslav relations. Occasionally, I would receive calls from staff aides of some of these senators and representatives. Of course there were some congressmen, like Ed Derwinski -- he was of Polish heritage -- who would be interested in principle in promoting positive relations with all the countries of Eastern Europe, including Yugoslavia. So we also had some support on the Hill from people who were more knowledgeable and more balanced. There was considerable support on the Hill for a positive, nuanced policy toward Yugoslavia.

Q: Did you have any arrests of Croatian or Serbian-Americans, who went and messed around or somehow got in trouble in Yugoslavia?

GILMORE: The extremists we were working with the FBI on were here in the States. They were the few extremists. I want to be very careful not to sound anti-Croatian or anti-Serb. I deeply respect both peoples and their cultures. I had, by the way, a Croatian-American uncle who was a splendid human being, whose family was the last thing in the world from terrorists. But, there were some cases where we were able to trace suspects responsible for bombings or attempted bombings of Yugoslav consular and UN permanent representative facilities. We were working with the FBI very closely, and a very enterprising FBI officer began to work on applying the RICO statute (Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act) to some of these groups, which he did successfully. [Ed: The RICO Act is a United States federal law that provides for extended criminal penalties and a civil cause of action for acts performed as part of an ongoing criminal organization.] But at this point in time, I can't remember whether the real successful steps were taken when I was desk officer or when I came back to the Office of Eastern European Affairs a few years later as deputy director. In both cases, I was very much involved with U.S.-Yugoslav relations. It was during my time as desk officer that the U.S. Government got very serious about these issues. This was partly because Ambassador Malcolm Toon in Belgrade was somebody whom nobody would ever accuse of being anything except the most patriotic American who had an ambassadorial flag. And he would say, "C'mon, we can do better on this."

So we had that kind of support. And also the officers me in the Department, from Undersecretary for Political Affairs Sisco and others on down, didn't want to see any of this terrorist activity continue either. In some cases, where Yugoslavia had a consulate -- for example, they had a consulate in Pittsburgh and one in L.A., and a consulate and a UN mission in New York -- some of the officials in charge lived in dread of possible terrorist acts. I remember when I went to Belgrade some years later as deputy chief of mission, I met some of the spouses of Yugoslav officials who, during my time as desk officer, had been stationed in the U.S. The spouses generally had positive memories of the U.S., except on this issue.

Q: Were there any particular issues this first time, 1973 – 1975 that we were concerned with?

GILMORE: There was another issue that I couldn't and didn't do anything about at the time, although we did do something about it later. I believe very strongly that ultimately we did the right thing by extraditing him, although it was controversial among Croatian-Americans. That was the Artukovic case.

Q: Oh, God.

GILMORE: Andrija Artukovic would have come to the States shortly after WWII, probably in 1948. He entered the States illegally, in all probably. He'd been one of those Croatian Ustashe leaders who probably had escaped Europe via the Vatican Ratlines. He'd been the interior minister in the wartime Independent State of Croatia. From all we could tell from historical records, he had been one of the Croatian officials who oversaw the Jasenovac concentration camp. Jasenovac was, by concentration camp standards, a beauty, where many ethnic Serbs, Jews, and Gypsies (both Roma and Sinti) had been done in, tortured and murdered. He'd gotten into the U.S. illegally, with an assumed name as I remember. He was living on this brother's estate in the greater Los Angeles area. There had been an extradition request by Yugoslavia -- I don't remember the dates, probably in the 1950s. His extradition had not been granted, and he was under a stay of deportation. He had no status, he had no green card. Periodically, State would get a request from the Justice Department whether we saw any reason to change his stay of deportation, whether there were any political developments which affected the case? I remember I looked into the case and discussed it with one of my superiors. I was troubled by it, because it looked to me like there was no question that Artukovic was responsible for mass murder. In any case we didn't do anything about it then except to indicate to the Justice Department that there was no fundamental change in the political situation. But I had a pang of conscience that would repeat itself periodically until some years later. I'll come to that later in my debriefing. But in any case, the Artukovic case came up when I was the desk officer and I remember it clearly was an important matter.

Q: I had my nose rubbed in it for five years, from 1962 to 1967 as Consul General in Belgrade?

GILMORE: Exactly. They were very sensitive about it. I assume that the reason for the stay of deportation was we felt that he could not get a fair trial in a Communist country.

Q: Well, I think it was more than that....

GILMORE: Well, there may have been more to it than that. Still, I believe that legally a judge stayed his deportation.

Q: But I think that the real thing was that his brother was a wealthy contractor and contributed particularly to the Republican party.

GILMORE: Well, there were certainly political strings attached to the case, no question. As I understand it, as we looked at the case back then -- it must have been in 1974 or 1975 -- we looked at the cases as the Justice Department requested and I examined the file. It was clear that Artukovic was living on his brother's estate near Los Angeles. He wasn't involved in any kind of émigré activity that we could tell, he was keeping his head down. But I think his wealthy brother, as you said, had provided for him very well, materially. We checked with the local police in California. There were guard dogs behind a large metal fence and that sort of thing.

Otherwise, just servicing the embassy in Belgrade was a heavy job, with Malcolm Toon as Ambassador. We had a series of good career ambassadors in Belgrade. Just keeping them informed, running down the various issues, bird-dogging the issues they wanted to expedite was a lot of fun and work.

Q: Was there much thinking on your part and others about "... after Tito, what?"

GILMORE: Yes, there always was, and in fact, you remind me that there was a post-Tito contingency study that was prepared during that period. Actually, the Office of Policy Planning (S/P) was responsible for it. Then there was another contingency study later when I was deputy director of the office. But people like Ambassador Toon felt pretty strongly that the likelihood of Yugoslavia falling apart in the post-Tito period, at least in the immediate post-Tito period, was not as great as some anticipated. Tito's health during the mid-1970s was still pretty good. He was still active, he was still traveling all over Yugoslavia as he always did. He'd have meetings with the party leader in Vojvodina Province, in Kosovo Province, with the Serbian party and the Croatian party. He was pretty vigorously in charge, so "after Tito, what?" wasn't as acutely or as frequently discussed as it was later. By later, I mean during my second go 'round with Yugoslavia, as Deputy Director of the Office of Eastern European and Yugoslav Affairs, 1978-81, and as Deputy Chief of Mission in Belgrade, 1981-85. By the time I became Deputy Chief of Mission in Belgrade he was dead. But during my time as Deputy Director, it became a much more acute issue, especially when Tito's health did fail, when his diabetes flared up and he had to have a leg removed and then, shortly thereafter, died.

Q: Were we concerned about other Communist countries messing around in Yugoslavia, or the Soviet Union?

GILMORE: We watched for that. It was pretty clearly the judgment of our embassy, a judgment which by the way I came to share, particularly once I served in Yugoslavia as Deputy Chief of Mission, that after Tito the Yugoslavs were going to try to cooperate as closely as they could economically with us and the USSR. But when it came to any kind of Soviet meddling in Yugoslavia, they weren't going to have any truck with it. And meanwhile the Yugoslavs did something that we considered very important strategically. In retrospect, it looks just as

important as I thought it was then. The Yugoslavs gave no special access to Soviet aviation or the Soviet fleet: no special advantage to them that they did not also give to us. Each of us so-called super powers had the same number of ship visits a year to Yugoslav ports. Very often the Soviet Union would send more ships per visit because they had fewer places to go in the Med, with the Mediterranean Flotilla, drawn from the Soviet Black Sea fleet. But our ships visited Yugoslav ports regularly. The Soviets were not given any special overflight rights. Period. The Yugoslavs were very zealous about that.

And we had a relatively good relationship with the Yugoslav Army. It was not as close as we had in the late 1940s and early 1950s, when there was a perceived Soviet threat, and when we sold Yugoslavia F-84s and F-86s. But we had a good relationship. We would sell certain reasonably sensitive military components to the Yugoslav forces. The process of deciding what we would sell was very carefully controlled, politically. That was one of the things the desk officer had to work hard on. It was in the U.S. interest that the Yugoslav Air Force be capable enough to present a credible defensive deterrent to hostile power which thought to play games. We also were open to military-military relationships involving some training of Yugoslav officers. It was delicate. Of course an activist ambassador like Malcolm Toon would be very interested in that. We had very able military attachés in Belgrade in my time.

LAWRENCE P. TAYLOR
Chief Consular Officer
Zagreb (1973-1974)

Economic Officer
Belgrade (1974-1976)

Lawrence P. Taylor was born in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1940. He graduated in 1963 from the University of Ohio with a degree in history and economics and received his MA from American University. He served as a member of the Peace Corps in the province of Antioquia in 1963. In addition to Colombia, he was posted to Yugoslavia, Dominican Republic, Indonesia, Canada, England, and Estonia. Mr. Taylor was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.

Q: -and all this which has served me to understand the Serbs more. I mean, Popovic was saying, was taking great pride on the Salonika front during World War I that they didn't kill people with bullets. If they caught a traitor they killed him with an axe. And I thought, uh-oh.

TAYLOR: You're right. And I always felt very fortunate, though, Stu, that I served in both Zagreb and Belgrade because serving in Zagreb opened my eyes to things that you can't get either from our language instructors of the day or from experience in Belgrade. For one thing, you knew immediately that this country was not holding together. When I went to Belgrade, everybody in the embassy thought, well, Yugoslavia is doing pretty well, and when I went there, I said, well, I can see what you're saying but, you know, I live in Zagreb, and when you're there, talking to people, building relationships, getting beneath the surface, it's

very clear they all still hate each other. Now it's controlled, but some day this genie is going to get out of the bottle. It hasn't been solved; it's just been contained. When you were in Belgrade you thought the system was working. There were Yugoslavs. Well, maybe there were, but there weren't any in Croatia, I'll tell you that. So that service in Zagreb really gave me an insight that unfortunately the embassy and the people who only worked in Belgrade, even if they'd been there for two or three tours, never really could understand because it looked like it was working.

Q: We've already alluded to it, but how did you find your first impressions in Zagreb of the people and the system and all that?

TAYLOR: Well, I just thought it was fascinating, and I was really up for this assignment. It was what I had wanted. I thought I was just so lucky to have a job that sent me to a place this fascinating, that had given me language training and so forth, so I went in there on a real emotional high, and I just loved it. I didn't have a set of expectations about the system, but I liked the people, and the people liked Americans. That was absolutely clear, and so that was a big advantage. But what struck me most about the place, again, was the weight of history, but this time it was quite a negative weight of history, and the sense of ethnic hatred and dislike. And I remember I had so many conversations with visiting American scholars who were writing books on Yugoslavia who were claiming that Yugoslavia was going to work, that the workers' self-management and the Yugoslav identity had solved a lot of problems and opened new doors, and they were quoting all the time the statistics on inter-ethnic marriage and so forth. And I just kept saying all the time, I would say, "Well, I hear what you're saying, but I live here, you know, and it doesn't seem that way to me. That's not what I hear at night. That's not what I hear when I talk with these people. That's not what I hear when I sit in a restaurant or in a café. They really don't like each other very much, you know." But there was an international industry at the time that was convinced and wrote a lot of books about, you know, how Yugoslavia was the new model and was and would continue to be successful.

I'll tell you, one interesting [language] vignette was, because again, I was still young enough and still oriented toward trying to get out and network and meet people and not stay in the office all the time, so when my car came to the port of Rijeka, instead of having it delivered, as was normal, I told the Administrative Section, I'll get on the train, I'm going to go down and pick it up and drive it up here myself, because that will give me experience of going on the train, going through the... So I went down there and I did, and I had to have the help of - there was some nice customs expediter down there, not from the Consulate but from the port, who took pity on me and helped me get the car and everything. So I took him out to lunch to thank him for the car, and I still remember him saying to me, after lunch was over and I was getting ready to get in my car and drive it back to Zagreb, he said, "Mister Taylor, you speak Serbo-Croatian wonderfully, but you speak it like a book." And it rang true to me. I mean I was just drawing this stuff right out of the textbook. It was a wonderful comment.

Q: What were the consular problems that you had?

TAYLOR: Consular problems there were not visa problems. The visa thing was fairly orderly. Most people either clearly could or couldn't go, and we were in control. It wasn't anything like the Dominican Republic, and in fact I had a vice consul and a Foreign Service national that did most of the visa work, and it was only a few cases that I had to become involved in. The interesting cases were welfare and whereabouts, American citizens. Some of them were quite normal - young people run out of money or gotten sick on the Dalmatian coast, and how can you help them. There were a lot of American citizens in the Consular District. They were originally born in Yugoslavia, had emigrated to the United States, and come back to live on their Social Security payments in a place where [Social Security checks] went a lot further than they did in the U.S. And they needed some care and feeding, and then, of course, some of them would eventually pass away, and then there would be a death thing.

Now a couple of things there. You know, this was 1973 or '74. It was amazing. I wish I'd been doing oral history, Stu, at the time, because I had American citizens come into my office, elderly ones, who had been born in the Turkish Empire, or who had been Sarajevo in 1914, when the archduke was assassinated, and then had emigrated to the United States and were telling me what Los Angeles was like in 1921, and then had come back to the Yugoslavia of the day. The richness of this historical texture was just unbelievable, but of course it's all gone now, and we didn't capture it. No one captured it, and it's gone. What a loss.

Q: I had one man come in and said, "Well, I worked as a torpedo in Chicago," for maybe it was Al Capone or something, you know, a killer for one of the mobs. Another one worked in a "blind pig," which is slang for a speakeasy - a "blind pig," and I was mentally searching and I finally remembered some obscure reference and knew it was a Prohibition bar.

TAYLOR: There are fascinating, just fascinating, things, just so full of interesting characters and this rich history. And then, I'll tell you, there's this one consular case, fascinating. This American citizen, born in Croatia but was an American citizen, was caught entering Yugoslavia, crossed the border illegally, carrying weapons and a Ustashi uniform, and so he was arrested as a terrorist. So eventually I was notified and I went there. It turns out I was absolutely convinced the guy was nuts - this was far from being a terrorist, he was mentally unbalanced - and so then initiated a long process to get him out of jail and under some sort of medical supervision, which I finally prevailed in. And then he was transferred to this medical facility for examination and so forth - that was in Zagreb - and so I would go see him once a week and bring him some chocolate or something like that and talk to him. Now this guy, you know, was just absolutely totally off the wall politically, but he was mentally unbalanced, and not a terrorist, he was just mentally unbalanced. But I can tell you this, and this is the eye-opener for me: when he talked about domestic Yugoslav politics and about World War II and what it meant to the country, he sounded just like everybody else. He sounded like the prime minister. He sounded like the bishop. He sounded like the college professor. They're *all* lunatics about that - which unfortunately explains a lot about what has gone on. That region has produced more history than it has consumed.

Q: Well, did you have any problems, particularly in Germany but even more so in Sweden, of sort of these Croatian nationalists left over from World War II who were terrorists, and they were trying to mess around in Croatia. Did you get any reflection of that?

TAYLOR: No, they had peaked out just before I got there. They had, I don't know, kidnapped a plane or blown it up. That was kind of their last hurrah, and fortunately they sort of disappeared off the landscape, but there was a little bit of a legacy in that any time you flew on the Yugoslav airline for all the time I was there, because of those things, all the baggage was lined up as you got on the plane, and no bag was ever put on that plane unless a person said, "That's my bag."

Q: In November I took Croatian Airlines, and you could not have anything with batteries in it in your stowed luggage. You could carry it in your suitcase, and I tell you, you'd never - you know how many batteries you have, for flashlights, cameras, and all that, and the sweat that poured out of me, thinking, My God, have I got them all? I mean they're still obviously nervous about this type of thing. Did you get any feel for the Church? Was the Catholic Church important at all at that point?

TAYLOR: Oh, it was very important. It was very important, and the mixture of the religion with Croatian nationalism in people's minds was extremely important. Again, this is one of the things that still, at that time and I guess today, is a factor in setting Serbs and Croats off with each other, because the Croats really look to the Church as a foundation of their society, their culture, and their legitimacy; and the Serbs are, as you know from your own experience, the first thing that will be out of their mouth is how the prelate of the Catholic Church walks down the steps of the Cathedral when the Nazis march in and puts a garland of flowers around the Nazi general and then proceeds to support the extermination of Serbs. Is that really true? No one asks if it is reality or nonsense.

Q: And you hear about the massacre at Glina-

TAYLOR: Exactly, so it's a very divisive factor between Serbs and Croats still today, but the Croats very much look to the Church as an integral part of their system, their state, and their society.

: And trees along the side.

TAYLOR: And horses and cattle just everywhere. And so the place was littered with Turkish automobile accidents. There was never an American automobile accident. We had, again, a number of American welfare and whereabouts cases along the coast. We did have an American citizen that was of Lebanese descent, but he was an American citizen who was jailed, and then when he got out on bond, hid himself in the trunk of his wife's car and drove out to Trieste, and successfully. They didn't open the trunk of the car. The Italians opened it, however, within sight of the Yugoslav guards, and were surprised to discover him in the trunk, which led to a massive Yugoslav effort to retrieve him, both immediately on the spot, but then when that failed, subsequently through diplomatic channels. I was unfortunately involved in that.

Q: What happened? Did they ever get him back?

TAYLOR: No.

Q: No, I didn't think so. What was your impression of how Tito was viewed at that particular juncture?

TAYLOR: You know we had a Croatian friend. She was of Hungarian descent. Her family had lost everything in the Communist revolution. They had been part of a very wealthy oligarchy. Members of her family were killed. All of their land and houses had been taken away from them. So she worked as a translator, and she spoke several languages and made a nice little life for herself, but wasn't part of the system. She hated the Communist system; she hated Tito; she hated everything about it. One day, she came in, and every once in a while, a rumor would go around that Tito was sick and about to die. Well, it came around. Tito was sick and about to die, and this time it was on the news and people thought it was real. And she came running in to see me. She said, "Mister Taylor, Tito's going to die. What are we going to do? What are we going to do?" So here it is, you see. Here it is, this woman who hates everything about him and his system can't imagine what life would be without him. So by this time, he's such an established part, such a dominant part of the life and the stability of a system that's so potentially unstable, that even those who hate him realize that he may be indispensable.

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. KRYG
Administrative Counselor
Belgrade (1974-1976)

Ambassador Sheldon D. Kryg was born in New York City and was educated at the University of Maryland. He entered the Foreign Service in 1965 and has held posts in England, Yugoslavia and an ambassadorship to Trinidad and Tobago. In Washington, he held many positions including ones in the Inspection Corps and Administration and Information Management. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1994.

Q: Did you get any feel from your Serbian teachers about Serbia and the Serbia mentality?

KRYG: 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.

KRYG: 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?

KRYG: 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
Belgrade (1974-1980)

Terrence Catherman was born in Michigan in 1925. He served overseas in the U. S. Army overseas from 1944 to 1946 and received a B.A. and an M.A. from the University of Michigan. His postings abroad have included Germany, Vienna, Israel, Yugoslavia, and Poland. Mr. Catherman was interviewed by G. Lewis Schmidt in 1991.

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: You 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.

LAWRENCE H. SILBERMAN
Ambassador
Yugoslavia (1975-1977)

Lawrence 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.

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 Krys, 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 Krys, 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 Vikraina 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

RONALD J. NEITZKE
Consular Officer
Belgrade (1975-1978)

Ronald Neitzke was born and raised in Minnesota and educated at Sts Thomas College, the University of Minnesota and Johns Hopkins University (SAIS). Entering the Foreign Service in 1971 he served in Oslo before studying Servo-Croatian, the beginning of his career as specialist in East European Affairs. In Washington, Mr. Neitzke served on the Policy Planning Staff at the State Department and was Country Director for Czech and Albanian Affairs. In London he was Deputy Political Counselor, and in Zagreb he served as Deputy Chief of Mission during the conflicts of the split-up of Yugoslavia. He also had several assignments in Washington in the personnel field. Mr. Neitzke was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2006.

Q: Let us talk a bit about your impressions when you went out in 1975 and we will come back to this obviously when we get to the '90s. What was your impression of the officer cadre, Foreign Service Officer cadre, involved in Yugoslav affairs then?

NEITZKE: I was still a young, second tour officer. I wasn't fully aware of that dimension, that there was a de facto Yugo club in the Service. I knew that Kennan had been ambassador in Yugoslavia. I knew that the outgoing ambassador, as I was preparing to arrive, Malcolm Toon, was one of the finest we had. I didn't really know anything about the Eagleburger, Anderson, Scanlan, Zimmerman group, and we should probably mention Scowcroft, who would dominate Yugoslav affairs in the post-Tito years and even into the wars of the early 1990s. Nor was I aware of the Moscow connection of many of the Yugo hands. Many of these guys were exceptionally talented, even by Foreign Service standards. And as in Oslo, I had supervisors who took an active interest in my development -- Mark Palmer stands out in that regard. But there

was an edge to the work and to the whole atmosphere of the place that I hadn't experienced in Oslo.

Q: We will come back to the inner workings of the embassy a little later, but describe what Yugoslavia was like from the optic of Belgrade when you arrived there in '75?

NEITZKE: It was, as we would later come to view it, Yugoslavia's Zlatna Doba, Golden Age. Internally, the Yugoslav national question, so important and destructive during World War II, was largely subdued, or at least reasonably well hidden below the surface. Everyone was aware, however, of the constant balancing act that Tito had to perform to keep all national elements satisfied that they were getting their fair share of the pie. He had cracked down on both Serb and Croatian nationalists, Rankovic in '68 I think and the Croats in '71. So the issue was not dead; it just wasn't red hot when I was there. If I can digress for a moment, I'd say that what we had in Tito's Yugoslavia at that time was the mother of all group-identity quota systems, in which nearly everything, positions, perks, and so on was apportioned based on national identity. Even senior slots in Yugoslav embassies abroad were filled in this manner. At the federal level, senior offices rotated among representatives of the various republics and autonomous areas.

But the country, however backward it still was in many respects, had a vitality then, a dynamism, that was palpable. Yugoslav guest workers in Western Europe were remitting huge sums to the country. Vikendicas, small weekend get-away cottages, were springing up throughout the countryside. Most Yugoslavs were free to travel abroad, at least comparatively so. The Yugoslavs' vaunted Socialist Self-management system was being taken seriously by West European political theorists. National inter-marriage was on the rise, or so it seemed in Belgrade. The JNA, the army that is, and the LCY, the communist party, seemed increasingly integrated from a nationality standpoint. Even though Belgrade itself was relatively drab, especially in the winter from the burning of low-grade coal, there was a sense of forward movement in the country. This isn't to suggest we were somehow unaware of Yugoslavia's past and didn't worry; we did, about all kinds of contingencies. But our concerns were generally more hypothetical than acute.

Q: You mentioned intermarriage. You are talking about?

NEITZKE: Serbs and Croats intermarrying, mainly, but also, to a lesser extent, Serbs and Croats marrying Bosnian Muslims, Slovenes, Macedonians, and Montenegrins. But very little involving Albanian Kosovars. Let me just add, regarding potentially resurgent nationalism, that in my three years there and projecting as far as we reasonably could into the future, we and other Western analysts always made allowance for the possibility that Kosovo could be Yugoslavia's Achilles heel. The Albanians were not integrating into the country in the same way that the other nationalities at least then appeared to be doing. The birth rate among the Albanian Kosovars was far higher than among other nationalities, and they were much poorer than any other nationality. The sheer demographics of the situation were pushing Serbs out of their ancient religious heartland of Kosovo. Our analyses always made allowance for the Kosovo factor. But no one, at least no one in Belgrade, was then predicting, or even making allowance for, a possible violent resurgence of Serb-Croat or Serb-Bosnian Muslim cross national strife.

Q: Tito was at his, still in full power.

NEITZKE: Very much so. He was getting on in years, and he was somewhat detached from many of the day to day decisions in running the country. And there was a concern that he might be hanging on too long. And, of course, “after Tito, what?” was a vital question, but there was no doubt in those years who was still in control. Jokes were told about Tito behind his back, and some of the public acclaim was forced, and some who’d felt his heavy hand hated him, but there was, too, a genuine respect and admiration from many Yugoslavs for what this guy had done. He seemed larger than life at times, strutting about in his trademark white suit. Bitterness lingered in some quarters from various instances in which he’d dealt roughly with this or that nationalist tendency or personality, but most people, I think, gave him a fairly wide berth to do so. Tito was also a dominant figure, a founding father, of the nonaligned movement. He had been playing that role to the hilt for years, and in the process gained for Yugoslavia far greater influence on the international stage than its size and power would have dictated. Yugoslav diplomats often punched well above their weight, as the Brits say, parlaying their country’s nonaligned role into far greater influence than one might have imagined. They were, in fact, the most, perhaps the best word is leveraged, group of diplomats I encountered in my career, with the exception of the British.

Q: I know that in Moscow and in Beijing, for example, Yugoslav diplomats got out and around more than most.

NEITZKE: The nonaligned movement, or NAM, created a structure within which they could move boldly. There was always a nonaligned summit or a nonaligned ministerial or a nonaligned vote of some sort which we and the Soviets had to take seriously. It seemed to me, and bothered me, that we were always, in a sense, courting them, despite the fact that their actions and votes were often inimical to our interests. We would count it a modest victory, for example, if we could get them to get the NAM to change language that was truly obscene to language that was merely outrageous. The Zionism as racism issue comes to mind. The issue of Cuba also. They played their hand very well.

Q: How would you describe American policy there? And Soviet policy?

NEITZKE: I recall sessions in the FSI area studies course in which Yugoslavia was described as one of the three or four most likely areas which, if mishandled, could spark a third World War or a U.S.-Soviet confrontation. Handling Yugoslavia correctly meant as vigilant observation and analysis as possible and doing all we could, in every sphere of bilateral activity, economic, cultural, military, and so on, to move them closer to our side, so that when Tito died the odds would be greater that Yugoslavia would not fall back into the bloc, and that the Soviets would not be tempted to overplay their hand. That often meant in practice tolerating unhelpful Yugoslav behavior on a range of mainly multilateral issues while doing what we could to mitigate the harm.

So there were tensions, but there was also a clear sense that the game was ours to lose, that we were on top in the tug of war with the Soviets. The Soviets, for their part, were also active, probing everywhere, including on military sales and military cooperation.

I should add, however, in contrast to the wildly exaggerated claims of Russian-Serbian brotherhood based on their shared Orthodox faith that were heard in the 1990s, one never heard that in the 1970s in the context of U.S.-Soviet competition in Yugoslavia. Never. We knew that in their internal contingency planning the Yugoslavs paid far more heed to the possibility of a Warsaw Pact intervention after Tito's passing than they did to any potential Western military threat. Of course, none of this was spoken of openly. At the same time, as I mentioned, they were a thorn in our side on a whole host of issues.

Q: What sort of issues?

NEITZKE: Hot button multilateral issues, such as Zionism as racism, Puerto Rico, Korea, Angola, the Horn of Africa. They would vote with the nonaligned against Israel in the UN. They would cozy up to the Cubans; Castro was another dominant player in the NAM. The Cubans, of course, with Soviet aid, were reaching out militarily to try to tip the balance in the Soviets' favor in Third World trouble spots. And then there were the larger, more sensitive bilateral bones of contention, such as the Yugoslavs' belief that we coddled dangerous anti-Yugoslav émigrés and hijackers – Croatian nationalists in the U.S. executed a hijacking in 1976, for example -- and our awareness that Yugoslav security forces sometimes killed anti-Yugoslav émigrés and that they had allowed terrorists to transit their country. So there was plenty to worry about.

Q: I want to come back again to the leadership of the embassy and we will talk about that but you were in the consular section for a year. What were you doing?

NEITZKE: A little of everything. I did welfare and protection work and was also head of the visa unit, my first real supervisory experience. But, as with consular work in Oslo, what I remember most vividly is the welfare and protection work. One case in particular I'll never forget. A girl in her mid-late-teens, the daughter of a wealthy New York socialite family, had been induced to travel to Yugoslavia by a much older man she'd gotten to know in New York, a Yugoslav, and had been taken to a town in Bosnia. We were alerted by her mother, I believe, but it became clear that differences between mother and daughter had contributed to the situation. The case was handed to me. I got a car and driver and we drove through the night, an adventure of its own kind in Yugoslavia at the time, since you might just plow into a horse drawn cart in the middle of a dark road. We arrived and went to the local police headquarters, where the girl was awaiting us with the older man. When it became clear that she was going to leave with us, the man, a large, tough-looking guy, came up to me and said calmly but defiantly that he was going to kill me, not there but in time. I remember his name to this day. Not long thereafter, he was the subject of a Yugoslav security manhunt along the Adriatic coast, when Ambassador Silberman was traveling there and thought to be threatened. We brought the young woman back to the Embassy compound and took care of her for a few days, before putting her on a plane back to the U.S. All the while, there was a fear that this guy was hunting for her and would do anything to get her back. She looked me up a few years later in Washington, a changed person, much matured, and was very grateful.

I also recall the case of an American in his early 20s, a big guy, who had come over, gotten a car and been driving around the country for a couple weeks. The thing is, he had never gotten out of his car, ever. He was a mess, and he was ours to care for. Dealing with his distraught parents and

arranging for his care and eventual repatriation took a lot of time and emotional energy. I later got a very moving letter of thanks from his mother.

Q: This is in a period when a lot of young people were traveling around. Many of them went to Turkey and Nepal and came out carrying hashish. Did you get drug problems?

NEITZKE: I don't recall that drugged out American kids, let alone traffickers, were a big problem. Of course, you're never aware of the hundreds or even thousands of perfectly normal young people traveling through your consular district without incident. The other thing I remember from that year is making the rounds alone in my four-wheel drive Jeep through southern Macedonia, Kosovo, and Montenegro, looking for U.S. Social Security recipients, trying to verify that they were still alive and entitled to the checks they were receiving. It was not unknown that corpses would continue receiving these checks, since they were so important to the extended family. And, you know, you'd finally find the house in some backwater village and you'd be welcomed like a conquering hero. They'd bring out the rakija and they'd bring out the carp and they'd bring out the cakes, but they couldn't always bring out the Social Security recipient, and so you'd have to cut them off. But I enjoyed those trips. They gave me a level of familiarization with types of people that others, even most, in the Embassy never had.

Q: I climbed up many Bosnian mountains to ask the relatives of deceased Social Security recipients to show me your marble monument, because they claimed that they had put up a monument to the deceased and had charged Social Security for a marble monument and of course it was just a cement slab and they would look a little bit sheepish.

NEITZKE: When I came back from these trips I felt I'd been in a foreign country. In any capital city, amid the diplomatic community, living in embassy housing, not subject to any of the rigors of the host country nationals, life is artificial. If you don't get out among the people, go into the villages and talk to those living on the edge, you can end up with a very distorted impression of the country. So I always thought that in a place like Yugoslavia consular work provided an exposure that was irreplaceable.

Q: Yes. Like I say, I did this for five years and I mean, I just loved traveling in the back woods, in the back hills.

NEITZKE: And they were back hills. There were parts of Montenegro when you would drive by in the four-wheel drive vehicle the jaws would just slacken and the mouths open and they would look at you as though you had just landed from Mars.

Q: I know. To the point of telling the policeman who I was and what I was going to do so I would not- they would not- you did not want to surprise them.

NEITZKE: Right.

Q: Well, how did you find cooperation from the authorities?

NEITZKE: There was a degree of formality and protocol in dealing with Yugoslav authorities

that I hadn't expected. How cooperative they were might depend on what you were asking for. If you were persistent enough, you could usually get the meetings you wanted for, say, a visit to a republic capital, although access to communist party officials tended to be more difficult everywhere at all levels. I recall one meeting that I'd tried hard to get with a young communist party official in Pristina, in Kosovo, even then a hyper-sensitive place. I got it, but the meeting was pointless, because when I met with him, with note takers present in a room that was almost certainly bugged as well, the guy was petrified. I had never in my life tried to have a conversation with a man as frightened as he was, lest he misspeak and get in trouble with his party superiors. There was generally less cooperation when you got out into the provinces, away from Belgrade. My most tense experience dealing with Yugoslav officials came during a visit to an American serving a long prison sentence in Bosnia. The prison official demanded that I hand over a note that the American had given me during a supposedly private meeting in a prison room. I played dumb and he finally gave up, but it was tense. Another time, I was trying to track down a Social Security case near the southern border of Macedonia close to Greece, a sensitive area, and somehow I'd wandered off into no man's land. The police in that instance too were not exactly understanding, and gave me a several-vehicle police escort out of the area, but I was never mistreated.

Q: Well do you want to talk now about the ambassadors you served under in Belgrade?

NEITZKE: I mentioned that I just missed serving under Toon. And Carter named Larry Eagleburger ambassador in early 1977. Between those two, however, from mid-'75 until late '76, Larry Silberman was ambassador. It was a curious appointment. He was a very bright guy, energetic, still in his 40s. He had just been Deputy Attorney General, I believe, and had held other sub-cabinet level jobs. His brief tenure in Belgrade was unusual in several respects. He introduced the strangest embassy front office operation I ever encountered. Fairly early on, and in what seemed an unnecessarily humiliating fashion, he fired his DCM, and then did not replace him. As you know, someone has to do the DCM's work and most ambassadors aren't going to do it themselves, least of all a political appointee. Silberman had brought with him to Belgrade a young man named Brandon Sweitzer. As Silberman explained it, Sweitzer would serve him as the Counselor of the Department served the Secretary of State, an odd analogy. Brandon would be his front office advisor and sounding board sort of, and would occupy the DCM's office, I believe, but he would not be the DCM. No one would. Instead, various section chiefs, mainly Charlie York, as I recall, from the econ section, served occasionally as acting DCM. So, organizationally, it was a little dysfunctional.

More importantly, however, Silberman struggled with and never quite figured out how best to play the Yugoslav leadership, the Yugoslav mentality, who they were and how to move them. They were Communists, yes, but not of the Soviet variety. His tendency toward a one-size-fits-all anti-Communist approach contributed, I think, to exaggerated tensions in the relationship during much of his time there. Yugoslav officials bear part of the blame, but Silberman himself made it a more dangerous period for U.S. interests than it needed to have been. His tendency to lecture senior Yugoslav officials on U.S. constitutional law and civil liberties didn't always go down well. One case in particular, however, dominated his Ambassadorship. It involved an unjustly imprisoned American dual national, whom the Yugoslavs accused of spying.

Q: I think he was in a sugar factory.

NEITZKE: That sounds right. And there was little question in our minds that he was innocent, that this whole thing had been trumped up by Yugoslav security types, either to cover up some mistake they had made or deliberately to damage relations with the U.S. It wasn't a small matter; there was no avoiding it. But was it sufficiently important to gamble much of the relationship on, as Silberman nearly did? Maybe, but if you were going to do that, you needed a well thought out strategy, some insight into these peculiar people, and maybe even patience to get you to your goal. Silberman's inclination, however, seemed to be to hammer away at this frontally in Belgrade, and haul out whatever big guns he could find in Washington, in effect placing the relationship on the line. I suspect he and a few others thought, might still think, this was a gutsy, principled approach, but the effect seemed to be to get Tito, who may have been caught off guard when the incident arose, to dig in his heels. When the case was finally resolved, after a probably longer than necessary standoff, and the American was released, Silberman quickly issued a defiant public statement shaming the Yugoslavs and virtually ensuring that for the remainder of his time there he would be kept at arm's length by Tito and other senior officials. And he was, all but frozen out. This could have been very damaging to U.S. interests had Tito begun to falter badly in the period before Silberman left.

Q: In the dismissal of his DCM, I am just thinking back, as I recall, the person involved was Dudley Miller, and I think that somehow or another Dudley Miller's wife or Dudley himself led Silberman to believe he was being slighted.

NEITZKE: I don't know. I never heard that. But look, if you had in this room right now everyone who served under Silberman and they were speaking candidly, you'd get all sorts of strong opinions on the guy. And I suspect Silberman himself would like that. He was divisive, or maybe it's better to say he liked keeping people off balance. I served under a number of political ambassadors. Most of them were talented and came out supremely self-confident yet not fully aware of what the job entailed and concerned to one degree or another whether they would have the full support of the career Service, or how they would get along with us. Silberman was certainly true to that form. He could be difficult to be around. He judged people, embassy officers and Yugoslavs, very quickly, often harshly, and rarely changed his mind, or so it seemed.

Q: I might mention that Judge Silberman is an appeals court judge at the level just below the Supreme Court, still a very powerful person.

NEITZKE: He's also the author of an article published in Foreign Affairs, written after he left Belgrade, in which, as I recall, he argued strongly against allowing FSOs to serve in policy-making positions. The implication was clear: FSOs, with career safeguards, would pursue their own agendas or would be prone to disloyalty, or at least would be insufficiently loyal, to an Administration's political leadership. Now you can cast this argument in whatever detached, intellectual guise you want. But it seemed to me it sprang directly from his experience in Belgrade. We had worked our tails off for him, but he may have felt, especially in the dual national dispute, that he hadn't been supported by senior FSOs in policy positions in Washington. So his article, essentially attacking the professionalism of the Foreign Service, did

not sit well with some of us who'd been with him in Belgrade and experienced his unsteady lead there. This idea by the way, the supposed need to keep FSOs out of policy-making positions, was advanced by other Republican political appointees. Silberman's article was of a sort with a later attack on the Service by David Funderburk, a political appointee close to Jesse Helms, after departing his ambassadorship in Bucharest. And another of my own bosses, Ed Derwinski, got in trouble in the mid-1980s when, as Department Counselor, he expressed the same sentiments in an interview he gave The Washington Times.

Q: OK. Let us talk about Larry Eagleburger. Larry had served in Serbia before. When I was there Larry came in as number three in the economic section. Charlie York and Dudley Miller were also there. Larry must have taken to this like a duck to water.

NEITZKE: He was a high flying FSO and had been for a long time before arriving in Belgrade as ambassador in early 1977. He'd held high-ranking positions in both the Department and the Pentagon, I believe. He was still in his 40s, close to Kissinger, and was well regarded all over Washington, especially on Capitol Hill, where he was said to be liked by both parties, partly for his straight forward, tell it like it is, Midwestern manner. He had made his mark in Yugoslavia as Lawrence of Macedonia following the devastating 1963 earthquake in which he lived down there amid the relief community.

Q: I was there before him. I was with a hospital, a MASH hospital. He followed me; I have to put in a little personal aside there.

NEITZKE: He appeared to know the country well, although in retrospect I'd have to reserve on his perception even then of Croatia and Slovenia, and perhaps Bosnia. But he had a clear sense of our interests. And if you could handle the occasionally blustery or teasing way he'd deal with you, and you got on well with him, as most did, you could learn a lot. But there was another aspect to him as well. Although he was the quintessential American Ambassador in Yugoslavia, no one better suited, totally on top of his brief, that same self-assurance seemed at times to morph into cockiness.

Q: What do you mean?

NEITZKE: Well, for example, I recall a trip I made with him to Sarajevo, one of his several introductory trips to Republic capitals. These trips typically included an entourage of four or five from various sections of the embassy and lasted two or three days. On the trip to Bosnia, after a long morning of meetings, factory visits and so forth, we sat down to a heavy, many-course luncheon hosted by Bosnian Republic officials. As the meal progressed, Eagleburger grew so relaxed, seemed so much in his element, that, after one member of our party expressed an opinion, Eagleburger quipped to our hosts, something like, don't pay any attention to him, he's just a spy. Strange, right? Except that the officer in question was in fact the Station Chief, and he didn't find it all that funny. Nor, reportedly, did the Agency. I'm not letting any cats out of the bag here; this guy's identity, and he's now long retired, is well known.

But most of the time Eagleburger was a consummate professional. And given his reputation in the country, his ability with Serbo-Croatian, and, the simple fact that he followed the disliked

Silberman, he usually got a warm reception. This isn't to say we didn't have problems with the Yugoslavs during Eagleburger's time there. We did. I recall, for example, accompanying Eagleburger to his first call on the foreign minister to protest an unauthorized transfer of U.S. arms to the Horn of Africa. But the change in the tenor of the relationship from the extreme coolness that characterized Silberman's last months to what many Yugoslavs perceived as the return of a true, longtime friend was obvious.

Unfortunately, I had only one year with Eagleburger; I left Belgrade in March of '78, several months early, having been selected for a new Pilot Threshold Training Program at FSI. And the day before I left, Eagleburger invited me to the residence for what turned out to be a several-hour brunch, much of it one on one conversation with him. He cared about younger officers, and I appreciated that.

Q: How did you find Marlene Eagleburger? She was my consular assistant. I was her first overseas boss.

NEITZKE: Open, engaging, unpretentious. We liked her. And I think they had young children at the time too, which sort of leavened the atmosphere around the residence.

Q: She was another Midwesterner, she was from Chicago, from a German family. Her family owned the Heinemann Bakery, a major bakery in Chicago. Let's talk now about being a political officer. Who was the political section head? What were you doing?

NEITZKE: The Political Counselor was Mark Palmer, a former Kissinger speechwriter. Mark constantly pushed us to think creatively about larger and longer term questions of U.S. interest. And he too cared about his officers, the development of younger officers, and I benefited greatly from working for him. The fact that he'd known Eagleburger in an earlier incarnation and was on friendly terms with him also helped.

But when I initially went to the Political section Silberman was still ambassador, and my work there had an inauspicious start, or rather what might have been inauspicious. My first task was to take notes for Silberman on a call at the foreign ministry discussing a wide range of multilateral issues. Now, that seems pretty basic, just take the notes. Later in my career, I made it a point to tell first-time junior officer note takers what we would be discussing, what level of detail I expected, and the small stuff too, what to take notes in and so forth, just take-it-or-leave-it tips on what works best. I went off to the meeting with Silberman with a tiny notebook, not even a notebook really, thinking that should be adequate. Only en route did I learn that Silberman expected close to a verbatim transcript. I wrote furiously, covering all sides, margins, and crevices of the tiny amount of paper I had. But there wasn't enough of it. And Silberman didn't give you a second chance; if you screwed up the first time, you were dead. The meeting lasted over an hour and covered all manner of issues, with lots of names and acronyms new to me. I could sense Silberman glancing over at me from time to time, wondering I suppose what Neitzke was doing, why he hadn't brought a proper notebook, and was he getting it all? But on returning to the embassy and beginning the dictation to our secretary, I found that I had, in fact, gotten enough or could remember enough of it to fill in the blanks, to Silberman's obvious surprise.

Q: It illustrates a problem we have had in the Foreign Service; I certainly experienced everywhere I went that nobody told me how to do the job. I mean, there was no real training except in the consular course where you looked things up and all but basically-

NEITZKE: A lot of consular work is seat of the pants on the welfare and protection side.

Q: There, that is fine. But things like writing reports and all you kind of learn this-

NEITZKE: Yes and in most instances you have time for a bit of incubation under the guidance of a senior officer, somebody who knows the ropes and has been there.

Q: As a political officer what specific areas or issues did you cover?

NEITZKE: Each of us in the section had an internal brief and an external brief. My internal brief was Montenegro, Macedonia, and Kosovo. That meant following significant events in these areas, leadership changes, tensions, if any, between the Republic and the federal government. You would follow the regional press as best you could, and travel to those areas to meet with people and get a feel for what was going on. My external brief was multilateral issues, UN affairs, and the nonaligned movement. While not quite as bad as the endless reams pumped out on socialist self-management, reporting on the activities of the NAM accounted for a huge percentage of the ink in the mainline papers. This stuff could be terribly arcane and boring, but some in Washington were interested. This was a time when we were constantly being criticized or condemned in nasty NAM resolutions. But slogging through all of this stuff could be a grind.

Q: And one has to point out that the rhetoric or whatever you want to call it, the verbiage that went out on these things was-

NEITZKE: Stupefying.

Q: Yes. Also it seemed written to fill space but not necessarily provide comprehension.

NEITZKE: All of this served the purpose, in Tito's mind, of keeping Yugoslavia's profile high, so that it could not be ignored, and the Soviets would not be tempted, and at the same time trying to nurture a broader sense of Yugoslav nationhood and pride, to cement together a real Yugoslavia. It was an interesting experiment. But the NAM was always a thorn in our side. You might remember Moynihan's famous, brilliant tirade as UN rep in which he cut loose on the NAM - I wish I had the language - in which he mocked these, he said something like, these exalted, self-appointed potentates, these presidents for life, these Third World demigods who dared lecture us on human rights and other matters.

Regarding the NAM, there was a body called the nonaligned information bureau, or something like that. It was an effort by the NAM to create a supposedly non-capitalist, non-socialist global information network, to help the nonaligned get out their version of the truth, to one another and the rest of the world unaffected by Western or other biases. In 1977, I believe, this group convened representatives of all the NAM at a fairly high level in Sarajevo and it was mine to cover, to find out all I could about what was being decided, how it was being decided, who

actually wielded the behind the scenes influence, and so on. So I went down and, as an American diplomat, was frozen out of the meetings, not even allowed to enter the conference site. But I went around and chatted up various delegates in bars and cafes and collected enough material for what became a long cable that I thought at best might be plowed through by a couple of dogged readers. To my surprise, we received a cable from the Department with the most fulsome praise I ever received for a report. Again, evidence that they really did take the NAM seriously. Ironically, I later learned that the cable had been drafted by the officer whose position I took in the Policy Planning Staff a year after leaving Belgrade.

Q: Did we feel that the Yugoslavs were a balance wheel on the nonaligned movement or were they out in front, you know, with Castro and the worst of them?

NEITZKE: Castro was among the worst. Tito was not in that category. But the Yugoslavs could be plenty frustrating. They would go off to NAM meetings and come back and tell us that they'd done the best they could to moderate things, you know, they just couldn't budge the others more than a certain amount. But from time to time we'd get cables from our embassies in other NAM capitals telling a different story, suggesting the Yugoslavs had been anything but helpful to U.S. interests. So it was difficult. Egypt was also a major player, as was India, and with a few others these tended to dominate. Collectively they could deliver the vote on any number of multilateral issues. And since in those days we were vying with the Soviets for influence in virtually every Third World nation, you had to pay attention. In retrospect it may seem odd, but then virtually everywhere on earth, including every African backwater, we were vying with the Soviets for influence. Our only real interest in many of these places was to keep the Soviets out. And the Soviets were ramping up their penetration...

Q: Well this was a time when Kissinger thought the Soviets were on a roll, that the best we might do would be to blunt them or reshape their influence in some way was...

NEITZKE: To construct a web of entangling relationships, is the concept I remember, to restrain the Soviets. Kissinger also spoke of the need for more organic relationships between the Soviets and their bloc allies. This, of course, was an issue, or cluster of issues, that would dominate policy debates through the latter 1970s and 1980s. Were the Soviets unstopably ascendant? Did we have the opportunity, let alone the political will and stamina, to be major players in Eastern Europe? And, if so, with what parties there should we seek to engage, who were most likely to be the engines of change if and when change ultimately came? These were some of the issues that would surface again and again, in various forms, especially in the Reagan years. But you're right, Kissinger's view on this long policy quandary was as you describe, that the Soviets seemed to have the historic edge, that we might be able to shape events to comport more with our interests but might not be able to alter this trend fundamentally.

Q: Did you get any feel for what other embassies, French, British, German, Italian, in Yugoslavia were thinking at the time?

NEITZKE: I have no recollection that other Western diplomats saw things much differently from the way we did, although some Swedes, I recall, seemed truly beguiled by socialist self-management. We and the Soviets were unmatched in the size of our embassies, and in the

breadth of what we were trying to do in Yugoslavia.

What I learned early on is that there are few governments that even try to conduct a truly global foreign policy. Most are constrained by a lack of resources, which also tends to constrain their view of their interests. The Yugoslavs, acting mainly through the NAM, did try to conduct a global foreign policy, to have informed and considered views on all manner of issues and to make their influence felt. In this respect, I thought they outperformed even many Western governments, including some of our NATO allies. But in Belgrade, apart from our British friends and, curiously enough, a couple of extraordinarily well-connected Japanese diplomats, there were not many embassies to which we could turn for fresh information or perspective. On the contrary, we were constantly sought out by other Western embassies. You'd like to have this be more of a two-way street, but I found there and elsewhere later on that it rarely is.

Q: That is the thing I find as I do this oral history, that we are a global power, that nobody else has the reach that we do, and that while we sometimes make terrible mistakes - and I think we are going through a very bad patch right now in the Middle East - we are the indispensable nation.

NEITZKE: That's clearly the case now, but go back to the period we were discussing, the period when Kissinger concluded, based on everything he was seeing, that the Soviets were in the ascendancy. That was the context in which we were still operating even in the early Carter Administration, even though Carter's people tried to shift the emphasis away from, as they put it, an inordinate fear of communism, and toward North-South issues and basic human needs. Yet in one's day to day work as an American diplomat abroad, your competitors were the Soviets and you were rarely in doubt about that.

Q: Did you have any feel for the Soviets and their outreach within the various republics?

NEITZKE: Not as much as we would have liked, obviously. The Soviets themselves, of course, would not share much of anything with us. But we had other means of obtaining information.

Q: I do not want to get into intelligence gathering, but as a political officer did you find that our intelligence agencies were supplying you with pretty good stuff?

NEITZKE: I don't know that I saw everything that was available, but what I did see was useful, in that it provided a different, or more detailed, or more nuanced perspective, or was just something we weren't picking up anywhere else. But it's spotty. Rarely does it provide just what you need when you need it most. There's just never enough of it, especially on the most sensitive issues. Of course, you never know what you're not getting. And much of what you do get is not independently verifiable. And there's a leap of faith, a readiness to believe this stuff is credible mainly because of its origin. It's a leap sometimes made too quickly. For example, a hard wrought, front channel report, compiled from all available non-intel sources, would tend to be trumped by a conflicting intel report. As I was to learn, senior officials in Washington were especially susceptible to crediting as truth anything with a code word on it, even if it conflicted with well-sourced front channel reporting. A couple times later in my career I came across intel that seemed suspicious to me but was having a dramatic impact on policymakers in Washington.

We were able to show with timely eye-witness reports that this supposedly reliable intel was essentially baseless. I hope those were rare exceptions. In Belgrade, we were desperate for this stuff. And with back-up sourcing or other means to verify it out of the question, you accepted it as reliable. And I presume it was, for the most part.

Q: Let us talk a bit more about your experiences with the various republics when you would go there. Did you get any feel for a place like say Montenegro?

NEITZKE: My single most vivid recollection of Montenegro is the doorman at the Hotel Crna Gora in Titograd. He was the spitting image of Charles de Gaulle. Beyond that, I went in with the impression that the average Montenegrin was sort of a super Serb, tall, good looking, macho to the hilt. Some of that came from my having waded through “Black Lamb and Grey Falcon.” That’s how Rebecca West portrayed them. And there were elements of that. They were tough, hardened, not the kind of people you would easily push around. But they had a different perspective from the Serbs. They were much smaller in number, less exposed to external influences and pressures, and sprang from a terrain so rugged that it had to have played a role in shaping them. We were also told that there was a historic connection between the Russians and the Montenegrins.

Q: Oh, the king’s daughter, the king of Montenegro, or prince of Montenegro, his daughters married both an Italian and a Russian duke.

NEITZKE: The intermarriage we’d heard about was between Russian officers and Montenegrin women. And we’d heard that Russian was being taught in Montenegrin schools. I wasn’t able to judge how much of this Russian-Montenegrin tie was hype and how much was real. There seemed less to it than the Soviets would have had believe.

Q: What sort of a read did we have on the Albanian Kosovars at that time?

NEITZKE: Kosovo was easily the strangest place to travel in Yugoslavia. You could stand in the field outside Pristina where the Turks defeated the Serbs in 1389 and tour the old, frescoed Serbian Orthodox churches. And you could feel there was some substance to the Serbian claim that this was their national heartland. But you couldn’t help but notice that there weren’t many Serbs around. We had heard from the Serbian side that they were being pushed out, and we knew, as I mentioned earlier, the Albanian Kosovar demographic trends, by far the highest birthrates in Yugoslavia. Still, compared with the forested hills of Sumadija, in Serbia, Kosovo looked pretty forlorn. It was hard to imagine even then that most Serbs’ supposed devotion to this land was much more than symbolic. Pristina was the most tense regional capital I visited. Police everywhere. A sense that you were being followed and everything you did was being recorded. There had been inter-ethnic flare-ups at the University. Everyone we spoke with was uptight.

Another important Kosovo-related issue in those years was supposed Albanian irredentism. Since there was almost no reliable information on Albania’s intentions, it was difficult to weigh the validity of Serbian concerns. But those concerns were voiced constantly. As strange as Kosovo was then, it was no match for Albania, even based on what the Albanians themselves

were putting out. It was hard then to see how or why the Albanian Kosovars would even want to be part of Hoxha's weird experiment. But within Yugoslavia, in embassy projections of Yugoslavia's long term cohesiveness, Kosovo always stood out as an area that might never be fully integrated.

Q: Speaking of these magnificent Kosovo monasteries and all, what about the Serbian Church, not just in Kosovo? What sort of factor was the Orthodox Church?

NEITZKE: This is an aspect of the Serbian identity that I wasn't sufficiently attuned to when I arrived. The deep connectedness between the Orthodox Church and the Serbs' sense of national identity truly manifests itself, as we all later learned, when the nation feels threatened. In Tito's Yugoslavia, in the comparatively placid mid-late 1970s, the Church was largely in the background. A far cry from its high profile during the unbridled nationalism of Milosevic's Serbia in the late 1980s and 1990s. The interesting question I think is whether during the 1970s the Serbian Orthodox Church was a force for pan-Slavic cohesion or was more a target of non-Serb suspicions and fears. I think more the latter. But one also needs to look at the role of the Catholic Church in Croatia and Slovenia in that regard. Seen from the Serbian perspective, even in the mid-1970s, the Catholic Church was a threat, an institution on permanent probation, in Serb eyes, in light of its perceived role during World War II.

Q: Well I know, again, I got this from my Serbian Serbo-Croat teachers, the horrors of the Catholic Church in Croatia; the name of the place escapes me but a church where they pushed a lot of Orthodox in and set it on fire.

NEITZKE: You're probably thinking of the Glina massacre. There were a number of such places. And there was Jasenovac, the camp in which so many Serbs, Jews, Gypsies and others were brutally killed.

Q: Yes. During World War II religion became an excuse to kill, a key player in genocide in parts of Yugoslavia. And the Serbs remembered. I got this all the time, what the brothers of St. Francis did to the Orthodox.

NEITZKE: I got the largest dose of that not in Serbia but in Croatia. When I visited Zagreb, a senior ConGen Croat employee escorted me around town and showed me where she had seen a Catholic priest take a Serbian baby and just smash its skull against the wall, as though that one horrific recollection said it all. It's a funny thing, this isolating of historical incidents and trying to critique the role of the different churches in Yugoslavia's demise. There were a lot of truly nasty things going on in Yugoslavia in World War II. It wasn't simply Croats killing Serbs and Jews. Look at what Serbs were doing to Muslims in the Sanjak and neighboring parts of Bosnia. This is historical quicksand in Yugoslavia. Every side had its litany of horror stories and statistics. That's no excuse at all for what the Croatian state did in World War II; the Ustashe were unrivaled in their barbarity, but they're not the whole story.

Q: The Serbs also complained about the Muslims in world War II, some SS Muslim troops or something.

NEITZKE: At the Naval War College in 1990-91, I wrote a long, nearly book-length piece titled Yugoslavia: Was it Ever Meant to Be?, in which I explored some of this. You're struck by what a hodgepodge of nationalities and simmering resentments this country was created out of after World War I and the challenge that confronted Tito after the slaughter of World War II. There were so many skeletons in that closet.

Q: You were dealing with people who had very long memories.

NEITZKE: Propagating cross national hatred was outlawed in Tito's Yugoslavia and severely punished, but one can imagine, in the homes and villages, men pumped up with rakija, singing the songs that memorialized the brutalities that their particular nationality had suffered. Most of this would have been out of sight of diplomats serving in Belgrade. A vibrant economy and prospects for a brighter future could dampen those sentiments. But when times turned bad and you became convinced that your tribe was threatened, perhaps because ultra-nationalists had taken control of all the media, the memories and myths resurface in a much uglier form to justify the unthinkable.

Q: How did the embassy synthesize what they were collecting in Belgrade with Croatian and Slovenian perspectives on what was happening?

NEITZKE: They didn't always. There was a clear delineation of responsibility between the Consulate General in Zagreb, which covered Slovenia and Croatia, and Embassy Belgrade, which covered everything else. If the CG had a view that differed from that of the Embassy, he was technically free to send it in to Washington. But exercising that freedom, if the issue were especially sensitive or the Ambassador felt strongly enough about it, might also get you fired. The Ambassador was overwhelmingly dominant in-country, and Zagreb CGs had to tread carefully. Some were gutsier than others. When I was in Belgrade, for example, and Silberman was enmeshed in the dual national dispute with the Yugoslav Government, he was reporting to Washington that the Yugoslav position represented a calculated decision to chill relations. But our CG in Zagreb, Herb Kaiser, disagreed, read the situation differently, and so reported his own take to Washington, despite what I understand was a none too subtle Embassy effort to get him to stand down. But Herb may have been the exception, or Silberman's heavy handedness may have been the exception. Generally, I suspect, things wouldn't get to that point; CGs would tend to tone down conflicting perspectives, if they had any. When I became CG in Zagreb in 1992, and when I opened the Embassy and became Charge in August of that year amid the Bosnian War, the old CG-Embassy Belgrade relationship changed abruptly and dramatically. Front office perspectives in the two Embassies were radically different, and, for our part, we didn't hold back. There were open, front channel analytical disputes. Belgrade was not happy about its fading prerogatives.

Q: It had not been done before.

NEITZKE: I was reporting frankly what I saw, much of it ugly, based on the enormous number of sources available in Zagreb at that time. But it was not the way Embassy Belgrade saw things, and they were used to being better informed, or thinking themselves better informed, and prevailing. And that had ended.

Q: You would think that our embassy in Belgrade at the time, back in the mid-1970s, would have tried hard to report honestly on all of Yugoslavia, on all perspectives.

NEITZKE: Yes, but I think this varied by Ambassador, and the period when we were dealing with the touchy dual national case and its aftermath, Silberman's tenure, may have been an aberration. I'm not suggesting that differences of perspective between the CG and the Embassy were infrequent, only that I suspect comparatively few of them were as significant as the one I cited. Given the Ambassador's overriding authority, Zagreb CGs were going to be reluctant to assert a strong counter viewpoint on, say, the long-term viability of Yugoslavia or the contentedness of the Croats and Slovenes in the Yugoslav Federation, although Zagreb CGs would almost certainly have had a more nuanced feel for the latter issue. And there were many Croats and Slovenes in leadership positions in Belgrade. Stane Dolanc, a Slovene, was Executive Secretary of the LCY and very close to Tito. So one had a sense even in Belgrade that you were also hearing from Croats and Slovenes, although these would have been the Croats and Slovenes most dedicated to Yugoslavia.

And it's not as though Embassy officers didn't travel to Zagreb. There were major events, such as the annual fall international trade fair, where the U.S. would have a pavilion. And the nuclear reactor being installed by an American company in Krško, Slovenia would also draw embassy visitors. Nonetheless, there was a notable tendency for Western diplomats in Belgrade to view Croats, at least the ones who hadn't come to Belgrade, as under suspicion, as needing to be watched carefully for any factional tendencies. At a more gut level, the unspoken take on Croats among Western embassies – even if never characterized so bluntly -- was that they were sort of, at best, ungrateful whining coffeehouse intellectuals who had not paid their dues in Yugoslavia as the Serbs had done in World Wars I and II and, at worst, anti-Yugoslav aircraft hijacking saboteurs, basically. Again, that's much rougher than we would ever have characterized it but that was the sense that one had in Belgrade of some of "those people up there."

Q: Yes, well, it wasn't just not paying their dues. They were essentially seen as being on the wrong side during World War II.

NEITZKE: True, but in the end we also cut off Allied aid to the Serbs, to Mihailovic and the Chetniks. But the notion that the Croats and Slovenes had not paid their dues was broader than that. At the time of Yugoslavia's founding, the Serbs felt, rightly, that they had spilled most of the blood that made a South Slav state even conceivable, that the Croats and Slovenes had, in a sense, been offered shelter in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes from their former Austro-Hungarian overlords, that they owed a debt of thanks to the Serbs and should have graciously acceded to a guiding Serbian hand in the running of the new state. From Belgrade's perspective, the Slovenes, and especially the Croats, had never accepted these generous terms of membership, had behaved atrociously in World War II, and by the 1960s and 1970s had given rise to elements actively seeking the destruction of the Yugoslav state.

Q: I was once stuck on the Island of Crete, awaiting a trial of some American drug smugglers, and with time to kill went with my interpreter to the only movie in town, The Battle of Neretva, a Yugoslav movie. And I kept having to tell my interpreter that, no, those are the Bulgarians; no,

those are the Romanians; these are the Chetniks. I mean, you had to take a long course to understand who was doing what to whom.

NEITZKE: Part of what Tito manufactured as a national consciousness to combat the reality of wartime slaughter, and obviously it was not ultimately successful but it served its purpose for a number of decades, was that the predominant feature of the war was the rise of the Partisans into a great, cross-national anti-fascist force. There was an active Yugoslav film industry that churned out one film after another, all crude by Western standards, reenactments of major partisan victories where the good guys prevailed.

And the highway between Zagreb and Belgrade, the main highway traversing the country was the Bratstvo and Jedinstvo, Brotherhood and Unity. Again, it's fascinating to me that Tito was able to fashion a nation out of a bloodbath and hold it together with a strong arm but also a dynamism and a certain mythology that actually seemed real for decades.

Q: What about Congressional Delegations visiting Belgrade? Did you get many of those?

NEITZKE: We did, and some were memorable. It's where I first came across Charlie Wilson, for example, and met Senator Dole. But most, as you might imagine, preferred to do their fact-finding in Dubrovnik or somewhere else on the coast. Unlike my later experience in Zagreb in the '90s, I wasn't overly impressed with the caliber or seriousness of some of these guys; it seemed much more vacation than business. One that I'll never forget, led by House Speaker Carl Albert, culminated in a big formal dinner in Novi Beograd, where the guest of honor, feeling no pain whatsoever, rose precariously to his feet to toast the valiant people of Yugoslavia, wherever that was.

Q: I think we have all had experiences like that, but somehow the nation survives. Do you want to add anything before we move on?

NEITZKE: Just to note that, while researching my Naval War College paper in 1991, I read many academic analyses compiled in the early 1980s on the long-term viability of Post-Tito Yugoslavia. None foresaw the destruction of Yugoslavia. Indeed, most of them gave early post-Tito Yugoslav leaders high marks for their efforts to hold the country together. They did not foresee anything like the violent disintegration that ensued in the 1990s. I stress this because, when Yugoslavia finally imploded, many academic experts on the Balkans acted as though they'd seen it coming all along. They hadn't.

Q: This is sort of a contemporary note but I think one has to look at the role of individual leaders in this. If you had not had such a devilish concoction of leaders in Yugoslavia, you might not have had this blow up.

NEITZKE: Maybe not. Perhaps not just then, but eventually something was going to give, I think. On the leadership issue, I recall Warren Zimmerman, our last Ambassador to Yugoslavia, once wrote that he felt "up to (his) ass in pygmies."

Q: Exactly. Well then, you left when?

NEITZKE: March 1978. I left Belgrade three months early. I'd been chosen to be in FSI's Pilot Threshold Training Program. This was one of several attempts over the years to teach management skills to mid-level officers. The idea was that most FSOs, even some of the best FSOs, tended toward solo acts and never became effective managers. This was an attempt to remedy that. There were about 30 in this class, none of us volunteers. It lasted about three months, was the source of some lasting friendships, and ended in a near mutiny.

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.

IRWIN PERNICK
Deputy Chief Political Officer
Belgrade (1976–1978)

Mr. Pernick was born and raised in New York City and educated at City College of New York (CCNY). After service in the National Guard he joined the Foreign Service in 1963 and was posted to Rome. His other foreign posts were in Thailand, where he was Public Affairs Officer and, in Yugoslavia, Political Officer. At the State Department Mr. Pernick held a variety of positions dealing with a variety of issues including Political/Military Affairs, Military Sales, and Press and Public Affairs. Mr. Pernick was interviewed by Raymond Ewing in 1997.

Q: From there you went to Belgrade, Yugoslavia.

PERNICK: After a year of language training, which helped as you can imagine, I was the Deputy Chief of the political section in Belgrade. It was not a very large section and there were lots of different functions outside of the section that we had some responsibility for. This meant some internal reporting. We kept an eye on USIA. I was beginning to prepare for my role as the embassy liaison to the CSCE (Commission of Security and Cooperation in Europe) delegation. CSCE had taken place in Helsinki the year before, 1975. I got to Belgrade in 1976 and the follow up conference to the Helsinki conference was to take place in Belgrade. I think it began in 1977.

Q: The U.S. representative was Arthur Goldberg.

PERNICK: Arthur Goldberg and his deputy was Eagleburger.

Q: Who was the ambassador to Yugoslavia at that time?

PERNICK: That was interesting. When I arrived, Judge Laurence Silberman was the ambassador. Ambassador Silberman has a brilliant mind. He was very interested in what was going on. He was always roaming around the embassy. I only overlapped with him about six months but I liked him. He had turned off a lot of people though. He basically forced his DCM to leave. My predecessor, who left on time, had warned me about him. I found he had a fertile mind. He was lawyer and later a judge. He is now on the DC circuit. I see him once in awhile and he doesn't remember me but he says hello anyway. His wife is a little provocative too, in the sense that she got involved in the American Embassy Ladies Club and then insisted on having briefings from various people. They left after six months.

A year before I arrived the Yugoslavs had arrested a Yugoslav-American in Yugoslavia whom they claimed was not an American citizen. They were holding him on some very serious treason charges. They wouldn't give our Consulate officials access to him because he was born in Yugoslavia and was recognized as a Yugoslav citizen. What was his name? I will think of it. We constantly tried to get access to him, however. Ambassador Silberman tried also but got nowhere. Finally, he saw an opportunity but forgot where he was. He was invited to speak at the US-Yugoslav Chamber of Commerce meeting. He proceeded to tell the people that he could not, as an American Ambassador, guarantee the safety of Americans in the country because he was not being given rightful access to an American that was being held in this country. That upset the Yugoslavs. They did not do anything for awhile. I had a broken car antenna. People had flat tires. We don't know who did it but the police knew who we were. They finally released this man and we got him out of the country quickly. He was incarcerated for over a year and most of the time we had no access to him.

A major non-aligned conference was going to take place the summer of my arrival. What could be more interesting to the Yugoslav press than an interview with Tito? It was two or three pages verbatim in very small print and right in the middle, very prominent, was a question about the release. He highlighted Ambassador Silberman as someone you could never work with and someone you would expect the American government to do something about because he was not fostering relations between the two countries. He fully expected President Ford and Kissinger to

pull him out. Kissinger might have been so disposed but this was before the 1976 elections and you were not going to get a Republican or even a Democrat to pull out an ambassador just because some communist dictator said he was a bad guy. So Silberman lasted until after the election and then he announced his departure. We had chargé d'affaires for six months and then President Carter nominated Larry Eagleburger who had ties with Kissinger and had served in Yugoslavia before. He got an award for some work he did during a serious earthquake in Macedonia and the Yugoslavs were happy to have him.

Q: Your main responsibility was the CSCE conference?

PERNICK: Right.

Q: We sent a large delegation and you arranged things before they got there and liaised with the host government?

PERNICK: Yes. There was a major questionnaire sent out before hand as to what could be expected from the Yugoslavs. We had to do a lengthy analysis of the CSCE agreement and the way each of the signatory nations had carried out the provisions of the agreement. We complemented the Yugoslavs on some issues and hit them over the head on others. I got involved and met a lot of the Yugoslavs. I never felt like I was a true part of the delegation but I useful because I hosted the poker games and I arranged for them to play basketball. I acted as an intermediary when Mr. Goldberg told me that he was not happy with his housing arrangement. I told the ambassador and we worked out an arrangement for the Goldbergs.

Q: How long did that conference last?

PERNICK: About six months.

Q: We had a large delegation that covered human rights. We think of Yugoslavia in 1997 as a failed country, which has split apart. Twenty years earlier it was doing pretty well. It hosted this conference and was active with the non-alignment. Tito played an important role in the world. Could you see any of this coming on? I am sure at the time you were there that the ambassador and others were discussing what was going to happen after Tito.

PERNICK: Yes. To very little avail, though, because everybody sent to Yugoslavia wanted to be there when Tito passed away. Then you would see what the future of Yugoslavia was going to be like. In retrospect, yes, there were seeds of turmoil. I had some Serb friends who took me to visit relatives in a place of Croatia called Lika, near a national park. It was predominately a Serbian area. I had heard some stuff from Serbs in Belgrade but who believes people who just talk all the time. The Yugoslavs really had the benefit of truly being able to get out as long as they weren't too outrageous and so they were more educated. The chances that you would be able to speak Italian or French or German or English as much as Serbo-Croatian was high. They traveled like the Western Europeans. The people in Lika wanted to talk about how terribly they were treated by the Croats in World War II.

I had done some work in graduate school on Yugoslavia so I was very pleased to be assigned

there. My thesis was going to be on US-Yugoslav post war relations. I had done a lot of preparation and once had a conversation with Ambassador Unger who had begun life in the Foreign Service as a geographer. He worked in Trieste before the agreements were hammered out. I had some feeling, but I thought, 30 years later, what are they talking about? What can they possibly have in their minds? They are talking about the current government and most likely the next government who were being prepared to be the future government who were all in favor of socialism. There wasn't a Yugoslav who was allowed to say anything nice about the fascists. There wasn't a Yugoslav who was allowed to say anything nice about the Chetniks who were really the Serbian Royalists and they weren't exactly fascist but they were certainly anti-Tito. I figured after 30 years of development and growth that everyone in this system, which Tito created, had a piece of the action. There were three forms of government. There was the Presidency, which was a ruling group with membership from all of the provinces, six republics and two autonomous provinces. Eight people rotated annually as Vice-President with Tito being President. Then there was the party itself which has a similar type of government but within the party the various functions had people designated to those slot which has to represent fairly the whole country, the nations, the ethnic groups and the religions. Finally, there was the real government, the cabinet. I can't remember the details, but you will see there were maybe three Serbs from Serbia, a Serb from Bosnia, two Croatians from Croatia, and three Muslims from Bosnia. It was very mixed. Everyone was to get something. If a Serb dropped out another would be appointed to keep the balance.

Who would have thought that the Albanians would be able to provoke the Serbs and the Serbs would allow themselves to be so provoked that at the end of the 1980's, 10 years after the death of Tito, when the President of Yugoslavia, who was either a Slovene or a Croatian, would have to attend a major event commemorating the 600th anniversary of the battle of Kosovo where the Serbs lost? The Serbs lost to the Turks. At least the Northern Irish are commemorating a victory. The Serbs were commemorating a battle they lost which caused them to move from their official homeland. Milosevic, President of Serbia was able to use this. He used this event and the whole notion of the Albanian occupation as an excuse to show Serbian strength. In turn this made some of the other republics nervous. The Slovenes first. It couldn't have been better for the Slovenes. They were always looked on as being the Austrians of Yugoslavia. They were the ones who would go along with anything. Therefore when they decided to be independent, the Serbs, who controlled most of the army, did not send a force sufficiently large to subdue the Slovenes. When the Croatians saw the Slovenes doing well against the Serbs, they indicated they were leaving too. They were in a more difficult position because Croatia lies between Serbia and Slovenia. The Serbs found they couldn't resupply their troops in Slovenia so they walked out. The Croatians however, were next door and there were Croatians living in Serbia and Serbians living in Croatia.

The man who was most effective in foretelling events was Ed Derwinski. I was working for him as Secretary of Veterans Affairs at the time Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia were all falling apart. He said that this was nothing and that the most crucial issue would be Bosnia. This was a year or so before anything happened there. Why Bosnia? It was never independent and there were a bunch Muslims living there. A lot of them are Serbs and many Croatians, but so what?

Q: Let's go back to the time that you were there.

PERNICK: I was really taken aback that the Serbs, 30 years after the end of World War II, were still complaining about treatment by the fascist Croatians. Then I heard a little of that in Zagreb, Croatia. The Croatians were not happy with the way the Serbs seemed to lord over the country. It was supposed to be a three-place country after World War I, between the Serbs, Croatians and Slovenes. The Serbs got the capitol, the ruling house and the military. Even though the Croatians had a population advantage over the others they felt that things weren't right. Therefore you can see Croatians joining an independence minded group during World War II to fight the royalist Serbs.

Q: Would you talk a little bit about the relationship between Yugoslavia and the United States. We were concerned about human rights issues and this imprisonment of this person of dual nationality.

PERNICK: We tried frequently to begin discussion about how to treat dual nationalities but without success.

Q: How about other areas? Economically Yugoslavia was beginning to have some difficulty.

PERNICK: I must say that the arrival of Larry Eagleburger and the departure of Silberman started the improvement of relations. The Chargé d'Affaires, Charlie York, was ok, but nothing special. The Yugoslavs were delighted when Larry Eagleburger showed up. He could get into see anyone and never abused that courtesy. I can't recall major problems that we had. I had to attribute that to the fact that the Yugoslavs did not want to mess up the relationship with Eagleburger because they knew they could get a Silberman back.

Q: At that point we still valued the role Yugoslavia in Europe?

PERNICK: Very much. The Cold War was still going on. Yugoslavia was a key, though.

JACK SEYMOUR
Yugoslav Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1976-1977)

Mr. Seymour was born in the Philippines, the son of a U.S Navy family. He earned his bachelor's degree from Dartmouth University in 1962. He joined the Foreign Service in 1967 after serving in the U.S Army for three years. His career included postings in Canada, Yugoslavia, Poland, Germany, and Belgium. Mr. Seymour was interviewed by Raymond Ewing on November 20th 2003.

Q: Okay. OK, now let's move back or on to your assignment to be desk officer for Yugoslavia in the Office of Eastern European and Yugoslav Affairs?

SEYMOUR: Yes.

Q: EEEY. And that was '76 to '77?

SEYMOUR: Yes. From Warsaw I was paneled to go to the Polish desk, but when I arrived,, as Ambassador Davies had told me at the farewell party, they put me on the Yugoslav desk and moved the incumbent there to the Polish desk. This was because of what management called their “special personnel problem” in Belgrade in the form of the ambassador, Lawrence Silberman, who had been appointed, I believe by Gerald Ford, and had become very difficult in several different ways. I can't remember what I said about this earlier.

Q: I don't think you've said much about it, so go ahead.

SEYMOUR: Okay. I'm not sure how much I should say, though; it provides some insights into the politics of the Foreign Service. Essentially Ambassador Silberman was a very energetic fellow and he could have been a great ambassador as a political appointee, but in my view he chose to become an issue instead. Something he had done before I came to the desk was to appoint his own special assistant who became a shadow DCM. This polarized the Embassy and made it impossible for the appointed DCM, an old Yugoslav hand, to function. There were differences of style, for sure, and perhaps of political approach, I am not sure; I got different views from different people at the embassy.

At any rate, Silberman wasn't happy with the DCM but he did not get rid of him directly. What he did was bring in and engineer a foreign service reserve appointment for someone from the outside, a man named Brandon Sweitzer, a rather young, 38 or so, businessman, to serve as a special assistant or advisor to the ambassador. As soon as Sweitzer got settled, apparently, the ambassador began using him like a DCM, and this polarized the embassy, because there was a loyal group behind the incumbent, whose name was Miller, and then there were some who thought Sweitzer wasn't so bad. Eventually Miller left, and by the time I arrived on the desk, Sweitzer was de facto DCM, including to the point of serving as chargé, in charge of the embassy, in the Ambassador's absence, signing the cables and all. This meant that neither of the embassy's top leaders was an experienced career officer, let alone one knowledgeable about Yugoslav affairs. It also created a legal problem, because Sweitzer's name had not been sent to the Senate for advice and consent or confirmation and, as I learned, by law, I am pretty certain, a Foreign Service post must be in the hands of a commissioned officer.

Q: A commissioned.

SEYMOUR: A commissioned officer. So we had a situation in Belgrade that was a little bit out of the ordinary, if not, illegal or contrary to regulation, and the personnel people were dancing around that dilemma. They essentially had three options as Jack Scanlan, who was then head of personnel or administration in the Department, told me (Eagleburger was deputy undersecretary for management). They could put Sweitzer's name up before the Senate for confirmation, remove him or prevent him from serving as chargé, and, of course, just doing nothing. Since it was the summer before another election, summer of '76, you can guess which option they chose.

I naturally had a lot of dealings with Brandon Sweitzer by cable but also in person when he came for consultations, and he was a fine guy, but it was a difficult thing.

Another incident that occurred before I came to the desk brought a lot of things to a head. In the fall of 1975, a Yugoslav American, actually a Hungarian ethnically from Vojvodina, on a visit was arrested and jailed on charges of espionage because he had been taking pictures of a sugar plant. He himself was in the sugar business back in the States, we learned, and he claimed that it was a personal interest. Well, he was held without consular notification or communication for about nine months. This was a big and serious issue, a violation of the very limited but specific agreement we had with Yugoslavia on dual nationals being allowed to leave the country with an American passport if they had entered with one and a Yugoslav visa. Such violations had been a problem when I had served as a consul in Zagreb, but none so serious as this. It also violated the Geneva Consular Convention, in our view.

Q: He was a dual citizen?

SEYMOUR: He was a dual citizen. We had a rather tenuous or too narrow an agreement between Ambassador George Allen and the Yugoslavs back in 1950 that was the basis for our handling of these dual national cases. The agreement, an exchange of notes or memoranda with the Foreign Ministry stipulated only that any national who entered with a Yugoslav visa in his American passport would be allowed to leave on the American passport. I think it responded to a situation where the Yugoslavs were seizing American passports and forcing dual nationals to either renounce their citizenship, which was a lengthy, complicated process, or to accept a Yugoslav passport, which most, those who came to us anyway, did not want to do. This limited agreement was a help but only partially and not in serious cases, like arrests, trials, and imprisonments.

Q: In 1950.

SEYMOUR: In 1950 we negotiated the "Allen agreement," but problems continued and were rife during my time in Zagreb in 1969-71 and later on the desk in 1976-77. A decade later, we negotiated a consular convention which was much better, but we didn't have that at the time I came to the desk in June of 1976, and this man's arrest, Toth was his name, was a very serious issue for us in our relations with the Yugoslavs. There were others too, but this was big. I don't recall the details of the earlier part of it, but by the time I arrived in the summer of, in June of '76 it was getting close to a year since Toth's arrest.

Silberman had been pressing his case hard at every opportunity, and the Department had also been doing so, but there was tension between them. Silberman was conservative and focused on Yugoslavia as a communist dictatorship under a strongman, while the Department, though recognizing that, was also pursuing the decades-long US policy to preserve and encourage Belgrade's independence from Moscow, so that in its handling of the Toth case it was probably balancing with other issues, but there is no question that the Department had raised it to the highest political levels.

One of the first things I did soon after arriving was to go to Niagara Falls for the unveiling there of a statue to Nikola Tesla, a Croatian-American of Serbian extraction who had done a lot of work with electricity in the early days, in competition with Thomas Edison. I believe Tesla actually developed the better method of using alternating current to transmit electricity over long distances. Finally he was getting his due with this statue of him at the Falls, and the Yugoslavs were all happy with that. Frank Zarb, director of the Energy Agency or commission or something like that—we did not have an energy department then—was going to represent the US government and make suitable remarks. Silberman had pressed very hard for us to include something about the issue of Toth's arrest and detention, and we in the department agreed to that, but there was a lot of back-and-forth on how strong the language should be. Ultimately, we submitted three alternative sentences to Henry Kissinger, the secretary of state, for him to decide, and I would like to say more by way of an epilogue about all this later on.

Q: I thought you were going to say that Zarb said all three sentences.

SEYMOUR: Well that would have been interesting too. Actually you were involved in all this at the time. But I forget which gradation of harshness Kissinger chose; I think it was somewhere in the middle. Anyway, I was assigned to go up and in effect make sure everything went right, which turned out to be making sure that Zarb really got it into his speech and said it. But surprisingly, and I think Kissinger was surprised, Zarb was actually reluctant. He told me he thought it was inappropriate and so on and he read it and questioned me closely, perhaps because of the somewhat last-minute nature of the insertion. He asked, "Who wants me to say this?" And I replied that the Secretary had approved it and wants you to say it, to which he questioned, "You mean Henry Kissinger? He wants me to say this?" Then he shrugged and sort said something to the effect that if Henry wants me to say it, then I will. So he did.

A few weeks later there was a meeting of the U.S.-Yugoslav Business Council at Lake Bled in Slovenia, where Ambassador Silberman was going to make remarks. He had drafted a very sternly worded section about Toth, and we at our level, the Office of East European Affairs approved it or something like it. I think it denounced the Yugoslavs for holding Toth; it did not mention Tito by name but was pretty harsh. Well, that morning the Yugoslav embassy called and told us they were going to release Toth, but it was too late for us to inform Silberman so that he might alter his speech. Because of the time difference, I think he had either already said it or was about to and we couldn't prevent it.

Months later, I asked the Yugoslav political consular with whom I worked rather closely about that and there's sort of an epilogue about him too because he is now a US citizen living in the US. But I told him then that we could not understand why you notified first the State Department, when the decision had been made to release Toth in time to notify the Embassy in Belgrade and the Ambassador before he addressed the meeting Bled. The political counselor responded that we didn't want to give Silberman the "satisfaction of getting the word from us. And I said yes but you realize that he might have dropped or altered his remarks, in which case you would have saved some further trouble in our relations. The political counselor just smiled and replied that they "did not want to give Silberman the satisfaction." The Yugoslavs did not care much for Silberman, and it did get worse. We wrangled over exactly when they would release Toth, because they rather took their time, about three weeks, in doing so. We wanted it to

be done immediately but they stalled, claiming the need for things like medical examinations and out-processing.

They finally handed Mr. Toth over to US custody at the airport in Belgrade. The ambassador was there, greeted him, and put him directly on a Pan American flight to the U.S. Then the ambassador called a press conference. I think it had been known or the Embassy had informed the press that this was going to take place, so there were several journalists on hand, perhaps five to 10, including several from the American press. Speaking to them, the ambassador denounced Tito, the president, Marshal Tito by name for this violation of our rights Mr. Toth's rights in pretty hard terms. Moreover, he criticized, condemned, the "obstruction of the Office of Eastern European Affairs" for making more difficult throughout the episode his efforts to get the man released.

Q: Ambassador Silberman did?

SEYMOUR: Ambassador Silberman criticized the office by name. And that brought down the wrath of Congress, among others. I think Senator Buckley, James Buckley from New York called for a "blue ribbon commission" to investigate the Office of Eastern European Affairs and there was much press play about this. So we were thrown into turmoil for a month or more, responding to complaints, letters and calls from the public and Congress, writing press guidance, making lists of all the different times we had made demarches and to whom and all the times that we had sent out instructions to the embassy to make demarches and so forth. Virtually the whole office was involved, the directors and the other desk officers, one way or another in dealing with this.

Q: Of this particular case?

SEYMOUR: On this particular case. And in the course of all this, perhaps two or three weeks into it, there was an interesting and unusual development, which I think you remember and may have helped to arrange: we were all called up to see Arthur Hartman, the Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, one afternoon about 3:00 I think it was, the whole office, the director, his deputy, and everybody. Arthur Hartman talked to us a bit, making small talk really. About 15 minutes went by and were kind of wondering why we were there and then the door burst open and it was Henry Kissinger coming down to the depths of the Department, so to speak, to give us a morale boost. He told us he admired our steadfastness, and he also appealed for us to hang tough and not to talk about it, because it would only make things worse. Then he promised that when the elections were over and the time was right he would "set the record straight" about Silberman. I think those were his exact words or pretty close. But he never did.

Four or five years later, though, when I was in the political sections of the embassy in Bonn, Kissinger, now out of office, came to visit the German capital, as he did once a year perhaps, to keep up his ties and test the mood in Germany. As a private citizen but with his bodyguards, he had meetings with Foreign Minister Genscher and Chancellor Schmidt. And either he asked for or we suggested an embassy tag-along and an embassy car. At any rate I was assigned to accompany him but, as they were private meetings, I was to sit outside.

In the car to the airport, it was evening by then, and the ride took about 30 minutes, he briefed me on the meetings and I took notes on what all they had said in order report to the embassy. Once he had finished, after about 15 minutes, he settled back in the seat, relaxed, sat quietly for a moment and then asked, "Well now, where were you when I was secretary of state?" And I replied that I was on the Yugoslav desk. He paused: "Were you there when that nut Silberman was our ambassador?" I said yes I was. Another pause and then a sigh: "Well, you know, one thing I regret is that I never set the record straight on Ambassador Silberman." I don't know what I said in response but it was probably something like, "That's all right, we got over it." But I was thinking, "Yes, you son of a gun," but I did appreciate and admire his recollection of that.

Q: I don't know if it figures in any of his books; probably not.

SEYMOUR: I don't think so.

Q: I was the special assistant at the time of this to Assistant Secretary of State for European affairs Arthur Hartman, and I do remember that staff meeting of the Office of Eastern European Affairs conducted in Art's office and I was there, I was the note taker for the meeting. And I think I knew-

SEYMOUR: Well you probably knew exactly what he said.

Q: Well, I don't remember- somewhere in there is my record of that conversation and, you know, what you said is more or less what I remember, certainly the context. And I had forgotten exactly what had prompted it and the office director, was that Carl Schmidt at the time or was he the deputy?

SEYMOUR: I think Carl was the deputy and Nick Andrews was director; then later Carl moved up to be the director.

There is one other story that might be of some interest. One of the issues at the time when I arrived was the violence and the assassinations and so on against Yugoslavs, Yugoslavian officials. Three weeks before I got there the Yugoslav embassy had been bombed, that is a bomb exploded there in back of the building damaging a portion, and the Yugoslavs were naturally very upset and security was a big issue with them. There were various incidents I could mention but the main one, which had aftereffects and connections for me, was a hijacking of a TWA airliner that took place I think in about September 1976, a couple of months after I arrived on the desk.

When they found out it was hijacked by Croatians, I was called in the middle of the night and went down to the operations center. Larry Eagleburger was already there. In his capacity as M, Undersecretary for Management, he was also director of counterterrorism, so he was running the show there, and as soon as they learned that there was some Yugoslav connection, they called me in. They had learned that because the plane landed in Montreal and some of the passengers were let out and somehow identified the hijackers as Croatian. It was not a transatlantic flight but put down in Montreal to take on fuel, as the hijackers wanted it to fly to Europe to drop free-Croatia leaflets over London and Paris and then to go on to Yugoslavia to do the same. But the plane was

forced down, or had to take on fuel in Paris, and was held at the airport, and ultimately our ambassador wound up negotiating with the hijackers at the airport. Our ambassador was Rush I think, Ken Rush. And we had only little bits of information about the hijackers. From the passengers who were let off in Montreal we learned that they called the ringleader by the name "Bushich" and among the three or four hijackers was a blonde American woman called "Julie."

I learned this when I went down for breakfast with the FBI man who had been sent over to the operation center for this crisis. The FBI was called in for a number of reasons and there were other elements to this. One was that the hijackers demanded that leaflets or a petition or something calling for a free Croatia that had been left in a suitcase in Grand Central Station should be released to the four major newspapers, The New York Times, The Chicago Tribune, The L.A. Times, and The Washington Post, which the FBI did early that morning, and it was published in at least one or two of those papers. Also in Grand Central Station for a reason I can't quite remember the hijackers had placed a bomb, a suitcase with a bomb, and a policeman or bomb disposal expert was killed in the process of defusing it. That made this whole thing a capital crime with a mandatory life sentence.

Q: Capital offense.

SEYMOUR: A capital offense, and that led to other things and the eventual trials and so on. But when I went down for breakfast and happened to join the FBI man in the line there, I asked him a little bit more about what was going on, what they knew about the hijackers and so on, and told me the ringleaders were a Croatian named Bušić (Bushich) and an American named Julie. That was interesting, because when I was in Zagreb in 1970 or '71 on the Yugoslav national day, November 29, two young women, Americans, were arrested for throwing free-Croatia leaflets out of the *neboder*, or "skyscraper," the tallest building on the main square there. They were arrested and that became a big consular case for us. One was Julie Schultz, who had been put up to the leaflet-throwing by a permanent resident from Croatia I think living in Cleveland, named Zvonko Bušić. When I mentioned that, the FBI man turned to me and said I think-

Q: Those are the two.

SEYMOUR: Those are the two. And it turned out they were. They were married now and I recall that somehow rather soon after talking with the FBI agent, I was hustled over to the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) operations center. There I encountered the man who has since written novels about such things, one called Op-Center, written with Tom Clancy, I believe. Steve Pieczenik was his name. He was a psychiatrist by training and an expert on these situations.

Q: Expert on negotiation, hostage situations and so on.

SEYMOUR: That's exactly right.

Q: University of Virginia.

SEYMOUR: I think so, but on contract to the State Department. Anyway, I was ushered in to see him and he sat me in an office there, closed the door and started peppering me with questions. He was trying to build a profile of the hijackers. I remember, for example, recalling the month or so that Julie spent in jail before her trial in Zagreb. She faced pretty severe penalties, as it was a rather serious offense in Yugoslavia at the time. She ultimately got a two-year suspended sentence and, I think, an expulsion and banishment from the country for a period. I recall my wife thinking that she had been up to no good and wasn't a naïve thing as we were portraying her but knew perfectly well what she was doing and we had all been deceived by the young, naïve blonde bit. This turned out to be true, but at that time she got off lightly.

Before the trial, though, we did all the normal consular things, helped get her a lawyer, visited her in jail, and delivered mail. She received quite a few letters, from a kid brother who made drawings and her father, a professor at Portland State. She was from Portland, Oregon, and she became rather emotional reading these letters, especially from her father. When I mentioned this to Pieczenik, he exclaimed, "Ah, a father figure," and later in briefing Ambassador Rush about how to negotiate with her, as she did the talking for the hijackers at the airport, he emphasized that the Ambassador should assume the air of a fatherly figure. Eventually, they did surrender, probably because they realized the futility of pressing further and perhaps were satisfied that at least their statement on independence for Croatia had been published in the press as they had demanded.

Two things happened subsequently by way of epilogue. When I was now retired probably in about the early '90s and Croatia had indeed gained its independence and opened an embassy in Washington, I went to an event at the Catholic University here, a roundtable discussion or something with Catholic priests and some others from Croatia. I was then following Balkan issues at the Atlantic Council, and I noticed that the list of participants included the press officer from the Croatian embassy, Julienne Bušić. I scrutinized the participants but saw no one who looked like her. Apparently, she didn't show up, or if she was there, she was much changed. I was rather stunned at the idea, though, for I did not think it was exactly appropriate that there would be a Croatian official whose husband is serving in the penitentiary and who had caused all this difficulty and had actually hijacked one of our airplanes. I told somebody on the desk-

Q: In the State Department?

SEYMOUR: In the State Department who explained that they were vaguely aware of this incident in the past but felt that there was nothing really that could be done. Now I understand she's back in Croatia, in Zagreb, doing something in public relations there.

In addition, I knew a journalist, David Binder and mentioned all this to him. He contacted Mrs. Bušić and learned that she had met with the widow of the policeman and had appealed to her on the basis of their common loss of husbands, the widow's when her husband died trying to defuse the bomb and she when her husband went to prison. The widow apparently did intervene somehow to try to get Bušić released or get time off, though apparently to no avail, and the two women corresponded a bit. They had a bond of sorts, and David Binder became really intrigued with that. He followed it up, as I said, with his interviews and wrote a story about it for the New York Times.

Q: Alright. You never know.

SEYMOUR: There were a couple of other interesting things. Would you be interested in a kidnapping and counter-kidnapping and legal advice and that?

Q: Yes. Let me ask you one question before we get to that. You had served in Yugoslavia previously.

SEYMOUR: Yes, in Zagreb as a consular officer...

Q: Okay. So that was in a sense your preparation for this assignment on the desk?

SEYMOUR: Yes. And I had studied Serbo-Croatian at the Army Language School for a year, about six years before, but the training at Monterey was very good, once I learned my assignment to Zagreb was official, I was in INR at the time, I used to go over to FSI on my lunch hour to brush up by listening to language tapes, for about three or four months before going out. Then one of the problems I had is that I had actually learned Serbian. Although there were a couple of Croatians on the staff at Army Language School it was mostly composed of former Serbian military. There was one fellow, I guess he was Montenegrin, whose claim to fame was to have flown the plane that took the young king to exile in London just ahead of the German invasion of Yugoslavia where he set up the government in exile in 1941. So these instructors were along in years.

But the post language program in Zagreb was really valuable to me when I got there and needed to adapt quickly to the Croatian form of the language. I'd like to make a pitch for language training at post, because I understand that, later, money was cut for these programs. For me, as one who had studied the language actually six years before, the training at post, perhaps three days a week, helped me revive it quickly. More important, it helped me to learn the Croatian variation, which was really essential. By six months or so, I was quite comfortable in Croatian. There's little real difficulty in understanding, but there are clear differences of grammar and vocabulary and it was only through the post language program that I could have picked that up so quickly.

Q: Now this period '76-'77 when you were on the Yugoslav desk in Washington, did you travel much to the country or pretty much stayed in Washington?

SEYMOUR: No, actually I did not travel, mainly because I was only there for a year and, coming from Poland, my plan and desire was to be Polish desk officer, to which the office agreed. I believe my only travel was to Niagara Falls for the Nikola Tesla statue unveiling that I mentioned. After the year they paneled someone else into the Yugoslav slot (it was Darrell Johnson), and I went to the Polish desk, as planned. I did travel a bit there, to Milwaukee, I believe to speak at the university and meet with Polish-American groups and to the Embassy and the Consulate in Krakow for consultations there. I had more experiences on the Polish Desk, for example the Poland Day and the other things mentioned earlier.

Q: And the reason you were put on the Yugoslav desk was basically to deal with a very difficult situation and perhaps your predecessor, they needed to move him out, or her out because of some of the problems with the ambassador.

SEYMOUR: Well, yes, I felt badly about that, frankly, and we can turn a little bit to some other things about the ambassador, but it was Alan Thompson, whom I had actually met before coming into the Foreign Service when I was in the army in Berlin. He was executive assistant to the minister there. He and Bruce Flatin, who was with the mission there, both coached me about getting into the Foreign Service. I took the exams in Berlin, monitored by Bruce. So I knew Alan a little bit beforehand. He was a friend, and he had served in Yugoslavia, before Silberman, but not in Poland, so when they switched him to the Polish desk and put me on Yugoslavia, we worked together a fair amount, helping each other. I felt very badly for him and I don't think it was really quite fair; however, I don't believe it affected him at all career-wise.

It was a very special situation. On about the first day I reported I was told to go up and see Arthur Hartman. He sat me down, and said essentially that we've got a real problem in dealing with this Ambassador because he sees in everything that we are somehow out to get him or to frustrate what he tries to do. The word was that Secretary Kissinger had apparently jokingly told Silberman when he was sworn in or at some point early on that he should watch out for those FSOs, because they will try to diddle you or some such thing.

Q: He took it seriously.

SEYMOUR: I think he took it seriously, but the problem was not with the desk. He said that himself to me later, adding that he was sorry it had caused difficulties for Alan or me. He said, "My problem" is not with the desk!" He really didn't think his problem was with Kissinger either; he thought he had Kissinger's strong support, which, I quickly learned, was not really true. His problem was with Hartman, and I never fully understood that, except that Arthur Hartman was his more frequent high-level interlocutor at the Department, I imagine. Anyway, Hartman told me that day about all this and instructed me, among other things, that I in clearing cables going to Belgrade, I should read very carefully every one, the most routine from all agencies. Moreover, anything involving policy in any way should have in addition to the normal seventh-floor clearance an additional clearance from M, that is, the Under Secretary for Management, who at the time was none other than Larry Eagleburger. He had to clear for appropriateness or for language that might cause misunderstandings or, worse, appear insulting to the Ambassador—anything that would set him off. I had never encountered anything like this and was rather astonished, but their concerns proved true and the extra care they wanted me to exercise quickly proved entirely appropriate.

Several weeks on, for example, I began noticing that the cables were being signed not just "Silberman," as customary, but "Silberman CAB". I noticed and wondered if it was not some new communications symbol, as there were many acronyms on our cables but I didn't think much more of it. Then, the first time Silberman came back for consultations he came round to see me and Sam Fromowitz, who was the economic officer. Sam was a great, great guy and a good colleague. He had been in Belgrade when I was at the Consulate General in Zagreb, and we had a lot of fun working together in Washington.

Well, what the Ambassador wanted to know first of all was “what are they saying about me, what’s going on?” He asked if they had said anything about the “CAB,” and at first it didn’t register. Then he pressed, saying, “You know, the “Silberman CAB!?” And I asked, “Well, what does that mean? And he replied: “Conceited Arrogant Bastard,” explaining that, “One of those State Department guys had called me that, so I thought I would just start signing my name that way.” He was reacting to was a little piece that had appeared in the Wall Street Journal, in their front-page column where they brief news items. This one summarized the dust-up over the Toth case, reporting Silberman’s denunciation of Tito and quoting some State Department official as saying that our ambassador there was just a “conceited arrogant bastard.” So he was reacting to that.

He also wrote what became a rather infamous letter to a Yugoslav-Canadian who wrote to him in Belgrade complaining about his criticisms of Tito, the head of the country as unseemly in a serving ambassador. The first word we got on that was from the man in Canada himself who forwarded us a copy of his correspondence with the Ambassador, explaining that we might want to see it to know what our ambassador was really like. To the man’s letter criticizing him for behavior unbecoming of an ambassador, criticizing publicly the head of state of the country he was serving in, Silberman had responded, and I think I remember it verbatim, even close to the exact date: “Dear Mr. Jovanovic (I believe it was), I have your letter of September 28. Kiss my ass! Sincerely, Lawrence H. Silberman, Ambassador.”

Q: Didn't say CAB?

SEYMOUR: No, it didn't say CAB but I'm sure it had that effect. The Jack Anderson column got hold of the letter somehow and called me wanting to confirm it. I did confirm it and told him we had the letter too, or a copy of it, and the caller, one of Anderson’s assistants, just laughed and called it “refreshing.” I believe they printed a short item about it.

Q: Direct.

SEYMOUR: Direct, yes.

Q: Okay. Well, what else did you want to? You mentioned a kidnapped, counter-kidnapping.

SEYMOUR: Oh yes. This was a legal case. And again it's an example of how the two years of consular work in Zagreb proved extremely helpful in serving on the desk. In fact, I would say if you include all the various inquiries you get, about 50 percent of the work was essentially consular, so without that experience I would not have been nearly as well prepared.

But this was a strange case. I was contacted by a lawyer representing a family in New Jersey whose daughter had had a child by her Yugoslav husband, or divorced husband. A court in New Jersey gave custody to her but with visiting rights for him, and on a visit one day he took the child back to Yugoslavia. The lawyer was trying to see what could be done about it.

Well, to contradict what I just said, I didn't really have much experience with that kind of thing, but I did have good contact with the counselor for consular affairs at the Yugoslav embassy. My first telephone call when I got to the operations center on that hijacking case had been to him. I had met him only the night before at his welcoming party, and over the months we had developed good working relations. So we discussed the case a bit from what the lawyer had told me, and he offered to meet with the lawyer to get more details and see how he could help.

We met a week or so later at lunch hosted by the lawyer at the Metropolitan Club, which was nice for both of us. The lawyer laid out the situation very plainly, and the Yugoslav embassy officer equally plainly gave his views of the options under Yugoslav law. He said that the Yugoslav courts would probably favor the father, a surprise in one sense, but he thought they would not give much weight to a New Jersey court decision favoring the mother. Talking it all through, he asked if the lawyer had thought of a "counter-kidnapping," which the Yugoslav official ventured might be the best solution? So we all thought about the various implications of that and came around to thinking that was really the best way to go.

So the lawyer went away with that and a month or so later I got another call from him asking if the embassy could possibly make one of its vehicles available to a firm in London that the family had hired, because the firm thought it would be easier to exit the Yugoslav border in an embassy car. I replied as politely and as reasonably as I could that I didn't think that was something that the U.S. government really should be dealing with. The lawyer indicated he had rather expected that but wanted to ask. I told him I was really sorry, but he said it was a pretty good firm and he thought they would find other ways.

Sure enough, a certain time later, I got a very happy call from the lawyer who told me that yes, the child was back. We talked about possible further ramifications and how to protect from something further or even worse, but I heard nothing more until I got another call from the lawyer asking if it was all right to give my name to a man who was going to write a book about this whole affair in order to recoup the costs to the family, because the firm in London was pretty expensive, I think. I truthfully said I would really be interested in that but, again, thought that it was not appropriate, and again the lawyer assured me he fully understood my position. He thanked me very much again and we wished each other and the family well. I had never heard of anything like that.

Q: To what extent did you keep the- our embassy in Belgrade informed of that kind of a case?

SEYMOUR: I believe I informed them initially about the meeting with the Yugoslav consul general and probably told them about declining the request for use of an embassy car, alerting them generally to the possibility of a child-custody operation. We usually put such things into an "official-informal" cable. Beyond that, I would have needed more detail myself—who it was, what was going on, when, and so forth—and that would have required a degree of involvement that was best not to get into. This was also the Yugoslav consular official's position in that meeting we had: he did not want to get officially involved, even though he had informally given the advice that was ultimately followed successfully.

Q: Okay. Anything else that really stands out on the Yugoslav desk, which was quite an eventful year for lots of reasons?

SEYMOUR: Well yes, it was. There was a fair amount of concern about security of the Yugoslav installations and personnel, as I mentioned, and various instances of violence throughout the year. I mentioned the bombing of the embassy, and a Serbian-American newspaper editor in Chicago was murdered later on. Initially, the American Serbs were saying the Yugoslav secret service had done it, but eventually it came out that it resulted from some kind of rivalry within the Serbian community. Then, somebody in Cleveland, a Croatian I think, had his home burned down, and he thought it was because he was prominent and “people” were out to get him for political reasons.

We also had frequent complaints about the Yugoslav consul general in San Francisco who occasionally brandished a pistol that he kept in his desk to intimidate people who were trying to get visas for visits to Yugoslavia when they were American citizens too. It was the dual-national issue I mentioned before. In addition, there were reports of “Croatian militia” training in the mountains in California waiting for that day when Tito would be gone.

We also received inquiries occasionally from local American officials about how to deal with certain things, say, the mayor of some town invited to a big Croatian event on April 10 to celebrate “Croatian independence.” Well April 10 happens to be the day the fascist government was installed in Zagreb under the wing of the Nazis, and so we advised that people stay away from that. In addition, a group of American airmen from World War II periodically pressed for a Congressional resolution honoring Draža Mihajlović, a Serbian Chetnik leader whose guerrilla fighters had saved them and other American flyers during World War II but who afterwards was tried and executed by Tito’s government. The idea of a resolution and stature honoring Mihajlović was anathema to the regime and it always raised it as a test of US support, which of course created a ticklish situation for us

There was also the case of Andrija Artuković, who had been minister of the interior and, I think, later of justice in the so-called independent state of Croatia allied to the Nazis during the War. He was a member of the Ustashe party, a fascist movement supported by Mussolini from the late 1920s. After the war, he had made his way to the U.S under false pretenses of some kind. Then later in the 1950s he was found out and ordered to be deported, but the order was stayed on grounds that he would not get a fair trial in Yugoslavia.

The case was raised and re-examined from time to time, but we could never get around that point about the fair trial. During the time I was on the desk, the Justice Department established an office of special investigations to press for proceedings against Nazis and their supporters, many from Eastern Europeans, who had escaped to the US and elsewhere. Justice moved to re-examine the stay of deportation in Artuković’s case and reopen the whole business. We worked pretty hard with them on that. I recall spending a lot of time going through the documents and the history of the proceedings here, which at one point were reviewed by the Supreme Court, in the late 1950s, I believe, and trying to find ways to overcome this both legally and politically. It was eventually done, not on my watch but I believe during Darrell Johnson’s tenure.

Artuković, then a very old man in his 70s or beyond, was returned to Yugoslavia. He was in poor health and couldn't really stand trial. Then he died and was buried there, and his son in California was pleading with us on humanitarian grounds to press the Yugoslavs to allow him bring his father's body back to the US, so it became a different kind of case, like the Bušić one had done, in a way.. I honestly don't remember the outcome of that, but it was, again, a consular kind of issue with political implications.

There was something else, too that I had in mind to mention, but suffice it to say the Yugoslav desk had always been considered a really challenging assignment and it was certainly that during my year there.

Q: Was there much consideration of really broad policy issues about keeping Yugoslavia together or? I mean, Tito was still alive at this point, that was still kind of for the future I guess?

SEYMOUR: Yes. At that point, in the mid-'70s it was still for the future, but there was always the concern. I think just about every Yugoslav desk officer beginning about 1960 thought that Tito would die on his watch, and we were always very concerned about what would follow. Later on, in 1987-89, when I was back as deputy director for that area, the Balkans, we began to see the beginnings of the fracturing that soon led to disintegration. We were actually surprised that it had held together as well as it did, nearly a decade after Tito's death in 1980. Many, if not most thought it could collapse earlier. There was also the view among some that somehow the country would "muddle through," but it was always an issue.

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 --

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.

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.

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.

**DAVID M. EVANS
Economic Counselor
Belgrade (1977-1979)**

**NSC Committee re Post-Tito Yugoslavia
Washington, DC (1980)**

Mr. Evans was born and raised in Philadelphia, PA and was educated at Harvard University and the University of Belgrade Law School. After service in the US Army, he joined the Foreign Service in 1963. As an Economic Specialist, Mr. Evans served in Warsaw, Belgrade, Moscow and London. In addition to his economic assignments, he served in senior level positions dealing with International Security and Counter-Terrorism. He also served as Political Advisor to the Commander-in Chief, US Naval Forces in Europe. Mr. Evans was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1996.

EVANS: Art Worster was the Deputy Director General of the State Department at that point for personnel. He said that Larry Eagleburger wanted someone to go out to Belgrade. There was a problem with the economic counselor who had initially been assigned out there. He wanted much more of an activist, because he wanted to focus on economic relations with Yugoslavia. He asked me if I was willing to go out. I said, "That sounds great," because I had been in Yugoslavia, and still spoke the language, and I knew Belgrade like the back of my hand, and knew the country pretty well. I said, "When should I go out?" He said, "In the next two weeks." I did, but it was another nail on the coffin of our marriage, I am afraid. Although, I had hoped that my wife would come out, she did not, and that pretty well set our course on our eventual divorce. She did not join me for the two years that I was out there.

Q: You were there from?

EVANS: 1977 to 1979.

Q: What was the situation in Yugoslavia during this period, both economically and politically?

EVANS: By the time I went out, Yugoslavia was in an economic boom. Typically, most Yugoslav families had two cars, but sometimes they had more. Most had a country place, or a place on the coast. If a Yugoslav woman of any sort of decent urban level wanted new shoes, she would go to Italy. If she wanted fresh fruit, she would go to Italy or Austria. They were living high off the hog. In fact, one of the things we did was to start writing about conditions. I went out as consul under Larry Eagleburger who was determined to focus heavily on economic areas to make this a major mark on his ambassadorship to Yugoslavia. When he was there earlier he was a junior economic officer.

Q: He was number three in the Economic Section. I was offered his job when he left, and I stayed as Chief of the Consular Section.

EVANS: People in the U.S. talked about Larry and Macedonia. He thrived on the job, so he and I really became sidekicks. I was very close to him. We used to play tennis every morning. Then I would have breakfast with him, and we would go into the office together. We traveled around the country together. When I got there, he said that he really wanted a push and that he wanted me to visit every republic, which we did, plus the two autonomous republics. That was three republics that we each did and we encouraged trade missions from these republics: Bosnia was one, Slovenia another. All of these were constituent republics. It was a very busy period. The

Yugoslav economy was booming. But what people were only beginning to realize was that it was a false economy. It was based on excessive borrowing and, sooner or later, it was all going to fall in on itself. As long as Tito was alive, people kept lending more money to Yugoslavia. When I first got there, Tito was in reasonably good shape. He started to deteriorate in 1978. It was in the fall of 1978 that he took a fall. It was then apparent that he was having trouble. I left in October of 1979 and by the time I left Tito was a very sick and failing individual. In that first period, prosperity rang. Yugoslavs had money to burn. There was tremendous building; banks were lending money; U.S. banks were coming in, right and left. Ironically it was a field day. Yugoslavia was hailed as the one free-market economy country in the East Bloc complex in the Warsaw Pact. We didn't even consider Yugoslavia to be communist because they were not on the watch list of bad countries. In fact, when I was working on things like that, they were virtually in the Western camp.

Q: When you came out there, this was a great time, everything was booming. At the same time, when you arrived there, since you had not been following this, in particular, you were kind of the new boy on the block, even though you went back to your college days. Were you getting reports from the Economic Section, or anyone else, saying, "We better watch this?"

EVANS: Oh, yes. One of my bright, young economic officers was Bill Montgomery, who you may know. He became Ambassador to Bulgaria. And Chris Hill, who is going to be the first U.S. Ambassador to Macedonia. I had a very bright bunch of boys. I say boys, because they were quite young. I supervised nine people. It was a big section. The bulk of the CIA was also working for me too, ostensibly. We were very active. People were coming and going all the time. But, yes, it was Bill Montgomery, to his credit, who took me aside, shortly after I got there, and said, "Look, maybe you can help me sell my analysis; 'the sky is going to fall in.'" Larry didn't want to sell it. He didn't want to say that the sky was going to fall in. We had a hard time getting this view across, but we did. It was one thing I felt bad about. I backed Bill, signed off on these airgrams, they went out. Occasionally, I signed off on them, and they just went out, without being cleared, which caused a problem, but they were late. As it turned out, Yugoslavia was living way beyond its means. The thing that was driving all of this was Tito. Everybody wanted to treat Yugoslavia as well as possible, because Tito was there, and was friendly. As long as Tito was happy and anti-Soviet, that was the main thing. The sky started to change in 1979 but the euphoria still reigned in September of 1979, a month before I was due to leave. The World Bank and I held our annual meeting in Belgrade, first time ever that they met in a Communist country. David Rockefeller was there. Everybody was there. That got me involved with the Rockefeller people, particularly because the euphoria continued. Nobody wanted to see Yugoslavia go down the drain for economic reasons, so, the West kept pumping more money into Yugoslavia.

Q: I would have thought that you would find like-minded people, bankers, other embassies and all, beginning to look at this. There is psychology, but, also, there are the facts and figures . . .

EVANS: Most of these loans were short-term loans and most of them were guaranteed. Ex-Im Bank was running all over the place, guaranteeing everything. The only people who were going to lose would be the taxpayers, in most of these cases. Other deals were structured. I was there when the famous McDonnell-Douglas plane deal was made in exchange for ham. McDonnell-Douglas company restaurants were serving Yugoslav ham for years and years to pay for the DC-

8 that the Yugoslavs bought.

Q: How did you find the Yugoslavs getting around the country, and all? How were you?

EVANS: If I do say so, I knew the country like the back of my hand. I traveled on a motor scooter everywhere, literally. I don't think there was a district of Yugoslavia that I hadn't traveled in. My language came back, within a month, I was fluent. I had a ball, as far as that goes. It was very friendly to Americans, basically. There was some harassment, but low-level, and we all knew that they were checking on us, but, in the economic area, there wasn't that much. I wasn't dealing with protestors, or anti-Communists or anything. Basically, on the other side, I got to know and become fairly friendly with Milosevic, who was Chairman of the Belgrade Bank, at that point. Larry Eagleburger and I would go out to his house and have roast lamb on a fire, and that sort of thing.

Q: How did you find his wife?

EVANS: I didn't ever meet her. It wasn't until later that I realized that he even had a wife, the famous Mira Markovic. He never brought her to any meetings, or traveled with her. I guess we knew he had a wife, but she was never brought out.

Q: How did you find Milosevic at that time?

EVANS: I thought he was very charming. Of course, he was a force to be reckoned with. We knew that Beogradska Banka, which he was Chairman of, was a front for the secret police. We also knew that he had an agenda. He was, nevertheless, very urbane, very cosmopolitan, quite sharp, not a banker, by profession, of course, but a politician who had been put in to head the bank, and to be a front man, as companies do, or put in a politician to get business. He went over to New York all the time. He knew America very well. He was always on the phone or his assistants were. We had instant access. He made Beogradska Banka the lead in dealing with matters affecting America certainly for Serbia, but not for Ljubljana, because Ljubljanska Banka was the lead Slovenian bank. Most Yugoslav bankers came from Slovenia, the real bankers. As far as we knew, Sloba was a good fellow, although one to be watched and one with obvious connections to the party and the secret police.

Q: What was your impression as you went around to the industries there? These were so-called "workers' owned" industries. What was your impression of them?

EVANS: Well, except for Slovenia, and some in Croatia, obviously, they were appalling, reminding one of what you saw in the Soviet Union. If you got down into Macedonia, for example, and Pristina, and certain parts of Southern Serbia, and much of Bosnia, it was very primitive, to say the least, primitive, inefficient, dirty, sloppy, all those things. The worst of Communism meets the worst of the Southern Balkans.

Q: Did this also ring warning bells when you thought that here was a country that is considered to be really moving?

EVANS: Warning bells were that this economic disparity was going to rip this country apart; not the ethnic thing. I still maintain that it was economic disparity that provoked and created the drive for Slovenia and Croatia to secede. It was not the ethnic conflict as much as it was the resentment of the north for supporting the inefficient, grubby, uncivilized south. The disdain that the Croats had for the Serbs was palpable and mutual. But, added to that, it was a strain on a cultural level. There was the religious difference, of course, but, what really burned up the Croats and the Slovenians, was that they were sending 85% of their tax dollars down to the damn Macedonians and Kosovars to waste and squander. They took the money and drank and ran around. That was the feeling and, to some extent, it was justified. Foreign exchange was earned in Slovenia and Croatia from tourism. Croatia was given the best slice of Yugoslavia. Another part of the terrible problem of Yugoslavia falling apart was that it had the whole coastline, and the heartland. How could Croatia lose? They had the main source of currency, which was tourist trade. Slovenia, of course, was protected and tucked up under Austria's wing. It was unfair that the Macedonians were left with a lot of arid soil and bad weather.

Q: While you were there, particularly toward the end, Tito was failing. What was the attitude of the Embassy, yours, Larry Eagleburger's? Who was the political counselor at that time?

EVANS: Initially, it was Mark Palmer, and then it was Harry Dunlop.

Q: I've interviewed Harry. What was the feeling about withering Yugoslavia?

EVANS: I don't know that there was one firm view. It was a constant question that we were all asking. I remember we were told that Yugoslavia had been added to the top five areas of concern on the CIA's global watch list, along with Iran, because of this uncertainty as to what would happen after Tito's death. Suddenly, by the end of 1978, beginning of early 1979, the question was not whether, it was when, and what would happen after Tito. The political people were focusing more on Soviet domination and a lot of scenarios were drawn up about moving western forces into counter Soviet invasions. There were certain Yugoslavs who were pro-western who said that if they didn't get out in time, they would be swinging from lampposts. On the political side, there was an actual fear of a possible Soviet military invasion. That was one option. The other was the breakup, along political lines; maybe the Soviets would grab a chunk and maybe we would then try to grab the coastline. But, it was all Soviet-oriented.

Q: The Soviet menace, as in so many other places, was part of the glue that kept a lot of stuff together, all over the world, including the Soviet empire.

EVANS: It wasn't until later, which we can go into, in my follow-up job back in Washington, that it suddenly became apparent that it was the economic area that was going to cause this whole house of cards to collapse.

Q: Unless there is something else that we should cover in Yugoslavia, maybe we should stop at this point, and we will pick it up the next time . . . you left there in the fall of 1979, and went where?

EVANS: I went back to Washington. After a very brief time over at the Board of Examiners, I

was called by EUR, the European Bureau, to come over, and given a very interesting job as the Executive Director of an inter-agency task force, examining the “after Tito” question.

Q: One last question on this Belgrade thing. You mentioned being close to Larry Eagleburger. How was he as an Ambassador and to work with, as a manager?

EVANS: Oh, I thought he was wonderful. The Embassy functioned beautifully, morale was high. He was very personable, as you know, I’m sure. He was demanding, but very accessible. He was not full of himself. I thought he did an absolutely superb job. Yugoslavia was a must stop for high-level visitors and delegations, and a lot of that was due to Larry Eagleburger’s almost magnetic personality.

Q: Still, in 1979, you were with BEX, after Tito left?

EVANS: I did not seek, I did not welcome, and I did not like going to the Board of Examiners. It has a justified reputation of being a back water, and it was, for many people, a holding action. Fortunately I was there for only two months. Then, I got a call from the Deputy Assistant Secretary for European Affairs who was responsible for Southern European Affairs, Bob Barrett, and he asked if I would be free to start immediately to head up a task force to look into the “after-Tito” scenario. This must have been about January of 1980. I came back in October of 1979. In January of 1980, I gratefully left BEX in Rosslyn, and went over to the Bureau of European Affairs, once again. I was ensconced in an office in the South Balkans, the Office of Eastern European Affairs, once called “EE.” I was given the responsibility of Executive Director, Executive Secretary, something like that, of a rather ad hoc, NSC Committee or task force, not a committee, to develop strategies in preparation for Tito’s death, which was now becoming more obvious that this was going to happen. This was fascinating because it brought me into contact with the military, with the economic area, with the political area, with the various elements of the NSC that come together for inter-agency meetings. I could draw on my former White House experience, when I was with the Council on International Economic Policy. I think that helped. Of course, I was fresh out of Yugoslavia, and through Yugoslav friends, had followed Tito’s illness very closely, as we all did. I realized, from some inside information that I had, that he was much sicker than the authorities let on. He had stumbled badly on several occasions and was losing his balance. Our initial focus was very much in the military area and I worked very much with both the Political Military Bureau in State, and directly with DOD, and the JCS (Joint Chiefs of Staff) drawing up various contingencies. Believe it or not, we actually had contingency plans that would bring in NATO forces, (U.S., primarily) down to Yugoslavia to hold off or counter a Russian invasion of Yugoslavia. The major military scenario was that the Russians would see this as a chance to move into Yugoslavia.

Q: We are talking about January 1980?

EVANS: Right.

Q: In December of 1979, we had had this major move of the Soviets into Afghanistan, and so,

putting this into context, there was the feeling that the Soviets were on the move.

EVANS: Yes, very much. It is interesting, in today's context, to look back and think that was our worry. But that was the concern, that they would move on Yugoslavia. We had actual airborne, Naval supported operations, and a tremendously complex scenario worked up, all of which seemed very logical. There was a lot of serious discussion about this. It was quite a busy time.

Q: Were you getting anything from the Soviet desk about what Soviet intentions might be, at that time? Do you recall?

EVANS: I don't recall getting anything threatening. In other words, there was no actual indication, that I ever received and I think all of my code word clearances were still in force at that time. At least as far as I was informed, or privy to, there were no indications of any Soviet forces massing. We were very sensitive to the overflight question. There was a feeling that it might be provoked by Yugoslav permission for the Soviets to overfly Yugoslavia, en route to some Arab state or something like that. But, I do not remember any particular information about Soviet forces massing near the western Soviet border, or anything like that. Obviously, that was a key concern but my recollection was this was all a contingency plan. It was not based on any perceived, actual threat.

Q: What was the reaction of the Department of Defense? We were still coming out of Vietnam. Did you find either reluctance or interest in doing something? Was this something that just tasked them, and it was done in a professional manner; did you find any sort of concern?

EVANS: I think it is fair to say that the State Department, the Political-Military people, were much more gung-ho about committing forces than was the Defense Department. In the meetings, the PM (office of Political-Military Affairs) representatives were the ones that were driving the train much more than Defense. I think this may have been part of that whole period during which the Defense Department was reluctant to be in the vanguard of seeking foreign engagements. Nevertheless, they were very positive players. There was none of the reluctance that we saw later, in more recent years under Colin Powell, of stating, basically: "We will not commit troops unless we are assured of victory." Easy in, easy out. There was no analysis at that time, of getting in and getting out. There was the feeling that this was one of the top priorities because this was a critical area for us. If the Soviets moved into Yugoslavia, that would open up a nice, soft, underbelly scenario. And so, it received a fair amount of importance.

Q: How long did this study last?

EVANS: It began in January and on a Sunday in May, May 20? I was working in my back yard at our house in the District and the phone rang. I got the word that Tito had died. It was a holiday. We had anticipated that this would be announced over a holiday when people are away and not in the streets. I rushed in and we flailed around with the various preparations that were to be made. At that point, my focus changed from contingency planning, of what to do after Tito, to organizing our delegation to Tito's funeral. Meanwhile, I had been informed by my inside sources that Tito had actually died in February and had been kept on ice, until he had been officially announced dead in May. I have no way of proving that. But I believe that it was true. It

came from medical sources in the hospital where he was staying. By this time there had been a subtle change from the perception of the military threat to the realization that we were going to have to deal with an economic situation. This tied in very much to my previous function as Economic Counselor in Belgrade and my work on the Council of International Economic Policy at the White House. Even before his death there didn't seem to be any real grounds to think that there was going to be an actual military attack. There was increasing indication that Yugoslavia was going to fall apart economically. That would drive this internal division and the disintegration that we all feared after strong men asserted themselves in various rivalries. Of course, they had that revolving presidency mechanism set up. But I started working with Treasury, much more than the task force, and the EB Bureau, and outside bankers, and the Rockefeller people, for instance, Chase Manhattan was very much involved, that sort of thing. The focus, as I say, was on the funeral - this was a tremendous headache, and a real insight for me into how ridiculous the Carter White House was. Tito, after all, was a very important personage, and despite Yugoslavia being communist, we had, basically, been backers of Yugoslavia, since the 1950s. Yugoslavia was essentially our part of the world in that period. Obviously, a strong delegation had to go, but it was decided that the President would not go, that it would be inappropriate. And, for some reason, the Vice President, could not go. So, the head of the delegation was Jimmy Carter's mother, Ms. Lillian. Well, Ms. Lillian Carter headed the delegation. There were screams of protest from people who were knowledgeable about Yugoslavia, including David Rockefeller. Others pointed out that this was very inappropriate, that it would be insulting to a macho society and inappropriate inasmuch as Ms. Lillian was not exactly hitting on all sixes. But the White House was adamant. There were a lot of headaches about it. With much misgiving, of course, I had to do the work that was required. But it was a very disturbing thing to me because I felt, having been steeped in Yugoslav studies since 1959, and serving there that we should send a bunch of high-powered delegations to make various points, including points with the Soviets and with the Yugoslavs. You could say maybe this was the beginning of a shift in our priority from Yugoslavia. In any event, the story was that when the funeral delegation plane arrived in Belgrade, Ms. Lillian didn't know where she was. Instead of being appropriately attired, she appeared, coming out of the plane, in some flowery pink dress, or something like that, and promptly announced to everybody, "Where the hell are we," sort of, "What am I doing here?" It was just awful and the Yugoslavs were mortified, absolutely mortified. Anyway, we got it over with and I guess the damage was contained. But it was not appropriate.

After the dust settled from that, beginning in June, the work really focused much more intently on the economic area. I was involved in bringing over foreign ministers and economic and finance ministers. The urgency about what was going to happen passed. Yugoslavia had stuck together. Problems now seemed to be economic and internal, not the Soviet threat. The military's preparations were all put on the back burner. At the end of June, the task force was disbanded.

Q: Were you looking at all at the Franco regime, because Franco and Tito, in a way, both fancied the same thing: who was going to succeed as the strong man. Franco prepared the way and it went well, Tito had not. Were you looking over your shoulder at the Franco transition which really had taken place only about five years before?

EVANS: No. Maybe others were, but I don't remember that ever coming up at all in the context

of our discussions.

Q: As you left this problem, you had now been looking at it rather closely. In your perspective at that time, wither Yugoslavia?

EVANS: Well, I thought it would hold together, although, it was very obvious that this rotating presidency was not very satisfactory. You had the six republics and the two autonomous republics which were part of the Serbian republic; a total of eight people who had to rotate through this collective presidency. We used to joke about the number of presidents. It was ridiculous because you had the President of the Presidency and then you had the Presidents of each of the six constituent and two autonomous republics. Then there were Presidents of the government, Presidents of Parliament, Presidents of this and that. There were something like 1,000 Presidents in Yugoslavia and they all felt very important.

What ultimately sank Yugoslavia as an integral country were regional economic rivalries and the divisions rather than the so-called ethnic and religious divisions. They came as a secondary thing. But the first thing was, after Tito, the Croats and the Slovenes saying, "We want out of this thing. We are tired of paying 80% of our taxes, doing 80% of the work and paying 60% of our taxes to the south. This has to stop." The Croats, of course, saw this as a chance to get out from what they felt was the Serbian domination. But mostly, it was economic. The Slovenians, who had most of the banking experience and were highly regarded in national banking circles, started laying the groundwork to distance themselves from this economic mess. Yugoslavia had been living high off the hog. In our earlier discussion, I mentioned the work that some of my subordinates had done, pointing out the tremendous economic problems that were under the surface of Yugoslavia's apparent prosperity and that the powers that be didn't want this reported. Now, the chickens came home to roost. All these things that just a few years before, our economic section had been predicting, came home. The Yugoslav prosperity was built on a very weak basis. All of a sudden, without Tito, the political stability factor was removed and loans were not as easy to get. Loans were called. Yugoslavia was suddenly a problem country instead of a protected country, because as long as Tito was there, and as long as Tito was about to die, we gave it high priority. We pumped money into Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia was important because Tito was dying. What would happen after Tito? Now that Tito was dead, it was a tremendous let down. The "Emperor had no clothes," and things were starting to unravel. But it was in the economic area. There was no indication of religious resentment. There was some dustup beginning between the Albanians in Kosovo and the Serbs. But that, again, was not part of what happened in Bosnia. Anyway the situation was stable enough, when the task force was disbanded and I had to find another job.

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 Laboyno, 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.

WILLIAM P. POPE
Political Officer
Zagreb (1977-1979)

Mr. Pope was born and raised in Virginia and educated at the University of Virginia. After serving in both the US Army and the US Navy, he joined the Foreign Service in 1974. Mr. Pope served several tours in the State Department in Washington, dealing, notably, with Counterterrorism. His overseas posts include Gaborone, Zagreb, Belgrade, Paris, Pretoria, Rome, and the Hague, serving as Deputy Chief of Mission in the latter two embassies. Mr. Pope was interviewed in 2006 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: Well then, you were assigned to, what? Zagreb or Belgrade?

POPE: Zagreb. It was my only time at a consulate.

Q: Did you take Serbo-Croatian?

POPE: I did, over in one of those high rise buildings in Rosslyn. And again, we had native speakers and they were excellent.

Q: Who were they?

POPE: Father Milosevic and a lady who was really terrific, I liked her so much, can't remember her name. Very lovely, very classy lady. And again, I liked it. I was good at it and it turned out to be, in retrospect, my best language; I was a four-four.

Q: Were you learning Serbian or Croatian?

POPE: More Serbian, but since I was going to Zagreb I made a point of trying to ferret out the Croatian dialect ijekavski so I could speak ijekavski when I got there and not ekavski. And they appreciated it. And when I went to Serbia later I just switched to ekavski. So it was okay.

Q: You were in Zagreb from when to when?

POPE: 1977 to '79.

Q: What was the situation like in Yugoslavia at that time?

POPE: Well there was a lot of concern about the Soviets because of Prague '68 and also Tito was getting up there in age. And I think people really felt that the Soviets wouldn't dare do anything to bring Yugoslavia back into the fold while Tito was alive. But since he was getting up into his 80s, people were concerned that the day he died, Soviet tanks would roll. And they had elaborate plans to go to the mountains and to retrieve stocks of weapons to fight them. They knew they couldn't protect the plains, the north of, up toward Hungary north of Belgrade, but there are lots of parts they-

Q: The Crimean Plain and all that.

POPE: There were lots of parts of Yugoslavia they felt, the mountains especially, they felt they could defend and they could really give the Soviets a hell of a time.

Q: What about, how stood the situation from this '77 to '79 period regarding Croatia nationalists?

POPE: That was interesting. I was really struck. I knew it but sometimes you don't really feel it until you get there. The Croats and the Serbs really did not like each other. And I can remember a conversation with a guy who was really smart. He was a young, very sophisticated Croatian lawyer and he'd been to the U.S. and to Canada and he'd been to Australia, he'd been all over

the world; he'd never been down to Belgrade. I said, "But, it's only four hours down the road and that's your capital." He said, "Not my capital, not my capital, that's the Serbs' capital." And I remember saying something like, "You know that in the United States we had a civil war and it took a hundred years, but we got over it. You've got to stop fighting World War II." And I can remember, he said, "World War II? What are you talking about? We're talking about the Battle of Kosovo Polje; we're talking about 600 years. And we're never going to forget, we are never going to be satisfied until we are independent." He wanted nothing to do with the Serbs. And I got the same thing from Serbs. Croatian nationalism was very much alive.

Q: You were the Political Officer there?

POPE: Yes.

Q: Who was the Consul General?

POPE: The Consul General was Olaf Grobel. Dick Christensen was the deputy. Again, I was the next man on the totem pole.

Q: Did you find that- in the first place, did the Croatian immigrant community in the United States, particularly in the Midwest and out in California, did that intrude on you much? I mean, were you getting people coming in and spouting Croatian nationalism?

POPE: I don't remember that so much. Maybe. I may be not remembering but it doesn't leap at me. There was a feature that I didn't understand well enough that really jumped out at me. It was my first real experience with the Catholic Church. Now, of course, it's on everybody's mind with the great pope, Pope John Paul II, who has just died who became a really major role figure and all this business with The Da Vinci Code and all of that. I had not understood it well enough and I was really shocked to be in a communist country where the Church had as much power as it did. That was really surprising to me. The Cardinal in Zagreb was a major player and Tito knew it.

Q: Well you know, one of the problems going back to the time of early Tito and Cardinal Stepinac. At this point was the Cardinal preaching Croatian nationalism or anti-orthodoxy or?

POPE: Not so much but it was understood that it was there as an undercurrent. And the Church, as I recall, was really demanding a big say for not preaching more of what you are saying, was demanding a big latitude, no political interference in priests or policy or property or any of that. As long as you left us alone we're not going to foment any kind of major rebellion. It was a standoff.

Q: Well, as a political officer in Zagreb in a tense time, I mean, the Church had played such a role in World War II, not a very pleasant role but anyway.

POPE: That's right. And that was very much on peoples' minds, that was still very fresh.

Q: I would think that we would, I mean one, we would want to watch them and two, we would

want to be very careful because we've got our own Church in the United States which has political, you know, we were reporting on a Catholic Church being beastly, this wouldn't sit very well in some American circles. I mean, did you feel this at all?

POPE: No, not so much the American piece of it. I was just fascinated to try to understand more about the role of the Church in Croatia and Slovenia, the principal Catholic parts, and to try to begin to peel the layers away to see what kind of role they were playing, what kind of international relations they had, how much, how far the Cardinal and the hierarchy could go and what kind of dance they were doing with the authorities in Belgrade. It was really interesting to watch it. And the other thing was that it was so openly strong. Catholicism wasn't crushed at all. In fact, it was crushing communism because I remember stories, I never personally saw any of it, but stories that priests would tell of the knock on the back door of the church late at night and there would be an army officer there, an army officer and his wife and they'd be holding a little child. They'd be looking over their shoulders and they'd whisper, "We need to have this child baptized." The priest would answer, "But you don't believe in God." "Well, no, but Babushka the grandmother won't look after the baby unless you baptize it, unless it's baptized in the Church." So these children would get baptized or else grandma wouldn't look after them. And they eventually prevailed.

Q: How did Slovenia fit into this?

POPE: Slovenia was extremely advanced economically. Croatia was next but Slovenia was really, really advanced and it was overwhelmingly Catholic, even more than Croatia. Slovenia was 99 percent; Croatia was, I don't know, 97.5 or something. And very sophisticated. And they really didn't want to be part of Yugoslavia, I remember that. There were some Croats who probably were sort of okay with it because Tito was a Croat, of course, and they were sort of okay, some Croats were. But the Slovenes really, really wanted to an independent country and part of Western Europe. They just looked at the rest of them, especially beyond Croatia as just from some other planet; used a different alphabet and were a different religion, because they were orthodox. And so they were the first to go and the happiest about it.

Q: How did Bosnia-Herzegovina fit into this when you were there?

POPE: It was really interesting. I didn't get so involved with that until the next phase when I got transferred down to Belgrade. That was '79 to '81. And that was interesting because I was doing primarily foreign policy reporting, but I had one internal reporting responsibility and that was Bosnia-Herzegovina. And I made a lot of trips down to Sarajevo and that place was fascinating, Sarajevo was an intellectual ferment kind of a place and it was filled with artists and writers and painters. But it was basically, especially the Muslim nationality, the way it was understood in Tito's Yugoslavia was really an artificial construct. It was meant as a way to balance the Serbs and the Croats, to have a kind of third balancing mechanism against the Serbs and the Croats. And it was understood that, of all of the different republics of the old Yugoslavia, Bosnia was always the most difficult, it was a balance place. And it was always, it was difficult because Slovenia was overwhelmingly Slovenes, Croatia was Croats, Serbs, but Bosnia-Herzegovina was a different animal. It was Yugoslavia in miniature.

Q: Did you get down into the enclave of Croatian settlement in, well, Herzegovina, I guess.

POPE: Yes, sure.

Q: I mean, did you get the feeling while you were in Croatia that they were looking forward to taking over a sizeable hunk of Bosnia?

POPE: Not so much, not yet. It was a little early. They had great empathy for them, but no, I think it was early for that when I was there.

Q: Did you get any feel for in Croatia the political class? Were they sort of a nominal communist but really working on more of a different system?

POPE: Yes. Exactly. First of all, in Slovenia and Croatia, they were really much more Western. They used the Western alphabet, they were Catholics, they were much more westernized and they were no more committed communists than any other place. That's what the system was and you had to get along inside the system. But I don't believe, especially in those two republics, there was ever a committed communist. They were just trying to go along and get along. And a lot of them were entrepreneurs; they'd go from the party to running a big factory, big enterprise. They probably, a lot of them became millionaires, I would bet, after Yugoslavia came apart and Croatia and Slovenia became independent. Because most of the productive capacity was in those two and they used to grumble like hell about sending a lot of their revenues to the poorer southern parts; "We work and they take the money."

Q: How was the United States viewed in Croatia in this period?

POPE: Oh well, we were very positive. Just for our history and our tolerance of religion and our going against tyranny and wanting to contain the Soviet Union. Because they were petrified of the Soviet Union, of course.

Q: When you moved over to Belgrade, what were you doing there?

POPE: Political Section.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

POPE: Larry Eagleburger.

Q: And DCM was?

POPE: Jack Scanlon.

Q: Say you had the foreign policy thing. First place, how'd you find going to Serbia, I mean going to Belgrade? I mean, was it a jolt?

POPE: Not too much. Certainly the Croats considered themselves superior to the Serbs. They used to tell this joke about why are the Turks so backward? Because they were associated with the Serbs for 500 years. And the Serbs in their turn would tell jokes about the Croats. But Belgrade was the capital and there was a large diplomatic community, many, many countries had relations, more than probably they would have if they hadn't been such big players in the non-aligned movement. So not such a jolt. And I could already read the language because of Russian. So I could read and the Croatian and Serbian languages aren't very different, it's like British English and American English. They say they're two different languages. They're not. It's the same language; it's just different accents and some words different. Just like we and the Brits, we'll say truck and they'll say lorry. Or we'll say elevator and they'll say lift. The Serbs and the Croats had some words different.

Q: Yuhan Supa.

POPE: Yes. And bread, kleb and kruh. That kind of thing for bread. But it's still basically the same language so it wasn't too difficult. What I liked is being at the Embassy. I always wanted to be at embassies and having been once at a consulate, that confirmed that I always wanted to be in embassies after that because it was the center of the action. Consulates were a little bit of an afterthought.

Q: What was the political situation with Tito? I mean, was there sort of a scurrying around and people trying to line themselves up for when Tito went? What was the feeling?

POPE: There was a lot of apprehension about the Soviets. And I think that at one level a lot of people felt that Tito would never die. I remember he was 87 and there was a joke going around, "What will Yugoslavia be like in 20 years?" And the joke was "Well, first of all, Tito will be 107." And I guess a lot of people just felt he would never die and so the issue would never have to be faced. The other thing is, I think at least the Party people were all desperate to figure out some way to hold it all together. And a lot of people below that felt that there's no way it could be held together unless the Soviets invaded and then they would pull together in some way to fight them but over the long run it couldn't hold together. I don't remember anybody thinking it was going to happen the way it did, as violently, with as much violence as it did. But a lot of apprehension I remember.

Q: Was Milosevic at all a figure?

POPE: Don't remember.

Q: We've talked about most of the things there but I would like to ask you about were there any foreign policy initiatives taken, were you seeing any work on trying to do something to keep the Russians from coming in? And was this a political issue or what other issues were we dealing with and I guess also did Kosovo raise its head at all? We'll talk about that.

POPE: Okay.

Q: Great.

POPE: Good. Thanks.

Q: Okay. Today is the 26th of May, 2006.

Were there any foreign policy initiatives or programs or something going on at this time? Because is your bag, wasn't it?

POPE: I was still pretty far down in the food chain. There may have been some things that Ambassador Eagleburger and others were involved in that I don't remember. For us, honestly it was more of a watching brief to see how this new rotating presidency would manage and whether they could persuade the Soviets to stay out. There was a lot of fear because of Afghanistan, of course, and other things that had happened in Europe like Czechoslovakia before. But particularly the most recent was Afghanistan. I remember there was a lot of gallows humor going around. How much is the cost of a tram ride in Belgrade? Two kopeks. Instead of the Yugoslav currency.

Q: The dinar, yes.

POPE: Yes, there was a lot of gallows humor. And it was more of a watching brief to see whether they would, because it was really all non-entities in this alleged rotating presidency which held for a little while but not very long. But of course the Soviets, in retrospect looking back, had plenty of problems of their own at that point. They had huge problems like we do now.

Q: Well, by this time was the non-aligned movement, which Yugoslavia had been very prominent in, was it dead?

POPE: No, I don't think so. I remember it was still a concern and we were delighted that Tito and Yugoslavia kept its, even though they were communists, at least they kept their independence from the Warsaw Pact and he took opportunities to make very clear his unwillingness to be subjugated to the Soviet Union. And we were all for that, we wanted as much of that as possible. But I remember a countervailing but not predominant issue was the non-aligned movement and it was frustrating. In the United States, there was a lot of feeling that the UN itself, the United Nations was not a very balanced organization and there were so many little countries leaning towards the Soviets and so reflexively anti-American. Or took the other side of issues, whatever it was. And it was a little bit like that. There was real frustration at this so-called non-aligned movement, which looked suspiciously to a lot of people, including me, looked really much more aligned than non-aligned.

Q: Well, it basically was, I mean.

POPE: It was, and it was frustrating. In the end of the day, compared with the big issues of whether the Soviet Union would survive or not survive, it was relatively of secondary importance. But at the time, when that's one of the main things you're working on, it's frustrating. They were so imbalanced with Indonesia and other countries.

Q: What about relations with oh, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania?

POPE: You mean Yugoslavia's relations?

Q: Yugoslavia's.

POPE: Oh, they were very good all the way around, they had good relations. And I don't know exactly how the Soviets felt about it at the time, given the Warsaw Pact, but I have the recollection that Ceausescu and others were trying to find some wiggle room to have good relations with Yugoslavia. Of course, there were lots of reasons with Romania, for example, and Hungary, ones they shared a common border with; they had river issues and the dam they were working on together and all that.

Q: Well now, I can't remember if we covered it or not, but Tito's health during the time you were there, did it give way? I mean, how stood Tito? Or was he gone by then?

POPE: When I arrived in '77, as far as anyone knew he was in fine health, he was in complete control. And I guess later, I don't remember the exact timing, I moved down to Belgrade in summer of '79 to go into the political section there, and he died I think in May of '80. So by that point it was beginning to be obvious that he was more frail and people were concerned. And I remember there was one bout of something that he had that concerned people a lot and then he appeared to rally and seemed much closer to the old Tito and people relaxed and then he suddenly died. And that's in particular when there was so much apprehension. None of these other individuals who were moving into this rotating presidency, none of them were really figures of any stature compared to Tito. There was only Tito. And there was a lot of worry about how it would all come out, not just the Soviets but was this any kind of a formula for governing.

Q: Well you know, having been in Croatia before, were there noises coming out of Croatia that you recall that, you know, it's getting ready to split or not?

POPE: No, not yet, not quite. But, that had always been there. I think I mentioned the last time we met about this friend of mine who'd been all over the world, a Croatian lawyer, and he refused to go down the road to Belgrade. "I'm never going until I need a passport to go and a visa, until we're independent." And so there was that feeling, they never wanted to be part of it, the overwhelming majority. There may have been a few who were true believing communists who believed in the SFRY (Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) but not so many. But I don't remember, I think it was a little premature at that point. I think it was felt that it would last for awhile.

Q: You mentioned the SFRY, this is the Socialist Republic-

POPE: Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. I'm sure there were a few people who believed in that but most of the overwhelming people, particularly in Slovenia and Croatia, they wanted nothing to do with it.

Q: Did you find there was a difference in attitude at the embassy in Belgrade about Yugoslavia? I mean, more Serb-oriented or not?

POPE: I don't remember that, more Serb-oriented. It was a fascinating time to be there, with all the fears generated and particularly out of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. And then Tito's becoming obviously more frail. It was a fascinating time to be there and then his death and the attempt to hold together some kind of a unified front. No, I don't remember that.

Q: Did you get to travel much?

POPE: You mean inside?

Q: Yes.

POPE: Sure. I was doing primarily the foreign policy reporting. I had one internal responsibility. We also traveled, of course, just as a family, for vacation up to Slovenia and we went down to Greece and by doing that we went through various parts of, south of us, like Macedonia, for example. So, sure.

Q: How did the Iranian hostage crisis strike in Yugoslavia or was there much interest in that?

POPE: That's a good question. You mean on the part of the Yugoslavs and the government?

Q: Yugoslavs, yes.

POPE: Well, it was a huge story, a huge story everywhere. And I don't remember any particular sympathy for that kind of behavior. There was a certain amount of sort of Third World sympathy or whatever you want to call it, non-aligned developing world sympathy, but Yugoslavs had embassies everywhere and a rather sophisticated foreign ministry and foreign policy and their people had been, had traveled a lot and I don't think there was a shred of sympathy anywhere for taking embassies hostage like that. I don't recall it.

Q: Well then, you left there in?

POPE: '81.

Q: '81. By the way, how did the, what were you getting from your diplomatic and Yugoslav colleagues about the election of Ronald Reagan? Did that come as sort of a shock?

POPE: I don't remember. I don't know how shocked they were, at least the people I knew, particularly the foreign ministry people. Again, many, many of them had served in Washington and spoke English and had some concept of the United States and they understood our peculiar way of doing politics. They had their own peculiar way of doing politics, so. I don't remember any huge shock about that. There probably was, in retrospect, if I think back; that was a long time ago now. But if I think back there probably was because they probably felt that Jimmy Carter was somebody they- he came out there while I was there. And I think he was well

received and viewed as being sympathetic toward broader kinds of things that the Yugoslavs were interested in so probably that he wasn't reelected probably was a surprise to some people.

Q: Did human rights, was this at all an issue in Yugoslavia?

POPE: Well, we raised it. There was the human rights report and we always contributed.

Q: Well, there weren't a lot of, if I recall-

POPE: No, because everybody we knew had a passport and traveled and went abroad. For example, they went to Trieste a lot, they went to Trieste to shop. And they had foreign currency and passports and they came back. There wasn't any such thing as a defection. If you didn't want to live in Yugoslavia, you wanted to move to Canada, if you could get an immigrant visa to Canada, you moved. That's all. And so it was different from, it was sort of communist but not really. There were some people who were deprived of something, job or briefly imprisoned or something, but it was at a different scale than in the Warsaw Pact, in particular the Soviet Union with the gulags and all that. It certainly was not a democracy. But again, it was a different scale. So yes, sure, that was one of the issues that we talked about, freedom of the press and that kind of thing. They had, again for a communist country, they had quite an amount of freedom of the press but it was below the Tito and party level. But the papers in Zagreb and Belgrade roasted the local officials. I remember they had one, in Zagreb they had one wonderful cartoonist who would have been a hit anywhere, his name was Pero, which meant "pen", and he was terrific. And I just remember there was one cartoon where there was a street repair crew and the boss was telling them, "Hurry up and fill in that hole, because they're digging it up again tomorrow." They just tore up the local officials all the time. So it was quasi-free by comparison with points east.

LAWRENCE S. EAGLEBURGER
Ambassador
Yugoslavia (1977-1981)

Ambassador Eagleburger was born and raised in Wisconsin. After graduating from the University of Wisconsin he served in the US Army, and in 1957 joined the State Department. A specialist in Yugoslav affairs, he served as Ambassador to Yugoslavia from 1977 to 1981. Ambassador Eagleburger served in several of the highest positions in the Department of State, including, Deputy Under Secretary for Management, Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, Under Secretary for Political affairs and Deputy Secretary of State. His service also included a term as Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs in the Department of Defense. Ambassador Eagleburger was interviewed by Leonard J. Saccio in 1988.

Q: In my own experience, I find that the people in the embassy get to a point where they rely on the CIA instead of doing their own work. Have you got any comment on that?

EAGLEBURGER: I didn't see too much of that. Mind you, I haven't had the experience in running embassies that you have. I've only been ambassador to Belgrade. I didn't see that in the embassy in Belgrade, and indeed, I would have to say that the CIA people in the embassy in Belgrade were, by and large, of pretty high quality and pretty careful. My problems with the agency had to do with instructions from Washington to the station chief in Belgrade. On the occasion in question--not only he, it was a broadcast directive to the station chiefs around the world, I am told. I don't even remember specifically what it was with regard to, other than it was that a number of items were not to be told to the ambassador.

I learned about it when I went back on consultation and went into the Department. Ben Reed, who was then the Under Secretary for Management, told me about it, so I went back to Belgrade and asked my station chief if it were true. He didn't lie; he said yes, it was true. I said, "Fine. I want you to send a message back to Admiral Turner and Frank Carlucci, and tell them that you are out of business in Yugoslavia until such time as that order is rescinded. I mean by that, you're not to come into the office, and you're not to conduct any business in Belgrade or in Yugoslavia; you are simply to close up shop as soon as you send the message back telling the CIA that's what's happened."

I think it took about a week and the order was rescinded.

EAGLEBURGER: When Carter came in and I went off as ambassador to Yugoslavia, I was adamant that human rights issues were going to be dealt with by me behind closed doors with the Yugoslavs, and we weren't going to be out banging in public about the way they managed their internal affairs. By and large, I succeeded in maintaining that position for four years, including at one point telling Pat Derian that if she came to visit Belgrade, please let me know because I would be sure to be out of town. So she didn't come. I will say that on more than one occasion we got people out of jail and, by and large, I think ameliorated the way in which the Yugoslavs dealt with some of what I would describe the human rights problems. It is a much more humane system than most others, anyway, but they were more careful because there was some private work going on.

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 ca 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 Lawrence 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 Croats 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.

RICHARD M. MILES
Yugoslav Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1979-1981)

Ambassador Miles was born in Arkansas in 1937. He earned an associate degree from Bakersfield College, Bachelor's degree from University of California, Berkeley and a master's degree from Indiana University. He joined the Foreign service in 1966. His overseas posts include Oslo, Belgrade, Moscow, Leningrad, Berlin, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria and Georgia. Ambassador Miles was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

Q: Well now, Dick, you went in the summer of '79. Where did you go?

MILES: I went back to Washington.

Q: To do what?

MILES: I was the Yugoslav desk officer, '79 to '81, in the State Department.

Q: When you got there, how stood relations with Yugoslavia?

MILES: They were okay. Larry Eagleburger was the Ambassador, which was an experience in

itself, being desk officer with Eagleburger out there. He was and still is a real force of nature. I learned a great deal from Eagleburger. He came back to Washington often and I would pick him up at the airport in my car, drive him in. I can't imagine desk officers doing that kind of thing nowadays but I did it. I would say relations were good, actually, at that time. We had a rather close military relationship with them. That military relationship with Yugoslavia had its ups and downs over the decades going back to 1948, you know, when we first—I don't know when we first started doing it, 1949, 1950 maybe—began training pilots in Texas and all that.

Q: Yes, I remember seeing Sabre jets, F-86s, sitting on the tarmac at the airport in Belgrade.

MILES: Yes. It was a pretty amazing thing. In the airplane museum out at the Belgrade Airport, there was a P-47 Thunderbolt, a World War II fighter plane that we had given to the Yugoslavs during that period of intense military cooperation in the late 40s. I hope we didn't destroy it during the Kosovo bombing campaign. In the 1970s we were again selling a lot of military equipment to the Yugoslavs. This was mostly defensive in nature, radars and so on, although the line between defensive and offensive is often in the eye of the beholder. I remember we were selling them Maverick air to air missiles and you would certainly believe that to be an offensive weapon if one hit a plane you were piloting. We were also working with them on the various issues of Yugoslav terrorism. There was a lot of radical émigré activity directed against the Yugoslav state and there was a certain amount of skullduggery on the part of the Yugoslav state apparatus against these émigrés, especially in Europe but including in the United States; so that was always a complicated issue. Anyhow, it was a very active relationship and one that kept us all on our toes. There was a lot of financial activity but I didn't do the financial stuff in the Eastern European Office at that time. We had a regional economic affairs officer, Bob Bradtke, who is still in the State Department, and Bob spent a lot of time on Yugoslav financial matters because we were trying to help, along with the IMF and the other international financial institutions, to keep the Yugoslav economy moving along. And it was moving along rather nicely, you remember; they were doing alright, actually.

Q: You said that Larry Eagleburger was sort of a force of nature. How was he different from other ambassadors?

MILES: Oh, yes. It's hard to describe where he derives his authority. For example, where does his authority come from as opposed to that of any other ambassador? He's bright, of course. He was an aide to Kissinger and so he had connections. But a lot of people in the Foreign Service are bright and have connections and yet Eagleburger always stood out and still stands out, even in retirement and in not very good health. I mean, he's just one of our special people in the State Department.

Well, he has a strong personality. He's not a, what's the phrase, a shrinking violet. He's personable. He's not arrogant or something of a bully like some other superstars that I know. He's a very decent person. He enjoys what he's doing. With some of the big shots, you get the impression they're sitting on a sharp tack all the time and you kind of wonder why in God's name are they doing this if it upsets them so much?

I can remember one fellow quite high up in the Department hierarchy who would break out in

hives due to the stress of the pressure that he was under. And people in this profession are often under a lot of pressure, no question about it; but like, “Why are you torturing yourself?” I often felt like saying, “Why don’t you go buy a house in the country and raise cabbages or something? No one is making you do this work.” Anyhow, Eagleburger thoroughly enjoyed what he was doing and he would joke about it. I have often heard him say to visitors out in Belgrade, that this Ambassador stuff beats working for a living. You could see that he just got a kick out of it. And, as Ambassador, he used all the tools that he had available—assistance programs, exchange programs, military to military relations, taking advantage of visitors and friends in high places, not to mention what is now fashionably called public diplomacy—simply making statements or interviews or whatever to try to advance the interests of the United States as he best he could. He was really excellent at—and this is something I learned from him and have successfully used many times as ambassador—delivering unpalatable messages without destroying his ability to continue good relations with his interlocutor or with the host government.

There was no significant crisis in U.S.-Yugoslav relations at that time. Of course, the big event which occurred was the death of Tito in 1980 but, important as it was, this was not a crisis event even for the Yugoslavs. Naturally, we had problems. There was constant wrangling over the nuclear reactor that Westinghouse was constructing near the border between Slovenia and Croatia. There were problems of intrusion into Yugoslav air space by naval aircraft from elements of the Sixth Fleet deployed to the Adriatic. The Yugoslavs would get very excited about that and jump up and down. We would try to calm them down.

There were problems with these anti-Yugoslav émigrés I mentioned to you infiltrating into Yugoslavia and trying to blow up bridges or simply trying to spoil things in Croatia so that the tourist numbers would decline, the economy would suffer and so on. Some of these overzealous nationalists came from the United States. It seems axiomatic that nationalism increases in direct proportion to the distance from the mother country. But these were relatively minor things; there was no one big thing that really stood out during the two years that I was desk officer, with the exception, the major exception, of the death of Tito.

Q: I was going to say, how did we view Tito at the time and his succession?

MILES: Well, we had had our ups and downs with Tito but on balance Tito commanded a certain respect in Washington. His bloodier days were behind him so that occasionally you might find someone locked up in jail, like Milovan Djilas, but they would not have their head whacked off and might, eventually, be freed. And I think there were some anti- I hate to call them anti-communists but anti-Yugoslav government types around, including in the U.S. Congress, and including in our military, who just could not abide the idea of a decent relationship with a communist government, no matter how benign. But the more sensible power brokers in Washington and elsewhere had developed a measure of respect for Tito. The belief was that, on balance, he was doing a pretty good job of trying to bring the country into the 20th century. And in fact most of us who had anything to do with the communist world, at least the people I knew and worked with, felt that if the communist world were to evolve in a more humane manner, Yugoslavia might serve as a model for what that world might become. No one, bar none, predicted the imminent collapse of the Soviet Union. And so we were interested in Yugoslavia as kind of a model which others might follow. And, frankly, because its style of government, its

openness to western ideas, tourism and business gave the Soviets conniption fits—it was kind of fun to be able to play on that. So when American ships would pull into a Yugoslav port we always got a hell of a big kick out of that and the Russians would get excited about it. But it was very interesting: the Yugoslavs kept their balance sheets and so the exact same number of Soviet ships would pull into a Yugoslav port as the number of American ships that pulled in but they couldn't quite match things like our aircraft carriers or the salaries of our servicemen while on liberty so even if the numbers were the same, the quality was very different.

Q: Well, did we—

MILES: There was a considerable perturbation, if that's the word, when Tito fell ill and when it appeared he was going to die. So we dusted off—I did it myself—the contingency planning books, which were eight or ten inches thick, going over every conceivable possible scenario, everything from Soviet military intervention down to total dissolution of the country and uncontrolled civil conflict or something like that and what we might do in this case, what we would do in that case, and we revised all that during the lengthy period of Tito's illness. I spent an awful lot of time organizing and attending meetings by my bosses, inter-agency meetings, to discuss all these things or sometimes having meetings of my own to discuss them at a working level. And I think on balance our planning and our assessments held up pretty well.

In fact, just a month or two ago, I attended a very interesting conference put on over at the Kennan Institute and sponsored by the U.S. Institute of Peace and another think tank, I can't remember which one exactly. What they did was—it was quite interesting really—they took the key cables from the Embassy and the classified intelligence evaluations, the SNIEs [Special National Intelligence Estimate], the official analyses of the intelligence community that had been collected from about 1948 through about 1985 or something like that, and they had them declassified. I don't know how they managed this but things which were secret and sensitive and all that, they were all declassified. And then they lined up a seminar group of maybe 25 or 30 people who had worked on Yugoslav issues for the State Department, the CIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency, some of the academicians and some Yugoslavs. They even had some former Yugoslav diplomats and they brought in Pavle Jevremovic, an old and good friend, who had just been assigned as the Serbian Ambassador to the UN, and we all sat around for an entire day and discussed these documents: how well were they constructed; what did they look like with the enormous hindsight that we are now able to apply to them; were there things that we saw correctly; were there things that we had missed or not seen correctly. And, you know, the documents held up quite well. It was really interesting to see these documents again, especially those that I had a hand in working on more than twenty-five years ago. That was an amazing exercise and one that we really ought to do much more often.

Q: While you were on the Yugoslav desk, was there much reporting on the Serb-Bosnian-Kosovar—I mean, you know, the ethnic divisions, the possibilities of things really breaking? How did we feel?

MILES: Well, you know yourself, anyone who has ever been in Yugoslavia, modern Yugoslavia, becomes aware of the fault lines in the society: Croats and Serbs, Bosnia fractured in many ways, Serbs and Kosovar Albanians, even Serbs and Macedonians. I mean, there were fault lines all

over the place. And so the Embassy, as the Embassy had been doing since, I suppose, at least since the split with Stalin in 1948, paid careful attention to these issues and reported on them. We did keep a very watchful eye on these things. We did tend to see the major fault line as being between Croatia and Serbia and we underestimated the difficulties in Bosnia by a long shot.

However, we did spend a good deal of time on Kosovar Albanian practices and policies and on the Serb or the Yugoslav response. At that time there were some significant protest demonstrations. People would block a road or something of that sort but, at that time, the Kosovar Albanians still had their own governmental structure; they still had their parliament; they were subject to the Yugoslav state, of course; and, in fact, they were deriving a certain amount of income from the government's Fund for the Underdeveloped Regions, but still there was unrest. And we were all aware of the sensitivity of these issues and of the need to keep an eye on them. Yes, definitely.

Q: You were there at the death of Tito?

MILES: Yes, in Washington.

Q: Yes. How did we view this succession of Tito, the solution perhaps?

MILES: I think we felt—and the intelligence documents that I just reread back this up—that Yugoslavia would have a hard time hanging together after the death of Tito, but there was a general consensus that we could expect a period of ten to fifteen years before the centrifugal strains would begin to tear the country apart. Now, frankly, ten to fifteen years is about as far as any human being can see into the future anyhow. And that prediction proved fairly accurate. Tito died in 1980 and Yugoslavia began to disintegrate in the early 1990s.

Q: I know when I was there one of the overriding considerations for keeping Yugoslavia together was the Soviets. Yugoslavia, next to Berlin, seemed a place where we could end up in conflict if things went wrong, and of course Yugoslavia didn't actually break up until the Soviet Union broke up.

MILES: Yes, we did worry about that and we discussed our options. It was not dissimilar to the analogous situation I described earlier with regard to Iran after the ousting of the Shah. In other words, what might we do in the case of great instability in Yugoslavia? What were the likely fault lines? Should we support one putative faction or another? Should we offer supplies or assistance? Should we intervene in some way? And if we did those things what would the Soviets do? Or if the Soviets did those things first, what should we do in response? That's why the book, the Yugoslav contingency book, was a foot thick—because it went into all the intricacies of who might do what to whom, and what should we do in response, and looking at it from at least the two sides of the United States and the Soviet Union.

And so there was concern about it but there was also a general feeling that nothing dramatic would happen—that given that particular, historic moment, the Soviets would not intervene or even move quickly to support any particular faction. The Yugoslav successor leadership, as it was at that time, would not try to turn to the Soviet Union for assistance or help, and therefore

the best thing for the United States to do was to lay low, continue our economic and military support, express our desire that Yugoslavia remain together as an integral state and wait to see what would happen. And that turned out to be a wise policy, I think. In fact this weird rotational government that they set up did actually work for 10 or 12 years, and it might have worked forever if Milosevic and Tudjman had not themselves pretty much decided that there was more to be gained by tearing it apart than by maintaining it.

Q: Yes. Well, so we are up through '81 about? Or where are we now?

MILES: Tito died in 1980 and then I left the Desk in 1981. With Tito's funeral, of course, that was an interesting thing in itself. Former New York Governor Averell Harriman was selected to be the U.S. representative. He had become a bit deaf and of course Tito's death took five or six months to play out. Over that time period, I had many conversations with Governor Harriman, none of them very substantive. We were in touch with Dr. Michael DeBakey, who was seeing to Tito, along with some other foreign doctors. Tito had Russian doctors there, he had German doctors, he had some American doctors, but Dr. DeBakey was the one who kept us informed of what he thought was happening with Tito as the doctors tried to prolong his life.

Governor Harriman lived in Washington but he liked to go and spend the weekends at his home out in the Virginia horse country. So usually every Friday afternoon or Saturday morning, I'd get a call and would be told that "The Governor" was on the line and he'd shout, "Dick, Dick!" He'd shout because he thought, you know, everyone shouted at him to be heard so he had to shout back, "Dick, is Tito dead yet? Is he going to die this weekend?" And I'd shout back—my kids got a big kick out of it when they would hear me shouting over the telephone on Saturday mornings at home; it became kind of a family joke. "No, Governor, he's still alive. I don't think he's going to die this weekend. It's probably okay to go!" That's the way we went through several months, really. And then finally he did die. So we got the group together. Jimmy Carter was President then so the President's mother went out with the funeral party to represent him and that caused a little bit of a mini scandal because she showed up at the funeral in a white dress. Yugoslavs still talk about it because one is expected to wear black at a Yugoslav funeral.

Q: This is tape four, side one, with Dick Miles.

Yes. You were saying Miss Lillian—

MILES: So Lillian Carter went out as the President's personal representative and as his mother, you know, she could carry that off. And wore a white dress on the airplane. Now we had been assured by Yugoslav protocol that there would be time for the funeral party to go to their hotel and change clothes and freshen up and then go view the body and pay their respects. But instead, in good Yugoslav fashion, the protocol people decided to drop that agreed upon plan and they took them straight from the airplane to the funeral. So that's why Lillian Carter showed up in a white dress. It was no fault of hers.

RAZVIGOR BAZALA

**Deputy Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Belgrade, Yugoslavia (1979-1982)**

Mr. Bazala was born in Germany but immigrated to the United States while he was still young. He joined the Foreign Service in 1970 and served in Warsaw, Poland from 1970-1973. Afterwards, he was sent to the Republic of South Vietnam from 1974-1975 to serve as a Branch Public Affairs Officer (BPAO). He then became a Deputy PAO (Public Affairs Officer) and was moved to New Delhi, India, where he stayed from 1975-1978. After his tour in India ended, Razvigor and his wife were stationed in Belgrade, Yugoslavia from 1979-1982. He then spent 1982-1988 in Washington DC, serving as country affairs officer for Yugoslavia. While still in Washington DC, he took the position as European Press and Public Affairs spokesperson. After going back to being the country affairs officer for Yugoslavia again, he worked as a special assistant to the White House for the Iran-Contra Affairs. He spent the next couple years working with the Venice Economic Summit and as a USIA Senior Policy Officer until he was stationed in Jamaica from 1988-1992. Mr. Bazala spent a few more years in Washington until he was stationed in Macedonia for most of 1994, and then returned to Washington, and was then stationed in Bosnia again but this time as the IIP (International Information Program) team chief. After his time there, he worked as the media advisor and spokesperson for Brcko. Mr. Bazala spent the remainder of his career in Washington until his retirement in 1999. His interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2011.

BAZALA: Sylvia and I were both assigned to Belgrade, Yugoslavia after our tour in India ended. The transfer in 1978 to the position of director of the American Center was my first during the summer reassignment cycle. Sylvia became head of the consular visa section of the embassy. Prior to traveling to post Sylvia and I took the full eleven month Serbo-Croatian language course at the Foreign Service Institute. Incidentally, on early postretirement résumés I cited Serbo-Croatian as one of the languages I spoke. After the fall of Yugoslavia, I changed that to Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian impressively increasing my language skills without a moment's effort. In truth, while each language subsequently became internationally recognized as unique, they are very similar to each other and no speaker of any of the three needs an interpreter to communicate with a speaker of either of the others.

Our tours in Belgrade were just the first of several encounters with the country and its remnants after the death of Yugoslavia. I returned to Washington from Belgrade to become the country affairs officer at USIA for the Balkan nations in 1982 and 1983, and later served in the State Department as country affairs officer for Yugoslavia between 1985 and 1987. During the Balkan wars I served again as USIA's Balkan country affairs officer (1992-94). During that assignment I replaced the PAO in Skopje, Macedonia for four months. At the end of the war in Bosnia I served as embassy PAO in Sarajevo in 1995 and 1996 and was spokesperson and media advisor to the Deputy High Representative in Brcko, Bosnia in 1997. In 1998, I was named to the new position of regional PAO to be available to fill in at any of the Balkan and former Soviet Union countries staffed with only one USIA officer. In that capacity I served in Moldova, Bosnia, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Slovenia and Kosovo. Sylvia also served in Bosnia as deputy chief of

mission at the embassy in Sarajevo from 1998 to 2000. It seems as if we could not get the Balkans out of our systems.

The key event during our first tours in Belgrade was the death of the founder of Yugoslavia, Marshal Josip Broz Tito in May 1980. The U.S. government issued the first in a series of “After Tito What?” intelligence analyses in 1952. Tito had proposed the establishment of a broader Yugoslavia when he came to power at the end of WWII without Soviet assistance that would have included Albania and parts of Greek Macedonia and Bulgaria, territories over which he had ambitions, asserting that the area would be united by “a” model of socialist government, not “the” (Stalinist) model. The idea, which included the notion of workers self-management, was an anathema to the Soviet dictator. The Yugoslav model was a “leftist deviation” for which Stalin expelled Yugoslavia from the Cominform (Communist Information Bureau) that the Soviet Union founded in 1947 as the official postwar forum of the international communist movement. For the next 33 years Soviet attitudes toward and probable involvement with Yugoslavia remained an issue of concern to America’s foreign policy makers.

The cold war had already begun, and Tito won immediate support from non-communist European governments and the U.S. after his expulsion from Cominform. This support enabled him to stay in power despite being banished by Stalin. Yugoslavia thus was able to avoid being folded into the Warsaw Pact, the Soviet defense alliance composed of nations that the Soviets dominated after World War Two, the antithesis of the U.S.-led North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

While Tito successfully avoided having Yugoslavia engulfed within the Warsaw Pact, the Soviets continually attempted to rein him in as closely as possible. By the 1960s, however, the Non-Aligned Movement (Tito was a founder) provided Yugoslavia and third world nations across the globe some wiggle room to withstand the cold war foreign policy maneuverings of East and West. It also provided a rationale for Tito to strut around the world for years espousing non-alignment long after the movement became increasingly insignificant in the third world. The headlines his travels garnered served little more than to boost his ego in his last years as domestic problems in Yugoslavia mounted.

The U.S. took great interest in Yugoslavia’s overt desire to remain independent of the Warsaw Pact, which kept intelligence analysts and policy makers busy for almost four decades monitoring the slightest shifts in the conduct of its relations with the Soviet Union. The other nations of Europe shared that interest and implemented policies that treated Yugoslavia favorably and demonstrated respect for Tito. While the cold war established limits to restructuring the scope and nature in the relationship between the U.S. and Yugoslavia, there remained some flexibility for adjustments at the margins.

As the years went by, the country became a relatively open society, certainly in comparison to the other Warsaw Pact member states. In hosting the 1984 Winter Olympics, Yugoslavia appeared to have enormous potential for adopting aspects of western European modernism. It came to be regarded as the acceptable face of communism as the Yugoslav tourism industry rapidly expanded to draw in hordes of hard-currency spending middle class Europeans looking for low-cost holidays along the nation’s gorgeous Adriatic coastline.

Tito had some rather clever ways of reducing domestic political and economic stresses and tensions that increased the appeal of Yugoslavia in the non-communist world. At a time of stagnant economic development in the early 1960s, for example, he made passports available to virtually all citizens on demand, a policy that no other communist nation ever considered implementing. In so doing, he was able to export domestic unemployment and reduce doubts about the effectiveness of his economic policies.

Tens of thousands of Yugoslavs looking for work resettled in West Europe and easily found jobs amid labor shortages there which made it possible for them to send home remittances to family members left behind. That eased internal tensions and pressures on the government dramatically into the early 1980s. The construction of private housing increased exponentially as a result, but because tax rates were higher for completed houses than for those under construction, many remained unfinished, which created somewhat shabby images of relatively prosperous neighborhoods in towns and villages across the country.

Tito also opened Yugoslavia to imports of European and American consumer goods; Marlboro cigarettes, Playboy and Time magazines and the daily Paris Herald Tribune were sold at virtually every kiosk in the country's larger cities. Many American films subtitled in Serbo-Croatian were screened in cinemas nationwide and the American television series "Dallas" almost brought the nation to a standstill when it was on the air. In real ways, non-ideological flexibility generated considerable popular political support that cemented Tito's control over the levers of public policy and all but eliminated public discontent. A strong secret police force to track down anyone who may have wanted to step out of line also helped.

The fact that Lawrence Eagleburger was the ambassador during our tours was another draw to serving in Belgrade. He was Henry Kissinger's deputy National Security advisor during the first term of the Nixon administration. Earlier he had become somewhat of a hero in Yugoslavia while serving at the U.S. embassy in Belgrade when a major earthquake struck Skopje, Macedonia in 1963. The role he played in distributing U.S. recovery assistance earned him the appellation "Lawrence of Macedonia", words that appear on a brass plaque above the entrance to the embassy elevator shaft near the Ambassador's office.

I anticipated an active and exciting tour in Yugoslavia, but it did not begin all that auspiciously. The first house we occupied in Diplomatska Kolonija, a small enclave of about 20 diplomatic residences, was the one we liked least during our careers. I think a number of people believe American diplomats overseas live in glamorous settings based on whatever images they have ambassadors' residences, which are generally impressive because they are venues for gatherings with leading political, professional, academic and cultural luminaries.

Officers among the rank and file, however, sometimes occupy substandard housing. I wrote a letter to my predecessor asking about his house, which I assumed we would occupy after his departure. He replied that among other features it had "the room where Frankenstein's monster was born." I took that as a feeble attempt at humor, but when I first looked down the steps into the large basement with an 11 or 12 foot ceiling that had an oversize boiler and a strangely convoluted arrangement of pipes and plumbing fixtures, I could envisage the birth occurring

there on a dark and stormy night amid flashing bolts of lightning and crashes of thunder.

But what bothered both of us most were the sagging floors in every room. They dropped several inches just a pace or so from all four walls. Book cases along the walls would have fallen forward without being attached to them. Without blocks under the back legs of our bed frames we would have slept with our heads elevated six inches above our feet. On top of that, the grounds around the house were wildly overgrown. My predecessor obviously had no interest in landscaping. I took cleaning things up into my own hands as kind of a hobby during the year that we lived in it and I got the grounds into good shape by the time we moved out. The exercise helped defuse my dissatisfaction with our situation. Fortunately, a larger marginally more pleasant house in the colony with level floors became available thereafter, and we occupied it for the last two years of our assignments in Belgrade.

The American Center of which I was the director had a fairly extensive library that was visited weekly by hundreds of Yugoslavs, primarily Serbian university students. Its location was on Knez Mihailova, a major downtown boulevard linking Republic Square with Kalemegdan, the impressive Middle Ages Ottoman fortress at the confluence of the Danube and Sava Rivers half a mile away. It was a prime piece of real estate on a triangular lot and resembled, somewhat vaguely, New York's classic Flat Iron building, but on a far smaller scale.

I regretted that we were unable to emblazon 'AMERICKI CENTAR' on the two-foot wide marquee across the front of the building. My senior colleagues would not consider it, convinced that was not the way to go politically. I had hoped we could mount something other than the book-sized brass plaque at eye level on the left side of the entry door to highlight the presence of an American facility in so prominent a location. I doubt that would have undermined Yugoslavia's delicate East-West balancing act, which is what my colleagues saw was at stake.

That is not to say that residents of Belgrade were unaware of the existence of the American Center. It was located near Belgrade University, and the British Council, Alliance Française and the Goethe Haus were also in the neighborhood conducting information, cultural and academic exchange programs for the U.K., France and West Germany respectively. The National Museum and the Belgrade Opera House were also within shouting distance on Republic Square.

My job as director of the American Center in Belgrade paralleled my position in New Delhi but on a smaller scale. Director is a nice title, but in Belgrade its key components were largely bureaucratic and administrative offering fewer challenges than my job in Delhi. The staff ran the Center effectively with me having little more to do than approve selections of books and films to be added to its collections. Furthermore P&C had established American Centers in the capital cities of each Yugoslav republic by 1980, so my turf was rather confined. I had the advantage of being located in the capital city and was in the embassy every day which provided greater input in developing P&C programs than my colleagues had in the outlying centers. But other than the prestige that derived from serving in a strategically important European nation, being the American Center director in Belgrade did not match the appeal or challenge of serving in New Delhi.

I was able to carve out a niche for myself, however, by being the only officer in the embassy at

the time who took an interest in developments in Kosovo. As director of the American Center in Belgrade, I was, in effect, the branch PAO for all of Serbia including Kosovo and Vojvodina, which were designated socialist autonomous provinces of Serbia under the constitution Tito promulgated in 1974. It also made Albanian an official language of the country reflecting the fact that Kosovo had a large Albanian population. The term Kosovar was applied to Yugoslavs of Albanian background resident in the province. I wanted to assess whether it was worth expanding USIA's outreach to Kosovars in that overlooked area of Yugoslavia now that its status in Yugoslavia's national politics had been elevated. I hoped the messages we communicated in Kosovo could reach Albania. Our government had no diplomatic contact with the country since WWII.

I had a personal interest in learning something about Albania through Kosovo. As a hermetically sealed rigidly authoritarian dictatorship Albania was far off the U.S. foreign policy radar screen. The U.S. did not recognize the government and the country and its people were largely unknown to Americans. I hoped travel to Kosovo would provide me some insight into the dynamics of Albanian society and culture.

On my first trip to Kosovo in late 1979 I drove into Pristina, the province capital, and passed by several blocks of bleak and bland commercial, office and apartment buildings with poorly maintained exteriors. The dreary impression concealed what I was stunned to find in the city center, the distinctive and prominent modern Boro i Ramiz Cultural Center with an auditorium, indoor stadium and shopping mall. It was located a few blocks from the Grand Hotel, a hastily constructed emblem of Kosovo's modernization where I spent the night. They and other recently completed structures signaled that Kosovo was rapidly transitioning from third world dreary to European modern. Kosovar, as distinct from Albanian, nationalism was visibly arising in Pristina.

I jumped out of the car and walked quickly into the Boro i Ramiz Center. While self-consciously modern, none of the shops were very appealing to a Western consumer. One establishment, an art gallery with generous enough studio space for several artists to work in simultaneously drew my attention. Some of the most interesting people I encountered anywhere in Yugoslavia were three artists having coffee in the gallery that rainy afternoon. They beckoned me in and I found their work on display very avant-garde, expressing widely differing artistic styles and techniques.

The gallery impressed me deeply. What triggered the inventive and contemporary output of local artists in Pristina, a city considered by many largely a third world backwater? As soon as that thought came to mind, I paused to reconsider the meaning of that term. After several subsequent visits to Pristina, with the gallery always being my first stop, it became clear to me that it no longer applied to artists in the city. I had no way to estimate, however, how true that was elsewhere in the province.

The 1974 Yugoslav constitution, among other provisions allowed Pristina University to teach courses in the language. (A mildly interesting historical factoid is that the Yugoslav constitution with 405 articles had more than any other at the time. Today, India's, with only 395, leads the pack). More significantly, the university quickly became a focal point for expression of Kosovar nationalism. Academic exchange programs were established between Pristina and Tirana

universities that enabled Kosovars to travel to Albania and Albanians to Pristina. The contacts we developed among Pristina faculty provided valuable firsthand information about developments in Albania that was previously unavailable. While I was interested in learning more about Albania through Kosovo, Albanians were more interested in learning what was happening in Kosovo, and Kosovo's influence among educated Albanians grew rapidly.

Albanians could watch TV broadcasts from Kosovo. State TV in Pristina dubbed "Dallas" and a variety of other programs both domestic and foreign in Albanian when the only other foreign source of information available to Albanians may have been Chinese communist Chairman Mao's "Little Red Book." Kosovo served in a number of ways to break the hermetic seal Albania's communist government built to prevent its population from exposure to outside influences.

The opening of links between Kosovo and Albania also made it possible for me to sample Skenderbeg, a fine Albanian brandy that was not available in the U.S. The Kosovars I met were generous in offering it to me in their homes when there was no trade between the U.S. and Albania. The country was terra incognita to all but a handful of Americans, and I felt quite privileged sipping it knowing that the number of those who had consumed it in the U.S. may not have exceeded the fingers of two hands.

Provisions of the 1974 constitution contributed to unleashing expressions of Kosovar nationalism in both positive and negative ways. It certainly made federal management of the province more difficult, but most significantly, increased autonomy for Kosovo led less than a decade later to outright rebellion against both local Serbian and national authorities in Belgrade in the spring of 1982. During my tour in Yugoslavia I wrote up my observations to provide the embassy some insight into the dynamics of change in Kosovo. This was at a critical time when almost no one else paid attention to developments there. When Kosovo claimed a right to self-determination within Yugoslavia less than three years later, everybody tuned in.

During my three years in Yugoslavia, Albanian nationalist sentiment remained largely subdued. It was neither totally suppressed nor openly expressed. Until 1982, Kosovars were still cautious in expressing a desire for self-determination. A major reason for that was Serb emotional attachment to Kosovo. After the battle of Kosovo Polje in 1389, the region became considered the heartland of Serbia, a notion passed from generation to generation ever since. Serbs feared that Kosovars would destroy symbols of Serbian culture if Kosovars were to govern the province independently. The three most prominent Serbian orthodox monasteries, primary symbols of Serbian nationhood dating back to the 14th century, are located there, but the monasteries have not been touched since Kosovo declared its independence in 2006.

The real irony in my view is that while Serbs adhered to the myth of Kosovo as the center or origin of Serbian civilization, by the time I first visited there in 1979, Kosovars were 80 percent of the population; the vast majority of Serbs had never set foot in the province. In fact, the growth rate of the Albanian population was three or four times higher than that of any other Yugoslav ethnicity, and the highest in all of Europe, which generated considerable concern among authorities in all of its republics.

This rapidly evolving population dynamic would soon have had an impact on the shape of the nation's political structures. My observations in 1979 indicated that a dynamic had already come into play to change further the status of Kosovo within Yugoslavia. After the fall of Yugoslavia, it evolved into a call for Kosovo's independence from Serbia, which the Serbs claimed was a desire for union with Albania and served to justify the brutal repression of Kosovo that reached its peak in 1998 and 1999 under the leadership of Yugoslavia's last president, radical Serb nationalist Slobodan Milosevic.

Tito's *Bratsvo i Jedinstvo* (Brotherhood and Unity) was the rallying cry for social cohesion of multi-ethnic Yugoslavia. That concept, never inculcated into the consciousness of the vast majority of the nation's population, was considered little more than an empty slogan in Kosovo. The myth of Boro, a Serb and Ramiz, a Kosovar, that emerged from tales told of the heroics of Tito's Partisan forces held that one of them, I don't know who, saved the other during a battle in World War II. While they may, in fact, never have actually existed, the tale of a heroic Serb and a valiant Albanian fighting side by side against the Nazis provided some substance to "Brotherhood and Unity", the implementation of which was intended to bridge hostilities among the nation's ethnicities. Boro and Ramiz had nothing but each other's best interests at heart, so why couldn't all Yugoslavs just sit down together and get along?

By the mid-1970s, that myth was literally made concrete in Pristina with the construction of the Boro i Ramiz Cultural Center, a sports arena, auditorium and shopping mall. Some say its swooping roof line resembled raised hands clasped in prayer. It was, in fact, a rather impressive facility at the time. After Tito died, and certainly by the mid-1990s, Serbian nationalists had unceremoniously jettisoned the Boro i Ramiz myth; Kosovars did the same. The complex is now named the Palace of Youth, Sport and Culture. Some myths, it seems, have short shelf lives.

I also conducted USIA programs in Novi Sad; the capital of Vojvodina, Serbia's other autonomous province, which was little more than an hour's drive north of Belgrade. P&C had established a presence there in earlier years, but budget cuts led to the closing of the American Center we had opened there several years before I arrived in Yugoslavia. The city remained an important cultural center with socially and politically active Slovak, Hungarian and Romanian minorities. The province also had a lively so-called naïve or primitive art community in which artists predominantly of Slovak background produced lively and colorful works depicting life in rural Vojvodina. Some of them achieved international acclaim. Sylvia and I and other embassy colleagues occasionally drove out to Vojvodina villages, primarily Kovacica, Zrenjanin and Pancevo in search of good examples of regional art. We acquired, among others, works by Martin Janos whose figures with huge forearms and calves reflected the hard physical labor of Slovaks who emigrated from the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

I considered my tour in Yugoslavia a return to my roots. I wanted to meet members of my grandfather's family in Zagreb, the capital of Croatia. Unfortunately, I was not treated open-heartedly when I first visited them in 1971. They were happy to meet a distant American relative, but were somewhat suspicious about my living and working in Belgrade. They considered it somehow made me pro-Serb. I think my relatives concluded I had abandoned my Croatian heritage, which I cannot deny, having given little more than perfunctory thought to it during my life. My Croatian grandfather in his younger days promoted of the idea of a south Slav

federation, but he eventually settled in Bulgaria. The rest of his family and their offspring had absolutely no interest in a federation under Tito's rule, an attitude shared by many of their fellow ethnics. I believe they were also skeptical of my father who identified himself Bulgarian and not Croatian.

Father, nonetheless, was very proud of several of his relatives who became prominent in Croatian society. His uncle, Alexander Bazala, wrote the first history of Greek philosophy in the Croatian language, which earned him distinguished status in Croatian academe. His book was also cited as one Tito read while he was in prison in the 1930s in his biography in the official Yugoslav national encyclopedia. It asserts that Tito referred to it as one of the most influential works in shaping his own political philosophy. I came across Alexander's book in an antique bookstore in Belgrade 50 years after its publication, and on a visit to Sarajevo I found it still listed in the university library catalog. A copy remains among the books in our library at home.

While obviously not openly expressed under Tito's rule, Croatian antipathy toward Serbs had strongly been expressed before then. Croatians always felt threatened by what they considered Serbia's intent to be the dominant party in their relationship. Croatian nationalists also felt inferior to their Serbian counterparts because they were unable to establish an independent state of Croatia. They generally feared subordination under Serbia, which they experienced in the 1920s. The years of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes heightened interethnic stress, fear and antipathy. Those sentiments were suppressed under Tito's "Brotherhood and Unity" ideology but always floated just below the surface. They sprang up in full force, however, after Croatia declared its independence from Yugoslavia in 1992.

Tito's death in May 1980, just days before his 88th birthday, set the stage for the death of Yugoslavia. During the almost four months he was hospitalized in Ljubljana at the end of his life, he had a leg amputated to prevent a gangrene infection and suffered from a range of other ailments as his health steadily declined. He may have wondered in his waning days that were capable of succeeding him, the father of his nation (and a quasi-deity to boot). The music played at noon on state radio day after day during his hospitalization hinted that the end was approaching; it was increasingly dirge-like in the last weeks of his life.

Tito's deification was a lifelong endeavor. Perhaps the annual running of the *Stafeta Mladosti* (Youth Torch) around the country exemplified it most openly. Like the running of the Olympic torch prior to the opening of the quadrennial games, the Youth Torch run lasted weeks. It passed from hand to hand across every region of the country culminating in *Dan Mladosti* (Youth Day) that fell on the day also celebrated as Tito's birthday. The run, extensively covered by all media, served to demonstrate the successor generation's reaffirmation of Brotherhood and Unity and its adoration of the nation's leader.

In totalitarian nations, images of the leaders are generally on display everywhere. Unlike the Soviet Union under Stalin or the Peoples Republic of China under Mao, however, where a single outsized grandiose graphic image adorned public places everywhere, in Tito's Yugoslavia there were hundreds of different photos or graphics depicting him in as many different settings across the country. At the National Theater, for example, there was photo of him surrounded by ballerinas in the director's office; at the School of Drama he was at a student rehearsal; at

universities he was in conversation with rectors and faculty; in factories he was with workers on the shop floor; and at military facilities he was at the center of a group of officers and soldiers.

Tito self-consciously built and maintained the myth for 35 years that he was a popularly anointed leader and widely revered throughout Yugoslavia's multi-ethnic society. It was no surprise that he came to consider himself irreplaceable and consequently gave little thought to the question of succession. The constitution of 1974 which, except for national security and defense matters decentralized governance to the republics elevated him to the status of ultimate ruler. He became the final authority; only he could resolve policy disputes among them. After he died, the seven-member collective leadership group of first secretaries of each republic's communist party that succeeded him became the ultimate power. It proved to be an unwieldy and ultimately unworkable way to run a multi-ethnic nation with divergent interests and different rates of economic growth among the republics.

I read that Tito's funeral was the largest in the world up to that time. Numerous heads of state, government leaders and royalty attended the event in Belgrade on May 8. Ambassador Eagleburger reminded the entire embassy staff just days before he died that any of us planning travel out of the country had better be back in Belgrade within 36 hours after the announcement of his death. Aware of that requirement, we drove off to Venice with no idea when that would happen. Thus while our children endlessly chased pigeons around St. Mark's Square, we scanned the front pages of tabloids and kept our ears open to Italian radio news sound bites, not that we could comprehend anything more than menu-vocabulary Italian. Fortunately no announcements were made during our rather stressful trip to Italy.

The U.S government delegation to the funeral consisted of Vice President Walter Mondale, President Carter's mother, Miss Lillian, distinguished democratic politician and diplomat Averill Harriman, and Secretary of the Treasury G. William Miller. I happened to hear a snatch of discussion in the ambassador's office about how to cope with the presence of Miss Lillian, an outspoken, independent and feisty loose cannon who, it was clear, neither the Ambassador nor the DCM felt comfortable having to host. Her colorful public persona was unlike that of the dignitaries they were used to encountering.

I spontaneously suggested that Sylvia might be able to assist. Growing up in the south she had met many Miss Lillian-types and would do her best to put the president's mother at her ease during her stay in Belgrade. Sylvia got the nod and all went well except for the meeting between Miss Lillian and Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. The president's mother requested the appointment because in her 70s she had served in India as a Peace Corp volunteer and wanted to meet the nation's leader. Sylvia was roped into serving as her escort officer. Mrs. Gandhi, however, had no interest whatsoever in meeting Miss Lillian, which became clear as soon as they sat down together for tea. It was an awkward occasion that luckily had no negative impact on U.S.-Indian relations.

Bilateral U.S.-Yugoslav diplomatic relations continued on an even keel during the rest of our assignments in Belgrade after Tito left the global stage. We learned to ski on the slopes of Kranjska Gora in Slovenia where we also spent time at Lake Bled, a geographic jewel you could walk around in little more than an hour. We stayed several times in a small Austro-Hungarian era

hotel with rooms that looked out onto an island with a picturesque church built at some point in the 19th century. The area was gorgeous after a snow fall. Lake Bohinj along the Southern Alps was also a wonderful place to visit in Slovenia, Yugoslavia's second smallest but most prosperous republic.

Travel to Croatia took us to the Plitvice Lakes National Park, the oldest in southeast Europe that is now a UNESCO world heritage center. Created by water flowing over limestone deposits at different altitudes over countless millennia, the 20 lakes in the park are joined by wooden walkways. A stroll along them offered numerous visually splendid vistas that made our visits there memorable experiences. As Yugoslavia was torn apart in the 1990s, unfortunately the area around the lakes was mined. I drove through the park not long afterwards. Yellow tape marked areas where undetonated explosive devices (land mines) were still located and warned those passing through the area of the dangers. This was a major travesty of the conflict.

No stay in Yugoslavia was complete without travel to Croatia's magnificent Adriatic coastline and stops at any of its thousand picturesque islands. The city of Dubrovnik is perhaps the most dramatic site. We walked the top of the wall that surrounds its medieval center, climbed its steeply sloping streets to find charming secluded seafood restaurants and strolled on its main streets sampling the wares of vendors offering everything from trinkets to fine art. We also purchased several prints by the internationally known local artist Jovan Obican who we met briefly in the city. He was a capable entrepreneur who opened a shop near Miami, Florida where he found an active market for his work; some of the most popular depicted scenes of Jewish weddings.

The visit of noted Hollywood director Sidney Lumet to East Europe in the fall of 1980 on an exchange grant that also took him to Budapest, Warsaw and East Berlin was a highlight of my tour in Yugoslavia. In Belgrade he participated in the annual film festival. His most recent film, "Serpico", starring Al Pacino, was about police corruption in New York City. It generated great attention in the U.S. and Europe and demonstrated to Yugoslavs that freedom of expression in our society allowed film makers great latitude to address any issues they wanted to examine.

My parents were visiting at the time and by chance my father and I encountered Lumet at a local restaurant one evening. We were beckoned to his table and during our conversation he volunteered that my father's face was the handsomest he had ever seen. Partly in jest, I suggested my father keep an eye open for a letter offering him an opportunity to appear in Lumet's next film. Needless to say, that did not happen, but Lumet's remark is one I will never forget.

Allen Ginsberg's visit to Yugoslavia was another memorable experience. Noted Serbian poet Vasko Popa invited him to his home, and I traveled with him to the village of Vrsac (VER-shots) in Vojvodina just miles from the Romanian border. Several other American poets who had just participated in the annual Struga poetry festival in Macedonia joined us for the ride to dinner with Yugoslavia's virtual poet laureate. He was widely known and admired in U.S. poetry circles after translations of his work appeared in English.

As we approached the village police officers waved us down. This irritated the antiauthoritarian American poets who made it clear they wanted nothing to do with cops. I exercised my

diplomatic skills in an attempt to assure them that the police intended only to provide an honor guard for the guests of an internationally esteemed local resident. Several of the American poets were ready to express openly their utter disdain for police authority, which they might have been able to get away with in the U.S. The idea of a police escort in their honor was a concept difficult for some of them to grasp. In the U.S. they said it certainly wouldn't be to honor them. I succeeded in cooling them all down, and our two car convoy was finally escorted to Popa's house with police sirens blaring and red lights flashing.

The dinner in the yard of Popa's modest home was very pleasant on a warm summer evening with lots of local red wine and grilled lamb. Local musicians dropped by and played folk music. Poets read several of their works; Ginsburg spoke spontaneously characterizing the evening in words that may have regarded as a poem by literary critics. Since they were unrecorded, they have been lost to mankind including his reference to yours truly as a "functionary" who just happened to be at the table. I found that somewhat unflattering, but then, in the eyes of a beat poet, what else would a Foreign Service officer be?

Shortly before our departure from Belgrade in 1982, several American movie actors came to Yugoslavia to appear in a feature film about the 1943 movement of Tito's Partisan fighters from Vojvodina to Bosnia. Entitled "Veliki Transport" (Massive Transport), it was the last film produced in Yugoslavia about Tito's role in WWII. We hoped to see it later on the screen in Washington, but it was never released in the U.S. Outside of Yugoslavia it was shown commercially only in Spain for some reason.

Why American actors were cast as Yugoslavs in a Yugoslav film I do not know, but some of us at the embassy found that intriguing and we and drove out to the location to observe a scene being shot. We discovered that the American actors were Robert Vaughn, perhaps best known for his leading role almost two decades earlier in the hit TV series "The Man from U.N.C.L.E.," and James Franciscus, who starred in several widely seen TV series and appeared in a number of feature films as a supporting actor.

We watched several takes and had an opportunity to chat with both men during a break in the filming. We left business cards with them and I was surprised several days later when they both unexpectedly appeared at the American Center. They told me they were interested in the work of the embassy and wanted to know more about cultural and academic exchanges saying it was their first visit to a U.S. diplomatic facility. I gave them a brief tour of the premises and told them about the scope and nature of USIS activities in Yugoslavia. They thanked me for the orientation and after little more than half an hour returned to their filming. "B list" celebrities though they may have been, I was flattered by their attention nonetheless. They expressed serious interest in U.S. public diplomacy activities, and I enjoyed having the opportunity to talk with them about USIA activities in Yugoslavia. The event merited a toast and I just happened to have a bottle of slivovitz and several shot glasses handy and we drank to each other's good health.

We left Yugoslavia in the summer of 1982, just months after the outbreak of open hostilities in Pristina, the capital of Kosovo. Elements of the Yugoslav army had been deployed there to maintain order, which was an unprecedented event in Yugoslav history. The army had never

before been called upon for that purpose anywhere in the country. But by that time the idea the rallying cry in Kosovo had become 'Kosovo Republica' a call to elevate Kosovo's status from an autonomous province of Serbia to an independent republic. In my last visit to Pristina before our departure, I saw soldiers camped out in the large undeveloped lot around the Boro and Ramiz Cultural Center with their laundry hanging off balconies of nearby apartment buildings; armed vehicles patrolled the streets. The sight was very unsettling but the stress and tension between Serbs and Albanians was tightly reined in for the next five years. When I returned in 1998, it was a markedly different story.

RAYMOND ELLIS BENSON
Public Affairs Officer (USIS)
Belgrade (1979-1982)

Raymond Benson was born in New York City in 1924. He served in the U.S. Army between WWII and the Korean War. He graduated from the University of Wisconsin and attended the Russian Institute at Columbia University. He joined the United States Information Agency (USIA) in 1957. His overseas posts include, Zagreb, Belgrade, Hamburg, Turkey, and Moscow. Mr. Benson was interviewed by Robert Daniels in 2000.

Q: Let's now turn to your service in Belgrade as country public affairs officer from 1979 to 1982, any special circumstances about your move from Moscow to Belgrade?

BENSON: No, it was considered logical. John Reinhardt was then the Director of the USIA. You know him personally. He knew that I knew the language and had served there almost six years before. The job was going to be open. I asked for it and I was assigned to it. It didn't hurt that John and Larry Eagleburger were good friends dating to the time that John was an Assistant Secretary and Larry was, I believe, at the National Security Council and then at the State Department. So they knew each other well, and Larry Eagleburger had been a junior officer in the economic section of the embassy when we served there in the 1960s, so we knew him, and John felt that was just ducky. So off we went in 1979. Larry was Ambassador [Ed: serving from June 1977 to January 1981].

Q: Any comments about Eagleburger as Ambassador in those years?

BENSON: Well, Eagleburger, I thought, was superb. He is a delightful man, as far as I was concerned. He was a good friend. He was very clever, he was very witty, a fellow graduate, mind you, of the University of Wisconsin, very intelligent, extremely approachable by anybody at the embassy. Knowing Serbo-Croatian quite well, really well, he had good access to anybody and everybody. I don't think he himself went to Yugoslav movies or the theater, but he understood the importance of the cultural aspects of Yugoslav life as a reflection of the political scene. He was interested in officers who did that or who participated in Yugoslav life at that level. I found him an absolute delight to work with.

Let me say that he backed USIS's efforts within the country all the way; whenever they needed any ambassadorial backing. There were several instances. Number one was the need to get the information center in Sarajevo upgraded. We had information center, I should say, under the control of USIS in Skopje, Macedonia; Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina; Croatia in Slovenia and in Belgrade itself. We had a great staff in the country. And he pushed with people at the government level in Bosnia-Herzegovina to get our quarters there repaired and upgraded. This worked. We opened a new information center in Titograd, the capital of Montenegro. It is now Podgorica. It's been given its old name again. John Reinhardt came in for the event. We had a very gaudy opening of the new information center in Montenegro.

In fact, we agreed that we should have an information center--this was my suggestion--in Pristina, the capital or the main city of Kosovo. Now, we had a reading room in Novi Sad, which was not run by an American but by local employees. Novi Sad is in the autonomous region north of Belgrade and had a sizable Hungarian minority. It's very close to Hungary there. But, we did not have one in Kosovo. He supported my recommendation that there be one, and to make it more interesting I had suggested that there be an American resident in Pristina who would run the information center, and I suggested that it be a State Department foreign service officer who would have been trained in Albanian--mind you, we had no representation in Albania, no diplomatic representation at that time at all--and that this person would have Albanian at the Foreign Service Institute, would come in and would serve for a two-year tour of duty in Pristina...

Q: ...which would include trying to keep tabs on what was going on in Albania?

BENSON: Well, but with a library and other USIA responsibilities. I suppose there would be some relationships between this person and people cruising around who had their antennae up and ears out. The suggestion went on that, after two years in Pristina, that person would be assigned to Belgrade and would be in the political section so we would have a person in the political section all the time who was really attuned to Kosovo, to Albanian affairs, and would know Albanian. Larry thought this was neat.

Q: You were aware of the brewing crisis in Kosovo at that time?

BENSON: Well, we were aware for... What are we talking about here? We're talking about 1979 and 1980. Of course, the crisis in Kosovo was forestalled in 1966 when Tito got rid of (Aleksandar) Ranković, the head of the security services and one of his closest advisors and war companions. What was going on in Kosovo was very complicated, and the idea that it not be a crisis dictated a lot of Tito's policy toward it. There was an Academy of Sciences founded in Kosovo; there was a national theater; there was a big university.

Q: These were all Albanian language institutions?

BENSON: Or bilingual. There was a big radio station; there was a big television station. They had Turkish programs, Albanian programs, Serbo-Croatian programs, and had cultural centers. There was, if you want to think of what we were recommending to USIA, to John Reinhardt, there was a context into which an American library and information center would fit. In fact, and

as I pointed out, the person in charge of it would then move into the embassy and be in the political section, and Larry thought that was just as neat as could be. John, however, thought that this was a little much. He didn't gainsay the political and social importance in the Yugoslav circumstances, but pointed to the fact that we had in Yugoslavia, not that large a country, an information center in Skopje, in Sarajevo, in Zagreb, in Ubiana, we had a reading room in Novi Sad, we had a big one in Belgrade, we were just opening one in Titograd, and that's a lot of stuff on the ground.

Q: Yugoslavia was nearly unique in its ethnic diversity and the federal system and USIA programs had to reflect that diversity.

BENSON: That was the point we made, you know, that each of these reading rooms was in effect a USIS representative in a semi-quasi, well not independent, but within a federal system there was ample justification for this. John Reinhardt never turned it down. He said it would be on his list for funding, were funds to be later available. You're familiar with the verbiage in government circles which means don't hold your breath but on its merits I cannot say this isn't worth it. We never got it, and I think it might have made a little bit of difference later on, but I was pleased at the time at the cooperation between Larry and I as we wrote this up and sent it in. Larry always supported USIA. We had biannual meetings in Belgrade of all of the people from the field, USIS people whom I've mentioned who were from Skopje, Sarajevo and so on. He always had a gathering for them. He always spoke to them. He wanted to debrief them. He wanted the political section to debrief them. He felt these were American government representatives in these places, which in fact they were, where there were no other U.S. government representatives except, mind you, in Zagreb, where we had a consular general. He was damn good, awfully good.

Q: Would you say Reinhardt was showing a lot of interest in Yugoslavia?

BENSON: Well, I wouldn't say that John didn't show a lot of interest in other crucial countries. Yugoslavia was small but crucial, and he had two friends in Yugoslavia, one of whom was Larry, who was the Ambassador and hard to ignore and they went back a ways. They had done certain things that I know of, not to go into in the course of this interview, in the State Department when Kissinger was there. They had worked together on certain issues, and they were very close. And then there was I. So we didn't get to do something which I think was on its merits worth doing, but there you are. I think it's worth saying that.

I should also note we developed a program with Larry's support for commemorating the 100th anniversary of the United States' recognition of Serbia. Now, that was neat. It was to be in 1980, because it had been 1880. There was no Yugoslavia in 1880, so we couldn't exactly commemorate the recognition of the sovereign state of Yugoslavia.

Q: 1880 would have been shortly after Serbia became fully independent at the time of the Congress of Berlin [13 June – 13 July 1878]?

BENSON: Yes, and we recognized them promptly, or promptly enough. What was that, 1878? So again, with good support from Larry, we got a good grant or an addendum to our budget from

USIA, and we had an exhibit and seminars and colloquia, and we commissioned a piece of music that the Belgrade Philharmonic would play which commemorated this event with themes from 19th century United States music and Serbian music intertwined. Leo Smit was commissioned. He did it, and they performed it. We had people who combined with their Yugoslav counterparts in cultural areas, American history/Serbian history, American literature/Serbian literature, and so on. It was a beautiful series of events and a big exhibit, American works on paper, meaning graphics, no oils, curated at the SUNY of Albany, which was exhibited in Belgrade and Zagreb and Slovenia. It was good stuff, and Larry was crucial in supporting this and getting us the money.

Q: How did the political atmosphere in Yugoslavia in 1979-1982 compare with what you sensed in your earlier experience of 1959 to 1964?

BENSON: Well, it was really quite different. In 1979 already, Tito was not feeling very well. He died in May of 1980. In the last months he was terribly ill. He was in a hospital bed up in Slovenia, which is where he died. Things were, in a certain sense, unraveling, not that we would have, nor do I think we said they were unraveling. Now, there was a name I forget now, a fellow in the political section who was from CIA, who was extremely good and expert. What his reporting revealed I don't know, but you may be aware of the fact that it was the CIA which predicted long before, or several years before, the dissolution of Yugoslavia, that it would dissolve, and I shouldn't doubt but what this man's analysis contributed notably to that conclusion. He was good, he was awfully good.

But I don't think that we said, as an embassy reporting to the State Department, you know, "It's June 15th. Tito's dead for six weeks. Things are going to go to hell in a hand basket." But the environment was very different. For one, we had all of these offices around the country. We were dealing independently with the Ministry of Information, with the so-called Foreign Ministry of Macedonia in connection with our information center in Skopje. It was just a different ballgame from what it was before.

Q: So the republics had their nominal foreign ministries like the Soviet Union.

BENSON: Like in the Soviet Union, oh yes, sure, and certainly ministries of culture, ministries of education.

Q: Which made it all the more important for your USIA sub-offices in the republics to be there, because they were the only direct American contact with these foreign ministries of the republics.

BENSON: Yes. Now, one wouldn't want to overdo the length and breadth and depth of the ministries of foreign affairs in the republics. The ministries of culture, education, arts and what have you, had much more, if they weren't even at the ministerial level. The organizations which controlled those aspects of life in the republics played a much more direct and important role. The federal ministries of culture and education and the organizations which controlled academic exchange were not impotent in dealing with the individual republics, but it was a situation that was very interesting to see. You had different languages, to begin with. You had Macedonian,

you had Croatian, and you had Slovenian and, in the Voivodina, you had Hungarian, and, in Kosovo, Albanian. You know all this. It made things in our area of work, cultural and academic and information work, very interesting, I must say. You couldn't deal with the whole country with one language. On the other hand, I would go to Macedonia and I would speak Serbo-Croatian; I didn't know Macedonian. I'll elaborate on this later as you and I work on the final version; there is much more to be said.

Q: What about the climate, especially Yugoslav opinion, regarding relations with the U.S. vis-à-vis relations with the Soviet Union. You mentioned in the early 1960s that Tito was trying to take the lead in the world neutralist movement but he tended to vote neutral on the side of the Soviet Union in most international forums.

BENSON: Well, he certainly continued to do that. It continued to be irritating as all get out for the United States. As far as popular views were concerned, by the time I returned in 1979, all Yugoslavs had passports, anybody who wanted to could travel. Visa regulations with neighboring countries, Austria, Italy and Greece to the south, were eased to the point that a Yugoslav could ride his bicycle into Graz [Austria] and go to the opera or his car into Trieste for shopping. Yes, there were border controls, but basically it was free. The dinar was a viable currency in these nearby areas. Many of the Yugoslavs we knew would go on skiing vacations to Austria, especially to what is it, Bad Kleinkirchheim, in southern Austria, which had wonderful slopes and catered to the Yugoslavs. Many parts of the coast of Greece around the Salonika area catered to the Yugoslavs. They had pensions down there which loved to have the Yugoslavs. This was a tremendous difference. Moreover you had a great number, thousands and thousands, of gastarbeiter (guest workers) in West Germany at that time, some of these in the professions, others doing more menial tasks. Foreign currency was coming in Yugoslavia. The coast catered to foreign tourists in a very open way, which was just hardly beginning when I was there earlier in the 1950s and 1960s. I believe it was close to \$2,000,000,000 worth of foreign currency came in through tourism, not all from the coast, because Yugoslavia has wonderful mountains in the northwest. That was Slovenia.

Q: What about economic relations with the U.S.?

BENSON: Well, economic relations with the U.S. were moving right along. But, the question at that time was most-favored nation treatment for Yugoslavia, which still had not been granted. I think that's all I should say about that. Yugoslavia was not a major trading partner of U.S., and direct investment was not then possible, the kind that's going on now.

Q: Was American economic and military aid to the Yugoslav government continuing?

BENSON: Not in the way that it was in the 1950s and 1960s. We didn't even have a PL-480 program any longer.

Q: What about your experience as chargé d'affaires? That would be the first time you did anything like that, at that level.

BENSON: Well, it certainly was. That was in 1981. What happened at the time was that Eagleburger left. He was given an appointment by the incoming Republican Administration, first as Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs [May 1981 – January 1982] and then as Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs [February 1982 – May 1984]

Jack Scanlon, Eagleburger's DCM, became chargé. I was the third by rank in the embassy. Jack was called back to Washington. There was to-ing and fro-ing about could he, should he go, what would happen to the embassy, and they suggested, the State Department did, that I take over as chargé *ad interim*. Later that summer David Anderson came in and became the Ambassador [August 1981 – June 1985], and I agreed with some trepidation to take the DCM. It was an interesting time politically. You know, there had been rather violent riots in Kosovo in March of 1981. It settled down by the time I took over, but the embassy was visiting a lot and reporting up a storm. The political section was terribly active.

Q: So your staff was going to Kosovo even though you didn't have a permanent post there?

BENSON: Oh, yes. I was there myself I don't know how many times. We had exhibits there, we had friends there, and we would seek an excuse to visit. You'd write a trip report, you'd write a memo of conversation, the people in the political and economic section. You could get up, in good weather, in the morning early and drive to Pristina and be there midmorning, and you could be there for five or six hours and come home for dinner. The roads were decent. In fact, in good weather it was really a rather lovely drive. It's not that far. You could also fly. You could do a round trip in one day. So I did it for, as I recall it, three months, and various interesting episodes but no problems. One of the most interesting episodes was the visit of Charles Wick. You know, he as the head of USIA replacing Reinhardt. He came in with a whole team of people. It was really fascinating. Fortunately I had met him in Washington earlier.

Q: Now David Anderson arrives as Ambassador in the late summer of 1981; what were your impressions of his time as Ambassador?

BENSON: David was another fellow who had been with us in Belgrade in the 1960s. He was then a junior officer in the political section. He and Larry were good friends, Larry a junior officer in the economics section. He was very gifted linguistically, spoke Serbo-Croatian very well, German very well. His wife was a German citizen. He was a neat guy. He was again, as Larry, very open, very friendly, very congenial, literally open--I mean, the door was open, people in and out all the time--very politically deft and very good with the Yugoslavs, traveled the country a good amount. It's always tough to leave an embassy, you know, even for two days. You have to make an effort to do it. He did it. He was good.

RUTH KURZBAUER
Language Studies
Belgrade (1981-1982)

Ruth Kurzbauer was born and raised in Ohio. She attended Yale, majoring in Chinese Studies. Ms. Kurzbauer studied both Chinese and Serbo-Croatian at the Foreign Service Institute. She later continued these language studies in both Yugoslavia for a year and Taiwan for a year, eventually being assigned a post in mainland China.

Q: That's right and that is how the United States jumped right into it. That is the period that I concentrate on in my studies and that is how I come to this sort of conclusion that the more we understand the less we will fight against each other. I think to promote understanding between countries is everybody's task.

KURZBAUER: You know it is strange because you look at that and you see how our two nations have had a history of close alliance, the World War II history, and positive mutual perceptions. And then a great divide of mutual hostility and mutual misperceptions and so forth. But we can approach that and can find congruence at least on many levels.

And then there is Yugoslavia and I am still trying to figure it out, even having worked and lived there for two years and probably having gotten more deeply into ordinary society than I did in China, to be honest. Trying to understand how people who are fighting each other stem from the same nation, if you will, the Slavic nation. They speak basically the same languages: Croatian and Serbian linguistic differences are minute. It is analogous to British and American English. The people are Slavic by original ancestry but history for a variety of reasons has divided them into the Catholic, Orthodox Christian, and Muslim segments. Empires from the outside came in and changed histories. People found themselves on different sides of imperial lines, the Ottoman and Austrian. It is like saying the Shandong and the Hebei people who both stem, at least according to legend, from the Great Yellow Emperor, are now fighting each other to the death. And yet not only are the Slavs originally from the same stock way back, they have had the experience of living, working and intermarrying with each other in many cases for at least the last fifty years. And yet that nationhood was not able to sustain itself.

Q: After China split from the Soviet Union and India in the early sixties, they too got....

KURZBAUER: Well, it was a natural because Yugoslavia was a maverick state. What I found so interesting...when I was assigned to Yugoslavia I didn't know much about it but thanks to Foreign Service training I at least got an introduction... what I didn't realize was that when Yugoslavia left the Cominform, it was not because there had been a policy or sovereignty reason to separate, but because Stalin threw them out. Tito, at that time, was a devoted Stalinist communist and he organized Yugoslavia after the war on democratic centralist lines with everything coming from the top. Yugoslavia ended up through the decades as a federated system. But it was not initially because policy makers in Yugoslavia thought this through, it was because Stalin perceived Tito to be a threat, he was too independent, too nationalistic, even though Tito perceived himself as a loyal communist. So all of a sudden Yugoslavia was left hanging. It was like your father throws you out of the house and what do you do now? So they had to reinvent themselves in some other way, to define themselves in such a way so they could say that they were the true communists and it was Stalin and his system that were the aberrations.

HARRY JOSEPH GILMORE
Deputy Chief of Mission
Belgrade, Yugoslavia (1981-1985)

Ambassador Harry Joseph Gilmore was born and raised in Clairton, Pennsylvania in 1937. He attended the Carnegie Institute of Technology (Carnegie Mellon University) for a year before transferring to Pittsburgh University, where he graduated in 1960. From there he went onto graduate school at Indiana University's school of Russian and Eastern European studies. While applying to a National Defense fellowship, Gilmore took and passed the Foreign Service exam and was accepted into the Foreign Service soon after in 1962. He served in the United States and at posts abroad including Ankara, Turkey; Budapest, Hungary; Moscow, Soviet Union; Munich, Germany; Belgrade, Yugoslavia; Berlin, Germany; and Armenia, where he served as Ambassador. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in February 2003.

GILMORE: When Eagleburger left Belgrade on January 24, 1981, David Anderson, a very capable career diplomat, was nominated to be his successor. David asked me to be deputy chief of mission, so in August of 1981, I went to Belgrade. David had arrived in July. [Ed: State Department Office of Historian notes Ambassador Anderson was confirmed by the Senate on July 27, 1981, and presented his credentials on August 19, 1981.]

We were committed to working closely with this new collective post-Tito leadership. And it was clear that they were not able to make quick decisions. It was also clear pretty quickly that some of the things that Tito had feared, and monitored, and managed to keep under control were starting to happen. It was pretty clear, for example, that the Serbian Republic leadership was falling back into a more traditional Serb mode of thinking, and was jealous of the autonomy that Vojvodina, and in particular Kosovo had – Vojvodina and Kosovo were the Autonomous Provinces of the Socialist Republic of Serbia.

Let me cite an example of how the collective post-Tito leadership functioned. Vice President Bush visited Yugoslavia in September 1983. The leader of Yugoslavia's rotating collective leadership, the President of the Presidency was to lead the Yugoslav side in the talks which are part of any high-level visit. One of the Yugoslav officials who wrote the talking points is now in the U.S., now a U.S. citizen. He told me in confidence some years later that they crafted those talking points very carefully. They then arranged a "murder board" to prepare their leader for his meeting with Bush. The other members of the collective leadership made it clear that he couldn't go beyond the carefully agreed points. So, he conducted a very wooden dialog with Bush. As we know, George Herbert Walker Bush is a highly experienced diplomat, so this exchange didn't impress him very much. Bush's visit to Belgrade came right on the heels of the September 1st shoot down of a Korean Airlines flight KAL 007 by the USSR over the Kamchatka peninsula. Bush was very upset about the shoot down and raised it in forceful terms. The Yugoslav president couldn't handle it. He just responded with a bunch of platitudes. He didn't want to take any firm position and carefully avoided criticizing the USSR.

Vice President George Bush came to Belgrade with his wife, Barbara and they were very, very upset by the shootdown. The Yugoslavs had put out a very careful statement which they thought preserved their non-aligned status in the world, and they didn't really come out and condemn it. So, George Bush beat up on them, or at least tried to. And he didn't have a Tito as an interlocutor. Tito might well have criticized the shootdown, even condemned it; but the collective leadership didn't criticize it. They were super cautious. This was one of the first indications of how much Yugoslavia would miss Tito, would miss his decisive leadership. But, there were also other indications, including differences between the republics on budgetary issues and the question of development funds for Kosovo. Remember, one of the constant battles in Yugoslav politics had been over how much the well-off republics, particularly Slovenia, but also Croatia with its Dalmatian Coast, should contribute to the development funding for the poorer areas like Kosovo. The collective leadership found it difficult to reach a consensus on such issues.

There was one thing that the collective leadership did that was repressive internally. It concerned good old Milovan Djilas, who of course had written his books, The New Class, and Conversations with Stalin, much earlier. He was in Belgrade, living in a house near the Parliament. He was hauled in for questioning. I guess he had been detained for a short time. We found out about it in an unusual way. Our DCM in Paris, Jack Maresca, phoned me, and said Cy Sulzberger of the New York Times, whom he knew well. Sulzberger would have been close to Djilas. The New York Times had helped Djilas, gave him notoriety, and maybe helped him publish his books. That'll be in the archives. We hadn't heard anything about his detention. Sure enough, we did some very quick checking, and the authorities had picked up Djilas. There was no reason for this. He wasn't doing anything extraordinary. Although he was not Tito's favorite person, and he was a thorn in Tito's side, I doubt that they would have detained him if Tito were alive. This was another sign of nervousness. In fact, after some questioning, he was released and put under something like house arrest.

Ambassador Anderson decided to send the number two officer in the political section, Jim Clunan, to see him. We didn't make any deal about it; we didn't ask anybody's permission. We just sent him over to Djilas's home. Djilas was delighted, gave him tea, and said how happy he was to see him. Djilas talked to Clunan and smiled all over himself. Because you know what that visit meant; it that meant the U.S. was interested in Djilas, and the Yugoslavs ought to think twice before they did anything more harsh. But the detention of Djilas was another indication of the lack of self-confidence of the collective leadership.

During my tour of duty in Belgrade the Yugoslavs ran a very successful Winter Olympic Games in Sarajevo [Ed: 8-19 February 1984]. I didn't get to the Games. I traveled to Sarajevo before and after the Olympics, but I had to run the embassy during the Games because Ambassador Anderson wisely, in my mind, moved temporarily to Sarajevo to make sure U.S. V.I.P visitors were being taken care of. He used his connections to get them the right appointments with the Yugoslav officials who were basking in the publicity of the Olympics. By the way, the Sarajevo Olympics were well run and the Yugoslav built some pretty good infrastructure in Sarajevo. It was subsequently knocked around, I'd say, during the pummeling of Sarajevo by the Serbs. But, in any case, the Sarajevo Olympics were well run. Our embassy did a good job assisting the

many Americans who attended the Games. We put the administrative counselor, Vince Farley, in charge of the embassy's involvement, and he won high praise from the Congressional delegation and other official American visitors to the Games.

But there was one other really important matter I want to mention. The Yugoslavs got into major financial trouble. This hadn't to do particularly with the collective leadership; probably it was going to happen under Tito too. Yugoslavia was kind of caught between East and West, economically. The Yugoslavs had taken some large loans from American and European and Japanese banks, and they weren't able to service them. So by late 1982, early 1983 they were in pretty serious trouble. They needed a major bailout. Here we should all take our hats off to our Ambassador, David Anderson, and to Ambassador Alfred Hohl, the Swiss Ambassador, and also to Kenneth Scott, now Sir Kenneth Scott, the British Ambassador. The three of them, particularly David Anderson and Alfred Hohl, played an almost heroic role. I use that word carefully -- in getting Yugoslavia's collective leaders to realize first that they were in trouble, and then in assisting them to work with their creditors to refinance their debt. It was not easy for them to do that. David Anderson was the one who took the message to them, after talking with his British and Swiss counterparts. He went -- I was his notetaker, which was very unusual - to see Milka Planinc, who was the equivalent of the prime minister, the Chairman of the Federal Executive Council. David indicated that we knew what kind of trouble they were in. It was serious, we gave her some figures. David said if the Yugoslav leadership was interested, we would be willing to use our diplomatic influence to help them get a rescheduling. Planinc smiled all over herself, but she reacted very professionally. She said she had to take the matter to the collective leadership. She did, and they decided they wanted help. So, David Anderson and Alfred Hohl spent many a night sitting up late with Zvone Dragan, the Vice President of the Yugoslav Federal Executive Council and his country's highest ranking economic officer, to work on the rescheduling.

The Swiss ambassador had a special role to play because the head of the Bank for International Settlements in Switzerland was his personal friend. That BIS played a key role in the rescheduling. The Yugoslavs were very reluctant to pledge their small gold reserve as the security for paying their debt. The issue had to go before the collective leadership, and also the military leadership had to agree with it. Initially, they balked.

In the end, the Yugoslavs agreed to pledge their gold, and the rescheduling went ahead and was successful. It bought them time, time to make some economic reforms, which seemed to be working as I left Yugoslavia in the summer of 1985. But, in any case, the most important thing that happened on David Anderson's watch was the rescheduling. I'm firmly of the belief that had we not gone to the Yugoslavs and told them how urgent we thought their problem was, and helped them push this rescheduling and get it through their own internal structure, they would have been in very serious economic trouble. They would have been in default and would have had a real economic crisis... maybe even something close to a meltdown. I should note that an especially able economic officer, Patrick Nichols, was instrumental in identifying Yugoslavia's looming financial crisis and in helping Ambassador Anderson coordinate the U.S. response. Ambassador Anderson nominated Nichols for the Salzman Award, which Nichols won. [Ed: The Herbert Salzman Award for Excellence in International Economic Performance is a Department of State award made possible by the late Herbert Salzman, former U.S. Ambassador to the U.S. Mission to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. It recognizes

outstanding contributions in advancing U.S. international relations and objectives in the economic field. The recipient of the award receives a certificate signed by the Secretary and \$5,000.]

Q: Were we monitoring the ethnic divisions of Yugoslavia, Macedonia, Albanians, Muslim Bosnians, Croatians, Montenegrins, the whole thing?

GILMORE: Yes, as best we could. We were particularly watching the Kosovo situation. That had flared up before David Anderson got there as ambassador. We had officers down there all the time. There had been demonstrations and student unrest at the University of Pristina in the provincial capital, and it was closed. We were also watching development in Yugoslavia's Republic of Macedonia. We had a political officer assigned to watch each republic and the two autonomous provinces, Kosovo and Vojvodina. And, of course, we had the America Centers in each republic. We had to be very careful because center directors were not to be engaged in politics, and, in fact, they weren't. But when the center directors came to Belgrade, we could always sit with them, and they could sit with officers from the economic and political sections, or if what they had to say was interesting enough, the Ambassador. So, we had a pretty good fix on what was happening in each republic and autonomous province. And then we had some very interesting and impressive people on the embassy staff. The Counselor for Public Affairs, Raymond Benson, for example, had been in and around Yugoslavia for years and knew it especially well [Ed: Benson has been interviewed by ADST].

Q: Right. He was there when I was there, 1962 to 1967.

GILMORE: Right. And as a USIA officer he didn't do any political or economic reporting, but he had some excellent contacts, especially with the Serbs. So we were watching how some Serbs were becoming more nationalistic. We had some contacts with Slobodan Milosevic who was then a banker. Milosevic's rise to power in Yugoslavia's Serbian Republic began in the final 15 months of Ambassador Anderson's tour of duty, which ended in the summer of 1985. Milosevic was elected to a two-year term as President of the Belgrade League of Communists City Committee in April 1984. From the time of Tito's death in May 1981, the embassy's political reporting had focused particularly on Kosovo, where there had been real problems already in the late Tito period. They included huge population growth among the Kosovo Albanians.

In any case, we monitored Serb-Albanian tensions in Kosovo pretty closely, and reported regularly on them. We also monitored Serb-Croat differences, particularly the differences on budgetary issues, especially Croatia's desire to keep more of the revenues from Dalmatian Coast tourism. Tourism in Croatia, particularly from Germans, was booming and Croatia was putting less revenue back into the federal coffers. Still, when Ambassador Anderson and I left, and Jack Scanlan came aboard as the new U.S. ambassador in July of 1985, Yugoslavia looked in relatively decent shape. [Ed: Scanlan was Ambassador from July 1985 until March 1989 and his oral history interview is on the ADST website.] The financial crisis was being dealt with through rescheduling. Decision-making was cumbersome, but the collective leadership mechanism was working, and none of the ethnic issues seemed about to explode. Meanwhile, in the Soviet Union's *Glasnost* and *Perestroika* were gathering steam. The developments that would lead to the demise of the Warsaw Pact were yet off in the future.

Q: Yes, and that was in a way the pressure that kept Yugoslavia together.

GILMORE: It was indeed, and it was also the pressure that kept the U.S. engaged in Yugoslavia. Once the Warsaw Pact had fallen apart and Germany was reunified, the U.S. was no longer interested in taking the lead and in forging a Western policy of support for Yugoslavia's unity and independence. In fact, we were going to leave it up to the Europeans, as we well know.

Q: That's when Jim Baker said, "We don't have a dog in that fight."

GILMORE: Right.

Q: While you were there, did you see a difference in perspective between our consul general in Zagreb and the embassy in Belgrade?

GILMORE: Well there was always a question of a differing perspective. One of my tasks as the DCM was to write the performance rating of the consul general in Zagreb; the ambassador would review it. We had some very interesting reporting out of Zagreb, very good reporting. It didn't always match what we in the embassy would have hoped for out of Zagreb, but Ambassador Anderson and I thought it was independent and professional. And there were differences emerging between Serbia and Croatia. Of course, Franjo Tudjman, who subsequently became the strong man in Croatia, was making some noises, and another dissident, named Dobroslav Paraga, was also active. The consulate general had established careful contact with him. The whole issue of Serbs in Croatia, an issue which has now been shoved into the dustbin of history, was still alive then.

Yugoslavia had very little oil. What it did have was largely in Croatia. So, there were energy issues too, but differences in reporting on economic and energy issues between the Embassy in Belgrade and our consulate general in Zagreb were relatively minor. Although, there was always a question of how autonomous the consul general in Zagreb should be. David Anderson had a light touch. He could also be tough. He was a small fellow, a Scotsman who had been a very good soccer player. Basically, as long as he thought the consul general in Zagreb was being professional and as long as he felt as ambassador he was being consulted on the issues he cared about, he didn't get nervous, he didn't get uptight. He wasn't a control freak like some of his predecessors had been seen to be. But if you go back and read the reporting, it'll be interesting to see how it stacks up in light of subsequent developments. There were clearly important personalities in Croatia who were unhappy with the federation, and we were seeing some of that.

Q: Well, you left there in...?

GILMORE: I left Belgrade in summer, August of 1985. I came back to the Department to be the Director of the Office of Central European Affairs, where I remained until August of 1987. Two very interesting years.

Q: Earlier you mentioned Andrija Artukovic, who was associated with the WWII Croatian Ustashe. Do you want to say something at this point in the chronology?

GILMORE: Yes, the reason I'd waited, was because the key date of what I want to relate at this point was February of 1986. In other words, after I came back to run the office of Central European Affairs in the Bureau of European Affairs, Artukovic was finally extradited. But what I wanted to say was, with the creation of the Office of Special Investigations in the Justice Department, a much more vigorous effort to look at WWII war criminals got underway. One of the most significant cases that was pending, and as I explained earlier, had not been resolved, was the Artukovic case. In effect, he was under a stay of deportation. He was living incommunicado, as you had mentioned, on his brother's estate in southern California. The Yugoslavs had been terribly frustrated when, as you know as well as anybody, they hadn't been able to have him extradited decades earlier.

In any case, what I want to put on the record is sensitive, but I think important, and that is that near the end of my stay in Belgrade, Mr. Murray Stein - I'm pretty confident that is his name - but I don't keep my papers, because we're not supposed to in this new day and age. Mr. Murray Stein of the Justice Department Office of Special Investigations came to Belgrade. In preparation for his visit, David Anderson sent me to see Milan Bulajic, the head of the Federal Secretariat of Foreign Affairs Office for Legal and Consular Affairs. I mentioned to Bulajic that there was a new office in the Justice Department which was seeking to review some extradition cases. I asked whether his embassy in Washington had reported this. Bulajic had been personally involved, as a much younger man, in the earlier attempt to extradite Artukovic. I believe he was skeptical. But when Stein came to Belgrade, he went to see Bulajic. In fact, as I remember, I hosted buffet dinner for Stein at my home, the DCM residence. The two talked about the case and in the end the Yugoslav government decided that, although it would very difficult to bring together people who could bring new personal testimony about Artukovic, they would try to do it. They did it, and Artukovic was finally extradited in February 1986. He was extradited after Supreme Court Justice Rehnquist turned down a midnight request by his lawyers not to extradite him. As I understand it, and there are others who would be much more familiar with the details, Artukovic was tried in Zagreb, the capital of the Croatian Republic of Yugoslavia. He was found guilty and sentenced to capital punishment. He was quite ill at that time, quite elderly, but he was found guilty. He died in prison shortly thereafter. [Editor's Note: The court in Zagreb issued a death sentence on 14 May 1986, but a year later the authorities ruled that he was too ill (with senile dementia) to be executed. He died from natural causes in a prison hospital in Zagreb in 1988, aged 88.]

Q: We're talking about the Reagan administration, they were Republican Californians, and Artukovic's brother was a strong supporter of them financially. Did you get a feeling that this was almost the special investigation unit was being pushed into doing this? It was not politically palatable?

GILMORE: Well, it's interesting. When Murray Stein came out to Belgrade, it was clear that he was very much determined to see if the Yugoslavs could be persuaded to reopened the Artukovic case, because he knew the file and believed the U.S. Government's position on his extraction would be different this time. But, perhaps surprisingly, I heard nothing politically about the case and our ambassador Anderson was a Reagan appointee to Belgrade. He was open to reexamining this case, and was, indeed, committed to it. Former Ambassador to Yugoslavia Lawrence

Eagleburger, who served as Assistant Secretary for European Affairs from May 1981 to January 1982, Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs from February 1982 to May 1984 and who was acting as a special advisor on Yugoslav affairs to the White House and at the time knew very well what was at stake. I don't know how much political pressure Eagleburger and the other senior U.S. officials might have had to withstand. I assumed that there was some pressure, but it certainly didn't affect what we were doing in Belgrade. We knew that Artukovic's extradition was a very important issue for some Croatian-Americans, but we also knew what the charges against Artukovic were.

JOSEPH R. MCGHEE
Yugoslavia Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1982-1983)

Joseph R. McGhee was born in Pennsylvania in 1952 and educated at Yale and Columbia. He entered the Foreign Service in 1975. His career included posts in Prague, Rome, Panama City and Bonn. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1997.

Q: Do you recall any of the types of questions or any of the questions that you were asked in the oral exam?

McGHEE: I don't recall quite specifically what it was but the thrust of one question was, and I don't remember which time this was by the way, that I was going to write some sort of a report. We had gotten onto the subject of Yugoslavia for some reason and they asked me that if I was going to write a report on X aspect of some event in Yugoslavia, how would I go about collecting information about it. I don't recall that I answered it terribly well. I said that I would look at the newspapers, read some magazines, talk to local officials and politicians. Then I guess because I was in the university at the time, I said I would get some specialist journal and consult articles about it. I didn't know any better.

Q: Then you moved over to basically do the Yugoslav desk for the next year, is that right, from sort of '82 to '83? What were our concerns with Yugoslavia at that particular time?

McGHEE: Our main concern with Yugoslavia was stability. Tito was dead and he had left behind him not a successor but a sort of a ramshackle institution called the rotating presidency. There were I believe eight members of this panel, one for each of the republics.

Q: There were five republics weren't there?

McGHEE: There were five republics. There were seven members then: five republics and the two autonomous areas of Kosovo and Voivodina. They each had a seat on it as well. Everybody got a turn. For a year you were chairman of this body and as chairman of this body you acted as chief of state for ceremonial purposes. But in order to do anything, you had to have a majority vote within this panel. Plus Yugoslavia being run the way it was, each of the

separate republic of Montenegro, Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia and Macedonia each had their own government that to the extent possible sought to run things internally.

In my day this rotation actually worked fairly well. The presidency was occupied by people who had all worked more or less closely with Tito and believed in Titoism and a united Yugoslavia and so they managed to make the thing work even though it was highly improbable. Of course as soon as the Soviet threat was taken away, it flew to pieces. In those days it worked reasonably well.

The other big problem was with the Albanians. There was severe ethnic strife in Kosovo that caused the shutting down of the University of Pristina. The Kosovo government was dissolved at various times and was run by a sort of commissioner that was sent there from Belgrade. The Yugoslav army was bolstering the police in the region. There were incidents of terrorism and pressure brought against the Serb population to leave with a consequence that the Serbs went from around 25 to 30 percent gradually down to about 10 or 12 percent of the population of Kosovo over that period. Of course there was suspicion that a lot of this was being fermented and financed by Enver Hoxha and the Albanians next door.

Q: Were there any issues between the United States and Yugoslavia at this time?

McGHEE: Not major ones, no. Relations were actually pretty good and relaxed and of course with Eagleburger as Under Secretary he paid a lot of attention to the Yugoslavs and made sure that things stayed on track.

There had been an incident about five years before, I don't remember the exact date anymore, but a Croatian independence group here in the United States had bombed the home of the Yugoslav number two in their embassy down here in Northwest Washington. The home was completely destroyed. Fortunately there was no one injured in the bombing but the place burned to the ground. The Yugoslavs had not had it adequately insured and the rebuilding was significantly more than they had in their insurance fund. Eagleburger actually managed to get the State Department to pay the balance of the rebuilding costs. Technically it is our responsibility with an attack like this on our territory.

I actually did a good-bye party for this guy. I went and got the check that was written on the secretary's sort of emergency fund, I guess. It had a name and I don't remember what it was called anymore. It was a fund that the secretary had some discretion over how to spend. They wrote the check and I brought it to this reception and handed it to Eagleburger when he came through the door then he waved it and handed it over.

By and large relations were very good. There were problems but they mainly stemmed from the fact that the Yugoslavs were in kind of an economic crisis and the embassy had no money. They were constantly stiffing tradesmen or asking us to pick up the cost of this or that.

Q: Where we concerned about anti-communist forces in the United States, I mean émigré Serbs or Croats?

McGHEE: I think it was émigré Croats at that time in particular.

Q: Were they causing any other problems? Did we keep good track of who was doing what to whom?

McGHEE: They did cause problems and in a number of areas. Sitting in the State Department the problem was that some of these Croatian organizations had good contacts in congress and congress was constantly on us about being too friendly with the Yugoslavs. It was nothing insurmountable but it was constant sniping. They would turn up from time to time with the old Ustashi flag, independent Croatia, and bug the Yugoslav ambassador sometimes when he traveled. The worst incident was the bombing of this house here that I recall.

Q: I can't remember when it happened, the Artukovich case. Did that occur during this time?

McGHEE: No. Actually Artukovich, as I recall, was arrested in Yugoslavia for snapping photographs.

Q: No. I am talking about Artukovich who goes back to the Ustashi regime in Croatia and had been living in California. I think he was a war criminal. That had been taken care of?

McGHEE: No that didn't take place during my time. In my time there was a guy whose name I can't remember that had been picked up for allegedly spying, economic espionage. Although what he had actually done was, only with difficulty it could be characterized as that. He got out while I was on the desk although most of the work had been done by my predecessor. We handled his departure and his flight back to the States. I can't now remember the guy's name.

Q: No earthquakes or anything like that in your time?

McGHEE: No, no earthquakes. There were no forces of nature work.

Q: Forces of nature were benign. How about between Yugoslavia and Italy, were there any issues that we got involved in?

McGHEE: None that we got involved in. In that time frame or slightly before that, actually when I was serving in Italy in around 1978, there was an agreement signed between Yugoslavia and Italy at a place called Ozemmal which is in the Marche, northeastern Italy. It was a treaty that was supposed to settle all the outstanding issues from the Second World War including Trieste and all of that. In fact the Ozemmal Treaty generally did settle most of those issues.

Some of them have been reopened since then because of the collapse of Yugoslavia. Italy is now settling its outstanding issues with each of these countries separately. There are some issues stemming from the expulsion of most of the Italian population at the end of World War II.

At that time this Ozemmal agreement had just been signed and it was holding up pretty well and being pretty faithfully implemented by both sides. Tourism and travel to the Dalmatian coast was open and it was being fully utilized by Italians as well as Germans and Swedes. It was a pretty

quiet time.

RUSSELL O. PRICKETT
Economic Counselor
Belgrade (1982-1985)

Mr. Prickett was born and raised in Minnesota and attended Hamline University and Harvard Law School. He entered the Foreign Service in 1959. During his career he held posts in Switzerland, Yugoslavia, and Japan, also working in the State Department's Office of Economic and Business Affairs and Trade and Finance Division. Mr. Prickett was interviewed in 1999 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

PRICKETT: As it turned out, the thing that opened up after about a year over at Commerce was the economic counselor's job in Belgrade. Since I had checked out at a 4 level in the Serbo-Croatian language after my tour in Belgrade in the '60's, had gone through the economics course at FSI and had a series of economic tours, and there were still people in positions of power and authority in Yugoslavia whom I had met, been acquainted with back in the '60's, I had, as the personnel people said, "all the tickets" for that job. I did get the assignment. This assignment was from '82 to '85. It was a three-year tour.

So I was assigned as economic counselor to Belgrade in 1982. In preparation for that transfer, my wife, Rose, was able to get into language class at FSI in Serbo-Croatian. Being a singer, she's good with language, and was able, even though she had to interrupt her studies from time to time to go off and sing an opera someplace or whatever, she could usually come back in and catch up with the folks. She did not surpass the officers, but she did about as well as any of the dependents who were doing that language work. When we arrived in Belgrade, we had an apartment that was not in the embassy complex, and so we were out on the economy, so to speak. We were near the large marketplace. We did marketing and shopping on the economy. We weren't quite as dependent on the commissary that was down in the embassy apartment basement as some of the other folks were, although we certainly took advantage of it. So Rose was out in the town a good bit. We had a housekeeper who would come in a couple of times a week and didn't speak any English at all, and she and Rose communicated okay. Rose said there was an awful lot of pantomiming going on, and she was sure that what was being said wasn't grammatically correct most of the time, but they did understand each other.

Q: Now this servant, was it assigned to you by the government?

PRICKETT: No.

Q: So you weren't being penetrated.

PRICKETT: Oh, I don't doubt that we could well have been, but Dragica came on a recommendation from somebody else, I think from the Brits. I don't believe she had worked for

Americans before. But she was in the community of folks who did work for foreigners, so she was surely known to the Interior Ministry people.

Q: Well, perhaps you'll talk about the security aspect of the assignment. Could you speak in bed? What about bugging?

PRICKETT: Oh, we assumed that we were bugged. We just assumed, which of course is what the SY people always told us to do, and there was no reason to assume otherwise. You know, the telephone would ring, and there wouldn't be anybody there, and we just assumed that people were checking to see if folks were home — so that they could come in and change the tapes or whatever. This had happened. I was aware of this, of course, from my former tour in Belgrade also, and we just assumed it was being done. We also knew that the Russians, who had their embassy on some high ground not far away, had some pretty sophisticated equipment too, but they were not hand-in-glove with the Yugoslavs by any means.

Q: They weren't sharing intelligence — to that extent.

PRICKETT: No, not unless it was to their advantage. We probably shared some stuff with the Yugoslavs on the Russians, too, just as there were military missions from both sides to Yugoslavia, and the Yugoslavs were very happily playing the man in the middle. They kept pretty good insulation. I think I may have mentioned in connection with my previous tour, we didn't learn much about the Russian equipment and their classified relations with the Russians, and they apparently didn't learn much about ours either. Our defense efforts, for instance. While their rhetoric was against the West, their defense plans were all against the East. They knew where the threat was coming from if there was to be a conflict. So yes, our domestic help may well have been interviewed from time to time, but there wasn't much to catch. There were probably microphones in our telephones and stuff like that. We just didn't think about it much because we knew to take it easy.

Q: You learned to take precautions.

PRICKETT: Yes.

Q: And Foreign Service nationals, or locals, as I guess you called them in those days, in the embassy — did they fall in the same category as your servant?

PRICKETT: Yes, with a little modification. These folks had made their careers with us from early on, and most of them we had very good reason to believe held strong loyalty towards us as employers and strong yearning towards the United States as a future place to live. I always made a point of explaining it. I hired several locals in the course of the years, first in the Commercial Section and then an economic professional later on, and I told them at the outset that whatever their protestations about not being Communist, about being more favorable towards us — I said, "I'm not going to put you in a position where you need to feel a conflict of loyalties between your loyalty to your country or your loyalty to your employer. We keep that sort of stuff separate in our embassy, and so if anybody comes around and knocks on your door and says, 'We need to know what you see, what you hear,' or whatever in the embassy, you're free to talk. The

response usually was ‘Well, I would never do that’.” And of course, we all know better. The kind of leverage that a government has over its citizens just makes it such that we have to assume, and that it would be wrong for us to put people in a position where they had to endanger themselves, their kids, their education, their opportunities, or their relatives to put themselves in any kind of jeopardy on our behalf. That just wasn’t on, and so I made this clear to my people all the time. This, as I understand it, is the way everybody in Belgrade and in the Communist countries has dealt with the locals and their domestic servants. You make certain assumptions. It makes our life a little more inconvenient, but it saves them from really terrible circumstances.

Q: It’s important, yes.

PRICKETT: Well, I was very gratified to arrive in Belgrade to be working for an old buddy from the ‘60’s. David Anderson had been second secretary in the embassy when I was commercial attaché, and he was our ambassador. He had come from Berlin, where he had been civilian chief of our mission in Berlin, and he was good with the language, he was well connected with the Belgrade leadership, and probably had as good — well, better — entrée with the top Yugoslavs than any other ambassador in town. On one occasion George Kennan visited Belgrade, and Kennan had been ambassador to Yugoslavia. I mentioned that I just missed serving under him. David told us about his conversation with Mr. Kennan. He said George Kennan had asked him, “Whom do you see on a regular basis? Do you see the defense minister, for example?” “Well, not unless we have a serious issue to raise. I can see him if I have to.” “And the foreign minister?” “Well, yes.” “The trade and industry minister?” “Yes.” Kennan just looked at David and said, “You’re a much more effective ambassador here than I was ever able to be.” David was good.

Q: Of course, times were different, too.

PRICKETT: Times were certainly different, no question about it, and there’s certainly no question that Ambassador Kennan was doing his darnedest to make American policy encouraging to the Yugoslav position of independence and resigned because he didn’t feel he was being adequately supported in that effort by Congress.

Still, David, when he had been in Belgrade back in the ‘60’s, David was a soccer player, a very accomplished soccer player. He had come to the States, I believe, at about age 16, with his parents from Scotland. He was born in Scotland. He still had just a trace of an accent. You couldn’t quite identify it. He had played in some of the industrial soccer leagues as a kid when he first came to the States. I’m digressing and talking about David because David passed away some years ago, and I don’t know whether we have archives like this for him or not. But when he came to the States he played in these soccer leagues, and he said, “We’d go out and play, and then everybody would go to a bar and drink beer and fight, and that was just the way it was, so that’s what I did.” David wasn’t a tall guy, but he was very well put together and a tough guy. In a staff meeting one time, somebody said he wasn’t sure that Washington wanted us to make this that or the other point, and David just cut the guy off and said, “I didn’t come out here to tell Washington what it wants to hear. I came out here to call it like it is.” It was a thrill, really, to be working for an ambassador like that, and David always backed up his people on the staff. One deputy assistant secretary of Commerce came out and was fussing at our officer who was in

charge of airline transportation affairs because he hadn't gotten an invitation to a particular do or a dinner. He was leaning on the officer, P. J. Nichols, my deputy. Of course, we always kept Ambassador Anderson informed as to what was going on, and when David found out that this fellow was leaning on P. J., he called him up at his hotel and reamed him out very good, and said, "If it's so important to you to go to this affair, Helen and I don't need this" — Helen was his wife — "we don't need it; you can have our tickets if you want, but you *will not bully my people*." David had already turned down, I think, whatever amounted to tenure in the Senior Foreign Service before he took the post. He wanted it understood that he wasn't beholden to anybody. He was a career officer, but he had not signed on to that, and he planned, I think, for this to be his final post in the Foreign Service anyway, so he was one independent SOB, and a real pleasure to work with.

We arrived at a time when the Yugoslavs were just beginning to experience a hard currency shortage and a foreign exchange crisis that the world knew so well in the cases of Mexico and Brazil, back in the first half of the 1980's. What had happened was that the Yugoslav economy had been expanding by leaps and bounds all through the '70's. They had lots and lots of bank lending, private bank lending. They'd had a lot of World Bank loans and projects, and infrastructure and big heavy industrial projects were sprouting up all over the country. They were living high on imports and were managing to keep their inflation relatively under control, because they were importing so much stuff that they had plenty to spend their money for. But being a fairly inefficient socialist economy, they were not building up their own capacity to produce the goods that all of this demand with the high incomes and the foreign credits was generating. When it came time to start paying this stuff back, they had not earned the foreign exchange that they needed to do so. They did have substantial gold reserves, but these were not to be touched. This was their stash that was to preserve the independence of the republic, after all. Nobody knew where it was. We assumed it was in Switzerland, but the location and the exact amount of their gold reserves were deeply guarded secrets.

Q: Debt ratio — is that what we're talking about? In other words, how much should they. . . . Wasn't 20 percent the magic figure?

PRICKETT: Something in the 20s, yes. And they were well above that.

Q: They were well above that. Okay.

PRICKETT: What has become very much talked about now in the '90's was also the case then, that the foreign private banks were having such a time recycling their oil revenues that they were in a way more anxious to lend that money out than they were to examine how it would be repaid. So when countries like Yugoslavia or Mexico or Brazil or lots of others came for loans, what we had been considering way, way back in the '60's and '70's, the problem of recycling those oil revenues turned out not to be the problem. The problem was what was going to happen after those revenues got readily recycled. Yugoslavia was in such a crunch in the early 1980's, and we were going to have to reschedule their debts. Now they had a very fundamentalist attitude about rescheduling. It was a bad, dirty word. Rescheduling, refinancing — re-anything — wasn't to be even considered. The Yugoslavs actually had a good credit rating, and any refinancing or whatever they were afraid was going to endanger that, and they were very proud that they had

been making regular payments. In a sense though, what they were doing was converting the income to dinars, spending it on infrastructure projects, roads and railroads and bridges, and importing a lot of industrial equipment from the West and a lot of consumer goods. And they weren't building their own export capacity nearly as much. Now they had very good agriculture, and they were getting some income from their exports to Western Europe. They had a very efficient and well-operated airline, and they also were making good income from goods transit through Yugoslavia from Western Europe down to Greece and the Middle East and back.

But they were in tough straits by 1981-82, and we were already in the business of intermediating, as it were, between the Yugoslavs and the world financial community. When the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank comes to most capitals, it steers a pretty wide path around the American embassy, being located in Washington, DC, after all, they really work against the apprehension that they are under the thumb of the US Government in Washington. In Yugoslavia, however, the situation was a little different. We had expertise that they didn't have about the country, and particularly about the people running the country and whether the negotiating positions that those people took were based in fact or whether they were just bluffing. We found that the Monetary Fund, the private bankers, the folks who came to town to do business with the Yugoslav firms or banks or to negotiate with the Yugoslav Government regularly came to see us, and so we got inside knowledge about a lot of transactions and a lot of negotiations.

The American businesses and banks and the international financial institutions relied on the American embassy to give them a perspective on their negotiations and dealings in the Yugoslav business and financial communities that didn't always happen elsewhere. In the course of some negotiations, when it finally became clear that there was going to have to be some kind of rescheduling or refinancing of Yugoslavia's foreign exchange debt — by whatever name, and they managed to keep from calling it that (I've forgotten now what the terminology was) — it would happen that the International Monetary Fund negotiators would be in town, and the representatives of the consortium of over 500 private western banks, which were led by Manufacturers Hanover (because they had the biggest exposure) would come to town, there would be negotiations that would take place from about eight o'clock in the morning until the negotiators were worn out. The Yugoslav business day usually went from seven till two (it was a six-day business week, which comes out to a 42 hour work week. Then they would retire for a huge Yugoslav business lunch, and the Yugoslav custom was that's when you went for your siesta, and then you would get up later on ready for your nightlife. Well, Ambassador Anderson had the habit of taking a fair amount of work home with him at lunch time, and it could easily happen around two or three in the afternoon that I'd get a call: "Russell? David. Manny Hanny [meaning Manufacturers Hanover] people are coming out to the house about five o'clock this afternoon to talk about the rescheduling negotiations." And I'd say, "Would you like PJ and me to come out about 4:30?" "Would you mind?" David would say. And so Patrick Nichols, PJ, my deputy, and I would go out at 4:30. I should say that PJ was a very able, very intelligent, very knowledgeable guy who had been an analyst over at Langley for some years, had worked on Yugoslavia, Poland and some African countries.

Q: As an FSO?

PRICKETT: No, he was hired by the Agency first, and he actually had done some documentation that was published in Congressional hearings on Yugoslavia in the '70's. Then I think he did a tour in one African country and, I believe, in Poland before his assignment. He resigned from the Agency and became an FSO, not an FSR.

Q: He became an FSO.

PRICKETT: Yes, he was an FSO. He and David were good buddies and were out there before I arrived. Parenthetically, PJ was a little concerned about this. My predecessor had apparently been nervous about the fact that here was a guy who played golf, as did David Anderson, the Scotsman, was a golfing buddy and a tennis buddy with Anderson, and maybe was closer to the ambassador than he was, the fellow who was in between as his nominal boss. PJ mentioned that to me about my predecessor's feelings, and I said, "PJ, it doesn't bother me to deal with somebody who may be brighter than I am or closer to the ambassador. I will insist that you keep me completely informed."

Q: And it worked.

PRICKETT: Oh, yes. We had a very good teamwork. We had a lot of respect for each other and had a lot of fun together.

Q: His previous label must certainly have been known to the Yugoslavs.

PRICKETT: Sure, because he was above the line.

Q: Did this have any negative effects?

PRICKETT: No, it didn't seem to. He was also good with the language. He was a very good linguist.

Q: So you didn't have a spy on your staff, in the imagination of the Yugoslavs.

PRICKETT: If we did, it didn't seem to matter, because PJ was very well connected. He was able to talk economics with the people that he needed to talk to. He had good entrée around town. So if they had ideas like that, they were taking them into account and figured he was a guy to deal with.

Q: Makes sense.

PRICKETT: Sure. And in fact, all PJ's work was above the line. He was a Foreign Service officer. And in fact, too, I think the Agency recognized that we had language capabilities in the legit Foreign Service that they didn't necessarily have. And we had history and connections, and so on.

At any rate, PJ and I would go over to the ambassador's place, and we'd sit out on the verandah, and presently the Manufacturers Hanover people would arrive, Povro Dobric and Maggie Mudd,

the daughter of the former political counselor in Belgrade, but both very, very sharp people. Dobric was of Croatian parentage, I think it was, and they both knew the language, and they were both bankers, and they were representing this consortium of Western banks. Well, as talk would proceed, David at some point would say, "Now the people from the Fund [meaning the IMF] are coming by about 6:30 or so." So in what could have been a regular parlor comedy, the private bank folks would arrange to leave a few minutes before the people from the Fund were due to arrive, and then the International Monetary Fund folks would show up. Everybody was talking about what positions the Yugoslavs were taking and is there concern about possible unrest if they institute severe fiscal restraints, or monetary restraints. Is this just talk, or is there some substance to it? We would give our best analysis of the actual economics of the situation and of what popular response to such measures might be, where the Yugoslavs might have some wiggling room in negotiations and where they really didn't — either from their bosses or from the popular opinion, would be able to move. Their bosses, I may say, were not accessible to anybody. They were the members of the Presidency. These were the really old-time close confidants with Tito. They were one representative each from each of the six constituent republics and the two autonomous provinces who shared the head-of-state hat that Tito had worn when he was alive (he died in 1980). We were dealing with the first post-Tito government in Yugoslavia. It was a committee, basically, and they shared as chief of state, as commander in chief, of such responsibilities.

Q: Was there a rotating committee head?

PRICKETT: No, but the head of this committee did rotate. In other words, the presidency of the Presidency rotated periodically, but these guys were a club of old-timers, and no ambassadors saw them, with an interesting exception. David Anderson had been a soccer player, I mentioned. Back in the days when he was. . . . Alex Johnpoll was his boss back in the '60's, and David had arranged within that from time to time he could get off early in the afternoon, and he would actually go and work out with the Belgrade soccer team. Now this was a soccer team that had an international reputation, so David was one hell of an athlete to be able to do this. But he would work out with them. He didn't play in their games or anything like that, but he had their respect to that extent. And of course he had contacts. Well, now, when David came back as ambassador, he knew some guys from those days, and they knew him. David had complimentary tickets up in the box seats — we would call them the sky boxes — of the Belgrade stadium for soccer matches any time he wanted to go. He would take his wife or he would take one of us from the embassy. Now the sky box in Belgrade was an open-air sky box. It was primitive. It was not one of the luxury boxes that they're building at the University of Texas stadium for football. The wind blew through and so forth, but you had a cover over your head if it rained. And when I was sitting up there with David, he'd point out members of the Presidency to me. He'd say that's so-and-so and that's so-and-so over there. As we came out — there were no extended conversations — but they'd wave and not and greet each other. So David was known to these guys, whether he had formal entrée to their offices or not. That's the kind of representation we had in Belgrade when David Anderson was ambassador.

Well, it would happen then that this parlor shuffle would take place, and the Manufacturers Hanover people would leave, and the International Monetary Fund people would arrive, and we would talk out the subject. Well, then, maybe around 7:30 or eight o'clock David would say,

“You know, the Yugoslav vice-premier for economic affairs has asked if he could drop by around eight or nine,” So then the Monetary Fund people would depart, and we’d have another round of visitors. Somewhere along the line, PJ and I would call home and say, Look, we’re sorry about dinner, but you knew we were going over to the ambassador’s tonight, and we’ve just moved inside off the patio, and the conversations are continuing, and David has asked his kitchen to bring us some sandwiches, and we won’t be home for dinner. Sometimes it was a little easier for me because my wife, Rose, might be back in the States on an extended professional trip with musical engagements, or she sang elsewhere in Europe too. But in fact, she was gone — we figured it out — just about a third of the time that we were there, she was out of the country doing musical things.

She knew that I had my work to do, and I knew that she had her work to do. And then we’d be talking sometimes till well after midnight with the vice-premier and his assistant.

Q: It’s a long day.

PRICKETT: It was a long day, and we knew that the vice-premier then had to be briefing the members of the Presidency, this august body that was Tito’s heir and they had to get the parameters of their negotiating position for the coming day before they entered into the negotiations with the Western bankers. This pattern repeated itself day after day from time to time. Of course it was a period that was very tough for the Yugoslavs. They were going through a hard time. But it was as exciting as could be for us.

Q: You were the hub of all this. . . .

PRICKETT: This would go on. . . . There were several rounds of negotiations, and so when the negotiators were coming to town, why we sort of cleared the decks and made sure that our normal business would get taken care of some way — the routine reports and the periodic reports and so on that had to get written — and make sure that somebody was available to talk to the visiting business people.

Q: How big was your staff?

PRICKETT: Let me think. I had a deputy and three other officers, one of them a junior trainee, I think. A deputy plus two. And we had a science attaché who was administratively located in the Econ Section, but his office was elsewhere and he was totally concentrating on the scientific work.

Q: Did Washington appreciate Anderson’s good work?

PRICKETT: I’m sure they did.

Q: I would think they would, because that’s a commendable performance.

PRICKETT: Now he and Larry Eagleburger were very close buddies.

Q: Now Larry, was he political counselor at the time?

PRICKETT: Larry was political undersecretary, I believe.

Q: Oh, you mean back in Washington.

PRICKETT: Back in Washington, yes. Larry had been number three man in the Econ Section back in the '60's. Then he had come to the Department when Kissinger came in the second Nixon Administration. Larry was deputy undersecretary, I believe, for administration and basically was Kissinger's right-hand guy. I believe he had been his assistant over in the National Security office too. Then Larry was out and then back in the government, I believe, for a time. And, oh, let me see. At any rate, he had been then assistant secretary for European affairs, he had been undersecretary for political, and then deputy secretary, and then for a brief time was Secretary of State. He wasn't Secretary of State until after the end of my career and Ambassador Anderson's career in Washington.

Q: You had a DCM in Belgrade.

PRICKETT: Yes. This was Harry Gilmore, who had served in Budapest previously and had served in Turkey and was a musician by training. His wife was an accomplished singer also, a soprano, and Harry and Carol and Rose and I made a lot of music together in the English-language church group. It happened, Harry was the keyboard guy. He was a pianist, and he had undertaken to play this harmonium, which was basically a pedal operated little squeeze organ in the small Catholic church where we met, and he had in some trips to Germany made a point of picking up music for the harmonium. There was quite a literature. And so he always had something to play for preludes and offertories and postludes for the services and so on, and from time to time, at the holidays, we would put together maybe a small chorus. We certainly did Christmas concerts. We did them at the DCM's residence, where there was a big hallway and not a spiral staircase, but a staircase with landings that, in effect, produced a spiral, and we could do a processional down those steps that could be pretty effective. So we made a lot of music together. Carol and Rose did some duet recitals in the country, down in Skopje and down at the coast and up in Zagreb. There was an American soprano who was living in Split who was really the first lady, the *prima donna*, of the Croatian National Opera in Split. And she came to town and did her Belgrade Opera debut while we were there, and we gave a reception for her afterwards, and she and Rose did duet recitals as well. Her name was Cynthia Hanselbakia. So we had musical fun on the side, and did a lot of music with the Gilmores. They were, I think, our closest friends. We were close with the Nicholse and the Andersons as well, but I think the Gilmores were our closest friends of the embassy. Sometimes it would happen with Sunday coming up, maybe on a Friday afternoon or whatever, Harry would call me on the phone or we'd meet in the hall or on the steps in the embassy, and he'd say, "Shall we get together and prepare some music for Sunday, or shall we just shake hands and blow?" This is an old jazzman's expression. Harry played jazz while he was going to school in Pennsylvania, the Carnegie-Mellon Conservatory, and so he was an old jazz buddy. We did some reviews, some musical comedy reviews and things, that I would usually direct and produce, and Harry would be the main keyboard guy. We brought in people from other embassies and had a lot of fun with this while we were there.

Well, Harry would sometimes be in on these consultations and sometimes not. Harry was always kept up to date. I kept him up to date or Ambassador Anderson did, on the negotiations. But somebody had to run the embassy while these negotiations were going on, so Harry was always in a dilemma, because when the ambassador was in town, then he expected Harry to be there as his deputy and executive officer, and when the ambassador wasn't in town, then Harry had to run the place, and the question then was when the hell did Harry get his vacation? Harry is retired now, but he was ambassador to Armenia, and it was apparently a pretty ungodly place to go, but he did good work out there, and we were all certainly glad to see him get his ambassadorship. He came out of it alive, which we couldn't say about our colleague back in the '60's, Spike Dubs, who went to Afghanistan and was shot to death in that horrible confrontation.

But it was a real pleasure and source of pride to be able to serve with such great people. We were out there trying to do good work. We had several such rounds of negotiations and managed to help the Yugoslavs pull through their crisis — their crises — which were still threatening when my tour came to an end in 1985.

Q: Did the Yugoslavs appreciate the American role in this?

PRICKETT: At the time, they certainly did. Certainly the people that we were dealing with did. Our role was not publicized, you know. And like many other people, the Yugoslav attitude was often "what have you done for us lately?" so there's hardly any residue these days going back to 10 and 15 years ago as to what was happening then. And it's a matter of considerable chagrin that we helped them through a serious financial emergency, and they threw it all away. I guess we'll get to that a little later.

Q: Also your book might be based on that.

PRICKETT: The book, yes. Well, the book takes them up to their highest point of success.

Q: Which is?

PRICKETT: Which was January of 1990, at which point the economic reforms put in by Prime Minister Markovic really took effect and really "bit." The trouble with that was, of course, that that meant that they put the screws on a lot of the inefficient businesses who had been spending all this money.

Q: In other words, privatization? Is that what you're saying?

PRICKETT: Well —

Q: Did they privatize much?

PRICKETT: I need to go back and talk a little bit about that. The Yugoslav socialist enterprises were not state-owned enterprises in the usual socialist sense. Their concept of social ownership was rather vague. Social ownership was kind of "in the air." The state was not the owner of

record of the factories and such, but rather the assets were considered to be “owned” — in quotes — by the society at large, and the stewards of that society were the workers in the factories, whose job it was to represent the societal interest as well as to be the workers. They actually had elections for the officers of their enterprises. Now it was the Party who nominated the officers, so the electoral process wasn’t something that we would recognize as being open and democratic.

Q: Do you recall any trade unions?

PRICKETT: No, because, you see, they didn’t need trade unions. They were the owners. But what was meant was that the workers’ councils, as they were called, represented the workers’ collective. The workers’ collective amounted to everybody who worked in the outfit, from the guy who swept up the floors at night, the guys that worked on the lathe or the machine shop or the assembly line, and the guy in the front office who wore a white shirt and met with the foreign executives who came to town. They were all members of the workers’ collective. The workers’ collective, then, elected a workers’ council, which had and exercised functions that were comparable to both that of a very tough labor union and of a very interested board of directors representing shareholders.

Q: But the council was nominated by the party.

PRICKETT: The workers’ council was elected, actually, by the workers, from people who were already there. But when they then hired the managers, the directors, those were the people who were nominated — which read “installed” —

Q: Fascinating.

PRICKETT: Now what we saw, in fact, was a complete spectrum of this system operating extremely well and quite democratically, of the system operating very well but very autocratically, being run from the top by a tough Party boss, and not being run well at all. So some of these outfits were making money and were doing very well, and some were not. Now there again, the Yugoslav Communist theory said that you didn’t have to have welfare, because you didn’t have unemployment. But what this meant was that all the enterprises had to hire everybody. They had to provide jobs. If an enterprise was losing money, they would often force mergers with enterprises that were good money-makers, so that the efficient outfits would have to take the inefficient ones in under their umbrella. This had a dumbing-down or an averaging-down effect on the overall economy that was really too bad. You could imagine this in theory, and we could sort of sympathize with the theory back in the ‘60’s, when this quasi-independence of the businesses was just coming into being. By the ‘80’s, when it had been around for a long time, we could see that sometimes it worked and sometimes it didn’t, and it depended more on the individuals in charge and, after all, whether the business was a logical one to be operating in that country or not.

Q: Yes.

PRICKETT: For instance, Belgium and Switzerland and a number of European countries don’t make cars. They buy their cars from somebody else. Well, the Yugoslavs were determined they

were going to make cars, and the example that came over to this country sort of represents what kind of cars they made. What they did was they made a car off of an outdated license from Fiat in Italy. That's basically what the Yugo was. And it provided necessary transportation and filled a real need in Yugoslavia, but it wasn't about to compete in the American market or anywhere in Europe. And they tried hard to make it compete, but it wasn't working.

Well, at any rate, that was the picture of ownership, and it wasn't state-ownership in the usual sense. So some Yugoslavs argued that they didn't have to privatize. But when they did get around to considering privatization, it took a different form.

I had mentioned the financial straits that the Yugoslavs were in and the government-to-government and the government-to-bank and the government-to-international financial institution negotiations that they carried out. Well, there were private-sector implications to their financial straits also. American and European creditors on the commercial side — not just bankers — weren't getting their money, weren't being paid. One such example was the Douglas Aircraft Corporation, which had supplied the bulk of the Yugoslav Airlines' civil air fleet. They were being paid regularly, and the Ex-Im Bank was getting its money, for the airplanes themselves, but Douglas had a service contract with JAT, Yugoslav Airlines, to service their planes at many, many locations around the world. Yugoslav Air served the United States, Australia, and most of the European countries. They flew to Africa and Asia. They were an extensive airline, and they were a money-maker. Their pilots were very accomplished. So they were a very well-respected organization, and they flew American planes. I'd say that there were times when Douglas and Boeing were in very stiff competition with Airbus to provide planes for Yugoslav airlines, and we worked pretty hard on behalf of the Americans. Obviously we couldn't take sides between Boeing and Douglas, which of course combined much later, but we did manage to freeze out Airbus, even though the German former defense minister was down there throwing his weight around.

Douglas wasn't getting its money for servicing Yugoslav Airlines planes, and they Yugoslavs were in arrears by several millions of dollars. I got a call from John Wallace, who was Douglas' chief sales representative for Europe, and the guy who usually came to Yugoslavia with the latest word on new airplanes that Douglas was developing or just to keep Douglas in the mind of the Yugoslav Air people. He was very effective in that way. I had first met him back in the '60's, when the Douglas DC-9 replaced the Caravel in the Yugoslav fleet. At any rate, I got a call from him one afternoon inviting me to dinner over at the Intercontinental Hotel that evening. I went, and he was there with a team of people from Douglas who wanted to know what our ambassador would say if they, Douglas, told the Yugoslavs that they had to get their money or they would stop servicing the airplanes — which would have the effect of shutting down Yugoslav Airlines. I told John and his people that I thought the ambassador would say the same thing that I was about to say, which was, if they really believe you, you'll get your money. Well, they had an appointment to see the ambassador the next morning at 10 or 11 o'clock, and of course the ambassador asked me to attend the meeting, too. They put the question to him, and he put the answer to them. I'm sure he would have given that answer with or without my briefing, but of course I had briefed him. And he said, "If they believe you, you'll get your money." They were concerned would this interfere with the bilateral relations between the countries. They were very conscientious about their relations with the US Government, and the ambassador made the point

that we did not have any foreign policy objectives that would conflict with their getting money in their legitimate commercial transactions. So then they started negotiations with the Yugoslavs and with Yugoslav Airlines. The Yugoslavs were hurting for hard currency at the time, but Yugoslav Airlines was a hard currency money-maker. Well, like a number of families, I guess, in the Depression or immigrant families to the US or whatever, they had to keep close watch on their pennies and figure out whom to pay and which creditors they could afford to make wait a while and which ones they had to pay, and Douglas was getting to the head of the line by making some noise. They worked out a two-*tranche* arrangement to bring themselves up to date on these payments. The first *tranche* was to be paid while the negotiators were in Belgrade, and the second *tranche* was to be paid two or three weeks later, and that would bring them up to par. So this agreement was reached, and the Douglas negotiators went back to California, and all was well — we thought. One Tuesday afternoon, I got a call, and it was John Wallace on the telephone from Long Beach, California, and he said, “Russ, they didn’t make their second payment, and we’re not coming back. If we don’t have our money by Friday, we are going to shut them down.” Well, I had my work cut out for me. It was Tuesday afternoon.

Q: You were caught in the middle, weren’t you?

PRICKETT: The following day, the Wednesday. . . . I mean, the rest of the day, my secretary and I worked, and we wrote a bunch of letters. We wrote a letter to the director of Yugoslav Airlines. We wrote a letter to the president of the National Bank of Yugoslavia. We wrote a letter to the head of the so-called Industrial Bank of Yugoslavia, which was the bank that had direct relations with Yugoslav Airlines. First thing the next morning I was on the phone making appointments and I was running all over Belgrade. My first stop was Yugoslav Airlines. The vice-president for financial affairs came out of a board meeting to meet with me, and when I told him what the problem was, he said, “We were just meeting on that very subject, and you need to talk to our bankers, because we have been paying into our bank.” We’ve been making the payments that are owed, and it’s the banks that haven’t been forwarding the money to Douglas Aircraft.” I said, “Well, I’m going to the National Bank next, and I’m headed over to the Industrial Bank.” “Well,” he said, “you need to go to the Belgrade Union Bank as well, because the Industrial Bank is a subsidiary of the Belgrade Union Bank.” Well, I learned this, as I said, when I was already at the Yugoslav Airlines. So somewhere along the line, while I was on the run, I got another copy made of my letter. I went over to the National Bank. After dropping my letter off and leaving my message and making my pitch there, I called my secretary back at the embassy and I said, “I need you to do something for me. I need you to call the Belgrade Union Bank and talk to the president’s secretary.” The president of the Belgrade Union Bank was a man named Slobodan Milosevic. I said, “I want you to apologize for the short notice. I don’t even know whether Mr. Milosevic is in town, but I need to see him very, very urgently on a most important matter, and I will be at the Belgrade Union Bank at 12 o’clock noon today.” I had no idea what would happen, but my secretary was a good secretary, and she made the call. I went from the National Bank to the Industrial Bank. The president of the Industrial Bank was a man that I had known, a young fellow — or I considered him a young fellow because he was about my age — who was rising in the Party. He was with one of the trading companies back in the ‘60’s, so I had known him. He wasn’t in town, and I left my letter and my message with somebody else and then went across the main square in Belgrade to the Albania Building, where the headquarters of the Belgrade Bank was, and in the lobby — I walked in at 12 o’clock — and

there in the lobby Mr. Milosevic's secretary met me and took me up to his office. Milosevic welcomed me, brought me into his office, sat me down. The custom in business calls in Yugoslavia back in the '60's had been to offer a wide variety of refreshments. There would be a choice of different kinds of fruit juice, which were always delicious. They were thick with the pulp of the fruit. And there'd be mineral water, and there'd be Turkish coffee, but there would also be some hard stuff, some slivovitz (plum brandy), often double-distilled plum brandy (*perpecenica*, they called it), or there would be what they called *lozovac*, which was a double distilled wine brandy. It was totally clear in appearance but packed a real punch. So I came in, and Mr. Milosevic asked, "Would you like some refreshment?" He asked me in English, and I answered him in Serbian: "*Ne kišok, mo_da.*" He said, "Oh, won't you have something stronger?" I said, "*Mo_e, jedne lozo.*" Perhaps then this *lozovac*, this wine brandy. And then he said, "Do you know our *Viljamovka*?" I didn't know what that was, and he said, "It's a pear brandy." And this is also this double-distilled stuff, which was like the *lozovac*. It was your basic white lightning but with an aftertaste of fresh pears. That was my first acquaintance with what is I think still my most favorite brandy drink. It's really something.

Q: Like Poire William.

PRICKETT: That's exactly what it is. *Viljamovka*, the *poire William* or pear William, *Wilhelmsbirne* in German — it's the standard —

Q: It is sweet.

PRICKETT: Not sweet.

Q: I mean it's good.

PRICKETT: Not sweet. It's a really strong drink, but it has the aftertaste of the fresh pears, unlike some of the other, you know, syrupy brandy drinks. At any rate, that's my digression. I did pick up two bottles of that on my way home from the office that very day and have always tried to find some when I've been back in the country or, for that matter, back in Europe since.

Well, then we got down to business, and Milosevic called into his office his executive vice-president, a woman named Vorka Vucic. She's a neighbor of ours. We had known her. She was just about every American banker's favorite Yugoslav banker. When they came to town they wanted to talk to Vorka. She looked like the Wicked Witch of the West. She was dark-haired. She wore black all the time. She was a widow. And she had very sharp, witch-like features, lovely sparkling eyes, a beautiful voice, and an almost angelic personality. We were neighbors, and we saw each other socially from time to time — wonderful woman, very, very bright. And she's the woman, by the way — I think — who set up the Belgrade Bank and Milosevic's stash offshore on Cyprus, prior to the present-day troubles. So she, for all her sweetness, was some tough cookie.

At the time, I saw her experience and that of other women who were rising by merit in the Yugoslav system as perhaps foretelling a more general improvement in the position of women as executives. There were a number of women, other bankers — more in the banks than in the

industrial companies.

I laid out the problem as the Douglas Aircraft people had laid it out to me, and I told her about my calls around town, and particularly that the vice-president for finance of Yugoslav Air had told me they'd been making their payments, that they, Yugoslav Air, did not have hard currency shortage and they were not happy about the possibility of being shut down because their bills weren't being paid. "Well," she said — and I had mentioned the Friday deadline set by Douglas — and she said, "I don't think we can have it all by Friday, but we can have something over a third of it by Friday and the remainder on a Monday." I said, "I can't speak for the company, but I'll tell them what you said." And we both knew that that was going to be just fine, that if Douglas knew they'd have their money by Monday, all of it, and that there would be earnest payment of good faith by Friday, that that would be a satisfactory conclusion. Indeed, they did make the payment, and they didn't shut them down, and I thought I learned something about Milosevic and his people at that point. Number one, that my first advice had been correct — if they really believe you, you will get your money; secondly, that he will push the envelope just as damned far as he can; and third, that when he sees that that's as far as he can push it, that that's the end of the matter. Now I think there have been times in the more recent adventures in Yugoslavia that that lesson could have been applied. Right now, when there have been such heavy commitments to war, I'm not sure whether a point of no return has been passed or not. But I learned on that occasion that, number one, Milosevic couldn't be bluffed, but number two, he could be coerced.

Q: As in the Bosnia case.

PRICKETT: I'm convinced of it. I'm convinced that if . . . Well, before Bosnia, really, in 1991, and I guess this is as good a time to expound on this as any, when the Yugoslav national army first crossed the borders into Croatia, ostensibly to insert itself between the Croats and Serbs who were engaged in local fighting inside Croatia, that was a time for those of us who knew the country to get the ear of our leaders and put forward a United States position, basically to strong-arm our NATO allies into imposing a blockade on what was then still one single country. Hungary and Romania had been making noises about wanting to get closer to NATO. We could have said, "Here's how you make your bones, boys. You close off all the land border crossings between yourselves and Yugoslavia, and you help us close off the Danube." The Sixth Fleet would steam into the Adriatic and put a cork in all the Yugoslav ports, and NATO air forces would start patrolling the country and make a total no-fly zone out of all of Yugoslavia. Now we would have had to, as I said, tell our NATO allies, "We're going to do this, and you can come along with us or not, but this is a European problem. We have interests in Europe, and if you want it solved, you come along with us. If you want to muddle around and let it go to hell, then that's your affair." Once with NATO on board, we would have said to the United Nations, "If you want to be relevant, you'll bless this operation; if you don't, you wash your hands of it and fade into history." However, we had just won a smashing victory, we thought, in Desert Storm, and our good President figured he was on his way to reelection on the strength of that, and it would have been a very difficult, very touchy prospect to try to persuade the American people that we ought to get that involved in a country that they knew that little about — and cared less. Now, of course, we're facing much more difficult prospects, and as any of us know when we see something on the horizon that troubles us, we know that things will get worse if we don't do

something about it at the time. Sometimes, we speak up, and sometimes our advice is heeded, and sometimes not. Now I was long out of the Department by that time, and I was not burning up the wires to Larry Eagleburger to say, "This is what we ought to do?" Frankly, I thought, How could Larry be missing the point? My own daughter was in Belgrade at the time. It wouldn't have been easy to slam a blockade on the country. But it was what we needed to do, and I'm convinced that when nothing happened. . . . First the Yugoslav army crossed the border into Croatia; then there was a pause. And when nothing happened except a lot of talk in New York, then they moved on, and I can just imagine the wolfish grin on Milosevic's face as that happened.

Q: Because he had his —

PRICKETT: He knew us pretty well.

Q: He knew us pretty well, yes.

PRICKETT: So at any rate, back in the days when it was just a few million dollars at stake, I helped back him down, and I have to say I wish I had been over there to talk to the guy on a few subsequent occasions and had had the kind of backup that I got from my ambassador when I was over there at that time. Well, that was one of them. I mentioned that we had negotiated with Yugoslav Airlines to be the suppliers of their next round of aircraft. This time it was the Boeing 737 and the 757 that were to replace those old DC-9's. I can't remember the name of the German former defense minister, Bavarian, I think he'd been president of Bavaria [Franz Josef Strauss?] too, but he was representing the Airbus consortium, and he was down in Yugoslavia throwing his weight around too. But the Yugoslavs had had a good history of dealing with American airplane manufacturers, and they went with Boeing. This was shortly before Boeing took over Douglas. So we got some pictures where several of us, including our ambassador and the representative of the Ex-Im Bank and the Boeing people and the Yugoslav negotiators, the Yugoslav Airline people, were signing the deal to buy a bunch of 737's. I think that pretty well sums up the highlights of my second Belgrade tour.

Let's pop back in time just a little bit. During the financial negotiations, Larry Eagleburger returned to Belgrade on a visit. I think it had to do with the financial negotiations, but at any rate, he came back. He had been ambassador previously, and he was either undersecretary for political affairs or assistant secretary for European affairs at the time of his return visit in '82 or '83, I believe. At any rate, he had a meeting with the prime minister, which the ambassador and I accompanied him to. The prime minister was Milka Planic, a Croatian woman, whom people were comparing to Margaret Thatcher. The Yugoslavs would say, "She's our Margaret Thatcher." She was a pretty effective leader, but the prime minister's powers had been diminished. She was the first prime minister after Tito's death, and so we and other countries were anxious to, number one, see how effective she would be and to help her to keep the country together. People had feared what might happen when Tito died. Well, like so many other projects, it just took longer than we thought it would before the country came apart, a little over 10 years.

Well, before going over to see Mrs. Planic, Larry had a meeting with the embassy staff,

especially the local staff, with whom he was very, very popular. This was in the main meeting room in the American Club. I think it was called the Elbrick Room, as a matter of fact, after the ambassador who had been there when I was there earlier. And Larry stood in the middle of the room, and everybody else made a great big circle around him, standing — there wasn't room to seat everybody — and he went round one at a time greeting everybody. First, he made a little speech, and he was sort of theater in the round, turning to one side and then to the other, talking to everybody, partly in English, partly in Serbian — mostly in English with a few Serbian expressions. His language was pretty good. Then he greeted everybody affectionately, going around from one to the other. There was a very close personal affection that all the Yugoslavs in the embassy had for Larry. And he was very funny in his remarks. He was bringing greetings from various people, and he said, "My sons greet you, who are taller than I am, and my wife greets you —" and I said, "— who's prettier than you are." He turned over and pointed his finger at me, and said, "I'll take care of you, Prickett." You know, it was a buddy-buddy kind of thing, and Larry was a lot of fun, a lot of fun to work with and deal with. And then after this love fest, we got into the ambassador's car and drove across the river to New Belgrade, to the prime minister's office, and on the way, Larry said, "If I'd had to kiss another mustache, I don't know what I would have done," because kissing on both cheeks is the Yugoslav form of greeting, men and women — men and men, women and women, and so forth. And the Serbs do it three times for good luck. And then he had a very good meeting with Mrs. Planic carried on in her language. She did not have English. So sometimes, Larry would need to glance over to David, who would usually supply the missing word, or I would maybe. They were both as good in the language as I was, and I had a good rating and was helping. Later on, when the vice-premier for economic affairs came to Washington — in fact, it was during the tour; I was back for that visit, and his name, by the way, was Zgonej Dragan — when Zgonej Dragan was in Washington when Larry was undersecretary he called on Larry, among others, and they spoke entirely in Serbo-Croatian. And I was there taking notes, and half the State Department was looking over my shoulder afterwards saying, "What did he say?" So one of the anecdotes I wanted to include, was Larry's visit.

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.

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.

LEONARDO M. WILLIAMS
Branch Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Ljubljana (1983-1986)

Mr. Williams was born in Alabama. He was raised in Alabama, Washington, D.C and Minnesota and was educated at St. John's College (MN), University of Wisconsin and Georgetown University. After joining the Foreign Service in 1968, he served as USIA Public Affairs and Information Officer in India, Pakistan, Czechoslovakia, Greece and Yugoslavia. His Washington assignments dealt primarily with operations of USIA. Mr. Williams was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2003.

Q: Had you been assigned already to go to Yugoslavia?

WILLIAMS: I was assigned during that year.

Q: And then you took Slovenian.

WILLIAMS: Yes, a language of two million people.

Q: You were going to Ljubljana. Were you picking up the difference between Slovenian,

Croatian, and Serbian?

WILLIAMS: No, I had enough trouble just learning Slovenian. But for native speakers, they see the relationships very quickly. Other than when I went down to Belgrade, I never had extensive exposure to it. I never watched Serbo-Croatian television. I was focused on trying to learn Slovene. But my sense was from listening to other people and how easily they went back and forth that there were a lot of cognates and it probably would be fairly easy to learn Serbo-Croatian once you knew Slovene. I think Serbo-Croatian is probably closer to Bulgarian. It's disputed if that's even a separate language.

Q: You went to Slovenia and were there from when to when?

WILLIAMS: I was in Slovene training... from the summer of '83 until December of '86, so three and a half years.

Q: What was the situation in Slovenia when you got there?

WILLIAMS: Slovenia was the most prosperous of the Yugoslav republics. It seemed to be very open. One difference in Serbia is that the Serbs were more outgoing and there was a certain amount of energy there that resembled the Greeks in a lot of ways in terms of their volatility and so forth. The Slovenes tended to be more Germanic and seemed to feel that their natural orientation was toward Bavaria and saw themselves more as an Austrian influenced entity. I remember one time, this university rector was meeting with the cultural affairs officer from Belgrade. He was describing the Slovenes. He said, "Slovenes are really Hapsburgians in the Balkan manner." I thought that was a good way of summing it up. That played out in what you saw. It was more liberal, more open. It was still communist and the Communists were in charge. But they thought themselves to have very much their own identity and a different approach to Yugoslav communism and self-management. They were interested in closer ties with the West than they had had before. There was a lot of movement back and forth across the border, which intersects a Slovene region. Trieste was a Slovene city originally and they still speak Slovene around there as well.

Q: What about Italy? What were the relations with Italy?

WILLIAMS: In general, they were good. The Yugoslavs used to go to Italy all the time to shop, especially in Trieste and the area around there. They seemed to be able to go there rather freely if they could afford it. There was some kind of a monetary limitation at one point. I don't remember the details of that. But cross-border movement seemed to be...

Q: When you were there, although Slovenia was part of communist Yugoslavia, was this a different breed of cat from Czechoslovakia that you had known?

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes, definitely. Czechoslovakia was still very much on the Stalinist model. Yugoslavia reflected a lot of different flavors, but the overall posture of the society was more open.

Q: Was Tito still there?

WILLIAMS: No, he had died. It had gone to the collective presidency, the rotating presidency, by that point. And of course the big question was whether or not that would work in the long run.

Q: What were you doing there?

WILLIAMS: I was the branch public affairs officer. That was my USIA title. My Czech title was “director of the American Center.” We had a small facility there, a library and offices. We were doing the normal things that USIA does, but more easily than we could do in Czechoslovakia. We had a strong international visitors program. We organized film showings and lectures at the American Center and at Yugoslav institutions around the republic. Operate the library, of course. I did a lot of personal contact work. We were sought after as-

Q: You were the American contact, weren't you?

WILLIAMS: Yes, I was the only American official in the Slovene Republic.

Q: Did you find yourself doing diplomatic work, too?

WILLIAMS: To some extent. I wasn't doing political or economic reporting or anything like that. But when there were official events that they wanted an American presence at and it wasn't at a level that would bring in the consul general, who was in Zagreb, or someone from Belgrade, I would be the official American representing the embassy.

In terms of my daily work, it was virtually all with the press and cultural institutions and economic institutions. In trying to promote economic liberalization, we worked with groups like the Chamber of Commerce and some of the economic departments in the Slovene government. They were anxious to have that kind of collaboration. Once the groundwork had been laid by whatever, Party approvals had to come out of that. But the Party members per se, those people that were officials of the Party, generally kept their distance. It was pretty much in the last year that I was there that things had evolved in our relationship with the Yugoslavs. They became more forthcoming and more willing to attend our events and actively worked with us.

Q: Who was our ambassador?

WILLIAMS: David Anderson was the ambassador when I got there. He was followed by John Scanlan, a State Department career officer who had been a Fulbright professor there and knew the country real well.

Q: There was quite a Yugoslav mafia within the Foreign Service, both USIA and State, wasn't there?

WILLIAMS: It was a place people went back to, yes. Larry Eagleburger was a junior officer there.

Q: He and I and David Anderson took Serbian together. It's a place people went back to and they really knew the country quite well.

WILLIAMS: Yes. That was one of the things that was a strong benefit. When they came back as ambassador or at other high level jobs, they were able to step right in there. It kept the relationship at a certain level that would have been difficult had they not had that background.

Q: How did you find your contacts with the university?

WILLIAMS: They were good. In fact, I still have friends there and we still communicate. There were certain professors at the university who spoke good English to start with and had had a lot of interaction with western institutions and they were very open and receptive. The Department of Social Sciences was one of those. The philosophical faculty was another group that we worked with quite a bit. We had good relations with the law school, and the university administration in general. Ljubljana at that time said it was a town of about 300,000. But in terms of those people that were leaders in the community, it was a relatively small community. One didn't just see people at the office. One saw them downtown at the market or the theater, etc. It was a very open society in that regard. It wasn't totally open. There were people who felt it was sensitive to their jobs and to their contacts.

Q: Was there much of a student flow going to the United States?

WILLIAMS: Not a lot. It increased during the time that I was there, not just because I was there. The numbers were increasing. It was a time when Slovenia was doing relatively well economically despite the complaints about transference of wealth to the south from the north that really became a big issue later when the economy wasn't doing quite as well. I'm not aware of a whole lot of students, but I know that there were some going, with full scholarships.

Q: Was it more a matter of finance than of political control?

WILLIAMS: Yes, definitely. It was finance and language skills. Those people who could get the money either through scholarships or because their families actually had enough money and they wanted to go were able to do so.

Q: Was English the major language that people were learning?

WILLIAMS: It was German and English. English in the time I was there had become the language of choice as a foreign language. But a lot of people still learned German because they were living in Germany's backyard and vice versa.

Q: Italian wasn't particularly...

WILLIAMS: Not in that area. Closer to the Italian border... In fact, if you go to places along the coast there, Coker, for instance, people speak Slovene with an Italian lilt. It's really curious. There were some border issues but those weren't front and center. They were kind of smoldering.

Q: Was Trieste at all an issue or something that the old people would sit around and bemoan that it no longer was theirs?

WILLIAMS: No, I think the Slovenes tend to be realistic about those type of things. The issue had more to do with workers working in one country and crossing the border, that type of thing. Rights issues, homeland issues. But I don't remember any complaints about it no longer being Slovene. One of the standing jokes was, "It's a good thing that we don't have Trieste. It's a good thing that the Italians got it and we don't have it. Otherwise, we wouldn't have any place to go to buy good shoes." That was their take.

Q: Was there a pretty strong sense of Slovenian nationality? I guess the only other nationality that the Slovenians were up against would be the Croatians?

WILLIAMS: Yes. During the time I was there, there wasn't that much competition between them. But you're right about Slovenes' sense of nationality. They've got Germans on one side and Croatians and Serbs on the other. They realize they need that strong sense of identity to keep from being swallowed. It's a small linguistic group there. They see themselves as ethnically different in terms of being more Germanic than Slavic in a lot of respects. It was definitely there. They did things to foster it. They had seminars every year on Slovenian culture and would bring people of Slovene descent or other foreigners. I was invited and participated in a couple of those to learn more about Slovene culture.

Q: Was there a strong, active Slovenian community in the U.S. that played any role?

WILLIAMS: Yes, they were definitely there. And they could go back and forth freely. You would frequently meet American Slovenes in Ljubljana for whatever business, some just visiting family, some to participate in some cultural event and so forth. I don't remember any big issues that the Slovene government may have felt defensive about. If anything, they tended to welcome folks and any kind of support they could get from overseas.

Q: Did you get any feeling that the Yugoslav government per se, mainly Serb, was looking with a certain amount of disfavor on Slovenia?

WILLIAMS: You'd hear echoes of it from the Slovenes. I didn't see it in going about my daily life or work. But Slovenes were very open about expressing unhappiness that what they saw was exploitation of them by the central government in the sense that they felt they were subsidizing the other less well off republics unfairly. They recognized a certain amount of national responsibility, but they felt that it went beyond them being responsible, that they were actually being exploited. They felt that the resources were being wasted, not just that they would have liked to have more money in their pocket but that what was being taken out of their pocket wasn't being well used.

Q: Was the West German embassy or branch active there? Or Austrian? Or the Soviets? Or were we the main game in town?

WILLIAMS: I'd like to think that we were the main game in town, but the Austrians were there. Theirs may have been a consulate. We didn't have a consulate. My official document said that I was a journalist. I had two passports, one that would reflect my journalistic status and then my diplomatic passport. The Austrians were the only other foreign country that had an actual establishment there. Oh, and also the French. There was a French cultural center.

Q: Were there any major visits, incidents, or problems, during this '83-'86 time?

WILLIAMS: No, not that I recall. I remember it being kind of an idyllic experience.

Q: Did any Americans get in trouble that you had to try to get out?

WILLIAMS: No. I think the toughest case of that kind we had was a guy who came to town and was going to restaurants and eating hearty meals and then said, "I don't want to pay!" They would lock him up and we would be contacted. We worked with the consulate, which had real responsibility for that, to try to maneuver him out of town. It took a while. Once he was out again, he was free and we couldn't deport him and the Yugoslavs didn't want to. They didn't want that image. He would start all over again. Finally, someone sent him some money and he agreed to get a ticket. His relatives worked with him. He was mentally disturbed but not uncontrollable. He was a pleasant person. He just was totally irresponsible in terms of how he conducted himself with regard to money. That was the only incident like that.

RICHARD M. MILES
Political Counselor
Belgrade, Yugoslavia (1984-1987)

Ambassador Miles was born in Arkansas in 1937. He earned an associate degree from Bakersfield College, Bachelor's degree from University of California, Berkeley and a master's degree from Indiana University. He joined the Foreign service in 1966. His overseas posts include Oslo, Belgrade, Moscow, Leningrad, Berlin, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria and Georgia. Ambassador Miles was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

MILES: Eighty-four. I left Washington and went to Belgrade.

Q: So you were in Belgrade from '84 to when?

MILES: Eighty-seven. Three years.

Q: What was the situation in Belgrade?

MILES: Well, it was still the whole country of Yugoslavia. The Balkan Wars hadn't started yet but the tension was certainly there. This was the period when Milosevic began his rise to power. When I first went there in '84, he was actually an official of the Beogradaska Banka, a major bank

in Belgrade. At the same time, he held office in the Serb branch of the Communist Party, called the LCY, the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. I served under two different ambassadors during that time, and I used to accompany them to meetings with Milosevic over in the bank office. All the Westerners believed he was a pragmatic person of somewhat liberal bent, Western oriented. Milosevic was very personable, and initially didn't give any hint of the kind of megalomania and extreme nationalism that he later became identified with. I don't think he ever was an extreme Serb nationalist, to tell you the truth, but he became identified with it and will probably go down in history that way.

Q: He was more an opportunist.

MILES: Well, he was; he was a political opportunist. And he saw, in the Kosovo situation—he was not looking at Bosnia then, no one was really at that time—but in the Kosovo situation he saw a means by which he could rise higher up in the Communist Party structure. There had been unrest in Kosovo since, well, probably since time began, but certainly in the post-war period going on into the '80s. There were periodic demonstrations. People would sit and block the highway, or they'd have a hunger strike or whatever, because they were not well treated by the Serb majority. They were governed, basically, by Serb politicians or by Albanians who had knuckled under to Serb direction. I don't remember exactly what took Milosevic down to Kosovo in the spring of 1987, but that was when he made the famous—

Q: I thought it was 1989, wasn't it, when the—

MILES: Well, there was a series—

Q: —anniversary of a battle with Kosovo.

MILES: Well, there was a series of events, yes, but he made that famous speech in Kosovo Polje, when he said, "No one should beat you anymore," in the spring of 1987. Well, the Serb crowd, both in Kosovo and in Serbia proper, loved this. Sharon and I watched that event on television and we were quite alarmed by it. Milosevic realized he had something he could use to improve his own political position within the Serbian Communist Party apparatus. He basically climbed up to the top on the back of Ivan Stambolić, who had been the long-time Party chief in Serbia. I met Ivan Stambolić in the '80s and I got to know him better when I went back to Belgrade in the 1990s. He told me then, in the '90s, that he had not made very many political mistakes in his life, but his one big mistake was underestimating Slobodan Milosevic. He was right. The result of this miscalculation was the Balkan Wars and the dissolution of Yugoslavia and, later, the NATO air campaign and the loss of Kosovo and, last but absolutely not least, Stambolić's own murder at the hands of Milosevic's henchmen. I'll return to that later.

Q: What was your job there?

MILES: I was Political Counselor, head of the Political Section, and Sharon was the Acting Commercial Attaché for part of that time.

Q: Who were the ambassadors?

MILES: David Anderson and then Jack Scanlan, two good ambassadors. We had a good political section too, by the way.

Q: Who else?

MILES: Well, Dan Fried was there. He became Ambassador to Poland and then served several years in the NSC and has now become Assistant Secretary for European Affairs. Janet Bogue was in the Section. She later became Deputy Assistant Secretary in the European bureau and she's now retired.

Q: What's her name?

MILES: Janet Bogue, B-O-G-U-E. She might be interesting for you. She was there in Yugoslavia and then she went to Kazakhstan where she was Beth Jones' DCM. A very nice person and an outstanding officer; I like Janet very much. And Bill Hill was there, who later became the OSCE representative in Moldova. Bill is still around. Have you—?

Q: Is he retired?

MILES: Yes, but he's still very active. And the officers did very good work. We were quite interested in the internal political situation. There was a rather celebrated trial going on of the so-called Belgrade Six—six intellectuals who the Communist Party believed had crossed over a certain line and had gone a little too far in some of their writing and activities. Dan Fried was particularly good at staying in touch with them, offering them some mild encouragement and reporting back to Washington on how this was going.

Q: How did they cross the line? Was it too much the capitalist line or too much the Western line or was it just that they were—what was it?

MILES: It involved allegations of holding illegal meetings and distributing subversive material both inside Yugoslavia and to foreigners abroad who were said to be hostile to the Yugoslav State. There was considerable intellectual ferment in Serbia at that time. This was also a period when Vuk Drašković, who is the current Foreign Minister of Serbia and is something of a Serb nationalist, was fanning the flames with regard to the situation of the Serbs in Kosovo. I wouldn't call Vuk an extreme nationalist although some would. Anyhow he's certainly a nationalist. Vuk was a famous author; he had written several quite popular novels, and he would appear at the Writers' Club in Belgrade. Lord, I've spent many a smoke-filled evening at the Writers' Club. You know, the Writers' Club was always a hotbed of intellectual activity, and he would hold forth down at the Writers' Club on how we have to keep the Kosovar Albanians in line and that kind of thing.

And about this time the famous *Memorandum* from the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences was released. That also fanned the flames of anti-Kosovar sentiment. It was an exciting time, I must say.

Q: From the Embassy optic how did you view Croatia and also the role of our Consulate General in Zagreb?

MILES: We got along fine with the people up at the Consulate General. They covered Croatia and Slovenia and we would go up there occasionally just to kick the tires and see what was going on. I don't recall any differences between the Embassy and the Consulate General at that time.

Q: What about Croatia? Did we have a feel for where—?

MILES: Well, it was a quiet period. You know, all of us, to a person, underestimated the inherent nationalism of the different ethnic groups in Yugoslavia. We were certainly all aware of the past ethnic differences and even the violence and atrocities that had been perpetrated by one group against another group all over the former Yugoslavia; we were all aware of that. But I think the Yugoslav government, even after Tito's death, was trying really, really hard to keep up the idea of Yugoslav unity and the brotherhood of all of the peoples of Yugoslavia. I mean, you could still get yourself put in jail for uttering hostile remarks against another ethnic group. I remember the case of Vojislav Šešelj, who is being tried at The Hague right now, accused of excesses during the Bosnian fighting. Around the mid-'80s, Šešelj was put in jail in Sarajevo for extremist statements or writing that he had made. And the Embassy was instructed by the State Department and I was instructed by the Ambassador to go and deliver a demarche to the Foreign Ministry protesting his imprisonment, raising freedom of speech and freedom of the press and all that, and I was told by my Yugoslav friends in the Ministry, "We hear what you're saying, but you know, this man is certifiable and he's a lot better locked up than out on the street." And I said, "Well, I'm just doing my job. This is an official demarche and so I'm just delivering it." And indeed, he was a very dangerous man as we all found out later.

This may be as good a place as any to put in a plug for a Yugoslav popular music singer named Lepa Brena—real name Fahreta Jahic. Born in Bosnia, she was and still is a true Yugoslav patriot. Her song *Zivela Jugoslavija* became an unofficial national anthem—sort of like *God Bless America*. To the amusement and occasionally to the annoyance of Sharon, I became a real fan. I bought her records, attended her concerts and praised her to anyone willing to listen. My admiration was not unshared. I remember a ranking Foreign Ministry official telling me, "She is worth twenty of our ambassadors!" Sharon and I became friends with her and her husband when we returned to Belgrade for my third assignment. By that time, unfortunately, not many people were interested in hearing the song *Zivela Jugoslavija* any more.

Q: Did you find Yugoslavia—was it easy to travel around and go places?

MILES: Oh, yes. Occasionally the military attachés would go a little bit too close to some military installations that were off limits for them and would find themselves detained temporarily until it could be sorted out, but otherwise no one in the Embassy, to my knowledge, ever had any particular difficulties. Certainly the Political Section team and I went all over the place and never had any trouble. We were, of course, under mild surveillance but not to the point of interfering with our activities. When Dan Fried would go and observe the trial of the "Belgrade Six", no one ever bothered him in that process. We were always under observation by the Yugoslav secret police but we were not really interfered with as we went about our business.

And at that time, Yugoslavs could read any Western periodical they wanted to or listen to the overseas radio stations or travel abroad; there were very, very few people who were denied passports. It was a communist country, but it was far from being a dictatorship. It wasn't a democracy exactly, but it wasn't a dictatorship either.

Q: How did you find—well, let's take some of the players—Macedonia? How did Macedonia fit into—?

MILES: There was always unrest between the Macedonians and the Serbs. Serbs resented the fact that Tito had allowed the church in Macedonia to have an autocephalous status and had encouraged the development of Macedonian language and Macedonian institutions. They believed, probably correctly, that he did this to help build the unity of Yugoslavia by weakening the dominant position of the Serbs in the federation. And the Macedonians, of course, had grievances against the Serbs. There were church differences over property. There were some very minor "border" issues. And of course there were perennial difficulties between Bulgaria and Macedonia. Some people took these arguments between the Macedonians and the Bulgarians seriously. I never did. I was always reminded of *Gulliver's Travels* and the conflict between the Big-Endians and the Little-Endians over which end of an egg should be broken at breakfast. But none of these were terribly serious matters. They didn't usually involve violence. They didn't usually involve mass demonstrations or anything. They were just part of the tension of being in Yugoslavia in those days. And it's worth noting that with the collapse of the communist system in Bulgaria and in Yugoslavia, these problems virtually disappeared.

Q: Bosnia-Herzegovina?

MILES: You know, it was a very quiet place at that time and in retrospect probably we should all have spent more time over there because obviously the fault lines were much deeper than we thought and much more dangerous. As far as we were concerned, the big issue in Bosnia-Herzegovina at that time was the phenomenon of the appearance of the Virgin Mary at Medjugorje. She allegedly appeared to some children in 1981 and, by their account, had reappeared before them several times. By the mid-'80s, this whole business had become a very real social and religious phenomenon. Our daughter Elizabeth was finishing high school about then nearby in Austria, so she went down to Medjugorje to see what she could see—she observed the crowd and the passing scene. When she did her required essay for application for college, including to Haverford College where she decided to go, she wrote about her visit to Medjugorje. She had a good record from high school, but I think that essay helped her get accepted. One of the little benefits of Foreign Service life.

At that time we had a very active military-to-military relationship and I was involved in this as a kind of civilian advisor to the Ambassador. Of course the Defense Attaché's office dealt with most of that but, I was involved from the political standpoint. I would go on the visits to the military factories where we were interested in having some things co-produced or allowing the Yugoslavs to produce certain things under license. We had an existing arrangement where American servicemen stationed in Europe could travel to Yugoslavia only with their military ID card; they didn't need a passport or a visa, and they could stay in the Yugoslav military resorts, some in the mountains and some on the sea, for quite inexpensive rates.

We had a joint military commission, half Yugoslav, half American, that would meet twice a year, once in America, once in Yugoslavia. I would attend those meetings, both in Washington and also in Yugoslavia, and it was always very interesting really. I did get to know some Yugoslav military officers who were still in positions of influence in the Serb military when I went back for my final tour of duty in 1996. This was fascinating work. There were some people in our military in Washington who were very uneasy about this relationship, so this part of the process of trying to move the relationship along did encounter some minor difficulties from time to time.

Q: Slovenia: wasn't this felt to be almost a separate country?

MILES: Well, it was freer of tension than any of the other republics because the population was overwhelmingly Slovene. And also the standard of living was higher than in the rest of the country. I don't know what the precise figure is but my guess is that there would be something like 98 percent homogeneity among the population.

Yugoslavia still had the rotating presidency and they still had the so-called national key formula, where for important positions like ambassadorships, the higher bureaucratic positions and so on, the positions were supposed to be shared equally among the republics, and while most of the other republics had no problem finding adequate people to send to these key positions, because they paid reasonably well and were often just sinecures, Slovenia always had a hard time with it because the Slovenes didn't want to come down to Belgrade and live there. I talked to several of these people, including Slovenian politicians, and they said basically that they just didn't want to live in Belgrade. They were very happy living in Slovenia and saw no reason to go down there.

Q: Was Franjo Tudjman at all a figure while you were there?

MILES: No. No, he wasn't. We knew who he was but at that time he played no role in particular. He had been imprisoned for expressing nationalist sentiment and had been released, so maybe he was just lying low.

We really didn't foresee the immediate—historically, the virtually immediate—separation of Yugoslavia and the subsequent Balkan War. We really didn't foresee that. We saw the cracks in the societal structure with Kosovo because they had been there for a long time; they were highly visible, and we used to cover Kosovo pretty carefully because of that. So I guess you could say we were not too surprised when later the difficulties with Kosovo intensified and led eventually to war between the NATO powers and Yugoslavia. But the big split—Croatia and Slovenia splitting off, Bosnia being fractured—we really didn't foresee that, at least not in the mid-'80s.

Q: Well now, how did we view this rotating presidency? Did we see this as something that could keep going or was this considered a provisional thing that would have to shake down into something a little more effective or how—?

MILES: No one thought that the post-Tito political structure would survive forever and that includes the rotating presidency. Maybe it was a clever idea to try to postpone what appeared to

be somewhat inevitable, but it was so inefficient that no one thought it would be long-lasting.

Q: Yes.

MILES: Really, after Tito's death, there were only two national institutions which still functioned: the Army and the Party. But the Party simply didn't amount to much after Tito's death. Tito was the Party, really. After Tito's death, you had a lot of "Parties", one in every republic and province. And there were almost as many leaders. People used to speak of "Little Titos". One of Tito's faults was that he had systematically cut down anyone who might develop a following of his own. So, when he died, the Party was basically run by second-stringers. The first-stringers had been removed from the game long before.

The Serbian Orthodox Church was a strong institution and, in a sense, it had nation-wide influence, but its real center of influence was in Serbia. It was weak in Montenegro and Macedonia and had very little influence in Croatia and even less in Slovenia. That left the Army and the Army, that is, the officer corps, was predominantly Serb. Some of the criticism of this was a little bit unfair because there certainly were Croats and others in the officer ranks, but it's true that Serbs were predominant. Tudjman himself was a general, for goodness' sake, and he was as Croatian as they come. I never thought that there was out and out prejudice against others than Serbs serving in the officer corps. I don't think anyone was trying to keep the officer corps Serb at the expense of the other nationalities, but in the end the Army also did not prove to be a national unifying force because it was considered Serb dominated and many of the other army officers—sort of like General Lee, I guess, staying with Virginia rather than the federal union—opted to stay with Croatia or Slovenia when push came to shove.

Q: Yes. I remember—I'm talking now about the 60s—but our feeling was that the major unifying force besides Tito was the Soviet Union, the fact that if Yugoslavia started to break apart, this might offer a target of opportunity for the Soviets, and this meant that, you know—this could spell real problems for the United States but also for the Yugoslavs.

MILES: Well, that's true, we did think that way. We thought that way and they thought that way and you did mention Tito, who was the primary unifying force in Yugoslavia. Tito tried to maintain the spirit of the partisan movement and the post-war nation building activities and also, frankly, was not above using some hard-handed methods on the part of the secret police. But once Tito died, this all began to fray.

Already in the 1984-87 period, the Soviet Union saw the beginnings of perestroika and glasnost, and while there was a lot of argument about that in Western circles, as you remember, the fact was that the Soviet Union was less and less likely to try any kind of maneuver of that sort. It had not been very successful in going into Afghanistan, as you remember, and so I think that the Afghanistan situation was probably another inhibiting factor regarding any sort of interventionism.

Q: How were the Yugoslavs dealing with their neighbors? It's got like seven neighbors.

MILES: Well, they got along pretty well. There were constant—and I followed this very

closely—there were constant small irritants on the part of nationalist elements in Macedonia with Bulgaria and vice versa. Ditto in Slovenia and even a bit with Croatia against Austria and Italy. There was constant squabbling over issues like whether the road signs near the border were in two languages or not, or whether the Slovenian minority in Italy was able to use the Slovenian language in the schools. These were piddling, little disputes, quite frankly. I mean, no one was being persecuted; no one was being forcibly deprived of their property or their land; no one was being refused the right to travel and so on. But it was almost as though the local people and authorities just felt the need to complain about something and so by God they did.

Q: I remember it used to be the phrase “we are surrounded by”—what was it, “brigama”? The word “brigama” is “troubles” and to form it you take each letter in there and it spells the countries that Yugoslavia was surrounded by.

MILES: That’s right. They did have a lot of neighbors. But there were no serious border disputes. No one mobilized troops or anything of that sort to try to rectify these alleged wrongs suffered by the national minorities abroad.

Q: How about the youth? I’m thinking universities. Did we have much contact with them?

MILES: I think we underestimated them. Looking back at that period of time, I think, in the Political Section especially, we should have been paying more attention to the young people. We did try to determine their attitudes about their feeling of nationality, of nationhood, that is, belonging to a nation as opposed to belonging to an ethnic group. But we did not focus on youth as much as we had in the past when there had been specific State Department programs devoted to youth. That had all faded away and we didn’t pick it up on our own. We might have been a little quicker to see the difficulties that came in Yugoslavia if we had paid a little more attention to young people, especially to college-age people.

And by the way, there are pretty brave people in this age group. A later generation of these students, who faced beatings, expulsion from the university and even jail became the core of the political resistance to Milosevic and through their activities they created the change in public opinion which ultimately brought about Milosevic’s removal from power.

Q: With major demonstrations in Belgrade and elsewhere.

MILES: Yes. And not only that but several years later they were an inspiration to the people opposed to Shevardnadze in Georgia. There was contact between the leaders of the student opposition movement in Serbia, Otpor [Resistance], and some of the Kmara [Enough] activists in Georgia. We did pay attention to young people in the ’84-’87 period; I just don’t think we paid enough attention. I went myself to meetings at the law faculty at that time where there would be something like a semi-demonstration by the students about this or that but we just didn’t take this seriously enough. We didn’t have contact with the students on a systematic basis; we would do it only sporadically, and that is a big difference.

Q: What about the media, TV, newspapers, radio there? What was your impression?

MILES: Well, we knew those people and our public affairs people spent time with them. We provided the usual sorts of training and exchanges to help them improve the quality of their product. Yugoslav TV was pretty free, as was the print media at that time. Of course, the government influenced the media in various ways but I don't remember any particularly ham-handed efforts by the government or the Party to curtail the media while I was there. Sharon and I were particularly close to a senior journalist at *Politika* who was eventually fired, mainly, I think, because she was Croatian.

Q: Had the Communist Party as a communist party lost its zeal or whatever?

MILES: Yes, the stuffing had gone out of it. As for the government, the federal ministries still functioned or pretended to function. I remember that enormous governmental building that they had in—

Q: SIV?

MILES: Yes, the SIV [Federal Executive Council] building. All the ministries were there and people were moving around doing this and doing that, although lord knows what. Meanwhile, over in the League of Communists building, it was very quiet. I would go over there occasionally; I knew some of the people over there and I'd go over there periodically and talk to them and I'd also talk to the leaders of the national youth organization which was still housed over there in the same building. But I always got the impression when I went there that the driving force of the Party had somehow departed the building—that it had become just a nice place for people to hang out and get some kind of a salary for pretending to work.

Q: What was your opinion of the operation of one of the ambassadors, was it David Anderson or Jack Scanlan?

MILES: Well, I liked them both and am still in touch with Jack Scanlan. I just got a letter from him last week, actually.

Q: Where is he now?

MILES: He's down in Florida. Unfortunately, his wife died recently.

Q: I knew she was having a problem.

MILES: We went to a memorial service that they had here in Washington late last year, I believe it was, and he came up from Florida for that. But he is fading a bit himself now. He's not in the best of health.

He was fine as Ambassador to Yugoslavia. I did think he went a little far, though, in supporting this Yugo car thing. You remember "Crvena Zastava", the Red Flag Company?

Q: Yes, wasn't it a sort of Fiat or something?

MILES: It was like a Fiat. It started out that way. Shortly after the war the Crvena Zastava Company produced a very, very tiny Fiat under license. It was called the Fica, you remember, pronounced “Ficha”, and everyone drove that little rattletrap around; it was the most ubiquitous car in Yugoslavia. It was cheap; people could afford to buy it. And then they improved it and it actually became a reasonably decent car. Then in the early 1980s, I don’t recall exactly when, probably about ’82, ’83, several investors, including some Americans, decided that they would create a separate line for the car, at the plant in Kragujevac, and they would provide a higher degree of quality control, better quality of paint, etc. They would make the car to American specifications, call it the Yugo and would send it off to America to be sold for, I don’t recall exactly how much, but around \$2000. So, for a while, that was the cheapest new car you could buy in America. Unfortunately for everyone, it was just not a very good car for American conditions. It became the butt of a lot of jokes because, despite its low cost, it was just not a very reliable car. Eagleburger was one of the investors in the company and Scanlan has always been very, very loyal to Eagleburger. Eagleburger was his mentor in many ways and so perhaps for that reason, I don’t know, he went a little further than he probably should have in helping to promote that car. It was a U.S.-Yugoslav joint venture but still it was a 100 percent Yugoslav product. Scanlan was very proud of the fact, for example, that he got the company to lease a Yugo to the Embassy for a dollar a year or something like that. He then put the American flag on the right fender and would drive that little thing around to official meetings, which the Yugoslavs themselves did not really appreciate. They thought it was a little bit tacky, I think. Certainly no Yugoslav official ever rode around in a Yugo. My wife Sharon, who was the Acting Commercial Attaché during this time, spent an inordinate amount of time on the phone with the Zastava plant getting spare parts to keep the car running. It seemed to eat windshield wipers and fan belts.

And I remember once going to a meeting with Scanlan in the Yugo. Now the protocol is that ambassadors always sit in the back seat on the right side. But on this occasion, I had to sit in the back because Scanlan, who is taller than I am, couldn’t fit in the back comfortably. So he sat in the front seat and I sat in the back seat and off we went to call on, I think it was the Prime Minister of Serbia or something like that, with the Yugo and the flag flying. Anyhow, we arrived; he got out of the front seat—this was right after he arrived in Yugoslavia and the Yugoslavs didn’t really know him very well and they didn’t know me much either at the higher levels of government. Well, when he got out of the front, they sort of ignored him and when I got out of the back, they shook my hand in welcome. They thought I was the Ambassador. It was really kind of funny.

But both Anderson and Scanlan were good ambassadors. They had a good sense for what was happening and they knew their way around. Neither of them made any mistakes while they were there.

Q: Well then, you left there in ’87?

MILES: Eighty-seven.

Q: At that time, whither Yugoslavia in your mind?

MILES: At that time we were troubled by Milosevic’s climbing up the political ladder very

rapidly, beginning to use the Kosovo issue and that developed further, as you indicated earlier, after I left, to the point where it became very dangerous. But, in 1987, we still didn't really foresee the imminent breakup of Yugoslavia and we so didn't foresee the violent events which were to come. So, when I left in '87, I don't think we were terribly worried about whether Yugoslavia. We didn't think it would last forever but we didn't think it would collapse in a couple years either. Well, it shows once again that it's very difficult to make predictions in this business.

KATHERINE SCHWERING
Economic Officer
Belgrade (1984-1987)

Ms. Schwering was born in Wyoming and raised abroad and various localities in the US. She was educated at Northwestern University and Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). She joined Chase Bank, where she was trained as an international economist, and worked with them until joining the State Department in 1978. During her career Ms. Schwering worked primarily on international economic, monetary and terrorist matters in Washington and abroad. Her overseas posts were in Burundi, Yugoslavia and Turkey. Ms. Schwering was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: So you are off to Belgrade. You were there from when to when?

SCHWERING: September-October '84 to August of '87.

Q: What was your job?

SCHWERING: Economic officer.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

SCHWERING: The first one was David Anderson and then it was John Scanlon, who stayed involved. He retired I think, right after Belgrade. He was supposed to be named ambassador to Poland, but that is when things were breaking down.

Q: His son is in the Foreign Service. Yeah, I met him in Kyrgyzstan as a junior officer there. What was the situation? What were relations with Yugoslavia like in '84?

SCHWERING: They were pretty good, as far as I knew. I have a history, because I was in Belgrade in a summer program in 1971 and then I had traveled there for banking in '76-'78. This was my third incarnation, from a different point of view in Belgrade, so I knew a lot about the culture and everything. It turns out I also had Yugoslav contacts. There had been three Yugoslav banks in New York when I was a banker. They were my customers when I was in the Soviet Union-Eastern Europe branch of Chase. When I was assigned to Belgrade, at least two of these

individuals were back in Yugoslavia. I was able to network right away. This was very useful to me in my economic work.

Overall, relations were good. That was the time when we had P.J. Nichols. He had been the deputy in the econ section, and left the summer I came. The main relationship between the U.S. government and Yugoslavia was economic reform working with the IMF. Of course, program after program, the Yugoslavs would fall off the wagon. I knew them. They had no intention of undertaking any economic reforms. They just wanted the money, and they would say what they needed to get it. In the late 70s one of the third world debt crises had started, and Yugoslavia was one of the countries that defaulted on its repayments. In '78-'79 there was a group of international countries called the Friends of Yugoslavia, who had gotten together informally to try and help them economically. We have seen this pattern a lot more recently. It has become a standard way of dealing with countries. The Friends of Yugoslavia was created in 1981 to work with the Belgrade government and the IMF and everybody else to get the Yugoslav economy back on track and get all these loans that we had made to Yugoslavia on the path to repayment. So, the real action when I was in Belgrade was in the economic shop, not the political one.

Q: Who was the economic counselor?

SCHWERING: It was... oh God, I can't remember his name. He was there for a year. The one who was there most of the time I was there was Lloyd George – a real character.

Q: I think Lloyd was a junior officer in Athens when I was counsel general there.

SCHWERING: I don't know. He was of the era when they didn't do consular work. I knew he had come from South Africa.

It was very unusual for an embassy to have the action in the Econ section. As a result, the political section was feeling a little shorted. However, this was not only because the main interaction between the U.S. government and Yugoslavia was on economic issues, but also P.J. Nichols was a personality in the embassy and he had gotten really close to Ambassador Anderson. They used to cut the econ counselor out.

Q: Who was P.J. Nichols?

SCHWERING: He was the deputy econ chief. Again, he is another one of these people who only wanted to get ahead. He so ticked off the political section. He would get together with the Ambassador and the IMF and such, and somehow he would convince the ambassador to exclude the econ counselor and the entire political section on all of this. When I got to the embassy in '84, relations among sections were so bad that the first few times I walked into the political section, a political officer would walk out and demand to know if I had permission to be in there.

Q: What was the Yugoslav financial system like?

SCHWERING: 'System' is too good a word. It was just that they had their not even socialist view of the world; it was a self-management system which only bore a partial relationship to

reality. It was... I could bore you. I could make your ears bleed with the details. They really didn't accept the economic laws which operate everywhere – even Saudi Arabia. Real economics is like physics: if you are in it enough you can see that if you push here something is going to give there. It is as simple as that. They thought that they could just issue credit without ever paying it back. There was no financial discipline. I am talking about in their own economy. They borrowed and never paid back. They just had inflation. By the time I left Yugoslavia, there were millions of zeros following the one for a valuable note. You could spend ten dinars when I arrived in '84, and it probably was a million dinars to buy the same thing a few years later. They just printed money.

They really didn't understand how it worked. I did a study of the economy. Now, while there is no such thing as a good number, even by their numbers – they had a central statistics bureau – their economy was in decline. There was net disinvestment. Their plants were wearing down and not being replaced. That was because of the workers' self management system, where workers were half of the management board of any company. I translated their accounting law. It turns out that wages were not a cost of production. In their company accounting statements, you have the same categories you have in ours, although they have two kinds of taxes, one of which was called taxes and the other wasn't. It is a system where wages and salaries are paid out of net profit after taxes and are not listed as a cost with materials. Well, what happens, if you don't have any profit? How do you pay wages? In that economy, most companies were in the red. What they would do then is go to the bank, which their company was part owner of, and borrow money to pay wages and never pay it back.

Q: Well, it makes you wonder about our own banking institutions. Is this a write off? Why deal with this kind of country?

SCHWERING: Well, if you go back, this was one of the countries into which banks could direct petrodollars that had been put on deposit with them. These were considered, like Latin America and Africa, untouched markets for banks who needed to place the money on which they were paying interest. Yugoslavia was just one of those countries. In the 1970's, when foreign banks were lending us money, we were laughing. We knew we were never going to pay it back. It got caught in the third world debt cycle. You get an IMF (International Monetary Fund) program, which hopefully gets your economy straightened out a little, and then you should generate enough foreign exchange to repay loans. But the Yugoslavs either never stuck to the program or left important parts of it out.

One thing I discovered, but only after I left (I pointed this out to IMF auditors, who hadn't even picked up on it) was that two-thirds of the Yugoslav money supply was actually foreign exchange, and not dinars. The IMF kept working with the central bank in terms of inflationary targets on Dinar issuance and limits on that. That was only a third of the cash in the economy, so they had no influence over the street market rate of that foreign exchange in dinars. You can't only handle one-third of the money supply and factor that into your equations and expect the equation to work. So it was things like that.

It never occurred to the Yugoslavs (the same was true in Poland) to tell the IMF or World Bank, "Oh, by the way, most of our cash happens to be foreign exchange." That just totally changed the

picture, and the economic programs never worked because nobody had all the information.

Q: Were we doing anything other than reporting on this disaster?

SCHWERING: Oh sure. We were strong arming the government of Yugoslavia and strong arming the IMF. We had terrible ‘clientitis’ there. However, I have never worked on a country where the State Department wasn’t trying to get the IMF or the World Bank to back down from its roles. ‘Political reasons’ is a phrase I never want to hear again with its, “please don’t make them do this, please don’t make them freeze salaries, please don’t make them reduce their budget deficit.” Part of the problem of the political cone being the foremost cone in the Foreign Service is they don’t understand economics. It is like a house of cards. You can’t remove one of the cards and expect the house to remain standing. Yes, these economic programs cause tremendous hardship, which is why the World Bank in the 80s put in place what they called a social network program. Unless you get all of the distortions out of the economy, it is never going to function right. The State Department usually worked against common economic sense because we thought it would cause too much political instability.

Q: What was the Yugoslav government like at the time?

SCHWERING: Fine. This was interesting, because Tito had died in 1980. They had elections every five years, certainly for the republic or autonomous province representatives. When I got there, there were nine members of the Yugoslav presidency, the ninth member being the Yugoslav communist party, the league of commons or the president of that. He faded away by the time Milosevic took power in the late 80s. They had federal elections every five years. That meant that in 1985 they were going to have federal elections, which I realized was stimulating. Everybody had been kind of holding their breath when I got there. I realized the political establishment was still running the way Tito had set it up. It was as though they were holding their breath and not quite sure he was dead. It was very odd. Then in 1985, people realized he was gone, that they could actually vote for someone, and that there might actually be competition. I think there was still only one party allowed, but that was when you could feel things change. Other people like Milosevic said, “Oh my god. I now have a chance to get ahead.” You saw a lot more political maneuvering among the old boy’s club that ruled every republic, Kosovo and Vojvodina. Politics changed, but it was very subtle, and someone from the outside might not have realized it. It was the first time Tito had not been around to determine who was going to be who. That is when Milosevic started making his moves.

Q: Katherine, how did you see the relationship between the various components of Yugoslavia – Croatia, Bosnia, Macedonia, Slovenia, Serbia and Kosovo?

SCHWERING: With the exception of Kosovo, everything was as it had been under Tito. They were all cooperating. The general sentiment was: “Everything is fine. We are all one country.” In fact, they had a very popular folksinger, whose name I can’t remember, who would always end every performance by singing “Yugoslavia,” which of course is the anthem of, “we are all one in Yugoslavia.”

Kosovo was different. They had had troubles in ’81, and the republic forces had been sent in to

quasi occupy it. On my first visit to Kosovo in 1984, there were still several main buildings in Pristina, the capital of Kosovo, that were surrounded by military jeeps, armed men, and things. At that point, relations between Serbia and Kosovo were clearly deteriorating. Kosovo was one of the parts of Yugoslavia I reported on. I covered Vojvodina, Kosovo, Serbia, and Montenegro. I talked with both Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo. Things were still as they had been structured under Tito.

The translator who was usually assigned to me was a Serb who spoke Albanian and Serbian. His name was Rushivats, which is also the name of a town in Kosovo. He would talk to me on the side. I also learnt from my interviews about land holdings, that there had been a World Bank program in Kosovo at the time which was trying to help encourage development, which most people didn't realize existed. The World Bank pulled out later. I also talked with the World Bank people. Kosovo had a very high birth rate. It also had the highest rate of home ownership in all of Yugoslavia. It was one of the areas from which people hadn't moved to big cities, but were still living on plots of land that had been owned by the same family for generations. This was not true in Belgrade and Ljubljana and Zagreb or Sarajevo. It was a very stable population. However, I heard rumors, which I could never, of course get officially confirmed, that the Albanians were pressuring the Serbs out, usually through purchases of land. Every time you would bring it up, everybody would deny it.

The important positions in what we would call the private and public sectors in Kosovo were still being staffed the way they were under Tito, with rotating Serbian and Albanian heads. The population was still very mixed, and the school system was still bilingual. You could go to school all the way through university in Kosovo. All schools had programs in Albanian as well as Serbian, and you could choose to go to either. It was all in the same school and it was no problem. The Serbs stopped that in '91 or '89, I can't remember. But the Serbian government in Belgrade decreed that Albanian was no longer to be used in the schools. Of course I can't think of anything more provocative except shooting people.

What seemed to be going on was there was a very sudden pressure from Albanians, who were 80-90% of the population in Kosovo, who were trying to buy land, probably to consolidate their holdings which were being divided up among children. The Kosovar Serbs felt they were under pressure to sell. They sort of felt, "Well, why not, I would rather live in Serbia anyway." However, you couldn't just leave. You had to have the permission of your local authorities to leave anyplace you were living anywhere in Yugoslavia, and you had to have the permission of the authorities of the city you wanted to move to, to move there. I ran into Serbs who had been working on this for two or three years. They were going around with their little identity cards and getting all the proper stamps so they could leave Kosovo. So there was this very subtle outflow of Serbs. The Serbs would say the Albanians were pressuring them. We could find no hard evidence of it. The Albanians would deny it. It wasn't a hostile thing. It was just that when you are more and more of a minority, you start feeling less and less comfortable.

But there was a point when the Serbs had gone in and stomped down on the Albanians in '81. Now, this was '84-'87. The Albanian Kosovars just denied it, but maybe they were thinking, "If we can encourage the Serbs to move out, we will."

Q: Here you were, a professional banker; what were you getting from the Yugoslav banking community?

SCHWERING: Well, same thing I had been getting as a banker. I knew them all. I had visited them all as a banker.

Q: Yeah, there is a certain point where they were saying, "Boy, we can get away with this." However, there must have been a certain point where you realize you were moving towards doom and disaster.

SCHWERING: They never saw that or thought that, because they always thought the government would bail them out.

You see, the system was that you had no stock market or anything. Any factory or bank or any other enterprise or factory that was set up, was set up by other companies that would invest in it. The banking sector was very specific. All the big companies in a republic would invest to establish a bank, or had invested in the 40s and 50s to establish the banking system in their republic. So, in effect, these companies owned the bank, and the bank lent only to them. It was like their treasury. There was no distance, no objectivity. What would get you thrown in jail for in the U.S. was the way of doing business there. So, companies just assumed the banks would bail them out, and the banks would just issue more guarantees or credit. Inflation was just out of control.

Q: Well, what about your international bankers – including American bankers? Had they gotten over getting rid of this petro-dollar business, or were they in for a penny, in for a pound, in for a hundred pounds?

SCHWERING: Well once money is in the system it is there. It doesn't stop circulating. So, the way to look at it is the international financial system had been inflated permanently by these petro-dollars. So, in theory, you lend them out, and as the money gets paid back, you lend it out again. It is one big cycle. It is like energy. It doesn't disappear. It just goes from a deposit to a loan to a repayment to the lender, who then has to re-lend it, because the depositor is still earning money on it. So it was there. However, countries like Yugoslavia, and those in Latin America and Africa just stopped repaying. Banks are not in the business of giving grants away. So, the whole international community was interested in getting these repayments up and going. So, that is when the IMF, which was the key for this, really became a major player. Lending countries like us were very interested in working with the IMF to get these economies back on track so they could re-pay our banks.

Q: Were you aware of conflicting attitudes between the U.S. treasury people and the embassy people?

SCHWERING: Yeah. Treasury was a lot more realistic and practical. The State Department was usually the soft one who wanted to waive the rules. But Treasury wasn't a player. What most people don't realize is the State Department was the designated U.S. government negotiator on debt, not Treasury. Treasury was always a part of the delegation, never head of the delegation.

There was a written agreement between the two agencies.

Q: Well, did you feel being in the economic section, that you were supposed to put out a rosy report with a rosy picture or a better than dismal picture?

SCHWERING: Well, that depended on your econ counselor. The first one we had there was that way. However, the ambassador was worse. Jack Scanlon didn't want anything negative to be reported. He had very bad clientitis. He wouldn't let cables go out that said anything negative about the economy.

Later, after that tour, I came back and worked in Washington in the office of monetary affairs, which is the IMF liaison office, and I continued to work on Yugoslavia. This way, I got to see, from the other end in Washington, what was coming out of Belgrade. P.J. Nichols actually went back to be econ counselor the summer I left Belgrade, and the reporting out of Belgrade became the laughing stock of Washington DC, the CIA, and Treasury. We in the office of monetary affairs didn't believe anything that came out of there because we knew it was biased or there was information left out. It was a standing joke.

Q: I assume you weren't under any particular constraints regarding contacts with Yugoslavs and all, there.

SCHWERING: No, not really. At that point, Yugoslavia was considered Eastern Europe in terms of the department of DS (Diplomatic Security). They would caution us that we were not to have close relations with any Yugoslav. It wasn't like Poland or Hungary, but we got called in periodically, particularly the women. It was so funny. I don't know how many men left that post married to Yugoslav girls. It was a no fraternization policy; that was it. The women got called in all the time on instructions from Washington, but our male colleagues didn't. It became a standing joke among us women. You know, the poor security officer was such a sweetie. He would get so embarrassed when he would get another instruction to call all the ladies of the embassy in and reveal to them that we were not to get involved. Finally, one secretary just looked at him and said, "Ok, it is ok if we go to bed and have sex with them as long as we don't get involved, right?" That was the last time he called us in. We never heard he ever called the men in. I am sure he did once or twice. Like I said, I went to more weddings in Austria. When my male colleagues met someone in Yugoslavia they married. Because we couldn't get married there, it was easier to get married in Vienna. I don't know how many of those I went to.

Q: What were you picking up from your Yugoslav contacts? I assume you were meeting people in the professional, political or economic classes who were moving ahead in society. How were they looking at where Yugoslavia was heading? Were you getting into discussions on that?

SCHWERING: They didn't think in terms of Yugoslavia. Every time you met someone they wouldn't say, "I am a Yugoslav," they would say, "I am a Serb" or Croat or whatever. Rarely did the thinking go beyond that. It was Tito who had had it. Then what happened when he died was the league of communist membership on the Yugoslav presidency faded away. Then each of the eight members (the six republics and two autonomous provinces) had a vote. That came about in 1985 or maybe later. That is when you saw either Serbia or Croatia trying to influence the other

votes to further their republic's interests. I think from 1985 on at least, maybe not before, it really was Serbia trying to become the top dog. Croatia was not trying quite as hard. Ljubljana just wanted to leave and wanted everybody do leave them alone. It was like Congress. Whoever could get the most power and votes. It was during that time or a little bit later that Milosevic engineered the change in authorities in both Vojvodina and Kosovo that put pro-Serb authorities in there, gaining three votes on the presidential council. Montenegro usually voted with Serbia, so that was four, and all he needed to get was one more. That is really what Bosnia was about.

Q: Did you find yourself constrained about going to Croatia? I was just wondering whether you could go to Croatia and talk to economic types and whatever.

SCHWERING: Oh sure. There was no problem, but we had a consulate in Croatia so...

Q: Well, sometimes the relationship is, "We will take care of this or so from the consulate." Did you run across it.

SCHWERING: Well, the consulate in Zagreb was responsible for Slovenia and Croatia, so the embassy in Belgrade didn't do reporting on those two. There was a little competition I suppose. It got worse as time went on, but no, there wasn't any real problem. Being in the center of the country, we had access to Croatian and Slovenian statistics. All of the sections of Yugoslavia were to be represented on all federal bodies, so Slovenes, Croats, and Albanians and everything were part of our daily contacts, because they were mixed in the ministries and everything else.

Q: It has been claimed that the Serbs saw to it that they gathered in all the money of the country for themselves. Is that accurate?

SCHWERING: No, it couldn't happen, because of the way their system was. There was one bank in each republic and province that was designated to do foreign exchange transactions. There was one Yugoslav-wide bank, Yugobanca. Basically, that one bank did all the transactions for its republic. No bank had any rights to do that. Now, there were rules that came and went, where the central bank, the Yugoslav national bank (which was not a commercial bank) had imposed foreign exchange surrender requirements. I remember one period of time where if any of these foreign trade banks in any of the republics had foreign exchange for more than three days, they had to turn that foreign exchange over to the national bank. So, they almost never had foreign exchange on the books after three days. They would either pay for an export or do something with it to make it disappear. It was only after the system broke down in the late 80s and 90s that the Serbs began in fact to take over the national bank. At that point, though, it was not pro-Serb – or anything else in the early or middle 80s.

Q: You left there in '87. Is there anything else we should talk about regarding your time there – any trips or visits by anybody?

SCHWERING: Well, I should start out by saying that the summer before I went, I dislocated a shoulder and had surgery and developed a very rare pain syndrome. I was lost in the system for months. I didn't show up at post, and that is because I couldn't move. It was six weeks or two months before the doctors diagnosed what was going on. However, I was in such pain I couldn't

use one arm. I had a seven month old baby, and my joints became frozen, and apparently there is no treatment for it. I had to get permission of the Department to go abroad.

Then an accident happened five days before I was to leave for post in July. The Department was awful. I had just gotten out of FSI, and they said, "Well, we can't handle you because you are not at FSI any more." I called the European bureau and they said, "Well, you are not at post yet, so you are not ours." I called the Foreign Service Lounge, which oddly enough is the one that handles you in between. They said, "If you are not going abroad, come and get your time cards. We are not going to handle you." Med, said, "You are not ours, because you are not on medical over-complement." I literally "fell between the chairs." I could get no one to sign my time card, so I thought my pay was going to be cut off as no one would. The European Bureau would take no responsibility for calling the post to tell them where I was and I couldn't as I was in too much pain; I couldn't even climb stairs or ride in a car. It was awful. Finally, in late September, I went into the Department because at that point I was going to have to give my daughter up to foster care. I couldn't take care of her. Oh, my medical insurance had been cut off through bureaucratic error, and I couldn't handle any of this, and I was so sick – it was hell. Finally, the clearance doctor looked at me and said, "Well, the only recommendations are for physical therapy, and that can be done at post in Belgrade, so we will let you go." When I arrived, the doctor at post was completely appalled as I was in no shape to be outside of a nursing home. However, I had a child to support; I had to get my salary started up again and by living overseas was the only way I could keep my child with me. My husband wouldn't help at all. So I got there.

But what was interesting, was when I got in country, it took two or three weeks for the doctor to arrange for me to go to the orthopedic hospital for the first time. I go in, and the first thing that struck me was that there was no such thing as a wheel chair in the country. So, you have all of these people with broken legs, broken hips and everything, standing around on a crutch, if they are lucky. Crutches were also rare.

I noticed this guy both at the entryway to the clinic when I went in and an hour later when I came out on my very first visit. He was a very noticeable guy, who looked like a thug. He had this huge scar across his cheek. No, I remember, I had just come into country. I had not left the embassy compound once in the two or three weeks since I had been there. I had seen him before. I immediately recognized him; he was so distinctive. I wracked my brains as to where could I have seen this guy. Then, I realized I must have seen him when I had landed at the airport. He had been sent to follow me. I must have just picked it up and recognized him later. Gee, how did he know I was going to be at the orthopedic clinic? So, that was interesting. And they used to do voice prints of us. The embassy was near the railroad station. Every time a new officer came, they would sooner or later get a phone call asking in English if the train to Sarajevo had left yet or something. Apparently, in responding and saying, "This isn't the train station, or I don't know," or whatever else, they would take a voice print.

Q: That was kind of sophisticated.

SCHWERING: Well, yes. I traveled around the country. I would be in hotels where they would accidentally leave the taping room door open and you would see a room with wall to wall banks of tapes running. It was so funny. Then, one time, on a Sunday or something, I called a colleague

from my home. We were going to meet somewhere. I hung up. Then, I had to make another call. I picked up the phone, and it was still connected. What I heard was apparently the changing of the guard. Whoever was listening in on our phones had forgotten to hang up, so I heard all of these voices in the background – all this good-bye, hello, how are you – whatever. I kept yelling “Hang up, I have to make a call.” So, there were amusing things like that. The Yugoslavs weren’t terribly subtle.

I had an inside look at the Yugoslav medical system for a long time as a result of my injury. That was very interesting, because I went daily for five months. Later, I was medevaced to Germany because I wasn’t doing a whole lot better. However, I went to the orthopedic clinic in Belgrade for five months for therapy five days a week. It was interesting whom I met there. The person on the table next to me was someone from the Polisario in North Africa. Yugoslavia had a policy in the 70s that anybody from any liberation movement that had been hurt would get free medical treatment if they could make it to Yugoslavia. So, those were some of the people I was getting treatment with. There were black Africans translating for this Polisario Arab, and an African student in Belgrade would be the translator for the physical therapist and stuff like that. I had to do all of this, by the way, in Serbo-Croatian. They used to hook the stimulant, a metal coin-shaped thing, up to my arm. It had a pair of wires leading out of it. Then, one time, they said they were going to put me in a tub of water with that. I said no, thank you very much. I just knew I was going to be electrocuted. At that point the embassy medevaced me to Yugoslavia.

Q: you say you have got a couple of things about your bosom buddies, this man Milosevic, is that so?

SCHWERING: Well, not really bosom buddies. When I was in banking for Chase, my last assignment was the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and I was a team leader for institutional relationships. We worked with banks and governments. It was either then or my first year in the diplomatic corps in Belgrade that I had a meeting with Milosevic, when he was head of Beogradska Banca. Now, in those days, basically everything like heads of all companies – government and public (but not government institutions) – were political appointees. Prior to being appointed as head of Beo Banca, I believe Milosevic had been head of a shoe company. We dealt with Beogradska Banca at Chase for however long he had been there.

I have to say I found him very reticent. He didn’t say much. Absolutely none of us who dealt with him in the New York banking community had any idea he was politically ambitious. He just did not come across that way. But once we saw him in action, we understood he did everything behind the scenes.

Another person I met and who for years was a good contact of mine and whom I just did not pick upon was Borka Vučić. She became Milosevic’s main money launderer during the war. I first met her when she visited New York on behalf of the bank she was working for at the time, which I think was also Beobanka Gradska. When I traveled for the bank, I would call on her. All the time I was assigned to the embassy in Belgrade, I dealt with her both when she was at the Commercial Bank, and later when she was moved to the National Bank of Yugoslavia. We go back a long time, she and I. She frankly was the only competent banker in the country. She didn’t come across as political. However, when the country broke up in 1992 – or I think it was

'91 that Slovenia and Croatia seceded, Milosevic chose Borka Vučić to do all of his banking in terms of foreign exchange and other things. She was a very loyal subject. She has since written a book, which I have a copy of but haven't read. Anyway, it was very interesting. I am someone who could have been sent to deal with her and find out what was going on.

Q: You say she was the only competent banker. Because of the communist system could they have a bank in a way?

SCHWERING: Well, there are financial centers – call them banks if you want – in every culture. That is one of those things like the law of physics. Even the Middle East – ostensibly Muslims – doesn't charge interest. But, in fact, there is that concept in their economic system. They charge 'fees.' But you will find in any country in the world the same principles end up applying. People have money, and they need a place to keep it and that is a banking system. That system is the source of loans for the economy. There is a cost of money that is paid in one form or another. Yes, that was true in Yugoslavia too.

MORTON I. ABRAMOWITZ
Director, Bureau of Intelligence and Research
Washington, DC (1984-1989)

Ambassador Abramowitz was born in New Jersey and educated at Stanford and Harvard Universities. He entered the Foreign Service in 1960 after service in the US Army. A specialist in East Asian and Political/Military Affairs, the Ambassador held a number of senior positions in the Department of State and Department of Defense. He served as Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research and as US Ambassador to Thailand (1978-1981) and Turkey (1989-1991). He also served in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Vienna. Ambassador Abramowitz was interviewed by Thomas Stern in 2007.

Q: Let me move on to events in the Balkans in the 1985-89 period. Do you remember what role you might have played as the U.S. faced the break-up of Yugoslavia?

ABRAMOWITZ: I didn't play any real role, the most was when the Secretary asked me in 1987 for an analysis of what might happen in Yugoslavia, particularly after the huge demonstration in Belgrade and other cities in 1987. I was asked to go there to look at the situation. I did that along with my chief analyst for the region. We spent a week in Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia. We submitted a brief report, the first draft of which was written by the analyst. We basically concluded that there was a race between the forces of nationalism and economic integration. We were not sure which would come out on top. My analyst felt that nationalism would win out; he was right. I was not that certain about that conclusion and equivocated to some degree. But we did conclude that the future looked quite grim and a break up of Yugoslavia was quite likely. My analyst was certain of the break up; I was not so certain and we left some wiggle room in our report.

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."

RAZVIGOR BAZALA
Yugoslavia Country Affairs Officer, USIS
Washington, DC (1985-1987)

Mr. Bazala was born in Germany but immigrated to the United States while he was still young. He joined the Foreign Service in 1970 and served in Warsaw, Poland from 1970-1973. Afterwards, he was sent to the Republic of South Vietnam from 1974-1975 to serve as a Branch Public Affairs Officer (BPAO). He then became a Deputy PAO (Public Affairs Officer) and was moved to New Delhi, India, where he stayed from 1975-1978. After his tour in India ended, Razvigor and his wife were stationed in Belgrade, Yugoslavia from 1979-1982. He then spent 1982-1988 in Washington DC, serving as country affairs officer for Yugoslavia. While still in Washington DC, he took the position as European Press and Public Affairs spokesperson. After going back to being the country affairs officer for Yugoslavia again, he worked as a special assistant to the White House for the Iran-Contra Affairs. He spent the next couple years working with the Venice Economic Summit and as a USIA Senior Policy Officer until he was stationed in Jamaica from 1988-1992. Mr. Bazala spent a few more years in Washington until he was stationed in Macedonia for most of 1994, and then returned to Washington, and was then stationed in Bosnia again but this time as the IIP (International Information Program) team chief. After his time there, he worked as the media advisor and spokesperson for Brcko. Mr. Bazala spent the remainder of his career in Washington until his retirement in 1999. His interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2011.

BAZALA: I anticipated that I would return to USIA at the end of my public affairs tour at the State Department in the summer of 1985. One day, however, I encountered Shaun Byrnes, a State Department colleague with whom I served in Belgrade. He told me he thought the Department would want me to stay on as the country affairs officer for Yugoslavia. I was flattered that a rising FSO considered me a good candidate for the assignment. He was instrumental in having the European bureau tag me for the position and worked to obtain USIA approval for me to serve in that capacity. While I had selected public diplomacy as my career track, I always had an interest in State's foreign policy functions and responsibilities; a country affairs job in the Department, far more than a public diplomacy job at USIA, offered the opportunity to be involved more closely in the formulation of foreign policy.

While some of my USIA colleagues advised me against taking a country affairs job at State, once again I persisted and moved into the position in early fall that year. The main lesson I learned was that the prime responsibility of country affairs officers is to be ambassadors' hand holders and to help them chart their ways through the maze of Washington's myriad foreign policy character actors. One may think of ambassadors as anointed personalities and ultimate authorities, but most of them rose through the ranks and did not fully understand or appreciate the intricacies of the Washington operations of other federal agencies with stakes in the implementation of U.S. foreign policies. And in reality few career ambassadors and not many politically appointed ambassadors had any personal contact with the president; they could wind up floating belly up in the whirlpool of internecine interagency turf battles were it not for intrepid country affairs officers saving the day.

Ambassadors rely on country affairs officers to identify appropriate contacts within the

Administration to get a fair hearing for their concerns about the conduct of bilateral relations between their capital and Washington and to gain an understanding of how the operations of other U.S. agencies can advance or hinder the advancement of the administration's diplomatic objectives in their countries. My most interesting experience as country affairs officer was not defusing a Soviet threat against Yugoslavia but ironing out a dispute between the ambassador to Yugoslavia and the U.S. Department of the Navy over a freedom of navigation exercise scheduled to transit waters of the Adriatic Sea that Yugoslavia claimed as territorial.

The U.S. for years had conducted freedom of navigation exercises to challenge territorial waters claims the U.S. considered excessive. The U.S. insisted that all nations obey the 1982 UN Law of the Sea Convention that the U.S. itself, however, had not yet formally ratified. The convention defines the right of innocent passage through territorial waters; it is innocent if not prejudicial to the peace, good order and security of the coastal state involved. It also defines as prejudicial passage that poses a threat to the territorial integrity or political independence of coastal states. And that is where push came to shove between the embassy and the Navy.

I do not know exactly when the interagency dispute began, but the U.S. Navy must have provided significant advance warning that it intended to exercise freedom of navigation in the Adriatic Sea because several days were required to hammer out a solution acceptable both to the embassy and the Navy. Whether the Navy informed the Yugoslav Ministry of Defense of its intent I do not recall. But when the Ambassador learned that the ministry opposed the exercise and would mobilize the Yugoslav air force to demonstrate its opposition to the U.S. Navy entering waters it claimed as territorial, things started hopping fast.

The very agitated DCM called me to say the Ambassador wanted the Navy to call off the exercise lest it become the source of increased tension between the U.S. and Yugoslavia.

How would the Navy respond were Yugoslav aircraft to fire at its ships? We hoped not to have to find out. It took me a while to identify someone in the Pentagon with responsibility for the Navy's freedom of navigation exercises. That individual informed me that as far as he was concerned, the exercise in the Adriatic would proceed as scheduled. It was, after all, no more than innocent passage through territorial waters. When I said that according to our embassy in Belgrade the Yugoslav government didn't see it that way, he was indifferent. A fishing boat transiting those waters was one thing; U.S. warships with missile launching capabilities were another even though the Navy intended no threat. U.S. intent and Yugoslav perceptions were two distinctly different things.

Pushing the matter off the front burners was not easy. I informed my office director of the embassy's concerns, let him know of the reaction of a working level Navy official and suggested that the Department weigh in at a higher level. Before that happened, we requested that the Navy send appropriate personnel to the Department to discuss the matter with us further at the country affairs officer level. That discussion, which lasted several hours, was in fact an interagency negotiation. We argued that regardless of the Navy's intent, embassy Belgrade feared undetermined negative consequences should the exercise proceed. The Navy personnel with whom we met retorted that the principle of freedom of navigation was at stake and that the threat of a Yugoslav show of force in opposition would not deter the Navy from proceeding as it

intended.

I do not remember how much higher up the food chain the argument went, but in the end the Navy yielded to the State Department in recognition of another principle, that of the predominance of State in the conduct of U.S. foreign policy. The fact that the Navy was able to put the embassy in so tight a bind, however, demonstrated on a small scale that resolving interagency disputes is as much an element of diplomacy as intergovernmental negotiations. That was all in a country affairs officer's day's work. I do not remember the outcome of this episode; perhaps the Navy vessels wound up paying a call on a Yugoslav port which would have defused the issue nicely.

RUTH E. HANSEN
Political Officer
Belgrade (1986-1990)

Ms. Hansen was born on February 18, 1946 in Illinois. She received her BA from Wheaton College in 1968 and her MSFS from Georgetown University in 1970. Her career has included positions in the Dominican Republic, Poland, Panama, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria. Ms. Hansen was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.

Q: Did you get a feel for some of the strains within Yugoslavia from the instructors?

HANSEN: A little bit, yes. We had several teachers, most of whom essentially taught Serbian. These included Svetlana Hanaher, who was an amazing teacher, very dedicated and very determined that we would all do well; Father Milosevic, who was a Serbian Orthodox priest, and a Mr. Jovanovic, a very feisty and energetic guy. We had a lovely and particularly effective instructor who taught Croatian, Mrs. Kapolina. The instructors seemed at least on the surface to get along and they certainly put on a good face for the students, but you could sense some degree of tension among them.

Dr. John Lampe ran the East European area studies program that year and did a terrific job. I really felt that we were well prepared to serve in the region.

Q: Were you in the same language class with Larry?

HANSEN: Yes, there were about eight of us altogether going through the language training program. Eventually we got to the point where they divided us up, and Larry and I were placed on something of a faster track, along with Bill Ryerson, an amazing student of languages, who was going to Belgrade as Consul General. He later was the first U.S. Ambassador to Albania, having taught himself Albanian while in Belgrade. To our mutual relief, I'm sure, it worked out well for Larry and me to be in language training together. However, we certainly never studied together at home!

Q: What was the situation in Yugoslavia when you arrived?

HANSEN: We served in Belgrade from the summer of 1986 to the summer of 1990. My assignment was originally for three years, but I requested and was given an additional year. It was a terrific four-year assignment, and may have been the last good period to serve in the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), as it was called then. Inter-ethnic tensions were certainly increasing sharply by the summer of 1990, but the real violence didn't erupt until a year later.

When we arrived, Ambassador John Scanlan was the ambassador, and later Ambassador Warren Zimmermann. Both had served in Yugoslavia earlier in their careers, I believe.

In the summer of 1986, Josip Broz Tito had been off the scene for several years, having died in 1980. Analysts and commentators had generally predicted the break-up of Yugoslavia after his death, but it hadn't happened yet. I think the republics/provinces comprising Yugoslavia were hanging together longer than most people had expected, but the divisions were coming. The Communist Party was still very much in control, but both it and the country generally were very much de-centralized. The Yugoslav military was something of an exception and at that time was probably one of the few institutions that could be described as of a federal character.

Tito had left in place a political and economic system that, in the end, highlighted and fostered nationalist differences among the peoples and regions comprising Yugoslavia. While he was alive, he managed to hold them together, often using repressive measures, and the governing system had swung back and forth between more and less centralized structures. At his demise, political and economic power was centered in the republics, rather than at the federal level. Much authority had been devolved to the republic level. This meant that, in order for politicians to succeed, they needed to satisfy their people in their republics, and they found that playing to nationalist themes worked to their immediate advantage. When the break-up of Yugoslavia came, it was a break-up responding to these nationalist pressures and sentiments. It was not simply a throwing off of communism and turning to democracy; it was satisfying nationalist goals.

Economically things were not going well in Yugoslavia. For a number of years before the mid-1980s, Yugoslavia had enjoyed relative prosperity and had shown some economic promise, even as a communist country. By the mid 1980s it was faltering economically, partly due to external circumstances in the world economy but of course also due to the gross inefficiencies of the so-called worker self-management system. With nationalist sentiment building up, people in the various republics also began to think that they were being taken advantage of economically by the other republics. Slovenia thought, for example, that its relative economic success was being used to subsidize the poorer parts of the country (Kosovo, parts of Bosnia, parts of Southern Serbia); Macedonia thought that it was receiving artificially low prices for its natural resources and in turn being over-charged for mediocre goods manufactured in the wealthier republics of Slovenia and Croatia. Everyone saw the political and economic situation as a zero sum game and felt they were getting the short end of the deal.

In a way, the American presence reflected the make-up of Yugoslavia. We had the embassy in Belgrade, of course, which was the capital of both Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia; a

Consulate-General in Zagreb, Croatia; and USIA American Centers in Belgrade, Zagreb, Ljubljana, Sarajevo, and Skopje – that is, in each of the republican capitals. We did not have an official presence in either of the provinces, Kosovo and Vojvodina, which were also part of the Republic of Serbia. This was a substantial American presence in a country of 24 million people, considerably larger than in any of the other countries of Eastern Europe, with the possible exception of Poland. There was a very large Fulbright exchange program for Yugoslavia. All of this reflected the very strong U.S. interest in this communist country that had managed to maintain some independence. It kept out of the Warsaw Pact and out from under the direct thumb of Moscow. The United States invested a lot in our presence in Yugoslavia.

Q: What was your job, and what piece of the action did you have?

HANSEN: I was one of four or five officers in the Political Section, headed first by Richard Miles, who later went on to serve as ambassador to several different countries, and then by Louis Sell, who later wrote a biography of the notorious Slobodan Milosevic.

I was the political reporting officer for Serbia, including the ethnic-Albanian province of Kosovo, and the human rights officer.

When we arrived, Slobodan Milosevic had not yet come fully to the fore, but I believe he was already at a senior level of the Serbian communist party. One of the other key figures was Ivan Stambolic, a rival of Milosevic's who was assassinated some years later. There were two major issues that probably could be considered the crux of Serbian politics at the time, the status of the Province of Kosovo and the economic, political, and human rights conditions there and, more broadly, Serbia's standing within the Yugoslav federation.

Upon arriving at post, I was introduced to and began getting acquainted with human rights activists and emerging political opposition figures. After we'd been there about six months, the Serbian Academy of Sciences came out with a major paper about the future of Yugoslavia and its major issues and problems. The first part of it was a fairly straightforward pro-reform paper, in good part dealing with needed economic and democratic reforms. Then it launched into essentially a tirade on Kosovo and the threat they felt that Kosovo, with its about 90% ethnic Albanian population, posed for Yugoslavia and for Serbs in particular. With this document, the Academy helped to popularize the theme that Serbs in Kosovo were suffering at the hands of the ethnic Albanian majority there and were being "forced" out of Kosovo. Kosovo is an area that Serbs considered integral to Serbia as a nation. It carried tremendous emotional and historic appeal for Serbs as the cradle of Serbian civilization, the site of the historic Battle of Kosovo Polje in 1389, and home to the ancient Serbian Orthodox patriarchate. So the tensions that ultimately tore Yugoslavia apart were beginning to come out into the open. They had been present for a long time in other fashions over the years, and at various times they had been held in check by the repressive measures of the Tito regime. Certainly the situation was beginning to deteriorate in the first couple of years that we were in Belgrade.

Q: Did you get down to Kosovo much?

HANSEN: I did. In my first visit, I had the opportunity to accompany the Political Counselor,

Dick Miles, and a visiting human rights officer from the State Department Human Rights Bureau.

There were a number of individual human rights cases that were of concern to Washington at the time, but the major issue was the treatment of the ethnic Albanian population, particularly in Kosovo and in Macedonia. There, there was a fairly high rate of arrests on what we tended to consider political grounds, for expression of political opinion, usually having to do with the status of Kosovo. At the time, advocacy of a change from province to republic status was understood as codeword for advocacy of independence for Kosovo and ultimately for creation of a “greater Albania” comprised of Albania, Kosovo, and portions of Macedonia and Montenegro. The Serbian authorities, and by extension Yugoslav authorities, interpreted any discussion of a Republic of Kosovo as subversive and as intended to stir up ethnic conflict. In their minds, the Kosovo and Macedonian Albanians wanted the province to attain republic status, equal to that of the other republics of Yugoslavia, which under the then-constitution theoretically would give Kosovo the right to break away from the federation, which would contribute to the break-up of Yugoslavia.

Q: What did a visit to Kosovo entail?

HANSEN: During most of the time we were in Yugoslavia, diplomatic travel around the country could only be arranged via the Yugoslav Foreign Ministry. It wasn't that you couldn't travel otherwise, but your chances of getting appointments with anyone were practically nonexistent without going through the Foreign Ministry and the protocol structures in the various republics and provinces. In keeping with this practice, we flew or drove down to Kosovo and were met by a local protocol officer who accompanied us to all the appointments that his office had arranged at the Foreign Ministry's request – for example, with the editor of the newspaper, an Albanian-language publication; with Kosovo government and communist party officials, and so forth. On this particular visit, we were taken to visit a large hog-raising farm and meat-packing plant, one of the provinces self-management enterprises. For the most part, our interlocutors were ethnic tandems of Serbs and ethnic Albanians. They seemed to work in parallel structures. It gave the impression that the ethnic Albanians had more autonomy than they probably actually did, especially as Serbia began to try to alter the equation. We were free to raise any questions we liked but the responses were seldom very enlightening. Our interlocutors were always very articulate and always had a good line of gab to feed to foreign visitors. It was sometimes hard to understand what they were really saying, even with an interpreter, because the lingo of the Yugoslav communist system was a language unto itself. It was by no means straightforward.

Kosovo was a basket case economically. The unemployment rate and poverty levels were high. Factories were operating at far from full capacity. In the capital of Kosovo, Pristina, the shops were poorly stocked, streets were trash-strewn, sidewalks and roads were in bad repair, streets were crowded with overflow pedestrians. There were tremendous numbers of young people, mostly unemployed or under-employed. In decent weather, the evening “korzo” brought crowds off people out to walk the main street through town. The main economic activities were agriculture, a lot of it very marginal, and mining. The famous Kosovo Plain was quite fertile and was lovely in the spring. Kosovars would brag that it had the potential to be comparable to California in food production, quite an exaggeration.

Kosovo was the least developed part of Yugoslavia and was largely supported by outside budgetary supports from the rest of the federation, which was a very big sore point in Croatia and Slovenia, the wealthier republics that ended up supporting this disaster in Kosovo. While the Serbs remaining in Kosovo were largely an aging and declining population, there was a high birth rate among the ethnic Albanians and, unfortunately, a very high infant mortality rates. I think it was the highest in Europe at the time. In response to earlier unrest in the province, the Albanians in Kosovo had been to some degree bought off by investments in the province financed from the rest of the federation. For example, there was a university in Pristina where students could study in Albanian, but for what? There were no jobs to go to.

It was a very unhappy situation. The Serbs felt Kosovo was an integral part of their homeland yet they didn't feel safe there. You would hear outrageous stories about Serbian women being raped, nuns attacked. A lot of the stories were probably exaggerations and distortions, but there probably was an element of truth as well. One of the Serbian themes at the time was that Serbs were being "forced" out of Kosovo by population pressures from the growing ethnic Albanian population and were "forced" to sell their property to the ethnic Albanians because the Albanians offered prices they couldn't refuse. Their phrase was migration "under pressure."

So there were a lot of ethnic tensions. Another example was simply the way Serbs spoke about Albanians. They often used the Albanian language term for Albanians, which was acceptable to use when speaking Albanian, but when spoken in Serbian it was considered a derogatory term. Serbs used it freely. Generally, they considered Albanians the lowest of the low, perhaps on a par with gypsies, the Roma who were also on the bottom rung in Yugoslav society. It was sometimes difficult to speak with Serbs about these ethnic issues. They were very emotional, very close-minded. They couldn't understand why we weren't more sympathetic to what they perceived as the dangers posed by the ethnic Albanians in their midst.

Q: What was the attitude of the embassy about the Kosovo issue?

HANSEN: Especially in the first couple of years we were there, I would say it was seen as something of a longer term issue. Over time and with Milosevic's rise, it took on more immediacy. We often tried to make the case to our interlocutors that, by treating Kosovo Albanians with suspicion and imposing ever more repressive measures in the province, they were creating a self-fulfilling prophesy. If they were concerned about Kosovars seeking to break away from Yugoslavia, Serbia's handling of the Kosovo issue and treatment of ethnic Albanians only made this more likely. No one was persuaded.

In the embassy, I think there was a sense that, yes, at some point it could reach a flashpoint. There had been violence in the province in the past and there could be again in the future, but I don't think it was seen as an immediate threat to stability in the region. And in the event, of course, it was elsewhere in Yugoslavia that the break-up occurred and violent conflict erupted initially. But Kosovo was certainly something we understood as a serious matter. Ambassador Zimmerman took on the issue aggressively and tried to convince Serbia to deal more appropriately with the ethnic Albanians, to respect freedom of expression and so on. Prominent Americans visiting Yugoslavia at that time conveyed similar kinds of messages. It was a

sensitive thing. Larry may mention in his transcript that the famous writer Joseph Brodsky visited Belgrade, and Larry managed his program. Brodsky met with Serbian writers and other intellectuals and made the case that they had to come to terms with the Kosovo issue with respect for human rights, to no avail. Joan Baez gave a concert in Belgrade, which was attended by a huge crowd. The audience obviously knew her music and loved her, but she made a comment about the Kosovo issue and the temperature in the concert hall plummeted.

Q: Wasn't there any sort of human rights group within the Serbian body politic that was concerned about Kosovo?

HANSEN: There was a semi-official human rights structure and independent human rights groups were emerging. There were human rights activists in Serbia, but they were mostly interested in the rights of Serbs. They were looking after their rights.

A semi-official Yugoslav human rights structure was taking shape in about 1989, under the leadership of a prominent law professor, Vojin Dimitrijevic. He told me once that, of the committee's 40 members, he was satisfied with most of them but about four were problematic. At one point early in the committee's existence, Rep. Steny Hoyer led a CODEL to Yugoslavia and we arranged a luncheon where he met some of the human rights committee members. As one of his conversations developed, I could sense that one of his interlocutors, a member of the human rights committee, probably held some typically unenlightened Serbian views. I was able to steer the conversation in a direction that revealed them, and in fact he made some derogatory comments about gypsies, for example, and questioned the right of the U.S. or other countries to look into the human rights situation in Yugoslavia. The Congressman was understandably nonplused, and even asked the gentleman for confirmation that he was indeed a proponent of human rights. The Congressman later asked me about the gentleman, and I commented that we seemed to have found out one of the four problematic members of the committee, and now just needed to find the other three. The Congressman got a good chuckle out of that.

There was a lot of Congressional interest in Kosovo at the time. I had another very memorable experience when Rep. Tom Lantos and his wife asked for a tour of Kosovo in about August of 1989. Congressman Lantos was very interested in human rights issues generally, very active on human rights issues in Eastern Europe, and particularly interested in the dilemma in Kosovo. That summer, he was spending some time in Bulgaria, where an anti-Turkish campaign was underway, and took advantage of his proximity to Yugoslavia to be driven into Serbia for a visit to Kosovo, and I was his control officer. With an embassy driver, I picked them up at the border with Bulgaria and we drove down into Kosovo for about three days. This was a wonderful experience for me as a political officer. Lantos is a very impressive individual. He and his wife are quite a pair and we had a wonderful several days traveling around Kosovo. Both he and his wife asked a lot of good questions and were genuinely interested in understanding the situation from all points of view. They came with their sympathies for the ethnic Albanians, the underdogs, already pretty much in mind and they certainly didn't change their minds, but they seemed really to want to understand the situation in Kosovo and the relationship between the ethnic Albanians and the Serbs. We just talked and talked that whole long weekend. It was one of those moments in the Foreign Service where everything comes together, and I had the chance to bring to bear just about everything that I'd come to understand about the situation and talk

about it to someone in a position of responsibility in Washington in Congress. It was a terrific experience.

Congressman Lantos was especially interested in meeting Ibrahim Rugova, who then was emerging as a leader among the Albanians in Kosovo. We were able to set that up, and they had a long talk over lunch or dinner at the Grand Hotel in Pristina. Lantos had asked me beforehand what I thought of Rugova, and I said that I thought he was in over his head. After their discussion, Lantos said he agreed with me. As years went on, Rugova continued to play a lead role in Kosovo and was president of Kosovo for a long time. So obviously he grew into the job.

We also had to arrange for Congressman Lantos to meet with at least someone in the official Kosovo structure, and we did have a meeting with a top ethnic Albanian official, whose wife was Montenegrin. She joined the meeting as well. This official could be assumed to be hostile to Lantos because Lantos was so critical of the regime he represented, but they had a pretty good conversation. I had to serve as interpreter, which was quite a challenge. At one point, the Kosovar official made the comment that human rights are fully respected in Kosovo. Lantos replied, "Would that that were so," and raised his eyebrow at me as if wondering whether I could manage that phrase. Luckily, thanks to the Serbian teacher at the embassy, I had the exact Serbian translation at hand ("Kamo sreche") and tossed it right off. As I mentioned, this official's wife joined the meeting, and their ten-year-old daughter showed up as well. Quite strikingly, this multi-ethnic family was making a graphic point about ethnic integration. As the wife said directly, "How could we live here if we thought our own children's rights would not be respected?" Congressman Lantos, I'm sure, was not taken in by any of this, but he responded in a very avuncular fashion. He had the little girl on his lap in no time, and his wife was showing her pictures of their grandchildren. They had something like ten or 12 grandchildren, arrayed in a photograph in veritable "Sound of Music" fashion, complete with the white suits and dresses.

Q: Did you find that some of the Serb officials were their own worst enemies? Did they come across as very crude, tough guys?

HANSEN: They could, certainly, and they had a hard spot in their hearts when it came to the Kosovo issue, or to relations with Croats and Slovenes, for that matter. On the other hand, they could be charming and lovely. Sometimes I kind of enjoy telling people, when they come down on Serbs generally, that I found them to be a warm and friendly people. They certainly were towards us on a personal basis. Obviously they subsequently earned a very bad reputation for themselves. But we had a great tour in Belgrade, in the old Yugoslavia.

Q: What was it that was keeping Yugoslavia together, as internal pressures were building up and change was coming to Eastern Europe?

HANSEN: Yugoslavia was created originally out of the turmoil of the Balkan wars, the break-up of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires, and World War I. There used to be a sense that Yugoslavia's independence and territorial integrity were threatened from the outside by potential territorial demands from surrounding countries. The joke reflecting this was that Yugoslavia was surrounded by "brigama", meaning it was surrounded by worry. "Briga" means "worry" or "concern" in Serbo-Croatian and, when declined as "brigama," the word was spelled with the

first letter of the names of the countries surrounding Yugoslavia: “b” for Bulgaria, “r” for Romania, “i” for Italy, and so forth. The “m” referred to the Hungarian name for Hungary. The Soviet Union was also seen as posing a potential threat to Yugoslavia’s independence and sovereignty. So for a long time, the country held together to resist these perceived outside pressures. During the communist period, Tito and his heirs resorted to repression to keep potential dissident elements under control and to stifle nationalist sentiments that might have threatened Yugoslavia’s cohesion.

By the late 1980s, with Tito gone and with nationalist leaders coming to the fore in the Yugoslav republics, we came to see that the threat to Yugoslavia came less from outside forces and more from internal conditions. There was in fact less and less holding it together. People did not see that they had shared economic interests in the Yugoslav state. They certainly didn’t value the country’s ethnic diversity, which was so intriguing and charming to outsiders. With the decentralization in place, there were few federal institutions. At the federal level, there was a weak collective presidency, a rotating presidency; the federal legislature was weak and was under particular attack by the Serbs because their greater numbers in the general population were not reflected proportionally in the Parliament. There was a National Bank, which was also weak and was a focus of hot political debate as to its powers. The communist party still had a federal structure but it was falling apart under nationalist pressures. With the Catholic-Orthodox divide, there was certainly no religious institution to contribute to unity, quite the opposite. The Yugoslav military was about the only institution truly of a federal character, and it was probably dominated by Serbian officers at senior levels. Then, serious economic dislocations occurred due to hyper-inflation. So, there was not much at all holding the country together. I think the system proved very resilient. It was able to absorb an awful lot of tension, and the demise dragged out for some time, longer than might have been expected.

Q: When was Milosevic’s famous visit to Kosovo?

HANSEN: The visit that purportedly spurred him to take on and use Kosovo as an issue in his political maneuvers was in the spring of 1987. That was when he visited, I believe it was Kosovo Polje, a town near the provincial capital Pristina. There was an incident outside the building where he was speaking, police clashing with demonstrators. He looked out on the scene and made a pledge to Kosovo Serbs, along the lines, “You will never be beaten again.” Then, later on, after he had consolidated his power within Serbia and drained the provinces, Kosovo and Vojvodina, he visited Kosovo Polje again for the 500th anniversary of the 1389 Battle of Kosovo Polje, in June 1989.

By then, his repressive policies towards Kosovo were taking hold. A curfew was imposed, and there was a ban on group meetings, for example. Larry may mention in his transcript a visit to Kosovo arranged about this time by USIA, for an American art history expert, the spouse of an embassy officer, to speak in Pristina. She drew a huge crowd. No disrespect to her, but I’m sure it was not only interest in art history that created such a large audience. Rather, it was an authorized event that allowed people to come together when they couldn’t otherwise. When I visited Kosovo one time myself during that period, we drove through a town out in the countryside and stopped briefly in the town center. Just looking around, we saw four or five different cases in which police had stopped young Kosovar men and were searching them and/or

their cars. The police presence became very strong and noticeable.

Q: What about Serb-Croat relations, or Serbian relations otherwise in the federation? Did the U.S. Consulate in Zagreb see things differently from the Embassy in Belgrade?

HANSEN: As I've mentioned, there was a general sense among many people in Yugoslavia that their interests, their national interests were not helped by being part of this Yugoslav federation, but in fact were harmed by it. They didn't get out of the federation as much as they put into it supposedly. I think these were distorted views and played on politically. They weren't necessarily correct views from an objective viewpoint, but that was the way a lot of people felt. Particularly in Slovenia and Croatia, there was a lot of distrust of and antagonism towards Serbia. They could easily point to Serbia's treatment of Kosovo and criticize it on the grounds that it was anti-democratic and violated human rights. But Slovenia and Croatia were not necessarily on the side of the angels, except by comparison. Leaders there were also highly nationalistic. The Croat-Serb issue was especially sensitive because of the large ethnic Serb population in Croatia and the raw deal they thought they were getting from the Croats. When the break-up came, the Serb-Croat conflict was a huge element. Just before the eruption of conflict, I had the impression that the Bosnians were almost frantically trying to avoid a break-up, sensing, I think, that they would be caught up in it and suffer at the hands of both sides.

Q: Were you covering just Serbia?

HANSEN: For the first three years, I was basically covering Serbia, especially Kosovo, plus Vojvodina, as well as human rights issues. In my last year, a new political officer arrived and took over the Serbia and Kosovo portfolio, which was something of a relief to me, frankly. Instead I picked up on Bosnia and on general foreign policy matters. Yugoslavia at the time was a leader in the so-called Non-Aligned Movement, so foreign policy issues were quite important in the relationship.

Q: What was your impression of the Kosovo Albanians? Did they seem at all accommodating?

HANSEN: They were of course unable at that time to speak out in any kind of a very frank way. They basically restrained themselves for a long period, for a good number of years until 1999 when the lid did finally come off. In the spring of 1999, the U.S. gave the ultimatum to Milosevic and the air strikes ensued. During all those years, I think the Kosovo Albanians were incredibly restrained, extremely patient with their situation. The situation simmered for a long time, even as the conflict went on elsewhere in the old Yugoslavia and as the country was torn apart.

I should mention the story of one Kosovo Albanian communist party leader who was prominent during the time we were in Belgrade, Azem Vlasi. We used to meet with him regularly when we visited Kosovo. He seemed for a long time to try to hold things together in the province and to try to avoid the Serbian machinations aimed at undoing Kosovo's autonomy. He made numerous pleas at communist party gatherings. The major meetings were actually broadcast on television, so we could watch what was going on, although there was no doubt even more happening behind the scenes. He finally had to just walk out of the party, as did others from Croatia and Slovenia at

different times. His departure was certainly part of the falling apart of the communist party at the federal level. At one point, there was a major strike that went on for months at one of the major mining complexes in Kosovo, with the miners holed up and camping out right in the mines. In “solidarity”, Vlasi went and joined them. He was ultimately arrested at Milosevic’s behest and was held in preventive detention for over a year before being put on trial and convicted on some charge. For a long time, I held on to a newspaper clipping with a photograph of Vlasi being brought into court, flanked by two very stern-looking but probably ethnic Albanian police guards. It seemed to me a very ironic photograph. Vlasi passed as a kind of leader in Kosovo, though many ethnic Albanians no doubt would have accused him of being a collaborator for most of his political career, since he went along with the system for so long.

The key ethnic Albanian leader who emerged was Ibrahim Rugova, who I mentioned earlier and who is even now (summer 2004) president of Kosovo. As far as I know, I was the first embassy officer to establish contact with him. He seemed quite weak at the very beginning. If I recall correctly, he was the president of the Kosovo Writers’ Society. It must have been about 1988 that you started to hear his name among the “intellectuals” of Kosovo. I know that Ambassador Scanlan was still at post. I said at one point that the embassy needed to start meeting some of these emerging leaders, but it was not easy to establish contact with them. Then we had a congressional staffer visit. I took him down to Kosovo and we managed to meet Rugova. We must have requested this meeting through official channels, though I’m not sure about that. It was a rather stiff, formal meeting. At the end of the conversation, I told Rugova that the Ambassador would be coming down to Kosovo the following week and asked if we could arrange a meeting. He demurred at first, claiming he would be out of town, but then he called me later in the week to say that he would be available after all to meet with the ambassador. I don’t have a clue what went on behind the scenes in Kosovo as that meeting was set up, but I expect there was quite a bit of nervousness about it.

In those initial meetings and subsequently, Rugova seemed always to have to be extremely careful about what he said to foreign visitors. He would keep the radio playing while we spoke, for example, presumably on the assumption that the meeting was being monitored. Of course he never spoke openly about an independent Kosovo. He had to talk around the issue.

Q: What was the situation in Kosovo as far as the schools. Did they have classes in Albanian, or were the Albanians forced into the Serbian mold?

HANSEN: I expect there was something of a mix depending on the different communities in province. But there was schooling in Albanian. There was the university in Pristina essentially for the ethnic Albanian community. Some people spoke both languages, though it was more often Albanians speaking Serbian than vice versa. But I did meet several Serbs there who said they were raised in Kosovo and went to Albanian-language schools. I also was aware of Albanians who spoke no Serbian whatsoever.

Q: When we talk about the Balkans, we are really talking about Yugoslavia in a way. What about Croatia, particularly because it was the other big entity in this federation. What were you getting about Croatia when you first arrived, although it wasn’t your particular beat?

HANSEN: Of course the political reporting on Croatia as such was done by our consulate in Zagreb. There was something of an artificial divide as a result; obviously the embassy's political reporting needed to be integrated. I don't have particularly insights as to how this was handled by the Ambassador and DCM. At my own level, I don't feel the coordination was particularly strong. I don't think that I had a good sense of the political situation in Croatia, and expect the reverse was also true. It was naturally very easy to be critical of Serbia and Serbs for their behavior regarding Kosovo and relations in the federation generally. But there were things going on in Croatia also that deserved a critical eye.

I remember when Ambassador Zimmermann first came to post. One of his early meetings was with a Serbian individual who asked for an appointment and came in to talk about what he reported as the maltreatment of Serbs in Croatia. We heard these kinds of rumors and allegations in Belgrade quite often, and it was the kind of thing you would take as part of the litany of Serbian complaints about their victim-hood. But apparently there was at least some substance to the complaints, or at least they reflected to a degree how the substantial Serbian minority in Croatia perceived themselves as being treated. And perception is reality, in a way. In any event, I'm not sure what reporting had come out of Zagreb about the status of Serbs in Croatia, but it was something the ambassador picked up on, in part I think to provide some balance for his exhortations regarding the deteriorating situation in Kosovo.

The subsequent conflict in Yugoslavia centered in good part around the issues of Serbs in Croatia and Croats in Serbia. I certainly have no sympathy for the way Milosevic and other Serbs pursued things in the years after I left Yugoslavia. But I've always thought that the Serbs did have some legitimate complaints and some legitimate concerns. I don't think that they were very well understood and certainly were not addressed by the international community. The Serbs had no excuse for doing what they ended up doing, but they did have concerns that as a matter of fairness should have been understood and addressed. The fact that they weren't may have contributed to what happened after. Although, as I say, there's no excuse for what the Serbs did.

Q: How did we see Milosevic? Was he sort of a rising star when you arrived at post, or was he already seen for what he was?

HANSEN: He'd been in banking, actually, just before or just around the time that I arrived in Yugoslavia. I think he was initially seen as relatively progressive, but that image didn't last long. He was prominent in Serbian politics, and the other prominent figure was Ivan Stambolic, who I think was viewed more favorably liked than Milosevic. As I mentioned earlier, there came to be sharp rivalry between them later on. Stambolic was killed several years later. I believe his body was missing for a number of years until fairly recently the Serbian authorities made some progress in establishing what happened to him. I think that Milosevic was seen as responsible for Stambolic's death ultimately but I don't have a good sense of the details on that issue. In any event, Milosevic's demagogic character emerged pretty clearly over the next few years. I never met him personally since embassy contact with him was at a higher level. For a time there were differences of opinion as to where Milosevic was headed, but his true course was pretty clear well before I left the country. He spoke English very well and was very glib. He was certainly one of those political figures in Yugoslavia who knew what outside observers wanted to hear. They could all spout the right words and could be quite duplicitous. But despite his rhetoric,

Milosevic did come to be seen very much as the culprit. One of the disturbing things, of course, was that he did enjoy a degree of seemingly genuine popularity among his Serbian constituents.

Q: Then you turned from Serbia to follow events in Bosnia-Herzegovina? What were you seeing there?

HANSEN: During the last year in Belgrade, I worked on Bosnia-Herzegovina. We were seeing Bosnia-Herzegovina as the real crisis point. It was a focal point of the standard analysis we used to give official visitors, visiting journalists, etc. Everybody would ask what would happen if Yugoslavia broke up, because after Tito's death everyone expected that it would. It was in a way amazing that it held together as long as it did. The standard analysis was that, if Yugoslavia were to begin to fall apart, probably Slovenia could break away without too much difficulty. If Croatia tried to follow suit, there would certainly be some violence associated with that kind of move. I confess that I personally never envisioned the extent and severity of the violence, but that was our standard analysis. If Bosnia tried to become independent or break away in some fashion, we always said there would be serious violence. There would be a blood bath because the territory couldn't be divided up in a rational way among the competing ethnic groups. As the divisions among them sharpened, people were being pressured to identify themselves with one group or another, even if they were from mixed families or had not personal inclination to take sides. In the embassy, I think we sensed that Bosnia was a crucial piece of territory. As that last year went on, there were more and more localized conflicts, political conflicts, not necessarily violent conflicts, but political conflicts across Bosnia, particularly in the Herzegovina region.

The leadership in Bosnia-Herzegovina seemed to me a little on the amorphous side, and perhaps that left room for nationalist leaders to assert themselves. There was a formal set of leadership structures because Bosnia did have its representation in the federal presidency and the federal parliament, and there were corresponding structures at the republic level. Some of the officials in these formal structures seemed to be trying hard to hold the place together, indeed to hold Yugoslavia together. It seemed to me that they knew that, if things started falling apart, there would be serious problems and Bosnia would bear the brunt of it. For a time, of all the republics, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia seemed to be trying the hardest to hold Yugoslavia together in the waning days of the federation. Certainly, the Bosnians had a lot at stake, as subsequent events showed so tragically.

Just before the end of my tour, I made two trips to Bosnia in about March and then in the spring of 1990, the second trip accompanying the DCM. We got a sense of real tension even then. Many of the officials we met with emphasized that "we just really have to keep Bosnia together, and keep Yugoslavia together for Bosnia's sake."

It's hard to say to what extent Yugoslavs generally had a sense of impending doom at that point. I recall one conversation with some Foreign Ministry officials. One young officer asked about the United States' experience. What would the United States do in these types of circumstances? Well, that was an easy answer, though seemingly not one that he expected. I reminded him that the United States had faced the secession of southern states, and that, as a result, we fought our civil war, the bloodiest war in our history. He became very quiet.

Looking at the overall picture of Yugoslavia at that time, I wanted to mention one particularly interesting and important visitor to the embassy in probably early 1990. Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger came to Belgrade for a short visit. He knew Yugoslavia very well, having served there very early in his career. Partly because of the events of 1989, with the fall of communism elsewhere in Eastern Europe, people were agonizing all the more about what Yugoslavia's fate would be. Well, Eagleburger came and wanted to get a sense of what was happening in Yugoslavia. One of the events we arranged for him was to bring in political and human rights figures from all of the republics, and from Kosovo, I'm sure, to have a sort of a round table discussion with him. It was quite a phenomenal evening. They all came to the ambassador's residence and sat in a huge circle around Eagleburger. They each essentially seemed to be giving their rationale as to why their republic or province should be treated in a particular way, and asserting their complaints about their status in the federation. The upshot was that Eagleburger commented as he left, not to the participants, as I recall, but to embassy officers and his accompanying staff, that he just didn't see how they could hold Yugoslavia together. A number of the participants had made in plain that they didn't want to. The Slovenes and Croats were clear at that point. It was sort of like the cards were on the table and you could see how the hand was going to be played out. There was a sense that the situation was grim and would go from bad to worse. It may be that there was so little intent or interest, among the people of Yugoslavia themselves, in holding the country together in a positive way that their only way to do it would have been by repression.

Q: Where did you go at the end of your Belgrade tour in the summer of 1990?

HANSEN: Before finishing up on our Belgrade tour, I did want to talk a little bit about how our children fared there, to give them their full due. Anya and Alison were young children when we were in Belgrade, aged six and four when we arrived for the four-year tour. I'm sure there were some initial shocks to their systems, and each had a little difficulty initially in settling in to these very different circumstances. But overall it seemed to have been a wonderful time for them.

They attended the small international school there, the International School of Belgrade (ISB), which kept its doors open during the entire conflict in Yugoslavia and I think is still operating today. They had a wonderful time at that school. It was a very protective environment, they had a lot of good friends, and they thrived. They did very well in classes academically, and the teachers were great. Anya had some chances to do some acting and singing and became very interested in both, the beginnings of her career in theater. She graduated from Northwestern in Drama and is now a stage manager in Chicago by profession. Alison was also into music, singing and piano, and went on to study theater at New York University and now works with an independent producer in Manhattan. In Belgrade, both Alison and Anya took piano lessons from a lovely, elderly local woman, a Mrs. Bach, who taught many of the children in the international community.

We traveled around the country a lot with the kids. They saw a lot of Yugoslavia. In particular they fell in love with Dubrovnik, which we visited several times. We had a particularly memorable time about halfway through our tour in Yugoslavia. My parents and Larry's mother and aunt all come for a visit at the same time. The whole group, all eight of us, headed out in our two cars for a trip to Sarajevo and Mostar, and then out to the Adriatic Coast to Dubrovnik, then

into Montenegro across the Gulf of Kotor, through Budva, and to Sveti Stefan. Then we took the car train from Bar back through all those mountains and mountain tunnels to Belgrade. It was a wonderful trip and gave all of us a good feel for those parts of the country. We still talk about it.

Q: We had three kids and they loved it there. Then we came back to Washington and it was a very miserable time for the children.

HANSEN: We had a similar experience. The transition back to Washington was difficult.

There was a very sad turn, though. Living in Yugoslavia, we always felt that our kids were safe. Generally, unlike in the United States, you didn't have to worry if somebody spoke to them on the street or offered them candy, for example. Yugoslavs were just very loving towards children. So it was very shocking, later on, to see that children were so frequently the victims, or even the targets, of the violence that erupted in Yugoslavia. It seemed totally out of the Yugoslav character, as we had experienced it. I have never understood it.

Q: Where were you assigned after Belgrade?

HANSEN: We returned to Washington, where I had an assignment as the Country Affairs Officer for Romania, the Romania desk officer. I was the desk officer from summer 1990 to summer 1992. Just before leaving Belgrade, I had a chance to make a quick visit to Bucharest. I caught a ride with the naval attaché in Belgrade, who also covered Bulgaria and Romania. He and his wife were going to Sofia by car, so I rode with them. It seemed like a terribly dismal place compared to Belgrade. We spent the night there and then drove up to Bucharest, which was just as dismal.

LARRY I. PLOTKIN
Cultural Affairs Officer
Belgrade (1986-1990)

Larry Plotkin was born in Chicago in 1939 and educated at UCLA. He entered the Foreign Service and USIA in 1973. His career included posts in Warsaw, Poznan, Panama City, Belgrade and Sofia. He 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 happen 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 trying 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 anywhere. 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 do 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.

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!

TIMOTHY E. DEAL
Director, Office of Eastern European and Yugoslav Affairs
Washington, DC (1988-1989)

Timothy Deal was born in Missouri and educated at the University of California at Berkeley. Entering the Foreign Service in 1965, he has served in a variety of foreign posts in Honduras, Poland, the Czech Republic and England. Mr. Deal also worked in the National Security Council for several years. He was interviewed by Raymond Ewing in 2004.

Q: Ok, and then in 1988, you came back to Washington in what position?

DEAL: I came back as Director of the Office of Eastern European and Yugoslav affairs (EUR/EEY). I put in bids for that position as well as Director of the Office of Regional Political and Economic Affairs (EUR/RPE). But I wanted a break from economic issues so my strong preference was for EUR/EEY. Tom Simons was the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Eastern European and Soviet affairs. We had worked together in Poland. He was in the Political Section while I was in the Economic Section. So, they welcomed me with open arms in that job. During the last few months of my stay in Paris, I went on an official visit to countries in Eastern Europe where I had not been before, namely Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Romania.

Q: Ok, this was not too long before a lot of things happened, but I don't know to what extent you were anticipating the fall of the Berlin wall and all that happened?

DEAL: Well, we certainly weren't anticipating change of that magnitude. However, in the fall of 1988 the Polish government began negotiations with Solidarity in what became known as the Roundtable Talks. I visited Warsaw in November 1988 just as the talks were about to begin. It was around that time that I asked my desk officers for Poland to develop a set of initiatives that we might announce in the event of a breakthrough in these talks.

I had intended to stay in the EEY job for two years, although hoping I might be chosen at some point for a Deputy Assistant Secretary position in the European Bureau. But the election in 1988 changed all that. Brent Scowcroft and Bob Gates were back at the NSC. Bob and I had been colleagues together on the NSC staff in 1976-78. I contacted Bob, who offered me a position in the International Economic Directorate of the NSC. Of course, I really wanted to be the head of that directorate. Bob told me that they planned to hire a banker to head the office, but that he would need someone like me with policy experience. That made the position more attractive, and I thought there always the chance that the appointment of the banker might fall through. While on the face of it, this might have appeared as a sideways move from a career standpoint, I thought it was worth the risk. I accepted the offer and returned to the NSC for a third time.

Q: And when was that?

DEAL: March 1989.

Q: Well, before we leave Eastern European and Yugoslav Affairs in the Department, let me just ask you whether you had contemplated a program to deal with political change in the other countries of Eastern Europe in addition to Poland?

DEAL: While I was at State the primary focus of attention was Poland, although the effort expanded to other countries after I left the Department. I should mention a few other things. At NATO in the fall of 1988, I co-authored the U.S. contribution to a NATO study, which established the principle of conditionality in Eastern Europe, that is, political and economic reforms must go hand in hand to win Western financial support. That became the policy that helped shape the NATO and Economic Summits of 1989. In January 1989, I accompanied Senators Hatfield and McClure on a visit to the "bad guys" of Eastern Europe, Bulgaria,

Romania, and Czechoslovakia. In that same month, Tom Simons initiated a policy review towards Yugoslavia, because there were already rumblings of major political change in Yugoslavia, but not necessarily of a positive nature. Milosevic was talking in jingoist terms about a Greater Serbia. However, I left the Department before completion of the study.

Q: Ok, anything else about your time in Eastern European and Yugoslavia Affairs; that was not very long?

DEAL: No, I was in the Department for only nine months.

E. ASHLEY WILLS
Cultural Operating Officer, USIS
Belgrade (1988-1991)

Ambassador Wills was born in Tennessee and raised in Tennessee and Georgia. He was educated at the University of Virginia and John Hopkins University. Entering the Foreign Service (USIA) in 1972, Ambassador Wills served abroad in the field of public affairs in Romania, South Africa, Barbados, Yugoslavia and Belgium and in India as Deputy Chief of Mission. He also served in Washington as Deputy Director for Southern Africa Affairs for USIA and as Political Advisor to the US Military Commander in the invasion of Grenada. From 2000 to 2003 he was US Ambassador to Sri Lanka. His final posting was as Assistant US Trade Representative. Ambassador Wills was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2008.

Q: To '91 and where were you?

WILLS: I was in Belgrade. I think it was like the third largest USIS installation in the world. We had six or seven branch posts in each of the republican capitals. My job was to be the COO, the operating officer and make sure all these posts ran well and that the personnel were doing their jobs; it was like being a DCM except it was a USIS post. We had a couple of PAOs there and we had a history of legendary USIS officers in Yugoslavia.

Q: Walter Roberts I knew very well.

WILLS: Yeah, he was one of them. We had Terry Catherman and a couple guys who had been PAO in Moscow and then became PAO Belgrade. The two PAOs when I was there were both able officers but they weren't legendary so I had a lot of scope and I took advantage of it and traveled a lot in the country, to all the republics. The ambassador when I got there was a guy by the name of Jack Scanlon, John Scanlon, and he died not long ago. He had a reputation when I got there of being a little bit too close to Slobodan Milosevic who was then the leader of Serbia within the federation. He left about four months after I got there and almost immediately went to work for...

Q: Pelsege or something?

WILLS: Yeah, it was a Serbian...

Q: A Serbian drug manufacturer?

WILLS: I think that's right. It kind of reinforced the image that he had developed in the Foreign Service as being too pro-Serb. I'm not sure whether it was an accurate portrayal of Scanlon.

Q: There was a reputation.

WILLS: I didn't work with him very much so I didn't really know a lot about him. We had a brief period when the DCM was the Chargé and very quickly Warren Zimmermann came; he was a great ambassador and one of the finest FSOs I've ever worked with. We hit it off really well. Warren was very inclusive about making judgments and when something major was being considered he would ensure that either the PAO or I was present to represent USIS's interest even when the subject had nothing to do with us. Personally, Warren and his wife, Teeny, and my wife, Gina, and I became good friends. I later learned when I was an ambassador how difficult it is to have friends in the embassy. But because I was the deputy PAO and not the PAO for some reason I think he felt that it was okay. He and Teeny and I shared a passion for fly-fishing and Yugoslavia has some spectacular trout rivers. So whenever we could we were out on weekends in Slovenia or Croatia or a particular river in Serbia fishing. It also gave us a chance to meet normal Yugoslavs, every day Yugoslavs. Yugoslavia was, when it was a federation, a spectacular country, very beautiful, very under appreciated. Some people know about the coast, the Adriatic coast, but the country overall is just gorgeous, just gorgeous so I loved traveling around. I knew Sarajevo very, very well before it was nearly destroyed by a civil war.

Q: Warren and Teeny didn't mention the time that they had a gypsy party at the little cottage next to the ambassador's residence and we all got quite drunk and went skinny-dipping in the embassy pool.

WILLS: In Yugoslavia?

Q: Yeah.

WILLS: Back when he was a junior officer?

Q: Yeah, that was when I was chief of the consular section.

WILLS: No, he never mentioned that.

Q: I thought so. I wonder Ashley could you talk a bit first when you got out there in '88. What was the political situation then?

WILLS: It was tense already. Milosevic had already begun to move in a pretty Serb first direction. It was not clear at all that the federation would break apart at that point; there had been

rumors, speculations ever since Tito died in the early '80s, '81 or something like that I can't even remember when he died. That it was his personality, which kept the place together and then it would eventually fall apart. It's true that he did impose his will on the place, that subsequent leaders didn't have his prestige or his personal charisma in sufficient quantities to dominate politics and keep the federation together. But at that point in '88 although things didn't look great it was still holding together and yet there were worrying trends. Milosevic's personality and approach were big problems; the country's economy was faltering, inflation was a couple hundred percent a day at certain points. We were recalculating the pay that we would give our FSNs every week because inflation was so out of control.

But the most worrying part of the economy was certain parts of the country were well ahead of other parts. Slovenia, Croatia, even within Serbia, Vojvodina was a more prosperous part of the country than the rest of Serbia. It was these differences in economic growth rates and prosperity that, I think, led to the breakup of the federation as much as nationalist or ethnic resentment. If there had been more growth in Serbia and Kosovo, in Montenegro and Macedonia then, I think, the impulse to leave the federation wouldn't have been so great for Slovenia and Croatia. But because they felt that their earnings were being taxed by the federation and transferred to poorer parts of the republic they could see no future in staying. They also were getting more and more pissed off by Milosevic's aggressive policies and the federal president, who's name I can't remember, was a good man. He was a Croat, as I recall, but he couldn't keep things together; he just didn't have the wherewithal.

Q: Regarding Milosevic was there much contact with him?

WILLS: Warren saw him often and he wrote some wonderful cables about those meetings. I remember one had the title There Are Two Slobodan Milosevic's and the cable went on to describe how Milosevic, who spoke some English, could meet with foreign investors, American delegations, people from outside Yugoslavia and be a charming sophisticated man who would come across as moderate and negotiable, reasonable. Then there was the Slobodan Milosevic who was the Serbian politician who was as fiery and unreasonable and actually irresponsible as any dictator one could encounter. Warren had a very keen analytical mind and he was a great writer. So over the three years, well he was there about two and a half years of my three years there and he became more and more disenchanted with Milosevic.

The Europeans, frankly, were feckless, they said they were going to assist us in trying to keep the federation together, which we wanted to do for all kinds of geo-strategic reasons, and they didn't. In fact the Germans were conspiring with the Slovenes and the Croats to recognize them the day they left the federation and they did. I'm sure you know there were all sorts of proof that they were double dealing because they had their own interest in the Balkans. We with Warren leading the way and getting Secretary Baker's attention, Jim Baker was the Secretary, tried through a series of interventions to keep the thing together. I never will forget toward the very end I guess in May of '91 it looked like the federation was going to break apart but Baker made one last visit and we summoned all six or seven republican presidents to Belgrade, to the UN. He had brought out a guy to be his interpreter but interpreting in seven meetings straight was just too much and I ended up doing the interpreting for the last two meetings. That interpreter's name was an FSO named Vic Jackovich, USIA officer who was of Yugoslav descent and had great Serbo-Croatian

obviously. He was a great linguist; he spoke about seven or eight languages. He later served as the first U.S. ambassador to maybe it was Croatia or Bosnia, I can't remember.

Q: Where is he now?

WILLS: He's retired and I believe he lives in Europe. Anyway, I with my family left Yugoslavia on June 21st I think it was 1991 and a civil war broke out two days later in the republic.

Q: I'm not going to let you get away with this.

WILLS: No, no, no. Okay.

Q: Okay, in the first place how affective and what were you trying to do with USIA of...

WILLS: Programs?

Q: ...programs to various places?

WILLS: Well we had several objectives. One was to keep the federation together, one was to introduce more democracy than even Yugoslavia allowed. Yugoslavia as you know very well, was not a typical Communist dictatorship, very different from the start and had evolved to the point where it had the appearance of democracy in some ways even though it was a one-party state. We had big economic objectives. I spent a lot of time on the economic parts of our program because we saw this worrying disparity and that this was undermining the stability of the state. I'm trying to remember the word that was used to describe self-management. What the hell was that word? Samo...

Q: Samo...

WILLS: Something like that and they ran factories this way and they were running them into the ground because nobody was running the factory if you let the workers run it. So we were trying to get them to move as quickly as possible toward a freer market. Meanwhile, you will recall this was all happening while next-door Nicolae Ceausescu had been taken out and executed. The Soviet Union was becoming unstuck and all of Eastern Europe was moving with greater or lesser alacrity away from Communism. The Yugoslavs who had started off well ahead in this respect had in some ways fallen behind because of their political disagreements amongst themselves. So we spent a lot of time on economic issues. Of course the Slovenes and the Croats were very keen to do just exactly what we were suggesting. The Serbs were not so keen, the southern states generally were worried that free market economics would impoverish them. In fact, we were arguing the opposite so I spent a lot of time on that, we as a USIS post did.

I spent a hell of a lot of time on personnel issues because if you run six or seven posts and you've got one, two, three or four Americans in each one of them and anywhere from six or eight to thirty or forty Yugoslavs there are all kinds of...

Q: Give an idea of some of the problems you had.

WILLS: We had a branch PAO at one post who could not get along with the consul general. I had to go out several times to try to make peace between them and get them working more positively. There would be some progress and then something would happen and they would get on bad terms again. We had an officer; this was before the State Department changed its rules, who was gay and the longer he was in Yugoslavia the more active he became. There were security personnel in the embassy who wanted him removed from post instantly. My task was to try to solve that without violating our security rules or this officer's privacy. Oh God, there are so many...a young officer only his second post working as a branch PAO and he just didn't know, he was young, he didn't know what to do. He needed to be coached from beginning to end about how to operate and how to manage and how to reach out. Thank goodness he had good Serbo-Croatian and he later proved to be quite effective; but at the beginning it was touch and go about whether he would make it. Those were the sorts of things that I dealt with. Then in Belgrade I also had to run a big information section and a big cultural center. We had eight or ten officers in Belgrade, different personalities, and different strengths. The press attaché was very able in many ways but not a very good writer so whereas in many embassies the press attaché writes the ambassador's speeches that just didn't work so I ended up writing Warren's speeches for him. We had a cultural officer who was married to a State Department officer and there were all kinds of indiscretions being committed by one or the other of them in the course of the assignment there; that was not pleasant.

On a personal side our two kids liked the school and did well. We liked being in Yugoslavia because of the travel; it was such a beautiful country. But we also did something that, I guess, the current generation of officers can't do. We had all these military installations still in Germany and we used to take the family and put our little Volvo station wagon on the car train as it was called and get us two sleepers and ride through the night and wake up in the morning in Ljubljana and then take that car off the train and drive across a piece of Austria and get to Berchtesgaden where there were three or four U.S. owned hotels. It was just so much fun to get out of Yugoslavia and go to Bavaria. We were next door to Italy and we would take the car train to Ljubljana and then drive into Northern Italy. It was just a wonderful well-located place and it was beautiful. As I think I mentioned earlier, my wife learns languages osmotically and Christ she would pick up Italian while we were there or pick up Slovenian or whatever. So it was just a lot of fun for our family.

Q: What about places, I'm thinking particularly more obscure regions Macedonia and Montenegro, getting...how were programs working in these places?

WILLS: It would depend on the talents of the branch PAO. In Macedonia we had a youngish officer who was energetic and would get things going and come up with ideas of stuff that we would do. In Montenegro we had a more experienced officer who spent most of his career in academic life and then joined the Foreign Service pretty late. He was not as imaginative as this other officer but he was very steady and he was on very good terms with the Montenegro leadership; he was more politically astute, I think. We had a lot of money from USIA so we would bring in speakers all the time. We must have had a speaker a week somewhere in the country.

Q: They loved to come there.

WILLS: Yeah, they loved to come there and we were turning them over all the time. Madeleine Albright came, she fashioned herself a East European expert, which her PhD. is in.

Q: She lived in Yugoslavia.

WILLS: She was a daughter of a Czech diplomat but that would be typical. We had what's his face, this guy who now runs Columbia's economics program but he made a name for himself advising these economies right after their transition away from the Soviet style, Jeffrey Sachs. We could get leading American intellectuals in whatever the field because Yugoslavia was a funky place to go and a beautiful place. We would insist you come to this country and travel around to those six posts or at least four of them. We wouldn't accept a speaker who wouldn't agree to go to at least four; usually we made them go to all six. So we would have officers accompanying them out of Belgrade on trains around Yugoslavia, occasionally on planes. So all of our officers got out.

Q: I figure when I was there I overnighted in 42 different places.

WILLS: I have to tell you about another exciting, personal triumph. I caught the biggest trout I'd ever caught on a fly in the Sava Bohinjka River in Slovenia. Warren and Teeny and I were up there on a fishing trip and they were just around the corner. These three Yugoslavs were fishing from the bank with bait. I had waders and I went out in the middle of the Sava Bohinjka, they thought that was crazy to begin with, and I caught this 27 inch fish they called a marble trout. It's an unusual species, unique to Yugoslavia. These Yugoslavs on the bank, Slovenes, cheered as I wrestled this fish with my little fly rod, they didn't even know what fly-fishing was. I caught the fish, held him up, cheers from the guy's forty or fifty yards away on the bank and then I carefully revived the fish and released him. They went nuts because they were there to fish for food. For me it was for sport, God Slovenia was beautiful, just gorgeous.

Q: What were we doing and what was the response and all in Kosovo at the time?

WILLS: We didn't have a post in Pristina. We, meaning USIS and the embassy, of course had no office there at all. The embassy had a consulate in Zagreb and that was it; just two posts and our post was the principal source of information in reporting really about political developments. But Pristina was nominally part of Serbia so we would cover it out of Belgrade. We had a very able political counselor named Louie Sell. Louie became expert in matters Kosovoan. He would go down there a lot, I went down there a couple of times and a couple of other officers went down to meet with the Kosovo leadership. We were very critical of Serbia's approach even then. Milosevic was particularly obnoxious on this. This was a part of Serbia and it would never be anything else.

Q: That's June 29th '89 wasn't it?

WILLS: Yeah and they were committing atrocities down there of generally small scale meaning

at a time three or four Kosovars would be rounded up by Serbian police and roughed up or killed. There was nothing on a large scale until later after I left. But we were very sympathetic with the Kosovar point of view. We made it plain that some new arrangement had to be arrived at, that 88 percent of the people of Kosovo were ethnic Albanians and they were being dominated by a police force that was overwhelmingly Serb. It was just an untenable situation even then and it became less tenable after I left.

Q: What was our feeling toward Madame Milosevic?

WILLS: She was an academic by background and taught, I think, at the University of Belgrade even while...

Q: Something like that.

WILLS: Slobodanovich...

Q: Boxes and something like that.

WILLS: She didn't have the last name Milosevic. I'm trying to remember what name she used; it was her maiden name but I just can't remember what it was. I didn't deal with her, I didn't know her, and I never met her to my knowledge or recollection. I think she was seen then, I think it's been shown to be so since as a pretty hard-line adviser who was remarkably racist about Albanians among other things and about Muslims generally. Bosnia she apparently had no role in what happened in Bosnia but was not at all unhappy to see the Bosnian Serbs moving against not only the Muslims but the Croats too who lived in Bosnia.

Q: Well now things were moving at the end of '89 when Eastern Europe fell apart. What happened say to the press because I came from an era where politica borva were simply turning out this...

WILLS: Crap.

Q: Crap. I mean apparently...

WILLS: Absolute crap. I don't want to say there was freedom of the press, there was not. But there was more freedom than had been the case apparently in Yugoslavia prior to 1988. There were commentators who were writing about these events outside the country mainly about events inside Yugoslavia in ways that were not necessarily congenial to Serbia's interest. Of course the press in Croatia and Slovenia was moving more and more and more toward a kind of uniform hostility to the republic and they were clamoring for independence; but there were even commentators in Serbia who would take on Milosevic in print. Now they wouldn't necessarily prosper, they weren't favored with interviews and that sort of thing but they weren't taken out and shot either, as might have been the case earlier.

Q: Was this Croatian-Serbian virus affecting your relations or the embassy's relations with consul general in Zagreb?

WILLS: Yeah, the consul general in Zagreb, his assignment coincided with mine. In fact, he stayed an extra year.

Q: Who was this?

WILLS: Michael Einik. He became as I suppose happens more and more identified with the Croatian point of view and would come up for consultations; he made it plain that he thought he was coming to some medieval city.

Q: It's the damndest thing.

WILLS: Frankly it's obnoxious as the dickens. In fact, I found Croat's every bit as obnoxious on one end as the Serbs were. The Croats portrayed themselves as these Western enlightened folk because they are Catholic and because Zagreb is pretty and neighbors Italy and all that. But they have a history of brutality as much as the Serbs had.

Q: Well their history during World War II was horrible.

WILLS: It was unconscionable, it was just horrible. Their attitude toward the Serbs when I got to Yugoslavia was obnoxious. It was condescending, it was tin eared, it was as though the Serbs had no legitimate point of view at all; they were heathen. I mean it was really hard to deal with. As I say, the Serbs were tough to deal with but I found the Croats just as tough. Meanwhile, the Slovenes were benefiting from this Croatian-Serbian tussle; they were merrily making preparations to leave the republic and were the first to leave. They benefited because that larger dispute hid their, well it didn't hide it everybody knew the Slovenes wanted out, but it made it easier for them, I think.

Q: Sure. Also Croatia sat between Slovenia and Serbia so when push came to shove a couple months after you left the Serbs couldn't do anything against Slovenia.

WILLS: They tried and the Slovenes put together a little army that held the Serbs off in the first few days of the civil war. I mean Yugoslavia was a fascinating place, just fascinating. We had very able senior officers in the mission pretty much all the way around. We had the attention of Washington. Baker for whom I do not have the greatest respect as a secretary of State did very well I think in presenting the U.S. diplomatic point of view there. It didn't work but it wasn't his fault, we were being undermined by the Germans and the French and others and even that really wasn't decisive. That country was going to break apart sooner or later, it happened, there was really nothing that we could have done about it. In a way it's surprising that it lasted as long as it did.

WARREN ZIMMERMAN
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: 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 Tadjman 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 Croatians 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.

ROBERT RACKMALES
Deputy Chief of Mission/Chargé
Belgrade (1989-1993)

Robert Rackmales was born in Baltimore, Maryland in 1937. He studied history at Johns Hopkins University and graduated in 1958. He received a Fulbright Scholarship to Germany and this influenced him toward his entry into the Foreign Service in 1963. He had twice served in Nigeria, Yugoslavia and Italy at various rotations. He was interviewed by Professor Charles Stuart Kennedy on May 11, 1995.

Q: Then you arrived in Belgrade when?

RACKMALES: September of 1989.

Q: What was the situation in Yugoslavia in September of '89?

RACKMALES: It was a period of great optimism. When I arrived it was the eve of the first high profile visit of the new Yugoslav Prime Minister, Ante Markovic, a Croat who had been chosen earlier that year. The reason for the optimism was the events elsewhere in Eastern Europe that made it clear that communism was crumbling. The Gorbachev revolution had taken hold. Communist regimes had crumbled in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. The same would happen in Romania just a few months later, in December. There was a feeling that Yugoslavia was very well poised to a model and in the vanguard of East European countries that were shedding communism. Markovic was already starting to allude to having multi-party elections in Yugoslavia, which already had the most open economic system in Eastern Europe. They had had a more western orientation, more of their businessmen had been exposed to capitalism. So there was a feeling that Yugoslavia was going to be the first East European country to join the Common Market, and was going to help to show the way to the others. Well, how wrong can you be.

Q: What was the embassy and the consulate general in Zagreb...what did we have there?

RACKMALES: In terms of staffing?

Q: Staffing, and you're in charge of running it. What was your appraisal of our presence there?

RACKMALES: We had a sizeable embassy given the size of the country. Yugoslavia had always attracted a lot of U.S. attention over the years. Initially in '48 because of its break with the Soviet Union. A lot of the programs that we were running, like the Fulbright program, were among the largest in Europe. I think only Germany had a larger Fulbright program, and on a per capita basis ours was way way ahead of everybody else. And there was a lot of coming and going. Americans liked to come to Yugoslavia for a number of reasons. So it was a busy, active embassy. We had about 100 Americans in Belgrade, and about 350 Yugoslav employees. In Zagreb they had about a dozen Americans, and maybe 60--I'm not certain now of the number of FSNs. So these were sizeable operations that we were running there.

Q: To go back to September of '89, how did we view the problem of ethnic diversity division at that time. What were we seeing?

RACKMALES: Even before '89, there had always been concern over the viability of the system that Tito left behind, whether it could contain centrifugal forces which were obviously strong. There was growing hostility between Slovenia and Croatia on the one hand, and Serbia on the other. Tito's system as it evolved in the years since his death, had given more and more power to the individual republics and less and less to the federal government. To the point where we all knew that the greatest threat to the optimistic scenario I just described was in the unwillingness of the republics to allow the federal government to implement coherent policies. So our efforts in 89-90 was to try to bolster Markovic, whom we saw as the best hope, maybe the last hope, because if he failed the prospects were very gloomy. He seemed at that period, in the summer and early fall, to have the kind of leadership abilities that gave him a fighting chance to overcome the systemic problems of heading a government with very little power, with only the powers that the republics were willing to let him exercise. He went to the United States and made a good impression. As a person he was dynamic and knew how to talk to westerners. The only

doubts were would he be allowed to carry out a meaningful reform program in Yugoslavia. And in the succeeding months it became clear that it probably wasn't going to happen.

Q: Something you said, we wanted to support Markovic. How do we support somebody? What does that mean?

RACKMALES: First of all by having him meet with the President. That's one way of showing support to a leader of a...

Q: This would be George Bush at this time.

RACKMALES: That's correct...through the kinds of things that the spokespersons for the administration say about him. In succeeding months as he got more and more embroiled in difficulties there were other attempts. For example, at one point I remember Bush calling him up to express his support for him, and that information was released publicly that the President of the United States had called him. And we did begin in those months preparing an aid package for Yugoslavia. I remember going to Vienna to a regional meeting of all Eastern European DCMs, and AID directors, to discuss what kind of an aid package would be appropriate. The amounts earmarked for Yugoslavia were not very large. I had been, as DCM, in charge of preparing the recommendations for what areas we were going to assist. But even at that point, even in December of '89, I told the chair of the meeting who was Bob Barry, who was in charge of the office that was established to implement AID programs in Eastern Europe, that we should not actually dispense aid yet for Yugoslavia until it became clear that the severe breakdown in relations between the republics and the federal government showed some signs of improving. Because otherwise you were giving money to an entity that was not functioning. And in fact in succeeding months things got worse instead of better so we never really went forward with any concrete aid. That infuriated Markovic because he kept saying, what good is your rhetorical support if you can't come forward with hard cash. But it's very hard to justify in a situation where the IMF and other international institutions, and our own analyses, were that the federal government was impotent. It reached the point, for example, where Slovenia was not turning over to the federal government the customs duties that it was collecting for goods that were entering Slovenia. They were keeping them.

In late November of '89 the Serbs instituted an economic boycott of Slovenia. This within a country that is nominally united. In my own mind that was the clearest evidence that Yugoslavia was probably on a rapid downward spiral in terms of unity.

Q: On the political reporting, were we in touch with the governments of the various republics, and if so what were we getting from them? What were they talking about?

RACKMALES: There were three groups of republics. On the one hand there was Slovenia and Croatia who at that point were starting to head hell-bent towards independence at the earliest possible date. There were the first free and open elections took place in Slovenia and Croatia in the spring of '90, and both brought into power groups that were clearly headed in the direction of independence. Even before those elections it was clear that that's the way things were trending, but the elections intensified that process.

Anyway, you had those two northern republics. You had Serbia which basically would have liked to have been rid of the northern republics, felt strong enough to dominate the remainder, and so was not about to pay a price to keep the country together.

And then you had the other republics who basically were terrified of what a breakup would mean, Bosnia, Macedonia, and Montenegro. Montenegro was too much in Serbia's shadow to really do much more than wring its hands. But the two leaders who worked the hardest to try to keep a form of Yugoslavia together were Izetbegovic in Bosnia who was elected in November of '90, and Gligorov who became the leader of Macedonia in '91. Unity became more difficult to maintain with the demise of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia which formally broke up in February of '90. Its power crumbled very rapidly, but the underlying interests of the republics at that period were more or less as I've described it, namely two who only wanted to leave. One which was somewhat happy to have them leave provided in the case of Croatia that they didn't try to take Serbs with them. The Yugoslav constitution provided for secession but not secession of republics. Secession of ethnic groups, of nations as they called it, *narodi*. The Serbian argument was if Slovenes as a nation wished to leave Yugoslavia it's in the constitution that they have that right. If Croats want to leave, essentially as Croats, that's fine. But, and this becomes now one of the root causes of the wars that sprung up, that they do not have a right to take Serbs with them. The Serbs have the same right of self determination as anyone else. That in a nutshell was the Serbian position.

Q: Were you seeing the rise of Serb nationalists around? Before the cry had been brotherhood and unity. Were you seeing this as being sort of the ethnicity of being...this first thing that allowed politicians to get out there and make a mark for themselves. I'm a Serb, or I'm a Croat. Did you see this becoming a political ploy?

RACKMALES: That was really what Milosevic used to gain unchallenged power and in Serbia the nationalist drive was initially focused on Kosovo. That was his first dramatic moment was when he in a speech in Kosovo made a very impassioned statement about Kosovo and the Serbs, and Serbian pride, etc. It had a great resonance in Serbia. Up until that point he had been viewed as a typical apparatchik. Maybe a little more professionally qualified in the area of banking than some of the others. By the way, I don't know if it's generally known that he had had an IVP grant in the field of banking back in the mid-80s I think, he went to Chicago and other cities. But his primary focus was always political, and he pursued power in a very single minded way, ruthless way. He used nationalism as the means for this.

I think most of the analysts see this as opportunistic on his part. In other words, that he simply made a calculated decision that here was the right button to push. I do think there is a somewhat of a messianic streak in Milosevic, that he genuinely sees himself as a kind of savior of Serbia. He is an extremely skilled cold-blooded politician who combines that, contradictory as it may sound, with a genuine feeling that there is no one else who can defend, protect, promote the interests of the Serbian nation other than himself.

Q: As these forces are beginning to gather, you're sitting in the embassy, you're reading more about politics, and whatever the papers are, you're watching TV and meeting people, were there

times when you and Warren Zimmermann, and maybe others in the embassy, would sit together in the glass bubble, or the plastic room, and talk about whether Yugoslavia, and what were American interests?

I might just put in a qualifier, prior to that, American interests when I was there, and when you were there the first time, we didn't want to see Yugoslavia split apart because this would give an opening for the Soviet Union and could mean World War III because it was one of those places as long it held together, and was somewhat out of the Soviet orbit, it meant that they wouldn't be attracted, and we wouldn't be attracted and we wouldn't get into fighting with them. A very clear interest, but now things are changing.

RACKMALES: That's right, and what we eventually came up with to replace the former Trinity, which consisted of independence, unity, and territorial integrity (through the '60s, '70s and most of the '80s, we would repeat that as kind of a mantra) was a duality-unity and democracy. As we saw it, if either were suppressed or shattered, you couldn't have the other. In other words, you could not in the context of a split, a destruction of the Yugoslav state, you would not have democracy because it could not happen peacefully given the ethnic tensions, given the structure of the country. You didn't have groups neatly in areas that if you drew borders around them, they'd be more or less content to be there. In particular the Serb and Croat population was scattered and the Muslims were intermingled, not in a well defined separate area. Anyway, we argued forcefully that our policy should be based on support for both unity and democracy, and emphasizing the interdependence of the two. At that time, the Slovenes and the Croats were making the argument that what Milosevic wanted to do was to impose a non-democratic system. While he may talk a less communist game now that he sees the handwriting on the wall for communism in Eastern Europe, he's basically a Bolshevik at heart, so you should view Serbia as a threat to a democratic Yugoslavia. There was certainly something to be said for that argument. But what we were promoting was the concept that you could not have a survival of democracy in a chaotic breakup of Yugoslavia. Unlike the CIA's analysis that got into the press which said that a breakup of Yugoslavia was inevitable within 18 months. (It turned out to be pretty close to the mark.) Our view was that a breakup of Yugoslavia was not inevitable but was a strong probability. In February 1990 I told Ambassador Thomas in Budapest that the odds were 3 to 1 against Yugoslavia staying united at that point. But, CIA felt that there was a chance of getting a peaceful agreement on separation. We were very skeptical of that in the embassy. We felt it almost inevitable that we were going to have widespread violence which would, of course, undercut democracy.

As the months went by the process of the republics taking more and more away from the Federation accelerated. Milosevic badly mishandled the political process, to the point where he antagonized all major groups except for a small number of intellectuals. His leadership became very faltering and uncertain. So he was a political ghost long before he formally left office.

In those last months you had the visit of Jim Baker, Secretary of State. It was widely seen as a last ditch attempt by the United States and the European countries as to what policies to...

Q: This is very interesting. What were you getting from the other missions there? I'm thinking particularly of German, French, British, maybe Italian, and at that time it was still Soviets.

RACKMALES: Some in the United States thought we were hanging on too long to a forlorn hope that Yugoslavia could stay together. We were actually the first of the major missions in Belgrade to draw attention to the seriousness of the possibility of the disintegration of the country. I remember, for example, calling on my counterpart at the Soviet embassy who was one of their most experienced Yugoslav hands. He had spent at that point something like 12 years in the country, and was five years into his current tour as their DCM. He told me that the harsh rhetoric the various ethnic groups were using was just Balkan hotheadedness, and should not be given too much weight. He was convinced the army and other federal institutions would ensure that the country stayed together. That was the basic assessment of most other missions in '89 and '90. By the end of '90 and the beginning of '91, it was becoming very clear that the country was falling apart. Warren and I had good relations with the heads and the deputies of all of the western European missions who came to see things more or less as we did. One exception was the Austrian DCM who had an animus against Yugoslavia, so he was rooting for it to fall apart, saying its an artificial country it should never have been existed. I think he took assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand personally. He was an odd man out. In the light of what happened from the middle of '91 until early '92, and the role that the Germans played in pressing for early recognition of Croatia-Slovenia, it's interesting that that was strongly opposed by their ambassador in Belgrade. And according to articles that I've read, and other information that I've gotten, also by all of the professionals at the foreign ministry...

Q: Was it because there's a Croatian community in Germany?

RACKMALES: It was a little more complicated than that. It was based in the first instance on personal biases of some very influential friends of Kohl. The editor of the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, whose name escapes me at the moment, had been a correspondent of the paper for Germany in Belgrade in the '50s and had developed a deep and abiding dislike of the Serbs, partly based on some unfortunate encounters that he had had. The German media in general seized on developments in Yugoslavia which was familiar to many tourists. As the fighting started, the public started seeing scenes of refugees, scenes of some of the atrocities that started happening at the time. We're still seeing them today, the kinds of scenes that caused great public anguish. So the combination of this one influential newspaper's strong pressure combined with growing public outrage over the things like the bombing of Vukovar, and the shelling of Dubrovnik, which were creating a climate that facilitated Germany's going against what would otherwise have been a consensus of NATO countries. To the genuine dismay of the French, British, and ourselves the Germans announced unilaterally that they were going to recognize Croatia and Slovenia.

Q: I must say that when I heard this as an observer, there is nothing that would raise the Serbian animosity level than Germans and Croats getting together. You'd have thought that Germany would have played it smart, as you'd have thought the Pope would have played it smart, who also got into the act. The rise of Tudjman in Croatia, how did we view him, and what were we seeing with him?

RACKMALES: Here there were probably at least some differences of emphasis in terms of the views of our consulate general Zagreb, and the embassy in Belgrade. Although the consul

general, Mike Einik always reported professionally, there was naturally more sympathy for the emerging Croatian argument for independence. As far as the activities of Tudjman's party, what was most disturbing was the reliance on arming party members. The argument was that the Serbs were arming in their areas, and that this was just defensive. I suspect there were some areas where there had been clandestine Serbian arms shipments, but the scale of the Croatian action, and the fact of its having official blessing greatly ratcheted up the tensions, and caused an increase in the arming on the other side as well. So it represented a major shift in the direction of a violent outcome.

Q: Did the embassy try to do anything with Tudjman and Milosevic?

RACKMALES: Well, the problem was not that Tudjman and Milosevic were not getting together. The problem was that they were getting together. In a secret meeting that we only found out about subsequently they met in Serbia and agreed to divide Bosnia between Serbia and Croatia. We confronted both men with this. They made somewhat halfhearted denials that they did anything like that. But the information was pretty solid, and reliable, and nothing that happened subsequently would lead me to question whether the reports we got of that meeting were not accurate. My feeling was that each played off and benefited from the other, so each would have been dismayed had the other been replaced by someone else. I mean, for Tudjman, Milosevic was the ideal leader of Serbia. He was viewed as a communist which made Tudjman look good by comparison. He could portray him as the bogey man, and used that to discredit attempts to deal with in a serious way the grievances of the Serbs--how can you deal with these Bolsheviks, and that sort of thing?

At the same time Tudjman felt he could deal with Milosevic on issues like Bosnia. It was kind of the equivalent of the Nazi-Soviet pact over Poland really, they quietly agreed to divide it up. And from Milosevic's standpoint it was kind of the same thing. Tudjman delighted in evoking memories of Croatia's unsavory past and his anti-Semitism and authoritarianism made him unpalatable to many. So each one was a polarizing figure for the other side. At the same time I think Milosevic felt some contempt for Tudjman, and felt that he could wrap him around his finger whenever the two of them did get together. I remember a west European diplomat who had traveled back with Milosevic and the army leadership from one of the series of meetings that were arranged by the European community among the presidents of the different republics, and he said that Milosevic was being very open about how stupid he thought Tudjman was, and how he had completely fooled him in these talks that they had just had. And he and the army leaders were laughing about Tudjman, they had very little regard for his intelligence or abilities. I must add, though, that in Bosnia, Tudjman played his hand more shrewdly than Milosevic, avoiding sanctions while pursuing essentially identical policies.

Q: Did you notice at the time...something that has become either apparent, or at least seems to be apparent, that is the complete lack of veracity or the interest in veracity on the part of the leadership. At least I get that feeling. Did you have that at the time?

RACKMALES: I had served six years in Italy, and I never assumed veracity from any quarter any time. But there is a difference in the grade. I would have to say that with long experience, I think, there's no question that Milosevic could look you in the eye and tell you something that

you knew, and he probably knew that you knew, was outright falsehood. I mean he would have no compunction in doing that. So the only way around that is to find out enough about the issues he was talking about to do a kind of reality check on what he was saying. The point is certainly true that neither of those two men hesitated from, in some cases, denying what was obvious or generally known. Tudjman for a while denied that Croatian troops were in Bosnia when there had been dozens of credible reports that they were, and I think he finally admitted that perhaps they were there.

Q: Before this thing really blew up were we sending out our people around the country and to find out whose doing what to whom? What sort of reports were we getting?

RACKMALES: Both we and Zagreb were sending people into some of the areas which seemed to be flashpoints, into the Krajina area, for example. The consulate general did an excellent report. We sent people a number of times into Bosnia. The problem with reporting isn't that we didn't go out, is that it was hard to really get at the areas where some of the worst problems were happening, which were not in the larger cities. In other words, we had a pretty good take on Banja Luka, Mostar, Sarajevo obviously. But if I had to assess the overall performance, it's that we didn't get enough of a sense of the village level realities, because it's hard both in terms of time, in terms of communicating with peasants who just aren't used to talking to foreigners. If you went to a city you can find a lot of people who were interlocutors. The extent to which the conflict became an urban-rural conflict is described by Misha Glenny in his book, which I think is the best...

Q: What's its title?

RACKMALES: The Failure of Yugoslavia. It starts off at the very beginning saying that Tudjman himself missed that reality, he was relying on what he heard from Serbs in Zagreb who were not in touch at all with Serbs who were down in villages in the Krajina, that he was simply out of touch with that reality. I think that was largely true of the diplomatic missions as well. You tend to talk to people who are more accessible. For example, the majority of the Serbs who lived in the larger cities, and tended to be the more articulate, and who tended to be the ones that western diplomats would talk to, would say reassuring things, things that would give you a more optimistic view of what things...

Q: That's true of our reporters today. It's very difficult to understand, to go into small towns, and understand the gun lobby, for example, or other things. To go back a little on the time, Secretary of State James Baker came to Yugoslavia when?

RACKMALES: June of 1991.

Q: And Yugoslavia was still together.

RACKMALES: That's right, barely.

Q: And how did that visit go?

RACKMALES: Badly. Baker felt that his message was basically not getting through. I know that his people felt very strongly that the Yugoslavia issue was a can of worms, that it was worse than the Middle East, and there was absolutely no inclination, I think, on the part of Baker or his people to put the United States in the lead role. I agreed with Baker's decision to let the Europeans run with the ball, because at that period the European community was trying to hammer out a common foreign policy, and they viewed this as their first opportunity for the European community to take a lead role on a major international crisis, and to help solidify and forge a unified foreign policy for the community. Unfortunately, for reasons that I've partly alluded to already, that unity fell apart rather quickly. At that point, I think, Baker's attention, the President's attention, was really focused elsewhere and there was no inclination to step in, which would have been hard to do anyway, and say, okay Europeans, you've blown it.

Q: Larry Eagleburger, who had been ambassador and served there, and certainly he was what, Under Secretary of State at the time?

RACKMALES: He was Deputy Secretary.

Q: Was he playing any role?

RACKMALES: Yes, very much so. In fact, one of the ironies that I often mention about this crisis, is that we had probably never had the degree of expertise at the highest levels of our policy-making structure as we did for the Yugoslav crisis. There was Eagleburger who had served there for something like six years. He had been there as a junior officer, had been ambassador, and followed it very closely as Assistant Secretary. And you had Brent Scowcroft as the National Security Adviser who had served there as a military attaché back in the '50s. So you had two experts at the very top which is almost unheard of. It certainly wasn't true in Vietnam or any of the other major foreign policy crises. And I think Eagleburger would be the first to admit that we did not produce, despite that expertise, we were not able to devise a policy that ameliorated the situation.

Q: As this thing was going, you and Warren were sitting there looking at this, did you see a policy? I mean really the role of the United States. I mean we can huff and puff, but did you see something that made sense that maybe we could have done, or the Europeans could have done?

RACKMALES: Are you talking about my view now, or are you asking me to...

Q: No, at that time, now we're 1995 and it's much worse than it's much worse than it has ever been.

RACKMALES: When you're looking back, when you're trying to recall what your views were at...I mean, you have to be careful you don't read back into your views at that time conclusions you have subsequently come to. And I did not keep a journal, I don't have access to notes, or reports of my views at that time. As I say, we did support the policy of allowing the Europeans to try to work out a negotiated peaceful solution to this, and we were dismayed at the German position. I was dismayed that we had not been more active in helping the majority of the EC counteract the Germans. In fact, within the State Department, and one of the very, very difficult

things that the Yugoslav crisis brought to light...every organization that tried to deal with it almost immediately became embroiled in internal arguments and disputes over what kind of policy to take. And within the State Department there were people on the desk in key positions who were very sympathetic to the German view, saying the Germans are right, we should recognize the Slovenes and the Croats. That was not the formal United States policy, but at this point Baker did not want to embroil himself with Yugoslavia.

Q: We got you to Yugoslavia and you were mentioning that there were a series of crises you had to deal with, you being the embassy and State Department. Could you enumerate the basic crises and then we'll go back and look at each one as it developed. I mean the major ones.

RACKMALES: Let me say first that I arrived in September of 1989 when there was some cautious optimism that with a more dynamic and westward leaning federal Prime Minister Ante Markovic, that there was a chance for Yugoslavia to stay together. Markovic led a group of sort of western oriented reformers who primarily focused on economic reforms, were hoping that in the context of a post-cold war Europe a united Yugoslavia could be first of all be in the vanguard of Eastern Europe economically and politically. Markovic within a few months after my arrival was openly calling for multiparty elections which the United States strongly supported. Markovic's only trip to the U.S. in October 89 was disappointing for him because he didn't get much in the way of concrete indication of U.S. help, which showed that Yugoslavia was not very high on our list of priorities. But he got some expression of goodwill and he had a meeting with the President, and he got photo ops. We in the embassy were supportive of Markovic, despite his faults. We believed that if he failed he was probably the last chance, and things looked mighty dark after that because we didn't see any other Yugoslav leader who could keep the country together.

Now you mentioned the individual crises. The one that was probably at that time, both for the embassy and for Washington number one, was Kosovo, where violent confrontations had occurred between Serbian authorities and the Albanian majority.

Q: We're talking about 90% or 95%?

RACKMALES: Yes, 90% roughly at that time. It was an extremely emotional issue for the Serbs. It was the issue that Slobodan Milosevic had really come to power on. So I think until the actual outbreak of widespread fighting two years later in connection with the Slovene-Croatian declaration of independence, Kosovo was still an area that got a very large proportion of our attention.

Q: You say attention, what did the American embassy do about it, and what general instructions were you operating under?

RACKMALES: First of all one of our main tasks was to accompany congressional delegations. There were several key members of the Congress, and in the first instance Senator Robert Dole who on his visits to Yugoslavia, and Yugoslavia was the subject that he took a very strong interest in, and still does to this day, as you know. Kosovo was one of his main focal points, and he had on one of his visits which had occurred just prior to my arrival, but which still had

repercussions long afterwards, he had addressed what turned into a mass rally of Kosovo Albanians, and that led to a riot.

Q: How did that come about? Dole addressed the mass rally?

RACKMALES: Yes, he spoke and of course Albanians...his message was one of support for the Albanians in Kosovo. It was a message that the Serbs didn't like, and that the Albanians of course reacted very positively to. But in the context of the tensions that were down there, it was understandable that the Serbs did not view Dole with the greatest degree of...

Q: This is the conflict between the Albanians and the Serbs and Kosovo goes back at least to 1379. But anyway, did you talk to Dole? He's a presidential candidate now but looking at it at the time why would a senator from Kansas get involved in such fiery issue, in a local issue?

RACKMALES: I can't fully answer that, but one factor as we understood it is that he has a very senior staffer who was very close to him. I do not recall her name, its been years since I've heard it, she's a Croat but also has very close ties to the Albanians and she had influenced him. Also I would say the Serbs do have a way, almost a genius, of turning people off, of treating them, or reacting to them in a way that further reduces even a small amount of sympathy they might have for any arguments the Serbs were putting forward. The Serbians had stripped the Albanian majority of the autonomy that they had been given under Tito. Kosovo had been an autonomous province, had an Albanian leadership, a communist leadership, and in the last analysis they were responsive to what the national party decided. But in Kosovo itself the Albanians once they had real political power were no more kindly towards the Serbs than the Serbs had been towards them earlier. So in that part of the world you tend to use power to help your own so the Serbs did have some legitimate grievances which they tended to overplay. Still, any fair-minded person would say it was hard being a Serb in Kosovo during the time when the Albanians were riding high.

Anyway, this was a burning and emotional issue for the Serbs. It had the practical effect, and here I would relate it to the other crises, it had the practical effect of cutting off our access to Milosevic because when...well, one of the first things that happened after Warren arrived, Warren Zimmermann, arrived in March '89 as ambassador, and then on June 28th Milosevic orchestrated a major commemoration in Kosovo which was designed to celebrate a number of things. It was done on the anniversary of the...

Q: 1389.

RACKMALES: So this was a big deal and Milosevic had worked very hard and through political pressures, had managed to get the other leaders of the republics in Yugoslavia, to agree to constitutional changes that in effect ended the autonomous status of Kosovo and returned it to simply being a province within...

Q: Milosevic's position was what at this time?

RACKMALES: He was the head of the communist party, but everybody looked to Milosevic as

the ruler of Serbia. He was never Prime Minister which is not a very influential job, but he later became president of Serbia. Anyway, he was able to get the entire federal establishment, and the heads of Slovenia and Croatia, etc., all of them signed off on these constitutional changes and agreed to come to this big celebration. But the western ambassadors boycotted the event which got some news coverage, cast a shadow over this glorious moment, and as a result for a long time after that Milosevic refused to see Warren in particular. He rarely met with other western ambassadors either so it's not as if...I think he held a grudge against the whole group. But he had a particular grudge against Warren because in his view, and there was some indication of this, in his view Warren had organized the whole thing. So he was definitely enemy number one, and Milosevic absolutely refused to have anything to do with him. So that somewhat cut us off to the extent that Milosevic would have in fact shared any of his real thinking with Warren.

Q: When you arrived what was the situation vis-a-vis Milosevic as far as the embassy was concerned?

RACKMALES: No contact.

Q: Sometimes the DCM is not as tainted you might say with policy. Could you go at a secondary level or something like that? I mean below Milosevic?

RACKMALES: You mean if we had something to communicate, or we just wanted to meet with him?

Q: I mean do we have any ties to Milosevic?

RACKMALES: Well, to some of his people, yes. In other words, the political section, or I would sometimes meet with people who were rumored to be close to Milosevic. But Milosevic had very many few real confidants. There were a lot of bureaucrats who worked for him. It was not hard getting the official line. That was easy to get. We could meet with Serbian party officials and get the official line anytime we wanted. We were inundated with the official lines. Getting some kind of genuine personal insights was much more difficult. We tried but we were for a long time not successful.

Parenthetically I was interested to see that Bob Frasure had been able to establish what the press called a good rapport with Milosevic. He was the special envoy who tragically was killed in an accident a few weeks ago. I met with Milosevic one-on-one on two or three occasions and was with other senior U.S. officials who called on him, such as Cyrus Vance, U.S. senators, Reg Bartholomew when he was special envoy. I don't think that any of those meetings could be really characterized as having good rapport with Milosevic. I felt that I could have written the script before the meeting. Nevertheless, it is important with someone who has the power and the influence that Milosevic has, to have that direct contact. And you know, that I am pleased that apparently one part of our current, more active, policy is to frequently see Milosevic and try to build a rapport with him.

Q: But at this critical time...

RACKMALES: It was his decision, we were not boycotting him. In fact Warren was repeatedly looking for opportunities but Milosevic was adamant that he wasn't going to have anything to do with us.

Q: What was our judgment at that time. Who is this guy Milosevic? What motivated him as far as we were looking at him at that time?

RACKMALES: We did not feel that his nationalism was necessarily genuine, but that he was simply using this to increase his own personal power. His background had been as a communist apparatchik, and a very able one. Nobody underestimated his political skills. I think we probably viewed him as far and away the smartest of all the political leaders in that area. But he was also viewed as unburdened by any values that we thought were important, human rights, for example, or his fomenting of distrust among various nationalities. His technique was often to stand back and let others do the dirty work. For example, when Serbia announced the economic boycott of Slovenia (this would be equivalent to Texas declaring an economic boycott of New York) Milosevic never said a word. It was done by subordinate organs in Serbia, the Chamber of Commerce, I think was the one that first announced it. Milosevic would often stay in the background. That was his style. Anyway, our attitude towards Milosevic was that he was a negative influence, but a formidable one.

Q: About with the Albanians, if we're still looking at Kosovo, did we have people we could talk to in the Albanian...I'm talking about the Albanian minority. How did we treat them?

RACKMALES: Yes, we met regularly with them. Warren would go down regularly. I went down initially a bit less often because Warren was traveling there on a fairly regular basis, as was the political counselor. But I also went from time to time and met with the leadership, especially Ibrahim Rugova who still today is the acknowledged leader of the Kosovo Albanians. We kept up a regular dialogue with them. Our basic message was that we supported their human rights, that we encouraged them to use all legal means to try to advance those rights, that we were sending the same message to the federal government, and to the Serbian government. But at the same time we were strongly discouraging them from acts of violence which we felt in that context could only cause suffering, and not improve their lives.

Q: Did we feel that the Albanians...Albania now being a different type of country after the communists had left, were they too busy with their own problems, or were they fishing in these waters? Or how did we feel about this?

RACKMALES: There is a complex relationship between the Albanian government and leadership, and the Kosovo leadership. Ethnic affinity is one important element of the dimension that a certain mutual mistrust is also there. As I understand it a lot of the leaders in Albania are somewhat nervous and a little apprehensive of the Kosovo Albanians who because they lived in a more sophisticated country are much more widely traveled, have more political experience. The Kosovo Albanians were in effect self governing at a time when the Albanians were suffering under Hoxha. Despite these differences, the government in Tirana tends to call for strong steps against Serbia, and advocates the rights of the Kosovo Albanians. But I think they would be very nervous about an early amalgamation of the two entities.

Q: At this time, we're talking about '89-'90, were we running around looking for human rights violations?

RACKMALES: Oh, sure. First of all we have to because of the annual human rights report. We were always very careful not to take anybody's allegation at face value. We knew that whether it was the Kosovo Albanians, the Krajina Serbs, or anybody else, that there was a tendency to exaggerate. So we would always look for credible objective corroborating evidence. But there was no question that the Serbian policy in Kosovo, and I would say at a slightly later date, Croatian policy in Krajina, stripped people of rights that they had enjoyed up until that point. In other words there was a real setback in terms of ability to organize politically, right of free speech, employment rights, education rights of the minority in their own language, were stripped away for a time. So the human rights situation was abysmal, no question about it, and that was documented in great detail in the human rights reports.

Q: Did this have any affect in Yugoslavia on embassy's operation.

RACKMALES: I don't want to give the impression that Slobodan Milosevic was the only Serb who questioned our heavy emphasis on the Kosovo. I think probably all but the very small and uninfluential group of Belgrade intellectuals who identified with western European values and who usually got about one percent of the vote in Serbian elections, felt that we were obsessed with the Albanians, and the issue again of a double standard came up. It was an issue that has haunted us through all these crises, and if you saw today's Washington Post, Tony Hall, a congressman from Ohio, has a very interesting piece in which...he's one of the few, Jimmy Carter was another, who draws attention to the fact that we have tended to have a double standard in the human rights area, to focus almost entirely on Serbian transgressions, and to ignore, downplay, or excuse similar things when they're done by others.

Q: You were there from '89 until '93, Kosovo never really blew up.

RACKMALES: That's right. There were a couple of tense moments and a few fatalities. Had those happened a few years earlier it would have been more dangerous. As we went from '90, which may have been the point of maximum danger, as we went into '91 and '92 and '93, some might have predicted that as fighting was taking place, violence was happening elsewhere, that Kosovo would have gotten more dangerous. In fact, it got less dangerous. My last visit to Kosovo, which I think was in April of 1993, there was less police presence, you saw almost no policemen. Whereas the first time I had gone there on every block you had two Serbs with machine guns walking around. And I think that's one of the ironies, one of the paradoxes, of the whole series of crises in that area is that the explosion of violence in Bosnia had the effect, I think, of sobering the Kosovo Albanians. The other factor that I think has dampened tensions is that, while in every formal respect Kosovo is still a colony in terms of the formal power structure, the Serbs have tolerated a parallel Albanian structure, including schools, hospitals. Basically there is a functioning, even though it is illegal, Albanian government there, and the Albanian community goes about most of its business, including a very thriving involvement in smuggling. You see a lot of BMWs driving around, and they're not being driven by Serbs for the most part. So Kosovo which we looked to as the most likely flashpoint in 1989 is now maybe the

least likely flashpoint as of today.

Q: Let's turn to sort of the west. I'll let you tackle it however you want.

RACKMALES: Okay. Let me organize it by using as a focal point the visit of Jim Baker, Secretary of State, in June of 1991 because that was the critical period from May-June '91 through probably the fall of '91, the key decisions were taken by everybody that led to the explosion of violence, first in Slovenia-Croatia, and then later in Bosnia. First of all, he came not just as the Secretary of State of the United States. This was a period in mid-1991, and we as an embassy had been working towards this, and it reflected, I think, the high degree of cooperation that existed among the missions. Everybody was beginning even as late as I would say mid-'90, in some cases towards the end of '90, some major embassies were still pooh-pooing the idea that a breakup was imminent, or that if it happened, that it couldn't be handled in a fairly peaceful way. I think we were the least complacent of the embassies, but our views were pretty closely shared by the major west European embassies. So when Baker scheduled his first trip to Yugoslavia, it was one of the last times that we and the Europeans were on the same wavelength. And the policy was to send the following signals: was first of all to the Slovenes and the Croats who had announced that they were about to declare their independence unilaterally, and damn the consequences of that. The message was, that we would not support unilateral steps to break up Yugoslavia. That they needed to try to come up with a political solution, and preserve some form of Yugoslavia. If that was not viable, then they had to still continue to talk until an agreed dissolution could be achieved. That was the first part of the message, and that was aimed primarily at the Slovenes and the Croats.

The other message was addressed to the army and to the Serbs, was; you must not use force to keep Yugoslavia together. I think in those two messages, there was a contradiction that has bedeviled us all along and the contradiction is the following:

That it was not fully appreciated that except for Slovenia, all of the successor states to Yugoslavia were also multi-ethnic states. Bosnia was in the worst position because there was not even a majority ethnic group. So if you are let's say a Serbian senior military officer what you're hearing from the west is that we don't think that a multi-ethnic state should use force against a minority that wants to break away and form its own state. What would go through his mind is fine, if Croats want to leave Yugoslavia, the Yugoslavia constitution gives them the right as Croats. What it does not do is give them the right to take Serbs with them against their will. The Serbs have the same right not to be part of Croatia as the Croats not to be part of Yugoslavia. The underlying question, when is it justified for the international community to provide arms or other support to a multi-ethnic state facing a minority insurgency, is one of the most vexed of our times. But the foundations of our policy as it emerged vis-a-vis Croatia and Bosnia were shakier than we liked to admit. It helps explain why so many statesmen have been struggling with this. There are other aspects of it obviously but it's one that has never been resolved, and that may only be resolved when finally sadly, tragically, as a result of the war populations are moved so that new boundaries can be drawn and everyone throws up their hands and says okay.

Q: How was Baker received when he came there?

RACKMALES: He was very unhappy with the whole experience. I was on the bus with some senior NSC staffers and their attitude, and I believe that this reflected his as well, is that, first of all, the Yugoslav crisis was horribly complicated. One of them called it worse than the Middle East. Secondly, there were no good guys. Baker was not happy with any of his interlocutors, he thought they were all to a greater or lesser extent, mostly greater, lying to him, dissembling. He also felt that he had gotten some assurances from the Slovenes that the Slovenes later said was just a misunderstanding on his part. So when the Slovenes a few days later went ahead and announced their independence, he felt personally betrayed. At that point he was probably more angry with the Slovenes than any others. But his basic judgment (which I remember thinking at that time, and still do think was correct), was that, boy, if the Europeans want to take this one on, let them. He saw nothing good to be gained by the United States trying to play the lead role in finding a way out of that maze. And the Europeans at that point were trying to forge a common foreign policy. This was a period of some optimism that a more united Europe could be...

Q: It was sort of at the beginning, and I mean this was going to be their baby. They'd show what a united Europe could do.

RACKMALES: That's exactly right. I don't want to get bogged down in the details of how the European Community went astray. Although I agreed that we should let the Europeans take the lead, I didn't think we should withdraw completely from the fray. I thought we should help the EC if they came to have problems. We should be quietly supportive. But that unfortunately we didn't do, or we didn't do very effectively because there was an important conference in Ochrid within a month or six weeks of Baker's visit. It was kind of the first really acid test for the Europeans, and they had hammered out a political agreement which five of the six leaders had agreed to. The holdout was Tudjman.

Q: Who was the Croatian.

RACKMALES: And I remember trying to get the State Department to weigh in heavily in support of the European position, and bilaterally with the Croats to warn them that they should not walk out. And I got a wishy-washy response saying, well, we think the important thing is to stop Milosevic, and we think Tudjman's concerns may be justified, we don't see any reason to weigh in.

And Tudjman walked out of the meeting, the meeting broke up, and the fighting spread dramatically within the weeks after that.

Q: On the mission, you became Charge at that point?

RACKMALES: I happened to be at the time of that particular conference because, although Warren was still ambassador, he was away at that time. I did not become the permanent Charge until May of 1992.

Let me just wrap this segment up by saying one word about our coordination, or lack thereof with our European friends. I mean the hostility, the backbiting that erupted between the Germans and the other Europeans over the issue of recognition of Slovenia and Croatia was very

damaging to the European Community. I felt that one of our greatest risks was of allowing this to do the same between us and the Europeans. We haven't avoided that entirely, particularly when Clinton was forced to unilaterally announce that we would not observe, or monitor, the arms embargo, when we unilaterally withdrew our ships. I thought that was terribly misguided. Anyway, we seem at the moment to be back in a bit more cooperative relation with the Europeans but throughout this we've been dogged by the fact that, I guess for political reasons, we feel the necessity to criticize the activity of allies who are carrying out United Nations' mandates that we in many cases pressed, as far as I know, nothing that's happening on the part of any of the UN agencies in Bosnia is happening against, or in contradiction to the series of United Nations security council resolutions. All of which we either drafted or played an important hand in shaping. It's unfortunate, I think, that we have sometimes taken the easy way out, and tried to point the finger at allies who are taking a disproportionate share in Bosnia of casualties and expense and risk.

Q: What was Larry Eagleburger? He was number two in the State Department at that time, and had been ambassador and had served there, so probably was our most experienced hand in Yugoslavia, and here he was sitting right underneath Jim Baker. What was your impression, and maybe of the embassy, of Eagleburger's role at this time?

RACKMALES: Eagleburger came to Belgrade in 1990. It was the only time in the four years that I was there he came. His personal conclusion at that time was that Yugoslavia was finished, and he anticipated the embassy on that one. I think all of us knew that there was certainly a good possibility, a probability, that it would be. But all of us were also concerned about the policy consequences of acting as if it was hopeless, and there was nothing we could do. In other words, even if there were only a 10% chance of keeping it together it was so important because the consequences of a disintegration were so serious that we had to still act as if, and to take whatever steps were possible in order to try increase that 10% chance, which was the policy line that we continued basically up through the Baker visit. But I think Eagleburger concluded a year and a half before the visit took place that say what you like, the place is going to fall apart, which was also the conclusion of the National Intelligence Estimate that got leaked to the press, which again had the effect of helping the self-fulfilling prophesy. If you give up on a country, then its prospect of surviving is further reduced. I give credit to Eagleburger, even though he himself was somewhat apologetic when I called on him on one of his last days in office, when he was Secretary of State. He said something like, "I'm sorry we haven't provided you much policy support." Eagleburger has taken a lot of heat for this, but I happen to think he was right in characterizing what was going on in Bosnia as a civil war. The popular view is that it's simply Serbian aggression, and this is a fault line that divides many of the commentators, and the people who are strong advocates of military action to stop Serbian aggression, and people who view the conflict as more of a civil war in which we should not take sides. And that is a fault line that is still very much there. Sometimes people move from one side to the other. George Kenney who was the first to resign from the State Department if you remember back in '93, on the grounds that our policy was immoral because we did not use force, and were condoning aggression, etc. He has now crossed to the other side. There's no organization, no government agency that is not divided within itself between proponents of those two basic points of view. I watched a few months ago on C-span a debate over Bosnia at the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank. All four of the debaters were conservative foreign policy specialists--Jeane Kirkpatrick,

Patrick Glenn, and two others. You had the same basic division, this same inability to come to an agreed framework of analysis. The debate has often been highly emotional, and usually there's a lot more heat than light thrown on the issues.

Q: Let's turn to the Slovenia and Croatia. Let's say when you arrived in '89, what was the view of Tudjman?

RACKMALES: Tadjman wasn't really on the scene very much in '89. He had been living in semi-seclusion in a think tank. He had left the communist party and become an anti-communist. It was only in the run-up to the election when he formed a party that made an overt appeal to Croatian nationalism, that made no attempt whatsoever to appeal to Serbian voters. Their platform and their party activities would have alienated and antagonized even the most moderate Serbs. They basically ran against the former communist party which had become even more liberal, had shed its communist ideology and re-named itself, and other small mainly multi-ethnic parties. And of course there was the Serbian nationalist party which was kind of a Serbian counterpart to Tadjman's party which obviously won overwhelmingly down in the Krajina. A lot of the urban Serbs who lived in Zagreb voted more for the ex-communist party or for some of the new parties which tried to model themselves on west European parties.

Q: This election was when?

RACKMALES: The Croatian election would have been April of '90, and the same pattern emerged that we saw even more strongly in Bosnia later that year, and which was very ominous, namely that when you introduced democracy and multi-party systems, you were fragmenting society on ethnic lines. You had a polarization around the parties that appealed to one ethnic group, and that was certainly true of the HDZ, and it was certainly true of the Serbian party that ran in the Krajina. And in Bosnia, where of course Izetbegovic and his people have to support a multi-ethnic Bosnia, but that was not the campaign they ran in 1990. Their party was actually in ferment allied with Karadzic's party. Oddly enough people forget that.

Q: Karadzic being the Serbian, the Bosnia-Serbian leader. They are certainly enemies at this point.

RACKMALES: That's right. All three of the ethnically based parties in the Bosnian elections ran, if not exactly joint campaigns, that agreed among themselves, listen, we won't attack each other, what we will attack are these multi-ethnic parties because Markovic, the federal prime minister, had encouraged the growth, and even announced something called an alliance of reformed forces that he hoped would galvanize western oriented economic reform based on political parties. So he was working in Bosnia with intellectuals and others who shared those values. Well, all of those parties did miserably. They were attacked by the nationalist parties who did not attack each other. So it's one of the many tragedies and ironies of this whole situation.

Q: And to a certain extent it helps justify the feeling that they asked for it, and let's not get into the middle of this.

RACKMALES: That's right. It raises again this issue that I mentioned of the double standard.

When Jimmy Carter went last year in a rather forlorn, and I think misguided effort to try to bring about a more stable peace, if you remember he met with all the parties, and he made one public statement for which he was roundly criticized, namely that he thinks the Serbian position is not widely understood. But he's right. The Serbian position has...and I'm obviously not talking about Serbian atrocities but the political basis for the Serbian argument which was that the Bosnian constitution, which stated at that point that no important decisions could be taken except by consensus among the three national groups. That principle has now been reinstated in the Dayton accords. It's because of Bosnia's unique status where there is no majority group. That was the one thing that set Bosnia off from all the others. All of them except Slovenia were multi-ethnic, but in all of them except Bosnia there was one group that had 60% or more of the population. In Bosnia the Muslims had about 43, the Serbs had about 34 roughly, and the Croats had the rest. The Bosnian constitution had said that no major national decisions can be taken except by a consensus of the three groups. So when the Serbs said, hey, wait a minute, what is more important than a decision to leave one country and declare independence. And it kind of got brushed aside by the international community. But their argument deserves more consideration, I think, than it's gotten.

Q: I want to go back to your time, and your experience. Tudjman wins this election in Croatia, how were relations? We have this thing where Milosevic basically has cut us off. How about when Tudjman came in?

RACKMALES: Well, relations were strained with Tudjman too because what immediately happened is that...and he had some very unsavory characters coming in, he brought some people back from the United States with World War II backgrounds...

One of the first things they did was to in effect fire all of the Serbian police down in the Krajina. At the same time there was widespread firings in factories of Serbian managers. A whole series of steps that caused us to focus on Krajina in the human rights report. To Warren's credit he would confront Tudjman with these. Although Tudjman would always see Warren, Tudjman knew very well that his only chance of achieving independence was with a degree of western sympathy. So he would never have stiff-armed the United States the way Milosevic did. Nevertheless, Tudjman put into the Croatian press some extremely nasty criticisms of Warren for his criticisms of Croatian human rights issues. So we were not beloved by either of the two major protagonists because we called the human rights situations as we saw them.

Q: How about in Slovenia? Slovenia has sort of passed over our radar so much that one doesn't think about it anymore. How did we see that situation?

RACKMALES: The Slovenes were always the easiest to talk to. We, of course, knew that they did not have the kinds of internal problems because they were a homogeneous society. We tried to encourage them with very limited success to stay involved. We also supported Baker's message that a unilateral declaration of independence would set off the Croats but the Slovenes basically didn't give a damn about the Croats or anything else. They wanted out, they didn't care particularly what the consequences would be, and they wanted to simply go their own way, and the less they heard about the subject of Yugoslavia the better. So basically they would listen politely, and then shrug.

Q: How about the intra-embassy situation in Belgrade during this time? Did you begin to sense differing views. Particularly I'm thinking of the Germans more than anyone else.

RACKMALES: No, the Germans were arguing basically the same things we were. The problem is that their government was not paying much attention, they were in fact going their own way to the great distress of the German embassy. It's been reported now widely that not only the German embassy in Belgrade, but the German foreign ministry at the most senior professional levels tried desperately to get Genscher and Kohl off of their premature recognition kick.

Q: When this happened what was the analysis from our embassy when Germany made...when was it?

RACKMALES: I talked to Vance about the German push for early recognition. He knew Genscher pretty well, and he said I don't know why he's doing this. I can't talk to him about it; he's totally closed off. Vance was deeply distressed when the Germans and other Europeans announced their plans to recognize Slovenia and Croatia, and then was even more distressed, and Warren and I were the ones who actually broke the news to him, that the United States and the Europeans were going to recognize Bosnia. He literally turned pale, and shook his head and said, there's going to be a terrible tragedy as the result of this. He had argued as forcefully as he could against recognition because it undercut his role as a negotiator because recognition was the one thing that...

Q: Recognition of Croatia?

RACKMALES: That's right, Slovenia and Croatia. It was the strongest lever that the west had to help try bring about a peaceful solution.

Q: I was wondering with the German recognition of Croatia, particularly of Croatia...I'd come from Yugoslavia in an early era and had not had to deal with the problems you had, but one is certainly aware of the unholy alliance between Nazi Germany and Croatia during the war that every Serb remembers, that was mother's milk, and no matter what the other problems were, this one must have set off every nerve jangling, didn't it?

RACKMALES: Oh, absolutely. Many Americans would make fun of what seemed to us exaggerated Serbian fears of Germany, and yet I believe the Serbs were not just blowing smoke. Although their fears in an objective sense were exaggerated, popular feeling was genuine. Also, the credibility of the European community was shattered. The European community was getting whiplashed between Germany in the north who had their own policy toward Croatia and Slovenia and were not about to go with the consensus that the British and French were trying to build and the Greeks in the south, who had special interests in Macedonia. The Greeks were able to block any sensible policy not only on the part of the European community, but on the part of the United States which is hampered by the clout of the Greek lobby and the Greek members of Congress.

In 1991 the European community gave to a group of wisemen called the Badinter Commission,

now mostly forgotten, the task of setting guidelines for what criteria should be used on which to base decisions to recognize successor states to the former Yugoslavia. I think they did an excellent job. Under their criteria Slovenia easily met the criteria. No big human rights problems, overwhelming consensus on the part of the population. They gave a kind of green light. The next state which came close to meeting the criteria was Macedonia. Macedonia because the two major communities, the Macedonians and the Albanians, were both involved in the parliament. The Albanians took part in political life, and both groups basically supported independence. The Albanians had some grievances but these are being addressed to a greater or lesser extent. So Macedonia would have been the next country. Well Macedonia is still unrecognized because of Greek objections over the name which helps destabilize that area.

Croatia did not meet the recognition criteria because of what the commission felt were serious human rights concerns, and the fact that a major component of the population, the Serbian minority, had justified fears of their equality within the state. The Croatian constitution was the only one that explicitly said, this is a country of the Croatian people, and there are also some other nationalities who live here as well. It's not very reassuring if you're a Serb.

And then Bosnia was at the very bottom of the Commission's list because of the lack of even a true majority consensus. The vote that was held after the EC asked the Bosnians to hold a plebiscite on independence was in some ways a farce because the Serbs boycotted and the Croats voted for it, but not because they genuinely supported a multi-ethnic country. They quickly went as far as the Serbs did, and created their own separate mini-state which flew the Croatian flag, and used Croatian currency. But tactically Tudjman knew that in order to get western support he had to appear to support a multi-ethnic Bosnia. So he told his people, you will vote for an independent Bosnia, and then afterwards we'll take care of you. It was kind of a farce, the plebiscite, and again that was at the root of many of the problems we're facing today.

I mentioned that Vance was arguing very strongly against recognition of Bosnia, and I think a number of the European countries had misgivings about it, but the debate did not focus on the issues that the commission raised. What the debate focused on was: how can we dissuade Serbs from in effect unilaterally seizing Bosnian territory. So the decision was based on the idea that the Serbs would be dissuaded because of fear of international reactions. So the act of recognition was really one of a series of disguised threats of force, or if you will, bluffs.

Q: This sounds like a Washington type of...

RACKMALES: No, I have to say that it was also the view that the embassy by and large was also putting forth. I was not there for all of that debate because I was on home leave for a key segment of that. But my recollection is that we were, and Warren and most of the embassy staff, felt the way that I've just described, namely, that there would be more chance the Bosnian Serbs would refrain from violence if Bosnia were recognized.

Q: I'm thinking really you might say the policy; working people, political section, maybe the economic section, the station chief; was there a division? How did you sense the embassy when these various elements came up?

RACKMALES: We had a full range of policy differences. We had the people who wanted the United States to get involved with at least air power against the Serbs, not many proponents of sending U.S. troops, never have been as far as I could see. But we had people who wanted the Air Force to start bombing. But other Embassy officers were strongly opposed to any U.S. military involvement, thinking that all it would do would be to expand the fighting, cause more death and misery, and still not result in a viable multi-ethnic state. So, we had the full range. One of the achievements that I am particularly proud of is that despite all this, which would come out in our discussions in country team meetings, we continued to function as a team very effectively. We did not, I think, let our policy prejudices or preferences, however you want to characterize it, affect our reporting which I think was outstanding for objectivity, and Washington told us that we were far and away the most objective in reporting on the situation. I don't think anyone whether they belong in camp A, camp B, or somewhere in between, was particularly happy with the way U.S. positions were unfolding. What we were often doing was talking as if we were going to do something that would make camp A happy, and then in fact behaving as if we were really in camp B, so people were always off balance. I remember going back to Washington at a time early in the Clinton administration when the people in camp A, the proponents of bombing the Serbs now, were saying, now it's going to happen because of what Clinton said in the campaign. He's strongly committed to this. Some of the new administration's pronouncements about lift and strike tended to reinforce that. A message that they sent to Milosevic reinforcing one that Bush had sent that sounded very bellicose, almost like the kind of ultimatum you send when you're really about to take action. I remember when I went back to Washington in spring, 1993 and camp A was saying: they're going to be evacuating us, and we're really going to hit the Serbs. I was skeptical and as a result of my consultations in Washington it became clear to me that we were no closer to a decision of that kind than we had been in the final months of the Bush administration. So I came back and shared my impressions with my colleagues, and there were some very disappointed people on the staff and others who were relieved.

Let me just make one brief point about professionalism if I may because I think it's appropriate. I was one who was unhappy with the American Foreign Service Association. For a period of several months around the time of the resignations, George Kenney, Marshall Harris...

Q: Three or four mid-grade Foreign Service officers dealing with the greater Yugoslav affairs.

RACKMALES: I have nothing against George Kenney, nothing against Marshall Harris. I think the crisis is one on which even professionals can have very different policy views, and I also respect someone who feels that the morality of the situation is so clear cut and one sided that they can't in any way be associated with a government or an organization, or the State Department, that pursues an immoral policy. That is their right, and I respect them for that. What I did not like was the editorial line, and the whole treatment of this issue by the American Foreign Service Association. Tex Harris wrote an editorial in the Foreign Service Journal saying that these resignations represent the highest form of professionalism. That I don't agree with because it implies that it was less professional not to have held the policy preferences that these people had. I know that there are people who felt just as strongly as Marshall Harris, who continued to work on at great psychological costs to themselves, but worked on very professionally. That to my mind is the height of professionalism. I don't mean that as a criticism of Marshall, but the Association's standpoint was implicitly a criticism of the people who did not

meet this highest standard of professionalism. There was a kind of... glorification is too strong, but certainly a feeling that the State Department should take a special pride that we have people who leave because their policy is not being followed. So I wanted to just get my own view on the record.

Q: I agree with you on this. In the first place, Pope John Paul II made an announcement, and again being outside I shuddered when I heard this about supporting Croatia because if the Germans were particularly bad over Serbia, the Catholic church was almost as bad during World War II, the equivalent of pogroms, or whatever you want to call them against Serbs. How did that hit?

RACKMALES: Well, I think you characterized it correctly. I think it was very short sighted to turn the crisis into implicitly a religious struggle in which you side with one of the parties who happens to share your religion. There were many contradictions and ironies. The Catholic bishop of Sarajevo was a proponent of ethnic cooperation in Bosnia and was working to promote reconciliation. Unfortunately, he was living under a severe death threat in Sarajevo and couldn't even leave his residence. Who do you think was threatening him? Nationalist Croats. Croats whose views were like those of the Archbishop of Mostar, whom I had called on at the time of the Bosnian elections. I never met a more nationalistic Croat than the Archbishop of Mostar. He bragged about the fact that 98% of his flock were members of Tudjman's party. He was a fire and brimstone nationalist.

Q: Croatia declares independence. Slovenia declares independence. Macedonia declares independence. We recognized these...not Macedonia. What happened to the embassy because this was the embassy to Yugoslavia.

RACKMALES: In the case of Slovenia and Croatia, once the fighting had started, it became very difficult for us to keep in close touch. Even though Croatia did not become an embassy for a number of months, our oversight of them became a formality, and an administrative fact rather than a political fact because they became a de facto embassy and were getting some of their guidance directly from Washington, although we were always kept in the picture and could comment. And then, of course, with recognition our role ended entirely. We would continue to give a bit of administrative support because it was a very small embassy and needed help. But even that quickly shifted to Vienna and Budapest because of the practical problem, you just couldn't get from here to there.

On the other hand with regard to the other republics, with regard to Macedonia we had not set up any kind of an office there until almost a year after I left. So we were still fully responsible for contacts with Macedonia. In fact I traveled down on average every six to eight weeks, and met with Gligorov. Within three or four months of my becoming Charge, we got an extra person to actually live down there in a hotel in Skopje, and report through us. He would either FAX or come up from time to time and write reports. He was an outstanding officer, and that was very useful.

Q: When did Warren leave, and how did he leave?

RACKMALES: He left in May of 1992. He left within a day or two of the European ambassadors. This was another example of the frequent breakdown in communication and coordination between the Europeans and ourselves. Neither the resident ambassadors of the European Community in Belgrade, nor the United States Government knew, although there had been vague rumors, that in fact at a meeting of European Community foreign ministers, the issue was being discussed of withdrawing EC ambassadors. So the first that anyone learned of this was when Genscher left the meeting which was still going on and announced to the world that the European community was withdrawing ambassadors from Belgrade. I heard that Jim Baker picked up the phone and gave Genscher hell for the lack of consultation. Maybe Genscher's defense was that the EC ambassadors had not been told either. Even though Baker was angry, he realized that there was no way that we could keep an ambassador there once the Europeans had withdrawn theirs.

Q: What precipitated this?

RACKMALES: The fighting in Bosnia had begun, and the situation was rapidly getting worse. There was no sign of any Serbian responsiveness to the concerns of the international community, and also of course at that point Serbia was not recognized. The Ambassadors were not accredited to any recognized entity. Primarily it was done as a sop to public opinion, which was outraged over the carnage that was occurring, and demanding some response.

Q: How did you deal during this time as Charge, which is really a very long time, with the Serbian government?

RACKMALES: From June to December, 1992 the person who headed the Serbian government, the prime minister, was a Serbian-American businessman, Milan Panic. Panic had been brought in by Milosevic. Despite that, he told Eagleburger that his plan was to get rid of Milosevic. In other words, he was going to turn Serbia around from an authoritarian communist state, to a western oriented democratic friend of the United States. I was quite skeptical about his chances of accomplishing anything. I was also very nervous about having a United States citizen as prime minister. I was worried about freedom of information, what could I say about him in cables that he and his lawyers could access, so I tended to report in a very back channel way at first. Later on I got some reassurances, and I put more into the front channel, although it was always with a limited distribution. I did see Panic regularly. I don't think he ever had any chance, even if he had been politically more savvy than he was, of unseating Milosevic. Milosevic is an extremely astute operator. He would not make such a dumb mistake as to bring someone all the way from the United States who is going to threaten him in any way. It was naive of Panic to think it could be otherwise. Any small chance that he theoretically might have had were undercut by his complete ignorance of the Serbian scene. He didn't know the players or even speak the language very well. He relied on a few advisers, including a former FSO, Jack Scanlan. Jack had been ambassador before Warren, and was working for Panic in a dual capacity. One was a business capacity as Eastern European representative for Panic's chemical corporation. The other was as a foreign policy and political adviser. Unfortunately, even though Panic certainly needed advice, he didn't always listen but when he did the advice he got was not always sound. One of the worst mistakes he made was to try to cozy up to one or two of the senior military people who I guess he and Jack felt might help swing the Army around to his side. And it ended up in a humiliation

for Panic because the primary person whom they were targeting was playing a double game. So when Panic, shortly before the Serbian elections in December, nominated his supposed buddy to be Minister of Defense, the guy responds by issuing a press release saying no self-respecting Serb would ever work for Panic. That shows what a mismatch the Milosevic-Panic contest was.

Despite Panic's poor prospects we closely followed the Serbian elections, because if there was any chance of bringing in a more western oriented Serbian government, we couldn't ignore that possibility. And at the same time at that point UNHCR was operating in Bosnia out of Belgrade. The CSCE had monitors set up. We were involved in extremely intense multilateral contacts with UN agencies, with the CSCE, with our European colleagues trying to deal with the humanitarian crises. It was around the turn of the year, or early the following year, when we started getting the U.S. relief flights dropping supplies in eastern Bosnia.

Coming back to our role in Bosnia vis-a-vis Zagreb's, more and more as we went into 1993 organizations like UNPF, which had been headquartered in Belgrade moved their headquarters...

Q: This is United Nations Protection Force.

RACKMALES: It was headquartered in Belgrade during the period I would say roughly from June-July '92 until sometime in the early spring of '93. I spent a lot of time with the UNPF commander and his chief civilian deputy who were excellent sources. Most of the organizations that were actually in Bosnia, since we didn't have any official Americans except for a few communicators with UNPF units there, we were relying on UNPF, UNHCR, for reporting on Bosnia and we did a lot of that. Gradually, some of these shifted their operations up to Zagreb, so that put more of a burden on Zagreb. So basically there was an overlapping of responsibility until we actually set up the embassy there. Then I heard, this was after I'd left, but I heard that there were still some conflicts between Zagreb and the embassy in Sarajevo as to who was going to do what.

Q: One of the things that precipitated resignations and tremendous emotion in the United States and all of western Europe were atrocities. Being in an area where the government with which you were working is involved, at least was seen to be involved in really horrible atrocities against others. How did you deal with this in these reports?

RACKMALES: By trying to report as fully as we could, as accurately as we could, as credibly as we could, not taking every initial account of an atrocity at face value. There is a long tradition in that part of the world to use claims of massive abuses, atrocities, etc. as a political weapon. It's a difficult subject to discuss calmly and objectively because by its very nature an atrocity seems to call for strong emotional response. That came up with regard to the first of the mortars that fell in the Sarajevo market in '93. In the western media, of course, there was no initial doubt expressed that this was a Serbian atrocity. When the Serbs denied that it was their shell and accused the Bosnian government of shelling their own people, I would say that 99% in the west said this is absolutely outrageous and ridiculous. Here are these poor victims and now you're accusing them of murdering their own people. On the other hand, the UN personnel in Sarajevo who investigated the incident were highly suspicious of the Bosnian government, as David Binder pointed out in an excellent Foreign Policy magazine article, using the cynical (but not always

wrong) Italian yardstick of "who benefits from this action." The results are straightforward. The Serbian side doesn't benefit, they get bombed and the international community comes down on them, while the Bosnian government gets more support, including military support. What worries me the most is that these atrocities, whoever is causing them, tend to drive policy. For example, the Bosnian government called for Holbrooke not to come to Sarajevo, to stop the peace process, because of an atrocity. That is comparable to Israelis and the Palestinians not talking to each other because of bus bombings, which are also atrocities. Often atrocities are carried out in order to disrupt peace process. Both the media and the administration would often apply a double standard perhaps because there were many more Serb atrocities which came earlier in the Bosnian conflict. Our Embassy for example, strongly complained following a Washington Post front page story reporting that Croat forces had come in and massacred several hundred Muslims in a town in central Bosnia. In contrast to the usual reaction to reported Serb misdeeds, the Department spokesman failed to condemn the action.

Q: We're talking about the time you were in Belgrade, did you feel this was not an even handed way of doing it? You're nodding your head. You know the Croatians in the United States has always had a much stronger political lobby. For one thing they're allied in the Catholic church, and both of us know going back to the old days in Yugoslavia they can get things really cranked up in Chicago and Indiana and other places where there is a large Croatian Catholic community. And the Catholic church would side with the Croatians, even some of the nastier things that happened during World War II. Did you feel this was a factor, or was it just that we had thrown our lot with the Croatians and we didn't want to get into a plague on both your houses. How did you feel?

RACKMALES: I don't think the lobby was a primary influence. The lobby was there, and I mentioned for example that someone like Senator Dole I think was influenced by having someone who was a key member of the Croatian lobby on his staff. But I think the main thing was the perception which the media fostered because they were mainly seeing the war from the side of the people sitting in Sarajevo. I think they bonded emotionally with them, understandably. I might too if I were there, although it is interesting that many western military in Sarajevo had an opposite reaction. Early on people became convinced that the Serbs were the sole villains, that this is a white hat-black hat sort of a thing, that they precipitated this in order to form a greater Serbia, that they conquered territory that belongs to others, that they are a ruthless people with no respect for human life. I'm not sure that I fully understand the reasons why the public reaction to the shelling of Sarajevo was so much stronger than the Russian shelling of Grozny, which was ten times more intense, that caused many times more casualties, mainly elderly ethnic Russians who were being killed. It was also a violation of the rules of war.

Q: It has always been discriminatory.

RACKMALES: And what the Croats did to the Serbs finally in Krajina what had been done elsewhere by the Serbs people said, they had it coming to them.

Q: Yes, it was not ethnic cleansing, it was expulsion. You left when, and whither the Balkans at that time, and also with your staff, how did they feel about the situation?

RACKMALES: I left in July of '93, I had been four years and frankly felt at that point somewhat exhausted by the whole thing. I could see that what was driving policy was not the reporting or the recommendations of the embassy. Once a crisis reaches that point of political sensitivity, where the President's image and domestic political considerations are concerned, that the best thing the embassy could do at that point is simply to continue to report as honestly as they can. And I made clear before I left to everybody in EUR that I had no interest in continuing to work on that crisis. I felt after four years I needed to get away from it. I really was in effect burned out at that point in terms of trying to come up with new suggestions.

My biggest disappointment from an institutional standpoint, is that at that point our policy was in the hands of one of Clinton's worst appointees. Steve Oxman was the Assistant Secretary. I think it became clear that he was so inept, incompetent that he basically became an embarrassment to the administration, and he was forced to leave in '94.

Q: What was his background?

RACKMALES: He was a lawyer. He had served in the State Department for a while under Warren Christopher as some sort of special assistant, or staff assistant. But his main claim to fame, I guess, that he had been either at Yale or Oxford or both with the Clintons, and I think knew Hillary. The first sign that this was not going to be a guy who could address these issues effectively occurred when I came back to DC shortly after he had been named. I was in Washington for a week, and of course put him high up on my list of people to see. I would set an appointment and then he would find some reason to move it. In the meantime I had seen Peter Tarnoff, I had seen people at the Under Secretary level in several agencies, and I'd seen Lee Hamilton and other key people. My final appointment with him was on Friday morning, my last day in DC, at 10:00 or something like that. I sat in his outer office and his secretary said, I'm sure he won't be long, he's got a woman in there interviewing for a job in the bureau. So I waited 15 minutes, and I waited 20 minutes. In the meantime she had called him twice. And the secretary at that point after about 20 minutes was literally in tears, she was crying. She said, Mr. RACKMALES, I don't know what to do. I had another appointment outside the building, so at that point I couldn't wait any longer. I never got to see him.

Q: What was his position?

RACKMALES: Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, replacing Tom Niles, preceding Holbrooke. Holbrooke was brought back from Bonn. Holbrooke, to his credit, and I gather from a New York Times story to his regret because he has the same malaise over the issue at this point that everybody who has tried to tackle it. To Holbrooke's credit he, I think, has done probably the best that anybody could do given the constraints. I think that's something we all have to bear in mind as Foreign Service professionals that in the last analysis it's the President and what the American people will put up with.

LAWRENCE DUNHAM
Office of Foreign Missions

Washington, DC 1992

Mr. Dunham was born and raised on Nantucket Island, Massachusetts and was educated at Catholic University and George Mason University School of Law. After working briefly in the United States Customs Service in Washington, DC, he joined the Department of State's Office of Protocol in 1983. He worked in the Office of Foreign Missions as Diplomatic and Consular Liaison until 2001, at which time he was appointed Assistant Chief of Protocol, serving in that capacity until 2005. Mr. Dunham was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

DUNHAM: We also broke relations with the Yugoslavs at one point. Actually they broke relations with us. That also was during the Clinton administration, and was a result of NATO action that was taken in Yugoslavia. After military action was taken against it, the Yugoslav government made a decision to break relations with the United States. Over a period of several days, we worked out the process of closing down the embassy. In that case of course, they were given the option of finding a protecting power to manage things. I forget whether they designated somebody or not. That was a more complicated process because they had a much larger embassy than the Rwandans had. Of course we had a larger embassy in Belgrade then we had in Rwanda. The situation on the ground was different too. We had to evacuate many of our people out of Rwanda right away because they weren't safe. It was very interesting. With the Yugoslavs there was really a process of negotiation. We exchanged a couple of diplomatic notes with them going over the points that needed to be considered. They came back and asked questions about things. They actually asked for some modifications. I remember one female diplomat was going to have a baby, or the spouse of a diplomat was going to have a baby. I forget which it was. Nevertheless, it just wasn't possible for her to leave the country, so arrangements were made for him or her to be posted to their mission to the UN, which of course would not be affected by our action in the case. They also had to make determinations as to who would take care of the embassy property.

Q: We broke relations with the assumption that this is essentially a temporary thing, so they hold the property in abeyance.

DUNHAM: Some things have to be done immediately. I don't know if it was stated that this was thought to be temporary. I think in the back of everybody's minds it probably was felt that at some point in the future we are going to re-open in Belgrade and they probably were going to want to re-open in Washington. Certainly you go about it with the idea that they need to start making arrangements for their property. I think in the Yugoslav case, the property initially was turned over to the Office of Foreign Missions. I don't recall that they named a protecting power. OFM took over for all the property and took care of it. Over time some of the property was transferred to the successor states to Yugoslavia. I remember the Yugoslav diplomat we dealt with in this case. After a week or two of meetings, we had worked out all of the details and he came in for his last meeting. At the end, I walked him to the front door of the State Department. Ironically the process was not contentious; it was very businesslike. We had some issues we had to deal with, but those were resolved relatively easily under the circumstances. I was walking the diplomat out at the end of all of our meetings. I left him at the C Street entrance and shook hands with him. He said. "You know it has been nice doing business with you." Of course eventually

once things were resolved, it did take some time, but we established complete relations with the Serbians. I just attended their first national day celebration back in February. They hosted a very large event to celebrate their national day. The assistant secretary for European affairs spoke.

GEORGE KENNEY
Yugoslavian Affairs, Bureau of European Affairs
Washington, DC (1992)

In addition to Yugoslavian Affairs, George Kenney served in France, Zaire, and other tours in Washington, DC. He was interviewed 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 the 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.

ANTHONY C. ZINNI
Deputy Director of Operations, European Command
Stuttgart, Germany (1992)

General Zinni was born and raised in Pennsylvania. After graduating from Villanova College he joined the Marines, which became his lifelong career. His distinguish career took him to Vietnam, Okinawa, Philippines and Germany, where he served in senior level positions. Attaining the rank of General, Zinni served as Commander-in-Chief of CENTCOM, where he was deeply involved in worldwide missions including Somalia, Iraq and Afghanistan. General Zinnia was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

Q: So you came back. How were you looking at Yugoslavia? Was somebody sitting around making plans for Yugoslavia?

ZINNI: No. We were seeing the beginnings of things falling apart. We were starting up this; well, first of all, I got pulled off on another mission, on Operation Provide Hope in the former Soviet Union. Secretary Baker wanted to start, or he titled an international Marshall Plan, to work with the republics of the former Soviet Union to sort of build a relationship. General Galvin wanted it to connect military to military to ensure that the Russian military wasn't going to go back and try to snap things back, that this sense of hey, the winners in this are the Soviet people, they're friends, there are no winners and losers in this. So when I came back I immediately got sent to join Rich Armitage. We were running a goodwill military mission where we were taking the medical and food and other stocks we had stored for the Cold War in the mountains of Germany in Pirmasens and other places and we were moving it to the capitals of the republics for orphanages and the needy as a goodwill gesture. We were running that military operation out of EUCOM and I was coordinating it for EUCOM. We were based out of Frankfurt with Armitage and his team and I was then assigned to his team. We were working with the government, especially the Russian government, and trying to work with them on bringing in some investment, on trying to convince them to move the ruble to a convertible currency, to bring in some assistance and help and then moving toward international auditing standards, working some humanitarian efforts. Armitage was going around Europe and other places to try to create this international support for like a Marshall Plan to help them build this bridge. We could never generate that international support but I was caught up for about six or seven months doing that.

Q: What was your role?

ZINNI: I was officially the military coordinator where there was a need for a military mission like Operation Provide Hope where we did the airlift, we did the supplies, the military supplies, and delivered them the medicine and if there was any other military requirements. You know, support requirement.

I was also working the military to military contacts under General Galvin and General McCarthy, our deputy commander, where we were going over a number of other NATO generals connecting with the Russian military, holding a series of conferences the theme of which was to sort of share with them how militaries function in a democracy, building communications and bridges. So I was doing both those efforts.

And then Armitage sort of brought me into the inner circle of his team and so I was involved in some of the other economic and humanitarian issues. As you know, we were beginning to look at mortality rates and medical conditions throughout. The Russians were opening up much of their stuff to see where we could be of assistance. I had another nonmilitary effort in working with Armitage too in that area.

Q: How did you find working with the Soviet military, it was still Soviet at that point, wasn't it?

ZINNI: No.

Q: It was the Russian military at that point.

ZINNI: They were resigned to, you know Marshal _____ was the head of the Russian military. We met with their generals and senior leaders. They had just accepted it. They were resigned to whatever fate this path was going to take them on. They had no position one way or another. They weren't going to go to the streets. They weren't going to try to do anything influential in any political direction this thing took. They were wrestling with tremendous internal problems. They had Russian units stranded in Germany and elsewhere, no place to bring them back to. Soviet intervention military living in boxcars, families stranded in the former republics in Eastern Europe. They had these tremendous problems that now were beginning to surface, the hazing of troops was causing thousands of deaths in the ranks, you know. And extortions by NCOs and others, but they were really open about all this. They had a number of internal problems. They were open to our discussion of, you know, the function of the military in a democracy and all and how all that works. They would host us at these conferences. I didn't think they were particularly enthusiastic but neither were they resistant to it.

Q: Did you find it was pretty successful?

ZINNI: I think any views you might have had that there was going to be some sort of counter action, you know, to snap things back, then you realized that wasn't going to happen. In the meantime, we're also doing military to military in Eastern Europe which was much easier. I mean, Eastern Europeans were completely ready to go west and so I was going around to some of the militaries in then Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, Romania, where we were connecting to them building military relationships. I was speaking at their war colleges and other things and so we were doing that piece of it too.

Q: What were we thinking about in Yugoslavia?

ZINNI: The more prescient of our intelligence officers were saying this place is going to come apart like a cheap suitcase. Our senior intelligence officers were focused on the former Soviet

Union and ignoring it. I became convinced that the junior intelligence officers were right. When Shali became the commander of EUCOM we were asked, each of us senior staff officers, to tell him one thing we thought was very important for him to hear and at this session I told him, "Sir, the most important thing you're going to deal with in your tenure is SACEUR (Supreme Allied Commander Europe), the most important issue in crisis, is going to be Yugoslavia. It's going to come apart." I was basing this on intelligence. The senior director of intelligence, an Air Force three-star, jumped all over my case and said, "That's BS. That's not going to happen. It's Russia and the former Soviet Union. That's where he needs to be focused."

I said, "Sir, I'm just telling you this is what I think is going to happen." Of course, we were watching it as it was coming apart. Obviously, the Croats, the Serbs had been letting things fall apart within Bosnia and then the whole thing devolved. I left before...

Q: You left when?

ZINNI: In 1992, in the summer.

Q: Was anybody sitting around and saying, "All right. We'll move the First Division into Bosnia?"

ZINNI: They weren't there yet. I think there were a lot of people that were beginning to sense that this thing is going to become a crisis. But they were very reluctant on committing a military. We just now did Iraq, we did Provide Comfort; we did all this series of evacuation operations, we didn't really want to become involved in this. The debate was whether this was a European problem, whether it really should be NATO. We don't want to do a US-led coalition. Maybe it should be the UN. NATO was still wrestling with out of area stuff.

Q: Did you feel you were getting tagged as sort of the person to do exactly what the line officers in the military didn't want and that was these equivalent to peripheral things?

ZINNI: I was getting tagged to do all of this stuff. I mean, I was always gone and I was involved in all of these weird things. I mean, there was the business with Armitage and humanitarian operations, these strange security lash ups, the interaction with NGOs, the diplomatic missions. But I loved it. My sense was that everybody else was beginning to feel this is the future. You've got to step ahead into the future.

Q: I've talked to people involved in the sort of the diplomatic Foreign Service, saying that their impression of the military was well, if we go into Yugoslavia, we'll have to have half a million troops and all. In other words, saying we can't do it. This had become the name of the game. Even our government was very unhappy. We had sort of Yugoslav hands in the State Department and elsewhere.

ZINNI: You have to understand what was happening. At the same time, despite General Galvin's warning, we were into this peace dividend; cut the size of the military in Europe. We don't need them anymore. Bring them home. He was trying to say, "whoa." Before we do anything, let's understand what we want to do. Where is NATO going, how many troops do we need to have

here to be a significant player in NATO? What are the potential threats rising up out of this because, you know, you're popping the cork and it's going to be a different kind of world. Nobody was listening. We were getting congressmen coming over saying, and we were in free fall. So the Army and the Air Force particularly in Europe were seeing these tremendous reductions in forces, these cuts. Officers were suddenly getting their pink slips and senior NCOs. So the military was just sort of evaporating before your eyes out there. Over 300 some thousand going down very rapidly trying to reorganize, get rid of some of the infrastructure we had, and questions within NATO, do we even need NATO anymore? Should it go away? It was total, I don't think chaos, but there was such a confused state. There were so many things going on positive and negative. The last thing somebody wanted to do was get involved, get us all involved and jump the gun into something that maybe wasn't necessary. Would Yugoslavia really come apart? Is this going to be a smaller conflict? We don't want to take this on as a US-led coalition. Should this be a NATO mission? Is it appropriate for NATO? Is it in the charter? Is it a European issue? Remember now, Europe was trying to separate from NATO. There was this WEU (Western European Union) and these other efforts that wanted a non-NATO, all-European alternative to NATO.

Q: And this was a little later, but Europeans were saying Yugoslavia is our problem and we'll take care of it.

ZINNI: I don't think it was that clear. Germany was in the midst of trying to figure out reunification. Kohl was announcing the mark was going to be equivalent, that they're going to retire senior officers but keep the Eastern European military mechanism. There were so many things going on. I don't think anybody was that focused on it and was willing to commit to it. There were too many things going on that were affecting the military and the politics and everything else in Europe. It was in a state. It was an interesting time.

KATHERINE SCHWERING

**Analyst, Former Yugoslavia States, Bureau of Intelligence and Research
Washington, DC (1992-1993)**

Ms. Schwering was born in Wyoming and raised abroad and various localities in the US. She was educated at Northwestern University and Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). She joined Chase Bank, where she was trained as an international economist, and worked with them until joining the State Department in 1978. During her career Ms. Schwering worked primarily on international economic, monetary and terrorist matters in Washington and abroad. Her overseas posts were in Burundi, Yugoslavia and Turkey. Ms. Schwering was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

SCHWERING: After that I was recruited into INR into a political job. I had not wanted it. This was '92. In September '91 both Slovenia and Croatia had succeeded from Yugoslavia. There had been some fighting. There were UN peacekeepers in Croatia in '91. In '92, particularly in March and April, Bosnia had begun to go back. The Bosnian Serbs had started to take over parts of

eastern Bosnia and slaughter non-Serbs. Yugoslavia, for some reason has always been on the front burner. In '89 I had attended an inter-agency conference on Yugoslavia at Airlie House. We determined that Yugoslavia had not been a major issue since 1948 and agreed that it was going to be a back-burner country from there on. That lasted less than two years.

Q: Well, it has always been a critical country because of its location and borders.

SCHWERING: Yeah, but at this point the Soviet Union had broken up and so had COMECON and the eastern bloc. There no longer was an eastern bloc.

Q: Other things got involved.

SCHWERING: Well, actually, not really. 'Muslim' was a nationality designation, not a religion in Yugoslavia. In the 1974 constitution, which was the operative constitution when I was there, Tito had instructed that Muslim be added to Serb, Albanian and Croat as a nationality for census purposes. I have heard that this was to prevent Bosnia from being dominated by either Serbs or Croats. But the fact is some of the biggest arguments I had with Serbs were over the word Muslim. We Americans would say it is a religion. They would say, "No it is not. It is a nationality." However, they knew how the rest of the world viewed Muslims, and the Bosnian Serbs used that to their advantage in '92 and started claiming these were religious people. Everybody forgot that since Tito came into power, that while the practice of religion was not banned, it was so discouraged that if you were seen practicing your religion, you wouldn't be able to get a job. You would also be kicked out of the League of Communists. You had almost 50 years here of people almost never practicing their religion. These were not Muslims. In fact, the very first time President Izetbegovic of Bosnia ever set foot into a mosque was when he was brought to New York in '93 for negotiations with Karadzic. He visited a Mosque in New York. These are not religious people.

Q: I had an interpreter who had been a captain in the Bosnian army when I was doing election monitoring in Bosnia. I asked him what his background was and he said he was a Muslim. I said, "When was the last time you have been in a mosque?" He said, "Well, I never have been in a mosque." As we were sitting there eating...

SCHWERING: Grilled pork and...

Q: And drinking beer. Right.

SCHWERING: Not Schlibovitz?

Q: No, beer, good piwo.

SCHWERING: They literally used to laugh at those crazy Muslims in the Middle East.

I was brought on board in June of '92 by a group of Yugoslav experts both on the desk and in INR who heard that I had landed in town. Apparently, I had a really good reputation from my tour in Yugoslavia. There had been 20 or 30 bidders on this political analyst position in INR for

Yugoslavia. INR had rejected all of them. When I hit town, they put me in the job. I didn't know it was such a hotly sought after position until later. But it turns out I was perfectly suited for the job. Politics is easy. I mean, if you can read a newspaper and can think, you can do political reporting. Most people don't realize that it is the only cone in the Foreign Service that requires no special knowledge or training. Economics requires a great deal. In Consular, we administer laws and it requires very specific training. In Admin, of course, you have to learn all the regulations. It just never ceased to amaze me how Political officers are considered the elite cone, and yet they are the least...

Q: Well, it goes back to academia and all that.

SCHWERING: It goes back to what we used to do, which was mostly political.

Q: Well, you were there from when to when?

SCHWERING: I agreed to a two-year tour. Man, was it wild. I have never seen inter-agency fighting like that.

Q: This would be '92 to '94?

SCHWERING: Yes. However, I only worked from June of '92 to September of '93 as the political analyst. This was the key period of the war in Bosnia.

Q: Let's talk about that period. In the first place, where did INR fit in in all of this?

SCHWERING: One of the most interesting things was that in those days you had the Secretary's morning summary. That is like a little in-house newspaper for the Secretary of State. It is produced 365 days a year by INR. They would pick 11 to 13 of the most important things going on in the world to put in what we called, "the front of the book." The back of the book, or BOBS, were one or two longer analytical pieces, but never longer than a page. This was really a sound bite summary, but it was very good. This is what INR did.

All this time from '91 to '95, we didn't want to get involved in Yugoslavia. Our policy, believe it or not, was that we had no strategic interest in it. For some reason, all the time I was in INR, it was the lead article in the Secretary's morning summary even though we were not doing anything with regard to it. I think that for the 13 or 14 months that I was a political analyst, the reporting in Bosnia and Yugoslavia was not the lead article in the Secretary's morning summary. That is the interest it garnered in Washington over even the breakup of the Soviet Union. What was happening therein did not carry the weight that the Bosnia issue did. I still don't understand why.

It ended up being three of us. We worked as a team. There was me, the political analyst. There was the political-military analyst, Paula Pickering, and there was our refugee and relief guy, Lee Schwartz. Lee and Paula were Civil Service. They were permanent INR people. The three of us would put together the piece every single day. It got to the point where the editors of the Secretary's morning summary didn't even touch our stuff. We tried to minimize what we put in

there. This was a very short summary of everything that went on everywhere in the former Yugoslavia from relief to battles to secret negotiations – you name it.

Every now and then we would be ordered to cut back because the three of us would put all the info together in one article. Then we would start getting complaints. The editors told us they would get complaints from the seventh floor that they weren't getting enough information. Then, we would be allowed to put a lot more in. After a few months the editors just let us do our thing. If you go back and look at it, it is the most accurate reporting on the war. It was much better than the CIA's frankly; and DIA's (Defense Intelligence Agency) was awful.

Q: Where were you getting your information?

SCHWERING: From all sources. The INR is on line with other agencies. It gets all State traffic and almost all of the intelligence reporting of the military. It had a unique, dedicated, highly secure computer system that was eons ahead of the rest of the State Department. I would go through 800-1000 documents, intelligence reports, a day. Actually, the press was one of our best sources.

Q: You were getting what the CIA had, weren't you?

SCHWERING: Not just CIA, but all intelligence.

Q: Yes. Did you feel what was coming out was one, timely and two, pertinent or not?

SCHWERING: From the agency? Well, you have to remember we didn't have any people on the ground in Bosnia. I forget when we had to shut our embassy. That was probably in '94-'95. Dick Miles was the chargé then. We had people in Croatia, Serbia and everywhere else. However, in Bosnia, we only had a USIA office there and that was shut down when the fighting began.

The United States refused to join the UN troops in Bosnia because the policy of the United States government was that it would never put its military under the command of a non-American and being under the command of the UN was considered being under the command of a non-American. I believe we have since changed that policy; we did with Macedonia. What you had was UNPROFOR (United Nations Protection Force) in Bosnia. What UN troops there were there in Croatia. In fact, outside of our embassy in Croatia and Serbia, we had no troops on the ground. We were not in the UN operations. I don't think we even participated in UN observer missions.

This was the way I characterized what we had handed over to the Europeans; it was their fight. We had taken on Iraq in '90-'91. What we did when Yugoslavia started breaking up was to say to the Europeans, "Okay, this time we will hold your coat. You go in and do it." We literally sat back. We didn't want to get involved. President Clinton went there and said the American people would never support our getting involved in Yugoslavia. So we were not involved. We had no one on the ground doing any reporting. So it wasn't really a question of what the CIA could come up with. It was an embassy in Croatia interviewing refugees who had gotten out of Bosnia and refugees in Germany who were largely debriefed.

Q: I suppose news accounts too.

SCHWERING: That's right. News accounts were the best. That point plus other kinds of technical intelligence we could pick up. Those were our main sources. Plus anything we could convince our allies to share with us. But, we weren't involved.

Q: So, we had this policy of, 'we are not involved.' Jim Baker's "We don't have a dog in that fight" was well known.

SCHWERING: This amazed me. It was INR's, yet it was the lead article in the Secretary's morning summary.

Q: Now we are talking about the Clinton administration. Secretary of State Warren Christopher. What were we saying? You all were reporting stuff, but were you indirectly developing a pushing forward of something we should probably do or not?

SCHWERING: No. One of the most important things about intelligence in the U.S. government is that when you are in intelligence, you are absolutely to stay out of policy. Your job is to report, 'the facts and nothing but the facts Ma'am,' and that is what we did. Actually, it made the job easy. We were very accurate. I was very careful.

As you know, Yugoslavia is one of those countries you really have to have served in if you want to report on it. You are not going to 'get' that country unless you have been there. I had been there in three different capacities and spoke the language very well. Reports from the country didn't start pouring in until 3:00 in the afternoon. This is logical when you consider the time difference of six hours, and journalists on the ground only filing news reports at the end of the day in Yugoslavia and the amount of time it took to get those reports on the wires. I got an exemption from coming in early (which isn't my nature anyway), because we were always working until 10:00 or 11:00 at night, and weekends too. Often, when I was on duty, I would go to work twelve days in a row. I never got any compensation for that. It was exhausting, but it was fun. Paula and Lee and I would compete. Our rule became, 'last person to get their piece in to the daily summary for the secretary was the one who had to put all three pieces together, edit and make it go smoothly.' As a result, each of us tried to get out of there as soon as possible. We were a great team. We trusted each other. It was just an amazing cooperation. We all agreed on the analysis, and we had the facts straight for the Secretary of State.

Q: Well, among yourselves when you were looking at this, did you reach a consensus that it seemed that the UN operation and the European operation just couldn't do it?

SCHWERING: Well, the UN operation was a disaster. When they named that Japanese official as head, my thoughts were that you could not put a Japanese person in a situation like that. Culturally he would be unable to bring peace as they believe in compromise. It is a wonderful culture, but does not produce the type of person that is going to take a Croat or a Serb by the necktie and yank him and say, "You will do this." It didn't lead to anything – let me put it that way. It was really the UN that was in the lead. Because we weren't participating in UN peacekeeping forces or in their observer missions, we really had no handle in it.

The official view in the U.S. was all sides are bad. However, we knew that wasn't true in the intelligence community. At the same time, I have never worked on Yugoslavia where it didn't lead to the Balkanization of the office where I worked. After the country broke up, Slovenia and Croatia were handed off to a colleague of mine, while I continued to handle Serbia, Bosnia and, during the war, the rest of the country. Huge fights would break out in INR because people became partisan for the countries they covered. The analyst for Croatia and Slovenia, who incidentally had no experience in the country, would come out with these pieces that I would refuse to clear and visa versa. He would believe what the Croats said, and if there is one thing you have to know about that country it is you can't believe what anybody says. Also, the DIA reporting out of Serbia was awful.

Q: Were you there when the horror stories came back?

SCHWERING: Oh, yes.

Q: The horror stories resulted in the well publicized resignation of three officers, who interestingly enough had never served in the area.

SCHWERING: That is what I said. Working on this county leads to the Balkanization of the office. It got worse. Somebody leaked a classified paper. It wasn't us. While I figured it was someone in AID, the main source of leaks anytime they happened were the White House and the military. INR never leaked, nor did the desk. So this paper on assistance got out somehow. It wasn't a terribly sensitive paper. At that point, Ralph Johnson was the principal deputy assistant secretary in the European Bureau. He is an economic officer, and really quite good in general. However, he didn't seem, in my view to be performing that well at this time in EUR. So, at some point, the front office of EUR called in the entire Yugoslav desk, accused them of having supplied this leak, and told them that from there on in they would have nothing to do with policy in Yugoslavia. I forget what year that was – '93 or '94.

These were all innocent people. One of them was Janet Bogue, who later became an ambassador to a central Asian state. Another was Anna Borg, who is now a deputy assistant secretary of state in EB. These were really good people. One of the things about Yugoslavia from '89 on is that that office had had its pick of Foreign Service officers. It only had the best. It was just devastating to be treated like children, and to be told EUR knew they had leaked – which, in fact, they hadn't. There had been no investigation and they were cut off from formulating policy. It was taken up to the front office. Janet Bogue, who was the political desk officer, said the White House then dumped all of its unanswered mail on the desk, and said answer them. These were thousands of letters they had never gotten around to answering. That is what the desk officers were relegated to doing for awhile. It was appalling.

But, as I said, you work on Yugoslavia and it is going to break up the office you work in. I found that later, too. Every time I worked on it, huge fights would break out, because as you know, the Yugoslavs are very engaging people. You like them; you want to believe them.

Q: I found this during this time here in the job I have. Friends of mine who are old Yugoslav

hands come in and try to tell me that the Serbs aren't really guilty of stuff.

SCHWERING: They are still telling you that?

Q: Yes. These were guys who were Yugoslav hands. I had been a Yugoslav hand and I had served five years in Serbia, but boy, I just felt they were doing the dirty and they were the basic villains in the thing. Tudjman and the Croatians had their part too.

SCHWERING: They were.

Q: Was there a sense of frustration or something about, "God, we really have got to go in there?" Warren Zimmerman, our former ambassador there, later said that a whiff of grape shot at a certain point could probably have stopped something.

SCHWERING: Stopped it. Yes, that is true, and I agree. You have to understand he changed his policy 180 degrees during his tenure there. He initially said we shouldn't get involved; as there was no problem. Then, later he said, "Whoops. We should have gotten involved."

Q: I think we all thought that the Europeans said that was a European matter; and that they would take care of it. I think there was a great sigh of relief everywhere when we got involved.

SCHWERING: Well, yes and no. The European attitude toward the Balkans hasn't changed in a couple of centuries. My impression is again that they didn't go in, and it was the UN that went in. The Europeans sort of had this shrug of the shoulders approach that, "This is the Balkans. They are always falling on each other. What do you expect?" I don't think they had any great hope of solving it. However, we pushed them a lot to solve it. We had the Dayton negotiations and all these other things going on. It was very complicated.

Q: Well, what happened? Was there any talk about resigning or protesting the slap on the hand you all got or anything else within INR?

SCHWERING: No. It is one of the few times I felt I was really doing something good. When you think about it, I usually prefer to be in the action. But somebody had to be doing the job we were doing which was getting the facts to the policy makers. I don't think you could have found a better team than the three of us. I knew the country, and the other two were very precise, very factual. We did not try and skew anything in any way. We weren't getting any reporting out of Bosnia in early '92, because the focus was still on Croatia. Peace keepers sent to stop the fighting in Croatia had only arrived in January in '92.

Q: Vukovar and that area.

SCHWERING: Yes. As a result of that, Tudjman kicked most of the Serbs out of Croatia. That is when all of the foreign policy apparatus in Europe and the U.S. were focused on Croatia. The Serbs, in effect, took advantage of that by starting to ethnically cleanse eastern Bosnia. We didn't see that until March or April, we began to realize. Well, for a couple of months, the Serbs had been killing and driving non-Serbs out. This information only started dribbling out. I was not on

the job until June, and it was in the summer that the scope of what the Serbs had done in Bosnia really began to come out. I literally thought to myself, "If this is what I suspect it might be, I am going to make sure this government never says it didn't know what was going on." What I did from then on in was just try and get the facts and report them. Only once, in August of '92, when the horrific stories really hit the fan, the Serbs had set up these concentration camps of Bosnian Muslim men, and we first began getting the photographs and reporting in the summer, that the State Department was challenged at a press conference when they were asked, "Did the U.S. government know this ethnic cleansing and murdering was going on and what have you done about it?" Of course, the seventh floor came screaming to INR saying, "Have you been reporting on this or anything?" And all we had to do was just pick up all the secretary's morning summaries and wave it in their faces, because I had made sure as soon as I could confirm something on the ethnic cleaning that it was in the morning summary. And I never put anything in there that wasn't confirmed. I think that maybe I made two mistakes the whole 14 months I was on the job. I made sure the administration could never say it didn't know there was ethnic cleansing. I didn't want a repeat of WWII. We succeeded. It was important.

Q: Well, did you at any point get somebody from say the Secretary or something say, "Oh, this is too gruesome!"? You know, you are telling us about the massacres, the rapes, the expulsions and all. I mean it was pretty gruesome. Were you getting any people saying, "This isn't good breakfast reading for the Secretary or can't you tell us something nice?"

SCHWERING: No. INR is actually part of the intelligence community, not part of State. No, the job of the intelligence analyst is to tell it as it is. There is no policy, no spin. And I can tell you, INR is independent. It would not allow spin, but we never got any pressure, none. We were considered well around town. We did more accurate reporting than the agency. My theory about that is they have got so many people on each country they have broken it down so much that no analyst has the overall picture. INR has so few people. I was covering every aspect except military and relief. The economics, the political infighting, the contacts of Serbia and of the others with other countries, the sanctions issue and whether the Serbs were breaking it, and financial hanky panky. You name it; I was covering it. CIA, however, have bureaus for each aspect. You have a lot of young analysts over at CIA who have no experience and can't really assess any issue.

Q: Also, there is a layering process which tends to lead to modifications. Each time you go up, you qualify. It just happens in any organization.

SCHWERING: This is what I loved about INR. I just loved that. It is the only place in the State Department you can be honest. Our boss, the office director, might look at our stuff. However, basically, the rule in INR is the analyst is the one who knows. Our stuff in the Secretary's Morning Summary was never changed by anyone above us. The only person who would have changed it was the office director. But, as I said, they trusted us. We put the stuff together long after everyone had left and then put it into the editors who work overnight. But no, there was absolutely no pressure.

Now, we would also be asked to do memos from time to time. At times, people would try to put a political angle on those, or literally change the facts. So, when it would happen to me it was

because of people who knew that as you say, “the rest of the building didn’t want to hear the bad. They just wanted to hear the good.” I had some deputy assistant secretaries do that and send back the changed memo. And it would often be factually wrong. I would re-write it the way it should be. If I could accommodate their view, I would, but if I couldn’t, I sent it back altered to what it should be. If they changed it again and sent it back to me, I would take my name off the piece, put their name on it and do what they wanted. But my name never went on anything I didn’t agree with. Maybe that is why I had such a good reputation. But that is the only thing to do; I will do what my boss wants me to, but my name is not going on it.

Q: While you were there, were you seeing any change in thought among your colleagues in the bureau or anything else? There were incidents, for example, when the Dutch were forced to stand by in Srebrenica, and there was the so-called ‘market place massacre’ and all. Was that all during your watch?

SCHWERING: Yep.

Q: Things began to change.

SCHWERING: Let me take that back. It was August or September of ’93. I was getting elbowed out of the way by my immediate supervisor, who wanted all the glory. When I was invited to a meeting, he would take the message and go to the meeting and never tell me. I wasn’t going to put up with that because I was doing all the work. So, I switched positions and became director of Southern Europe. I had analysts under me. I handled Greece, but I also supervised the analysts on Spain, Portugal, Cyprus, Turkey.

Q: Well, when did this happen?

SCHWERING: This was August of ’93. However, in the European office in INR, we all had to rotate to do the weekend duty on Yugoslavia. Again, it wasn’t just European issues. However, mostly everybody worked Saturday and Sunday to do the reporting for the Secretary’s morning summary on Yugoslavia. So, of course, I would skim through that every day. I could do that fast, so I continued to report, but not as frequently – not every day. So, I still followed it. Remember, we had no one on the ground. You have to have people on the ground to get signals. The Dutch had low battery power as I have read since; they couldn’t even communicate with their own government. This is another one of those stories that only kind of leaked out over time.

We thought something was going on, but until we went back and looked at other kinds of intelligence, like imagery (you have to know what to look for) we did not know this was happening. In fact, the official view of the State Department was the Serbs would not go after Srebrenica or Gorazde. There were five UN protected areas in eastern Bosnia that were set up in ’92 and UN troops were in each. They were in Srebrenica. I can’t remember if they were in Gorazde. But, unbeknownst to us, the Serbs first took over the top two northern most small ones of these.

That is the point at which the U.S. really started pressing the EU, Serbs, Croats and Bosnians to sit down and negotiate. Things sort of hit a little bit of a stalemate at that point. I think this may

be when Secretary Vance got involved with Lord David Owen to negotiate. At some point we started stepping in, I think this was before '95, and it was just to urge the parties to negotiate.

Paula and I and everybody, including INR and every intelligence agency, thought the Serbs would stop there and they wouldn't dare take on Srebrenica, which had a Dutch peacekeeping contingent. However, Paul Pickering and I sat there and said, "Well, why wouldn't they?" If they can take over the whole of Eastern Bosnia, why would they be content to leave these pockets? In other words, neither of us said they were going to do it, but neither of us could see any reason for them not to try and take over these last pockets. Indeed, Paul and I turned out to be correct.

At this point, we were contacted by the Dutch who wanted to see what we knew. [There is this professor at the Dutch institute for war studies or something. He has written a book on Srebrenica.] Nobody, even the Dutch, knew what was happening until after it happened. In true Serb style, it appears, now, after the fact, that General Mladic, the Bosnian Serb general, didn't even decide to take Srebrenica until a couple or three days beforehand. That is pretty typical; Serbs don't tend to plan ahead. So nobody really had any warning. Nobody knew. However, the U.S. administration was absolutely shocked, shocked that the Bosnian Serbs took that over.

That is when we began to get serious. Actually, I wasn't involved in the negotiations; that is when they brought Holbrooke in. I am pretty sure there was some effort to do a trading off of territories, like we will give the Serbs Gorazde in Bosnia if they will give us back the eastern part of Sarajevo or something. Anyway, that is when the Dayton negotiations took place. Actually, that was '95. But, as I said, everybody was kind of at a stalemate. Several incidents made the U.S. get serious. First, Srebrenica happened. One of the cars carrying some of the high level officials we had sent to Sarajevo drove off a mountain top and the officials were killed. And finally, the Bosnian Serbs took some UN peace keepers hostage, and chained them to likely military targets for NATO planes. Those all happened in the summer of '95, and that is when the U.S. said, "We have had enough; we are going there." At that point, everybody realized that the fighting probably wasn't going to stop. Negotiations had been going on for over two years and had gotten nowhere. So, we got involved.

Q: You mentioned imagery. You have to have somebody who knows how to use the stuff, don't you? Was Imagery part of your portfolio?

SCHWERING: Well, we would get write-ups of what was seen, and then on occasion some was physically sent over. But that is more of a military need.

Q: I was just thinking...

SCHWERING: On the other hand, it was how we subsequently found some sites of atrocities. But, as I say, you have to know where to look. Without other types of information that point one to particular coordinates or areas, what you see are just huge reams of images coming in from all sources, all day long. The intel community can't possibly look at every square inch, so they look at where they think they are going to find something.

Q: Were you getting information from our allies, the French, the Dutch, the British, and others

who were in there. Was this part of our resources?

SCHWERING: Well, they were in there under the UN, and of course, we got UN reporting as we were a member of the UN. That is not classified or anything. Let me just say that there is always somewhat of a cooperation with any ally, and even non-allies, so there was no change in that regard. This did not include the French, who were not very cooperative.

Q: Well yeah, the French at one point...

SCHWERING: Yes, they were partly to blame.

Q: ... they got someone like the vice president of Bosnia or something was shot inside a French vehicle.

SCHWERING: No, it was a UN vehicle. It was an armored APC (armored personnel carrier).

Q: I thought it was French troops who were there.

SCHWERING: I can't remember.

Q: Yes, it was the French.

SCHWERING: That is quite possible. What happened, if I recall this particular incident correctly, was this APC carrying some government officials was traveling through Sarajevo, and Bosnian Serbs stopped the vehicle and said, "We want to look inside." Whoever the UN troops were with the vehicle said, "Sure," and opened the door. The Serbs leaned in and shot the guy. That was stupid.

There is something else that has come out. The main problem was that some of the first UN peacekeeping troops in Sarajevo were Nigerian, Ukrainian, and Nepalese, among others. These were awful UN troops. They did not do anything to protect the city. The first thing they did was set up a black market in prostitution. APCs were used for smuggling stuff in and out. The human trafficking thing that is such a big issue now started there, and it was awful. It was UN troops that set it up and profited from it. We were sitting there in INR getting good information about these awful things that were going on, UN money that was being stolen by peacekeeping troops and stuff like that. INR couldn't get this out. Even when we did get involved, the administration, and particularly the U.S. military, just didn't want to hear about it.

Q: Did you get any feedback, say from international organizations, IO, which is the UN desk at the State Department. Did they get unhappy if you reported things that cast aspersions on the conduct of UN forces?

SCHWERING: We didn't know. Whatever we wrote up at the morning summary, or memos, or whatever else went out in paper to these other offices for them to read. We rarely had face-to-face interaction.

No, nobody reacted unhappily, because they realized that was how they were to find out what was really going on, as opposed to very biased reporting out of Croatia for a good part of this time, from our – I don't know if it was an embassy or a consulate then in '92.

Q: An embassy. This was Peter Galbraith.

SCHWERING: No, it was before him. Before him, it was a State Department officer. We got our first knowledge of atrocities from people who had gotten out of the country, women who had been raped or had family members killed or men who had escaped. It was our embassy in Croatia which started debriefing a lot of these. Our first 800 interviews were out of there. Well, the chargé there, whose name I can't remember, didn't believe these stories. He would literally often add a paragraph to the end of some horrific rape and torture story saying, "Yeah, but she says this. No one witnessed it, you know. Maybe it is true, but probably it is not." It was so bad. I was at the Yugoslav office desk once, when the deputy director picked up the phone and just really reamed out the chargé in Zagreb, because he didn't want to believe this was going on.

So, you really had to know which post's reporting you could trust. A lot of times you couldn't trust it. The Serb military, particularly in Belgrade, had our military absolutely bamboozled. We would get all these DIA reports coming in saying Serb General so and so told me that they are not in fact bombing that part of Bosnia and they don't have any troops in that part of Bosnia and the Bosnian Serbs didn't do this. I mean it is like the DIA lacked the perspective and analytical gene. Maybe that is what DIA reporting is supposed to be. But, when we got our first general in there who was General Clark, General Mladic bamboozled him, took him up to Banja Luka. They posed for pictures with each other's hats on and gave each other pistols as gifts. I mean the reporting...

Q: This was Wesley Clark.

SCHWERING: General Wesley Clark. The reporting on that very first visit to Sarajevo by his staff and stuff was so pro Serb it just stunned us. Of course, that eventually changed, but I can tell you General Clark was not popular in INR at that point in time. But the Serbs could do that, and they had the French on their side the whole time. I think I pointed this out before, but what most people don't realize is the last nation to help the Serbs in their battle against the Turks and you know whoever, were the French. There is a monument to the French from WWI in the main park in Belgrade, Kalemegdan.

They don't have a statue to the Soviets. The Russians, as I said before, refused to help them in their battle for independence from the Ottoman Turks. However, the French helped them out. The Serbs are actually not close to the Greeks – that is a myth. They aren't close to the Russians. They are close to the French. Unfortunately when the UN divided up Bosnia into spheres of influence for the purposes of easier management, they gave the Serbian part of Bosnia to the French because of this connection. They should have realized the French could not be objective.

Q: And the French have Mladic, and Karadzic are still going strong somewhere.

SCHWERING: Oh yeah. In fact, after '95 we suspect the French of leaking some key

intelligence, and tipping off the Bosnian Serbs about some actions such as an overflight that NATO might take

That is the way we did start participating. NATO would fly over Yugoslavia and do AWAC surveys in '93-'94.

RONALD J. NEITZKE
Principal Officer/Deputy Chief of Mission
Zagreb (1992-1996)

Ronald Neitzke was born and raised in Minnesota and educated at Sts Thomas College, the University of Minnesota and Johns Hopkins University (SAIS). Entering the Foreign Service in 1971 he served in Oslo before studying Serbo-Croatian, the beginning of his career as specialist in East European Affairs. In Washington, Mr. Neitzke served on the Policy Planning Staff at the State Department and was Country Director for Czech and Albanian Affairs. In London he was Deputy Political Counselor, and in Zagreb he served as Deputy Chief of Mission during the conflicts of the split-up of Yugoslavia. He also had several assignments in Washington in the personnel field. Mr. Neitzke was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2006.

Q: Well then, you got out there when, and what was it like when you arrived?

NEITZKE: I went out in July of '92, a bit early. This is generally not done, but because of the staffing situation in Zagreb – it was a skeleton crew to begin with and almost all of them would be departing soon - I wanted some overlap with my predecessor, Mike Einik.

I recall landing in Zagreb with my wife and children on a nearly empty Croatian Airlines flight from Frankfurt, on one of the three or so planes they then had in their new fleet. The military situation was still sufficiently tenuous that very few other airlines were flying into Zagreb. The airport was eerily quiet, virtually deserted. Zagreb itself looked more or less normal at first glance, although it was already home to tens of thousands of displaced Croats and Bosnian refugees, housed in camps and various public buildings in and around the city.

I spent a week with Einik, learning as much as I could about ConGen operational and staffing issues and combining some of his farewell calls with my introductory calls. Washington had recognized Croatia and Slovenia in April but had held off on establishing diplomatic relations with either, so for the moment I also covered Slovenia and did a round of calls with Einik in Ljubljana as well. It turned out that that would be the only time I ever dealt with Slovenia.

Q: What was the relationship like at this point between the Consulate General and our Embassy in Belgrade? Or was there any relationship at all?

NEITZKE: Warren Zimmerman, our Ambassador, had been withdrawn from Belgrade in early

May 1992 to protest Serbian actions in Bosnia. The Charge was Bob Rackmales. Though operationally cut off from Belgrade – to travel between the posts one had to take a long, circuitous route through Hungary – we were nonetheless still technically subordinate to them. Contact between us was limited: the odd phone call, info copies of each others' cables, an occasional TDY-er traveling up from Belgrade to help out. We were, in effect, on our own, but as a ConGen still lacked certain authorities. The only friction in this several week period was over which of us should get the additional reporting officers the Department was considering sending out in response to pressures to get more reporting on Bosnia.

Q: I do not quite understand. I realize this is sort of an amorphous thing, but there you were in Croatia, and things were happening in Bosnia, and you are suggesting there was doubt about who should cover that. What exactly was your responsibility for Bosnia?

NEITZKE: Fair question. Let's address that now, then, because, as you'll see, much of my time and energy in Croatia was in fact devoted to Bosnia. But I'll need to digress for just a minute and recall the old days – I think we talked about this much earlier, regarding my Belgrade tour in the mid-1970s - before Yugoslavia's disintegration. Embassy Belgrade then covered Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia itself and Bosnia for the purpose of political and economic reporting, consular services, and so forth. The ConGen in Zagreb covered Croatia and Slovenia. The lines were clearly drawn; Belgrade covered Bosnia.

As the situation in Bosnia rapidly deteriorated in the spring of 1992, however, the Embassy began severely restricting official travel into the area, so much so that nearly all Belgrade reporting on what was happening in Bosnia from the spring of 1992 onward resulted from sporadic phone calls to Bosnian contacts or debriefings of UN, other international, or NGO aid workers returning from the area. By the time I arrived in Zagreb, even that reporting had slowed, as the balance of useful Bosnian reporting contacts had swung heavily in our direction.

UNPROFOR had moved its headquarters to Zagreb after the Serbian siege of Sarajevo made it problematic to remain there and after a brief, abortive attempt to set up shop in Belgrade, of all places. UNHCR's Special Representative for the Former Yugoslavia was headquartered in Zagreb, out of which they ran the largest part of a growing Bosnian relief operation. A rapidly growing number of aid organizations were also doing most of their runs into Bosnia from Croatia. Nearly all air access to Sarajevo – under UN auspices – was out of Zagreb. And, at any given time, half of the Bosnian government was in Zagreb, as Croatia temporarily became home to hundreds of thousands of Bosnian Muslim refugees.

Yet amid this incredibly rich reporting environment, especially compared to Belgrade at that time, Zagreb had only a couple full-time reporting officers. Even so, Embassy Belgrade was extremely reluctant to surrender its prerogative, either its right to render the definitive field judgment on what was happening in Bosnia, or even to acknowledge that our comparative reporting potentials regarding Bosnia had changed dramatically. We were asking for more reporting officers and Rackmales was insisting that whatever additional staff were sent out should go to Belgrade. But, as I mentioned, that situation was short-lived. Within weeks of my arrival, we announced our intention to establish full diplomatic relations with Zagreb – and Ljubljana – and to establish an Embassy, which we did in late August of 1992. Our subsequent contact with Embassy Belgrade was minimal, although tensions arose, fairly sharp, open

disagreements in a few cases, once we then began ratcheting up our own reporting and analysis on what was happening in Bosnia.

Q: But what about Slovenia? You weren't ever going to be dually accredited, or were you?

NEITZKE: No. As I said, I had only one, introductory round of meetings with government leaders in Ljubljana. Once diplomatic relations were announced, Washington handled Slovenia directly; we weren't involved, except to render occasional TDY assistance to our Embassy there.

Q: Did we have anything there to build upon?

NEITZKE: We had a USIS (United States Information Services) reading room there. This was a holdover from, well, from way back. In the old days we had covered Yugoslavia not just from Belgrade and Zagreb but with reading rooms, small libraries, American centers in all of the republic capitals, terrific bang for the buck investments. So that USIS facility in Ljubljana was the nub of what would become a small American Embassy.

Q: Well, when you got to Zagreb, how good would you say the Consul General's relationships were with the Croatian Government?

NEITZKE: Einik was personally respected around town. Since he represented the United States, he had to be taken seriously. But up until Zimmerman's departure in May 1992, he, Zimmermann, was the senior American official in the country. Zimmerman had visited Zagreb a number of times and both he and Einik had made clear to everyone that America wasn't coming to Croatia's defense; they were on their own as far as we were concerned. So there was a somewhat stiff formality to the relationship, because in Einik's last year there these people had at times been in a nearly life and death struggle from which we were standing aside. And Tudjman had a pretty good idea how he personally, and Croatia's cause, were regarded in Washington. Still, and notwithstanding all the Germans were doing for them, the U.S. was the Western power they most looked to, they wanted to be close to, whose long-term support they needed most. So they were generally friendly and solicitous.

Q: What was your impression of how the Europeans, their Ambassadors by that time, I suppose, were regarded? And how did they treat you?

NEITZKE: Having taken the lead in the EC's recognition of Croatia in early 1992, the Germans were obviously popular in Zagreb. But even the Germans didn't have that large an Embassy, and most of the other European embassies were very small. The Croatian Government treated them all with the utmost courtesy; they were at pains to get the diplomatic formalities correct, to be seen as a real, functioning government. Most of the Western Ambassadors struck me as competent, astute observers, not overly sympathetic to the Croats but not exhibiting the trained-in-Belgrade perspective either, although several of them had, as I had, served earlier in Belgrade. I had a lot of contact with them, especially in that first year, and came to regard a number of them as friends as well as colleagues. And they tended to search me out for information that they weren't getting, or for my assessment of this or that, which partly reflected, I'm sure, the disproportionate amount of contact that I had with Tudjman and other senior officials. In fact,

recognition of our, let's say, comparative advantage in knowing what was going on only grew with time. But it was a good group of Ambassadors, all in all, and, my title notwithstanding, they dealt freely and often with me as a peer.

Q: Well, how did you find Tadjman at first?

NEITZKE: In my initial conversation with him, one of the first things he said to me was, in essence, I'm sure you must have heard a lot of bad things about me in the halls of the State Department. He was half grinning, but only half. Of course, I said he was mistaken, but we both knew where things stood. In fact, his Defense Minister, ex-Canadian businessman Gojko Susak, whom I met early on and had frequent dealings with, used to recount how, in one early meeting at the State Department, he had been shouted at by an irate, finger-waving, senior official, swearing that only over Washington's dead body would Croatia ever become independent.

In personal terms, Tadjman didn't fit the image of him that I'd gained in Washington. That image was based heavily on Zimmerman's read of Tadjman from their several meetings. Warren described Tadjman not only as an ardent nationalist, which he was, but as an almost buffoon-like character, temperamental, humorless, racist toward Serbs, probably anti-Semitic, given to pomposity, and often poorly briefed. Although I could see a couple traits in Tadjman that may have given rise to some of that, and Warren's read may have better captured Tadjman earlier, in Croatia's pre-independence phase, it was not an accurate depiction of the Franjo Tadjman I got to know during dozens of encounters. I spent a lot of time with him, making demarches, escorting delegations to meetings and dinners with him, or being pulled aside to speak with him at events he would host. It wasn't me per se; there was no question he placed the United States in a special category and wanted our respect.

Tadjman, as I said, was an ex-communist general, a historian of sorts, a Croatian nationalist to the core, 70 years old when I first met him. He could be prickly, he could be overly blunt, but more often he was charming. Above all, however, he could be worked, or, as Thatcher once famously said of Gorbachev, you could do business with him. I know what his critics say, the accusations of Holocaust revisionism – his underestimations of Serbian and Jewish victims, of the total killings at Jasenovac, and so on. And there is cause for concern there, though, from what I've read, not as much cause as his harshest critics allege. And as for his supposed anti-Semitism, yes, I know about the remark concerning his wife's not being Jewish, although most of his critics quote that one way out of context. But I never saw it or heard it from Tadjman, anti-Semitism, even in credible anecdotal form, and one heard all kinds of rumors about the man and his past when I was there.

I recall a meeting I later had with the Agency's bio folks who were taken aback by my insistence that Warren, and consequently they, had gotten Tadjman wrong, had substantially underestimated him. I'm not saying Tadjman didn't have serious flaws; clearly he did, including his conception of democracy and his view of Croatia as mainly for the Croats, as though Croatia's Serbs ought to content themselves with second-class status. I know from Croatian-Serb friends and contacts something of what it felt like to be a Serb in Tadjman's Croatia. Apart from the Krajina and other areas of active, early conflict, it wasn't so much a fear of physical harm – although there was some of that --as an acute anxiety about jobs, opportunities, and social

standing, areas in which some Croatian Serbs faced active discrimination or worse, again, especially early on. And Tudjman could be exceptionally thin skinned, especially when mocked or ridiculed in the press, for example in numerous, biting, but often hilarious photomontages in Feral Tribune. I recall intervening in one such case, urging him just to take it, as the necessary cost of a free press in a budding democracy. I'm not sure how much progress we ever made on that front, though.

Q: We know Milosevic was playing the nationalist card, playing up hatred in order to gain his objectives. How about Tudjman? Were these two guys playing the same game or was Tudjman a different type?

NEITZKE: It always amazed me that Warren and others seemed to cut Milosevic, a pathologically duplicitous, first-order war criminal, so much more slack, at least on a personal basis, than they did Tudjman. Was it because Milosevic sometimes behaved better in person than Tudjman did? I've heard that people who met with Milosevic often came away with the image of a polished sort of Western business type, and that he spoke decent English. Tudjman's English, on the other hand, could be halting, and he preferred to use an interpreter when conducting serious business. Yet Milosevic calmly, methodically went about trying to realize his dream of Greater Serbia through sheer butchery, mass rape, and mass murder, whereas Tudjman did not, and personally was far more reactive. Tudjman may once have dreamed of hiving off at least the Croatian inhabited parts of Bosnia. We all heard the rumors – never substantiated, as far as I know -- about a pre-war deal struck with Milosevic at Karadjordjevo to divide Bosnia between them. But by 1992 Tudjman had his hands more than full with devastation and Serb occupation in Croatia and concern for the very survival of some Croat-dominant communities in Bosnia. The contrast with Milosevic could hardly have been sharper. For all of Warren's concern for the plight of Serbs in Tudjman's new Croatia – and, as I indicated, on the whole I shared those concerns – he showed precious little understanding of why so many average Croats might not have wished to remain in Milosevic's Yugoslavia. And on that score, I think, unfortunately, Warren accurately reflected the studied biases of Washington's other senior Yugo hands.

I recall another, later meeting I had at the Agency with a couple of fairly senior people. When I expressed frustration about why they were continuing to get it wrong in terms of the balance of who had done what to whom in Bosnia, one of them bluntly said to me, we've known all along who the bad guys were, but we were not about to "help make Yugoslavia ripe for Croatian hegemony." I couldn't believe it. Was this 1943 or 1993? Croatia was then more or less on its back, sheltering hundreds of thousands of displaced persons and Bosnian refugees while Serb forces continued to run amok. And here was the Agency couching its analysis to fit, what, their own badly dated biases. So, no, Tudjman and Milosevic were not actually playing the same game. And I said so, openly and clearly, in a number of cables.

Q: Back to the handoff in Zagreb, what advice did your predecessor give you, how did he see your priorities?

NEITZKE: Einik basically said, intending no offense, that I'd been handed a job that couldn't be done. I soon came to understand what he meant. When I arrived the ConGen had five or so seasoned officers, nearly all of whom were set to depart soon and were anxious to leave. The

local staff was stressed out from the war and lingering ethnic tensions within the ConGen. The old, rickety, but beautifully situated ConGen building was essentially unsecured, other than with basic locks and keys. It had been abandoned altogether when everyone left Zagreb amid the JNA bombing raid the previous autumn. In its day to day operations, the ConGen had not yet returned even to the tempo of the pre-war days; they did some reporting but were essentially in a holding pattern pending an uncertain future.

Regarding Mike's counsel on priorities, most of that too had to do with ConGen operational issues, managing some difficult personnel problems, things of that sort. The mindset was still one of subordination to Belgrade, with Belgrade having the call on virtually all things Bosnian. Reporting on the burgeoning Bosnian refugee situation in Croatia, including in and around Zagreb, let alone systematically tapping into those refugees, learning what they had experienced in Bosnia, did not appear to be a high priority. What I later found troubling was that in the weeks prior to my arrival, when some of the worst of the Bosnian horrors were taking place, the Bosnian Government had held conferences in Zagreb through which they were trying desperately to alert the international community to the breadth of what was happening in Bosnia, providing data on reported killings, rapes, ethnic cleansing, and so on. One could, of course, dispute the accuracy of what any Bosnians might have been putting out at that point, given their desperation. But, as best I could tell, and I looked into this, these early Bosnian Government pleas for help in Zagreb were not reported on, at least not at any length. That would, of course, have comported with both Washington's limited interest and the Embassy Belgrade-ConGen Zagreb jurisdictional understanding regarding Bosnia.

There was something else about that, too, about why there seemed to have been so little reporting on a security and humanitarian situation that was, not very far from Zagreb, precarious. I don't want to overstate this, but these guys had been alone for six or seven months, their families evacuated. Some of the families had just returned in May. I sensed a reluctance to, let's say, over dramatize the security situation lest the families' hard-won return prove short-lived. This isn't something unique to that war or that post; no one wants to see families jerked around. And I benefited from this as well, being able to take my own family to post in a situation in which, by some measures, that might not have been warranted.

But getting back to the handover, I think Mike perceived, as did I, that nearly everything in the ConGen's small, comparatively ordered world was about to change.

Q: Did you feel that you were on a tight leash from Washington?

NEITZKE: Not really. As I indicated, our policy toward the Yugo mess in the early summer of 1992 lay just to the active side of indifference. It's not our problem. We're not going to let it become our problem. We'll help out where we can, mainly on the humanitarian relief side, without becoming entangled in the conflicts. We'll participate in diplomatic initiatives aimed at halting the violence, but we're not about to get out front. Those were our basic objectives. And, of course, keep an eye on Tudjman and the Croats, and try, as best we could, to urge things along in a democratic direction. There was no specific charge to me as far as reporting was concerned. On that score, frankly, I don't think they expected much. I'd have a tiny staff, most of whom would be new to the area, one communicator. And again, at that time, the ConGen was still

technically subordinate to Belgrade.

Q: Well, what did you set out to do, to change? What did you set as your priorities at first?

NEITZKE: There wasn't much time for formal strategizing, setting goals and objectives and all that. I don't recall having much discretionary time at all in those early days. It was more a blur of events, meetings, other obligations. But out of that initial blur of activities, I did in fact frame a game plan for myself and the mission. The first such activity began about three hours after Einik and his family departed, when I welcomed my first CODEL, John Murtha.

Q: Representative from Pennsylvania.

NEITZKE: Yes. House Defense Appropriations heavyweight. But he was only the first of an onslaught of Congressmen, Senators, Congressional staffers, senior U.S. military, aid groups, and assorted other official delegations that descended on us during that first year. A fifth or more of the U.S. Senate came out, for example, most of whom I had the opportunity to speak with at length. We had on average a new official delegation arriving every six days or so that first year, in addition to swarms of journalists, NGO representatives, and third country diplomats requesting briefings. Although the mission was growing rapidly - mainly by adding TDYers - we were still comparatively small, with limited personnel, office space, vehicles, and so forth. Many of these visitors required tending from wheels down to wheels up, and the largest of them, the six Senators who attended our formal Embassy opening, for example, required my full-time attention. So it was a hectic pace, we were stretched thin, but it was exhilarating too. And early on, in part because of some of these visitors, I got up to speed on what was really happening in Bosnia more quickly than I probably would have been able to otherwise.

But back to Murtha. He came out because he, like many others on the Hill and in the Administration, felt pressure from the increased press reporting on events in Bosnia and was concerned that this could lead to calls for U.S. military intervention. There was a test of wills building in Washington and in other Western capitals not only over whether the reports were accurate but also over whether there was anything we could or should do even if they were accurate. The first place I took Murtha was a converted gymnasium in central Zagreb, one of many places the Croats were sheltering Bosnian refugees.

Q: Well, what was your impression of them, of the refugees?

NEITZKE: Washington Post correspondent Peter Maass said in his Bosnia book, "Love Thy Neighbor," that what first strikes you on encountering a large refugee population hastily settled in a confined space is the overpowering smell. You feel ashamed to notice it, but it's there, it's striking. The people, each family limited to a few square yards of space on the gym floor, looked grim, sad, hopeless. Yet most of these people were, in a sense, lucky, having avoided becoming ensnared in the Serb-run network of concentration camps - starvation, torture, rape, and murder camps, in effect. These people had at least escaped that.

Murtha walked around with an interpreter and spoke to various people, trying to get a sense of what was really going on in Bosnia. What he heard, partly because many had escaped early and

partly because of the difficulty of getting much detail out of traumatized people in a brief encounter, was mostly indirect evidence. He didn't get the kind of shocking, graphic accounts that I would soon be exposed to, credible, eye-witness testimony of public rapes and mass murder. Murtha did not get that. What he heard was more nuanced, or second-hand. Murtha would have been justified in coming away from that and saying, well, you know, it's bad but it's on the understandable side of the spectrum of what happens in all wars.

I'm not sure whether I took Murtha over to UNPROFOR, commanded at that time by an overwhelmed but very professional and likable Indian General named Satish Nambiar. I took many CODELs for UNPROFOR briefings, however, and UNPROFOR's unwavering line was, in essence, they're all bastards, the Serbs, the Croats, and even the Muslims; the international community handed us too few people for an undoable task in a situation that would only be made worse by Western military intervention. What I came to sense after a few of these briefings, comparing what I heard UNPROFOR say with what I knew from other sources was going on in Bosnia, is that something akin to Stockholm Syndrome was setting in at UNPROFOR, especially among their forces in Serbian-besieged Sarajevo.

Q: Any other early impressions, others who helped shape your, I mean, you mentioned...

NEITZKE: Just after Murtha departed two articles by Roy Gutman appeared in Newsday. Roy, as you may know, won the Pulitzer Prize for his early reports on the Bosnian genocide. His pieces were notable for their eye-witness accounts of death camps and for his straightforward use of Holocaust imagery. He had already written a less-noticed piece with Auschwitz in the title, about how Serbs were packing Muslims, including women and children, into cattle and freight cars, without food or water, and shipping them off to unknown destinations. But these two pieces, in very early August 1992, had an explosive impact in Washington, as did, shortly thereafter, the first televised footage of camps showing throngs of emaciated men, some looking almost skeletal, behind barb-wire fences. According to Department officers who personally witnessed this, even Eagleburger's office was in close to full-blown panic, fearing that these reports might force the Administration's hand on intervention. So when the Department spokesman appeared the next day to confirm Gutman's allegations of death camps, Eagleburger's office had EUR Assistant Secretary Niles publicly walk it back, denying the Administration had any confirmatory evidence of death camps, in the heated exchange with Representative Lantos that I referred to earlier.

The day after Gutman's pieces appeared, he called on me in Zagreb. We spoke for a long time. He told me more of what he'd heard about the camps. He was quietly incensed that the U.S. Government wasn't sounding the alarm. He was convinced that we must have satellite imagery that could help confirm the existence of the camps. He said a colleague of his had raised this matter directly with Secretary Baker. I could do little more than listen at that point. I did not have independent evidence to confirm the nature of the camps; nor was I yet aware that imagery did in fact exist to buttress his claims. Nor did I yet have Gutman's confidence, but that meeting proved to be the beginning of a long and useful association.

Then, within a day or two, if I recall correctly, Peter Galbraith arrived, a STAFFDEL of one from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. That too was the beginning of a long association,

as you know. Unbeknownst to either of us, Peter would become Ambassador in Zagreb a year later and I'd stay on for two years as DCM. Peter had done acclaimed investigative work for the SFRC on Saddam Hussein's gassing of the Iraqi Kurds.

Q: What was your first impression? I mean, you two would end up spending a lot of time together. How did he strike you?

NEITZKE: No lack of self-confidence, and a tinge of early Charlie Wilson. But also smart and determined to ferret out evidence of what he too had heard was happening in Bosnia. It took a while for us to get on the same wavelength, but eventually we did, pretty much. On that first trip – he came back a couple times, I think – I accompanied him on most of his calls and on a trip out of town that we'd arranged. A few of these may be worth including.

Q: Okay.

NEITZKE: First, our call at UNHCR revealed the strain and suspicion already taking hold of that organization. These were the people, the only outsiders early on, who had witnessed some of the worst of the worst in Bosnia. At the senior working level, they were clearly afraid that Western military intervention, if it came, would worsen the humanitarian situation and make it impossible for them to do their jobs – essentially helping care for refugees and delivering food to embattled communities. So they were loath to sound alarm bells about mass murder or death camps. Later, when the full dimensions of the genocide became clear, some at UNHCR backtracked, claiming that they had duly reported what they saw all along but no one had paid attention. Journalists found that there had been some early UNHCR field reports, and that some had made their way, perhaps through USUN, to the State Department. But neither State nor UNHCR publicized them at the time. By the summer of 1992, UNHCR was already functioning in something of a twilight zone of horror. As the killing and “cleansing” in Bosnia generated some million and a half refugees, UNHCR had, in a sense, to blind themselves to the atrocities generating the refugee flows while attempting to feed as many victims-in-place as possible until many of those victims too became refugees.

When Peter and I met with the UNHCR's Tony Land in early August, the only alarm bell Land sounded was over the possibility of Western military intervention. Land was at pains to downplay the difficulties they faced and the atrocities they had witnessed. Two months later, however, their message had changed, as UNHCR Special Envoy José-Maria Mendiluce – one of the most decent, impressive individuals I met during my three years there – told me over dinner, and soon thereafter publicized, his estimate that some 400,000 Bosnians were at risk of dying in the coming winter of starvation, disease, and exposure. With fresh UNPROFOR troops then deploying in Bosnia, the Security Council's command that relief be pushed through by “all means necessary” appeared initially to have welcome teeth in it.

Q: But we, I mean UNPROFOR, did not use all means necessary, did they?

NEITZKE: In retrospect, it's clear that we never expected them to. The U.S., the State Department mainly, threw a monkey wrench into the process early on by leaning heavily on UNHCR to establish its base for supplying the most endangered Muslim areas – areas in Eastern,

Northeastern, and Northern Bosnia threatened with Serbian ethnic cleansing – in, of all places, Belgrade, from which UNHCR would have to run convoys entirely through Serb-controlled territory. I don't know what State's thinking was on that. Looking back, it seems almost pernicious. In any event, that was the genesis of another tragic farce. A persistent pattern quickly emerged whereby Serbian forces would endlessly harass relief convoys escorted by UN troops who, in the event, proved unwilling to use force.

Let me stop for a moment to note that there was one brief period in which force was used. That was shortly after the British UNPROFOR forces deployed in the fall of 1992. Heavily armored and well led, they actually fought their way into a couple towns, going right through Serbian forces. All that earned for them, however, was a panicked reprimand from the UN military command that if the Brits kept that up they'd quickly endanger many other, less able UNPROFOR forces. So even the Brits were compelled to settle into a timid approach to aid delivery, under which the Serbs would typically allow to pass what were in effect starvation rations to encircled Muslims. In return, the Serbs alternately ripped off the convoys on the spot or demanded and got blackmail aid, part of which was sold on the black market and part of which was delivered to heavily non-refugee Serb populations, sometimes in Serbia itself. Whenever senior UNHCR officials would approach the point of throwing up their arms and screaming "this has to stop, we cannot do this anymore," the international community would, in essence, force them to keep going. At all costs, the pretense had to be maintained. A high-profile relief effort to which we could point, and contribute, had become a vital part of our limited engagement policy. We were, in effect, feeding Bosnia to death.

But getting back to my calls with Peter in August 1992, our stop at the ICRC's office in Zagreb was also interesting. Rather than express concern that the camps might be as brutal, and the atrocities as widespread, as was then being reported in the press, the ICRC Representative repeatedly challenged the credibility of Gutman's reports, suggesting that his witnesses had been coached. Strangely, Peter seemed to share her skepticism. A few days after that I was asked privately by Senator Carl Levin's office to vet one of Gutman's sources, whom the Senator wanted to bring to Washington to testify before a Senate Armed Services Subcommittee. We weren't ultimately able to say authoritatively whether the guy was legit, only that he sounded credible. So we helped him get on a plane to Washington. But getting back to the ICRC Rep, her attack on Gutman struck me, even then, as extraordinary. She was much less concerned about not having a firm grip on what was going on in Bosnia than about the embarrassment Gutman's and others' reporting was causing them. ICRC's hyper-defensiveness persisted as the conflict progressed.

Q: ICRC is supposed to be neutral, is it not, to do its job of aiding POWs and such?

NEITZKE: They try not to alienate any of the parties to a conflict, lest their access be compromised. And to be fair, they did some good work, doubtless saving many lives. The question was whether ICRC, if it had opted to push the limits, even within its traditional constraints, aggressively tried to gain entry into the camps earlier, might have saved many more lives. As it was, they were scrupulous about not apportioning blame, and they were not very pushy, especially at the height of the slaughter. But like UNHCR, if ICRC had not already existed, we'd have had to invent it. Because every time a mass atrocity report arose, a report that

in the absence of ICRC might have compelled Washington and others to engage more directly, we hid behind ICRC, declaring that we'd urge ICRC to investigate, aware that ICRC's ability to do so was often extremely limited. In mid-August, for example, we sent Washington a detailed, albeit second-hand account of an animal slaughterhouse in northeastern Bosnia converted to the task of mechanized human killing. The Department's nervous response was to ask ICRC to look into it immediately. There was no reason to believe that ICRC could even get close to that area at that time and, as far as I know, they didn't.

Peter and I also visited UN Sector West, where we saw the mutual, Serb-Croat devastation of a formerly inter-ethnic town, mostly laid waste. And there, I'll never forget, we had this utterly weird sighting. The town lay virtually in ruins. The Orthodox church had been blasted, defaced, and desecrated and so had the Catholic church on the other end of town. And there was not a soul in sight, until, as though out of a Fellini film, this young boy emerged from behind a battered building and crossed the street in front of us. He stopped, turned briefly, and on the back of his tee shirt were the words, "shit happens," and he quickly disappeared into another shell pocked building. That was it; a perfect scene; so apt, as you stood there looking around and wondering what in god's name had gotten into these people.

Our visit to a Bosnian refugee camp in Eastern Slavonia, however, made the most lasting impression. There we were able to interview many eye-witnesses to atrocities, from whose graphic accounts Peter compiled the bulk of a report that the SFRC issued shortly after his return to Washington, adding to the accumulating evidence of genocide.

Q: Well normally in a case like this, particularly in a country that is relatively easy to get to and all, it is not like a Sudan or something, you would have the American and European press all over the place. This is the sort of situation that would excite a media person.

NEITZKE: There were journalists covering some of this in the late spring and early summer of 1992, but not yet in the numbers that we would later see. Several journalists had been killed covering the Croatian war, and moving around Bosnia once the killing started there was extremely dangerous. I'm not sure whether the press at that point had full access to the Bosnian refugee camps in Croatia. One could fly into Sarajevo on a UN flight to get the story of the tightening siege, the sniper killings, the shelling, the increasing hardships, the latest "bread line massacre." But journalists couldn't get near the death camps early on, not until late summer, when, under growing international pressure incited mainly by such press reporting as there had been up until then, the Serbs allowed a few journalists into a couple camps that they mistakenly thought had been sufficiently cleaned up to permit this. That's when you got that initial video of the emaciated prisoners milling about. That upped the number of journalists dramatically.

We finally managed to get an Embassy Zagreb officer, John Zerolis, into one camp, Manjaca, in early September on a CSCE fact-finding mission. He saw no evidence of executions, obviously, but reported seeing hundreds of desperate looking Muslim men and boys held in sort of pens in pig or cattle sheds and, for food, run through a slop line. He said most of them didn't look as though they were going to make it. Before these limited visits to certain camps, however, a journalist had to be pretty determined – as only Gutman, Ed Vulliamy and a few others were – to get credible details about what was happening. Another early source that some journalists tapped

was the Zagreb Mosque, which became a haven for some of the worst-affected victims, rape victims, for example. My initial call on the Imam there – later the ranking Muslim cleric in Bosnia – was another eye-opener – as he detailed the kinds of trauma that the many Muslims seeking refuge there had experienced.

But, as I mentioned, by late summer 1992, increasing numbers of journalists were showing up. Rarely did a week go by when I didn't give several background briefings for journalists. For the most part these were not second stringers, but some of the bigger names from some of the most influential U.S. and other Western papers, periodicals, and television networks. I was pretty candid with them, but none ever violated the ground rules or betrayed my trust.

Q: Well there you were talking to all these journalists and, I would presume, defending a policy that it sounds like you did not have much faith in. How were you able to do that?

NEITZKE: I was rarely in a position of having to defend our policy, explain it, yes, often, but very few ever personally challenged me to defend it. I didn't believe then that the U.S. stance on Bosnia – under Bush or Clinton – even constituted a policy in the true sense of the word. We wished to stay out militarily, we urged the parties to come to terms, we contributed to the relief effort, we participated in efforts to broker a peace. But, with rare exception, our overriding objective until the summer of 1995 was to keep our engagement in every facet of the Bosnian mess limited, not to get out front. We succeeded so well in that endeavor, limiting our military engagement largely to a little-used MASH hospital at Zagreb airport, that by the end of 1994 NATO, most of whose other members had troops in harm's way in Bosnia, was splintering, mainly over our stubborn refusal to join in and lead.

There were others who did push me on policy. Dick Holbrooke comes most readily to mind. He visited a number of times, under IRC auspices, I believe. And I eventually discussed with him a list of specific policy recommendations. This was in December 1992 or January 1993, as the new Clinton team was getting up to speed. Dick later phoned me to say he had incorporated a number of my recommendations into a memo he'd sent to my old boss, then National Security Advisor-designate Tony Lake – although to no evident effect.

Q: I want to hear about that, but I think first we need to back up. We have not discussed the opening of the Embassy. I think you said you had a group of Senators there.

NEITZKE: It was a minor miracle that we pulled it off with as much dignity and fanfare as we did – amid a large CODEL – given the small staff on hand. Much credit for that goes to a young TDY Management Officer we got from London, John Dinkelman. But let me just back up a bit further, to the day, the night actually, when we announced our intention to establish full diplomatic relations with Croatia. It was mid-August 1992. I got a call at home from Eagleburger's office informing me that the Department was going to announce shortly our intention to establish diplomatic relations with Croatia and open an Embassy. I phoned Tudjman and gave him the news. There was a pause, in which I presume Tudjman was conveying this to those in his office, and then I heard muffled cheers and shouting in the background. It's clear they considered our action a major, long-awaited step toward legitimacy. Tudjman warmly thanked me. They were happy; they had a long way still to go, but in a sense, they seemed to

feel, they had made it.

We set the date for the formal Embassy opening to coincide with the visit of a six-Senator CODEL headed by Majority Leader Mitchell in late August. The others were Rudman, Pell, Sasser, Lautenberg, and Jeffords. We took them to what were by then becoming the usual stops: a destroyed town in Sector West, UNPROFOR, UNHCR, and lunch hosted by Tudjman with members of his government. We also took them to a Bosnian refugee camp in Zagreb, paired each with an interpreter, and gave them plenty of time to sit and chat with some of the victims. From the quiet on the bus as we pulled away, it appeared that most of the Senators were genuinely moved.

The Embassy opening ceremony was in two parts, the first inside, televised, in which I, Prime Minister Sarinic, and Senator Mitchell made brief remarks. I spoke partly in Croatian, comparing what Croatia was going through with our own long struggle for independence and asserting – in an obvious stretch – that the U.S. government, from President Bush on down, sympathized with Croatia's plight and suffering. We then proceeded outside to the front of the building – all traffic having been stopped on neighboring streets and a huge crowd having gathered – for the presentation of the colors – we had flown in a Marine color guard from Germany for this purpose – the playing of the national anthem, and the formal ribbon cutting.

In our ride to the airport, Mitchell and I continued our discussion of the previous evening. He wanted to know – leaving aside the question of military intervention – specifically what he should recommend that the U.S. do. This was still early days for me, but opportunity rarely comes calling when you're ready, so I told him what I thought.

Q: Which was?

NEITZKE: The question was, what could we do – that Washington might at least be willing to consider doing – to get the camps opened, the prisoners released, and the cleansing, killing, and raping stopped. Milosevic had the power to stop it. How could we get his attention? At that point I had not yet come around on the idea of arming the Bosnian Muslims. I said that, strategically, we should focus less on the dim prospects for quickly altering the balance of power on the ground in Bosnia – that could be very problematical, even counterproductive, in the short run – and more on bombing Serbian artillery emplacements, logistical facilities, and power centers, including in Serbia. I believed that air power could be used, not to clear and hold terrain in Bosnia, but to force the Serbs to the negotiating table. Air Force Chief of Staff General Merrill McPeak also argued the feasibility of air power in 1992, to take out Serbian artillery surrounding Sarajevo, for example, but was shortly thereafter replaced on the JCS by an officer more willing to toe the line, that is, that the only military option was committing a politically inconceivable number of ground troops to Bosnia. In the end, we did bomb the Serbs to the negotiating table in Bosnia and we did – over Kosovo – bomb Belgrade. I believe to this day – and Holbrooke indirectly acknowledged as much at the time -- that our bombing of Belgrade sprang not just from events in Kosovo but in part from the Clinton Administration's deep frustration, its sense of guilt over its prolonged moral impotence, its refusal to get serious about Bosnia.

But getting back to what I advised Mitchell, my strongest actionable recommendation to him was

that we close Embassy Belgrade, that we withdraw our legitimizing diplomatic presence from that regime of butchers, or butcher-facilitators. I also recommended opening an Embassy, even if it were a one-man post, in Sarajevo and raising the American flag there as high as we could as a symbol that we were standing with those beleaguered people. And finally, I recommended an all-out U.S. effort to document the war crimes occurring in Bosnia.

When Mitchell got back to Washington he did publicly advocate breaking relations with Belgrade, and I believe he said he discussed it with Eagleburger. That would no doubt have been a terribly difficult recommendation for Eagleburger, or anyone who had warm memories of serving in Belgrade, to ponder. Whether Mitchell also mentioned to Eagleburger my advocacy of this idea, I don't know.

Q: Well, sure, Larry Eagleburger was not going to be very enamored of that. I mean, he was really Mr. Yugoslavia. But I was wondering, did you ever put that advice in a regular front channel telegram, to close Embassy Belgrade and all?

NEITZKE: Not at that point. And as time went on, I concluded that the best hope I had for altering our policy was simply to report the facts, to describe as vividly, as graphically as possible what was actually happening in Bosnia and, of course, Croatia. This led to a virtual flood of Embassy Zagreb reports of grisly crimes committed by Serbian forces in and around the various concentration camps. Many of these were based on debriefings of camp survivors released into a special facility in Karlovac, Croatia, beginning in the fall of 1992.

Regarding Embassy Belgrade, however, our having kept it open, near the end of my year as chief of mission, Embassy Belgrade asked the Department for permission to establish direct contact with authorities in the Serb-occupied area of Eastern Slavonia. In response to that I sent in one of the more scathing cables I'd ever drafted, attacking both the propriety of such contacts, which would tend to legitimize these thugs, and the proposal that contact be made by officials of a U.S. Embassy in a capital run by these thugs' war criminal sponsors. Belgrade's proposal was so beyond the pale that I took the opportunity, in essence, to denounce our having even maintained an Embassy in Belgrade during that long first year of genocidal slaughter. In policy and moral terms, I asked, had it been worth the candle? Had our presence not helped to legitimize Milosevic? Had the additional intelligence we may have gained by remaining in Belgrade actually informed our policy in any demonstrable way? I argued it had not. My friends in Belgrade were not happy about that one, but they did not appeal. The matter was dropped.

As for Eagleburger, apparently he did consider, or at least said he had considered, closing Embassy Belgrade, breaking diplomatic relations, but declined to do so. There were two events around that time, late summer 1992, that even more clearly illustrated Eagleburger's thinking about Belgrade. The first was his speech to the London Conference in late August. That was the meeting hastily staged by British PM Major, with Washington's blessing, to try to blunt the call for Western military intervention over the initial death camp reports. At the table were not only Western government officials but Milosevic, Tudjman, and Izetbegovic as well. In his speech Eagleburger stressed the theme of Serbian victimhood, that history hadn't begun yesterday, that Serbs were among World War II's primary victims, and that memories of that were still fresh. Or so he maintained. He said the U.S. valued its long "special relationship" with the Serbian people

– not Yugoslavia, but the Serbian people. Turning to the ongoing conflict, he declared all the sides guilty before acknowledging, barely, that Serbs were the most guilty. But then, rather than expressing sympathy for the real time, mainly Muslim victims of Serb-perpetrated horror, Eagleburger intoned, more in sorrow than in anger, that what the Serbs were then doing was mainly wrong because it violated the sacred memory of past Serbian victims. To anyone aware of what was happening in Bosnia at that moment, Eagleburger's remarks were literally breathtaking.

The other noteworthy event, or action, around that time which sheds light on Eagleburger's view of Belgrade was the Panic-Scanlan charade.

Q: You are speaking of John Scanlan, himself a former Ambassador to Belgrade?

NEITZKE: Jack had been Ambassador in Belgrade just before Warren Zimmerman. He was close to Eagleburger, and, as I think I mentioned, I had worked with him many years earlier, in the early 1980s. Here's what happened. In mid-summer 1992, Milosevic acquiesced in – or may have helped concoct - a plan whereby Milan Panic, a wealthy Serb-American businessman, became Prime Minister of Yugoslavia, with an ostensible mandate to stop the killing, respect Bosnia, and end what he termed the disgrace to the Serbian nation. Although Milosevic quickly marginalized him in Belgrade, Panic became a hyper-active visitor to Western capitals, pleading for restraint in dealing with Serbia. Panic's "Counselor" in this enterprise was Jack Scanlan. Panic and Scanlan would almost certainly have had to receive Eagleburger's blessing for this initiative, since they would presumably have required Treasury licenses exempting them from the sanctions and the currency control regime then in place on Belgrade. Throughout the fall and early winter of 1992, as the siege of Sarajevo and the killing elsewhere in Bosnia continued, the Department Spokesman kept lending respectability to the Panic experiment, expressing hope that Panic would be able to ameliorate the situation and speaking expectantly about the possibility of real change in Belgrade through elections scheduled for the end of the year. In the event, of course, those elections were yet another Milosevic-engineered farce, and the Milosevic-controlled Parliament sent Panic and Scanlan packing. All in all, the experiment had served mainly to help divert attention from what was happening in Bosnia, while providing Milosevic some Western "cover" during six critical months of slaughter.

Q: So you think this Panic thing, experiment as you called it, was all more or less a put up job by Eagleburger or...

NEITZKE: I can't prove it, but, as I indicated, the U.S. Government had to have approved it, at least tacitly. Eagleburger's intentions may have been more innocent, you know, we're not going to intervene no matter what, Bush and Baker have already decided that, so let's give this a try. Maybe that was the motivation. But I think there was more to it than that; I suspect Washington, and Eagleburger personally, may have helped orchestrate this attempt to bail out the Serbs. Here's how bad things got, though, just one example of what can result from that kind of desperate, sloppy policy-making. In October 1992, Washington decided to protest formally an egregious Serbian action in Eastern Slavonia, part of Croatia. I think it had to do with their harassment of efforts to secure the mass grave at the Ovcara pig farm into which the Serbs had dumped the 200 or so patients they had dragged out of the Vukovar Hospital a year earlier and

summarily executed. In any event, now this is October, the midpoint of Panic's celebrated tenure as Prime Minister in Belgrade. The Department calculated, however, that Panic was already so marginalized that it was pointless to protest to him. So, what did they do? They instructed Embassy Belgrade to lodge this supposedly stiff protest of Serbian actions with their very own ex-Ambassador, Jack Scanlan. How perverse is that? It should have gone to Milosevic, and on the end of a spiked pole. Instead, they delivered it to the ex-U.S. Ambassador "Counselor" to the Serbian-American fake Prime Minister. I'm sure there have been even stranger moments in U.S. diplomatic history, but probably not many.

Q: What were they thinking? I suppose there just was no one... Anyway, let us again go back to where you were talking about after the Embassy opening. How did that change things for you and your staff? And also, how were you evaluating the Croatian reaction to persecution of the Bosnian Muslims? There was no love lost between these groups

NEITZKE: When we became an Embassy, we were obviously on our own, but we'd been virtually on our own anyway. And given the lag time to increase staffing, we became heavily dependent on TDYers from various agencies and other posts. Again, however, there wasn't a lot of time to sit back and plan things.

Croatian-Muslim relations in that period were a key issue. Tudjman occasionally spoke disdainfully about Izetbegovic, though not in ethnic or religious terms – at least none that I ever heard -- but rather in terms of Izetbegovic's ill preparedness to lead, decisions he had supposedly bungled, that sort of thing. And whatever Tudjman and Milosevic may have discussed or agreed at Karadjordjevo, if that meeting ever took place, it didn't manifest itself on the ground in Bosnia in any sustained way. Yes, as the conflict wore on, especially into 1993 and 1994, there was the odd tactical Serb-Croat alliance at the local level. There were even a couple of odder local Serb-Muslim tactical alliances. None of that endured, however, and none of what little there was operated by strategic design or direction; there was just no compelling evidence to support that claim, no matter how often Serbian sympathizers trotted it out. And throughout this early period, Croatia, with much of its outlying infrastructure destroyed or badly damaged from its own war with Belgrade, was inundated with hundreds of thousands of Bosnian Muslim refugees. Despite the obvious destabilizing aspects of such a mass movement, there were very few instances of significant Croat-Muslim tension in Croatia.

Let me tell you about something that happened over Labor Day weekend 1992 that puts some of this in perspective, the issue of Croat-Muslim ties in the early phase of the conflict. I had been there only about a month and a half. I received word from Rick Herrick, our military attaché, that an Iranian 747 had landed at Zagreb. We suspected it was loaded with arms.

Almost immediately, Tudjman called me in. Although there may well have been Iranian flights before my arrival, perhaps landing elsewhere in Croatia, Tudjman knew we were now watching things more closely. I think he suspected we were already on to this. When I sat down with him and Susak, they volunteered that the plane contained arms, ammunition, chemicals of unknown composition, and an unspecified number of mujahideen fighters of unknown origin. I later learned from Susak that these were not the first mujahideen to attempt to enter Bosnia through Croatia. Croatia had set up training camps to get their own men quickly trained during the

Croatian War. Susak implied that some of these foreign fighters had later spent time in Croatian training camps. Although I couldn't get a number from Susak, my sense was that mujahideen entering up to that point could be counted in the hundreds rather than the thousands. Regarding the mujahideen on this Iranian flight, Susak said they'd already taken off. They'd left for Bosnia, I presumed.

Tudjman asked me almost plaintively whether, if the arms couldn't be transshipped to the Muslims, Croatia couldn't just keep them. I told him no. I thought they'd have to be impounded under some type of international control.

I contacted EUR to talk about how this should be handled. It was a Saturday and I got Assistant Secretary Niles or one of his deputies. The response I got was, in essence, what's the big deal, why are you bothering us, it's not a U.S. problem. They first said that I needn't respond at all to Tudjman's request for guidance but then allowed that, if I felt compelled to, I could tell Tudjman he might order the Iranian plane to leave, with the arms.

This was the same nonchalant attitude I'd encountered in EUR on going out to Zagreb. This was nuts. An Iranian 747 loaded with arms, mujahideen, and chemicals had landed, and why was I bothering them? There had been fears for some time that the Bosnian Muslims might resort to some form of chemical warfare to try to halt the Serb advance. And here was clear evidence of mujahideen entering the fight. I don't recall exactly how this happened, but in short order EUR was all but shunted aside and I was dealing, and would continue to deal for the next couple days, with the office of the Acting Secretary, Arnie Kanter, Under Secretary for Political Affairs. Eagleburger must have been traveling. I became sort of a clearinghouse over the next 48 hours, taking calls, making suggestions, and conveying understandings among Tudjman and Susak, the UNPROFOR commander in Zagreb, the UN Secretariat, USUN, and Kanter's office. The solution was to let the Iranian plane go but seize and sequester the arms under UNPROPOR control. And that was done, although to this day – UNPROFOR was swamped and a blur of other events followed – I don't know where those arms ended up. The chemicals turned out to be non-threatening, medical supplies apparently.

The point is, getting back to your question about Croatia's attitude toward the Muslims, the shopworn charge that from the outset they were just as bad as the Serbs is absurd on its face. In addition to admitting the Muslim refugees, the Croats - with Iran and other suppliers - were running a military supply line to the Muslims when nobody else was doing so. Admittedly, this was not altruistic. The Croats were taking some of the arms for themselves and the Croats in Bosnia stood to benefit from almost anything the Muslims could do to help slow down the Serbs. And, too, this arrangement didn't last far into 1993; it began to break down seriously by the late spring. And we can get to that later, because it's also part of the backdrop for the secret 1994-1995 Iranian arms pipeline fiasco that PFIAB, or I guess it was the Intelligence Oversight Board, and several congressional committees later investigated and that I was called to testify before.

Q: Yes. I do want to cover that.

NEITZKE: But I found myself having to fight repeatedly, often in sharply-worded cables, the notion that the Serbs and Croats were acting indistinguishably badly toward the Bosnian

Muslims. I typically did this by challenging an Embassy Belgrade or U.S. military report, or a Department tasker perhaps, but my real target were higher-ups in the Department who were wedded to this, what I once called in a cable, “policy-stultifying myth.” I wasn’t just challenging this notion out of the blue, we were going all out to record and report testimony from Muslim survivors of Serb-run death camps, grisly, graphic, gut-wrenching, credible, eye-witness evidence which, taken in its entirety and viewed against the backdrop of everything else we knew, made a mockery of the contention that the crimes of Serbs and Croats in Bosnia were anywhere near equivalent. In the most biting of these, essentially protest cables, which I titled “The Ugly Virus of Moral Symmetry,” I pretty much just let them have it, slamming the outrageous inaccuracies in an Embassy Belgrade assessment of Croatian strategy in Bosnia. I think it was for that cable that I got a call from EUR DAS Ralph Johnson warning me to knock it off, because I would never, Ralph flatly stated, never convince Washington that the Croats weren’t as god awful as the Serbs in persecuting Muslims. They just didn’t want to hear it. Their minds were made up. A policy of limited engagement depended critically on a view that all sides, or at least the Serbs and Croats, were nearly equally guilty. So reports indicating that the vast preponderance of the killing, raping, and ethnic cleansing was being done by one side were unwelcome.

Q: So you had to be careful, I take it, from then on, I mean with the warning...

NEITZKE: I was already being careful to hew to the facts as we could document them, and as much as possible to let those facts speak for themselves. But no, it didn’t stop me from challenging what I thought Washington was getting wrong. And a couple times I guess you could say I tempted fate, once directly challenging the Serbo-philia of senior Yugo hands in Washington as well as their long-standing anti-Croatian biases. I think it was a cable in early 1993 addressing whether Tudjman should be invited, along with other heads of State, to the formal opening of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington. I didn’t recommend for or against, only that the issue be weighed objectively, indicating that it was clear that objectivity would be extremely difficult for some in the Department. I later learned, I think Reggie Bartholomew told me, he was then Special Envoy for the former Yugoslavia, that that cable had been carefully read at senior levels and had had an impact. No one offered a mea culpa – Eagleburger and Scowcroft were by then out of the picture, but Tudjman was invited and did attend the ceremony, where, as it turned out, he was roundly condemned by Elie Wiesel.

Earlier, on the eve of Clinton’s inauguration, I had weighed in on the broader dimensions of our Bosnia policy, criticizing Washington’s readiness to impugn the cantons plan that David Owen had painstakingly fashioned without offering any credible alternative. This marked the culmination of a period in which the Bush Administration – although this was carried over into the Clinton Administration – constantly nitpicked and undercut the efforts of Owen and his co-negotiators. There was this incessant criticism of whatever the negotiators came up with – as though we knew that the Muslims deserved better, even if weren’t actually willing to put any U.S. assets on the line to achieve that.

Q: Well, a couple things. Here we have high-level officials in Washington trying to keep a lid on things, at least to pretend that the killing and ethnic cleansing are balanced, so the United States would not feel forced to intervene. And there you are, not a very senior officer yet, charge, or

chief of mission, in a new country and all, screwing it up with your reports. I would think the knives would be out for you. And why...

NEITZKE: How did I survive?

Q: Exactly. How did you survive? Why were you kept there instead of being pulled out and replaced with a more compliant officer? I mean, that is how it is usually handled.

NEITZKE: It often felt like a high-wire act with no net. And I haven't yet mentioned some of the other things we were doing. On what and how we reported, however, I never considered changing course. State would obviously have welcomed reports that could have helped buttress a policy of limited U.S. engagement, shown that the slaughter was not as one-sided as it was. Mere silence from us would have been appreciated. But it wasn't my job to manufacture policy-supportive data to document the supposed amoral symmetry of the so-called conflicting parties. From everything I was hearing and reading, from all the information pouring into the Embassy, and it was considerable, in all channels, it was clear that what was happening in Bosnia, essentially on our doorstep and on my watch, was genocide. Despite differences on nuance, and varying degrees of sympathy for the Muslims, that was a view shared, without equivocation, by every element in the Embassy.

Were the knives out? It felt that way from time to time. But nearly everything we were doing, however unwelcome some in Washington might have found it, was unimpeachable from a professional standpoint. In my demarches and discussions with Tudjman, I was executing our policy and my instructions to the letter. I remember one very frank exchange with Tudjman, in which I, reflecting Washington's views, essentially called him a liar. In light of what I later learned, I'm not sure that what I said to Tudjman in that exchange was warranted, that what we were alleging he was up to was grounded on hard fact; it later appeared not to have been. But whether or not I was being appropriately tough with Tudjman, if someone high up in Washington wants you removed, you're gone. I did get a couple warnings, essentially to tow the line or else. And a couple of officers who came out challenged me, shouting, in one instance, that they knew I didn't support U.S. policy. But the call you're talking about call never came. One well-placed friend in the Department, who was reading everything I was sending in, told me he just couldn't figure it out, why I hadn't been yanked in favor of, as you put it, a more compliant officer.

Q: Did you feel that you had any allies in Washington, if not covering your back personally, at least sympathetic to the policy points you were making?

NEITZKE: Not personal allies, exactly, but those who were sympathetic on the policy front, sure. Nearly everyone beneath the EUR front office and the 7th Floor at State who knew anything about Bosnia was sympathetic. Our death camp survivor accounts were being widely read, and they, along with everything else, had an effect. Some, I was told, found the graphic nature of our reports so disturbing that they had to stop reading them. But handling the stress was different for those of us in the field. I could give a background briefing to The New York Times or CNN, or send in a tough cable and feel at the end of the day that I'd done some good, spread some truth. Or my wife could load up our car and take fruit or something out to the refugees and she could feel good about having done something tangible. We were right there. But for those in

Washington working directly on this at lower levels it must have been harder, because they knew the truth and there wasn't much of anything they could do to make themselves feel better, let alone to change policy. Four young FSOs did resign in 1992-1993, however. And a group of 10 FSOs in Washington formally dissented in mid-1993 and met with Christopher – for which I heard one EUR DAS refer to them disdainfully as “wayward children.” That was the attitude. Some who were troubled by our stance on Bosnia asked to be reassigned to other jobs. And some plodded on, not liking the policy but accepting that, at the end of the day, it's a paycheck.

Q: Well do you know whether any of your reports directly affected any of the officers who resigned, did you ever hear?

NEITZKE: I don't know. As I said, I know they were being read, so I have no doubt that they were affecting people's thinking to some extent. But whether they actually pushed anyone over the brink, I just don't know. Other than George Kenney, briefly, who was the first to leave, I didn't know any of the officers who resigned. George was our desk officer when he resigned. He was among those whom the 6th and 7th Floor accused of seeking to change U.S. policy through their inputs into the daily press guidance. You know, try to get the spokesman to confirm on the record that we did know about the death camps and so forth. But he was just doing his job. All of these guys I guess felt increasingly marginalized and concluded that resignation was the only honorable option available to them.

But getting back to your earlier question, how I survived bureaucratically, some of what I was sending in doubtless fell beneath the radar of the most senior officials. Bosnia may have been on the front page every day, but it wasn't the only issue Washington had to deal with. The transition in late 1992-early 1993, from Bush to Clinton, would have been a huge distraction for senior officials, including FSOs, worried about their futures. And it probably didn't hurt that my old boss, Tony Lake, was the new, incoming National Security Advisor.

Q: So you felt protected?

NEITZKE: No. Not by Lake, at least as far as I'm aware. In fact, I never communicated with Lake, except that one time through Holbrooke.

Q: Lake never came out?

NEITZKE: No. I wondered whether, ironically, it wasn't Eagleburger himself who'd cut me some slack. But I don't know. Anyway, I too was to have been transitional. An ambassador was to have been appointed after we established formal relations with Zagreb, but that came undone after Bush lost, so I ended up running the place for a year.

Q: And you never felt like resigning, giving up, maybe making a public splash and leaving? I mean, I can still hear the frustration in your voice even after all these years.

NEITZKE: Actually, Stu, long periods now go by when I no longer think about all this. But it was frustrating, and I learned that a few of my Washington colleagues more than once thought I might be on the brink of a public resignation. Galbraith mentioned that concern to me shortly

after his arrival. The only time I gave any thought to that, and only very briefly, was near the end of 1992, but I opted not to. It might have been cathartic for me, but it wouldn't likely have helped anyone else. I decided it was important to keep doing what I was doing.

Q: Okay, I want to get to another subject we have only touched on. That is the role of the U.S. military. But first, you mentioned other things you were doing that might have gotten under Washington's skin. Like what?

NEITZKE: Well, before we go there, I should say something about the primary source that informed our perception that what was happening in Bosnia was not a civil war, let alone a reemergence of age old ethnic hatreds, as some in the Administration alleged, but genocide. I mentioned that in early August we began sending in reports of alleged atrocities in Bosnia, but there weren't that many that were detailed enough or sufficiently corroborated. But that situation changed. The media had increased their focus on the Serb-run death camps – that, by the way, was a term Eagleburger hated and in late August was still disparaging; he set the death camp standard explicitly at the “Bergen-Belsen” level and referred to the Bosnian camps as “unpleasant conditions.” In any event, as a result of the media's focus on the camps and the ICRC's belated attention to them, Serb leaders decided to close some of the camps, sanitized parts of others for Western inspection, moved some prisoners to less lethal facilities, and generally slowed the intake of Muslim prisoners. Then in September, this is still 1992, the Serbs decided to turn over to the ICRC an initial group of 1,000 or so survivors to be taken to the holding facility I mentioned in Karlovac, Croatia, a little over an hour southwest of Zagreb.

From that point on, I sent anyone we could spare down to Karlovac to interview these men. The most prolific contributor to this effort was a young TDY FSO from Embassy Bonn, Dubravka Maric, who spoke Croatian, or Bosnian, with near native fluency. Dubravka and other Embassy Zagreb FSOs, and two other female FSOs we later brought in specifically to interview rape victims, produced a steady stream of reports to Washington and our regular European embassy and military command addressees detailing multiply-corroborated, eye-witness accounts of mass executions and some of the most sadistic barbarities you could imagine one human being inflicting on another.

Well, I take that back. Actually, it would be all but impossible for you to imagine some of these crimes, some of the torture and killing techniques in the camps, they were so gruesome, unless you were a full-blown psychopath, which I suspect some of the worst perpetrators were. In all cases reported by the Karlovac survivor group, the perpetrators were Serb and in nearly all cases the victims were Muslim. These Embassy Zagreb reports, combined with those from a few other U.S. Embassies in countries to which some of these survivors were eventually moved, constituted a substantial portion of the eight compendia – brief summaries of which the State Department made public contemporaneously - that the U.S. forwarded to the United Nations between September 1992 and May 1993.

Q: This was because the UN was asking for these, or why send it to them?

NEITZKE: The Security Council had passed resolutions calling on member states to report information of this sort about what was happening in Bosnia. These reports, many of the reports

we sent in, served as a key part of the initial data base for the UN Bosnia War Crimes Commission. Formally it was called the Commission of Experts, the Kalshoven Commission. It was set up in October 1992 and, after months of dithering, and worse, ultimately did contribute critically to the establishment of The Hague Tribunal.

Q: Well, Washington, the U.S. Government supported all that, did they not?

NEITZKE: Yes, but there's a caveat. While the U.S. took the lead on the war crimes data collection effort, the Commission, and eventually the Tribunal, and became the single largest source of funding for this effort, and at times had to drag other governments along kicking and screaming, our own initial impulse on this front was not as straightforward as it appeared. Throughout this early period, when we were sending in these grisly reports of Serb torture and killings, the State Department remained obsessively fixed on the idea of striking a balance, on the notion that there was in fact a balance to be struck, between Serb and Croat and, to some extent, Muslim-committed crimes.

I recall appeal after appeal from the Department to posts in the area for more evidence that all sides were engaging in ethnic cleansing and atrocities. They argued in one cable that unless we could provide more evidence of Croatian and Muslim excesses the credibility of our reporting of Serb crimes might be fatally compromised. In desperation, the Department began tossing into the mix, into the published compendia of war crimes testimonies to which I referred, uncorroborated second and third-hand reports of crimes committed against Bosnian Serbs, some from highly questionable Serb Orthodox Church sources. I sent in a protest of this apparent effort to cook the books, chiding the Department for resorting to notoriously unreliable sources in its quest for artificial balance, and arguing that we needed to let the chips fall where they may. For that, I finally got, if not quite an apology, at least a muted acknowledgement of my point. And they stopped including these suspect reports.

Then at the end of 1992, Eagleburger, speaking at a Geneva conference on the former Yugoslavia, delivered a quasi mea culpa on the war crimes issue, declaring that the West had an obligation not to stand back a second time in that century while a people faced obliteration – which was of course almost exactly what the Bush Administration and he, Eagleburger, up to that moment, had done. Eagleburger then named names, mostly Serbian, including Mladic and Karadzic - still at large 14 years later, by the way - and acknowledged that we knew who had committed the crimes and who had given the orders, who their political superiors were. On the eve of Eagleburger's speech, however, I had received an urgent call from a senior officer in EUR requesting names of suspect Croats whom Eagleburger could list alongside the Serbs to balance things out. I had no comparable names to give them. If I had, I'd have long since reported them. But this idea, that while the Serbs might have behaved worse in Bosnia than others, they hadn't behaved all that much worse, simply would not go away; it was too deeply ingrained.

Q: How did you know what the breakdown was? I mean, you were reporting from your side on what the Muslim and Croat victims said, but, as you say, there were Serb victims also.

NEITZKE: Yes, there were Serb victims. But while we reported anything we picked up on Croatian Government mistreatment of Croatian Serbs, and, to the limited degree possible, on

conditions in the Serb-occupied Krajina, we weren't in a position to interview Bosnian Serb victims; they weren't fleeing towards Croatia, they weren't accessible to us. So the Department kept exhorting Embassy Belgrade to do more of this reporting, but very little was forthcoming. I'm not sure what the problem was. One Embassy Belgrade officer told me that early on they were subject to almost insurmountable corroboration requirements on the forwarding of atrocity reports that were coming in mainly telephonically from contacts in Bosnia. I understand that the media in Serbia at the time were full of graphic Serb victim reports; Serbs as perpetual victims was, after all, one of the central themes of Milosevic's propaganda machine. But, for whatever reason, Embassy Belgrade sent in comparatively few cables reporting the first person testimony of Serb victims. One obvious reason may have been the simple fact that there were incomparably fewer Serb than Muslim or Croatian victims.

Q: But again, how did you know that? I see that that was your impression, but...

NEITZKE: From everything that I was seeing and hearing. Our war crimes reporting effort, mainly the reports from the Karlovac holding facility, indicated early on that Serbs were perpetrating something akin to genocide against the Bosnian Muslims. And some of these cabled eye-witness reports we were sending in quickly became public. Washington became sufficiently concerned that by late 1992 they had authorized a parallel, secret Bosnian war crimes reporting operation, which ultimately harvested many hundreds of overwhelmingly Serb perpetrator-Muslim victim testimonies. These, however, although they may at some later point have been handed over to the UN or the Tribunal, did not see the light of day at the time. I saw many of them, and I urged that they be declassified and immediately made public, but they were not. I even prompted one non-governmental congressional witness to demand the disclosure of these reports, but nothing happened. So, as lopsidedly Serb perpetrator-Muslim victim as was almost everything that did publicly surface, it was, to some extent, only the tip of the iceberg of similar evidence that the public was not seeing.

Q: Wait. Washington was trying to keep as much of this as possible secret because...

NEITZKE: My guess is that it was for the same reason that they'd pleaded ignorance of what was going on in Bosnia in the first place, because they feared it might generate more public pressure on them to do something. At the time they set up the secret mechanism, there was talk of greater efficiency. But rather than send us more TDY personnel to interview death camp survivors – a task at which we were demonstrably proficient – Washington wanted to use an existing operation, standing teams that, with the Cold War all but over, had time on their hands. In any event, this decision had the effect of shunting a huge number of war crimes reports into controllable, classified channels.

And it wasn't just the separate, secret harvesting of so many atrocity accounts. There was the long hiatus after the UN established the Kalshoven Commission before anything serious was done to bring heat on the Serbian leaders directing the slaughter. In early 1993 even Kalshoven complained privately that he was being pressured to drag his feet and, specifically, not to finger Serbian leaders with whom Vance, Owen or others might need to negotiate a peace settlement. That pressure appears to have come from a senior British official in the UN Legal Department, the same guy who later sought to ensure an artificial balance – between Serbs and others – in the

first tranche of Hague Tribunal indictments. But it's likely there was sympathy on both counts, respectively, from the Bush and Clinton Administrations. So while it's fair to say that the U.S. was the strongest backer of war crimes data collection and prosecution, it would be wrong to conclude that we went all out to ensure that the process proceeded as swiftly and in as straightforward a manner as possible.

In the end, the secret set-up may not have mattered, at least in one sense, since Washington's appetite for the kind of reports we were sending in, even on the human rights side of the house, was waning, especially as we moved into 1993. The Clinton State Department abruptly halted publication of the UN-bound compendia of such reports in June or July of 1993. That was about the time that the Clinton team, including Lake and Christopher, went into a pox-on-all-their-houses, full-court press to try to get Bosnia off the front pages.

But getting back to your central question, how did we know who was doing what to whom in Bosnia overall, and in what proportion, by far the most authoritative analysis of that issue was completed by the CIA in late 1994. As described in The New York Times in early 1995, the Agency study was a long, exhaustively thorough, and highly classified all-source analysis of that very question. It concluded that Serbs were guilty of at least 90 percent of the ethnic cleansing, killings and atrocities up to that point, that, overwhelmingly, Muslims had been the victims, and that this activity had almost certainly been orchestrated by Serbian political leaders. That was quite a contrast with what I'd heard out at Langley in the summer of 1993, in the conversation I mentioned earlier.

Q: So you felt vindicated by the CIA study?

NEITZKE: The CIA's conclusions were almost exactly those that I had offered in front channel analyses two years earlier. Some of the language they used was nearly identical to what I'd sent in. But so many more victims had been killed in the interim, and the U.S. in early 1995 was still sitting, actually by then squirming nervously, on the sidelines, that any sense of vindication wasn't terribly sweet.

But for anyone involved in Bosnia policy, or anyone who followed the debate on what to do about Bosnia, or anyone who may have been confused about what actually transpired in Bosnia, the CIA study stands, as closely as anything can, as an unimpeachable judge of the facts. It makes nonsense of Serb apologists' claims of equal guilt, of American policymakers' evocations of ancient ethnic hatreds, of the EC's suggestion that Croatian crimes in Bosnia in 1993 surpassed anything the Serbs did, and of the countless other insulting lies told to justify our own policy of abject cowardice. No other document has come out of the war or its aftermath, even from The Hague Tribunal, that provides such an unambiguous and damning apportionment of guilt for the mass crimes committed in Bosnia.

Q: Well, I am curious about something you said, to back up just a little. I believe you stated that someone in Washington, you seemed to imply that this was someone on the intelligence side, in effect took over a large part of the effort to collect eye-witness reports of atrocities and killings in Bosnia. You described this as a secret program. How was that possible? Most of these victims were in Bosnia or Croatia, were they not? How could it have been secret, without the

involvement of your Embassy or the Croatian Government?

NEITZKE: It wasn't. We were both involved, the Embassy and the Croatian Government. But I have to tread a bit carefully here.

Q: Can you be at all more specific?

NEITZKE: As I said, when this issue arose, I argued that any additional personnel to be devoted to harvesting what was, in effect, war crimes testimony, should be assigned to our Embassy, that they should work openly on this as other Embassy officers were then doing, and that whatever they produced should be included in the published compendia that State was periodically forwarding to the UN. I thought we in the Embassy could do the job more efficiently. But it wasn't just a question of efficiency. To do this secretly would require our establishing a working relationship with elements of Tadjman's security apparatus not known for their devotion to democratic ideals. Establishing those ties at that time, I argued, would send the wrong message to Tadjman.

I made my case to Washington but was overruled. They were determined to set up this new link. My job, I was told, was to make sure it didn't backfire. So what we did was to first ask Tadjman to clean house, as it were, to replace certain people. The key individual replaced later publicly condemned Tadjman's even entertaining our request, but Tadjman himself was receptive. Actually, receptive barely describes his reaction. He was virtually ecstatic over the prospect of this new sphere of cooperation with the United States. So we went forward. Although this hadn't been Washington's, certainly not Eagleburger's, intent – they did this mainly to get a better grip on the reporting of Serbian war crimes – this new engagement with Tadjman made him less receptive to our and others' later calls for greater respect of democratic rights. And it gave others direct access to Tadjman's inner circle in a way that didn't always support the message that I was trying to get across. I did my best to stay on top of it and protested a couple times when this new tie threatened to get out of hand, but the effect of this move on Tadjman was not helpful on balance.

Q: Okay, I think I know what you are alluding to and I guess we should leave it at that. Now, getting back, you suggested that you and the Embassy were doing a number of things in that first year, in addition to the atrocity reporting, that may have gotten on Washington's nerves.

NEITZKE: When the first group of death camp survivors arrived in Karlovac, and it appeared that subsequent releases would depend in part on the speed with which these men could be moved on to third countries, I sent in a message – the idea came from a Econ Officer Tom Mitnacht -- proposing that the U.S. quickly admit some of them, as something we should do for its own sake and as an incentive to other Western countries to do the same. Shortly thereafter, the USG itself estimated that there were up to 70,000 prisoners in 45, nearly all Serb-run, camps in Bosnia. The ICRC said nearly all were in unheated buildings facing "Siberian-like" conditions. Yet the Department all but shot down our proposal, citing a host of bureaucratic reasons, behind which clearly lay the message that Washington really, really, didn't want to take these people.

Q: So, what happened to them, the former prisoners in Croatia, and those still held in Bosnia?

NEITZKE: We and a few other, mainly European, countries, did eventually admit some of these men for resettlement. But most of the initial tranche of released prisoners languished for months in cramped, fairly squalid conditions in Karlovac. There was heat, food, and health care, but it was still pretty grim. I visited a couple times. It was important to try to move these people along if one were to press the Serbs to release more prisoners. But, seeing that very few of these men were moving onward, out of Croatia, the Croats eventually balked at admitting many more, which played into the Serbs' hands. By then they had their own reasons to drag their feet on more releases. Some well-documented camp populations in Bosnia seemed to disappear. Others, with a bad winter setting in, presumably died from the effects of their mistreatment while waiting, against the odds, for their own release.

Here's another example of what we tried to do. An Embassy officer brought me what appeared to be reliable reports that women and girls being held in one particular mass rape facility could be gotten out for a specific per-head ransom. I appealed to the Department for a small amount of funds to explore this, to see whether we could get some of these women and girls out, again, a gesture for its own sake but something that also might help shed light on this widespread atrocity. My proposal was not well received, but they couldn't just reject it. Instead there began a lengthy runaround, with numerous requests for more information, which they knew would be tough to get. Finally, Washington asked ICRC and UNHCR to confirm the location of the alleged rape facility, as though they'd be able to drive right up and check it out, which of course they would not do and could not do but were reluctant to acknowledge. So, in the end, after all the foot-dragging, nothing came of that effort either.

Q: Anything else, other things you attempted?

NEITZKE: We were looking for leverage wherever we could find it, to try to get Washington to do the right thing, or – let me be precise -- at the very least to begin telling Congress and the American people the truth about what was happening in Bosnia. Then, if the President chose to do nothing, so be it. That's his prerogative. But let's at least start with the truth; this is genocide in Europe, within shouting distance of the Holocaust. We'd all mouthed the words "never again," yet here we were, watching genocide in Europe yet again. Our leaders knew full well that in this case the truth was less likely to set them free than to force their hand, so they fought it hard, as I've said, portraying Bosnia as a recurrence of age-old ethnic hatreds and arguing there was nothing we could do until these people tired of killing one another. In mid-1993, Secretary Christopher termed Bosnia "the problem from hell," before trying, to the extent possible, to wash his hands of it for two years. He made much of the fact that Muslims too had committed crimes – as it turned out, only perhaps one percent of the murders and ethnic cleansing vs. the Serbs' 90-plus percent. But in Christopher's calculus, even the Muslims couldn't lay claim to the moral high ground.

Throughout this period, I was meeting with various journalists, including a producer for NBC's "Today Show," who asked to film a segment with me on what I'd learned about the atrocities being committed in Bosnia. That required Department permission, and it took them about a minute to send me a curt, hell-no message. As I've mentioned, I also had the chance to chat at length with most of the Senators, Congressmen, and staffers who came out.

Q: Are any of those particularly notable, I mean, Senators, for example?

NEITZKE: Biden's visit was interesting. It was in the spring of 1993. I laid out for him over dinner – it was just Biden, me, and a few of his staff -- what I thought should be done. Then I tried to dissuade him from traveling on to Belgrade for what I argued would be seen as yet another legitimizing meeting by a prominent Westerner with Milosevic. I said that, if he were intent on going, I hoped he'd issue a public statement branding Milosevic a probable war criminal. At his request, I produced a draft. This was at a point when Serbian forces were rampaging through Eastern Bosnia, vastly swelling the populations of the Muslim enclaves. Biden read my draft the next morning, appeared uncomfortable with its bluntness – he said, for example, that he didn't personally know whether Milosevic was a pathological liar, as I'd claimed -- and he did travel on to Belgrade to meet with Milosevic. When he came back through Zagreb, he told me that he'd called Milosevic a war criminal to his face. His staff told me later, however, that that wasn't quite what had happened; Biden had merely commented to Milosevic that others said he was a war criminal. Ultimately, however, Biden backed forceful action against Belgrade. There were many others, many other discussions, with Warner, DeConcini, Moynihan, Specter, Levin, Hutchison, Lantos, Leach, and so on.

Q: Well, did this, I will not say deluge, but steady parade of CODELs and what not keep you from other, more important work, did you ever feel?

NEITZKE: Trying to get the Congress' attention on this was a pretty high priority. And, as I told Congressman Leach when he asked me that question, Zagreb wasn't exactly the Paris Air Show. No one came out in those years for the fun of it, or the shopping. I wanted to get everybody out there we possibly could.

We would take some of them down to Karlovac to meet with death camp survivors. Others came with their own priorities. Some were focused on getting into Bosnia, Senator Moynihan, for example. His planned flight into Sarajevo aboard a U.S. C-130 flying under UN relief auspices was quietly nixed by the Pentagon at the last minute, only they didn't tell him. Instead, they had the pilot tell him that flights into Sarajevo that day had been grounded for security reasons. When I informed the Senator that this was not the case, that planes were taking off even then for Sarajevo, he was furious. He sent off an angry cable to what he called his friend, then-Secretary of Defense Cheney, suggesting he'd been deliberately lied to. On returning to Washington he reiterated the charge in a speech on the Senate floor, mentioning my name and what I'd told him. Moynihan eventually did get to Sarajevo, accompanied by Galbraith. But, as with so many others who got in, he did so with assistance from us in circumventing Pentagon roadblocks and getting them on other Allied aircraft assigned to the UNHCR airlift.

Q: Anything else?

NEITZKE: Maybe just one more. This had to do with the DART, the Embassy's Disaster Assistance Response Team, a USAID group, tireless, incredibly resourceful, mostly contractors, if I recall, whose job it was to anticipate emerging relief needs in Bosnia and propose quick action to address them. This work required them to travel into Bosnia, often with UN convoys of

one sort or another, usually to places which were reasonably safe. On occasion, however, they would come to me – I had to exercise go/no-go authority over all their trips into Bosnia - with a proposal that entailed significant danger. We knew generally where the front lines were, but we also knew that those lines could change rapidly. There was no question who'd be held to account if DART members were seriously injured or killed, but I don't think I ever denied a DART travel request into Bosnia. We may have delayed a couple trips briefly, but I don't think I ever denied one. I thought that their work was some of the most important that anyone was doing in the area.

Once, however, Tim Knight, the DART leader, asked permission for their most fearless member, Bill Stuebner, a wonderful guy, a hero in my view, to travel essentially through and behind Serbian lines to check out reports we were all receiving of extremely dire, possible starvation conditions in one or more of the eastern enclaves. Stuebner might face significant danger, yet, if he were willing to attempt it, I thought it worth the risk. When I asked, this one time only, for the Department's concurrence, they refused. They didn't say no, and they didn't question the evidence I presented of apparent conditions in the enclaves. They simply replied, gutlessly, that the decision – and, hence, the responsibility – would be mine alone.

I gave Stuebner the go-ahead. Eventually he and the Merhamet – Muslim Aid -- group he was traveling with made their way into Gorazde, I think it was, and he gathered the information he needed. Then, when Stuebner's return was briefly delayed, Embassy Belgrade panicked. They'd had no role in the Stuebner trip. They knew, however, that Stuebner was traveling, in a sense, incognito and that if the Serb forces encircling the enclave got wind of his presence there they'd be incensed and Stuebner could be in danger. Nonetheless, our Belgrade Charge, who I was later told had complained bitterly to a group of Embassy subordinates that Stuebner's "cowboy adventure" threatened to derail his own long career, notified UNHCR Belgrade and asked that they check on Stuebner when they were next in that area. Of course, if UNHCR Belgrade had been doing its job, supplying the Muslim enclaves, a trip like Stuebner's wouldn't have been necessary. Instead, they often delivered much of their food to Serbia proper, or to Serb-held parts of Bosnia, with only a comparative trickle finding its way to Muslim areas. UNHCR Belgrade was notorious both for knuckling under to the Serbian goons manning the checkpoints that were strangling the Muslim enclaves, and for leaking sensitive information to the Serbs, which it appeared they quickly did in this case as well. In the end, Stuebner was able to exit the enclave in the same surreptitious way he'd gotten in, but not before the danger level had been jacked up needlessly by Embassy Belgrade's gratuitous action. We let them know just how grateful we were for their intervention.

Q: Well, I am sure you did.

NEITZKE: I mention this case for a couple reasons. First, to give more of the flavor of what it was like, of what we felt ourselves up against, in trying to get what was happening in Bosnia taken more seriously. And secondly, to highlight, as we moved into 1993 and later, the growing attention that we, UNPROFOR, UNHCR, and not least the U.S. military, would be forced to pay to the plight of the eastern enclaves. These are areas into which we ended up airdropping food, if you recall, and one of these, Srebrenica, was the scene in 1995 of the largest single mass murder in Europe since the Holocaust.

Q: Let's return to that, but maybe this would be a good point to talk more about the U.S. military. You said that you found their role in all this intriguing, if that was your term. What sort of contact did you or others in the Embassy have with our military during this period?

NEITZKE: From the onset of the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia in March of 1992 until the end of the Bush Administration, the military, the JCS, were more than willing to follow the White House and State Department lead. The policy, at all costs to limit our involvement as much as possible, was exactly what the JCS favored. If that required distorting the truth, misleading Congress and the American people, so be it, the JCS would gladly play their role.

Q: How so, exactly?

NEITZKE: When the press got into a couple Serb death camps in August 1992 and their reporting and video footage began rousing the American people to demand that something be done, the Pentagon went all out to counter this pressure. In mid-August testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Pentagon International Security Affairs Assistant Secretary Hadley called Bosnia a "blood feud" dating back centuries that threatened to suck us into an endless guerilla war. General McCaffrey, speaking for the JCS at that hearing, claimed it would take 400,000 troops to halt the violence in Bosnia. 400,000! He pointed out that Bosnia was even larger than South Vietnam and, lest anyone miss the point, some four times larger than Northern Ireland. For good measure, he hauled out the bogey of the Wehrmacht's troubles in wartime Yugoslavia. Plainly, Bosnia was way too tough for the U.S. even to consider doing anything about militarily. This was part of what prompted even Warren Zimmerman ultimately to condemn the JCS's anti-interventionist excesses as "disgraceful, cowardly, and insidious."

I remember a discussion at the Embassy with General Jim Jones...

Q: James Jones, Marine Corps Commandant and...

NEITZKE: I think he was a one-star then, 1992, but yes, he went on from his Bosnia watch job with EUCOM to a series of rapid promotions that ultimately took him to the JCS and Supreme Allied Commander. He came through from time to time for a chat and once showed me contingency plans for safeguarding a potential relief corridor from the Bosnian port of Ploce up to Mostar. This was clearly not something the military wanted to do. That task alone, the plan estimated, would require some 25,000 troops – which meant, he and I both knew, that it was effectively off the table; the Administration would not even consider it. And that, of course, was the point. The JCS were careful never to say outright that any given task in Bosnia couldn't be done, they'd simply attach a troop requirement to the task that was wildly beyond anything politically acceptable.

Q: You are saying it was all negative, our military's role, attitude, and...

NEITZKE: Not at all. As far as I could tell, our military, our soldiers and airmen, and women, did every task assigned them in the Balkans with the utmost professionalism, and, when required, bravery. The MASH field hospital at Zagreb airport, for example, technically part of UNPROFOR, was a thoroughly professional operation, albeit badly underutilized because of

how far it was situated from UNPROFOR troops in the field. Our pilots, who flew into Sarajevo under UNHCR auspices, did a great job, repeatedly risking ground fire to get the planes in, as did the small team of U.S. military material handlers, I believe, at the Sarajevo airport. Our pilots who flew the airdrop flights over eastern Bosnia also performed well, even though they were directed to fly so high – for security reasons -- that many drops fell far from their targets.

Q: So you blame the JCS for our reluctance to take any real risks at all?

NEITZKE: I do. I agree with Warren on that point. Here's another example of how the Pentagon's extreme aversion to risk-taking on Bosnia played out on the ground. When the decision was made to send UNPROFOR into Bosnia, and the Brits, the French, and most of the rest of our NATO allies started ponying up ground forces, in the fall of 1992, we held back, committing only the MASH hospital, which was to stay in Zagreb, and a tiny group assigned to UNPROFOR Sarajevo. As pressure built up on us over time to commit at least some ground forces somewhere in the area, the Pentagon finally agreed to send 500 or so U.S. troops to comparatively safe Macedonia, to help man border checkpoints as part of the so-called sanctions regime that had been imposed on Serbia. This deployment was intended to free up some of the Scandinavian forces already in Macedonia, who were redirected to more dangerous duty in Bosnia. Only that wasn't the end of it. After awhile, the Scandinavians remaining in Macedonia began complaining to the UN, and the UN began complaining to Washington, about the refusal of U.S. commanders on the scene to allow their troops to man even a few of the more challenging border-monitoring posts. That's how determined the JCS were not to get involved. The United Nations and the Nordics – the Nordics! -- were complaining about our timidity. That's the sort of thing that contributed to the virtual blowout in NATO in late 1994 and early 1995 over the U.S.' refusal not only to lead in the Balkans but even to participate meaningfully alongside our NATO Allies.

Q: Well, that does sound bad...

NEITZKE: Ignominious.

Q: Taking it from the Scandinavians and all.

NEITZKE: In one respect it might have been better, cleaner, if we'd just steadfastly refused to deploy any troops anywhere in the Balkans, because the manner in which we did deploy the few that we eventually sent only further undercut any U.S. claim – moral, military, or otherwise – to leadership. I recall watching a TV interview of Defense Secretary Perry in mid-1994 in which he was at pains to make clear that the few U.S. troops being deployed would have absolutely nothing to do with peacekeeping; their work was to be purely humanitarian. Yet not too humanitarian. They definitely would not, for example, be exposed to mass graves, a Pentagon spokesman pointed out, lest that subject them to undue "psychological stress." What a contrast this earlier, frankly humiliating period constitutes alongside the forceful, self-confident manner in which our forces did ultimately deploy in implementing Dayton.

Q: You referred to the so-called sanctions regime on Serbia. What did you mean "so-called?" There were sanctions, were there not?

NEITZKE: There were sanctions. And by all accounts, they inflicted hardship on the average Serb and on some of Serbia's neighbors. But they never demonstrably inhibited Belgrade-backed Serb military depredations in Bosnia. And, from the reports I read, sanctions-busting evolved to a very high and profitable art form in Serbia. Despite a lot of to-ing and fro-ing by Western sanctions enforcement monitors, the West, including the U.S., knowingly permitted massive sanctions violations across its southern border with Macedonia. Why? Mainly because we wanted to prop up a very fragile Macedonia but without having to take on the Greeks directly, and their politically potent supporters in the U.S., over Athens' effort to strangle Macedonia at birth because of its name. During some months, according to reports I saw, thousands of railway freight cars and large trucks passed virtually unimpeded over the Serbia-Macedonia border in both directions. And this was happening as the killing in Bosnia continued and as we publicly touted the sanctions regime on Serbia as a strong response.

But let me get back to our earlier discussion...

Q: Yes.

NEITZKE: Our discussion of how far the Pentagon was prepared to go to counter any call for more direct U.S. involvement in Bosnia. The endless debate over Bosnia policy created far and away the dirtiest, most no-holds-barred analytical environment I'd ever worked in. Here's another example. In early January 1993 we, Embassy Zagreb, started getting second-hand reports – including direct ham radio reports via the Mosque in Zagreb, or perhaps it was Merhamet, about extremely dire conditions in the Serb-surrounded Eastern enclave of Zepa. We already knew that Zepa was near the top of both UNHCR's and the Bosnian Government's list of most desperate locales. Our best information was that no aid convoy had ever reached this area, whose population had by then swelled to an estimated 30,000 by the arrival of Muslims from ethnically-cleansed neighboring areas. The reports we saw alleged large and rapidly accelerating numbers of deaths, principally of children, due to severe malnutrition, even starvation. While we had no means of independently evaluating these reports, the conditions they described were consistent with what Stuebner, the DART rep I mentioned earlier, had picked up in Gorazde in late December. I sent in what we had in a front channel cable, appropriately caveated as to sourcing, but calling it an apparent final plea from the largest standing deathwatch in Bosnia, or something close to that. I added that, based I think on what Stuebner had heard, the Muslims in Eastern Bosnia were convinced that only massive air drops could save them.

I sent that report in more out of frustration than in anticipation that it would actually light a fire under anyone – this was the comparatively dead Bush-to-Clinton transition period – but apparently it did; it was read. The subject of how to keep alive the most vulnerable Muslim populations in Bosnia, endangered by bitter winter conditions and the continuing Serbian blockage of relief convoys, was already under consideration in Washington, including the possibility of initiating airdrops to those areas. The JCS had been holding the line against airdrops, but our report apparently helped tip the balance in the other direction, and the JCS went into overdrive to counter it. Two steps they took of which I'm aware were: the redirection of a satellite to photograph Zepa, and EUCOM's dispatching General Jones to Sarajevo to extract from UNPROFOR any information he could regarding convoys to the eastern enclaves, or

anything else that could be used to blunt pressures building for U.S. intervention or airdrops. In the event, satellite imagery of Zepa showed a moving vehicle or two and heat emanating from a couple buildings, which the JCS reportedly argued was a clear indication that the starvation reports were unfounded. And from Sarajevo...

Q: And you know this how? How did you know this was the Joint Chiefs specifically, and what they were doing, the satellite and all?

NEITZKE: The JCS representative on a high-profile U.S. relief survey mission that came out in early 1993 told me, accused me actually, that my report had forced them to redirect a satellite, and I saw the report of what the satellite had picked up. But before I get to what UNHCR actually found in Zepa when they finally got in, let me tell you what General Jones found out in Sarajevo. And here too, before you ask, I know what he reported because a thoroughly disgusted member of his team privately briefed us and I saw a copy of Jones' close-hold brief to EUCOM on the results of his Sarajevo meetings. His report said nearly all one needed to know about the extent to which senior U.S. military had swallowed hook, line, and sinker UNPROFOR's pox-on-all-their-houses perspective. More to the point, Jones' report indicated clearly how far the JCS were prepared to go to win the Bosnia information war, or disinformation war. It said, most egregiously, that relief convoys were in fact getting into the eastern enclaves, including Zepa, and that there was no evidence of starvation there.

Despite our differences, I had respected Jones and I was disappointed that he'd become an even larger part, indeed the focal point, of the JCS' determined disinformation effort, in this case, regarding relief convoys to the desperate eastern enclaves. The officer who briefed us, who had accompanied Jones to Sarajevo, told us how his phony convoy report had been concocted. Amid a strange joviality, he said, UN personnel had lightheartedly responded to Jones' query about convoys to the affected enclaves, that, "sure, that's on our list for every Tuesday," or words very close to that. The UN didn't want the U.S. military to get involved any more than the JCS wanted us to get involved, hence the reported semi-conspiratorial atmosphere at the meeting. On the basis of this UN wink-and-nod, Jones reported to his superiors, and they to Powell, that the convoys were getting in, including to Zepa, although everyone in that briefing, we were told, knew that they were not. But Jones didn't stop there. He went on to provide chapter and verse of what I earlier referred to as the virtual Stockholm Syndrome perspective of the UN, especially in Sarajevo.

Q: Meaning what? Stockholm syndrome? You have mentioned this a number of times.

NEITZKE: The term is derived from a famous hostage case in Stockholm. In essence, some persons held hostage in time take on the perspective of their captors, identifying with them, seeing outsiders, even potential rescuers, as threats to their well being. So, with Serbian artillery shelling Sarajevo, with Serbian snipers picking off civilians, with Serbs in control of virtually all routes into the city and able to close the airport at will, whom did UN Sarajevo consistently portray as the worst of the bad guys? The Muslims, of course. In UN eyes, the Muslims were not the principal victims of the Serbian siege, they were the principal culprits; they even shelled themselves to curry Western sympathy. I remember later seeing a U.S. military cable – a classic, from SHAPE I believe -- that baldly declared that Sarajevo was not, after all, a city under siege

but simply a venue for “exchanges of fire between conflicting parties,” of which the duplicitous Muslims were obviously more guilty. We passed that one around. Utterly laughable, but for the tragic fact that it represented what a lot of the U.S. military apparently thought and were determined to have others think.

In his report, Jones gave full credit to the recurring UN charge that Muslims were orchestrating a sophisticated PR campaign to dupe the Western press, playing on our sensitivities with reports of starvation, that the Muslims were nearly as guilty as the other parties of mass murder, rape, and other atrocities, and that it was the Muslims who were shelling UNPROFOR to try to make the Serbs look bad, that the Muslims were responsible for every UNPROFOR casualty, every one. As for the possibility of airlifts to feed the eastern enclaves, Jones reported the UN’s recommendation against doing so except under permissive conditions. Permissive conditions meant that the Serbs would have to be fully on board; so they wouldn’t shoot surface-to-air missiles at the flights.

Q: Well, could you not have challenged Jones on his report?

NEITZKE: Not without getting our source canned, but later I did challenge most of what he’d said in his report.

Now two things. First, when a UNHCR convoy, with UNPROFOR escort, did push its way into Zepa, what they found – in a very brief, almost drop-and-run visit – were in fact horrible conditions – many fresh graves, people eating bread made partly of sawdust, virtually no medical supplies, and a large, desperate, weakened, panic-stricken population. Actual starvation? The UN claimed not, but in light of what they actually saw, they didn’t push the point. What I learned as an aside from this incident is that it can be all but impossible to prove death by starvation. Technically, one doesn’t starve to death; rather, one’s severely malnourished, weakened body, facing severe winter conditions, little food, and no medicine, in time simply succumbs to any of a host of other problems.

Secondly, when, rather than take on the Serbs directly and force through convoys, we opted in late February 1993 to begin airdrops into the eastern enclaves, we did so under Kafkaesque restraints. This was part of Operation Provide Promise. Most such U.S. flights – several countries eventually participated – took off from Rhein-Main in Germany, but not, in most instances, before Serbs – on the spot, invited there by us – had inspected the pallets, the items to be dropped, eliminating anything and everything which in their opinion did not constitute humanitarian relief, such as sleeping bags and plastic sheeting, for example, to help keep people from freezing to death. Just think about that. The Serbs are doing all they can to strangle the Eastern Muslim enclaves, and here Serbs are dictating to the U.S. military, on a U.S. military base, what we may and may not drop to their beleaguered victims. And we bless the whole exercise. And then when we actually made the drops, we do so from 15,000 or so feet rather than the preferred 10,000 or lower, because we still fear that the Serbs might try to bring down our C-130s. Dropping from that altitude in frequent high wind conditions – often at night – caused many of the drops to drift far from their target areas, and endangered the desperate Muslims who ran out to get the stuff, MREs mainly, sometimes under Serbian fire. Again, I have nothing but praise for the men and women who flew these flights; they were not easy, and the food that they

were able to deliver on target, despite the constraints, saved lives. But this was not a glorious chapter at the command level.

Q: Well, why was there such a fear of the Serbs? Was it not at all justified? And were there not in fact threats also from the Croatian side, and even the Muslims, I mean, Bosnia was a very dangerous place, was it not?

NEITZKE: There are several aspects to that. And they're critical in understanding both what was going on in Bosnia and Washington's reaction to it. When it became clear that Yugoslavia was going to come apart, with the first serious fighting and substantial casualties in the Croatian war, in mid-1991, the Bush Administration, though loath to intervene under any circumstances, began to do contingency planning. And they didn't like what they saw.

Among the "Yugo hands" at State as well as Pentagon planners, it was axiomatic that the Serbs could not be stopped, let alone rolled back, merely by air strikes. Fighting on their own mountainous terrain, Partisan-style if necessary, they might prove a very difficult adversary. Only the intervention of a large, U.S.-led ground force might suffice, and casualties could be high. Clearly, they feared an escalatory ladder of actions that could lead to a quagmire.

Who would have led the Bush Administration to that assessment of Serbian strength and determination? Who would have provided their most authoritative reading of the Serbs? Of how hard they'd fight and how hard it would be to force them to the table? My guess would be Eagleburger, and perhaps Scowcroft, old Belgrade colleagues. Eagleburger was, unquestionably, de facto dean of State's Yugo hands. And when he stated, as I assume he would have, with conviction and emotion, that this is what you'll face if you go in, this is how hard the Serbs will fight, this is how hard it will be to defeat them, there would have been nobody in the government able credibly to challenge him.

Eagleburger used to say, including to the media, what if the U.S. did try thus and such to stop the fighting and it didn't work, then what? We'd have to escalate. And where would it all end? I understand, from a Kissingerian, realpolitik perspective, that great powers on ill-considered moral crusades can do much harm to themselves and others. But I always favored a different answer to Eagleburger's quandary, that at least you'd have tried, at least you wouldn't have stood by, our nation's highest recognized authority on Yugoslavia, cynically dissembling amid a prolonged genocidal Serbian rampage.

Q: Well now let us take this head on. You keep going back to Larry Eagleburger's role in all of this. Obviously you think he screwed up. But are you saying that he deliberately lied about what was going on in Bosnia, about the genocide?

NEITZKE: I can't prove precisely what Eagleburger knew at any given time. But his various statements, describing the death camps as merely unpleasant conditions, saying there was nothing the U.S. could do until "these people tired of killing one another," delivering a blatantly Serbo-philic speech to the London Conference, and insisting that the Croats' hands were as dirty as the Serbs' all mocked what was happening in Bosnia at the time that he made them. I think he knew essentially what was going on. Certainly he knew more than he was comfortable knowing. One of his aides told me that early on – around the time of Slovenia's breakaway – Eagleburger

quashed his own impulse for the U.S. to get more involved when he was told categorically by Baker that U.S. intervention was out of the question. As Baker famously said, “we don’t have a dog in that fight,” the U.S. would stay out no matter what. But Eagleburger didn’t just march out and defend the Bush-Baker decision like a good soldier, he clearly relished the role. That was obvious in how tenaciously he went about dampening the early public outcry for something to be done to stop the killing. Some of this was just bizarre. You may remember his claim that if we couldn’t quell the violence in Los Angeles, referring to the Rodney King riots, then there was little hope of our doing much about Bosnia. And he had to have played a role in that long, critically attention-diverting Panic-Scanlan charade in Belgrade. Provable lies or not, the totality of Eagleburger’s actions and public statements during this period were, well, ...

Q: A disappointment?

NEITZKE: No. They were a disgrace, amid an otherwise remarkable career. And instead of later expressing regret or remorse about the role he’d played on Bosnia – when his errors of analysis and judgment had become crystal clear -- Eagleburger stubbornly kept up the fight. When the Clinton Administration finally did bomb Belgrade over Kosovo, for example, there was Larry Eagleburger protesting that the move smacked of a “racist” approach to intervention. No apparent shame whatsoever. Yet that bombing was at least partly a consequence of Eagleburger’s own earlier efforts to limit and control information about Serbian crimes in Bosnia that might have further galvanized public opinion behind getting tough with Milosevic early on – a move that would not have left even educated Serbs wondering eight years later why the world had “suddenly” turned on them.

Q: Okay, then getting back.

NEITZKE: I was saying how wildly off the mark our Yugo experts’ analysis of Serb strength and fortitude was. From the hundreds of eye-witness victim testimonies that I saw, it was clear that the Serbs doing most of the killing in Bosnia were not the giant, hardened, fight-to-the-death Partisan warriors of Balkan myth and Partisan lore. Instead, cast together with JNA regulars and their Bosnian Serb henchmen were an amalgam of common criminals, punk wannabe gang-leaders, and former soccer fan clubs morphed into doped up weekend rape and execution squads. Even Karadzic later remarked, I believe, that 5,000 American troops on the ground early on would have caused them to stop.

Q: This is the thing that struck me at the time. It sounded like a bunch of, well, a bunch of guys with big beer bellies sitting around with artillery going after people who couldn’t defend themselves.

NEITZKE: Most of these were very nasty types, not courageous, but capable of inflicting horrific brutalities on innocent people. One reason the Serbs suffered very few military casualties in Bosnia were the consistently cowardly tactics they employed – heavily shelling a village from afar, traumatizing the residents. Then they would enter the village or town and start rounding people up. Then, to focus everyone’s attention, they might behead a few community leaders on the doorstep of their homes, or rape to death a young girl or two in front of her siblings, parents, and townsfolk in the local square. The point was to desecrate the place, so that the people, once

banished, would never wish to go back. And then the men and boys would be marched or trucked off to concentration camps where many of them would be starved, sadistically tortured, and killed, and the women and older girls would be hauled off to holding facilities where they were likely to be gang raped. In late 1992 the EC, I believe, sent out a team that estimated there had been some 20,000 rape victims by that point. And after the killing, raping, and roundups were over, the Serb looters would show up, stealing nearly everything removable, from toilets to wiring to doorknobs.

Q: Okay. But the Croats too...I mean I find it difficult to believe that the Croats, that this particular leopard had completely changed its spots from World War II. I assume there was some nastiness on the part of the Croats also.

NEITZKE: As I think I noted earlier, there were also some nasty Croatian elements – I’m thinking here especially of HOS and Paraga’s gang – but some in the HVO too, and Croats did commit atrocities on a number of occasions. For example, in April 1993, in the Lasva Valley, in Vitez, in Ahmici and other villages, and in October 1993, in Stupni Do, Bosnian Croat forces committed crimes as heinous and unforgivable as nearly anything – except Srebrenica – that Serbs did, albeit on a vastly smaller scale. We’ll get to what happened between the Bosnian Croats and Muslims in 1993 in a moment. But keep in mind the key finding of the comprehensive CIA study: Serbs did at least 90 percent of the killing, raping, and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia. And that figure was pre-Srebrenica. This while Croatia was inundated with hundreds of thousands of Bosnian Muslim refugees, and while hundreds of thousands more sheltered in Bosnian Croat-held territory in Bosnia.

As potential threats to any would-be Western military peace-making forces, the Serbs, although a genuine threat, were vastly overrated, and the Croats, even most of the Bosnian Croats, were far more likely to be welcoming than threatening.

Yet this very clear distinction was for a long time all but lost on both our military and UN commanders and officers. There was a peculiar tendency by the UN and Western uniformed military in Bosnia to show, if not quite comradely respect, at least undue deference to Serbian officers. This was separate from the Stockholm Syndrome aspect. One obvious reason is that some of the Serb officers looked and acted the part. There was, I was told, a sense that you could deal with them officer to officer, in contrast to some of the less-disciplined, occasionally more ragtag looking Bosnian Croat and Muslim military leaders. As I mentioned earlier, no one embodied this sentiment more clearly than the initial UNPROFOR Sarajevo Commander, Canadian General Lewis MacKenzie. MacKenzie dealt often with Serbian officers, reportedly showing them great deference, placed most of the blame for Sarajevo’s situation on the Muslims rather than their Serb encirclers, said as late as August of 1992 that he knew nothing of any death camps, said he thought the international media were part of a sophisticated effort to exaggerate such atrocities as there were, was invited repeatedly to testify before the U.S. Congress, and, as I noted earlier, on leaving the Balkans, embarked on a paid speaking tour for Serb Net, a pro-Belgrade organization.

Even U.S. officers occasionally succumbed to the professional attraction of dealing officer-to-officer with the Serbs, including with blood-on-their-hands Serbian war criminals. As late as

August 1994, for example, I along with most other Western diplomats in the region was dumbfounded to learn that General Wesley Clark...

Q: And future Presidential candidate.

NEITZKE: Clark, then JCS Director of Strategy, Plans, and Policy, had traveled deep into Serb-cleansed territory to meet, over State Department objection, with no less a war criminal than Ratko Mladic, the Serbian General -- still on the run -- who engineered the Bosnian genocide. In what a straight faced Pentagon flag officer spokesman termed a customary feature of such "military-to-military meetings," Clark was photographed accepting from a beaming Mladic a hat, pistol, and bottle of brandy. When a U.S. diplomat in the press the next day accurately likened the meeting to "cavorting with Hermann Goering," posts in the area were all quickly told by the Department to shut up about it, since Clark, it turned out, was an Arkansas, Rhodes Scholar friend of the Clintons. Clark later said he'd been misled into meeting with Mladic. That may be true, but those misleading him either knew better or, more likely, had fallen totally for the UN-propagated myth that all sides were equally guilty and that Serb officers in Bosnia were more like uniformed officers anywhere; they were disciplined; you could deal with them.

Apart from deference to Serb officers, however, there was this tendency I've alluded to, especially early on, for U.S. military visitors to the area to view all sides as almost indistinguishably threatening to any forces the U.S. might eventually decide to send in. This mindset led to a bizarre incident near the Split Airport in March 1993, in response to which I sent out another sharp front channel protest, this time to EUCOM, I think. Without anyone's notifying the Embassy, a U.S. Naval ship off the coast had sought and obtained permission from local Split Airport authorities to land a few men for a brief Search and Rescue practice drill. What they then proceeded to do, however, was to land way more than a few armed troops and essentially secure all of Split Airport. We got a call from Defense Minister Susak, I believe, a guy who would do pretty much anything for us that we asked -- if we asked him -- wondering just what the hell we thought we were doing around Split Airport. So I sent my cable calling the incident an outrageous violation of Croatian sovereignty. Then I took the opportunity to blast a U.S. military mindset so out of touch with Balkan ground truth that it apparently couldn't differentiate between potential threats to U.S. forces. I suggested that the Public Relations and PSYOPS strategy the U.S. military had insisted upon for Operation Provide Promise - that is, out of concern for Serbian sensibilities to publicly portray all sides as equally threatening to our airdrops, a ludicrous proposition -- was being badly confused with the reality of the situation in Bosnia, which was, I said over and over, that the Serbs were incomparably more hostile to the prospect of U.S. intervention than the Croats were and incomparably more guilty of raping, killing, and ethnic cleansing.

That cable too was read in Washington and EUCOM, and I got a call shortly thereafter from General Jones asking - for the record, I suppose, since he knew me fairly well by then -- why I had reacted so strongly, as if that weren't obvious. But he acknowledged that the Split SAR exercise had been a mistake.

Again, it's interesting to contrast that U.S. military mindset, the one that prevailed in 1992 and 1993, with where we ended up in 1995, looking at the then beefed-up Croatian forces in a sense

as a proxy in pushing back the Serbs in Bosnia. That warming military-to-military relationship would ultimately see Secretary of Defense Perry deliver an amazingly effusive eulogy at Defense Minister Susak's 1998 funeral. The transformation was profound.

Q: Okay, well, you have provided, you have laid out some serious charges and, I must say, some compelling evidence to back them up. Is there anything else you want to say about the U.S. military at this point before we move on. I mean, I want to get back to Croatia...

NEITZKE: There's just one more point I'd like to make here. I don't cut U.S. military leaders any slack at all for their dissembling, foot-dragging, and use of every other tactic they could find to keep us on the sidelines during the worst of the Bosnian genocide in 1992. But in doing so, in that period, they marched in lock step with the civilian side of the Administration, with Bush, Baker, Eagleburger, Scowcroft, and others.

I think a different framework, or metric, as they would say, for judging U.S. military leaders needs to be applied once the Clinton team came in. I'm not excusing the stance senior military leaders took in the new Administration – Powell was still CJCS and still dug in up to his eyeballs in opposition to deeper U.S. involvement in Bosnia.

Q: But it was not just General Powell, as you said...

NEITZKE: Not at all. Opposition in the military was wide and deep. Just as an aside, I remember once briefing visiting Army Chief of Staff Sullivan out at the MASH at Zagreb Airport, describing the complex of death camps, the one-sidedness of the carnage, what I saw as our interests in the conflict, how most of our NATO Allies were there and badly floundering under UN leadership, the whole thing, I laid it all out. For a long time he just looked at me, as though to say, or so I thought, I hear you, I feel for your having to deal with this mess, but there is literally nothing you could tell me that would alter my opposition to our getting more involved here. Another time I heard a U.S. Army colonel – he was accompanying a U.S. UN Association group, in a Zagreb meeting with Croats and Western Europeans present – stand up and pronounce that even the prevention of 20,000 rapes in Bosnia wouldn't have been worth endangering the life of one American soldier. It was embarrassingly clear that he'd gotten the memo. So, yes, although Powell was the most formidable U.S. military opponent of intervention, he was hardly alone.

But getting back to the early Clinton White House, some were reportedly so disrespectful toward the military, toward their professional concerns and even the military as an institution, that you have to ask yourself honestly whether you, if you were a commander, would want to risk your soldiers' lives in the Balkans or elsewhere under Clinton's leadership. Then, of course, Clinton's early decision on gays in the military alienated senior officers even more. So, despite then UN Permanent Representative Madeleine Albright's famous NSC challenge to Powell, "What's our army for then," I could understand their aversion to going into Bosnia at that point under Clinton's shaky leadership. But did that justify their, in effect, lying about genocide, distorting Bosnian ground truth, endlessly regurgitating UNPROFOR inanities, to counter pressures on the U.S. to intervene? I don't think so; you have to draw the line somewhere; you don't lie about genocide. In any event, the realization that senior U.S. military officers felt profoundly alienated

from the Clinton Administration, and that Clinton had no intention of making good on his campaign pledge to get tough with the Serbs, deepened the already acute frustration one felt on the ground in the former Yugoslavia as the tragedy continued.

Q: Just to clarify, you did or did not want the U.S. military to intervene, I mean even after President Clinton came in, because it sounded as though that was what you were advocating, intervention?

NEITZKE: I wanted the administration, both administrations, civilian and military sides, to stop trying deliberately to confuse, to stop lying to the American people about what was going on in the former Yugoslavia, Bosnia especially. And while I thought it extremely shortsighted for the U.S. to stand aside while most of the rest of NATO sent forces into Bosnia in the fall of 1992 under UN auspices, I never advocated or thought necessary a massive U.S. ground force. Even a small U.S. force, comparable to what the Brits and French sent in, would have transformed the mission from the outset. Under the Powell Doctrine, of course, we don't do token troop presences. But had we been willing in the late summer and fall of 1992 to commit a U.S. contingent to UNPROFOR, one way or another the situation would quickly have come to a head. We would have brought it to a head. With U.S. soldiers at risk, we would not have tolerated that flaccid mess of a command structure. More likely, if we'd been willing to consider going in early, we'd have insisted up front on a U.S.-led NATO force, which – as even Karadzic attests -- needn't have been all that massive. And the Bosnians would have been spared three years of UNPROFOR dithering, and worse. Underlying that preference was my view that there was a good deal less to the Serbs than met the eye and that air strikes, including against Serbia itself, could play a critical role in bringing them to heel, forcing them to the negotiating table. Admittedly, in January 1993, on troop deployments and other options, Clinton faced tougher choices than Bush had in the summer of 1992. Still, I hoped that on Bosnia Clinton would be as good as his word. Few of us realized then just how feckless his Administration would prove to be early on. I think some in our military saw all of that earlier and, while they'd been opposed to going into Bosnia all along, their opposition was redoubled by Clinton's early missteps.

Q: Okay. I see.

NEITZKE: If I could add just one other point here, I think it's important, about a power shift toward the Pentagon under Clinton. Through the end of the Bush Administration, Eagleburger, as I mentioned, with Scowcroft, would typically have been deferred to in weighing the Serbs' political will, what kind of force it might take to bring them to heel. Powell and senior Pentagon officials would have found little in Eagleburger's analysis to disagree with. But when Eagleburger and Scowcroft left, and in light of Clinton's weak standing with the military, and Christopher's early souring on Bosnia, the recognized analytical authority on this issue changed. The Clinton team began deferring almost reflexively to Powell and the Pentagon on the question of what it would take to break the Serbs' will, or at least get them to the table. And within the Pentagon, this issue would typically be worked by planners and analysts with little or no Balkan experience. They nearly always presumed unyielding Serb political will unless confronted with a Western ground force so large that Clinton would never agree to it.

But the larger question here is key. When the U.S. is contemplating military engagement, it now

seems to fall naturally to the Pentagon to assess what kind of force will it will take to break an adversary's will. But why? This is a political analytical judgment at least as much as a military one. It's something for which State and CIA will likely have at least as good a feel as the Pentagon. I understand that with "their" men's lives on the line, the Pentagon won't easily yield to State or the Agency on this judgment. But the balance now has swung very heavily toward the Pentagon. And on Bosnia it did so with the incoming Clinton Administration. They were afraid to challenge the generals on virtually any front, except briefly on the treatment of gays. And that extreme reticence explains some of the policy fumbling and muddling that took place on this issue until the summer of 1995.

As time went on, however, into late 1994 and 1995, the U.S. military itself, even if not always self-consciously from the top down, began to see the handwriting on the wall, the eventual inevitability of their being drawn in in some substantial fashion. And, working with the Agency, they were gradually coming up to speed on what they would need to know when that time came, on the capabilities they might want to have. The Predator and pre-Predator test reconnaissance missions over Bosnia that were being run quietly from, I believe it was Krk Island, off Croatia's coast, were one element of that. And the sophistication of their threat analysis began to improve.

Q: Just a minute. These are the Predators now being used in the Middle East and Afghanistan?

NEITZKE: An earlier version. They were experimenting with them, flying them over Bosnia and producing real time video. They're a very dangerous weapon, and not just for taking out one's enemy at little risk. If a nation has this in its arsenal, it could be nearly impossible next time to say that we can't get any real time intel about, say, concentration camps and mass murders. Just send a few Predators over the area in question. It could enormously complicate deniability.

Q: Well what about the Europeans? How would you rate their performance overall?

NEITZKE: I think we covered part of that earlier. Generally terrible, but at least they tried, at least they showed up. So did the Canadians. Until Dayton and late 1995, ours was the most glaring absence. But even before UNPROFOR's crippling inadequacies became apparent, it had long been clear that the Europeans were not up to the task. This should not have surprised us; there was no basis for believing that they could do this on their own, no historical precedent. Their assertion of a prerogative to handle this situation had all but evaporated in 1992. By then no one was in charge, no Western military force at least.

Q: Well you say they were not up to doing this. I mean, looking at it as a practical thing, here are powers, Germany, France, Britain, Italy, they certainly had a huge array of military might, and they were smart people. Was it a matter of will or what?

NEITZKE: Political will was sorely lacking. But they did have substantial military forces, except for the Germans, who were not there for understandable historical reasons. What they lacked most critically is any prior collective military engagement which might have helped them resolve some of the questions of mutual trust and confidence that plagued even the more formidable European forces in UNPROFOR. And the UN itself, Akashi most notably, but the whole UN chain of command, made effective military action, even by the Europeans, all but impossible.

The French contingent was certainly capable of executing a forceful military action, as were the Brits, as were some others. But each distrusted the UN chain of command and routinely sought guidance and confirmation from their own capital before attempting anything. Each had its own interests in the former Yugoslavia and was considering options to safeguard its own forces should things turn truly ugly and they have to get out quickly. Was the French public, even concerned as it was about the humanitarian catastrophe, prepared to accept French casualties as the result of decisions made by, say, British officers, let alone by a UN civilian? Maybe a few, but not many.

Now you could say that none of this was our fault, that we had no moral, legal, or political obligation to be there, let alone to lead. But you cannot say, looking at history, that the Europeans' behavior was surprising. There was no basis for believing that they were going to shed much blood, jointly, in this kind of endeavor, in the absence of the U.S.

Q: You know, it keeps coming back to what many of our colleagues have observed in various situations, that like it or not, the United States is the indispensable country.

NEITZKE: That was proven by our three-year absence in Bosnia.

Q: Okay, let us turn back to the Embassy, to your role in running that. You were Charge, or chief of mission, I guess, for quite a long period. How did that come about?

NEITZKE: After we established formal diplomatic relations with the Croats and opened the Embassy in late August 1992, the Bush White House, reportedly hoping to curry favor with Eastern European ethnic voters, nominated a Croatian-American, Mara Letica, to be Ambassador in Zagreb. I'm not sure whether her papers ever got to the Hill, however, before Congress adjourned for its long campaign recess. I heard at the time that the nomination may have been slow-tracked in State, that there was opposition to sending a non-professional out at that point. So there may have been some foot-dragging. With Bush's loss, it became moot; the nomination was dead. In January, the new Administration had a full plate of more urgent business and, for that matter, more senior ambassadorial appointments to make. It was late spring 1993 before they got around to nominating Galbraith as Ambassador. And, although Peter's friends on the Foreign Relations Committee rushed through his papers, his hearing, and confirmation, it wasn't until the very end of June that Peter arrived.

Q: We'll talk about Ambassador Galbraith's arrival later. First I would like you to talk a little more about how the new Administration handled the Yugoslav problems and how the sides there reacted to the new Administration. How did the Croats react, for example?

NEITZKE: Clinton had strongly attacked Bush for his failure to take on the Serbs, to halt the killing in Bosnia. So hopes were high after the election that he meant what he'd said. The Croats stood back, as did the Muslims, and to a certain extent, even the Serbs, watching to see what the new administration would bring. Surely the timidity and occasional sloppiness that had characterized the previous 18 months of U.S. Balkan policy would give way to something more forceful and coherent. In retrospect, it seems hopelessly naïve to have believed that. I understand that the Clinton team did ask for a fresh reading from the intelligence community on what it

might be possible to do short of full-scale intervention. I heard that Lake, for example, asked the community specifically for a study of the feasibility of liberating one or more of the death camps. Powell alone probably could have blocked that, but there was another problem. It would take months before new officials were confirmed and in place in all the critical subcabinet intelligence and national security policy jobs. In the meantime, the fresh look Lake wanted would come from holdover, mid-senior level career officials who had been defending our limited engagement policy and its flawed analytical underpinnings. Needless to say, they concluded that little could be done at even remotely acceptable risk.

Add to that the widely-reported disarray in the early Clinton White House, the narrowness of Clinton's victory, and Clinton's strong inclination to spend his limited political capital on domestic initiatives. It soon became clear that we weren't going to get a more potent policy on the Balkans and that it might even get worse. I recall reading that State Department Under Secretary for Political Affairs Peter Tarnoff told Elie Wiesel in April 1993 that failure in Bosnia would destroy the Clinton presidency; the Democratic Party constituted too fragile a coalition to risk it. I also recall reading that Hillary Clinton advised her husband that taking on Bosnia could cost them health care reform and argued strongly against it. Any lingering doubts were resolved by Secretary of State Christopher's disastrous trip to Europe early in the Administration aimed at selling the Europeans on "lift and strike," that is, lift the arms embargo on the Muslims and strike the Serbs from the air.

Q: Well it was considered at the time that we were keeping the Bosnians, the Muslims, from protecting themselves while the Serbs had an abundance of arms.

NEITZKE: That's correct. But Christopher hit a brick wall. Not only did Clinton – who grew nervous, or so it was said, after reading Kaplan's Balkan Ghosts -- pull the rug a bit out from under Christopher in mid-trip, but the Europeans already had men on the ground in Bosnia, some in vulnerable situations. It was all well and good for America, refusing to send troops of its own, to say we'd like to start dropping bombs from 15,000 feet. We saw in 1995 what that initially led to; the Serbs took UNPROFOR troops hostage, tied some of them to bridges, gun emplacements, anywhere where they'd likely be among the first to die from any bombs we dropped. So in the spring of 1993 Christopher's lift-and-strike proposal got a resounding "hell no" from the Europeans. Then Clinton reacted huffily, saying well, I tried, I just couldn't persuade the Europeans, completely ignoring the elephant in the room of our own refusal to send troops, to lead where it mattered.

That episode not only soured Christopher on Bosnia pretty much for the duration – it was, as I mentioned, his "problem from hell" - it also led directly to the toothless, ultimately calamitous "Safe Areas" agreement which provided largely fictitious UN protection for the remaining six largest concentrations of Muslims in Bosnia. You saw the last vestige of that policy copout when the Dutch "peacekeepers" in Srebrenica lamely surrendered to the Serbs in the summer of 1995, allowing them to haul some 8,000 men and boys off to be slaughtered. Now let me go back and say something about how the Croats, how Tudjman, was reading all of this.

Q: Please.

NEITZKE: Tudjman had come a long way in 1992, or so it seemed, from the erratic, ultra nationalist greedily eyeing Bosnia that Warren Zimmerman thought he was dealing with, to the more measured and reserved man I found on my arrival, to the Tudjman as self-perceived statesman following the London Conference of August 1992, where he had first tasted international respectability – and liked it. By the end of the year, with a quarter of Croatia still in Serbian hands and an unstoppable tide of Bosnian Muslim refugees swamping parts of the country, Tudjman found himself under increasing pressure – particularly from restive Croatian communities displaced from the UNPAs - to begin pushing back. He believed that the longer the Serbs' occupation of the UNPAs went unchallenged, the more likely it was that the UNPAs, or at least large parts of them, would never be fully integrated into Croatia.

Tudjman too had noted Clinton's tough campaign rhetoric on Bosnia. And with Clinton's victory, Tudjman hoped for a change in U.S. policy. But, as all the signals out of the early Clinton Administration pointed to continued U.S. reluctance to get involved, Tudjman was quicker than many to see that those hopes were misplaced; Croatia was going to have to take the initiative. And, by late 1992-early 1993, it was better prepared militarily to do so.

Q: So what did Tudjman do, I mean about these UN areas?

NEITZKE: The four UNPAs constituted the quarter or so of Croatian territory, or territory that Croatia considered theirs, that was seized and occupied by Belgrade-backed Serbs in the Croatia War. What to do with them, especially after the fighting there had been largely halted, was an issue on which the civilian side of UNPROFOR had the lead, at least for a time. That was headed by Cedric Thornberry, an earnest and interesting, and ultimately very frustrated, guy. Thornberry's view, and that of UNPROFOR, and technically it could be argued, that of the international community, was that the UNPAS were not integral parts of the Croatia that we and many other nations had recognized by the spring of 1992, that their status was unresolved pending final negotiations between Zagreb and Knin, the so-called capital of the Krajina Serbs. Thornberry's job, against huge odds, was to bridge this gap while helping see to the well being of those who remained in the UNPAs, nearly all Serbs except for a few tiny, surrounded enclaves of Croats, mixed-marriage families, and others.

Thornberry made no bones of the fact that he saw the UNPA Serbs as the underdogs, the past, current, and likely future victims of an ultranationalist Zagreb regime.

Q: Well, were they not, was that an inaccurate assessment?

NEITZKE: At a minimum, it was way overdone. Serbian leaders in Belgrade and in the JNA had anticipated early on that if Yugoslavia came apart Serb-dominant areas in Croatia would need help to remain in Yugoslavia, in effect in a Greater Serbia. These traditionally Serb-dominant areas in Croatia included large parts of Sectors North and South, and smaller parts of Sectors East and West, as the four UNPAs, respectively, were designated. Small-scale fighting for control of these areas broke out long before Croatia formally declared its independence. Belgrade had been shipping arms and other military supplies to the Krajina Serbs for some time. And the Croats in these areas had similarly been mobilizing. During the six months or so of the most intense fighting in the Croatian war, the latter half of 1991, all but a few Croats fled these areas,

remaining for several years in Displaced Persons camps around Zagreb, living pretty dismally. But all was far from well with the Krajina Serbs too. They found themselves even more isolated, cut off from the nearby Croatian communities with which they had traditionally traded and at the end of a very long supply line from Belgrade. Life in much of the Krajina at that tense time was truly grim. I later visited there. Many of these people were living in wretched conditions. And as Croatia became better and better armed, a deep sense of gloom and foreboding settled over the place, notwithstanding occasional bombastic rhetoric from Krajina Serb leaders.

Thornberry had UNPROFOR civilian teams living in the UNPAs, and many became very sympathetic to the Krajina Serbs' cause, seeing Zagreb as a huge threat. And Thornberry's own attitude consistently reflected that sympathy. As he got nowhere fast in his efforts to resolve the status of the UNPAs through negotiations, he heightened his appeals to the local representatives of Western governments, including me, to put pressure on Croatia.

Throughout this period, the latter part of 1992 and early 1993, there were provocations on both sides of the tenuous Krajina Serb-Croatia line, both sides probing the other for local advantage. By early 1993, however, Tudjman was ready to bring things to a head, by upping the ante with the first credible threat of a Croatian military move to liberate UNPA territory. In January 1993, for example, the Croatian army moved near Maslenica to open a secure land corridor to Dalmatia.

Q: How did you, how did the U.S., react to that threat?

NEITZKE: The European bureau at State reacted with near-hysteria. This was still very early in the Clinton Administration, but they had already figured out that they didn't want the Croats stirring things up, rekindling another hot front, as it were. So there were threats from Washington of sanctions against Croatia. Merely for reporting why the Croats said they had undertaken the move, I got another warning from EUR. They didn't want to know why; they didn't care why; they wanted the problem to go away. That was about the same time I got yet another threatening call from EUR, from the East European affairs office, this one suggesting that our whole effort to report atrocities in Bosnia was aimed less at documenting human rights abuses than at forcing the Administration's hand. They suggested that henceforth I just send in the raw data, sort of field reports, and not in widely-distributed, finished, cable form. Not very respectfully, I'm afraid, I declined.

The new administration was already tilting toward a pox-on-all-their-houses rationale for non-engagement, and a get-tough action against the Croats would have comported well with that. To this day I don't think most Croats know how close their country came on several occasions to getting slapped with sanctions. And there were still a lot of career Bush Administration holdovers around who would gladly have clamped sanctions on Croatia because of what they were convinced Croatia was doing in Bosnia. Serbia, of course, was already under the leaky sanctions regime that I discussed earlier. I delivered that unwelcome message to Tudjman, about the threat of sanctions. His response was, essentially, what would you have me do, how long must we wait, I have the displaced persons on my back, this is sovereign Croatian territory being held illegally through the long hand of Belgrade, and UNPROFOR and the international community just dawdle.

What happened in short order surprised me but stunned Thornberry. We flipped. The UN Security Council in March 1993, at the strong urging of the United States, if indeed it wasn't our initiative, adopted a resolution, 815 I believe, summarily declaring the UNPAs, all of them, to be integral parts of Croatia. That was it. The matter over which Thornberry had labored so hard and with such frustration was resolved. Tudjman, with this victory to point to, this tangible backing by the international community of Croatia's right to reintegrate all UNPA territory, was temporarily mollified. I don't think Thornberry ever recovered.

What this episode signaled to me was that Washington – which knew well the legal merits of the UNPA issue – was so determined to keep the lid on at least one Balkan problem that they were willing to go from threatening sanctions on Zagreb to endorsing the Croatian position nearly in the blink of an eye. This was a dance that would be repeated several times in the following two years – Tudjman saber-rattling and threatening to move if the international community didn't do something to get him back the UNPAs – and we or the UN giving him enough, just enough, to get him to stand down for awhile. Ultimately, in May 1995, the game was over; the Croatian military moved in and took over Sector West and then in the summer, in an operation it called Balkan Storm – an allusion to Desert Storm – the Croats retook Sectors North and South. We should talk about that later.

Q: How did you rate Tudjman's diplomacy in all of this, this dance you called it?

NEITZKE: Tudjman's decisions and actions when the chips were down did not, let's say, jibe with the caricature in Zimmerman's, and the CIA's, bio notes of a year earlier. He may not have been a master tactician, but he was plenty able. He read the situation correctly, took major but prudent risks, and in the end got most of what he wanted. He certainly read us right, what he could and couldn't get away with. I spent a fair amount of time with him and I thought I understood him about as well as anyone outside his inner circle. It's clear that at times he was making things up as he went along, getting conflicting advice from subordinates, and keeping his own counsel. His decision-making seemed more like that of a general, which he had earlier been, than a politician-President. You can say and think what you will about Tudjman – and many do, and a lot of it, especially from his political adversaries in Croatia and from Serbia and its sympathizers, is pretty vile – but Tudjman deftly steered the young and fragile Croatian state through some very dangerous waters.

Where Tudjman very nearly got it very wrong, however, was in Bosnia in 1993. And that, I believe, came about for a couple of reasons. The Bosnian Croats had generally – I say generally, not everywhere, Prozor in the late autumn stands out – behaved themselves in 1992. But by early 1993, waves of mainly Bosnian Muslims fleeing the largely unchecked Serbian onslaught were seriously undermining what had always been a tenuous Croat-Muslim balance in various parts of the country, including the southeast. Earlier Croat-Muslim cooperation in certain areas further north had been replaced by open friction and occasional fighting in south-central and south-eastern areas. Nearly always it was the Croats who were taking it to the Muslims. A lot of this fighting was spontaneous, loosely directed by local or regional Bosnian Croat leaders, and not – at least I never saw convincing evidence that it was -- directed by Tudjman.

Q: Do you think Tudjman did not know about it, did not follow this closely, did not authorize the Bosnian Croats to go after the Muslims?

NEITZKE: Well, I'm speaking here about the early days of this Croat-Muslim tension and fighting. Susak was himself a proud Herzegovinian, and he kept a close eye on Bosnian Croat interests. When Susak perceived Herzegovinian interests threatened, he was not averse to straying from Tudjman's guidelines; initiatives that he may have authorized on his own, or authorization that he too liberally interpreted, got Tudjman in trouble a couple times. Tudjman too cared about the Bosnian Croats, no question, but not to the extent Susak did.

Let me digress here to introduce another player, Mate Boban, the Bosnian Croat leader. I met Boban just once, in January 1993. Vance and Owen were then pushing for Western support for their cantons plan in Bosnia, and Boban and the Bosnian Croats stood accused of jumping the gun and beginning to take control in certain areas that the Vance/Owen plan envisioned for eventual Bosnian Croat dominance. When I met him in Zagreb, Boban was seething with anger, directed mainly at critics of his premature move. At that moment the Bosnian Croats were the only Bosnian party unequivocally supporting the Vance/Owen plan. The Serbs didn't like it because it would mean surrendering large chunks of territory they'd seized and cleansed. Izetbegovic didn't like it for a host of reasons. And Washington didn't like it, but offered no alternative. Boban reserved most of his wrath for Izetbegovic, although he hurled no ethnic or religious epithets. Rather, he attributed the Bosnian Croats' increasingly desperate situation to what he saw as Izetbegovic's unwarranted rush to Bosnian independence and bungling of Bosnia's defense when the Serbs made good on their pre-independence threats. Boban contended that no one in the West cared a whit about the Bosnian Croats; they would, I recall his saying, just as soon see the Bosnian Croats flushed into the sea. Boban was not a pleasant man; he played a lot of angles during the war and was said to have engaged in more than his share of corruption. But, while I strongly challenged what he'd said, on his central point he wasn't altogether wrong. The Hercegovinians had always stood at the bottom of the Bosnian pecking order. Boban argued they were on their own and would have to do what they'd have to do to defend themselves.

I took the opportunity in reporting on this meeting - this was just about at the Bush-Clinton handover in January 1993 - to critique the outgoing Bush Administration's stand on Vance/Owen, tacitly supporting the so-called Geneva peace process that had produced the plan, yet constantly nitpicking and undermining their efforts while declining to take the lead ourselves or suggest a viable alternative. I recommended that Washington get off the fence and either support Vance/Owen as the best that could realistically be achieved, and try to end the bloodshed, or openly abandon Vance/Owen and Geneva and pick up the baton ourselves. I also pointed out that while Washington's deep sympathy for Izetbegovic and the Muslims was laudable, the Bosnia of the past and the future was not theirs alone.

Q: Any reaction to that? I mean that was, that sounds like a dissent message to me.

NEITZKE: One former boss sent me a congratulatory message saying it was the damnedest cable he'd ever read, or words to that effect, but no, I heard nothing directly from Washington. It was the eve of the inauguration, for one thing; I'm not sure who was minding the store.

But getting back to Boban and the growing Croat-Muslim tensions, in January tempers had not quite yet boiled over in most Croat-Muslim areas. By April, however, the situation had grown much worse. That was the month when Bosnian Croat forces committed the Lasva Valley massacres to which I referred. And it was the month before Bosnian Croats in and around Mostar began driving Muslims out of West Mostar, mostly to the East Bank, and rounding up thousands of Muslim males and confining them in ad hoc camps set up around the area. But strangely, it appeared that as late as that same month, April, Croats were still transshipping Iranian arms to some Muslim forces.

Q: How do you know that?

NEITZKE: Our Special Envoy for the former Yugoslavia, Reggie Bartholomew, stopped in Zagreb in April, along with Barry McCaffrey. They met with Tadjman and in a private exchange between Susak and Bartholomew the next morning, Susak asked Bartholomew whether the USG wanted Croatia to continue moving Iranian arms to the Muslims.

Q: But I thought you said that all of that had been halted the previous autumn during that episode with the Iranian 747 at Zagreb Airport and all.

NEITZKE: Well, I thought so as well, and I was taken aback by Susak's question. Could it have been a feint, to cover up what he must have known the Bosnian Croats were about to undertake against the Muslims? I don't think so; that wasn't Susak's style; it wasn't how he'd operated with us. Or was it anticipatory, was Susak even then envisioning the larger Iranian role that still lay a year off? I doubt that as well. So I assume there must have been at least a modest continuing Iranian arms flow at that time, so modest – unlike the Iranian 747 the previous fall -- that we hadn't detected it. I recall this episode vividly because it was part of what I later had to testify on during the various investigations of how the Iranians had gotten so deeply involved in Bosnia. What was most interesting here is that Bartholomew in April 1993 told Susak that the USG could not be in the position of approving Croatian transshipments of Iranian arms.

Q: Well, that sounds like a very weak no.

NEITZKE: Bartholomew's response was clear enough: we would not approve or in any way be a party to the introduction of more Iranian arms into the conflict. And that position jibed with the one I had taken in September 1992. Did Reggie's response to Susak lead to a halt in any Iranian arms flow still underway at that point? I don't know, but I'm confident that there was no significant uptick in Iranian arms shipments following the Bartholomew-Susak exchange. We and others would have noticed it.

Twelve months later, however, in the spring of 1994, Galbraith and then Special Envoy Chuck Redman – on wink-and-nod instructions from Tony Lake – gave Tadjman a precisely opposite answer in response to essentially the same query. Redman then told Tadjman that the USG was not in a position to tell Croatia not to engage in Iranian arms transshipments. That was the Clinton Administration's supposed "green light" to an alleged undisclosed covert activity and to Iran's deepening involvement in Bosnia that prompted the various investigations. And that was

followed by a surge in Croatian-Iranian relations on several fronts, a large increase in the Iranian presence in Croatia, and, of course, large-scale Iranian arms deliveries. But returning to the Spring of 1993, the Susak-Bartholomew exchange seemed to indicate that as late as April of that year Croat-Muslim relations were still holding in some areas. That, however, was about to change.

Which brings me to the second factor – in addition to the cumulative destabilizing effects of the Serbian onslaught -- that contributed to the outbreak of more widespread Croat-Muslim hostilities in mid-1993. That was the lesson some Croats derived from the West's de facto acquiescence in Serbian genocide in the previous year. My guess is that some Croat leaders – possibly Tudjman but more likely Susak, along with Bosnian Croat leaders -- calculated that, with relative impunity, they too could forcefully strike the Muslims, especially in areas where they felt Muslims were encroaching, and in addition could begin seizing areas in which, if the Vance/Owen plan were implemented, Croats would be accorded dominance. One thing I heard around this time from an angry Susak was that some Muslim elements had begun using against Croats the very guns that Zagreb had been funneling to them. Yes, that sounds a bit neat, but that's what he said.

I very strongly doubt, however, that either Tudjman or Susak authorized the cleansing of the Lasva Valley, let alone the massacres in late April. By the same token, it's difficult to believe that what briefly transpired in and around Mostar in early May, which was widespread and obviously coordinated, could have taken place without some kind of nod from Zagreb. There, Bosnian Croats, as I mentioned, drove nearly all Muslims from the Western part of the city and began rounding up large numbers of Muslim males and holding them in buildings or improvised camps throughout the area. Those who believe that, notwithstanding the CIA study, Croats treated Muslims just as badly as the Serbs did, often point to those camps around Mostar as proof of their contention.

I can only guess what might have become of these Muslims had the Croat roundup and imprisonment effort continued unimpeded. The Serbs did not have a monopoly on sadism. Fortunately, it didn't continue unimpeded. We, UN personnel, and others were on the Croats' case virtually from the outset. By chance, our military attaché and his assistant were in this area at the time. We had them seek entry to some of the holding facilities, and they got in. With their eye-witness accounts we were able to correct wildly overblown reports that the Croats had set up a system of brutal concentration and death camps similar to what the Serbs had established a year earlier. But, more importantly, we were able to confront the Croats early on with the disturbing details of what we had seen and demand that the process be halted and those detained freed. With pressure from us and many others, nearly all the roundup activity was halted and nearly all of the prisoners were eventually released. For a brief while, however, there was severe mistreatment, even torture of some of these Muslims. And there were a small number of now-documented killings.

Although this bold Bosnian Croat move had essentially been nipped in the bud, a line had been crossed; Croat-Muslim relations in these areas would never be the same. The Bosnian Croats had been reined in, but not completely. Incidents of Croat persecution of Muslims continued to accumulate, and East Mostar became a hell hole, especially for the many displaced Muslims

swelling the population there. UN and Embassy DART officials visiting East Mostar reported the most god awful conditions. And then Stari Most, the beautiful old, medieval bridge, the symbol of Mostar, and to some extent, of Bosnia, was deliberately destroyed by Croatian forces.

Q: Well, again, how do you draw such a moral distinction between what the Croats were doing, or at least tried to do, and what the Serbs did? And also, is Tudjman himself, even if he didn't order it, not responsible for what happened around Mostar?

NEITZKE: On the first part of your question, drawing moral distinctions between what the Serbs and the Croats did to the Muslims, I'm reminded of the line that MacKenzie used, the pro-Serb Canadian UNPROFOR general. He compared the situation in Bosnia to that of three serial killers, one of whom had brutally murdered 15 victims, one 10, and the other 5. Do you really want to help the one who has only murdered 5, he would ask. His point was that all three parties were indistinguishably evil. But the best analysis of who did what to whom, of who killed whom, the comprehensive CIA study I've mentioned, destroys MacKenzie's contention. It was nothing like 15-10-5; Serbs were guilty of 90 percent or more of the killing, raping, and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia. The Croats came in second at a few percent, and the Muslims a distant third, and much of that was probably retaliatory. So, yes, the comparative guilt of the parties is absolutely distinguishable, morally and in nearly every other way, and we do a great disservice, it seems to me, in fuzzing that over or failing to recognize it.

Now on Tudjman and the events around Mostar, yes, I blame him, as we did at the time. Whether or not he had personally authorized this roundup -- I was never able to establish that -- he had to have known about it almost immediately. At a minimum he failed to stop it right away. So, yes, I do blame him. Some will forever believe it was part and parcel of his long-held design to carve up Bosnia. I've already suggested several reasons why I don't think that was the case, that Tudjman had, or at least ever attempted to execute, any such grand plan. But there's another factor worth mentioning. The expat Hercegovinians played an outsized role in Croatia's defense effort and were disproportionately represented in Tudjman's wartime Government. When threats arose to their kin in Bosnia, Tudjman tended to give them more rein than he should have, and wasn't as quick as he should have been to enforce discipline, because these guys were a significant part of his political base. Even if the Bosnian Croats initiated the Mostar actions more or less on their own, however, Tudjman should have immediately done whatever was necessary to stop it, no excuses.

I should add here that this effort, to get Tudjman and Susak to rein in the Bosnian Croats, continued apace through Galbraith's arrival at the end of June 1993. Peter made this one of his earliest priorities, and stuck with it, telling Croatian audiences they couldn't have it both ways -- if they wanted the West's sympathy as a victim of Serb aggression, they couldn't be beating up Muslims around Mostar.

Peter subsequently wrote, after his falling out with Tudjman and his departure from Croatia, that long after his arrival in 1993 we continued to receive numerous reports of horrific atrocities perpetrated by Croatian forces against the Muslims. Peter cast this as part of what he says was Tudjman's determined effort to carve out a Greater Croatia by hiving off large parts of Bosnia. With due respect to Peter, and in light of what I've already explained, I have to say that the part

about a sustained, calculated Greater Croatia land grab by Tudjman is ex post facto; it's not at all how he or I saw it at the time. And it's just not warranted. And on the incoming atrocity reports, Peter may be confused as to timing; most such reports came in before Peter even arrived in Croatia. There was the Stupni Do massacre in October 1993, I believe, but I don't think we had confirmation of Croatian responsibility for that in anything like real time. And I don't think there was anything else nearly that egregious in that period. Yes, the Bosnian Croats and Muslims continued to slug it out at a lower level even after the worst of the Mostar area camps episode was wound up, and Croats were far more often the ones behaving abysmally. And it wasn't just or even mainly killings; it was conditions in East Mostar and increasingly indiscriminate convoy blockages that troubled us.

As for Peter's additional suggestion that it was mainly his own dogged efforts throughout this period that brought about, or laid the groundwork for, the Washington Agreement of March 1994 that nominally ended Bosnian Croat-Muslim fighting, well, that's quite a stretch. It's funny. I recall Peter's once joking with several of us, apropos of the Washington Agreement, reminding us that history is ultimately determined by those who write it and adding that he'd learned a thing or two about divvying up historical accolades. I want to be clear about this. Peter did some excellent work as ambassador, for which he deserves much credit. But the suggestion that he was the key player in achieving the Washington Agreement, and that he worked against the backdrop of many months of continuing Croatian atrocities as Tudjman sought to carve out a Greater Croatia, is way over the top. Peter did have a small but important role in the Washington Agreement, however, which I guess we'll come to.

Again, as to who ordered those initial Croat actions around Mostar, I don't think it has ever been firmly established. Some saw Tudjman's hand in nearly everything, but Tudjman's grip on things wasn't always that tight; his operation was heavily ad hoc.

Q: What do you mean?

NEITZKE: Here's an example that I shared years later with the Chief Prosecutor or chief investigator for The Hague Tribunal and a couple of his staff. He was trying to establish chain of command for some of the worst crimes committed by Croatian elements in Bosnia. He asked me about a couple cables I'd sent in at the time describing an occasionally semi-chaotic Tudjman office and senior government apparatus in Zagreb. That did not jibe with the smoothly-running, top-to-bottom, Tudjman-led operation that he was hoping to prove had dictated virtually every action undertaken by Croats in Bosnia. I wasn't happy to have to disabuse him of this notion, because some of the people he was going after were truly rotten. But in fact, the early Tudjman government was anything but an all-knowing, well-greased machine. To illustrate, I told him that once, just minutes after the Serbs rocketed Zagreb's outskirts in the fall of 1993, I had received two calls in rapid succession from Tudjman's closest aide. The first conveyed disorder bordering on pandemonium in the President's office. The second call was to reassure me that, whatever I might think I'd just heard, in fact there had been no panic whatsoever. That was one of the strangest, best insights I got into how close a run thing Tudjman's early operation really was.

Q: Did Washington's view of Croatia change when they took after the Muslims around Mostar? Did we threaten them in any way?

NEITZKE: The sanctions option was again on the table, as I recall, and that, at least the threat, was certainly warranted. But I saw a different side of that whole issue when I went back to Washington for consultations that summer. By then NSC staff and State were desperate to move beyond Bosnia, to make it appear as though in their initial six months in office they hadn't botched the issue; they'd taken a tremendous amount of heat in the press. They sympathized deeply with the Muslims' plight, as most all of us did. But that, and a reluctance to do anything tangible, let alone risky, to actually help the Muslims, seemed to be about all that passed for policy at that point. Their take on Bosnian ground truth seemed to me naïve at best, which was strange given all the information to which they had access.

When larger-scale Croat-Muslim fighting erupted in the late spring and continued into the summer, Muslim forces also mustered the strength to push Croats out of a few areas in which the two communities had coexisted. One NSC official I called on in Washington shortly thereafter strongly backed these Muslim actions, suggesting that they were all legitimate GOBH activities and thus enjoyed USG support. She spoke as though she were unaware that Croats were even a constituent people of Bosnia. I interrupted her to ask what she found noble about rousting out women and children – of any national group -- in the middle of the night and driving them away, perhaps forever, from their ancestral homes. Wasn't that exactly the kind of activity for which we had roundly and justifiably condemned first the Serbs and more recently the Croats? In any event, that was the caliber of ground truth awareness and policy thinking that underlay Washington's renewed threat of sanctions against Croatia in mid-1993.

A year later, in the summer of 1994, when I again came back to Washington briefly I found pretty much the same pathetic policy, or policy avoidance, situation. When I raised the possibility of military action against the Serbs – who were again on the rampage – a senior NSC official told me that, while some in the White House wanted to hit the Serbs hard, no one in the White House had been able to convince the JCS to use “their army” – those were his words - to do so. So, after eighteen months in office, that's where Clinton stood vis-a-vis the military, the idea of his getting the military to do anything to which they objected was all but inconceivable.

While we're on it, there was another aspect of how Washington, and Brussels too, NATO, dealt with Bosnia that was always frustrating. It seemed that for them Bosnia was often essentially a bloodless paper exercise, an issue for endless debating, negotiating and drafting. You'd get cables exuding pride at their having arrived at some accord following what had to have been a laborious, word-smithing exercise. They'd present this document, this plan or whatever, as though it were a genuine accomplishment, something real, when often you knew it would have no significant effect on events on the ground or would go unimplemented altogether. Yet these drafting successes too were an essential component of our timid, minimalist policy, providing a measure of self-delusion that the process was moving forward when in fact it wasn't.

Q: Okay, let us turn to Ambassador Galbraith's arrival. The end of June 1993, I think you said. How did that go, I mean as far as your position was concerned? It's not normal. Usually someone who has been chief of mission or charge for a long time and has established himself on the local scene and all, well, might wish to leave when the new guy came. But you did not. You stayed and became Galbraith's DCM. Why? And what kind of adjustments were necessary in

how you did business, your role in the Embassy and with diplomatic colleagues in other Embassies?

NEITZKE: You're right. Normally one would have left on Peter's arrival. But this wasn't a normal situation, even a normal lengthy charge situation. I'd been chief of mission, the senior American there for a year. And I probably had closer ties and more contact with senior Croats in that year than all but a few other foreigners in town. Not just with Tudjman, but with Prime Minister Sarinic, Susak, Foreign Minister Granic, and various others. So yes, the handoff to Peter, with my staying there, was a little strange.

If things hadn't worked out between us, obviously I would have left. But things did work out. First, although the ConGen-then Embassy had been tiny when I arrived, it had grown rapidly that first year and in the summer of 1993 was still growing. Sections of one officer when I arrived were now sections of three or four. New sections had been added. New agencies had arrived. We were doing democracy and rule of law promotion through USAID and others. Lots of new initiatives. The old Con-Gen building was bursting at the seams, even as we sought to shore it up physically. We were acquiring additional office space around town. So by then, long before then actually, there was a serious DCM job to be done. Secondly, Peter and I saw essentially eye to eye on the issues, those confronting both the Embassy and the U.S. Government, although that changed toward the end of our two years together, especially regarding growing Iranian influence in Croatia and Bosnia. So there was no clash of viewpoints. Thirdly, Peter had his own agenda, his own initiatives, but beyond those he let me, wanted me, to run much of the show day to day. And he traveled a lot, in and out of the country, so there was quite a bit of de facto and real charge time those last two years.

In my dealings with other diplomats, it was occasionally a bit awkward but not overly so. I'd established good relationships with many of the Ambassadors and most of those continued to invite me to events they hosted, or speak freely with me, even seek me out, at other events, even as they were getting to know Peter. This sounds strange from a strict protocol standpoint, but somehow it worked. It would probably have been a lot more difficult to manage had another FSO come out as Ambassador instead of Peter.

Q: What about your wife, your children, how were they getting along? Did they want to stay on?

NEITZKE: From a family standpoint, wartime Zagreb turned out to be a good fit. The kids were healthy and thriving at the American School of Zagreb. ASZ was a great place, with probably 15 or 20 nationalities represented. In addition to caring for our kids, my wife had carved out a niche for herself, working sometimes alone and sometimes with the wives of other Ambassadors on practical ways to help refugees in the Zagreb area. There was the large annual party at our house hosted by my wife and other Ambassadors' wives for refugee children. On some days my wife would load up the car with apples, or powdered milk, toys, or other goods in short supply in the camps and drive out there and distribute them. Despite the language barrier, she connected with a number of these people. One family I recall in particular, who have since returned to Vukovar and are still struggling to rebuild their lives, lived at that time in a camp out by Zagreb Airport. They still send my wife cards and letters on the holidays. When my family was ultimately evacuated on short notice during the Serbian rocketing of Zagreb in 1995, it fell to me to go

around later and say goodbye to some of the refugee and displaced families with whom my wife had become close. Some wept openly as the news that she'd had to leave and probably wouldn't be back. She also helped found the Zagreb International Women's Club, which also had assistance to refugees as one of its earliest projects. So she was busy too.

While we're on this, there's one other aspect of the transition from me to Peter. By the end of that first year, I had pretty much exhausted Washington's tolerance. I had crossed swords with so many people that if Peter hadn't come out, I'd almost certainly have had to leave. So I was relieved by Peter's arrival. The gorilla climbed off my back, at least partly. And I got my first real break shortly thereafter, a couple weeks back in the U.S.

Q: You mentioned your family's evacuation from Zagreb in 1995. We can get to that later, but how did you find the security situation there, from a personal standpoint?

NEITZKE: Surreal at times. Shortly after we arrived an undetected land mine at Zagreb Airport exploded, badly injuring a heavy equipment operator. We lived on the edge of a war zone, within range of Krajina Serb rockets, in a city inundated with displaced persons and refugees. The Serbs fired rockets onto the city three times when we were there; once in the fall of 1993, hitting a suburb, and twice in early May 1995, with cluster bomb warheads, striking throughout downtown Zagreb – quite close to the Embassy -- and killing a number of people. Guns were ubiquitous. Every New Year's Eve at midnight there was the most amazing city-wide sound and light show of guns being fired. We had a great view of it from our house on a hill above the city. The same day as the bombing of the World Trade Center in late February 1993, a bomb that apparently had dropped from a passing vehicle came to rest outside the main door of the Embassy. As best we could tell, it wasn't intended for us; apparently attaching a bomb to the underside of an enemy's car happened with some frequency; the streetcar tracks outside the Embassy had evidently jarred this one loose. At home we had a 24-hour armed guard provided by the Croatian Government. Some of these men were more professional than others. I remember my very young sons telling me how neat they thought it was to be learning soccer moves from a guy toting a loaded machine gun. Yet life went on, and one didn't often feel much of a sense of danger. There was an almost cocoon-like sense of security to the place, false security perhaps. And by the spring of 1995 that had changed entirely, as some of our personnel came under active surveillance by Iranian-backed terrorist groups and we geared everyone up for possible evacuation. And we did eventually evacuate all families and non-essential personnel after the first rocketing of central Zagreb in early May 1995.

Q: Alright. Well, it is the end of June 1993. Peter Galbraith appears on the scene. I am just guessing that he was the sort of Ambassador who would have wanted to make his presence felt in short order. Is that correct? Talk a little about his priorities and about changes, if there were any, in how the Embassy dealt with the, I guess, policy vacuum that you have described in Washington.

NEITZKE: Peter had a politician's feel and a politician's thirst for the public aspects of the job. He wasn't publicity shy. In one of our first discussions he asked what he might do, within policy constraints, to try to win over the Croats, the man in the street. I suggested he travel out to Eastern Slavonia and tell them that Sector East is illegally occupied territory, that it's part of

Croatia and that the U.S. strongly supports its reintegration into Croatia. Peter made that trip early on, spoke out forthrightly, and his stock soared. It wasn't quite Brzezinski at the Khyber Pass, but the Croats loved it. Then, having won over much of the public with his pitch on Sector East, he began telling audiences that their Bosnian co-nationalists' mistreatment of the Muslims was unacceptable. That was an inspired move on Peter's part, great work, and it had an effect.

While I think of it, however, I remember another trip nearly two years later that Peter and a few other Ambassadors, I believe, took out to Slavonia, after Zagreb's liberation of Sector West. They accompanied Tudjman on what for Tudjman was a triumphal journey. Peter recounted the ecstatic reception that Tudjman and he had received from the crowds that greeted them, calling it a virtual John and Bobby (Kennedy) experience. That's the only time, by the way, that I ever heard anyone anywhere in any respect liken Franjo Tudjman to President Kennedy.

As it happened, the peaceful, negotiated reintegration of the UNPAs into Croatia became a focus of Peter's and the Z-4's efforts in late 1994 and into 1995, as pressure was building and Croatia was preparing to move against Sectors North and South.

Q: What was the Z-4?

NEITZKE: It stood for Zagreb Four. It comprised Peter, the Russian Ambassador, and representatives of the European Union and UN. This was a group that sprang to life, or at least assumed its formal shape, largely at Peter's initiative. It aimed at fostering negotiations between Zagreb and the Krajina Serbs on reintegration of the UNPAs. At the time, most international attention on the Balkan peace-seeking front was focused on Bosnia and the efforts, feeble though they were, of the Contact Group. Meanwhile, UNPROFOR's efforts to keep peace in and around the UNPAs and to get Zagreb talking to the Croatian Serbs were going nowhere. So Peter saw an opportunity, and the Z-4 was the result. My impression was that Washington didn't take the Z-4s' efforts terribly seriously, and some sniggered at its pretensions, but neither did they oppose this effort. And from time to time they were forced to pay attention to it.

The main problem that anyone faced trying to broker a deal between Zagreb and Knin in the late 1994-1995 timeframe is that, as I earlier mentioned, the Security Council had already resolved the central issue; the UNPAs belonged to Croatia, period. That fact was already reflected in Croatia's constitution. And that was unacceptable to Knin. So any effort, such as the Z-4's, to carve out a measure of autonomy for the Krajina within the Croatian state was going to face tough sledding on both sides of the line. In addition, many of the Serb leaders in Knin were wanted on criminal charges in Croatia and their fortunes depended on Belgrade's increasingly tenuous backing.

Q: Why do you say tenuous? These were all Belgrade's men...

NEITZKE: Ostensibly, but most were homegrown Krajina Serbs, armed by and celebrated in Belgrade at the war's outset, but as time passed increasingly seen as burdensome, socially backward, distant relatives, more trouble than they were worth.

The other thing that made negotiation of a Zagreb-Knin deal so difficult is that even as

conditions in the Krajina deteriorated, Zagreb was engaged in a large military buildup. And Tudjman's rhetoric was becoming more bellicose; the handwriting was on the wall.

Q: Well now, how closely did you monitor this, Croatia's getting hold of all these weapons. This was all in violation of the arms embargo, was it not?

NEITZKE: We tracked it, but not all that aggressively. Our military attaché reported on various aspects of the buildup, and I suspect that the Pentagon knew pretty well what was going on – at least until the Iranian pipeline phase began in late spring 1994. In that regard, we'll need to discuss the role of MPRI, but later.

Q: MPRI? That is...

NEITZKE: Military Professional Resources Incorporated, a private – well, at least technically, legally private -- group of ex-U.S. military officers and senior enlisted men, whose leadership included former JCS members. They entered into an agreement with the Croats to provide professional training – supposedly non-tactical – to classes of Croatian military officers. MPRI has often been cited by Croatia's critics as the architect of Storm, the operational name for the Croats' military retaking of the Krajina in 1995.

As far as I know, Washington was never even close to making Croatia's arms buildup a bilateral issue. On the contrary, at least by mid-1994, Washington tacitly accepted the buildup and by the early summer of 1995 had all but embraced it. A lot of it, the arms acquisition that is, was done very quietly, not so quietly that Belgrade wouldn't notice, of course, but not so blatantly that Western governments would have to address it. In retrospect, as I'm sure Holbrooke would agree, the Croatian buildup and military offensive in 1995 were critical in laying the groundwork for Dayton.

But, getting back, Peter's Z-4 was on a different track altogether. To an extent, Peter tried to use Zagreb's threats and militarization to focus minds in Knin. He traveled to the Krajina, including Knin itself, at least a couple times to meet with Krajina Serb leaders. I accompanied him on one trip, coming away with the impression that this was a beautiful - especially Plitvice Lakes - but wretchedly poor area and that prospects for getting this bunch ever to agree to anything acceptable to Zagreb were nil. Once, Peter even brought in Roger Fisher from Harvard, the author of "Getting to Yes," to sit down in Knin with Serb leaders to instruct them in the technical skill of negotiating. A fairly audacious effort. Pure Peter. But I don't think even Fisher had imagined as tough a sell as the Serbs in Knin. Peter got a lot of mileage out of all of this, however; the Z-4 got a lot of local publicity. When the Croats finally moved militarily, however, beginning with Sector West in May 1995, and then Storm in August, Peter and the Z-4 ran out of time, although that effort contributed to the later Erdut Agreement on Sector East.

Q: I must say, you do not sound as though you were personally sold on the Z-4.

NEITZKE: He was the Ambassador, so I supported him, but frankly I saw most of the effort as futile and to some extent as a distraction. It seemed to me most unlikely - no, impossible - that the Croats could ever be induced to come to terms with what they viewed, with some

justification, as the hoodlums in charge in Knin. In fact, by late 1994, we began hearing from Tudjman intimates witheringly dismissive characterizations of the Z-4's efforts, of the specific ideas they kept pushing for bridging the chasm between Knin and Zagreb. This wasn't going to fly and the Croats were using the illusion of a peace effort to ready their forces for military action that they had long decided was inevitable. Peter, on the other hand, appeared to believe that he was making progress, that he was building up significant capital in Knin. But the two times that I recall he tried to use that capital, during the Bihac episode and amid the rocketing of Zagreb during the liberation of Sector West, they ignored him. I'm not saying that the Z-4 effort, right from the get-go, was much ado about nothing. But there came a point when it had clearly run its course, when larger forces were taking hold. The deal just wasn't going to happen and, notwithstanding the separate and belated Erdut Agreement, it didn't. I personally...

Q: Excuse me. Okay, you said futile. I can understand that, but why was it a distraction, a distraction from what?

NEITZKE: A distraction from where our attention and limited assets might otherwise have been focused. My own modest efforts to induce the Clinton Administration to get serious about Bosnia had had no visible effect. But I'd hoped that with Peter's arrival -- and his Washington connections -- we could redouble those efforts. I thought we had to keep trying, even though the task had become more complicated by the Croatian-Muslim tensions. I continued doing what I could -- with high-level visitors and journalists, and by pushing our continued atrocity reporting. But Peter had other priorities. His Ambassadorship was the high point of his professional life up until then, and he wasn't going to risk it with quasi-dissent cables or anything else that irritated officials in Washington. He was determined to make his mark, however, and if he couldn't do that through high-profile work on Bosnia -- and he couldn't, that arena was already occupied -- he would do it through the Z-4.

I recall, just as an aside, that on my last day in the office, after we'd been together for two years, Peter came in with the "gift" of a copy of a cable he'd just sent the Department, essentially blasting our policy of endless dithering on Bosnia. In response to that, Peter quickly got a call from Holbrooke, then EUR Assistant Secretary, saying basically, well, that was nice, but do you want to stay in your job or not? And later, in his toast at my farewell party, Peter quipped that he'd assiduously followed every piece of advice I'd given him except all of those which would probably have gotten him fired.

Part of my reserve concerning the Z-4 effort lay in the fact that for over three years there had been non-stop negotiating activity; there was always a peace process one could point to. But most of this was so divorced from on the ground realities that when it did take substantive form it was dead on arrival. What it accomplished, however, what part of its purpose was, was to provide the illusion of a serious international effort to stem the killing while that killing continued apace. The Z-4 was hardly the worst offender in that regard. But as the Z-4 effort came to occupy ever more of Peter's and the Embassy's time, yes, I felt that we -- in terms of Embassy Zagreb's focus -- were trading water on Bosnia. And I worried that Peter was getting too close, too chummy, with Tudjman and Susak.

Q: How so?

NEITZKE: Well, for example, vacationing alone with the Tudjmans, the whole Tudjman family, at Tito's old villa on Brioni, an intimacy that Peter reveled in, and his using a Defense Ministry villa on the Adriatic for private getaways. This sort of thing could obviously make it harder for one to get tough with Tudjman when need be. I imagine Peter would say that he didn't think a "get tough" approach with Tudjman would have worked in any event. And on this, we strongly disagreed.

I had watched Tudjman's evolution from an ultranationalist all but ostracized by Washington, to a leader whom we not only recognized but helped win greater international respectability, to a man who, by early 1995, in his latest threat to seize the UNPAs by force, acted as though he could with impunity blow off a personal appeal from the President of the United States. Enough was enough. Tudjman was gaming us. We seemed to have lost all perspective on the man and on who owed what to whom. I advocated – with Peter and with several high-level visitors, and at the NSC and elsewhere in Washington -- a much more direct, confrontational approach. Tudjman and Susak were gearing up for war. I understood their frustration, and I sympathized with their goal of reintegrating the UNPAs. But it was clear there would be major problems in their doing so. I took one of Tudjman's closest advisors to lunch in early 1995 and told him we didn't think Croatian forces had the professional discipline to take back the Krajina without committing massive violations of human rights, atrocities, and killings. He listened to what I said without disputing it and no doubt passed it on. It was a concern some Croat leaders also had, not something strong enough to deter them from moving on the UNPAs eventually, but something they knew they'd need to be careful about. MPRI was to have helped out, at least on that aspect.

Q: Yes, well, but let us return now to the situation during Ambassador Galbraith's first year, that would be the summer of 1993 to the summer of 1994. You have mentioned the Croat-Muslim fighting and the Washington Agreement, but what led up to that?

NEITZKE: The heightened Croat-Muslim tension in mid-1993, and the various, mainly Croat attacks that that spawned were complicating Washington's standoff policy. As ugly as the situation in Bosnia had been up to that time, it threatened to get even worse. That's when Chuck Redman, who had replaced Bartholomew as U.S. representative on the Contact Group, began his prolonged effort to quell the Croat-Muslim fighting and reconcile the two groups. He didn't have much to work with. One thing he did have working in his favor, however, was the aftermath of a summer 1993 marketplace massacre in Sarajevo. That particular massacre was followed by a burst of U.S. and Allied indignation and the shooting down of several Serbian aircraft for violating no-fly restrictions. The impact of that incident has always been underestimated; it was the most significant use of Western force against the Serbs until the summer of 1995 and for a moment put the fear of god not only into the Serbs but into the Croats and Muslims as well. It appeared briefly as though the U.S. were about to get serious. Other than through Chuck's initiative we didn't exploit that fear, but to me it always stood as a clear indication that at virtually any point a forceful expression of U.S. determination to halt the killing could have brought the Serbs to heel.

Redman's effort, which produced the Washington Agreement of March 1994, was one of the very few energetic, disciplined U.S. diplomatic undertakings in the whole ex-Yugo mess prior to

Dayton. But in retrospect it was akin to a number of brief surges of activity on Bosnia by the Bush and Clinton Administrations, each of which proved to be less than met the eye and saw little or no serious follow through. This one was largely a product of Chuck's effort; from what I could observe – and Chuck was frequently in Zagreb during this time -- no one high up in the Clinton Administration was willing to risk much of anything to help him. So Chuck deserves great credit.

Q: But, and you have already referred to this, Ambassador Galbraith did at least help with that negotiation, did he not?

NEITZKE: He did. I think he provided Chuck some critical assistance at a couple points.

Q: Okay, then, the Washington Agreement covered what?

NEITZKE: It was actually two agreements, reached after a few days of indirect talks conducted by Redman in Washington between Croatian Foreign Minister Granic and Bosnian Prime Minister Silajdzic. One agreement created a nominal federation of Croat and Muslim-held areas in Bosnia. The other created, I think it's accurate to say, a notional – since it never got off the ground -- confederation between Croatia and the Bosnian Croat/Muslim federation. At the time, I didn't give Redman's effort much of a chance, in part because he was relying so heavily on Granic.

Q: The Foreign Minister.

NEITZKE: Yes. Granic was always personable, pleasant to deal with, and very bright. But he wasn't a Tudjman insider, at least not in the sense that Susak and others were. Granic was not one of the HDZ, the ruling Croatian Democratic Union, hard-liners. There were times when Granic seemed a bit too ready to please, appearing to support positions that didn't quite reflect Tudjman's, and certainly not Susak's, views. So I thought Chuck had to be careful to see that Tudjman would back up what Granic agreed to in this closeted Washington back and forth deal making. But to Chuck's and Granic's credit, they got it done. And with Tudjman and Izetbegovic in attendance, Clinton presided over the signing ceremony. For the moment at least, we were peacemakers. It was a welcome respite from the Clinton Administration's Bosnia nightmare.

But these were skeletal agreements, aimed mainly at getting the two sides to stop fighting one another. The ink was barely dry before the question arose of who was going to put meat on these bones. Both parties wanted arms with which to push back the Serbs. Unless someone provided weapons, gave them some tangible incentive to cooperate, they'd be back to fighting one another in short order. Yet it seemed at the time as though no one in Washington had anticipated this problem.

Q: The arms embargo was still in place.

NEITZKE: Yes. And Washington balked. Attempting to lift the embargo at the UN would have met opposition by UN officials and most of our NATO allies, who had troops on the ground in Bosnia. Since we still lacked the political will to join them, a U.S. attempt to lift the embargo

faced no better prospects than it had a year earlier on Christopher's failed mission to sell "lift and strike." Nor were we prepared to circumvent the embargo surreptitiously, although that would have been my preferred option.

Q: Well, was this ever considered in Washington, do you know, trying to get arms to the Bosnians secretly somehow?

NEITZKE: I once had a brief exchange on this possibility, no specifics or anything, with Charlie Wilson, when...

Q: The Texas Congressman who helped in our arming the Afghans.

NEITZKE: Yes, when he visited Zagreb. But as far as I know, our circumventing the embargo to get arms to the Muslims was never seriously considered. Well, let me modify that. After meeting with Clinton at the UN in November 1994, Tudjman claimed that he'd been asked for and had provided a commitment that Croatia would funnel arms to the Bosnians. But that didn't appear in the memcon of the meeting and we could never nail it down. Of course, by then Croatia was already funneling in Iranian arms, so perhaps Clinton had simply sought reassurance that Croatia would continue doing so. Or perhaps thought was being given to different or additional sources of arms. It was around this time that we heard rumors that senior U.S. officials had earlier convened in Washington and considered a substantial arms deal for the Croats and Muslims, and that the several hundred million dollar value of such a package had been mentioned to at least one Croat official. But I never saw any tangible evidence that those rumors were accurate. In any event, going back to the end of April 1994, we had done nothing at that point on the arms front, and that's when the Iranians again came calling.

Q: Well, let us get into that. The Iranian arms deal eventually caused quite a bit of embarrassment for the Clinton Administration, did it not?

NEITZKE: You might put it that way. As I've already mentioned, the Iranians were shipping arms into the area from very early on, well before the Labor Day 1992 747 incident. And they were evidently still moving some arms in via the Croats during the spring of 1993, when Susak raised this issue with Bartholomew. But all of that was minor compared with what was about to happen.

This strange episode began, for us at least, with a meeting in Foreign Minister Granic's office in late April 1994. Redman was calling on Granic to discuss implementation of the Washington Agreement. I accompanied him. Peter was out of town. At the end of their discussion, Granic, pointedly directing his remarks more toward me than Chuck, said the Iranians had been pressing Croatia to agree to receive and transship weapons to the Bosnian Muslims. The implication was that this was going to be something on a very substantial scale. Granic said Tudjman would call in Peter the following morning and ask how the U.S. wanted Croatia to respond to the Iranians. This was a heads up. He indicated that he personally hoped the U.S. would encourage Croatia to resist this pressure.

Granic, whom I'd gotten to know well by then, was aware of how Washington regarded Tehran.

He didn't want to see his government become closely allied with the Iranians, and he didn't want to see power within the HDZ shift even more toward less democratic elements. He knew that there were others, closer to Tudjman than he was, such as Susak – who had visited Tehran in November 1993 -- who were willing to risk closer ties with Iran in hopes of obtaining weapons of strategic value for Croatia vis-à-vis Belgrade.

Q: What sort of strategic weapons? Why?

NEITZKE: Tudjman and Susak knew by then that if they were ever to get the UNPAs back they'd have to do it themselves, militarily. But they weren't sure where, in that looming fight, Belgrade's tipping point lay. As Zagreb fought Belgrade's henchmen for control of these areas, Belgrade, the remnant JNA, might throw everything they had into the fight. Tudjman wanted something with which to deter Milosevic when that point came. And he and Susak hoped that they might find that deterrent in or through Tehran, or at least create in Milosevic's mind the fear that they had obtained such a deterrent. As to what that deterrent might have been, I don't know.

But again, although Tudjman himself doubtless wanted any weapons they might be able to obtain from Iran, there is no way he was going to risk getting closer to that regime without U.S. concurrence. First, he knew we'd find out if he did it behind our backs. Secondly, the intense carrot-and-stick negotiating process by which we had just gotten him to sign on to the Washington Agreement left Tudjman wanting to stay close to us and thus leery of making any major move regarding Bosnia without first speaking with us. Tudjman knew that an Iranian arms pipeline through Croatia would allow Zagreb to rake off some of the more interesting of these weapons and to monitor and control the buildup of Muslim arms better than would be possible if suppliers dealt directly with Sarajevo. And, using the pipeline relationship as cover, the Croats could look into acquiring "strategic" weapons that might be available through Iran. Again, however, Tudjman at this time was very sensitive to Washington. There's just no way he'd have gone ahead without our approval.

Q: Well, after that meeting with the Foreign Minister, I take it you sought instructions?

NEITZKE: We did. Now, again, this is the end of April 1994. Peter came back that evening. I briefed him on the Granic meeting, and he immediately asked Washington what he should tell Tudjman the next day. To describe what happened next, how the Clinton team handled this, as sloppy and amateurish scarcely does it justice.

Peter strongly recommended that the U.S. not object to Croatia's agreeing to the Iranians' proposal. Rather than a cable, however, Peter got a call from Jenonne Walker, the senior NSC European staffer and an old colleague of mine from Policy Planning. Jenonne told Peter that Tony -- Tony Lake, the National Security Advisor -- had said to tell Tudjman that he had "no instructions." Jenonne added that Tony had winked when conveying the term "no instructions." Peter wasn't happy with that response, believing that it wouldn't satisfy Tudjman's need for U.S. concurrence. And it didn't. Peter met with Tudjman the next morning, used his "no instructions" response, and came back and told me that it hadn't worked; Tudjman had appeared to want a clear go-ahead from Washington.

Peter reclaimed the “no instructions” instruction, arguing, correctly, that it would cause the Croats to balk and, incorrectly – and utterly without foundation – that the U.S. stance on the Iranian arms shipment intercepted over Labor Day 1992 had led to the Croat-Muslim fighting in 1993. Peter told me he had the clear sense from his first meeting with Tadjman that our position would be determinative and that no new Iranian arms flow had yet begun. So Peter pleaded with Washington for “no objection” instructions. He got nothing in response and was troubled going into a dinner meeting with Tadjman and Redman that night. In that second encounter on this issue, Peter urged Tadjman to weigh carefully what he had not said that morning, i.e., he had not said that we objected. Evidently Tadjman still did not have what he needed because, while walking in to dinner, Tadjman said to Redman within earshot of Peter “what do you want us to do?” According to Peter, Redman responded, “we don’t want to be in the position of telling you not to” say yes to the Iranians. This was in stark contrast to the answer Bartholomew had given Susak on this issue a year earlier and to what I had told Tadjman during the Iranian 747 episode on Labor Day 1992. Other sources subsequently confirmed that Redman’s response is what Tadjman took as our “green light.”

Redman told Peter not to report that exchange by cable. Antsy about not reporting so consequential an exchange, however, Peter spoke with Deputy Secretary Talbott shortly thereafter. Talbott too told him not to report the exchange with Tadjman by cable. He said he’d get right back to Peter on this, but he didn’t. At this point Peter and I both wondered – and discussed – whether he was being set up to take the fall if this whole thing blew up in the Administration’s face. I recommended, and Peter agreed, much to his later regret, since this document added to the Administration’s embarrassment, to record all that had happened in a contemporaneous memorandum that I would sign as a witness to what he said had transpired.

Peter’s fears of being set up were soon borne out. The CIA and Pentagon were dead set against what Lake had tried to finagle. So when CIA and the Pentagon asked State and the NSC whether anyone had given Croatia a go ahead to begin transshipping large amounts of Iranian arms, they were told that no such approval had been given. In one of apparently several such denials, a senior State or NSC official, I don’t recall who, said that Galbraith had botched his instructions and may inadvertently have led Tadjman to conclude that he could go ahead with the Iranians. Galbraith, he said, was being reprimanded, “having his hands slapped.” They claimed that Tadjman was then no longer in doubt where we stood. That was just one of many lies told; no one ever attempted to walk this back with Tadjman, nor did Washington want to walk it back, since it was still unwilling to offer any alternative to the Iranian option. Peter then got a call from EUR DAS Sandy Vershbow -- my colleague from London days who would himself shortly head over to the NSC to replace Walker – for the purpose, as Sandy jokingly put it, of “slapping (Peter’s) hands.”

Peter was pissed off, and justifiably so, by Washington’s crude distortion of the professional manner in which he’d carried out his instructions, by Sandy’s joking pro forma reprimand, and by the fact that Washington’s contorted cover story had apparently leaked. A British paper asked Peter to comment on the “Galbraith screw up” explanation they had heard from Washington to explain rumors of an Iranian arms deal. Peter was able to get that story killed, but he was incensed. Unfortunately, he couldn’t adequately vent on Washington, because the senior officials in Washington who were “hanging him out” might prove critical for his further service in this or

future Democratic administrations. The only consolation Peter received was an eventual admission by Talbott, in a grotesque understatement, that the “home office” had perhaps not handled this affair as well as it might have.

I was reminded of all this years later during the post-9/11 brouhaha between ex-National Security Advisor – and another former S/P colleague -- Sandy Berger and the CIA over whether Sandy had or had not authorized the Agency to take out Osama bin Laden when they had the opportunity. Sandy’s posture was classic Clinton. Equivocate, put nothing in writing, preserve deniability, protect your political flank at all costs. That’s certainly how they had handled the “green light” decision on Iranian arms.

Q: Well, what about the President? Was this decision Lake’s or Clinton’s?

NEITZKE: I notice that Peter now maintains it was Clinton’s decision, and an excellent one at that. The wagons have now been fully circled in defense of the “green Light” decision; it’s portrayed as an almost ingenious stepping stone to Dayton. But at the time we didn’t know for a fact that the President had been consulted, although we assumed he must have been. Shortly thereafter we were told that Lake had gotten through to Clinton, who was flying somewhere at the time, and that Clinton had approved this course of action. My guess, however, is that the wink-and-nod aspect of this, the no instructions, no written reporting, originated with Lake.

In the wake of all that followed, several players tried to amend the record. Granic, I am told, did not remember indicating a personal opposing view on the pending Iranian offer. But I remember distinctly, and told Peter at the time, that Granic did express such a view and that he implied the Croatian Government was divided on the question of entering into this arrangement with Iran. I think all of that was in the contemporaneous note we made that I referred to. And I covered this in my later Congressional testimony, as the committees looked into whether Washington’s “green light,” or any follow up to that decision, had violated U.S. statutes governing reportable covert activities. Various Administration witnesses, Holbrooke most notably, later testified – as the Clinton Administration was being pilloried for facilitating Iran’s entry into Europe -- both that the Iranian arms pipeline had kept the Croat-Muslim federation intact and thus contributed to Dayton and that Tudjman would likely have proceeded with the deal regardless of what we said. On the manner in which Washington had handled the “green light” decision, some senior Administration witnesses gave answers under oath so blatantly at odds with one another that their cases were referred to the Justice Department for possible prosecution for perjury.

Q: Did you have a personal opinion on the Iranian arms at the time, do you recall?

NEITZKE: I did. I thought we should have told the Croats no, and made it a very firm no. I couldn’t see much good coming from inviting a terrorist-sponsoring regime like that in Tehran to establish a major toehold in Europe. That we at least tacitly did so stands, in my mind, as one of the worst decisions that any U.S. administration made in the former Yugoslavia. And we did so at a time when Secretary Christopher and other senior U.S. officials were rightly condemning Iran as a state sponsor of terrorism. To what level, exactly, had my country sunk in its determination to avoid joining in the fight to halt genocide in Bosnia? This episode made crystal clear that there was no limit, literally no limit, to the Clinton Administration’s cowardice on this

issue. As for Peter's and Holbrooke's and others' wildly strained rationalizations of the "green light" decision, the best that can be said is that they knew very well by then what kind of people they were working for, yet they were determined, at all costs, to stay in the game, to remain in the good, employable graces of the Clinton team and the Democratic Party. So they defended the course we had taken, not as the least bad option available, which it wasn't, but as a genuinely smart move, one that allowed arms through to the beleaguered Muslims while limiting Bosnia-related strains within the NATO Alliance.

Q: You called this decision cowardly. But these Iranian arms did help, did they not?

NEITZKE: I've seen speculation that this Iranian "green light" decision was in fact part of a clever, new, extremely close-hold strategy concocted by Lake at Clinton's behest aimed at eventual rapprochement with Tehran. I think that's bunk. The reason we gave the Croats the go ahead was not that we'd suddenly re-thought the nature of the Iranian regime. It was that we had no intention ourselves of arming the federation and something had to be done. If we had told the Croats to say no to Iran, possibly Tudjman but certainly Izetbegovic would have been on our doorstep the next day insisting that we, then, supply them arms, a complicated, NATO-rattling step which, as I've said, still lay well beyond the limits of our willingness to get involved.

Did the Iranian arms help? Viewed narrowly, yes, of course. They and other, smaller flows of arms did help. I doubt, however, that, given what they'd already been through, the Muslims would have succumbed without Iranian weapons. And ultimately it was the Croatian, not the Muslim, push back against the Serbs that began to tip the balance from a strategic standpoint. The "green light" decision did, however, allow the Clinton Administration, for a while longer, to remain on the sidelines. But at what cost? It wasn't just the broader, strategic implications of providing the Iranians, their terrorist cohorts, and their virulent anti-Americanism, an approved gateway into Europe. For those of us on the ground, and our families, this decision would soon have grave consequences.

Q: How so?

NEITZKE: Shortly after the "green light" decision, Croatia's relations with Iran took off. There were frequent high-level delegations between Zagreb and Tehran. Deals of all kinds were being struck and publicized. There was a massive increase in the Iranian presence in Croatia, especially Zagreb. Their Embassy suddenly bristled with antennas. There were Iranian cultural exhibits and celebrations. The works. And within a year of the "green light" decision, Iranian-backed terrorist cells were conducting active surveillance and planning operations against the official American community in Zagreb.

Q: Well, what sort of threats, operations, exactly?

NEITZKE: Okay, but before we get to all that, and to put it all in context, we need to catch up a bit, to say something about the overall deterioration in the Embassy's security situation beginning in late 1994 and heading into 1995. I had a growing sense in this period, as did many others, that various aspects of the ex-Yugo problem were coming to a head. Croatia was clearly preparing for war. Tudjman's threats to move on the UNPAs were becoming bolder and more

dismissive of the international community, even, as I've said, playing the U.S. tougher than he had earlier. There wasn't much left to offer him on that front, and our threats to retaliate if he weren't patient were less and less credible. In the Krajina there was a growing air of desperation, as they too issued their threats to respond -- including with rocket attacks on Zagreb and other cities -- if Croatia moved militarily.

Another example is NATO. By the end of 1994, nearly two years of Clinton Administration denial and dithering on Bosnia had created a deep rift within the organization. NATO was splintering essentially over our continued refusal to engage -- on the ground -- and lead on Bosnia, even as we pushed for bombing that would endanger our allies' UNPROFOR contingents. The Bihac episode probably saw the worst of that.

Q: Bihac? That was at the intersection of...

NEITZKE: Bihac was both a town and the name given to a large Muslim enclave, one of the so-called UN-designated Safe Areas, in northwestern Bosnia. It was surrounded by Serbian forces throughout the war, but it managed to survive, barely. It had food and some capable military forces, but most importantly it had a charismatic, renegade Muslim leader, Fikret Abdic, who had broken with Izetbegovic, and who was good at cutting whatever deals were necessary -- with Serbs and Croats -- to ensure his people's survival. In late 1994 Muslim forces tried to break out of the Bihac pocket. After some initial successes they faced a massive Serb counteroffensive. That confronted the UN formally, and NATO and Washington informally, with the question of how to prevent a humanitarian disaster.

Both the civilian and military command sides of UNPROFOR by then were nearly useless. Akashi, the civilian head of the whole operation, reflexively urged extreme caution regarding the use of force; he was convinced that that was the not the way to deal with the Serbs. He once compared Serbia with 1941 Japan, nations, he said, encircled by hostile forces and compelled to fight; and he claimed a special ability to understand the Serbs as fellow "orientals." With rare exception, UN military commanders, when not openly faulting the Muslims, prided themselves on their "complete impartiality and evenhandedness." And both Akashi and the UN military insisted, in a couple instances when force was used against Serbian targets, that Serbian commanders be warned well in advance. In September 1994, a senior UNPROFOR commander even issued an after-the-fact apology to Mladic for the shooting of a Serbian tank. It was pathetic. Getting the UN to agree to do anything involving real force was virtually impossible.

But getting back to Bihac, within NATO, that crisis further heightened an already bitter debate between Washington and its UNPROFOR-participating allies over bombing as an option. There were some extremely nasty sessions in Brussels, with the U.S. on the hot seat, and recriminations flying. The MASH was even pulled into the fray at one point.

Q: The U.S. military hospital at Zagreb Airport?

NEITZKE: America's underutilized, all-but-token contribution to UNPROFOR. By intention, the MASH was situated too far from the action in Bosnia ever to play more than a tangential role. And this irritated some of the UNPROFOR contingents. To make their point, the French,

for example, once dropped five badly injured Bosnians off at the door of the MASH. Treating Bosnians, or Croats, for that matter, was not within the MASH's limited mandate, but in this case the French left them no choice. And around the time of the Bihac episode, the UN appealed to Washington to allow MASH medical personnel to helicopter into the edge of the conflict area. You'd have thought they were asking for human sacrifices the way the Pentagon nitpicked this request and heavily caveated their strictly one-time approval.

All of this rankled within NATO, contributing to the crisis of confidence in U.S. leadership in late 1994 and early 1995. This was at a point when NATO was drifting anyway, still looking for a clear, galvanizing, post-Soviet strategic perspective. On the ground in Bosnia, the UNPROFOR contingents of certain of our NATO allies were quietly laying plans and cutting deals – with the Serbs mainly -- to facilitate their withdrawal if the situation deteriorated much further. Meanwhile, in the Senate, efforts to force a unilateral U.S. lifting of the arms embargo on the Bosnian Muslims were beginning to pick up steam, which was feeding our allies' unease.

Q: The way you describe it it sounds like the United States is caught out there huffing and puffing and doing nothing while our NATO allies were doing the heavy lifting. But at the same time it sounds like our NATO allies got themselves into something, they got in way over their heads and they were not really doing much except to provide targets.

NEITZKE: Well, that's largely the case, except that it's not fair to say that the British and French UNPROFOR contingents, for example, and a few others were merely targets. They helped keep a lot of people alive. But UNPROFOR overall was clearly not up to the task. Some contingents were just along for the ride, others – some of the African units come to mind – were there for the pay, the money, and others, such as the Russians in Sector East, acted as though they were in cahoots with the Serbs. It was a motley crew, many of whom were essentially hostages in waiting. But go back to 1991 when the Croatian War broke out and the Europeans insisted on taking this on without U.S. leadership. As I've said, there was no historical precedent to suggest they could do so successfully. But that didn't bother us. We wanted to stay out. And we stayed out. But as the situation got worse in Bosnia, yes, we were huffing and puffing and pontificating about the desirability of bombing, but still we refused to join our NATO allies on the ground and to lead. And we were grateful that UNPROFOR, including Allied contingents, was there. It gave us an out.

But by late 1994 European attitudes on Bosnia had changed. One began hearing strained rationalizations for the looming fiasco. I recall a couple of dinners late that year in which I got into somewhat heated exchanges with several European Ambassadors. A couple spouted the UNPROFOR line that Muslims had been shelling themselves in Sarajevo and deserved no sympathy. One commented that Bosnia's demise was perhaps for the best because if it survived it would likely become a Muslim state, which was not in Europe's interest. Another argued that Bosnia had never really existed at all, hence trying to hold it together was a fool's errand. He said that Serb-cleansed parts of Bosnia should be allowed to confederate with Belgrade. Another claimed it was "pretentious" even to suggest that Yugoslavia's breakup could have been prevented. They were saying, in essence, we came, we did our best, we gave these people better than they deserved, and they blew it, all of them. It's not going to be on our conscience.

At this same time, late 1994 and early 1995, there was a steady drumbeat on the front pages and op-ed pages of major American papers that Clinton basically had no policy on Bosnia. The Clinton team's hope, illusion really, that they could preserve at least a modicum of alliance solidarity while strengthening the Bosnians, through Iranian arms deliveries and so forth, and keep the Serbs at bay, through sanctions enforcement and other means, had met the reality of our allies' raw anger over U.S. hypocrisy and the Serbs nearly complete sway over UNPROFOR on the ground. One could, and did, counter European criticism of our absence in Bosnia by noting the many other areas of the globe where we, but not they, were committed. But it was clear to everyone in that period that the alliance was in trouble.

Moreover, Bosnia was undermining perceptions of Clinton's foreign policy and national security competence more generally. This period is reportedly when Clinton began leaning heavily and angrily on Lake to come up with new options, options for asserting U.S. leadership, for getting the Serbs to halt their ethnic cleansing, and for getting the Allies and U.S. editorial writers off his back. One effort, which had been percolating for awhile, was to try to get Milosevic to seal off the border between Serbia proper and the Serbian-held parts of Bosnia in exchange for a gradual lifting of sanctions. Ultimately, despite persistent, dubious reports by some UN and even U.S. border monitors that the Serbs were complying, this effort came to naught.

An offshoot of the Administration's flailing about for a new direction on Bosnia was the sending of Bob Frasure -- my London predecessor, then an EUR DAS under Holbrooke -- to Belgrade for extended talks aimed at inducing Milosevic to rein in Karadzic and Mladic. Again, the only real carrot Bob had to dangle was an amelioration of the sanctions regime, but Milosevic refused to bite. Think about it, though. So morally contorted had our search for an "out" on Bosnia become that we were willing, even eager, to paint Milosevic, a first-order war criminal, as a potential good guy, a peacemaker. Bob spent countless hours in Belgrade negotiating, if you could call it that, with this megalomaniac, a doomed assignment that Bob confided he loathed. When Bob would report that his effort was going nowhere, however, and would recommend he be recalled, he'd typically be told no; he had to stay and try to bring Milosevic around. Again, it was critical to our non-engagement policy always to have an ongoing peace effort to point to. And for much of early 1995, along with the floundering Contact Group, Bob's was that effort.

Q: Meeting with detestable people is what diplomats sometimes have to do, I mean...

NEITZKE: Of course. Occasionally dealing with thoroughly disgusting human beings is part of the job. But such dealings shouldn't be indiscriminate. And they shouldn't be used mainly as a smokescreen for a policy devoid of political will. What's the foreseeable end of such dealings, how likely is a beneficial outcome, with whom is it worthwhile meeting, when, and for how long? These questions matter. And how should you comport yourself when dealing with a guy responsible for the deaths of tens or hundreds of thousands of people? This aspect of many of our half-hearted, sporadic diplomatic bursts on Bosnia always troubled me. The endless, fruitless, humiliating hours that U.S. diplomats spent chatting up Karadzic in gilded salons in Geneva early in the war, as his henchmen were butchering, literally butchering, and raping thousands of Muslims. The countless trips by Western or UN supplicants up to the Serb stronghold of Pale outside Sarajevo, pleading for this or that concession from Karadzic or Mladic. The ordeal Bob was put through with Milosevic. Is there a moral or psychological or practical cost to that sort of

diplomacy? Even Holbrooke was apparently bothered enough by this aspect of the job to let his negotiating team decide for themselves whether to shake hands with these criminals, saying that he personally preferred not to. He made a curious distinction, however, between Milosevic, on the one hand, and Karadzic and Mladic.

I should mention, in this regard, the trip that ex-president Carter made to Zagreb, Sarajevo, and Pale near the end of 1994. I attended a tense lunch that Peter gave for the Carters and their entourage during their brief stopover in Zagreb. Ex-Ambassador Harry Barnes was Carter's main staffer for the trip. The tenseness arose over the question whether Carter ought to undertake the effort at all – he was not doing this at Clinton's behest; I think he'd been put up to this by American friends of Serbia. Peter questioned whether it might not undermine Administration efforts to isolate Pale and whether Karadzic wasn't likely to use Carter for his own propagandistic ends. I described the kinds and scale of crimes for which Karadzic and his men were personally responsible. Carter replied that, whatever the outcome of his effort, he would not excuse or exonerate potential war criminals. But he wouldn't be budged on his trip; he was going no matter what. It was clear in Barnes' separate exchange with me, however, that Carter had no real game plan, no set objectives. Barnes kept asking me what I thought Carter could realistically hope to accomplish. So, did Carter's effort meet, say, the test of dealing directly with war criminals only if there were a reasonable expectation of a substantial, positive outcome? At the time, Washington itself was so brain dead on Bosnia that to suggest Carter was interfering with Administration strategy was a huge stretch. In the event, the Serbs did use his visit for propaganda and although Carter made much of the supposed ceasefire commitment he'd won, which did dampen tensions for a moment, Serbian forces began violating it almost immediately. So was his trip worth the effort?

Q: Or Ambassador Frasure's approach to Milosevic also, I take it you would question.

NEITZKE: Yes, well, Bob did his duty. And it was around that time, in early 1995, that the exhaustive, definitive CIA study, the one that said the Serbs were guilty of at least 90 percent of the killing, raping, and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, surfaced in the Times. Clinton himself publicly bridled when journalists then juxtaposed his effort to woo Milosevic with the CIA study's damning implication that Milosevic was the father of the Bosnian genocide. For Bob, as you know, it ended tragically later that summer, when he died in an accident trying to get into Sarajevo in a UN convoy after we'd failed again to persuade Milosevic, this time to get his Bosnian Serb friends to grant them, the Holbrooke-Frasure party, safe passage into the Bosnian capital for talks.

Apologists for the early Clinton Administration stance on Bosnia, the two and a half years from January 1992 to the summer of 1995, occasionally portray this late 1994-early 1995 period as the belated genesis of a clear, comprehensive Bosnia strategy that ultimately led to Dayton. But anyone who knew what was happening on the ground, was reading the cable traffic, and was talking with senior visitors from Washington knows that that take on history is fantasy. The Clinton Administration had no policy on Bosnia worthy of the name until mid-late-summer 1995, after the Serbs' humiliation of UNPROFOR – tying members of UNPROFOR contingents to bridges and other potential bombing targets around Sarajevo. After the UN's criminal failure at Srebrenica and the resulting execution of some 8,000 Muslim men and boys. After the

especially traumatizing deaths of Frasure, Kruzel, and Drew on Mt. Igman. After it had become plain that Senator Dole had the votes to override a threatened Clinton veto of arms embargo-lifting legislation. And after Clinton had taken fully on board the political implications of his earlier pledge of up to 25,000 U.S. troops, if necessary, to facilitate the withdrawal of UNPROFOR. So Clinton faced the choice of either finally getting serious with the Serbs or dispatching 25,000 U.S. troops to help with a dangerous and ignominious UNPROFOR extrication amid an imploding Bosnia. That was it. That's when he finally got serious, when getting serious at last became his least inexpedient option.

Q: You were speaking about the kinds of threats you all in the Embassy faced. Talk about that, what you were doing about them and so forth.

NEITZKE: As we moved into 1995, those of us responsible for the security of the Embassy community and other Americans in Croatia began to consider even more seriously what we'd need to do under different scenarios. The Embassy had been growing by leaps and bounds. We had official Americans in several locales around the city. We spent a lot of time nailing down the details in our evacuation plan and dry running it. It's a lot more complicated than one would have thought. The U.S. military collaborated with us on some of this, even planning contingency helicopter evacuations out of Cmrok, the large park that lay between the Ambassador's residence and mine. And I briefed the Embassy staff, dependents, American School staff, and others on how we saw the situation, the security threats facing us, and the kinds of events that might trigger a partial or complete evacuation. The latter was bit tricky because I was limited in what I could say about the growing threat we faced from Iranian-supported terrorist groups. Most people were focused on the danger of renewed fighting between Zagreb and the Krajina Serbs. Only over time was I able, obliquely, to raise their awareness of this other, potentially more acute threat.

Q: And the nature of that threat was, again?

NEITZKE: Surveillance, including filming, and advanced operational planning for attacks on official Americans. We had some rare, sensitive, multiple source information on this in very nearly real time. One of these, for example, confirmed surveillance of the vehicle, the mini-bus, that transported our kids to and from the American School, a vehicle, by the way, nearly identical to one that affiliated terrorists had recently blown up near the American Consulate General in Karachi. That sort of warning gets one's attention, makes things a bit personal, since I had two kids on the Zagreb school bus. But that was only one of several warnings, all among the less heralded consequences of the Iranian "green light" decision.

Q: Well, were we approaching the Croatian Government to say watch these guys, the terrorists, because, you know, you have your relationship with Tehran, but do not let them...

NEITZKE: Kill us? Yes, we were asking for this and that additional protection from the Croats, but we weren't addressing the root of the problem.

I recall that Dick Holbrooke, confronted by a Congressional Committee Chairman with a breaking LA Times story about the dangers the "green light" decision had forced on official

Americans in Croatia, nervously sought to downplay it, disputing the report's allegation that the threat to those of us on the ground had increased exponentially. He acknowledged that the heightened Iranian presence in Croatia had increased the threat to Americans there. But he argued that we'd taken measures to meet that threat. Well, yes and no. To the limited extent we were able – we were very exposed in Zagreb -- we did take additional steps, we scrambled. I immediately terminated bus transportation to our kids' school, for example. As I said, I briefed the community, albeit in elliptical terms due to the sensitivity of the information we had. We began to limit the movements of various officers, including the Marine Guards. We posted extra security, or got the Croats to post guards, on various residences. We sent at least one officer under acute threat out of the country. We got the Croats to ratchet up security on Peter and his residence. And we did other things, but still, most of us most of the time were sitting ducks.

Q: But you say this did not address the root of the problem.

NEITZKE: The terrorists themselves. What were they doing there? Why were we tolerating it? Why weren't we demanding, that the Croats kick these guys out of their country, or else. Peter said he feared – and assumed Washington would fear -- that taking that step might lead to disruption of the Iranian arms flow. For me this was beyond the pale. How low had we sunk as an Embassy and as a government if we were afraid to take eminently sensible measures to defend our own people because that might offend an anti-American, terrorist-backing Tehran regime whose arms flow made it possible for the Clinton Administration to stand aside watching genocidal slaughter? Near the end, in April 1995, with Peter out of town and barely acquiescing, I laid out all my concerns, and the specific intelligence to back each up, in a cable to the Department, stating that unless they gave us orders for a forceful demarche to Tudjman, we would have no alternative but to withdraw all official Americans from Croatia. I got the instruction I wanted and made the demarche with Tudjman, who had all of his key security officials present. I insisted that he rein in the Iranians and their terrorist buddies before something god awful happened for which we would hold him and his government responsible. I said that, in the absence of effective Croatian action to safeguard us, all official Americans would have to be withdrawn. Tudjman got it. He knew we were serious. But still, he didn't want to rock the boat with the Iranians; the arms flow was benefiting Croatia itself as it geared up for Operation Storm.

Before much of anything changed, the Croats moved militarily to retake Sector West – this was in very early May 1995 -- the Serbs began rocketing Zagreb, and we quickly evacuated all family members and non-essential personnel. While this greatly reduced the number of American targets, it didn't remove the terrorist threat.

Q: Well, it seems that you and Peter did not see eye to eye on the gravity of the Iranian threat?

NEITZKE: No, we didn't. And this is where, near the end, our otherwise generally strong, collaborative, working relationship nearly came apart. Peter's view of the Iranian threat was always tempered by his Iran-Iraq prism and the role he had played in helping to expose the horrors that Saddam Hussein had perpetrated on the Kurds. Even as Iranian-backed terrorists began surveilling him, Peter insisted that it made no sense for Iran to hit us in Croatia at that time. But by then Peter himself was living in a fairly tight security cocoon.

My view was that the surveillance, and the warnings we were getting through sensitive channels, spoke for themselves as to the threat we faced. It might not make sense for a clear-headed strategist in Tehran to strike against Americans in Croatia just then, but who knew what games others might be playing, what points someone might be trying to score, by the terrorist elements that the “green light” decision had unleashed in Croatia. Since when are all terrorist acts precisely logical from a Western perspective? This all came out during the various Congressional investigations in 1996. The Agency and I were of the same view, by the way, on the urgency, the immediacy, of the threat we faced. Zagreb was way up on Washington’s possible terrorist action watch list during this period.

Q: Did the press, the Western press, notice, report on, the weapons flow and all? And the, as you have described it, the burgeoning Iranian presence in Croatia?

NEITZKE: They noticed it, and there were reports, but it wasn’t covered extensively. And the fact that Washington had given the go ahead wasn’t known or reported on at all. And behind the scenes, among the various U.S. Government agencies with an interest in this matter, the situation appeared even murkier. The reason, as I said, is that State and NSC had lied to CIA and the Pentagon about their role in this. They maintained that Washington had not approved this activity. Yet before long it became clear to CIA and the Pentagon that Iranian arms were flowing in, and lots of them. And they were picking up reports that Washington indeed had had a hand in this. Rumors were flying, including one that I alluded to earlier, that the USG itself was running the whole operation, that we had launched a large program, worth hundreds of millions of dollars, to arm the Bosnian Muslims.

Against that backdrop, things took an unfortunate turn within the Embassy. Certain Washington agencies ordered their top people in the Embassy to find out all they could about any role the U.S. may have played, or any role other officials in the Embassy, including Galbraith, might be playing, in these arms flows. State told Peter to keep everything he knew about the arms flows, including the “green light” decision, from these very people at post. Even more disturbingly, I was told that that Holbrooke had advised Susak and, through him, another Croatian official, not to discuss any aspect of the arms flows with certain, other agency Embassy officials, because, presumably, he felt they couldn’t be trusted. How would you like to try to keep the team together, which was my job, with signals like that going to senior officials of your host government?

Because of the lack of consensus, the outright mistrust and lies told at nearly the highest levels of the Clinton Administration on this issue, and Lake’s and Talbott’s clumsy efforts to keep the DCI and Defense Secretary in the dark, there sprouted this bizarre situation among certain Embassy Zagreb officers of surveillance, suspicions, allegations, and tension. Peter was in an untenable position. As I said, he was charged with covering up the “green light” decision while other Embassy officials had been tasked by their agencies to find out what was going on. It was my job to keep the lid on all of this, keep people acting professionally toward one another, and try to keep everyone’s focus on the work we were being paid to do. That was a tough act, and it went on for quite a while, at least until the initial investigation of the “green light” decision and its consequences by PIFIAB, or the IOB, in early 1995, I believe. Later, in 1996, the

Congressional investigations got into this aspect of the “green light” decision as well; careers were on the line, not mine but others I cared about, and I did the best I could to place the blame for this aspect of the fiasco precisely where it belonged, on Washington’s, the Administration’s, doorstep. From the feedback I got from a number of House Intelligence Committee members of both parties, I succeeded.

Q: Surely, that would have some effect on your own career also.

NEITZKE: I remember being asked that question at the time by several House Intel Committee Members, including Porter Goss – who would later briefly head the Agency under Bush – did I fear retaliation for my testimony? I told them no, but more out of visceral disgust over the whole affair than from any sober analysis of whether my career.

Q: Well, before we move on, just one thing. You have mentioned Deputy Secretary Talbott. What about Secretary Christopher? What roles did he play in this?

NEITZKE: That was strange. I never came across evidence of Christopher’s hand in any of this. Presumably he was in the loop, but whatever involvement he had remained hidden.

Q: Okay, well, talk a little about the evacuation. How did that go?

NEITZKE: Once we made the decision, it went very smoothly. We’d practiced it, prepared the community, gone over everything. Our consul, Dennis Hearne, deserves a lot of credit for that. We later learned from those in the Department who handle evacuations that ours had been nearly a textbook case of how to do it.

But in the days leading up to that decision, it wasn’t at all clear where things would end up. I should mention that, among those I’d briefed on the security situation in early 1995 was the staff of the American School. Someone there asked me when I thought the threat would be greatest. I said I thought it would be if and when the Croats moved on the UNPAs and said that that could come as soon as late April-early May. I had no special foreknowledge of that; it was just my best guess. A day or two later, however, an anonymous telegram arrived at the Embassy, implicitly threatening me if I further disclosed Croatian government plans. Apparently I had called the Croatian move against Sector West almost to the day. That fed rumors around town that the Americans had the details of the Croatian move, that we were in on it, may even have assisted with it.

To add fuel to that fire, on the day the Croats did move against Sector West, I got a very early morning call from Herrick, our Defense Attache, who’d been summoned to the Defense Ministry and been told that the Croatian military action was imminent. It had probably already begun. Peter had left town the day before and was hours away at the coast when this alert came in from Herrick, so I took a number of actions, including, as Chairman of the Board of the American School, closing the school until further notice. The Principal and staff began phoning all the students’ parents telling them there would be no school but offering no explanation. At that moment, most of Zagreb was unaware of the impending military action. Only hours later did it become clear to all why I’d done what I did. That confirmed in some minds that the Americans

had to have been involved in some way in the Croatian military move.

We should probably return now to the activities of the retired U.S. military group I mentioned earlier, MPRI, the guys who had the private contract with the Croatian Defense Ministry to provide officer training. When they first came to town, the head of MPRI, it may have been Vuono ...

Q: General Vuono, who had been Army Chief of Staff?

NEITZKE: Yes. I think it was Vuono who gave me a long briefing on what MPRI was going to be doing for the Croats, with instructors who'd be more or less hanging out in the Croatian Defense Ministry. He wasn't asking for our approval or concurrence; MPRI was a private concern, although the Pentagon must have helped to arrange it, or at least given its okay. He said they'd be teaching Croatian officers various professional skills, accounting, for example. That seemed odd, but he mentioned military discipline as well, the laws governing warfare and respect for the rights of non-combatants. But nothing on military tactics or strategy. I asked a few questions, but it wasn't clear whether I was getting the whole story. I'm still not sure. Nor do I think that even Peter, to this day, knows exactly what MPRI did. Maybe it was as innocent and limited as Vuono, or whoever it was, described it. It seems unlikely, however, that that many ex-U.S. military personnel could have spent that much time in such close proximity to a Croatian officer corps on the brink of going to war and never talked shop.

So did MPRI, as I know some Serbs maintain, not only offer professional training to the Croats, but actively participate in, even orchestrate the planning for the liberation of Sector West, or for Operation Storm? Or, setting MPRI aside, did the USG provide real time intel assistance, and perhaps more than that, to the Croats during Storm, as a couple well-placed Croats have apparently testified? I saw nothing to indicate conclusively MPRI involvement in the liberation of Sector West, and I departed Zagreb over a month before Storm. And I'd had almost no contact with MPRI after that initial briefing.

Q: Storm, again, was what?

NEITZKE: Operation Storm, the Croatian move on Sectors North and South in August 1995. There were aspects to the Croats' early May move against Sector West, however, that suggested they'd taken on board someone's warnings about cleaning up their act, literally. There had been some artillery exchanges and skirmishing in the days leading up to the Croatian move, which, in the event, they characterized as a "police action" aimed merely at opening up the main east-west highway. Obviously it was much more than that, but the point I wanted to make is that before the press or international observers of any stripe could descend on newly-liberated -- the Serbs would say cleansed -- Sector West, the Croats had rapidly and systematically -- reportedly using refrigeration vans in some cases -- cleaned up much of the physical evidence of the fighting and nearly all evidence of non-combatant casualties, including removing the bodies and hosing away the blood. I'm not sure whether they even attempted such an effort during the much larger scale Storm; there was evidently plenty of evidence left behind in that case, including non-combatant dead, to prompt Hague Tribunal indictments of Croatian commanders.

The Croats' move to open Sector West began in the early morning hours of May 1. At that point the Embassy community was in a high state of alert. The Department had long since approved our request for authorized departure of family members.

Q: Explain authorized departure.

NEITZKE: I think the term is authorized departure. Perhaps it's voluntary departure. In any case, it's meant to address situations where there's a heightened level of threat to American officials and their families, a situation which the post and the Department don't think yet merits an ordered departure of dependents and non-essential personnel. Authorized departure had been in effect for Zagreb for some time prior to May 1. People could temporarily depart at Department expense and stay out with certain allowances. Anybody who felt they or their family members needed to get out could do so. But despite the level of concern, acute in a couple cases, people were extremely reluctant to depart voluntarily, to be the first to go, I suppose, or to be the only ones to go early, despite my urging them to do whatever they felt was necessary in their own circumstances. So there developed among some Embassy officers a desire for immediate, ordered departure, which I guess they felt would remove any stigma or whatever they might have felt from sending their dependants out. Nonetheless, I wasn't ready to recommend ordered departure, and Peter deferred to me.

Once the Croatian military action began on May 1, however, that issue became more urgent. The question before Peter and me and the rest of the country team as we considered our security options on that eerily quiet May 1 afternoon was whether to seek a Department-ordered evacuation of all family members and non-essential personnel. Peter was ready to move on this, as were most of the others. But I still wasn't and I fought against it. For me the issue turned on how one read the intentions of the Serbs in Knin. Would they respond to Croatia's move by loosing on Zagreb the rockets that had long been readied in Sector North? Or would they hold off on the rockets, figuring that such a retaliatory step might trigger a much larger Croatian move on Sectors North and South? Or play for international sympathy? Virtually the entire UN team in Croatia, Akashi and his staff, were sympathetic to them and had strongly condemned Croatia's "destabilizing" move as well as its intransigence during fevered ceasefire negotiations. Nor were we sure that the rockets could even hit downtown Zagreb; the ones they'd fired in the fall of 1993 had only reached the outskirts of the city.

Q: Now, who controlled these rockets?

NEITZKE: That's another question we had. Was operational control wholly in Knin's hands, or, more likely, would Belgrade, Milosevic probably, have to give the go-ahead? And was he likely to do so? I didn't think so. And I concluded, basically, that if the decision were Knin's alone, it wouldn't opt for suicide, at least not immediately. At that time, we heard from one of Tudjman's closest advisers that they too, Tudjman's inner circle, were convinced Zagreb wouldn't be rocketed. And after it was rocketed on May 2, they told us they were convinced it wouldn't be rocketed again, but it was. What I interpreted this to mean is that they were in contact with Belgrade and had received certain assurances. So either I was wrong, or they were snookered by Belgrade, or Belgrade had lost control over its friends in Knin.

Q: Well, what about your own family, their safety?

NEITZKE: They weren't anxious to leave. We'd been living with a significant amount of threat for three years by that time and had grown accustomed to it. We had, as I said earlier, strangely normal lives. I suppose my family was an example, though. I had a better sense than others of the various threats we faced, and my family was still there. So that may have deterred others from leaving. I don't know. But we'd made contingency plans by that point to get our kids temporarily back into their old school in Washington if the worst came, and some others had as well.

Frankly, on May 1, even as the Croatian attack to retake Sector West was underway, I was still just as focused on the terrorist threat confronting us. And I wasn't alone in that. And when the rockets came the next morning, mid-morning May 2, I was sitting in my office, windows open, a beautiful spring day. The explosions sounded like very loud, sharp, cracks, right next to us or very close by. The building shook. And in that instant, my first thought was that the terrorists had finally struck. I later learned from a contact with intimate ties to Croatian security services that those services too, with offices close to us, in that first instant, thought the American Embassy had finally been bombed.

Although it would be some minutes before we knew what in fact had happened, the Serbs had launched some of their rockets, and cluster bombs were exploding in various parts of downtown Zagreb, some as close as 75-80 yards from the Embassy. People responded instinctively but differently. Some fled instantly for the safety of the thick-walled, cavernous Embassy basement. Others took a moment to secure classified materials and make sure everyone was heading for safety before joining them. It fairly quickly became clear that we hadn't been hit, but we didn't know about possible casualties outside the Embassy, those who'd been out and about when the Serbs struck. Herrick soon joined us and reported that several parts of the downtown area had been hit and that there were fatalities. We'd been practicing with a walkie-talkie serial contact system for some time and in that manner were eventually able to account for everyone in the official community. No deaths, no injuries. But the need for ordered departure of dependants and non-essential personnel was no longer disputable.

We informed the Department by phone that we intended to implement our evacuation plan as soon as the dust cleared and it seemed prudent. There was no argument; they sent the authorization immediately. I got on the walkie-talkie system, told the families what little we then knew, and told them, along with personnel designated non-essential, to be ready to evacuate on very short notice. In the event, we were able to give them about two hours before they were to assemble for departure by bus from the Ambassador's residence. They all left, including my family, later that afternoon. Some of them, including my family, since my tour was by then nearing completion, never came back. And that was kind of a strange and difficult thing for them. No good-byes to friends and schoolmates and so forth. The Department doesn't authorize a return simply to pack out, so I would do that on my own.

Q: So did things calm down then, or...?

NEITZKE: The Serbian rockets struck again the following day, again hitting several parts of the downtown area in the general vicinity of the Embassy, including near a children's hospital, the

national theater, and a large market place, Britanski Trg I think, where we often shopped and through which many of us drove a couple times a day. This was the point at which Peter tried to contact officials in Knin, with whom he'd dealt in the Z-4 effort, and at least implicitly threatened them with U.S. retaliation if they hit the Embassy or killed Americans. I'm not sure that would have had much effect on Knin at that point, however. It was obvious that the game was up, that their part of Milosevic's Greater Serbia experiment would soon be history, and that the repeated, indiscriminate attacks on Zagreb were merely cynical retribution, intended to inflict pain on the civilian population. The Krajina Serbs had quickly forfeited whatever claim they might have had to international sympathy.

Q: How was Washington reacting? What were you telling Tudjman?

NEITZKE: As we'd done for nearly four years at that point, we urged Tudjman to show restraint. And we meant it, but our constant pleas had become a borderline pro forma exercise. Washington, and we, still didn't fully appreciate how strong the Croats had become militarily, and there were fears that any move by Tudjman would be met by a stronger countermove by Serbian forces. We didn't want another hot front opening up in the post-Yugo wars. But as Croatian forces quickly prevailed in Sector West, and did so, as I indicated, in a way that didn't leave much evidence of criminal excesses behind, some in Washington began to see the light, to perceive that this first major successful pushback against a four-year Serbian offensive, if it didn't go too far too fast, was not only tolerable but a positive development. This U.S. reaction to the Croats' move on Sector West, however, was before, and was not part of, whatever may have subsequently passed between, say, Holbrooke and Susak, or Perry and Susak, or MPRI and the Croatian Defense Ministry, regarding whatever green light we may have given, or assistance we may have rendered, to the later Operation Storm.

Q: Well, this issue came up in the trial of some Croats at the Hague Tribunal, did it not?

NEITZKE: That's my understanding, that the accused Croatian officers, on trial for crimes committed during Storm, claimed that Washington was aiding them in this offensive. I don't know the truth of all that. Holbrooke, I know, says it's fiction, that Washington strongly cautioned Tudjman not to undertake Storm, fearing that Belgrade, the JNA, would be drawn in. Given how Storm unfolded, however, and the follow-on strike into Bosnia with help from the Bosnian army, and the manner in which we finally did intervene to get the Croats to halt short of Banja Luka, I find it hard to believe that we'd been sitting this out entirely, let alone demanding throughout that Tudjman halt this action.

There's one more thing in this regard that has always troubled me in trying to figure out what Holbrooke or Perry or someone else may have privately advised the Croats in the late spring or summer of 1995 on the possibility of their taking military action. That's the surprising note that Bob Frasure is reported to have passed to Holbrooke at a luncheon with Tudjman two days before the Mt. Igman tragedy. This would be mid-August, when Storm was already underway. Bob is said to have referred to the Croats as "junkyard dogs" we had "hired" because we were "desperate," urging Holbrooke that we not order them to stop their offensive. I have to assume that there was something more to that relationship, something about our backing of or involvement in Storm that has yet to come out.

Q: That happened after you had departed?

NEITZKE: Yes.

Q: Let us go back then. After the rocket attacks on Zagreb and the partial embassy evacuation, how did life change for those of you who remained behind?

NEITZKE: That all happened just two months before I was set to depart. For me personally, it didn't return to anything resembling normal – even what had previously passed for normal. We didn't know how many rockets the Serbs might still have. Obviously they felt no compunction about firing them, so we had to plan for the worst. We basically moved most remaining personnel up to Peter's residence – up the hill and, we hoped, out of range -- for a few days, perhaps a week. We may have continued to do visa work at the Embassy downtown for a few hours a day. Trying to do any serious work out of the Residence, however, proved nearly impossible and, there having been no further rocket attacks for a week or so, we moved operations back to the embassy. We tried, for what little good that might have done, to keep as many people as possible out of the more vulnerable front offices. But frankly, if we'd taken a hit in that period it wouldn't have much mattered where you were sitting. The building was old and, notwithstanding our efforts to shore it up, still not all that structurally sound. After a couple weeks in that cramped situation, everyone went back to their old offices and we got on with it.

The downtown area was much quieter than before; it seemed almost deserted at times. People were spooked. It didn't return to anything like the way it had been in my final two months. Outside of work, we tried to avoid the downtown area as much as possible.

Work in that final period focused, obviously, on our security situation, both the possibility of further rocket attacks and the lingering terrorist threat, and on what Tadjman planned next. His move on Sector West was a game-changer. No one expected him to stop there. Some historians point to Storm and its substantial reversal of Serbian gains as the game-changer, and it was a game-changer of a different magnitude. But it was the move on Sector West that broke the ice; it occurred when there was no other prospect in sight of anything happening in the area that would alter the fundamental equation or get the international community off the dime. So that got a lot of our attention. In addition, with our evacuated families and non-essential personnel in various states of limbo, keeping them informed and negotiating with the Department over whether and when it might be safe for them to return took a lot of time. And Peter tried to keep the Z-4 process going, with now even more limited prospects.

Q: Were the Croatians able to launch attacks of any kind against Belgrade?

NEITZKE: Directly? Against the city?

Q: Yes. You said something about strategic weapons.

NEITZKE: I'm not sure what they'd have been capable of, other than perhaps bombing missions. And they didn't have that many aircraft at the time. So no. They never attacked Belgrade.

Tudjman might have wanted to strike back after the rocket attacks on Zagreb. He probably did. But he kept his cool, opting instead for Storm and a bet that Milosevic wouldn't respond directly, that he would abandon the Krajina. And Tudjman was proven right. As for strategic weapons, that had been mentioned in the context of Croatia's new ties with Iran, but I'm not aware that anything ever came of that. They did get some interesting weapons, but I don't think any would qualify as strategic.

Q: Well, there is something I wanted to get to before we leave your time in Zagreb. I have done a long interview with Peter Galbraith. He had something of a reputation in his Senate job, as I understand it, for going beyond his brief. Did you see any of that in Zagreb, that he was pulling Senatorial strings, doing things to push the Croatian cause or anything?

NEITZKE: Did he push the Croatian cause? In my own efforts to accurately portray what was happening in Croatia and Bosnia, to get the proportionality of criminal behavior and guilt right, I was sometimes accused, not directly but plainly enough, of advocating for Croatia, you know, the crime of clientism. But I wasn't. I was just trying to get the facts before senior Washington officials convinced that the Croats had to be acting as badly as the Serbs. And later, the comprehensive CIA study bore out the accuracy of our reporting.

Whatever his reputation may have been, Peter saw himself as a foreign affairs professional, and he was, and he came out determined to do a good job and to have an impact on things. Nothing wrong with that. He'd been told in the Department to be tough with the Croats, who in the summer of 1993, as I've said, had been going after Muslims in Bosnia. Peter's initial emphasis was both as defender of Croatian sovereignty in the occupied areas, the UNPAs, and critic of what some Croats were doing in Bosnia. I think that was an appropriate balance.

I've already suggested that on an occasion or two Peter got too close to Tudjman personally. But that's different from clientism. On the Iranian "green light" decision, Peter strongly backed our telling Tudjman unequivocally to go ahead, which is what Tudjman would have preferred to hear, but Peter's stance there was far more out of sympathy for the Muslims than for Croatia's self-interest in the deal. On Croatia's move into Sector West and preparations for Storm, although Peter dutifully executed his instructions urging restraint, his personal sympathies were with the Croats. Anyone who'd sat through two years of policy malaise, hoping for a break in the stalemate, a pushback of the Serbs, might easily have felt the same, which would not necessarily make him a Croatian partisan. And in his Z-4 effort, Peter took the interests of the Krajina Serbs into account to an extent that did not endear him to some in the Croatian Government. So, no, in sum, I don't think it's fair to say that Peter pushed Croatia's cause per se.

Now, on the question of whether Peter tried to work any levers in Washington while he was in Zagreb, if he tried, his efforts had no perceptible impact. Peter's view of Washington changed considerably over the two years we were together. He initially saw himself as a Clinton Administration and Democratic Party insider. He'd been sworn in at the White House by Vice President Gore. But he became increasingly frustrated with our policy drift, and worse. The ignominy of it weighed heavily. And the callous way Washington treated him during the Iranian "green light" affair clearly troubled him. He was being hung out. I think he dealt with that as well as one could. Nor did Washington warmly embrace his Z-4 project. And later, it wasn't

clear that he had Holbrooke's complete confidence; Dick appeared to be circumventing him occasionally in dealings with Susak and perhaps others. So I think, from the Washington angle, Zagreb was a sobering experience for Peter.

Q: Okay. You left when?

NEITZKE: July 1. That was ten days before the start of the mass murders at Srebrenica, over a month before Operation Storm was launched, a month and half before the Mt. Igman tragedy, and well before the Clinton Administration was forced, by these and the other events that I've mentioned, to get serious about Bosnia.

Q: Did the Croats, the Croatian government, or the diplomatic community note your departure in any way? Since you were...

NEITZKE: They did, actually. In addition to some farewell calls, Foreign Minister Granic and his wife took me to lunch. The German Ambassador, a guy I'd gotten to know very well, hosted a farewell dinner for me. And the Italian Ambassador and his wife fed me a couple dinners after my family was evacuated. And on the morning before I left, Tudjman asked me to come up to the Presidential Palace, as it was called, one of Tito's villas, and, with several of his Ministers and senior advisors and the Croatian press present, awarded me the Order of Prince Branimir.

Q: That sounds impressive.

NEITZKE: That depends. Tudjman's political opponents ridiculed him for his efforts to imbue the office of president with symbols of age and grandeur. For example, the elaborate uniforms worn by the guards at the Presidential Palace – even his calling it a palace was lampooned – were of Tudjman's design. As, reportedly, were the medals, or Orders, of merit or honor that Tudjman bestowed. The Branimir medal, however, was supposed to be reserved for departing Ambassadors. I think I was the sole exception to that. There was a ceremony, following which we sat down for a chat. This was still a pretty tense time, but Tudjman was relaxed. He asked me what advice I had for him. I told him I'd watched him closely for three years and was pretty sure he didn't take anyone's advice. I offered, however, that as shrewd as he'd been in getting independent Croatia on its feet and through the crises it had faced up until then, the future – this was before Storm, Dayton and everything – was likely to be even more challenging. And we talked about how far U.S.-Croatian relations had come – a sea change, really – since our first conversation three years earlier. Then we wished each other well, shook hands, and I left.

Q: What were you feeling, if anything comes to mind, when you departed Zagreb?

NEITZKE: That for three years I'd been watching up-close the effects of two U.S. Administrations' cowardice in the face of the worst humanitarian catastrophe in Europe since Hitler. That diplomacy, absent a credible threat to use force, or at least a credible demonstration of political will, is often worse than farce. That I'd done all I reasonably could, and then some, to try to get my government to do the right thing. But that I'd failed, at least in the near term. Along with most of the press, I had vastly overestimated the coercive power of shame, of conscience. I was ready to leave the Foreign Service at that point, not to resign in a huff, just to go. What was

the point? I was never again likely to find myself in a job as intellectually, emotionally, and morally challenging and draining as what I'd just been through. And I'd witnessed how a few of the brightest, most highly thought of FSOs of my generation and the one preceding it had responded when confronted with their own career-threatening challenges, and it was not edifying. I had asked for and been granted a year's Leave Without Pay. My wife was going back to work, and I was looking forward to being a full-time dad.

Q: Had anything been offered you, jobs I mean, or had you made it known right away that you wanted to go on leave without pay?

NEITZKE: Before that year's bidding cycle had begun, a friend, an Assistant Secretary, had asked me to consider a Deputy Assistant Secretary job. I looked into that briefly, but couldn't see myself making that change just then. For me, and I knew it at the time, Zagreb had been the kind of job from which I couldn't just pick up and start afresh with something else. It was going to take a while. So, yes, I asked for LWOP up front and was granted it.

Q: You said you were ready to leave the Service. Did you mean that?

NEITZKE: Not literally. I meant I was fed up. I was questioning as I'd never before the institution in which I'd invested the bulk of my working life. I still felt that most FSOs most of the time did terrific work. There are few, if any, more dedicated groups in government. They do 98 percent of what they're asked to do with energy and creativity and fortitude and you name it. But there are instances when it's necessary to weight conscience against career, to take a stand. I was stunned by the number of respected, senior-level officers who easily put career above all else and by their uncanny ability to rationalize doing so.

Q: Rationalize it how?

NEITZKE: Most of them, it seemed, took quiet professional pride in their ability as cool, seasoned diplomats not to succumb to what they deemed "emotionalism," you know, the sort of distracting emotionalism that full-blown genocide can unleash in officers less well-grounded. These guys took an essentially patronizing view of the dissenters, or worse, clicked their heels, and went out and told the Congress, the press, and the American people whatever was necessary to put a cloak of respectability on a policy of expediency. I recall, in that regard, an exchange on Bosnia that Mike McCurry, the Department Spokesman, had with reporters in late 1994. They were badgering him, demanding to know how he could stand up there at the podium day after day and pretend that we were doing anything at all significant to stop Milosevic. And he answered, I'll never forget, "because I'm paid to engage in the absurd."

Q: Well, unfortunately, that is what we are called upon to do sometimes as diplomats, to state our government's case as best we can despite even grave personal qualms.

NEITZKE: I think we touched on this earlier, when we were talking about how policy gets made, and how useful one really is if he's too close to an issue, relates to it too emotionally. At that point you just have to back off. But I strongly disagree with the notion that an emotionally sterile, utterly dispassionate approach always serves best. There have to be limits. Realpolitik is

not all that we're about as a nation. In dealing with something like genocide, let alone genocide in the shadow of the Holocaust, there has to come a point when your basic values kick in. I think we're best served as a nation by diplomats who neither go off on emotional tangents nor check their humanity at the door.

But it's a question that's always troubled me, whether you could be successful in the Service, keep rising through the ranks while dealing with tough, gut-wrenching issues, and keep your soul intact, as it were. When I led those few sessions on dissent in mid-career training at FSI after I retired, I would begin with remarks that I'd come across in the early 1970s by then-Under Secretary Macomber. Testifying before the Senate, he was asked what an FSO should do – Vietnam was then the focus of dissent – if he were asked to carry out a policy that he deeply opposed. Macomber responded that if one felt that strongly about it he probably shouldn't be a diplomat; he should be a teacher or a writer or an advocate of some sort. He quickly added, however, that if one decided he could live with "certain inhibitions" – his phrase – then he'd have the marvelous reward of a ringside seat at some of the greatest events of his day. I think that a lot of our best and brightest cling to that ringside seat at all costs.

Q: Well what happened to some of these FSOs, whom you keep referring to, the ones who took the careerist path on Bosnia as you say, defended the policy and...

NEITZKE: Nearly all of them did extremely well, actually, the senior officers we're referring to, I mean in terms of their onward Foreign Service careers. Lots of them were awarded with ambassadorships, ironically, in a couple cases, ambassadorships to the former Yugoslavia. Eagleburger got to be Secretary of State briefly. And on the military side too, nearly every senior officer who dutifully towed the line did extremely well. There's a pretty clear pattern there. I'm reminded from my research on the Holocaust of a similar pattern of reward for some senior people in the Department back then, men who'd held the line against admitting more Jews, who'd scoffed even at talk of rescue, and who'd steadfastly denied we knew about the Nazis' extermination program long after we did know. In the end, however, FDR fired EUR Assistant Secretary Breckenridge Long. At least there was that.

Q: There have been a number of books, loads of books in fact, some memoirs, written on experiences in the wars in the former Yugoslavia. Did you ever consider doing that? And lastly, now that you have the perspective of over a decade, are there any aspects of the conflict and what you did that you now see differently?

NEITZKE: How much more time do we have? I did think of doing a book. Some journalist friends even had a publisher get in touch with me, and we spoke a couple times, batting around ideas, what they'd most be interested in, what I felt I could do. We got to the point where they wanted an outline and, after some soul-searching, I decided I really didn't want to do it, at least not then. I was trying to work Zagreb out of my system, and I didn't want to descend again into that morass of anger and disappointment. But I'm a firm believer in the therapeutic value of writing things down, or airing them out, and this exercise with you is, I guess, my third and longest and probably my last effort to do that. So I'm grateful.

Q: The others were...

NEITZKE: The others were the long research paper I wrote in the Senior Seminar, which I guess we'll come to, comparing and contrasting the State Department's and the U.S. Government's responses to the Holocaust and Bosnia, which I titled "But Bosnia was not the Holocaust!" The second was a book done by Roger Cohen, "Hearts Grown Brutal," published in the fall of 1998.

Q: Writes for the New York Times.

NEITZKE: He does. I think he's the IHT foreign editor now. Roger was one of the many correspondents I got to know in Zagreb. I think he was technically Berlin bureau chief at the time. Later on he became chief foreign editor for the Times. We stayed in touch for a few years after I left Zagreb. When he was working on his book, I gave him a copy of my Senior Seminar paper, which he ended up quoting from at length. For anyone who has studied Yugoslavia going way back, "Hearts Grown Brutal" is a great read. Roger has a wonderful, at times almost poetic writing style. His treatment of Bosnia closely parallels my own. A sense of having helped inform his views relieved some of the pressure I felt to write something more elaborate myself.

The other question, on whether my perspective on what happened in Bosnia has changed, is more difficult. My fundamental take on what happened, and on the moral vacuity of our approach from 1992 to 1995, hasn't changed. But you learn more and your perspective broadens with time. We witnessed the war, the wars, from a certain vantage point. We weren't as attuned as the Bosnians themselves would have been, for example, to the war on a micro level, to the carnage and the corruption, for example, in arms dealing, food smuggling, and so on, to the innumerable deals cut at the local or village level among otherwise hostile factions that resulted in brief, ad hoc alliances that permitted some of these places to survive against all odds. And there are, of course, the many moving stories of loss, unbelievable hardship and even heroism that have come out. On the major outlines of what happened, however, history has shown that we got it right, and early on.

In mid-1995, Clinton was said to have been in a near-panic over what his failure of leadership on Bosnia might do to his reelection prospects a year later. I think Woodward in his book The Choice said Clinton then viewed Bosnia as a cancer on his Presidency, the old Nixon era characterization of Watergate. That Clinton's handling of Bosnia is now rated a stellar success by so many, most of whom either knew little at the time or remember nothing, is little short of obscene. That's the true miracle that Holbrooke worked at Dayton, transforming Clinton's Bosnia cancer of early 1995 into a grand plank of unmitigated success in his reelection platform of 1996. And now critics of our Iraq strategy – and god knows there's lots to be critical about – demand that we apply to Iraq the strategic insight and creative diplomacy that Clinton supposedly demonstrated in bringing peace to Bosnia. It boggles the mind. Galbraith and now even Biden are calling for the formal ethno-religious division of Iraq, supposedly drawing on lessons from the Clinton Administration's success with Bosnia. What a profound and potentially catastrophic historical distortion that is.

Lastly, I feel a lot better now than I did when departing Zagreb about the cumulative effect of all we did in those years on later policy. Some might dispute this, but I believe that we contributed critically to the public, congressional, and Administration mindset that guided our much firmer

response to the Kosovo crisis, going to war with Serbia, even bombing Belgrade. There was cause enough to have done that in the way Milosevic treated the Albanian Kosovars, but I don't believe we actually would have absent the lingering humiliation and shame of our earlier three years of cowardice on Bosnia.

MARSHALL FREEMAN HARRIS
Desk Officer for Romania, Bureau of European Affairs
Washington, DC (1993)

In addition to his service as Desk Officer for Romania, Marshall Freeman Harris served in London, Bulgaria, and at various other State Department posts. He was interviewed by Michael Springmann in August of 1993.

Q: How effective were the people you were dealing with? Did they really know what was going on in Bosnia? Did they know the history of this centuries old conflict? Gary Sick, in his book on the Iranian revolution, says that people in Washington and in other capitals, didn't really understand the history of the entity they were dealing with.

HARRIS: I think that was also true in the case of our Bosnian policy, but in an unusual manner. The policy makers tried to portray the conflict in Bosnia as just another event in a long history of ancient ethnic rivalries and hatreds. They saw it essentially as a civil war that had been going on for hundreds of years. They saw it as all being against all in Bosnia. That was their little foray into history; it was unfortunately inaccurate. Beyond that, the Bosnia policy makers in the Clinton administration have no background in the region or in the history of the region. In comparison, the Bush administration, which unfortunately reached the conclusion that we had no real interests in Bosnia and that therefore we should not become involved -- a decision that was reached for very cynical domestic political reasons in an election year -- the Secretary of State, who had been the Deputy Secretary, was Lawrence Eagleburger. He had served in Serbia and had spent a significant part of his career involved in or following closely the events in the Balkans. Under Eagleburger, you had Assistant Secretary for European Affairs Tom Niles who had also served in Serbia and in the Soviet Union and therefore knew the Balkans very well. The National Security Advisor was Brent Scowcroft who had also served in Belgrade as a Defense Attaché and who had also followed Balkans events closely.

In the Clinton administration, the Secretary of State spent four years as Deputy Secretary, which is usually not a policy making position or is out of the policy making loop. The rest of Christopher's career was devoted to the law and I doubt whether he ever became deeply involved in the Balkans. The Assistant Secretary for European Affairs is Steve Oxman who to my knowledge has not ever been in the region, much less having studied it. The list goes on and on. The special envoy to the peace negotiations in Geneva is Reginald Bartholomew who, while having the reputation for being an excellent diplomat and negotiator, was in the region only once, in April, 1993; he has no professional background in Eastern European affairs.

The professional Foreign Service officers, who are knowledgeable are advising the policy

makers to a certain extent, but their views are largely ignored. No matter how open the doors of the political appointees are, the Foreign Service is not going to rush in every day with memoranda and policy papers saying that it disagrees with what the administration is doing. The career Service was largely in favor of a change of policy and was consistently pointing out the disadvantages of carrying on the course that the Clinton administration was taking. The Service's views were to no avail. The discussions were always very pleasant and polite and conducted through prescribed channels, but the comments of the career Service, I think, rolled off the backs of the policy makers.

Q: INR gives weekly briefings to a variety of State officials, including Assistant Secretaries. Did they ignore the reports on Bosnia?

HARRIS: I think so. I guess that the root problem really was that the Clinton administration viewed foreign policy in general as an extension or adjunct to its domestic policy. It did not treat foreign policy on its own merits. That was especially true in the case of Bosnia where the overwhelming concern of the policy makers was whether that situation would take up all the headlines and the news and whether we would be embroiled or dragged into a conflict that we would prefer to stay out of. The concern, I think, was that our involvement might somehow jeopardize Hillary Clinton's health care package or the budget bill. That is no way to view foreign policy. Foreign policy is a subject matter that stands on its own feet. But this administration treats it as a secondary manner, which it is not. My comment goes beyond Bosnia, although that is at the moment the most important foreign policy issue facing the country.

Q: How much Congressional interest was there? How was it manifested? Did you receive many calls from Congressional offices?

HARRIS: I had a lot of calls from Congressional staffers and from Congressmen themselves, asking what was going on in Bosnia or asking for an explanation of our policy. Even now I think there is a core group of about 100 Representatives from both parties who would be willing to take Clinton on his policy. There are Republicans and Democrats prepared to support legislation which would expand our role in Bosnia. In the Senate, there are probably 25-30 Senators who would favor a more activist policy. That number may be growing. As our government is established by the Constitution, the Legislative Branch can't really take any initiative of foreign policy and that is what is missing. If Clinton were to exert some leadership on this issue, a majority in both Houses would support him.

Q: Are these Congressmen who have special expertise in foreign affairs?

HARRIS: I think the group represents a broad spectrum. But there was an absence of rigorous questioning of administration representatives by congressional committees. Since I have started working on the Hill, I have heard some criticism from Republican Congressmen and staffers. They feel that the Democratic-led committees were too reluctant to call State Department witnesses to discuss Bosnian policy. They feel that there was far too little of that.

Q: How much media interest was there during the period you served on the desk? Obviously, there is considerable interest now that you have resigned and done so publicly. How was it

earlier?

HARRIS: There was a lot of media interest, but perhaps not quite enough. What Americans respond to is generally television pictures -- blood in the streets. I don't think the networks, although showing those pictures, have not put them in their proper context. You see and hear the shells being fired, you hear the sniper fire, you see people scurrying for cover and then you see the dead and the wounded, but that is all you get. There is no explanation of what and why these events are taking place. There is no discussion that Sarajevo has been encircled for seventeen months, that people can not leave their areas, that they are terrorized every night with artillery and sniper fire. Had the networks told the full story, we would be arguing now not only what we should do for humanitarian reasons, but what we could do about the root causes of the conflict, which is Serbian aggression.

The other thing that had prevented a full discussion of the issues is that Secretary Christopher and the other Clinton administration policy makers would have you believe that what we see on television is not what is actually happening. Sarajevo is under siege; there are other Muslim areas of Bosnia under siege, but the Secretary and other officials insist that we are witnessing just a civil war and that all three sides are attacking each other and that they would continue to do so regardless of any U.S. action because they have been doing it for hundreds of years. That rationale supports a no-action policy.

Q: Would it be fair to say that the issue is not historic ethnic animosities in the Balkans, but essentially Serb aggression?

HARRIS: It is as simple as that. The regime in power presently in Belgrade is driven by a twisted ideology that Serbs must live in Serbia and that Serbs can not live side by side with non-Serbs. That is what is driving the Bosnian conflict today. There are, of course, ancient rivalries and ancient ethnic differences among the three major groups, but they have lived relatively peacefully side-by-side for hundreds of years. The lie of the Milosevic ideology is exposed most easily by looking at the 25-30% of the Bosnian population which is of mixed ethnicity. What will happen to these people if the three Bosnian groups can live together? It is often the case that members of different ethnic groups have married. They have been reluctant to list themselves in census surveys or identify themselves in conversations as members of one ethnic group or another. They identify themselves as "Bosnians". Had we permitted the Bosnian state to come into being properly, primarily by allowing its army to operate with adequate weaponry, then there would have been a different dynamic and people would not have accepted so readily the view that varying ethnic groups could not get along together.

Q: Beyond the Serbian problem, what other issues are there in Bosnia today?

HARRIS: The war has torn everything asunder. The principal issue should have been "democratization". We have a vital interest in seeing that outcome for all the republics which came into being after the collapse of Yugoslavia. They need to become democracies quickly and start on the road to economic development. These are objectives that we are ignoring in Macedonia, for example. We should be moving full steam ahead there because by encouraging democracy and free markets, you discourage ethnic feuding and nationalism.

Q: What would you say to someone who is considering the Foreign Service as a career? You were in it for eight years. Is it a worthwhile career or is it only good for those who can hold their tongues?

HARRIS: I think it is probably useful if you can hold your tongue. There is no doubt that even after you have been in the Foreign Service for 20-25 years, you are unlikely to be in a policy making role even if you are appointed as an ambassador to a fairly major country or even in many cases as an assistant secretary. At the same time, I think it can be an incredibly rewarding career. You can get a lot of responsibility at a relatively young age. That is particularly true if you are serving at an embassy abroad where you are given great responsibilities and you assume positions of importance that you most often not reach in a comparable career in the law. For example, in the United States.

You do make enormous sacrifices. It becomes difficult to maintain any reasonable sort of contact with one's family and friends made before one joins the Service. One's life becomes more insular; your colleagues become increasingly your best friends. You become part of a subculture. That can be an advantage if you can consider these new friends as part of a new family, but it can also be a disadvantage because you can not live what most Americans would consider a "normal" life.

Q: You didn't fall or were pushed out of the Department. You left under your own volition. If you had not become involved in the Bosnian issue, do you think you would have stayed in the Foreign Service?

HARRIS: I am pretty sure I would have stayed. I had no thirty year plan, no five year plan. I moved from assignment to assignment. Who knows what I would have done after the next two years on the Bosnian desk? I have no idea what I would have done after that, but I was certainly looking forward to continuing my work on the desk. I probably would have had the same reaction had I been assigned to another desk.

Q: What was the approximate cause for your leaving? I know you have said that you did not agree with U.S. policy. Had someone counseled you to sit tight and work from within, slowly trying to move the policy in your direction. Could you have done that?

HARRIS: I am still of the opinion that I could have worked from within. I really felt that what I was doing was productive and sometimes even rewarding in the sense that I felt, particularly as we developed policy options or descriptions of policy options -- listing the pros and cons -- that had I not been drafting the paper, it would have in most likelihood been a weaker paper. But, by the same token, by the end of July, I realized that I had to leave because I was simply not going to sit in the office and participate in the implementation of a policy which would dismember a U.N. state. Had the Bosnian government caved in and accepted that dismemberment before I left, I would still have reached the same decision and would have resigned, although my departure might have been much more quiet because there would not have been as much of a point in speaking out publicly about what was going on.

RUDOLF V. PERINA
Chief of Mission
Belgrade (1993-1996)

Ambassador Perina was born in Czechoslovakia when that country was under communist control. He escaped with his family to Morocco, then Switzerland and finally the United States. The ambassador was educated at the University of Chicago and Columbia University. Entering the Foreign Service in 1974, Mr. Perina specialized in Military-Political Affairs at posts abroad, including Moscow, Berlin, Brussels, Vienna and Belgrade. In Washington he served on the National Security Council, specializing in Soviet issues. From 1998 to 2001 Mr. Perino was US Ambassador to Moldova. Ambassador Perina was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2006

Q: That was my impression as well when I took it. Anyway, where did you go after the Seminar?

PERINA: The Seminar ended in the summer of 1993, and I went to Belgrade.

Q: Who was the Ambassador?

PERINA: There was no Ambassador. Warren Zimmermann had left the year before, and he had left the DCM, Bob Rackmales, as Chargé. The war was underway. Yugoslavia had broken up. We had broken off diplomatic relations with Serbia Montenegro, although we had an Embassy there. Bob Rackmales had negotiated that the Embassy and staff would continue to have diplomatic rights and privileges but in a legal sense we did not have diplomatic relations because we did not recognize Serbia-Montenegro as the successor state to Yugoslavia. It was a very strange and unique relationship. Bob Rackmales was Chargé d’Affaires but had been assigned originally to the DCM position, and I was initially assigned to the DCM slot as his replacement. However, I went to post to be the Chargé d’Affaires and was reassigned after my first year to be the Chief of Mission as a permanent Chargé, so that the DCM slot could be vacated and filled. By then it was clear that we would not have normal diplomatic relations, and an accredited ambassador, for a long time. When I was assigned to the job, I was told in Washington by my personnel counselor that there was a 50-50 chance that I would be closing the Embassy, that is to say that we would completely break off relations with Belgrade. This was one of the reasons that there weren’t too many people anxious to go. The country was under UN sanctions. One could not even fly in because all international flights were cut off as part of the sanctions. I had to fly into Budapest and proceed to Belgrade by car. It was a very, very strange situation. The Embassy itself had been downsized by about 50% when Warren Zimmermann left so it had a much smaller staff than previously. I knew I would be working under very difficult conditions, under the threat of closing down the Embassy on short notice, and with a staff that was greatly downsized. There were also security concerns and plans for military evacuation of the Embassy if necessary. I had several special security people on the staff whose only job was to prepare for such an evacuation and be there to help carry it out. They had videotaped and mapped the residence and entire compound inside and out, identified landing areas for helicopters and so on.

Q: You were there from when to when?

PERINA: I was there from 1993 to the early spring of 1996. I ended up being there about two and a half years.

Q: Before you went, what was your impression of the situation in the former Yugoslavia? What was our policy?

PERINA: This was a time when the Bosnian War was going full force and all the reports of atrocities were hitting the Western media. These included the reports on the concentration camps, the mass rapes, the use of rape as an instrument of war, the sniper killings in Sarajevo, and so on. All of these reports were coming out and arousing public opinion, generally in an anti-Serb direction because most of the publicized atrocities seemed to be committed against Muslims by Serbs. This was the time when three or four State Department desk officers in a row resigned from the Department to protest that the U.S. was not taking stronger action against Serbia. There was a feeling that the U.S. should be doing more to stop these atrocities, that it should intervene against the Serbs. It was a horrible time and horrible things were happening. The U.S. had started reacting to this, and military action by NATO was not ruled out. This was one of the reasons I was told there was a 50-50 chance of closing the Embassy.

There was also continuing tension over Kosovo. In December 1992, six months before I went out, Deputy Secretary Eagleburger gave Milosevic what came to be known as the "Christmas warning" that we would take action against Serbia proper in retaliation for any move against Kosovo. So U.S.-Serb relations were very bad, as you can imagine, and the State Department increasingly felt under pressure to do more to stop the killing in Bosnia. Our initial approach had been to try to stay out and let the Europeans take the lead. We felt that this was a good example of a regional conflict that the European Union should try to handle. But the European Union was not doing very much, and pressure was mounting on the U.S. by domestic public opinion to do something.

Q: I just finished interviewing Ron Neitzke. He served in Belgrade before but he was in Zagreb as Consul General at this time and then made Chargé for a year. He was saying that he very much felt unhappiness from the Department of State that he was reporting too many of these atrocities because the U.S. Government didn't want to get involved. He said he also felt he was up against what he called the Belgrade mafia, which was Eagleburger, Scowcroft and others with Yugoslav experience who had served there and felt close to the Serbs. Did you encounter any of this?

PERINA: It was ironic because there were a lot of Yugoslav experts at the top levels of the U.S. Government. But I did not feel such pressure. Of course, I was reporting from Serbia and most of the atrocities were happening in Bosnia. So I was not in a position to report on them. From Belgrade, we did follow developments in Kosovo and kept Washington informed on all reports of atrocities there. I did not get any signals that such information should not be reported. On the contrary, there was a lot of interest in Kosovo in our Congress so it was important for the Department to be fully up to speed.

Q: Oh, yes. This is where everything was happening. Were you given any special instructions when you went out?

PERINA: Apart from the possible need to close the Embassy, the instructions were just to survive. The UN sanctions were among the toughest possible. There were no airplane flights, nothing was supposedly allowed in. Now, of course, it was a porous border and you could buy a lot of stuff, but for the average person it was very difficult. For example, you couldn't buy gasoline. People had to go to Budapest and bring back gasoline in milk cartons, which they then often sold at roadside stands. There was also this rampant inflation going on as a result of the sanctions. When I arrived, the staff took me to a welcoming dinner in a restaurant and I couldn't believe how it was paid for. The economic counselor opened an attaché case that was just filled with stacks of bills, and he paid for the dinner with all of these bills. He just put them on the table, and we had to wait about 15 minutes while the waiters counted them. This inflation continued through my tenure because of the sanctions. Currency was continuously being devalued and reprinted in higher and higher denominations. The largest single bill that was issued in my time there was 500 billion dinars, that's billion and not million. I have never yet seen a single bill of a higher denomination, even from the German inflation after World War I. When this bill was issued it was worth about \$10. Within a week it was worth a dollar and within about 10 days it was worth a nickel. I have a stack of them which I kept as souvenirs. Basically, Yugoslav money became meaningless. Initially, of course, some people also profited by paying off debts and mortgages in worthless currency. There were rumors that Milosevic had paid off the mortgage on his personal house for a few hundred dollars.

Q: How did people survive?

PERINA: There was a black market primarily in German marks and to some degree in dollars. Most shop owners wanted to be paid in marks. If a person only had Yugoslav dinars, it was very difficult. A barter economy developed where people from the countryside paid with produce for manufactured goods and so on. There continued to be a stream of Western currency coming into the country from the many Serb guest workers in Western Europe, and especially Germany, who sent money back to their families. This basically sustained an entire black economy in hard currency. When I came back to the Department on consultations a couple of times, I brought back examples of the Serb currency—the bills denominated in millions and billions of dinars. People loved them, and Warren Christopher even passed some around at one of his morning staff meetings, as evidence of how the sanctions were working. But there was a flip side to the story. The sanctions destroyed the currency but the economy continued to function in some remarkable ways. For example, there continued to be a McDonald's in Belgrade through the entire sanction period. It was no longer under franchise and had to procure the ingredients for their products locally, but one could not taste a difference from any other McDonald's hamburger. If one had hard currency, it was still possible to buy almost anything, including new Mercedes automobiles smuggled into the country. There were, of course, many criminal elements who soon figured out how to make such a system profitable for themselves through smuggling and similar activity. The sanctions thus contributed to a real criminalization of the society. Gangsters and criminals became wealthy and rose to the top, while average people suffered.

Q: How did the people eat and procure basic necessities?

PERINA: I think a lot of people relied on communities, on social contacts, on family. People in the countryside could raise their own food and were relatively self sufficient. They were less affected by the sanctions. Many city dwellers had come within one or two generations from villages where they still had relatives who could help them get food. Others relied on remittances from abroad for hard currency. Serbs are also very inventive and clever. They are survivors, like everyone else in the Balkans. In most cases, they found ways to beat the system, though it was hard.

The Embassy people were, of course, in a very privileged position. We had the hard currency, we had the ability to bring in gasoline, food and other commodities for Embassy use, so we did not really suffer. But some things were difficult. For example, we could not use the banking system for Embassy transactions because Serb banks were also under sanctions and thus had no links to foreign banks. Everything was on a cash basis. Even salaries of our local employees were paid in cash. About every two weeks, we sent a car to Budapest that would bring back tens of thousands of dollars in cash, sometimes over a hundred thousand dollars. The cars were driven by Serb employees of the Embassy and had an American on board but no guards. They thus aroused no suspicion or interest. The whole system was based on secrecy. Otherwise, of course, local criminal warlords like the infamous Arkan would quickly have targeted these cars, and probably no number of guards could have protected them. At one point we had to put a new roof on the Embassy residence because it was leaking. This was a major repair and cost over a hundred thousand dollars. A car came from Budapest with the cash in a suitcase, and we paid for it that way. I remember telling Dick Holbrooke this story when I first met him in Budapest after he was nominated to be Assistant Secretary. He thought it was fascinating and already then took a special interest in the Yugoslav conflict. I spent an hour telling him stories from Belgrade, and that was how we first got to know one another. I just happened to be passing through Budapest when he was there with his wife, and I asked to meet with him.

Q: The Embassy was still in the same old compound?

PERINA: It was that same building, covering an entire block. We still used the main chancery but there were a lot of empty apartments in the other wings because the staff had been so downsized. The commissary was still active as well as the large cafeteria. In my first year, I was there without my wife so that my younger daughter, Alexandra, could finish high school in Virginia. I lived in the DCM residence because the main residence was under repair. That was the most difficult and bleakest year. In the second year, my wife joined me, and we moved to the main Embassy residence, which as you know is a beautiful building with a huge pool, tennis courts, a wonderful property. It was without a doubt the nicest residence we lived in through my entire career.

Q: What sort of a staff did you have? Did you have the equivalent of a DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission)?

PERINA: By and large, there was an excellent staff of very committed people. My first year I did not have a formal DCM because I was in the DCM position but I asked Jim Swigert, the head

of the economic and political Section, to serve as the acting DCM. He was outstanding and helped me immensely because he had been there the previous year and provided continuity. When I moved into the chief of mission position as a permanent Chargé d’Affaires, I did recruit a DCM who was Larry Butler.

Q: How were you received by the Serbs when you got to Belgrade?

PERINA: Within a week or so of my arrival, I received my first instruction to deliver a demarche to Milosevic. I had never met him. We did not recognize him as president of Yugoslavia since we did not recognize Serbia-Montenegro as the successor state to former Yugoslavia. We did accept him as President of Serbia, and in that sense were allowed to call him “President.” I was not an ambassador, and he knew that was done intentionally so as not to recognize him as a head of state with any presentation of credentials. I think Bob Rackmales had not seen him for quite a while before he left. So Milosevic really had not met with an American diplomat for some time. I put in a request to see him in order to deliver the message from Washington. Later in the same day, we received a response that Milosevic would not receive me and that we should just send over the message in written form. I knew if I did that, it would set a precedent and make it difficult for me to ever get a meeting with him. I decided that we wouldn’t send the message in written form. Instead, we sent back word that since I had been instructed to deliver the message personally to him, I would have to report his refusal to see me back to Washington and ask for new instructions. This was a bluff, of course, because Washington had not instructed me personally to deliver the message and would have accepted delivery of the message to him in any form. And I would have hated to tell the Department that I delayed delivering the first message assigned to me. But I decided just to tell Milosevic this and to wait 24 hours before sending the demarche in written form.

Well, the bluff worked. About three hours after we said that I would not deliver the message in writing, word came back that he would receive me that afternoon. I went over and I had my first meeting with Milosevic. Jim Swigert came along as the note taker. I delivered the demarche orally and also left a non-paper with the talking points to make sure he got the exact wording from Washington. This was the pattern I followed with all subsequent demarches. In fact, this first meeting ended with him telling me that he would receive me whenever I asked to see him. I never again had difficulty getting a meeting with him. He clearly wanted to engage with the United States and concluded that he could do so through me.

I cannot remember the exact content of that first demarche but it was along the same vein as numerous other messages I delivered that first year—basically all warning him against interference in Bosnia and sometimes warning him very bluntly that the U.S. would take action if Serbia continued to support the Bosnian Serbs militarily. I probably had well over a dozen meetings with him that first year. On the first few, I took Jim Swigert along but then I started seeing him one-on-one because he spoke more openly. His English was fluent so there was no need for interpreters. As I got to know him, the bizarre thing was that he was actually rather engaging. I think Dick Holbrooke found this later as well. It was quite intentional on Milosevic’s part. He wanted to engage the U.S. because he knew that we were key to Western policy in the region. Dealing with him was very informal and completely unlike dealing with some stuffy head of state. In the meetings, he loved to drink Johnny Walker Black just straight on the rocks.

He was a chain smoker and smoked these cigarillos, not cigarettes but sort of small cigars. For a few months that first year, he tried to quite smoking and complained of how difficult it was. He later started the habit again and smoked quite a bit by the time I was leaving Belgrade.

It took a while for someone to really see evidence of how strange he was. He was very skilled in ole playing. At first he would try to impress visitors with what a regular guy he was—drinking, smoking, and being very informal. He would stress his background as a banker and his contacts with American bankers when he visited the United States. He would drop names of New York bankers he allegedly knew and ask how they were. But then gradually, one could see that he was very strange. He rarely showed any emotion, even when discussing immense human suffering and tragedy. This was not only in relation to discussion of Muslims or Croats, but also to Serbs. I remember seeing him at the time the Serbs were expelled from the Krajina in Croatia, and there were these caravans coming into Belgrade of displaced Serbs with all their possessions on wagons and no place to go. I remember meeting with him, and he did not appear particularly concerned about them. There was no emotion about the tragedy and enormity of the conflict going on next door. In part, he wanted to show that he was very tough. But there was a genuine lack of compassion that was truly frightening and that Warren Zimmermann also described in his book.

The other unusual thing that I soon learned about him was that he never flinched. Some of the demarches that I had to deliver during that first year were very, very tough as compared to normal diplomatic exchanges. In most countries I would probably have been expelled if I said those kinds of things to a president. The gist of some of these messages was that we think you are a war criminal and we're going to bomb the hell out of you unless you stop doing so and so. I am of course exaggerating, and they obviously did not use that language, but that was the unmistakable gist of the messages, particularly as Washington got more and more frustrated and angered with Milosevic. And I always delivered the full and exact text of the demarche. I summarized it orally and then gave him the written text, which he always read before responding. No matter how tough or threatening the message was, he would always just look up after reading it and say calmly "Well, you know, this is not true," and begin discussing it as though we were discussing the weather. He would never flinch and never get angry or show emotion. I think the intent again was to give the impression of being tough and unafraid himself. He would also look directly into your eyes when speaking or listening, and lean forward very close to give the impression of listening intently. It was a fairly intense look, and his eyes never wandered, but it was not a threatening or angry look but rather a type of "I am not afraid" look.

Q: You could almost say he was a psychopath.

PERINA: Well I am not a psychiatrist but he was certainly strange and unlike any other person I have ever dealt with. There were a couple of other strange things that later on became even more apparent. There was never any staff that you could see around him. I would come to his office, and the only people I ever saw were his bodyguards and one assistant named Goran Milinovic. I never saw anyone else—not a secretary, a receptionist, or any staffer other than Goran. Goran was this large muscular fellow with a beard, and he functioned as everything, including note taker. He would take copious notes at every meeting but he wrote so quickly that I cannot imagine they were legible. I think it was all for show. I don't believe Milosevic wanted notes of

most of his meetings. When I came alone, then Goran did not sit-in on the meetings, and they were only one-on-one. This did change a bit later when Bob Frasure, our Deputy Assistant Secretary from Washington, started coming. In those meetings sometimes Milan Milutinovic, the Foreign Minister, and Chris Spiro who was an American advisor of Milosevic, would join. But the whole atmosphere of these sessions was very strange. Most heads-of-state want entourages to show their importance. With Milosevic, it was just the reverse.

The most bizarre episode I recall with Milosevic came one evening when he called up and asked me to join him for dinner. It was very strange to be invited like this by him, and to this day I do not know what he was trying to achieve other than to get closer to the United States and show how he wanted to work with us. This was in the period when Bob Frasure had started making visits to Belgrade, and the U.S. was starting to engage as the primary mediator of the Yugoslav conflict, replacing the Europeans. So Milosevic knew that the U.S. had become the key player on what happens in Yugoslavia. He called up, even though Bob Frasure was not in town at the time, and asked me to come over to one of the country houses and have dinner with him. We were having dinner, and he was his usual, chatty self, giving the appearance of a perfectly normal person. And then in the middle of the conversation he said, "Did you know that Warren Zimmermann tried to have me assassinated?" I was stunned. I could not believe he said that and thought that he was perhaps testing me in some way. I answered "Mr. President, I know Warren Zimmermann. I know American policy. I don't want you to believe that. It isn't true." He said, "No, no. It's absolutely true. I have evidence that Warren Zimmermann was plotting with Vuk Draskovic to have me assassinated and we have tapes to prove this." Vuk Draskovic was probably the most prominent dissident in Serbia at that time, and I am sure Warren Zimmermann met with him, but the assassination charges were of course absurd and indicative of Milosevic's paranoia. From that time on I realized that he was in a completely different world. But it took a while, and incidents like this, to really understand how he saw the world and how paranoid he was because he was generally so good at being able to cover it up. I think he genuinely believed the Zimmermann story, though I have no idea what kinds of tapes he was talking about. I never got around to telling Warren Zimmermann that story. I'm sure he would have been amused by it.

Q: If he was so out of it, did Milosevic really understand what was happening in Bosnia?

PERINA: That I think he did, although of course he always tried to give the reverse impression— that he was an outsider looking in, just like all the rest of us. I remember that when I raised Srebrenica with him, the position that he took was roughly: "Why are you coming to me? Why do you think I am responsible? I'm doing my best to try to calm Mladic but Bosnia is not my country. The United States itself says this is a separate country now, an independent country. Why do you come to me?" This was his basic response. The difficulty there was that we did not actually have a smoking gun to tie him to the events in Bosnia. Even later at the Hague Tribunal they had the problem of proving that he was linked to these events because they never found the smoking gun. When Milosevic did agree to take some action, he would portray it as almost a favor to us and a demonstration of how he also wanted to end the fighting in Bosnia. Again, during one of the Srebrenica demarches after the city fell, he said he would do his best to prevent any reprisals and that he would call Mladic. He picked up the phone and asked somebody to get Mladic for him. I remember he left the room for about ten minutes and then came back and said, "I talked to Mladic. He's crazy but I conveyed your warning to him." This was typical. For the

most part, he didn't defend Mladic or the other Bosnian Serbs. He would tell me Mladic was crazy but that he tried to convince him to stay calm and not overreact. During Srebrenica, he said that Mladic promised him that he would not harm the people of Srebrenica. But whether he actually called Mladic or did not call Mladic, I have no idea. I suspect he did not. It was probably all political theater to appease us and make himself look like a good guy who shared our concerns. Unfortunately, we now know that Mladic did do terrible things to the people of Srebrenica.

Q: Did we ever answer, "Well, okay. If you have no control, these aren't your people, then you obviously have no objection to our going in and bombing the hell out of them?"

PERINA: I don't think we ever put it in those terms but it was certainly implied that we would use military force if needed. But we did not want to let Milosevic off the hook by accepting his argument that he wasn't responsible. Part of the difficulty with our policy, and why it was a difficult line to maintain, was that we were trying to maintain that Bosnia was a fully independent country in which Serbia had no right to intervene and yet at the same time asking Milosevic to intervene by restraining Mladic and the Bosnian Serbs. There is a bit of a contradiction there, not a full contradiction but a bit. He exploited this a lot with this position of "Why do you come to me?"

Q: When you got back to the Embassy and sat with your colleagues, did you feel Milosevic was really running the show in Bosnia or did you think that he was perhaps complicit but not in control of the Bosnian Serbs?

PERINA: To be very honest, I did not know. I don't think Washington really knew but our best guess was that it was a mixture of the two. In certain ways Milosevic was certainly helping the Bosnian Serbs. Serbia provided military support, financial support, logistical support and so on. Some of this came through government channels but also a lot came from private groups and militias that sprang up, like Arkan's "Tigers." So how much influence this gave Milosevic over the Bosnian Serbs, or how long they could have continued to fight without Serbian support, is very difficult to gauge. Milosevic was complicit but can one say he was responsible for specific actions, like the slaughter of the Muslim men after the fall of Srebrenica? Did he know about that? Did he concur with that? I don't know. We don't know. Very frankly even later when he was on trial in The Hague and I was interviewed in The Hague by the prosecutors, it was clear that they also did not have a smoking gun on this. Certainly Milosevic bears much responsibility for the war as a whole because of his actions in starting the conflict but to what degree he exercised control over specific actions after the conflict started is a very difficult question.

Part of the reason that we didn't have a smoking gun was this incredibly strange way that he operated. I mentioned earlier how there was never a staff one could see in his offices in Belgrade. I visited dozens of times and never saw any infrastructure there. It was like sitting in a deserted building. This was even the case later during my tour when Bob Frasure, the Deputy Assistant Secretary responsible for Yugoslavia, started coming to Belgrade, and to a large degree also when Holbrooke started coming. Bob Frasure and I often discussed how bizarre this was. In one instance, Milosevic invited Frasure and me to a country house outside of Belgrade for discussions. We put together a draft list of some points and wanted to make a copy. We asked if

there was a copying machine we could use. Milosevic answered "I don't have a copying machine here." This was in the country residence of the President. There was no staff and he claimed there wasn't a copier. He said, "I have a FAX" and in the end we made a copy of it by faxing it to ourselves. When Bob and I were leaving, we commented to each other on how incredible this was. This was the President of the country in one of his residences, and there was not a copying machine in the house. This again shows why it was difficult later to find a smoking gun. Milosevic greatly limited the number of people he kept around himself, and he really avoided paper. He did not like paper. He always claimed he did things by phone or that he talked to people, that he talked to Mladic or something like that. At least in our presence you never saw any paper that he had on his desk or anywhere.

And of course participation in meetings with him was very restricted. When Bob Frasure made visits, Milosevic would at most have three other people in the room: his assistant Goran Milinovic, whom I mentioned; his Foreign Minister Milan Milutinovic, and then for a while this strange person Chris Spiro. He was a Greek American. He was an activist in the Democratic Party from New Hampshire who had at one time served in the New Hampshire state legislature. He was somehow engaged by Milosevic as an advisor. I always assumed it was part of Milosevic's effort to try to find ways to relate to the Americans better, and he thought that having an American citizen on his side would help him achieve this.

Q: What was purpose of these meetings?

PERINA: I have to give a little background here. It started when Holbrooke became the Assistant Secretary for Europe and recognized that our policy of isolating Milosevic and just delivering threatening demarches to him was not working. A decision was made to send out Bob Frasure to engage with Milosevic as an envoy from Washington and to try to elicit his help in ending the conflict. Initially, there was not a specific agenda to these meetings. They were exploratory and designed to show Milosevic that the U.S. might engage with him in a more positive way if he really proved helpful on Bosnia. We did, with Bob, eventually work out a set of broad principles on how to end the conflict, which in fact became the basis of the Dayton Agreement. These principles were very broad initially and primarily designed to draw Milosevic into a process and get him engaged.

Q: This was still a period when the Europeans were trying to play a role in resolving the conflict. What were they doing?

PERINA: Well, the Europeans were still talking about finding a solution but in fact they were doing very little. The whole European Union effort largely collapsed. One of the reasons, however, was that Milosevic did not really want to deal with the Europeans. He on occasion saw the British Chargé d'Affaires Ivar Roberts, but otherwise he made no effort to engage with the Europeans. He told us that he wanted to resolve the conflict with the Americans because only we were objective toward all the parties and did not have favorites, in the way that, for example, the Germans favored the Croats. He said that only we were fair and could be trusted. There was, of course, a lot of flattery in this. I think Milosevic also assumed that if he made a deal with the Americans, the Europeans would all follow, and he was correct in this. An interesting side point is how he denigrated the Russians in discussions with us. He did have meetings with the Russian Ambassador, and the Russians were the most vocal international supporters of Serbia. That is

why they had an ambassador and not a chargé d'affaires—they had no qualms in giving Serbia diplomatic recognition. But when I asked Milosevic about his dealings with the Russians, he would say, “The Russians are useless. They’ve got their own problems. They’re not doing anything. They can’t help in this.”

The Russian position was also interesting. I met a few times with the Russian Ambassador, who was not a particularly friendly fellow and did not have much contact with the rest of the diplomatic corps. Clearly, the Russians had some agenda in the region but they were very weak and had just lost their empire. They could not be expected to play a powerful role. But what was interesting was how they often misread the situation in the Balkans. Putting their money on almost full support of Milosevic was not a way to gain influence in the region. And later, the Russians completely misread and underestimated the problem of Kosovo, though many other Europeans did that as well.

Q: Was there much contact between your Embassy in Belgrade and the U.S. Embassy in Zagreb?

PERINA: Not very much, frankly. We read each other’s cables but did not coordinate in any special fashion. I did communicate on occasion with Peter Galbraith when he became the Ambassador to Croatia. We met at one of the Department’s chief of mission meetings, and I in fact invited him to visit Belgrade, which he did and he met Milosevic. Then we were together quite a bit in Dayton. I think he did a very good job in Zagreb and respect him for holding the Croats to account for the expulsion of the Serbs from Krajina. It took courage to do that, and Peter did do it.

Q: Did you ever run across Mrs. Milosevic who was a power in her own way?

PERINA: She certainly was, and she was much talked about for her alleged influence over Milosevic. She was also joked about as a bit of a kook and dragon lady combined. I never in my two and one half years there met her. I don’t think I even saw her. But I did get the sense that Milosevic was really close to her, and that she really did have a lot of influence over him. He had pictures of her in his office. They stood out in what was otherwise almost a barren room. One of the more interesting people I did meet in Belgrade was Milovan Djilas, who was still alive when I arrived though he died about a year later.

Q: Was he looked up to because he was a great figure at one time, a world figure?

PERINA: He had been a world figure, and I had studied about him in graduate school so I wanted to meet him. He was living in a modest Belgrade apartment, just like any other Serb. He had no influence and was not at all in the public spotlight. Many Serbs just considered him an old Communist. It was hard to imagine when you met him that this was the person who had had numerous meetings with Stalin and lived through so much. He was still intellectually very alert but not engaged in a serious way in contemporary politics. When I asked him what he thought U.S. policy toward Serbia should be, he responded that we should just bomb Milosevic, whom he described as a terrible man. He criticized the sanctions for punishing the wrong people.

Q: What about Jovanka Tito? Was she a figure at all?

PERINA: I never met her, and she was not talked about very much.

Q: Were there any other political figures who amounted to much or was Milosevic the name of the game?

PERINA: Milosevic was the name of the game. All of the other people whom I met there-- his ministers, generals, and so on-- were total cronies as far as I could see. I dealt almost exclusively with Milosevic. I had the access and could see him or call him whenever needed. On occasion I dealt with the Foreign Minister, Milan Milutinovic, but really just on secondary issues.

I should mention, however, that when I first arrived in Belgrade I was also responsible for Macedonia. Even though it had already declared independence from Serbia, we had not yet opened an Embassy there, and it was still being covered by the Embassy in Belgrade. So I made a trip down to Skopje and met with the President, Kiro Gligorov. He struck me as an impressive person who was doing his best to act responsibly and with restraint to continued border provocations by Serbia. We suspected that Milosevic was trying to foment a conflict that would allow him to intervene in Macedonia and bring it back under Serbia's fold. Gligorov was in a very tough position because Macedonia was so weak in comparison to Serbia but he kept steady nerves and never overreacted. I have often said that in my view Rugova in Kosovo and Gligorov in Macedonia were the two most responsible and impressive leaders in all of former Yugoslavia at that time.

Q: What about some of the Serb society in which you as a diplomat were moving? What were you getting from them?

PERINA: You know, it was hard to come into contact with what you would call the average Serb. I dealt primarily with two opposing communities—on the one hand the government consisting largely of just Milosevic, and on the other hand the dissident and opposition community. This consisted of opposition party leaders, NGO leaders, reformist intellectuals, representatives of the very limited independent media that existed, and so on. These were the people I had most often as guests in the residence. Some of the human rights activists in particular, like Sonia Biserko or Natasha Kandic, were very courageous people but they had little influence on the larger political scene. Their influence came much later, after Milosevic's downfall.

Q: What about Vuk Draskovic? He was quite a name at the time.

PERINA: He was probably the best-known dissident in the West. Milosevic contributed to that by having thugs beat him up very seriously shortly before my arrival. I knew Vuk well but considered him a little out of his element as a political leader. He did not really understand politics and came up with very strange ideas and suggestions. He was a writer and a poet, and not a serious political thinker. The most impressive opposition political leader I knew was Zoran Djindjic. He had been an exchange student in Germany and seemed to me to be the most astute of the opposition figures. We had him at our house many times. He in fact became Prime

Minister in the post-Milosevic era and was very instrumental in shipping Milosevic off to the Hague. Then he was assassinated by Serb nationalists, which was a big loss for Serbia.

Shortly after I arrived, I also met Vojislav Kostunica, another opposition leader at that time who subsequently became both Prime Minister and President of post-Milosevic Serbia. At the time I knew him, he was completely without influence or power. We met once, and it was not a good meeting. He was a strong Serb nationalist who did not hide that he disliked American policy toward Serbia. He was a very frustrated and angry person. He did not have any constituency or much influence during my entire time in Belgrade.

I also went a couple of times to see Patriarch Pavle, who was the head of the Serbian Orthodox church. He was a very frail, elderly man but very influential in the country. We wanted him to condemn some of the things happening in Bosnia, the sniper shootings of civilians and so on. He listened to my arguments but would not say anything remotely critical of the Bosnian Serb forces.

Q: What about Montenegro?

PERINA: Montenegro was interesting because amidst all the other developments at the time, it was always toying with the idea of breaking away from Serbia and becoming independent. There was this tension between Belgrade and Podgorica, the Montenegrin capital, always in the background. The fact is that Montenegrins were split on the issue of independence almost 50-50. Contrary to what some believe, U.S. policy was not repeat not to support Montenegrin independence. We felt this could lead to yet another war in the region. I visited Montenegro several times to talk to local politicians and get a sense of the mood. Fortunately, no serious problem with Montenegro erupted in my time. The situation became much more serious in later years.

Q: So what was happening with Kosovo in your time?

PERINA: Kosovo was a whole other story. The entire diplomatic corps in Belgrade talked a lot about Kosovo but the U.S. took it most seriously. We were always worried about Kosovo. The conventional wisdom was that it would blow up someday, but no one knew when. The fact that it had not blown up, however, invariably led to it being relegated to the back burner. People were just too focused on Bosnia, where an actual war was going on, to focus on someplace where a potential war might take place. But we still did take it more seriously than other countries, in part also because of the interest in the U.S. Congress. The Albanian lobby in the U.S. was very effective. Probably only the Israeli and Armenian lobbies were better.

I do not mean to imply that the Kosovo problem was somehow an artificial one, however. It was a very real problem, and very bad things were happening in Kosovo. The Serb approach was basically a colonial one. The Kosovar Albanians were treated brutally. They saw the U.S. as their major protector and often showed me photographs of the abuse: terrible pictures of people beaten, women raped, and so on. They were very good in documenting all of this and taking their case to the international community. On the other hand, in fairness one must say that many Serbs in Kosovo were also beaten up by Albanians when opportunities presented themselves for this.

The gulf and the hatred between Serbs and Albanians were enormous.

I haven't started talking about the Holbrooke visits yet but one of the things that I tried to do with Holbrooke was to get him more interested in Kosovo. I met a number of times with Ibrahim Rugova, the Kosovar Albanian leader who was elected President in elections that the Serbs did not recognize. He was a very moderate, reasonable and impressive person who did much to try to avoid an explosion in Kosovo because he knew, rightly, that the Albanians would pay an enormous price for it. He promoted peaceful resistance to Serbia and did so very effectively. Rugova almost never came to Belgrade but he told me that he would be willing to come if he had an opportunity to meet Holbrooke. I tried to interest Holbrooke in this but he turned it down. His position, both in Serbia and later during the Dayton talks, was that one had to resolve Bosnia first, that if the two issues became intertwined they would create a Gordian knot much more difficult to untangle. So he wanted to stay completely away from the Kosovo issues until Bosnia was resolved. He felt if he ever met with Rugova, even once, he would not be able to get away from it.

Q: I think he had a point there. They were two quite different issues.

PERINA: I think he was right but it was hard explaining this to the Albanians, which became my job both in Belgrade and during the Dayton talks. While we were in Dayton, there was a demonstration outside the base of several hundred Albanian-Americans who came from all over the country to ask that Kosovo be put on the Dayton agenda. It was the only demonstration during the Dayton talks, and I was assigned to go out and meet with the leaders. They were a very peaceful and reasonable group, headed by an Albanian-American physician from Texas. I told them very honestly that Kosovo was not on the table in Dayton because this was a meeting about the war in Bosnia but I assured them that the U.S. had not forgotten Kosovo and would deal with the issue at the right time. They were disappointed, of course, but seemed to accept the argument.

It was true that we had not forgotten the issue but there was just too much on the Yugoslav agenda at the time. Back in Belgrade, however, I raised Kosovo regularly in my meetings with Milosevic. I tried to convince him that Belgrade's policy would lead to another explosion and violent conflict in the region if it remained unchanged. His standard response was that we were taken in by Kosovar Albanian propaganda, that most Albanians in Kosovo were quite happy, and that only a few troublemakers were fomenting discontent. I am not certain if he really believed this and was so totally misinformed about the situation in Kosovo, or if he just believed that he could keep a lid on the problem indefinitely. I suspect it was a combination of both.

Q: But it was also a nationalistic issue throughout Serb society.

PERINA: Absolutely. Even the pro-Western, pro-democracy Serbs we knew had very little sympathy for the Kosovar Albanians. There were a few exceptions to this but they were very rare. The gulf even between moderate and reasonable Serbs and Albanians was enormous. To me it was clear that the situation was untenable and would lead to a crisis at some point. What we tried to do in the interim was to urge both sides toward moderation and non-violence. In the case of the Albanians, we had Embassy officers specifically assigned to visit Kosovo on a weekly

basis to maintain contact with the Albanians and show them that their plight had not been forgotten by the United States. These officers stayed in local hotels and spent a lot of time going back and forth. After the Holbrooke visits to Belgrade started and Milosevic was trying to demonstrate what a reasonable person he was, I had the idea of asking him whether the Embassy could open a permanent office in Pristina, the Kosovo capital, as a permanent base for our visits. This was actually a big request since everyone knew the sensitivity of Kosovo, and we still lacked formal diplomatic relations for even an Embassy, much less an Embassy branch office. But I persuaded Holbrooke to ask the question, which was one of the few times he agreed to engage on Kosovo. Milosevic was caught off guard and responded in a cavalier way “ Sure. If you want to do this, why not.” I think he regretted this answer the minute he gave it, and the Foreign Ministry certainly regretted it when it came to working out the details. But we did open an office in Pristina, and I think it was one of the more significant accomplishments of my tour. The Kosovar Albanians were so delighted that they actually found a building for us to use free of charge. They saw it as a big step forward in getting international recognition for the entire Kosovo problem. It was also seen as a victory for Rugova and his non-violent policies. It helped defuse the tension, at least for a while.

Q: We have people who were brought out of retirement to go to Kosovo. I recently interviewed one of them.

PERINA: During my time, we sent people from the Embassy but alternated them. One of our political officers, Liz Bonkowski, spent a lot of time in Kosovo. The Kosovar Albanians were very anxious to have Western diplomats, particularly American diplomats, in Kosovo because they believed it inhibited the Serbs and offered the Albanians some protection. So having a permanent Embassy office down there was a big step forward. The fact is the situation in Kosovo was extremely tense. I always believed that Kosovo would prove more difficult to resolve than Bosnia. In Bosnia, the Serbs, Muslims and Croats basically spoke the same language, intermarried, and could often not be distinguished except by their last names. And still they slaughtered one another. In Kosovo, the gulf was much wider. The Kosovar Albanians had created their own parallel society that excluded everything Serb. They boycotted Serb schools and set up their own school system so that a whole generation of Albanians already existed that could not speak or even understand Serbian. It was clear that the situation was untenable and a disaster was coming.

Q: How were the Europeans dealing with this situation?

PERINA: Well, everyone would wring their hands when Kosovo was mentioned, but the Europeans by and large did not know what to do. One got the impression they were secretly hoping that in fact the Serbs would keep the Albanians in line so that there would not be an explosion. Some Europeans were reminded of ethnic minority problems in their own countries and had a lot of sympathy with the Serbs. The most active European diplomat was the British Chargé, Ivar Roberts. As far as I know, he was the only other diplomat in Belgrade other than myself and the Russian Ambassador who on occasion had meetings with Milosevic. But even he underestimated the Kosovo problem. We were the most engaged Embassy on Kosovo, though even with us it was a secondary issue in comparison to Bosnia.

The real difference in approach to Kosovo between us and the Europeans was shown after the Dayton Agreement. Here I have to jump ahead a little. Basically, Milosevic made the Dayton Agreement possible. He was the key person who forced the Serb delegation to accept the agreement. Even Holbrooke recognized this. Milosevic did this because he was not a Serb nationalist but rather a self-serving opportunist. He believed that if he helped Dayton succeed, he would be seen in the world as a peacemaker and given legitimacy and respect, the sanctions on Serbia would be lifted, and his role in starting the whole Yugoslav conflict would be forgotten and forgiven. This is what he most wanted and why he helped Dayton succeed. The problem was, however, that we were committed to our promise to the Albanians that we would not forget Kosovo. So after Dayton we did not lift all of the sanctions but rather stated that an outer wall of sanctions would remain until the Kosovo issue was resolved. In effect, the economic sanctions were lifted but the political sanctions, such as non-recognition of Serbia-Montenegro, remained. Milosevic was furious when he learned that some sanctions would remain. He felt that he had been tricked, and it was the beginning of his falling out with Holbrooke.

But also—and this is where the Europeans come in—most of them did not support the U.S. on the outer wall of sanctions policy. They did not believe that Kosovo should be a reason for further sanctions on Serbia. Most of them started recognizing Serbia-Montenegro and elevating their *Chargés* to Ambassadors. By the time I left Belgrade, I was one of the few remaining *Chargé d’Affaires*. This European rush to normalize relations with Serbia and overlook the Kosovo issue was of course the biggest dread of the Kosovar Albanians. I think it was partly because of this development that the Albanians gave up hope that the international community would help them and moved toward developing the Kosovo Liberation Army, which suddenly appeared on the scene about two years later. This was when I was serving as the Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Department, and it took the entire international community by surprise. Suddenly, the Kosovar Albanians had an army which they had largely secretly put together. It was an amazing feat but also reflected how bad our intelligence was on Kosovo because we were still focusing almost exclusively on Bosnia. But I think I am getting too far ahead. I am sure we will come back to Kosovo later.

Q: OK, so let's go back to Bosnia pre-Dayton. What was the process of getting to Dayton? How did the talks evolve?

PERINA: Well, we have to go back to the visits by Bob Frasure, the Deputy Assistant Secretary who was handling Yugoslavia and whom I already mentioned. Bob started coming out when it became clear that the policy of just delivering threatening demarches to Milosevic was not working, and when Holbrooke became Assistant Secretary for European Affairs and wanted to get more involved in resolving the conflict. Frasure came out as sort of an advance party to meet with Milosevic and explore if there was any common ground for negotiations that Holbrooke would then take over. He made several visits, and in the end we drew up a broad list of principles by which we thought the conflict could be resolved. The bottom line of these principles was that Bosnia had to remain as a single federalist state, albeit Republika Srpska, a Serb entity with considerable autonomy, could continue to exist within Bosnia. Milosevic agreed to this, and it was the cue for Holbrooke to come in. Milosevic knew this. We had told him that if talks at the Frasure level succeeded, then a higher level representative—understood to be Holbrooke—would come to Belgrade. It was an incentive for Milosevic because he wanted to get the U.S.

involved, and he wanted to deal with the highest-level American possible.

He was also at this time trying to clean up his image in other ways. For example, we had a long-standing child custody dispute with Belgrade. An American mother was trying to get her children back from a Serbian father who had absconded with them to Serbia after he lost custody in U.S. divorce proceedings. For about five years the mother with the Embassy's help had been trying to get the children back, with the Serbs always claiming that they did not know their whereabouts. One day shortly before Dayton, out of the blue, Milosevic called me to say that the children had been found and could be returned to the mother. We immediately picked them up and kept them in the Embassy until the mother arrived, about 24 hours later, for a very dramatic and emotional reunion, since they hardly had memory of her. I have no doubt that the Serbs had known for a long time where the children were but Milosevic finally made the decision to return them when he felt it would most bolster his image with the Americans.

I remember Holbrooke's first visit to Belgrade. He stayed at the Ambassador's residence, where I was by that time living. He came with Bob Frasure and it was the first of about 20 visits by Holbrooke during my time, though I did not keep exact count. At least it seemed like 20, if not more. It was a get-acquainted session but basically he hit it off with Milosevic. Then with each subsequent visit he got more and more involved. He started coming out with the interagency team he put together that included NSC, DOD and JCS reps. The JCS rep was a fellow named Wes Clark, who at the time I think was a one star general. It was this group of about a half dozen people, including Holbrooke, Bob Frasure, Chris Hill, Wes Clark as the JCS rep and an OSD rep, that formed the key negotiating team.

This group changed shortly thereafter, however, because of the tragic road accident outside Sarajevo in which Bob Frasure, the NSC rep Nelson Drew, and the DOD rep Joseph Kruzel were killed. This happened on August 19, 1995. The whole delegation was traveling from Belgrade to Sarajevo and had been at my house for dinner the night before. Bob Frasure made his last phone call to his wife from our residence. It was an enormous tragedy. My whole family had gotten to know Bob well from his many previous visits when he stayed with us. We were all devastated, including our daughters. I subsequently flew back to Washington for the memorial service and funeral. I remember telephoning Milosevic that Saturday afternoon to tell him about the accident. I left word with his assistant, and Milosevic called back in about two minutes. He did sound genuinely shocked by the news. He had gotten to know Bob well and I think liked him. He later invited Bob's wife and daughters to visit Belgrade and see where Bob had spent his last days. Bob was replaced on the delegation by Chris Hill, who then came on all of Holbrooke's subsequent visits.

Q: What was Holbrooke's initial impression of Milosevic and how did the talks proceed?

PERINA: Holbrooke had been briefed on Milosevic by Bob Frasure and me and knew a little of what to expect. I think both Milosevic and Holbrooke found each other interesting as personalities and had an incentive to engage one another. Milosevic saw a deal with the U.S. as the path to lifting sanctions and gaining respectability in the international community, and Holbrooke rightly saw Milosevic as the key person to resolving the Bosnian conflict. Holbrooke was the right person for dealing with Milosevic. For one thing, he could simply outlast

Milosevic. These negotiating sessions sometimes went late into the night, sometimes until three o'clock in the morning and start again at six o'clock. I think one session went all night. Holbrooke really had the energy to do this. I think Holbrooke also found Milosevic an interesting person. You could engage with him more easily than with (Bosnian President) Izetbegovic or (Croatian President) Tudjman. For one thing, he spoke English so well. You did not need the formality of interpreters. It makes a big difference in discussions. Of course, that does not mean Holbrooke liked Milosevic. I think we all recognized that this was an unsavory man with a lot of blood on his hands. Perhaps because of this, there was a real challenge in dealing with him.

Q: Were you getting much out of Sarajevo and what was happening there?

PERINA: We saw the cables, and we followed all of the press reports. I knew the Ambassador, John Menzies. But until we were together at Dayton, we did not have much direct interaction. The link between all three capitals—Belgrade, Sarajevo and Zagreb—was Holbrooke and his traveling entourage. And one of the interesting things about Holbrooke, which I am sure frustrated a lot of people in Washington, was that he never reported on his meetings through cables. In the 20 or so visits by him to Belgrade, we never did a single reporting cable.

Q: This was deliberate?

PERINA: Absolutely. He always said-- and he was right in this-- that the more you report, the more Washington starts interfering in the negotiations. Interagency groups are set up, instructions drafted and circulated, a lot of people who want to get in on the action start appearing, and generally they are not helpful. What Holbrooke did was to call Warren Christopher periodically and brief him orally on the talks. Then, if anyone wanted a telegram, he would just say that he had already briefed the Secretary and that was that. And he got away with this as far as the State Department was concerned. It was a little tougher with the other agencies, particularly the Defense Department, because they did not trust the State Department, either Holbrooke or Christopher. That is why there were so many DOD representatives on the delegation whom Holbrooke had been obliged to accept as part of the initial decision to launch talks. These people were all doing their own reports back to their agencies in Washington. In particular Wes Clark, as the representative of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, would run off after every meeting to send a report back to his people in the Pentagon. Holbrooke knew this, and it irritated him, but there was nothing he could do about it except—later in the process- start having some very private, one-on-one meetings with Milosevic to which the agency reps were not invited.

Q: As the talks started, was it almost implicit that we had the option of bombing the Bosnian Serbs if the talks did not succeed? Did Milosevic understand this?

PERINA: Yes. That option was always there, and Milosevic did understand it because in fact before Dayton it happened. We did bomb the Serbs in Bosnia briefly, and there was a huge demonstration, several thousand people, in front of the Embassy. It was one of the few times I was really frightened about things getting out of hand but there was an element of orchestration in the demonstration so that Milosevic did not let it get out of hand. It looked very threatening but remained peaceful. All of this was very ironical because the Embassy had twice been evacuated before the Holbrooke talks when we were threatening the Bosnian Serbs with military

action. In each of these cases, all dependents and non-essential personnel were evacuated to Budapest in advance of possible bombing. In each case, the bombing did not happen, and people returned to Belgrade after several days in the Kempinski Hotel in Budapest. After the second time, it became silly, and the Serbs started making fun of it. They photographed the automobile convoy on the way to Budapest and made jokes about it. So then when we finally did take military action shortly before Dayton, the whole Embassy was there and no one had been evacuated. I cannot now remember what finally triggered the bombing but the point was primarily to show the Serbs prior to Dayton that we were serious. Holbrooke wanted to show that there were teeth in the threats after all. But it all happened on short notice and no one had time to evacuate the Embassy when we finally might have needed to do so.

Q: During this time was Croatia brought into the game?

PERINA: Sure. There was another team working with Croatia to try to set up a Muslim-Croatian federation in Bosnia to balance off the Serbs in the negotiations. I was not directly involved in this but it was seen as one of the elements needed to make the Dayton structure work.

Q: Was this structure worked out with Milosevic?

PERINA: The basic elements agreed with Milosevic were that Bosnia would remain as a single, unified state consisting of two entities, the Serb Republic or Republika Srpska as the Serbs called it, and the Muslim-Croat Federation. The two entities would have a lot of autonomy, including their own parliaments, but there would be a central Bosnian parliament and governmental structure, a central judiciary and so on. There was a rough outline of the division of powers among these entities and the key institutions that would be created but otherwise all the details were worked out at Dayton. That is where we had the real experts, the lawyers and others to put flesh on the bones.

Q: How did Holbrooke get the Bosnian Serbs to agree to this?

PERINA: Well, Holbrooke rightly did not deal with the Bosnian Serb leaders Karadzic and Mladic. They were simply too tainted by the atrocities committed. That is why he dealt with Milosevic, and why Milosevic was key to the negotiations. One of the fundamental problems through the talks was that we needed to negotiate with the Bosnian Serbs but could not do so directly but only through Milosevic. Milosevic thus knew how important he was to the whole process and hoped to redeem himself and his entire career by helping to make Dayton succeed. There was the one episode that Holbrooke describes in his book when Milosevic persuaded us to have a meeting with Karadzic and Mladic. He organized it at a house on the outskirts of Belgrade. It was the only time that I also met with Karadzic and Mladic because, of course, they were not invited to the Dayton talks. They impressed me as rather sullen and unfriendly. They were, of course, very unhappy with the position they had gotten themselves into. Through their actions in Bosnia, they had become politically radioactive, and thus Milosevic held all the cards in the negotiations, and they as well as Holbrooke were dependent on him as an intermediary.

Q: How did the Dayton meeting come about?

PERINA: Well, once the Serbs, basically Milosevic, agreed to the basic principles and structures of a settlement, it was understood that there would have to be a meeting of everyone involved to flesh out the agreement and sign it. You must remember that all of this took place before Milosevic, Izetbegovic and Tudjman had even gotten together in one room. There were actually many key issues still left hanging before we ever got to Dayton. Dayton was not just a paper exercise of filling in the blanks. We knew that there would be high-level talks as well as much detail to work out. Many people had to be brought together. For a while, there was talk of doing this in Europe, but Holbrooke wanted to retain control of it in the United States. Interestingly, Milosevic also wanted the meeting to be in the U.S. I am not sure how in the end the decision was made for Dayton but it made sense to do it on a military base where facilities would be available and access could be controlled. I heard subsequently that Dayton was chosen because it was Strobe Talbott's home town and he suggested it.

Q: What was your role in Dayton?

PERINA: I was Milosevic's keeper at Dayton. Each of the three chiefs of mission came out with their head of state—Peter Galbraith accompanied Tudjman from Zagreb, John Menzies from Sarajevo accompanied Izetbegovic, and I came with Milosevic. The job was to get them to Dayton and be a contact point in dealings with them. I received permission from the Department to fly to Dayton with Milosevic in the private plane that carried the entire Serb delegation. There were some Serbs who came separately from Bosnia, from Sarajevo, but not Mladic or Karadzic who wanted to come but were told they could not. So the Serb delegation from Belgrade was basically Milosevic and Milutinovic and then some military people and intelligence types. For some reason, Milosevic also took this American advisor Chris Spiro to Dayton. During the talks, I participated in most of the meetings involving Milosevic, though not all because there were a few meetings just exclusively between him and Holbrooke. As the talks got more detailed, they broke down into working groups of experts in which Milosevic did not participate. I spent a lot of time trying to keep an eye on Milosevic and the Serb delegation, and there was a lot of down time as is usual in these types of negotiations when people just mingled and chatted in the restaurant or coffee bar.

Milosevic and the other Serbs of course got a little antsy by being restricted to the air force base, Wright-Patterson. They were always coming to us and asking for permission to leave the base and go into town. We let them do so only once when I accompanied them to a shopping mall in Dayton. It was only about a dozen Serbs, but we had to have a lot of security from the U.S. so the entourage was very noticeable. The Serbs walked around looking at the stores and buying things. Some of the lower-level people bought quite a bit of stuff and were excited by all the stores. I remember that Victoria's Secret caused a stir and a lot of jokes. Milosevic, as I recall, bought a pair of shoes in a department store. I am sure he did not need a pair of shoes but he probably wanted to make the point that he had been off the base and allowed to buy what he wanted. These were, after all, people who for years had been under sanctions. There was thus something symbolic for them in getting off the base and buying things—it documented what they saw as the end of sanctions and of being international pariahs. And of course, there were Serb journalists and TV crews there to report on this. This was the only time we let Milosevic off the base. The Serbs wanted to make excursions a number of other times, but we told them that they could not because of security concerns.

Q: And this was not an idle comment.

PERINA: True. And we also did not want them wandering all around Dayton. That was the whole point of conducting the talks on a military base. But we did forget about one thing—the PX. We learned that the Serbs had started visiting the PX and buying things there, including U.S. military gear and uniforms in fairly large quantities. We had not thought of this, and the image came of Serb troops outfitted in U.S. gear that the Serbs had procured in Dayton. Holbrooke got really upset, and we had to tell the Serbs that they could not do any more shopping at the PX.

Q. Were the Europeans present at Dayton?

PERINA: The key ally and contact group countries were there but with a very symbolic presence. Most countries had just one person to report on events. These people were largely observers—they were not involved in the negotiations, and generally they were out of the loop. Of course, most people continued to be out of the loop because that was still Holbrooke's negotiating style. On the big issues, he would report to Warren Christopher and through him to the President but try to keep as much of a close hold on information as possible. The Europeans were allowed to be there symbolically because we all knew that in the end we would need the Europeans. NATO would have a post-Dayton role, a vast amount of reconstruction assistance would be required, and so on. But by and large, Dayton was a U.S. show, and really Holbrooke's show. I think Holbrooke deserves a lot of credit for what was accomplished in Dayton. Certainly the agreement did not bring love and everlasting peace to the Balkans, but it did stop the fighting and the bloodshed, and that in and of itself is a very significant accomplishment.

Now I also think—and I believe Holbrooke would agree with this—that Milosevic did a lot to make Dayton possible. This does not absolve him of his complicity in starting the whole conflict but it is a reality that should be understood. Milosevic operated much like Holbrooke in keeping a lot of information to himself and not sharing it. He cut the final deal in Dayton with Holbrooke, making an agreement possible. Many members of the Serb delegation did not know what was in the agreement until shortly before it was signed. In fact, there was a rumor that I cannot confirm that at least one member of the Serb delegation, a person from Sarajevo, passed out when he saw the final text. There was a lot of unhappiness with parts of the agreement that Milosevic had agreed to but none of the other Serbs could do anything about it.

Q: What essentially were the parts that made the Serbs unhappy?

PERINA: Well, there was a lot that made them unhappy, including the basic fact that Republika Srpska would not become independent but remain a part of Bosnia. But this was not a surprise to anyone, and all the Serbs knew this was coming. What really upset them were some of the more detailed provisions on return of refugees, property rights and restitution of property. Basically, the agreement said that all of the Muslims who had been ethnically cleansed could go back to their homes and reclaim their property. This would reverse all of the results of the ethnic cleansing that the Serbs had perpetrated. But then in addition, many of the Serbs were shocked to see how the boundaries were drawn between the Serb and the Federation portions of Bosnia, and also of Sarajevo which was divided into sectors. In effect, some Serbs found that they would be

living in Muslim-controlled areas. The person who reportedly passed out was a rather affluent Bosnian Serb who suddenly learned that his entire estate would be in a Muslim rather than Serb part of Sarajevo. As I mentioned before, Milosevic could agree to such terms because he was not really a Serb nationalist. He did not care that much about Serbs. He cared about Milosevic. He thought that by helping to conclude an agreement at Dayton his past actions would be forgotten and he would gain legitimacy and respect. But he was wrong. Kosovo was still outstanding, and it would prove to be his downfall.

Q: Was he still afraid at Dayton that Serbs might be bombed by the U.S.? Was that also a motivation?

PERINA: Perhaps it was. Certainly bombing was never off the table. But this reminds me of another anecdote about the technical support we had at Dayton from the military, which was really impressive. The process of deciding the borders between Republika Srpska and the Federation was one of the hardest parts of the negotiation. It amounted to sitting down and dividing a country on maps, deciding which side gets this village and that road. Numerous disputes came up. In one example, the disposition of a country road depended on whether it was passable in the winter or not, and there was an argument on how wide it actually was. Well, the U.S. had developed a wonderful way to deal with these disputes. We had virtually all of Bosnia on aerial film. There was a room set up at Dayton with several very large TV screens. In the case of this road, for example, we could go to this room, ask the technicians to find the road, and literally fly over it, even changing altitude within a certain range. The delegations that saw this technology were really amazed. One day, Holbrooke found a pretext to take Milosevic into this room and show him how it worked. Milosevic was also amazed. But, of course, the film had not been put together for the purpose of helping the Dayton negotiations. It had been put together by our military for the purpose of possible air strikes within Bosnia. Holbrooke knew this, and he intentionally wanted to remind Milosevic of it. I am confident Milosevic understood and got the message. It was in fact very impressive technology for its time. Nowadays, of course, it might not be any more impressive than Google Earth.

Q: Did you find yourself getting sympathetic to the Serbs after all the time you spent with them? You understood their concerns and viewpoints, after all.

PERINA: I found Milosevic very interesting but I would not say I grew more sympathetic to him. On the contrary, as we discussed earlier, the more I knew him the more I recognized how strange he was and what a perverse view of the world he had. With him, the first impression was better than subsequent ones. But I would say that over my entire tour in Belgrade I grew more sympathetic to the Serb people. They had acquired an extremely negative image in the West as almost a nation of rapists and war criminals. This was unfair. I came to know many, many good and courageous Serbs who were as opposed to Milosevic, Mladic and Karadzic as anyone in the West. They were paying the price for having a very bad leadership which allowed the worst elements of society to come to the foreground. I don't think that Serbs are inherently any better or worse than other nationalities in the Balkans. But they have to this day acquired a very negative image in the minds of most people in the West.

Q: Well, Germany is still working its way out from under Hitler's time.

PERINA: True. But I just don't believe in the concept of collective guilt. I think making everyone guilty lets everyone off the hook. I believe in individual accountability. But the reality is that nations do pay the price for the actions of leaders. I understand how it happens, though it is not fair.

Q: What was your impression of (Croatian President) Tudjman and (Bosnian President) Izetbegovic?

PERINA: It is difficult for me to say because I really did not interact with them directly. I met them once or twice and observed them at meetings but do not have any deep impression. Certainly their demeanor was very different from Milosevic's. They were much more formal. Dealing with them was very different, if only because of the language barrier.

Q: What was your impression of the Milosevic- Holbrooke dialogue at Dayton? Were there shouting matches between them and the like?

PERINA: I never witnessed a shouting match. That was not Holbrooke's style, nor Milosevic's style. Milosevic wanted always to show how unflappable he was. And Holbrooke's real strength was his persistence. He would never give up, even when somebody else might say this is impossible and walk away. It was often just a matter of physical duration and energy. Holbrooke could go on very little sleep at night. I saw this already in his visits to Belgrade. He could go on two hours of sleep at night. Then in the car on the way to the airport he would say "I have to rest for 10 minutes." He would close his eyes in the car and wake up ten minutes later and be all energetic again. Both Milosevic and Holbrooke were like that. But toward the end of the Dayton talks, Holbrooke did put on this big bluff that he would declare the conference a failure unless all three presidents signed on. We in the U.S. delegation were actually instructed to pack our bags and put them on the sidewalk in preparation for pick-up. He wanted it to really look like he was ending the conference and would declare it a failure.

Q: What would have been the consequences? Was there an implied consequence like bombing the Bosnian Serbs again if the conference failed?

PERINA: I never heard Holbrooke say directly we're going to bomb if this doesn't work. But as far as the Serbs were concerned, certainly there was an implication that the sanctions would get worse, the isolation would get worse, and we would under no circumstances allow Republika Srpska to secede from Bosnia. In other words, no matter what the Bosnian Serbs did, they would not achieve their main objective of breaking off from Bosnia. We would make sure of that, not through direct military intervention but rather by supporting the Muslim-Croat Federation and changing the military balance within Bosnia if the fighting continued. So logically, the best deal for the Serbs was what they could get in Dayton.

Q: What was the feeling when the Dayton Accords were signed?

PERINA: They were actually signed twice. There was a signing ceremony at the end of the Dayton Conference in November, and then there was a formal signing ceremony in Paris in

December which the French very much wanted. Holbrooke agreed to this because we needed the Europeans to help implement the agreement and also because the Paris ceremony was pretty much *deja vu*. The really significant event was when the three presidents signed the agreement in Dayton. Many of the Serbs in the delegation, as I mentioned, were devastated. They saw the Agreement as a total sell-out. But for Milosevic, it was a real moment of triumph. Here he had moved from being a sanctioned pariah to being a peacemaker on television screens around the world. Congratulations to the three presidents came from everywhere, including from President Clinton at the White House. I really think Milosevic believed at that moment that he had managed to change his image and shed his pariah status. But we had not forgotten about Kosovo, and Kosovo was yet to be his undoing.

Q: So what happened to you after Dayton?

PERINA: I returned to Belgrade and shortly before Christmas I got a call from (Deputy Secretary of State) Strobe Talbott asking me to come back to Washington and be Senior Deputy Assistant Secretary in the European Bureau. What happened was that Holbrooke resigned shortly after Dayton to go back to the private sector and he was replaced by John Kornblum, whom I had known for many years and worked for when I was doing CSCE issues. John had been the senior deputy to Holbrooke and now wanted me to be his senior deputy.

Q: In the two months when you were back in Belgrade, how did the Dayton accords go over?

PERINA: Much better with most of the Serbs in Serbia than one would think. They were for the most part relieved that the war was over and that the sanctions might be lifted. I think the Bosnian Serbs were much less happy. The average Serb in Serbia was less supportive of the Bosnian Serbs than many people understand. Sure, there was a sense that Serbs have to support their own against Muslims and Croats. But there was also a real exasperation with the war and a sense that Serbia was paying the price for the likes of Karadzic and Mladic. Most Serbs wanted the war to end and considered Dayton an acceptable and fair conclusion.

Q: Were you seeing a significant exodus of bright young Serbs out of Serbia?

PERINA: Certainly during the period of the sanctions there was an enormous desire among young people to leave the country. There were no opportunities in Serbia. There was not even a functioning economy. But not that many Serbs managed to leave because it was very difficult. Countries clamped down on granting visas, and Serbia was very isolated. There were not even international flights from Belgrade. Getting out was a real challenge, even for non-Serbs.

Q: How soon were the sanctions lifted after Dayton?

PERINA: The process of lifting sanctions started right away but it took some time. Lifting economic sanctions is actually not an easy task. In the U.S., it takes a Presidential directive to both impose and lift economic sanctions. Political sanctions are easier to work with. But changes in Serbia were noticeable right away. Within a few months, the economy was remarkably normalized. What did not change was what we called the “outer wall of sanctions,” the sanctions we had decided to retain because of the Kosovo issue. These were mainly political sanctions

related to recognition of Serbia-Montenegro, exchanging ambassadors and so on. They were largely symbolic, but Milosevic was furious when he realized they would not be lifted. This was the kind of political stigma he thought he had shaken at Dayton. It was the beginning of a real parting of ways between Milosevic and Holbrooke. It also marked a divergence between the U.S. and most of our European allies. The Europeans were not as concerned with Kosovo as we were and did not support the outer wall of sanctions. Most of them rushed to recognition and full normalization of diplomatic ties with Serbia. Unfortunately, this sent just the wrong message to the Kosovar Albanians.

Q: How did the Kosovar Albanians react to Dayton?

PERINA: They were of course disappointed that Dayton had done nothing to address their problems. Suddenly everyone was rejoicing that peace had returned to former Yugoslavia but Kosovo seemed to be forgotten. This was greatly damaging to Rugova's advocacy of non-violent resistance to Serb domination. Some Albanians were saying that precisely the lack of violence in Kosovo made it possible for Europeans to forget the issue. That is why we felt it essential to maintain this outer wall of sanctions. It was a message to Milosevic but also to the Kosovar Albanians that we had not forgotten Kosovo. But it was not enough. It was in this period after Dayton that some of the Kosovar Albanians decided they had to rely more on themselves and started building the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), which about a year later took everyone by surprise when suddenly the Albanians had an army.

Q: What was the role of Albania proper in all of this?

PERINA: I can't really say definitively but I think it was not large. The Albanian Albanians were having a lot of domestic problems, both political and economic. In many ways, the Kosovar Albanians were wealthier and better off than the Albanian ones. There was also a certain rivalry between Albanian leaders in Albania and Kosovo, almost a love-hate relationship. I think all of this minimized the role that Tirana played.

Q: I must say again, as an old hand in the area, I was surprised in later news footage how good Kosovo looked compared to how I remembered it.

PERINA: There was a legacy of better times in Yugoslavia. It was also my impression that the Kosovar Albanians coped with the international sanctions better than the Serbs. The borders of Kosovo were more porous to allow imports, and the Albanians have a reputation of being more mercantile. Even Serbs would tell me during the sanctions that anything could be obtained at the Kosovo open-air market. I don't know if there is any empirical data, but many people believed that the Kosovar Albanians were better off economically under the sanctions than the Serbs. Politically, of course, it was the reverse. The Serbs were in charge, and any Albanian who raised his head was quickly beaten down.

WILLIAM P. POPE
Coordinator, Interagency Committee to Enforce Sanctions on Yugoslavia

Washington, DC (1994-1995)

Mr. Pope was born and raised in Virginia and educated at the University of Virginia. After serving in both the US Army and the US Navy, he joined the Foreign Service in 1974. Mr. Pope served several tours in the State Department in Washington, dealing, notably, with Counterterrorism. His overseas posts include Gaborone, Zagreb, Belgrade, Paris, Pretoria, Rome, and the Hague, serving as Deputy Chief of Mission in the latter two embassies. Mr. Pope was interviewed in 2006 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: Well then, you left there in-

POPE: Well actually it was in '94 because I then unexpectedly, I still don't know how it happened, I got a call one day to go see Leon Fuerth. And I knew that name but I'd never met him. He was the National Security Advisor to Vice President Gore. And I had no idea why. I went over there and he was sitting there and he had a huge stack of papers on his desk and he had a file. He said it says here you served in Yugoslavia. And I answered, yes, I have. And he said well then you're hired. And I asked but for what? I didn't bid on it. Well you're hired anyway to be the Coordinator, the chairman of this interagency coordinating committee to enforce sanctions on Yugoslavia. The coordinating committee was interagency inside the United States because there were quite a few parts of the U.S. Government involved in enforcing sanctions against Milosevic. So I was surprised that I didn't know it, but I said yes. And it was only a one-year assignment, it was sort of mid-'94 to mid-'95, and it was interesting as could be.

Q: '94, mid-'94 when you took it, what was the situation in the former Yugoslavia?

POPE: Well, it was not good. There were already problems in Bosnia in particular and others declaring independence and there had been shelling, shelling of Dubrovnik and the whole situation. I don't quite remember the timeline of it but it was coming apart in ways that I didn't imagine would happen.

Q: Were Serbia and Croatia were kind of at war?

POPE: They were. They were at war, but also you had huge problems over Bosnia and it was a very unfortunate situation. It was very heartbreaking for me because I liked Yugoslavia and the people out there. But it was felt that the sanctions needed to be squeezed down to the maximum possible to try to avoid further bloodshed. And there was an international effort that was headquartered out of Brussels to enforce international sanctions around Serbia to prevent oil getting in, oil and fuel products getting in, and exports going out. And blocking the exports going out was fairly easy because they had bulk exports like grain and they basically just pulled blockages across the railroad tracks and sent a gunboat up the Danube and that did it. Because in the early days I was told a story, and this was before I got on this but by somebody who'd been doing these sanctions earlier, that at the very beginning of it had one of the sanctions monitors standing on the shore. It sounds apocryphal, I don't know, but it makes a good story. Standing on the shore of the Danube at the border coming out of Serbia, out of Yugoslavia, and the sanctions monitor sees this barge coming down loaded with grain and is yelling stop, it's prohibited, you

can't, can you hear me? Stop. And it just keeps going and goes right on up. And this was bringing money into Milosevic's coffers, of course. And so then they sent a gunboat up, the Italians sent a boat with a gun and that stopped it and they blocked off the railroads. But of course oil products were still coming in and especially from Albania across Montenegro, Lake Shkoder there.

And what we had was an interagency committee working with Customs and Defense and CIA and I've forgotten who all exactly but all the agencies on that committee were to coordinate our piece of helping the larger international coordinating group. And it was really interesting. And we were basically to squeeze Milosevic to the point where he agreed to go to Dayton and then of course it was up to Holbrooke whatever deal was negotiated there. And we did.

Q: During this time that you were doing this coordinating between '94 and '95, what were the issues that you were particularly dealing with? Because you were doing the internal and were these people within the United States or?

POPE: Both. Even though I was physically sitting in the State Department, we were reporting to the foreign policy advisor of the Vice President who was in charge of this government effort, Leon Fuerth. And there apparently was a story about how that happened, too, and it was long before my time, and I don't know exactly, it was an odd arrangement but that was the arrangement. And we had enough agencies inside the house, basically, involved in this that we needed some kind of a little coordinating cell, a coordinating nucleus. That was our group.

Q: You're talking about Commerce, Treasury, Pentagon. I mean, all the usual.

POPE: Yes, that's right. And Customs. And so there were enough. We probably had a dozen agencies involved and we were the coordinating nucleus physically sitting in State but reporting to the White House. At the same time, we were the principal link with the organization in Brussels that was under the EU. And there was a retired Italian ambassador who was the head of this large organization. We met a couple of times a year in Plenary in Brussels, the various countries involved in the sanctions effort, trying to close it off and squeeze it down.

Q: Well now this had no connection, I take it, to the cutting off of arms to Bosnia and to all?

POPE: No.

Q: Because that was a whole different thing.

POPE: Yes.

Q: This was strictly on Serbia.

POPE: Yes. This was economic sanctions on Serbia and the Bosnian Serbs.

Q: How did you distinguish between the Bosnian Serbs and the other Bosnians? In other words, how could you single out one group and, you know, deprive them of stuff that the regular

Bosniaks needed?

POPE: Well, we couldn't always. But, the country was divided basically at that point into three rather clear regions. And on your map here I don't think I could exactly draw it up but we knew the line not only included Serbia and Montenegro but it also went out here, the line we were trying to enforce, went out here in eastern-

Q: Yes, I'm talking around the, I guess the green and that area.

POPE: Yes, exactly. And to the extent we could, we were trying to also keep- because that would have been the same as letting Milosevic have it. If you had had an unrestricted flow of oil products, for example, petroleum products into that eastern part of Bosnia. This part over in here. So, we did a good job. For example, there was a big flow of oil by small scale smugglers, across right here from Albania across into Montenegro. Sometimes they would be literally carrying in small amounts no bigger than a trash can. But barges filled with hundreds of those and shoving off in the night going across the lake and you could see the tracks going down, you could see the little beach area on the edge all covered with oil, like an oil spill. And part of it was putting pressure on the government in Albania, in Tirana, to try to seal that off, that was the weak part right there because there were ships along here enforcing this.

Q: Well one of the problems in Albania at the time was the region didn't have much of a government, did they?

POPE: Not much. Not much of a government, but we were putting the pressure on. I traveled out there and met with them, went up to that border to see it myself, to see the smuggling and it was really blatant. I think that the Director of Customs got fired and the Customs Director for that region got fired and I think they began to actually crack down on it.

Q: How about Romania? I mean, Romania's got oil and I would think that there would be a lot of smuggling that.

POPE: Not to my recollection. To my recollection the Romanians were quite cooperative. There probably was some across the river but it wasn't, it certainly was not sanctioned or abetted in any way. I think to the extent they could, they cracked down on it and Hungary and the Croats, everybody. I think the real, the main weak point was Albania there. For whatever reason, Milosevic decided to go to Dayton. And I think our efforts were at least some part of it.

Q: How did you find the European powers, this didn't really cut into any great economic interests of powers. I mean, nobody was making money out of Serbia so I take it that it would have been, you know, good unanimity as far as what your goal was.

POPE: As far as I could tell. I don't remember problems. I mean, sometimes different ones of us wouldn't come up with as many monitors as the chairman wanted or with a boat exactly when it was supposed to be there or something, those kind of administrative problems but not a policy.

Q: How did you find the White House supervision? Was there much interest or sort of given the

job and go ahead and do it?

POPE: There was a lot of interest, at least on the part of Leon Fuerth. I don't know about the Vice President and the President exactly, but Leon Fuerth was very interested, and I sent him regular reports. He was available when I needed to see him, which wasn't very often. This was not a high-policy effort. This was a technical, more of a coordination effort. We got our marching orders, and we made sure everybody was on the same page.

Q: As an old Yugoslav hand, which got you into this, were you picking up any, at this point, the discontent of the lack of the United States doing something in Bosnia? You know, we had some people who resigned later on, sort of Bosnia was taking a terrible beating by the Serbs and we were basically staying out of it. Did you get any of that feeling?

POPE: I don't remember. Maybe. As I said, I did this for only one year and it was one of these years where you plunged in and very intensively met everybody and coordinated and flew off to Brussels. I just don't remember that. I guess I was so immersed in the minutiae of what I was doing.

RICHARD M. MILES

Chief of Mission

Belgrade (1996-1999)

Ambassador Miles was born in Arkansas in 1937. He earned an associate degree from Bakersfield College, Bachelor's degree from University of California, Berkeley and a master's degree from Indiana University. He joined the Foreign service in 1966. His overseas posts include Oslo, Belgrade, Moscow, Leningrad, Berlin, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria and Georgia. Ambassador Miles was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

MILES: Well, anyhow, as a reward for that Strobe said, I would like to send you to Belgrade. You won't be the Ambassador, but you've already got the title so you don't need to worry about that. Now, neither the European countries nor the United States had ambassadors in Belgrade at that time, to show our displeasure with the Yugoslav regime. We all had "Chiefs of Mission." "And," he went on, "You will live in the Ambassador's house, you will get the Ambassador's car, you will get the Ambassador's pay, so it will be a good assignment for you. And our relationship is so bad that we're not sending anyone there on official visits; it will be pretty rare when you will be bothered by that. You've been to Serbia before, we know you can handle Milosevic as well as anyone and we think it's a good assignment for you." And I agreed; I thought it was a great assignment. I was happy to go back even with the bad relationship between our two countries.

And so I went back to Belgrade, replaced Rudy Perina, who had been there as Chief of Mission.

Q: Yes, I've been interviewing him.

MILES: Yes, good.

Q: You were there from when to when?

MILES: I was there from '96 to '99. I left in '99 on the day the NATO bombing started so I saw a lot happen in those three years.

It turned out to be a very difficult assignment. It was good to be back in Serbia though. I had lived there six years previously, on two different tours and my wife Sharon and I, my whole family really, always liked Serbia. We liked the people and we had real friends there. We liked the Serbian language: Sharon and I had pretty good Serbian. And so it was pleasant to be back.

When I say "Serbia" or "Yugoslavia" I mean Serbia and Montenegro. That is all there was at that time due to the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina had all become independent states, so in the period 1996-1999 we are really talking about Serbia and Montenegro and of course Kosovo as part of Serbia. Technically, this entity was called the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia or "the FRY"—pronounced as in French fries.

I had a pretty good Embassy team. The administrative officer was a woman named Pat Moller who I really liked. She later went off to be DCM in Yerevan, Armenia, and when, in 2002, I got an assignment to Georgia I called her up and asked if she would be willing to be DCM twice and go to Georgia with me because I liked her organizational abilities. So she agreed to do it; she was very kind to do it. And I was afraid, you know: it's kind of dangerous being DCM twice and I was afraid that that might not be a wise career move for her, glad as I was to get her. But in the end she was made Ambassador in Bujumbura, and she is out there now. We had an excellent Defense Attaché named Bill Fischer who because of his really quite heroic work, especially as we were getting ready to go to war, went way beyond the boundaries that the Defense Intelligence Agency would like to have set for him and did a lot of almost OSS-World War II type work. And I was able with some effort to get him into the Attaché Hall of Fame a few years later. It's basically reserved for admirals and generals who had been in the intelligence field, but he did such excellent work that I put in a strong recommendation for him. It was rejected the first year and they only meet every two years to invite people into it and I raised holy bloody hell when he was rejected; I just made a pest of myself, submitted his name again and basically I said, "If Colonel Fischer doesn't get into your Attaché Hall of Fame I don't understand why you have the organization in the first place." And I guess they were embarrassed or they just wanted to get me off their back or whatever. Anyhow they finally took a serious look at his qualifications and so he was brought in two years later. It's quite an honor, actually, but if anyone deserved it, Bill Fischer did.

Well, I remember distinctly my first meeting with Milosevic. I had known him before when I was there from '84 to '87, when he was a rising Communist Party official, League of Communists in Yugoslavia, is what they called it, and also was with the bank at that time, Beogradska Banka, and the ambassadors used to call on him often. He obviously was a charismatic person and very intelligent, was considered to be pro-Western, was considered to be

a pragmatic technocrat. To be blunt, and I'm not doing this with hindsight or to make myself look good, but I was always suspicious of Milosevic and I thought that the Americans, that is to say our ambassadors, were sucking up to him a little bit too much.

In any case, when I met him almost the same day I arrived in 1996, he was on the grounds of his home in Belgrade entertaining some of the officials from Republika Srpska, the Serbian part of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Q: We're talking about after the Dayton Accords?

MILES: Right after the Dayton Accords.

Q: This is tape eight, side one, with Dick Miles. Yes.

MILES: Yes. The Dayton Accords were signed in 1995 and I was out there in 1996. So it was fairly close after the signing of the Dayton Accords and the establishment of the political and security arrangements for Bosnia and Herzegovina. So anyhow, the Republic of Serbia leadership was there; they were getting ready to leave actually, we just shook hands and said hello. And then I was introduced, in a way, since I already knew him, to Milosevic and—now, Milosevic is very clever, and he said, and his English is impeccable—he loved to speak English and he used to use idioms and swear words quite correctly, and he understood Americans and the West very well. He had lived in New York for a while as a banker and he was just a very intelligent man. And he said, “Now tell me, your custom in the State Department is that once you are an ambassador, you are always to be called “Ambassador,” is that not correct?” And I said, “Well, yes, Mr. President, it is, but I choose not to be called “Ambassador” here because we’ve kept our diplomatic representation at what we call the Chief of Mission level so I should be called ‘Chief of Mission’.” And he said, “Well, I shall call you Ambassador.” And I protested that and he did call me “Ambassador” for a few times and I kept protesting and then what happened was—it was not a bad compromise actually. When they would do the releases for the press, because they always did that, there would be “Ambassador comma Chief of Mission Miles called on President Milosevic”, blah, blah. So that was an acceptable compromise. By the way, shortly after the signing of the Dayton Accords, the European countries all pretty much raised their diplomatic representation to the ambassador level. I believe we were the last ones to hold out.

Q: Well, as we kept it—'96, what was the situation in Serbia? Montenegro?

MILES: Well, Montenegro was puttering along pretty well on its own. The Serbs, who do have almost 50 percent of the population in Montenegro, were not particularly restless, and while some did look to Belgrade for leadership, others looked to the Montenegrin capital, Podgorica, for leadership. There was a little bit of a power struggle down there between a fellow named Bulatovic and the Montenegrin President named Djukanovic and they jockeyed back and forth between the prime minister positions for a while, and Milosevic would try to court Djukanovic but he also was favoring Mr. Bulatovic, who was more loyal to him than Djukanovic was. But in Montenegro, happily, this internecine political struggle never involved civil conflict or violence with a few exceptions. There were some thugs that were occasionally activated during election

times and they would create a bit of a fuss down there but in essence Montenegro was left to be Montenegro.

I spent a fair amount of time down there because it always had been an interesting place, not to mention a beautiful place. And it had its own church down there as well, with a bishop, and I liked the bishop. And they had taken in a number of IDPs [internally displaced persons]—Albanians from Kosovo, plus they had a small Albanian population of their own. So Montenegro was genuinely interesting for us.

Well anyhow, this was—it was a quiet time in 1996. You know, when I went, Strobe had told me that we had such bad relations that nothing much was going to happen, I was there just to keep an eye on things. “It’s an unstable situation and it will be good to have a pair of trained eyes and ears out there,” he said. “So basically we just want you to stay alert, stay out of trouble, don’t say or do anything stupid, and tell us what’s going on.” And for about a year that’s what I did. There was an opposition to Milosevic, some very brave students and others who would conduct demonstrations against him and so on. It seemed in retrospect that there was just a constant stream of elections of various sorts, to the parliament or bi-elections or municipal elections or whatever the hell; it just seemed like I was constantly talking to candidates and encouraging a democratic election process, which was not always easy because it certainly was an authoritarian state. It was not exactly a dictatorship although it could turn ugly from time to time and I’ll give some examples of that as we speak. But it had certain democratic overtones; there was a fairly free media, for example—TV, radio and certainly the print media—and anyone could listen to overseas broadcasts or buy overseas publications.

Q: Was there sort of a—wasn’t there an anti-government radio?

MILES: Radio B-92, yes. It was quite outspoken and while they had difficulties from time to time they nonetheless survived. We provided a little assistance in the form of training and that kind of thing, exchange visits; more to encourage them than anything else. And they survived right up until the war broke out. So again, it was, you know, it was certainly not a democratic state. Authoritarian would be the word I would use. And it did have some democratic overtones. Most people could get a passport and travel abroad and so forth. And tourists could come and did still come now that the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina was over.

Because of the war we were paying a degree of attention to Milosevic. I think it’s an accepted fact that the peace agreements in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Dayton Accords, absolutely could not have been signed without Milosevic’s cooperation and his assistance. The leaders in the various Western capitals fretted over his behavior and where he might go with the power which he had acquired but they also gave him his due for having been useful and helpful in bringing about the Dayton Accords. I hadn’t been involved in the Dayton Accords process but I had read a lot about it and I talked to people who were involved in it and I think that Milosevic did deserve considerable credit for the successful conclusion of those negotiations.

Q: In talking to Rudy Perina—this was before you—he said that Milosevic really thought that he would win back, I’d say, world acceptance because he played such a role there and felt he—everything would be fine and it wasn’t.

MILES: Well, he did win a degree of acceptance. I indicated that the Western countries pretty much down the line, with the exception of the United States, raised the level of their representation to that of ambassador. Again, there weren't a great many visits by important people but there were some. I don't think at that time that the European countries considered Serbia-Montenegro, that is to say Yugoslavia, as a pariah state as they did later. So in a way he did win back a degree of acceptance. And there was no talk really of war crimes at that time against Milosevic. There was an interest in Mr. Mladic and—

Q: And Karadzic.

MILES: And Karadzic.

Q: Were they considered to be hanging around in Serbia?

MILES: At that time the general feeling was that they were resident in Republika Srpska and we knew that Mladic especially had come to Belgrade from time to time and I would make inquiries about that. And we heard—we never proved it, not to my satisfaction—that Mladic had been spending some time in Montenegro and I directly asked President Djukanovic if that was true and if it was true and he was still there, or if he were to return, we would appreciate Djukanovic's cooperation in helping us to apprehend him. And Djukanovic, I believe, lied through his teeth and said, no, he hadn't been; that he, Djukanovic, had made inquiries and Mladic had not been in Montenegro. My own belief is that he had been in Montenegro.

Well, anyhow, that was fairly low key at that point. There was a handful of Yugoslav army officers who had been indicted by the Hague Tribunal, seven of them to be precise, for some atrocities that had allegedly been committed and we did try very hard to get the then-Yugoslav government to turn them over. In the end they were turned over but I don't recall if they were ever turned over in Milosevic's time or if that came after Milosevic was ousted and the more democratic Serb government took power. In any case they are at The Hague now. But otherwise, the general feeling was Mladic and Karadzic, both of whom had been indicted, were over in Republika Srpska. While Mr. Milosevic had a lot of influence over there it was not his legal, political responsibility to apprehend them and turn them over. And in fact, I to this day don't understand why the allied forces there in Bosnia and Herzegovina and especially in Republika Srpska could not have found and apprehended those fellows.

Q: One gets a little bit suspicious in that the French more or less had control of the area and the French seemed always to play, certainly in those days, a rather devious game.

MILES: I wouldn't single the French out. I don't think any of the allied powers was interested in stirring up the people over there and maybe setting the civil war off again. At the least arresting Karadzic or Mladic would have raised the threat level to our troops there.

Q: When you got there in '96, what was the situation in Kosovo?

MILES: I used to spend a lot of time in Kosovo when I was there on my first tour, '70 to '73, and also my second tour, '84 to '87. I was always interested in Kosovo and I always felt that it was

Kosovo that was the fracture point in the Yugoslav system. I underestimated the Croat and Slovenian nationalist feeling as I think almost all of us did and I just didn't see the fracture lines in Bosnia and Herzegovina, although historically those fractures had been there going way back before World War II. But we underestimated the strength of nationalist feeling in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The various Yugoslav governments didn't make that mistake and we should have paid more attention to their concerns. We knew that the Croat-Serb problems and the continuing difficulties dating from at least World War I and especially World War II were there. But these problems were like an old wound; in Bosnia and Herzegovina we thought those differences had been resolved basically. There was freedom for the Muslim population, they could worship freely and we just frankly underestimated the problems in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Anyhow, in Kosovo, it was quite clear that this was a very troubled area. And by the time I got back there in 1996, Milosevic had used the Kosovo-Serb tension and fears and hatreds, fears more than hatreds, to vault into power.

One of the first things I did when I arrived was to call on the Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Pavle. I had known him before and I always respected him, and I still do respect him. Pavle is something of a nationalist; he had spent many years as a clergyman in Kosovo itself and so he had a strong feeling for Kosovo and the church property there and the monasteries which go back a thousand years.

Q: They've got some beautiful monasteries.

MILES: Yes. I mean, Kosovo means a lot to Serbs and it's an important part of their history and religious heritage.

So the first person I called on was Pavle rather than Milosevic; not terribly diplomatic but I wasn't feeling particularly diplomatic at that time. And that got around and that made a good impression, I think, on ordinary people—they liked that. Then I called on Milosevic and had a normal relationship with Milosevic. He never said anything about my putting him in symbolic second place after Pavle.

Then I hurried down to Kosovo as soon as I could after I arrived; it's a four hour drive down there and, I tell you, I spent a lot of time on that road. I really owe a great tribute to my driver, Nesa. And he is favorably mentioned and photographed in Warren Zimmerman's book about his time in Yugoslavia. Nesa drove me all over Serbia-Montenegro—day and night and through some dangerous situations. He is the only driver I have ever allowed to carry a pistol. I have never trusted the other drivers to do that. Some wouldn't have wanted to; others did want to and I wouldn't allow them to do it. But Nesa was weapons qualified and had such good common sense that I allowed him to carry a weapon. Happily, he never used it, never even had to draw it.

Well, when I went down to Kosovo I didn't find anything terribly surprising. The Kosovo Albanians had developed an entirely independent and separate system of government. They were raising money from within their own population to support independent schools; they were raising money from the Albanian diaspora, levying a kind of a tax, at times an extorted tax on the Albanian population abroad to help pay hard currency salaries to the Albanian teachers in their independent schools in Kosovo. Albanian non-governmental organizations in Kosovo were

compiling lists of alleged and real human rights violations in the province. With a very few exceptions, all the police in Kosovo were ethnic Serbs.

I remember, it was actually my first visit there, I think, when I called on one of the Albanian human rights oriented non-governmental organizations led by Adem Demaci. Demaci was an older man, quite a nationalist and rather hotheaded. He had spent many years in prison for his beliefs and statements. I got to know him pretty well over the three years and I always was slightly uneasy around him. He was a prickly fellow. But he was also very intelligent and very helpful in some ways. Well, he gave me a long list of over 200 human rights violations, which included everything from being stopped by the police after having gone through a stop sign to police barging into someone's house and rousting everyone out of bed and searching the place and hauling the males off for questioning and so on. So there was everything in that list from soup to nuts.

But then I called on the Serb governor, he was like a presidential representative down there; someone who basically was in charge of the police and the people who maintained public order and a few other things. The writ of the Serb government had shrunk considerably in Kosovo. And I said, "You don't have any ethnic Albanians on the police force now." He said, "Oh, we would love to have them but they won't serve." And I said, "Well, be that as it may, they are not there now and yet you have these human rights violations that are occurring regularly. What mechanism do you have to deal with that?" I said, "For example, in Los Angeles when we had ethnic disturbances we set up a citizens' commission, a Blue Ribbon Commission. Warren Christopher (who in 1996 was the Secretary of State) was the head of the commission that examined the police-civilian relations and they made a number of changes and a review board was set up and so on." I explained all this in some detail and then I said, "What are you doing in that regard?" And he said, "Well, we don't have any human rights violations here so there is nothing to talk about really." And I said, "Well, what would an Albanian do if he had a human rights violation? Where would he go?" And he said, "He could come and see me." I said, "How many Albanians have come to see you in the last two years, let's say?" And he said, "None, because there haven't been any human rights violations." So that was the kind of conversation that you would have. And this was all friendly enough, but the Serb authorities had their line and they were sticking to it and to hell with you as a diplomat and to hell with the Albanian community; it was basically "Let the Albanian community stew in its own juice and we Serbs are not going to help them out in any way whatsoever." Totally divided system, something like apartheid, I guess, in South Africa.

Well, I got to know other Serb representatives in Kosovo. I got to know the Orthodox Bishop down in Prizren, Bishop Artemije. I got to know the Albanian leadership. Dr. Rugova, who was the most revered of the leaders and later became President of Kosovo, although it's not independent even yet. Adam Demaci I mentioned, kind of a firebrand but an interesting firebrand. Mahmut Bakali, who had been Communist Party boss in Kosovo until the Albanian community basically withdrew from all that. Now this was very useful because I found that the Serb authorities never spoke to the Albanian leadership. They may have had a few spies and informers among the Albanians but basically they had no clue what the Albanian community was thinking and doing. And so in a way I became one of the few people who could tell the Albanian community what the Serb leadership was thinking and doing or thinking of doing, if you will,

and vice versa. And that included up to the Milosevic level so sometimes that was useful and sometimes this relationship could be used to help diffuse some situations.

Q: Was there any sign of a formation of the Kosovo Liberation Army, the KLA?

MILES: Not in the first year. The antecedents of the KLA go back a few years, but I remember when the KLA first raised its head publicly and that was in November, December of 1997 and we saw a report in the media of people in Kosovo calling themselves the Kosovo Liberation Army. The Albanian acronym is UCK [*Ustria Clirimtare e Kosoves*]: UCK rather than KLA. KLA is just a translation in English; everyone called it UCK. The “C” is actually a “CH” sound.

Q: Sounds like Ustaši in a way.

MILES: Yes, well. So there were a couple of them who, according to the media, had shown up at a funeral and had had balaclavas over their faces; I don’t recall if they had weapons or not—they may have. They held up their fists as a gesture of defiance. And I told our people, I said that’s a very serious development, we haven’t seen anything like that since 1945-1946, and so we need to absolutely stay on top of this. And I went down and talked to the Albanian leadership about it and they denied any knowledge of this and I said, “Well, according to the media, there was a field of some 4,000 people attending this funeral and here are photographs of these guys, uniforms and all. What do you mean, you don’t know anything about it?” And they said, “Well, we’ll look into it, you know, these are not our people, these must be from outside.” It’s the same bullshit that I used to hear in the civil rights movement in the South, you know—that no one could be from the local area, they all had to be from outside.

Well, anyhow, I took it absolutely seriously and you can bet the Yugoslav authorities were doing the same thing. That appearance in late 1997 was followed by a rapid crescendo of violent acts on the part of people calling themselves UCK. You would have drive-by shootings into police stations. A police station in that part of the world is—you know, you’ve been there—it’s just a little concrete block building with a couple of grubby windows and a small door and it’s a very primitive sort of a building. So when you’d fire into it with small arms or throw a hand grenade up against it or, even worse, fire an RPG-7 into it, you can cause some serious damage and you can kill people. Well, there were repeated incidents of that sort. There were reports of Albanian forest workers being killed by the UCK and the UCK reason for that was, these are people who were being paid by the Serb authorities not just to maintain the forest but to stay on the watch for anyone infiltrating across the border illegally from Albania, and so they were beginning to be systematically picked off by the UCK, just simply shot. And in talking to Rugova and Adam Demaci, who was the de facto leader of the more radical wing of the “legitimate” Albanian political movement down there, I said, you all need to get hold of this situation; you need to issue statements condemning the violence. You can say you condemn violence on anybody’s part—by the government as well as by these hotheads— but your silence indicates that you are tolerant of these acts. And, boy, they wiggled and squirmed; they didn’t want to do make any statement like that. Adam Demaci never did do it; he said basically these young men are the patriots of our nation, they are heroes; I may not condone everything they do but I am not going to issue any statement critical of their action. I mean, he was very blunt about it. Dr. Rugova, who always was a great temporizer, I think that is a noun, said, yes, I understand, but it’s difficult to do, our

political situation is delicate, there are more radical people who could push me out of my position if I take an overly moderate stance or one which might be considered to be pro-Serb but I will consider it. And in the end Dr. Rugova did issue a kind of a mealy mouthed statement along the lines I suggested condemning violence. But I believe he only did it once and he never was willing to repeat it and meanwhile the violence began to grow and to grow. So the Albanian leadership really didn't quite know how to handle these fellows and that was the beginning of the drift toward the violent confrontation with the Serbs which did occur. And I haven't yet described the Serb retaliation and punitive action against the Albanian community, but of course it followed those Albanian acts of violence and from that philosophy of action and reaction came the development of the intolerable situation which we saw in late '98, early '99, which finally caused NATO to go to war and to solve the situation by force.

Q: Were there sort of gangs like Arkan's Tigers or the equivalent doing their thing on the Serbian side?

MILES: Not at first. At first you had action by armed paramilitary units of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the so-called interior troops. Milosevic had recentralized the police forces. Tito had decentralized the police forces so that, until the '90s, you had something like the situation in the United States with the local authorities being the ones who would select the local police chief. Under Tito, there were police organizations at the federal level but they served more as coordinators than anything else. But Milosevic recentralized the police authority. There were local police in cities and towns, of course, but they were part of the Republic of Serbia Ministry of Internal Affairs, which was itself subordinate to the State Ministry of Internal Affairs. We referred to all these police forces by the somewhat generic acronym, MUP, pronounced MOOP. By the way, our military never mastered this pronunciation. They insisted on pronouncing it MUP, like "pup". MUP stood for "*Ministerstvo Unutrasnjih Poslova*" [Ministry of Internal Affairs].

At the same time there was of course the service of state security or SDB [*Sluzba Drzavne Bezbednosti*]. The military had its own counter-espionage service but I don't need to go into all these details. Now, the MUP had something like a small army. They were armed with relatively sophisticated weaponry up to and including vehicles armed with anti-aircraft cannon. The weapons on these vehicles are heavy machine cannon capable of battering down a stone wall or the walls of a house. I had mistakenly, as it turned out, thought that according to the Geneva Convention it was against the rules of war to use such weapons against ground targets. I thought you were supposed to limit them to air targets but Milosevic didn't care for such subtleties even after I had pointed this out to him. Well, I found out after I had left Serbia that I was wrong. There is no such prohibition, but I doubt that Milosevic knew this either so maybe my admonition slowed down the Serb use of these weapons. I don't know.

As part of their arsenal down there the MUP had heavy and light machine guns, they had mortars, they had armored personnel carriers, both track and wheel, and of course the usual range of small arms, pistols and automatic rifles. So they were extremely well equipped and what happened, of course, as the UCK attacks continued and grew, the MUP began to organize itself in a way which I found rather similar to the way in which the German forces had organized themselves to struggle against the Yugoslav partisan movement in World War II. And I suppose

if you are a Serb and you look back in history that would be a model you would tend to follow. But what that meant was you used punitive raids and retaliatory raids as a means of cowing the local population and discouraging them from offering safe haven to UCK bands or to discourage young men from going off from the village and the farm and joining the UCK. And of course the Serb authorities also heightened the patrols along the border and they tried to stop the infiltration coming in from Albania. Now, those were not basically Albanian Albanians that were coming across the border from Albania; they were basically Diaspora Kosovar Albanians who would rally in Albania and then infiltrate across the border with their weaponry which they had bought in the West, including some in America, and including some American-Albanians as far as that goes, and would then join the fight, which grew rapidly. I mean, it was amazing how from virtually a zero beginning in 1997 it became quite widespread in 1998.

Q: Was anything happening from Macedonia?

MILES: No, not particularly. There were some desultory talks going on to resolve a few—seven, I believe—disputed points along the border but these were not really contentious. No, Macedonia was not on anybody's radar screen at that time. They had their own problems down there but, at that time, they were not particularly related to the problems in Kosovo.

Well, you began to have these charges and claims by both sides which were often preposterous, numbers grossly inflated, atrocities real or imagined, and it was difficult for anybody to understand what exactly was going on. It would be like a bunch of civilians trying to understand what was going on behind the lines in World War II Yugoslavia; it would have been damned near impossible unless you were willing to go and join the units that were fighting and even then you would see only one side of it. And so as the situation worsened, Madeleine Albright, by then Secretary of State, became increasingly concerned, and others in Washington became increasingly concerned, and she sent Bob Gelbard out as a special envoy. Bob later became our Ambassador in Indonesia, but I think basically he was a poor choice as special envoy to Milosevic. He didn't know how to handle Milosevic. But, at any rate, he came, he went to Kosovo, he spoke to Milosevic, he tried to figure out what was going on, and then finally, following a somewhat intemperate session with Milosevic, which I guess I don't want to go into detail about here, Milosevic in essence declared him persona non grata and said he wouldn't deal with Bob anymore. He said it in quite earthy language and I would rather not repeat it but that took care of Bob as special envoy.

Q: I'm just trying to understand: here you are—so what was your role? Was this somebody sent in from the State Department on a mission or, I mean, were you superseded or what?

MILES: As the Russians say, "*Da i net*—yes and no." Well, it is often the case in crisis situations that a special envoy will be brought in. I mean, look at Dick Holbrooke resolving the Dayton Accords. So that's not unusual and I didn't have any problem with Bob particularly although, again, I didn't think he had the temperament or the understanding for the situation that he should have had. But he was intelligent and he had background and he had Madeleine Albright's ear and so I didn't have any problem with that. I was with him all the time, hip and thigh, and when he would come, of course, he would have the same kind of conversations I was having. And when he left I was still there to pick up the ball and carry it. So it didn't bother me

to have Bob doing that, but his approach and his attitude, his style, bothered Milosevic to the point where he declared that he wouldn't receive him anymore. And then Dick Holbrooke was brought in and he at least had had some rapport with Milosevic from the Dayton negotiations, he could handle Milosevic and, of course, Dick was no stranger to crisis situations and difficult negotiations.

So Dick came in. He actually brought Gelbard with him on the first visit as a kind of a face saving gesture for Bob and Milosevic was tolerably polite to him and then Bob disappeared from the scene and was never seen in Belgrade again. And Dick Holbrooke stuck with it until virtually the day the bombing started, and he was excellent. Dick is a creative genius with superhuman energy and despite the fact that he had an infected foot during the entire time—I mean, it was driving him nuts—he performed, I thought, heroically in this effort with a little team that he had developed, some people from the NSC and from the State Department and from the Pentagon. George Casey, who later was in Iraq, was a one-star general then. He came along. We used to kid George that Dick was bringing him along just so he could get those little airplanes from the military to be able to fly in and out of Kosovo rather than driving down. But, actually, George was a great asset; George paid attention to what was going on and he learned a lot, I think, from being in that situation and from being exposed to Dick and the rest of us as we grappled with the situation.

Well, Dick had several good ideas in addition to trying to talk sense into both the Albanian leadership—not including the UCK at first—and also the Yugoslav and Serb leadership; that is, mostly Milosevic. I don't remember the exact sequence of events, but when I went there in the summer of 1996, Milosevic was President of the Republic of Serbia and while I was there he decided he would rather be President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, such as it was at that point, Serbia-Montenegro, basically, and quickly performed the political maneuvers necessary to enable him to accomplish that. I'll skip over the internal political maneuvering that went on at that time, but, in the end, Milan Milutinovic became the President of the Republic of Serbia, and Djukanovic, as I indicated, was down in Montenegro, and so, after Dick came on the scene, we dealt primarily with Milosevic, Milutinovic, the Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Nikola Sainovic, and the appropriate generals from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and from the military, the Yugoslav military—and, of course, with the Kosovar Albanian leadership.

Dick had several really excellent ideas, one of which, I think, may have been unique—at least I can't think of an exact precedent for it. In order to help sort fact from fiction in these constant charges and countercharges and allegations and excuses and so on, an international corps of diplomatic observers—the Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission [KDOM]—was formed. It was a free-standing organization, under the vague auspices of a group of countries called the Contact Group. KDOM was reasonably large, eventually growing to between 800 and 1000 personnel divided into national units. So there was an American unit which had about 200 people in it, a British unit, a Russian unit, a German unit, an Italian unit and so forth, the French maybe, I don't recall exactly—I think the French had a unit. Housed separately and loosely coordinated both in the field through regular meetings of the leaders of the various units but also in Belgrade by weekly meetings of the appropriate ambassadors of the countries who had units in the field. The officers themselves, at least as far as the American unit went, were a combination of serving

military officers, serving Foreign Service officers, diplomats and a few spooks and other civilians of various sorts. I know it sounds Rube Goldbergish but it actually worked well. We assembled a rather large fleet of armored vehicles, getting from the British some armored Land Rovers from their operations in Northern Ireland. These had the unfortunate design flaw that when you were sealed up inside, the ventilators would suck the exhaust smoke back up into the vehicle. I don't know what those poor Brits did up in Northern Ireland but our people down in Kosovo, which is much warmer, of course, learned that there was no way they could drive around in those things all buttoned up; they had to keep the vents open to be able to breathe. And we got a few vehicles from the American Army and I remember many discussions that I had on the phone with Wes Clark's deputy, Admiral Abbott, and with others trying to pry these armored vehicles and other things out of the American military inventories.

These were exciting times and I remember when we first kicked it off. Dick was not there at that moment, but we had an agreed upon date when we would begin the first patrol of these independent units and the Russian Ambassador and I were there and a few other ambassadors but there was a lot of emphasis on the Russians and the Americans working together and so the Russian Ambassador and I got into one of the American armored Land Rovers; we had my flag on one fender and his flag on the other fender and we went off on kind of a Potemkin Village-type patrol, going up through Serbian checkpoints and then on down to a UCK checkpoint and then back, followed by at least 100 TV and print media people and it all made magnificent PR, the Americans and the Russians working together to try to help resolve this important issue.

Well, in the context of its limited goals, the KDOM worked fairly well. It brought some sense of reality to what was happening and began to provide us with some reasonably accurate figures of numbers of fighters and of who controlled what parts of the territory and so on because by now the UCK had basically denied entry into certain parts of Kosovo to the MUP forces or any other Serbian forces; they were operating what amounts to a Free Kosovo territory. But the KDOM people could, in theory, go in and out of these areas and try to keep an eye on what was going on and try to evaluate it. So it was very valuable. But they were unarmed and they had to back away from any kind of a confrontation. They sometimes served a role in getting two sides to back off and avoid shooting at each other. Sometimes they couldn't and sometimes there was shooting as a result despite their best efforts. I think the real miracle was that no one from KDOM was seriously hurt or injured during the several months of its existence. But in the end it proved inadequate for the situation, too small, too diffuse. It lacked a central reporting authority; individual country units reported back to their own countries. They were, in a sense, coordinated by the appropriate ambassadors in Belgrade but that is where the reports basically ended; they either ended in Belgrade with the ambassadors or in the various capitals where they were not necessarily shared with anybody. And, due to the lack of a real command structure, it was difficult to see how the numbers could be ramped up to more than the 800 to 1000 that they had.

Well, things continued to deteriorate and Dick's second idea, which was also a good one, was, let's have a full court press by the OSCE to do a job similar to that which had been performed by KDOM. KDOM will leave, will go out of business, but OSCE will muster eventually up to 2000 observers with more sophisticated vehicles, still unarmed, but with a unified command structure and a more sophisticated reporting system. Reports will go up to the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna. The Contact Group ambassadors could stay in touch, could go down and visit Kosovo

could continue to have their meetings in Belgrade. The head of this organization, called the Kosovo Verification Mission, KVM, was American Ambassador, retired, Bill Walker and he would meet periodically with the Contact Group ambassadors in Belgrade.

Q: Bill Walker?

MILES: That's right.

Q: I have interviewed Bill.

MILES: Okay. Well, he probably talked to you about this.

Q: Yes, but I'd like to get your perspective of this.

MILES: Yes. Well, it also worked quite well; it was more effective than the KDOM because of its superior staffing and more centralized and weightier authority, but it had the same limitations, that people were not armed, they were not there to prevent hostilities, they were there to help limit them as best they could and then to back out of the way and to observe and to report; that was their function and they did that very well. But in the end that proved inadequate also and so we moved closer and closer toward war, and I'll talk a little more about that.

Bill and some of his people were on the scene of the Racak massacre in January 1999. Serbs had gunned down a significant number of Albanians and had left the bodies all tangled together in a shallow ravine near the village of Racak. The TV was there with Bill and so he was shown on TV knee-deep in bodies, and announcing to the media his outrage and his belief that these were Serb forces who had mowed down these Albanian boys and men. I would probably have done the same thing if I had been in Bill's position but it was rather heady stuff, a little bit intemperate, to do that on the spot rather than try to investigate it in a more calm way. We had excellent forensic scientists coming out of Sweden leading burial site teams and crime scene investigation experts to help to determine what had happened; what kind of weapons were involved; did it look like it was systematic execution or the results of a fight; had bodies been dragged into a central place from different fighting positions or what. So there was a precedent for more scientific examination of the scene before making such declarations. But I think Bill's temper, his outrage, had reached its breaking point.

Q: Well, sometimes one gets too damned careful. You know, I mean, when an outrage is an outrage it's probably just, you know, to make an overly cold-blooded report, I mean, it's—

MILES: Well, I agree. But anyhow, the way in which it was done, announcing it to the media and so on, right on the spot, limited Walker's and the OSCE mission's influence with Milosevic; KVM never quite recovered from that. And anyhow, we went to war shortly after that. I don't recall exactly when the Racak massacre occurred; I believe it was in early '99.

Q: Well, back to Serbia, not the Kosovo-Serbian thing—the rest of Serbia. What was happening during this period? I mean, were there anti-Milosevic forces? I think this was when they were demonstrating in Republican Square and all that sort of thing.

MILES: There was a rather well organized democratic opposition, not entirely united, but not as disunited as some of the opposition that you see these days in Georgia, for example, or in Azerbaijan. It was much more united than that. So you had figures like Vojislav Kostunica who is Prime Minister of Serbia today; Zoran Djindjic, with his own party, who was later assassinated; Vesna Pesic; Vuk Draskovic, who I believe is still the Foreign Minister; and others as well, not to mention the students. And they were all conducting quite frequent demonstrations against Milosevic but they weren't doing it so much over outrages that were occurring in Kosovo. In fact, Vuk Draskovic back in the 1980s had been one of the hotheads calling for greater Serbian action to forestall increased Albanian nationalism in Kosovo. So don't think that just because they were very vigorous opponents of Milosevic that they were necessarily opposing his policy in Kosovo. I think some of them didn't like the bloodshed in Kosovo, but Milosevic's handling of the Kosovo situation was not a battle which they chose to take on. So the opposition to Milosevic focused more on his undemocratic rule, on the negative role of his wife who did exercise a degree of political influence, and other factors.

Q: Yes, what about Milosevic's wife during this time?

MILES: Well, she was a political figure in her own right. She also had a newspaper and magazine column where she would express her somewhat naïve thoughts about this or that. The conventional wisdom was that she pushed Milosevic to the left and toward a harsher line than he sometimes might be willing to take. I don't know whether that's true or not. I'm about the only Western diplomat in the period, '96 to '99, who was able to meet with her and have an interview with her, and I only accomplished this by bullying the leadership of her party and by leaning on Milosevic a little bit. And by the way, it was very clear that Milosevic and his wife had a very close relationship, and when I would be in some close conversation with Milosevic, he would sometimes very fondly mention his wife. He had her picture on his desk; he never, ever criticized her, at least not in my presence. And we know from other sources how close her relationship with him was; it was almost obsessive in a way.

Well, in any case, after it became clear that I was not going to be allowed to meet Mira Markovic, I said to the people in her party that unless I am able to call on her the way I have called on every other single person in Serbia and Montenegro of any significance, we will declare her and her party, if you will, *persona non grata*. There will be no more invitations to Embassy events, there will be no trips to America, we'll discourage American visitors from calling on other members of her party. You will just find us closed off to you and that will remain in effect until I am able to have a meeting with her and have a chat with her. And, I added, I'm not going to be bothering her every 15 minutes about this, but it's ridiculous that I'm representing U.S. interests in this country and here this woman is with enormous influence and playing a public role and I am not allowed to see her.

Well, several months went by to no avail and we did in fact send the whole pack of them to Coventry and then, finally, I was told okay, you can come and meet with Mira Markovic. And so I took an Embassy officer along and went down to the party office building. I hadn't talked to this woman for 15 minutes before I realized that she was suffering from rather severe mental illness and was not a normal person. And so I decided, well, okay, I'm probably never going to

call on this woman again and frankly there probably isn't a whole lot of sense in trying to call on her again but I'll make the most of this occasion. And so I stayed there for two hours and talked about every damned thing that I could think of that might be of interest to people back in Washington. And all I ever got from her in those two hours was, "You are exaggerating the situation. You don't understand our situation. Things aren't as you believe they are. You must be patient. We know how to handle these situations better than you; this is our country. We appreciate your concern but you shouldn't be so concerned." In other words, it was just one platitude after another and mixed in with a lot of Marxist-Leninist claptrap about how in Yugoslavia the workers own the means of production and we don't have the capitalist system here, we allow small enterprise and small scale agriculture but the people themselves hold the major assets and they are very happy with that, and so on and so on and so on. I just never got anywhere with her on any subject whatsoever and I tried every subject known to man except her family; I stayed away from that. The report made very interesting reading for people back in Washington. I expect it made up the entire dossier on Mira Markovic because there was probably nothing else in that folder but newspaper clippings and there was never anything else in it after that either because I never bothered to call on her after that. And she remained stalwart up until the end and even, as far as we know from the media, encouraged his resistance up until the moment when they came to haul him away to jail.

Q: What was happening inside Serbia? Were there gangs, corruption, that sort of thing going on?

MILES: There were some criminal elements but only those that were tolerated by the authorities. There were no significant criminal elements that I was aware of that were not condoned by the authorities. It was that kind of a state. A lot of business was being done in a semi-legal fashion, as you can imagine, through cronyism and state contracts and lack of objective, transparent bidding and that sort of thing.

Since we are on the subject of crime, I should mention the car-jacking of my wife, Sharon. Sharon worked for the International Organization for Migration located in downtown Belgrade. She was driving home one day and had, most unfortunately, left the car doors unlocked—a security no-no. We have reconstructed what happened and we think that, when she was stopped at a red light, one of the ubiquitous window washer guys, saw that her doors were unlocked and signaled his accomplice to come and jump in the back seat of the car. This fellow stuck a very large pistol in her side and told her to drive out of town. Now she had her seat belt on and the gunman seemed rather nervous—his hand that held the pistol was shaking—so she was afraid that if she tried to unbuckle the seat belt and make a run for it, she would be shot right where she was. Ditto, trying to crash into something. Anyhow, on the highway out of town she pretended to be an addled, stereotypical woman driver, driving erratically, saying, quite falsely, that she was not used to driving on the highway, that her husband only allowed her to drive back and forth to work and so on. In fact, she is a better driver than I am and she loved to drive that BMW 7 series car fast.

By the way, the newspaper accounts were more interested in the BMW 7 than in the car-jacking itself. A "*mocna zver*—powerful beast" one said. That description became a family joke

After a little bit of these theatrics, she pulled over and said, “I can’t do this anymore. You can have the car but I’m leaving.” And she unbuckled her seat belt and got out. That was cool! Well, she not only wasn’t shot, but the fellow gave her her handbag through the window. He took off in one direction and she took off—on foot—in the other. Later he had an armed standoff with a policeman and later yet, after giving the car an amazing number of dings, managed to drive into a ditch and break one of the wheels. He was picked up shortly after that and was tried and sentenced to, as I recall, 15 years in prison. It seems that he had only recently been released from prison after finishing a short term for manslaughter.

When she made her police report she had said that the fellow had a very big pistol. The police were somewhat condescending about that description, but, later, when I was talking to the head of the MUP criminal police about all this, he said, “You know, your wife has very strong nerves—and, by the way, that really was a very big pistol!”

I did create something of a faux pas shortly after I arrived. It’s always been my habit to spend a lot of time on the economic system of a country and so I went off to visit a steel factory south of Belgrade and I didn’t have the sense to realize that because they were in the middle of one of their interminable elections, this one I think was a municipal election, that my appearance at this state-owned steel plant—I mean, you know the system in Yugoslavia. There were no state-owned factories to speak of; they were all run by the workers on behalf of all the other—

Q: A—

MILES: Yes, “worker self-management” they called it.

But anyhow, leaving the ideology aside, it was a state-run factory. And the head of the company was a political appointee, in fact, one of Mira Markovic’s protégées who had no previous experience which enabled him to run this steel factory. He was a very young man who had previously been manager of a shoe factory. And so I went down to the factory and was televised and photographed and I made comments with this political appointee plant manager by my side saying this steel factory seems very efficient and this material would be very useful for construction in Yugoslavia, perhaps could find some export markets abroad, and so on. I think I was careful enough in what I was saying but the timing was terrible and it was taken up by the opposition and echoed even in the United States as a change in U.S. policy which was favoring the Milosevic people at this time of the election. And so this was a big mistake which I never repeated but it was a big mistake at the time.

You didn’t have the Arkans of the world active down in Kosovo at that time. That came really only after the opening of the air war and the unleashing of real military action against the Kosovar Albanians. Prior to the war, you had the MUP itself, the internal troops, but what you didn’t have was the involvement of the Yugoslav army and that is very important for several reasons. One, it denied the Yugoslav authorities the heavy weaponry, the armor—that is to say, the tanks, the self-propelled artillery, the artillery itself beyond mortars, and military aircraft. Milosevic would have liked to have involved the army even though it was more or less unconstitutional to involve the army against internal enemies. But the army, led by General Perisic, who has been indicted by The Hague for alleged war crimes committed during the

Bosnia War, was adamantly opposed to using the army in Kosovo. Perisic, who I think is a very courageous and interesting man, became an important opposition figure to Milosevic and, until he was removed from his position on the eve of the Kosovo War, not only refused to allow the army to be used in those situations but separated himself from Milosevic politically. For example, at a time when Milosevic was locking up student demonstrators, Perisic invited a group of the demonstrators into his office to just have a chat with them to show some solidarity, and then he made a public statement about “These are the young people of the future” and so on. It was really incredibly brave and I’m sure that Milosevic was just furious over that incident. Later, as the UCK activities intensified and the MUP activities intensified as well, the army, under Perisic, did allow itself to provide backup force in Kosovo. Some small scale artillery was deployed and so on. But I do know that General Perisic was trying very hard to stay out of it and the Defense Attaché and I had many extraordinarily interesting conversations with General Perisic and with his Head of Counter-Intelligence, Colonel General Dimitrijevic over the situation. General Perisic was extraordinarily outspoken in his opposition to Milosevic’s activities and to Mira Markovic; she had become something of a *bête noir* for the anti-Milosevic crowd. Really quite interesting conversations.

Well, because of his obvious opposition, Perisic was removed from his position as Chief of the General Staff and was replaced by an odious sycophant, General Ojdanic. General Ojdanic had no qualms about using the VJ [*Vojska Jugoslavije*], the Yugoslav Army, against the Kosovar Albanians, and as a result of the military operations carried out under his authority, he has been sentenced to 15 years imprisonment by the Hague Tribunal. So Perisic was not involved directly during the Kosovo air war but afterwards he became Deputy Prime Minister in the new government in Yugoslavia. He was later indicted and sent to The Hague on charges involving his activity during the war in Bosnia. He’s been released on a temporary basis pending his actual trial. So it shows that The Hague is treating him a little bit differently than they’ve been treating some of the others.

Dick Holbrooke was very good in handling the MUP and the Yugoslav military leadership during the buildup to the war. He understood perfectly the distinctions and the subtleties of the power relationships between them. He never quite got involved with the SDB, the state security service. I probably was the one who had the most contact with the SDB Chief, a fellow named Stanasic, also under indictment at The Hague. Stanasic had blood on his hands; he isn’t a—I’m not trying to present him as an admirable figure. Certainly, he was less admirable than General Perisic. But in his conversations with me and another member of my staff, he was extremely outspoken in expressing his opposition to Milosevic and his intense dislike for Mira Markovic. Now, it’s possible that he was playing me—after all, that was his profession—but, nonetheless, these were almost treasonous conversations that I had with him. Usually there would be no note taker on his part and I wouldn’t usually have a note taker. The Station Chief and I would just be there. We would generally not take notes and we’d try to recreate the conversation afterward in order to have a better flow of ideas and information. But these conversations were just incredible, and this from the head of state security; quite interesting indeed. I don’t know to what extent he was telling us what he thought we wanted to hear but I do know that after a few of these conversations, Milosevic required the head of state security to inform him each time that he was going to receive me and to call him after the meeting and give him a summary of the

conversation. And then, of course, Milosevic did remove him from his position after—it was actually while I was still there and before the air war, so Milosevic clearly didn't trust him.

Q: Well, was there a point as things were developing that you became fairly convinced that the only answer really is going to be war?

MILES: I was never entirely convinced of that but I was certainly convinced that that was what Washington intended, and it was quite clear that Washington's attitude was rather bellicose toward the regime and that Dick's instructions in his dealings with Milosevic were getting increasingly limited and increasingly harsh, I'd say. And so the situation continued to worsen and intensify, and during this time Madeleine Albright herself came out and talked to Milosevic but they didn't have a dialog, it was more of a scolding that she gave him. She hardly allowed him to get a word in edgewise, so that didn't amount to a whole lot. In Dick's case, he tried to have conversations with Milosevic and he tried to work out ways in which the two sides could be separated in Kosovo while efforts were made to find a political solution. And with the help of some bright young people from SP, the policy plans people in the State Department, and from the NSC, and with the addition of yet another special envoy, in this case Ambassador Chris Hill, coming up from Macedonia, because Bill had worked closely with Milosevic during the Dayton process—so we had special envoys all over the place, and we also were able to organize the first meeting in some nine years between Dr. Rugova and a few other of the Kosovar-Albanians and Milosevic. We kept trying to find, that is to say the United States government kept trying to find ways in which some accommodation could be made between the two belligerent sides, in what now amounted to a serious civil war, to lessen the tension and provide some way to introduce some confidence building measures which might lead toward a political solution at an indefinite point in the future.

So for example, there was a Catholic lay organization out of Rome called the Community of Sant'Egidio, which had been working for years, successfully, to try to improve the situation in the Albanian-run school system down in Kosovo and to make it more legitimate. One big complaint on the part of the Albanian authorities, who were running their own independent school system, was that the graduation certificates they were issuing were not accepted by the Serbian authorities. Well, I mean, that's understandable in some ways, but having said that it was a great handicap to the graduates who would try to go for jobs or even to further their education. They would find that their certificates didn't mean anything even though they had received a fairly decent education. So the Italians were trying to find ways to improve that and to have the Serbian authorities certify the documents, which would make them legitimate for international use. And there was actually progress on that issue. We had other NGOs that were involved: the Project on Ethnic Relations out of Princeton, New Jersey, was successful in getting Serb and Kosovar-Albanians together for discussions in a kind of a neutral location. They met down in Montenegro, as I recall. And those sessions, which went on for a day and a half or two days were actually shown on Belgrade television. This was the first time in years that such a thing had been done, where the two sides could publicly exchange their views about their grievances and how they saw things. So we encouraged this sort of positive NGO activity.

Dick and his people were very imaginative in trying to develop a mechanism for an acceptable Kosovar-Albanian police force in which people would be selected and trained and, under OSCE

auspices, would then begin to provide a professional police presence in villages in Kosovo, particularly in the villages in which the Serb authorities had lost control. And that training was actually begun and several hundred policemen graduated from it.

Demarcation lines between the opposing sides were constantly being proposed and altered and adopted and drawn forward and backward and accepted and then violated; it was a very, very intensive period. I mean, I scarcely did anything else for the whole period, 1998 until the spring of 1999, except work on these issues.

Q: What kicked off—I mean, the thing that really put the fat in the fire was when all of a sudden there was this mass expulsion of Kosovars into Macedonia.

MILES: No, no, it wasn't quite that. The thing that really—I think the straw that really broke the camel's back was the Racak massacre in January 1999. Bill Walker was there right after it happened and the scenes on television and the way in which Bill addressed the media on that occasion really solidified public opinion in Western Europe and the United States. I think that was really the point when the slide toward war became almost unstoppable. During all this time, as the fighting grew more serious, when you had actual units fighting each other, the villagers began to leave their homes and move away from the scene of fighting. So you had what amounts to maybe as many as 150 to 200,000 Albanians, men, women and children, living up in the hills, in the mountains with tarpaulin over their farm wagons or lean-to shelters on the ground and cooking their meals over an open fire and drawing water from a stream and trying to live in some way with babies and the heat of summer in '98 and the cold of winter in the winter of '98, early '99, and people getting sick and not having enough doctors and medical care.

NGOs were active. KDOM and later KVM were active, our own USAID people were very busy with relief efforts, but the situation for these refugees was truly horrible. And meanwhile the agriculture in Kosovo had basically come to a halt. It was a very strange feeling to drive along in a small convoy of armored cars through areas which had been abandoned by the population and to see herds of cows that had been let loose or had broken out of their lots or their barns and had come together in natural herds of maybe 150 or 200 cows roaming across the landscape and eating the grass or the corn or the crops that were left and no people in sight—not a soul. And occasionally you'd see a dead cow, bloated with its legs up in the air, either killed by stray dogs or shot by one of the Yugoslav MUP personnel just for sport or whatever. It was a very eerie feeling. Oddly, when you were driving near areas of combat it was somehow more acceptable; you'd see a village that would be burning with the smoke rising, walls smashed down, empty shell casings underfoot and all, and you just felt like you were in a bad movie about World War II and somehow the violence was a "normal" part of that wartime situation. But when you were driving along through areas where the fighting had passed on and where you saw these enormous herds of animals out in the fields and no people and everything very peaceful and quiet, that was an eerie situation, let me tell you, and one I don't care to repeat.

Q: Was the solution, as far as Milosevic was concerned, evident that the Yugoslav Army should just go in and clean house?

MILES: Milosevic wanted to and some of the military leaders were perfectly willing to do that. But again, until he was removed, General Perisic was adamantly opposed to that with the exception of providing some backup for the MUP. As the MUP conducted increasingly serious operations in the summer and fall of 1998, the VJ did provide some backup but, as long as General Perisic was in charge, the VJ avoided actual combat operations.

I'd like to mention, while we're on this, the activities of Shaun Byrnes. Do you know Shaun, by chance?

Q: No.

MILES: He would be someone to interview. He's retired from the Foreign Service now; he's in Rome where his wife is still a Foreign Service officer. His father was Bob Burns at Indiana University, a rather well known historian; I studied with his father, actually. Well, Shaun—I always liked Shaun. We had known each other for a long time in, I think he was in Moscow at one point while we were there and, hell, I'd known him as a kid when I'd attend dinners and seminars out at his father's house and he'd be riding his bike around. Well, in any case, we got Shaun. Shaun had been in Yugoslavia before and we got him seconded to us from Embassy Rome and he did absolutely yeoman work; he was just incredible in working with Serb authorities and also working directly with the UCK. He would go into situations where, for example, the UCK might have taken some hostages, were holding them in a house; the house was then surrounded by MUP forces who were about to open fire, and--what to do? Now, this is not generally covered in the A-100 course. Anyhow this took a lot of telephoning back and forth to Kosovo and around Belgrade and getting agreement with everybody and so on. I'm leaving out a lot of details here, but we would sometimes be able to obtain a waiting period, a ceasefire or a waiting period during which Shaun would go in through the MUP lines and down into the UCK stronghold and talk the UCK fighters into releasing those hostages and then talk the MUP into allowing the UCK people to exfiltrate through their lines back into UCK-controlled territory. Everybody with itchy trigger fingers, of course. Just truly heroic work. Now, we got him awards for that but I don't think any award can adequately speak to the heroic action that he took on far more than one occasion. The entire Embassy team performed in an outstanding manner but Shaun and Bill Fischer, my defense attaché, were just superb and I couldn't have done what I did in that situation without their very active involvement. I'm leaving a lot of good people out—Nick Hill, a Political Officer and Chris Hill's brother, did some excellent contact work in Kosovo, Tina Kaidanow—but I can't mention everybody.

Q: Well, wasn't it the Defense Attaché and you too sort of making the checklist of, okay, if we go to war, this is what we should do and where we should go and that sort of thing?

MILES: I wasn't doing that so much personally until just before our final closure of the Embassy, but the DCM, the Administrative Officer, the Defense Attaché and others did. I guess I don't want to go into great detail about it, but where DIA likes their defense attachés to cultivate personal relations and to count how many of this tank and how many of that tank there are—bean counters, we say—Bill Fischer and I had a more expanded view of his responsibilities. DIA likes that factual and statistical approach, but EUCOM, the European Command, and the Pentagon itself—that is, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, OSD, and the Office of the Joint

Chiefs of Staff, OJCS—they want rather more than that. And I felt they should have it and so I encouraged the Defense Attaché to go beyond the somewhat strict definition of his job as outlined to him by his bosses and to try to provide the sort of material and information and insight which EUCOM needed to wage war, and he did an excellent job of that.

Q: Were you at any particular point beginning to draw down? In other words—

MILES: Oh, three times.

Q: What?

MILES: We had a drawdown twice before we finally closed the Embassy down. Sharon got so used to going to Budapest that she actually began learning Hungarian. Yes, we had two drawdowns and then the final evacuation. We would generally go down to the hard core of the Embassy—about 19, including six Marine security guards.

Q: Who was your DCM?

MILES: Jack Zetkolic. So we spent a lot of time, our people spent a lot of time in Budapest. I always remained with the group in Belgrade and so I only went to Budapest once when we actually closed the Embassy, but everyone else pretty much spent anywhere from two weeks to a month up there on three different occasions. We were always able to go out by land with the exception of the last time out. I had cultivated a good relationship with the thug, literally thug, who was the head of customs in Yugoslavia and by basically buttering him up and showing him some respect through office calls and sending around a bottle of Scotch and that kind of a thing, we were able to execute these drawdowns as they're called, including the final evacuation, with no fuss whatsoever. People took out just about whatever they wanted to in the way of their household goods and their pets and so forth, and where we could easily have been harassed and bothered by the customs officers, that never happened. The passage across the border was just ultra-smooth.

Q: Were there any points where you had mobs surround you?

MILES: No. There was only one occasion when, I don't even remember what it was, when a mob came down to the Embassy and threw ink bottles and things against the building. The Yugoslav police controlled that and other than that there were no such incidents. There were sometimes peaceful marches past the Embassy. We were on a major street which had a lot of other embassies on it and—

Q: Kneza Miloša?

MILES: Yes. And sometimes demonstrators, pro-government demonstrators, would use the street but only on one occasion was there any overt hostility in that way; we always felt protected and we were protected. And when we finally did close the Embassy, maybe we can talk about Yugoslavia some more later, but I'll jump ahead to the actual closing of the Embassy because it's an interesting story. We had selected Sweden as our protecting power and I had worked with

the Swedish Ambassador and the Admin Officer had worked with the appropriate people in the Swedish Embassy and the DCM had been involved, and we'd spent a lot of time showing them the intricacies of our old building, how to manage the water and the heat and the cooling—plus all of our other properties in Belgrade.

Q: That was quite something. The old building had been quite badly damaged during World War II.

MILES: Yes, it was a mess. And so the Swedes were very good about this, very well prepared to handle it even though it was a major burden for them. We were going to send money down through the Swedish diplomatic pouch and they were going to pay the locally engaged staff, the FSNs, for a period of time. We didn't know how long the war would last, of course, but I think we all believed it would be relatively short. And it was a relatively short war but it took us a long time to get back to Belgrade and there's the rub.

So we informed the Yugoslav Foreign Ministry. Now, they had always refused to name a protecting power in their case because they didn't want to admit that we were actually going to be engaged in hostilities. But they didn't have any problem with our accepting Sweden; they just said, well, that's fine, we'll talk about this later if we have to, but let's hope that we don't have to. And then in the end there were lots and lots of telephone calls between me and the appropriate people in Milosevic's cabinet and also in the Foreign Ministry about this, and also with Strobe Talbott back in Washington and with Tom Pickering. Tom at that point was Under Secretary for Political Affairs so we were on the phone a lot about the actual closing of the Embassy. And when it became quite clear that we were in fact going to do that, the Navy flew in a plane, a C-9—it's the military equivalent of a DC-9—and we drove out to the airport in our armored cars early in the morning on March 24, 1999. We took the flag down from the Embassy at about 4 o'clock in the morning. We told the Yugoslavs we'd be leaving at 6 o'clock in the morning, and this was after Dick Holbrooke had had one last negotiating session with Milosevic the evening of the 22nd. It had basically failed and so after Dick left on March 23, we shredded the few files we had left, welded shut the vault doors of certain protected rooms and handed the keys over to the Swedes.

And then at 4 o'clock in the morning of the 24th, the Marines and I took the flag down, I carried it myself, and we hauled off to the airport in a small convoy of armored cars. And we really didn't know whether the airplane would be allowed to take off or not. I mean, you can stop an airplane with a couple of four by fours, just put them in front of the wheels and that's the end of that. Or toss the same four by four into the jet engine; anybody—an eight-year-old—can stop an airplane from taking off. So we didn't really know what was going to happen but in the end there was no problem at all. There was no problem with the customs people, no problem with the immigration people; they understood what was going on and they had orders, obviously, to let us out and so we were able to fly out. And then our Embassy drivers and baggage handlers turned around and drove the armored cars back to put them inside of our garage in the lower part of the Embassy and that very same afternoon the Yugoslav authorities came and broke the locks on the garage door and hauled all those armored vehicles out. So they got, I think it was about \$2 million worth of armored vehicles. I had the largest fleet of armored vehicles in Europe at that time and the Yugoslav authorities took every damned one of them.

Q: Well, let's talk about Washington first. As this was leading up to a civil war, where was the Embassy and where was, sort of, Washington? I mean, were you working off the same hymn book or was there some dispute or how did that work?

MILES: There was a feeling of inevitability about it at that point. It was clear that Holbrooke had given it every ounce of energy and imagination that he could and that the Yugoslav forces simply weren't going to back off. Now, I'm leaving out a very important and interesting part of this story which is the negotiations which had been going on in Rambouillet, France, during the first three months of 1999. Much has been written about Rambouillet but I was neither there nor consulted about it, so it would be foolish for me to talk about Rambouillet now. I'll limit myself to one comment—whoever thought up the final ultimatum to the Serbs, the ultimatum which was rejected by Milosevic's Parliament, didn't know much or didn't care much about Serb history. The Serbs have a history of rejecting ultimatums from superior powers. It's almost their national sport. When I saw the terms of that ultimatum, I knew that war was inevitable.

There was also an understanding, maybe more on the Embassy's part than on the part of Washington, that the UCK was not going to back off either. Anyhow, the pressure was on the Yugoslav government. The final ultimatum, signed by the U.S., the U.K. and the Kosovar Albanian delegations at Rambouillet, would have allowed NATO forces to go through Serb territory at will and occupy certain positions in Kosovo in order to separate the forces until a political solution could be reached. On the afternoon of the 23rd, the day before the bombing began; we were sitting in a TV room in the front office of the Embassy watching a meeting of the Federal Assembly, the Yugoslav Parliament. Serbian President Milutinovic, who had been Yugoslav chief negotiator at Rambouillet, gave a speech, which was quite defiant, even belligerent, and in essence he rejected all of these conditions that had been laid down in the ultimatum.

Now, I have to admit these would have been difficult conditions for any sovereign state to accept but, of course, they weren't coming out of the blue; they were the culmination of a series of requests and later demands by the chief negotiating partners at Rambouillet and against the background of harsh military action by both Milosevic and his instruments of force and by the UCK. There were reports of increasing numbers of refugees and by that time refugees had begun to go across into Macedonia and some into Albania as well and many had gone into Montenegro, which was very ill equipped to take care of them. And so when we were listening to Milutinovic's speech on the television, I was giving Holbrooke a sort of line by line translation of this speech, and I said this means they have rejected our conditions and Holbrooke said, well, this means war then, we'll have to do what we have said we'll do. Tell Milosevic that I am willing to see him again but that I'm leaving at such and such a time. I think he'd be leaving about 5 o'clock in the afternoon, the speech was at 3 o'clock or something like that, and, he added, I could stay later but if I don't hear from him, I'll be on that plane and out of here at 5 or 6 o'clock. Unfortunately, I don't recall the exact time. And I did pass that word on and the answer came back there was no need for a meeting, the positions of the two sides are well known. And in his last meeting with Milosevic the previous evening Holbrooke had said to Milosevic, you know what will ensue when I leave this room if these conditions are not accepted? And Milosevic said, yes, I understand. So there was no question whatsoever that

Milosevic did not know what was going to happen, although it's sort of an oddity of modern times that we don't declare war anymore. You know, we never declared war against Yugoslavia and NATO never declared war; we just began bombing.

Q: Well, did you get any feel for what were the calculations that the Serbs were making? I mean, they could have hunkered down and if we tried to roust them out of the woods and out of the mountains it would have been very difficult.

MILES: Well, that happened with their aircraft. We destroyed very few aircraft and not a lot of equipment, to tell you the truth. They were pretty good about concealment. But, of course, we were not only targeting military equipment. Earlier, Holbrooke had brought General Mike "Bud" Short to Belgrade. At that time, Bud was the three-star general in charge of USAFE operations. He would later be responsible for allied operations in the air war. Holbrooke had Bud Short come to Belgrade to describe for the political and military leaders exactly what modern air war was like. I was in on those conversations and I remember them very well. Bud did describe in eloquent detail what would happen if allied fire power was unleashed against the Yugoslavs. He told not just Milosevic but the also the Yugoslav Air Force generals that their memories of air war probably dated from old films from World War II. "Let me tell you what it's like now," he said. "We have a lot of weapons, we have stealth bombers, we have precision-guided weaponry, we have cruise missiles. You can't imagine the devastation that we can cause with this modern weaponry and we will do it and we won't just hit military targets." And I don't think they quite got it, to tell the truth, despite these conversations, and they were very serious and very sober conversations. And I can remember the head of the air defense service, I wish I could remember his name, a Yugoslav general, who sat across the table from Bud Short and listened to him, heard him out, and then said, "Well, General, I understand exactly what you're telling me but I have to do my duty and my duty is to my President and to my country and so I hear you and I have nothing more to say to you." And that general was killed, by the way, at one of his forward command posts during an air war. Sitting there and listening to that conversation was a very dramatic moment, let me tell you.

So when we did begin the air war, and of course I was gone by then, but we did hit civilian targets. We began to destroy the Yugoslav infrastructure: the electric power installations, the bridges and other such installations. We started with military targets, of course, but we quickly accelerated to strategic, civilian targets.

Q: This is tape nine, side one, with Dick Miles. Yes.

MILES: I haven't seen the statistics but my bet would be that a very large percentage of the munitions that were expended in the Kosovo air war were used against the civilian infrastructure as opposed to trying to hit military targets.

Q: We were able to put out the entire electric grid, practically.

MILES: Yes, exactly. These modern precision weapons are incredible. I've been back to Belgrade subsequently and it's truly amazing to walk down Kneza Miloša Street where the German Embassy, the Croatian Embassy, the Canadian Embassy and others, where our Embassy

is, and to see at one end of the street the Ministry of Internal Affairs building totally destroyed and then at the other end of the street the Ministry of Defense building is totally destroyed while across the street the Ministry of Foreign Affairs building was not touched. I mean, it's just amazing really.

Q: Were you involved in any discussions before this happened as war became more and more apparent of just—the whole idea was to make the Milosevic regime, was to hurt them badly, and this in a way was a political analysis. I mean, was this, you know, cutting off electricity, breaking the infrastructure, were you involved at all or your Embassy involved in that planning?

MILES: Well, numerous plans had been put forward prior to the day the bombing started to separate the forces and to monitor the reduction and the withdrawal of Yugoslav forces from Kosovo. And as the situation deteriorated and as our demands became increasingly strident and intrusive it became clear that Milosevic was just not going to accept those demands. I feel bad about the fact that we went to war at all. It seems to me that there still was room for political discussion and for efforts to avert the war, although, admittedly, once the Rambouillet ultimatum was presented to the Serbs as a “take it or leave it” deal, it was hard to see how we could back down from our threat to go to war. But I do also firmly believe that Milosevic had every opportunity to turn away from war. The national command authorities in Washington were resolved to separate the Serb and the Kosovar Albanian forces so that the Albanian population would not be persecuted and killed, their homes and villages destroyed; in short, Washington insisted that the Serb authorities were going to have to come to some kind of a political understanding with the Albanian population in Kosovo. And Milosevic was simply not willing to accept this. And, by the way, these increasingly stark Washington conditions were vetted and approved by the NATO allies, otherwise they wouldn't have gone to war. So it wasn't just the United States that went to war, although clearly the United States was carrying the lion's share of the burden here. But it was the entire Western community of nations, that is to say the NATO community of nations that had gone this route. Dick Holbrooke always was very good about briefing the ambassadors of the NATO member countries in Belgrade if he possibly could do it before he left town. In any event, he almost invariably would go up to NATO and would go on to Brussels and debrief at NATO as well. The Secretary General of NATO, Javier Solana, and the NATO military commander or SACEUR, General Wes Clark, came down several times. And there were lots of telephone calls back and forth, including direct calls between Solana and Milosevic and between Wes Clark and Milosevic and sometimes Wes Clark and the Yugoslav generals. Sometimes I'd be involved in those and sometimes I wouldn't; sometimes I'd know about them, sometimes I wouldn't. I believe I always knew when Dick Holbrooke was doing something or involved in something, but this didn't always hold for NATO.

Q: Were we pointing out to the powers that be in Washington and NATO that, okay, if we do go to war in this thing this essentially will mean a somehow a quasi or a fully independent Kosovo?

MILES: No, and for two reasons. One, events were moving too fast for us to do that kind of analysis and the people in Washington that perhaps would have been involved in an analysis of that sort were the same people that Dick had involved in his negotiating team that he would bring out and they were pretty busy just trying to avert war. And second, our policy was and remained so until a year or so ago, that we didn't favor an independent Kosovo—that we favored an

autonomous Kosovo within the confines of Yugoslav sovereignty and territorial integrity. Now, whether all the players were sincere in that, whether we believed that after warfare of the sort that we eventually saw, the situation could in fact revert to such a thing as autonomy, I don't know. My own feeling, I guess, is a little bit cynical in that regard but the issue was never carefully analyzed and I think those are the two reasons why it wasn't. I should mention by the way that two of the Embassy political officers collaborated on what we call a "Dissent Channel" message to Washington proposing and defending a change in U.S. policy toward one recognizing the goal of an independent Kosovo. I didn't agree with it but it was well written and I sent it in in this protected channel. That message won the Department's Creative Dissent Award that year.

Q: I'm looking at the time, Dick. Maybe this is a good place to stop. We'll pick it up the next time with what you are up to—the fact that you left for good, the war started, but—

MILES: There are a few more things we can go back and pick up.

Q: You know, I mean, what was happening?

MILES: Well, for example, Milan Panic, who is an interesting character and who needs to be brought out in this history, was involved and was in and out of Yugoslavia fairly often. He's an American citizen of Yugoslav background, who for a while became Prime Minister of Yugoslavia. After he left office, he had one of his pharmaceutical factories nationalized by the Milosevic government. The involvement of the Embassy in that process is interesting. And then maybe a little more on the Montenegrin situation and the attitude and actions of the Orthodox Church. There are some more things to talk about so we can tuck that in and then go on from there.

Q: Okay, great.

Today is the 12th of June, 2007. Dick, well, let's talk—again, you were in Yugoslavia from, well, was it Serbia or—?

MILES: Technically it was Serbia-Montenegro. We, especially those of us who had been in the former Yugoslavia still called it the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and that's what they called themselves, but I think that the American government called it Serbia-Montenegro while I was there, 1996 to 1999.

Q: Okay. You want to talk about, what's his name—Panic?

MILES: Panic, yes.

Q: Well, do you also want to talk a bit about what you got from the military attaché that you identified about Perisic, was it?

MILES: Perisic was the Chief of the General Staff.

Q: What was his impression?

MILES: Well, I always thought highly of Perisic, partly because he simply loathed Milosevic and made no secret about it. And if you can loathe a person even more he doubly loathed Milosevic's wife, Mira Markovic.

The Defense Attaché's view was that while Perisic may very well have loathed Milosevic, he was also a rather extreme Serb patriot and nationalist and probably did have more blood on his hands than he should have had, even as a military officer. Well, Perisic has been indicted by The Hague and so this will all come out in the eventual trial and we'll see what the Tribunal has to say.

With regard to Milan Panic; Milan is an interesting fellow. He was a former champion bicycle racer in Yugoslavia and, frankly, from no more than that plus his native wit, made his way to the United States in the 1960s and in time became a wealthy businessman in Los Angeles, the president and CEO of ICN Pharmaceuticals. Milan was always very much interested in Yugoslav affairs and I first met him when I helped to escort a small group of League of Communists of Yugoslavia officials around the United States and out to California. This would have been about 1984, the spring of 1984, I believe. That was one wacky trip. Somehow we wound up having dinner in Milan Panic's mansion in Los Angeles. All sorts of dignitaries were there from the political, business and cultural worlds. Former Governor Jerry Brown was there, as I recall, and also several former Cabinet members.

Q: Former Governor of California.

MILES: Yes. So anyhow, I met Milan then. He was very gracious, not an arrogant person at all, quite hospitable and very interested in policy and business matters and he was interesting in his own right. I didn't meet him again until I went back to Belgrade in 1996. Milan had gone back to Yugoslavia in the early 90s and somehow got appointed as Prime Minister under Milosevic. It was a pretty dumb thing for him to do, frankly, and in the end it didn't work out. As Prime Minister he actually hired former Ambassador Jack Scanlan, under whom I had served in my second tour in Yugoslavia, as his advisor. So for a while there we had Milan Panic, an American citizen, as the Prime Minister of Milosevic's Yugoslavia and at the same time having a former U.S. ambassador on the payroll as his advisor. It was a bizarre state of affairs and I'm happy to say it ended before I got there on my third and final tour. Milan kept coming back to Yugoslavia while I was there. He had his business interests to look after and he was also very much interested in trying to develop something of a democratic opposition to Milosevic. He couldn't be very open about it because, after all, Milosevic's regime, while it wasn't a totalitarian dictatorship, was authoritarian and it certainly had its dangers for those who wanted to challenge the regime. So Milan was always a little bit careful although not careful enough for my taste. He would stay in one of the nice hotels there in Belgrade and he'd talk to people privately but then he'd also usually host a dinner or two and would invite people in for these very nice dinners and I was almost always included. Frankly, some of the dinner conversation used to set my teeth on edge. Keep in mind that Milosevic probably received transcripts of these dinner conversations along with his morning toast and coffee. Usually, I would let Milan's comments just slide by but sometimes I would openly challenge him when I thought he had gone too far in trying to describe certain events or Washington attitudes. But despite this, I enjoyed his company.

Panic had invested in several pharmaceutical plants abroad, one in Belgrade and one or two in Poland. He was looking at one in Russia but I don't know if he ever actually invested in Russia or not. The one in Belgrade was actually making quite a bit of money and then, later on, as the U.S. policy toward Yugoslavia hardened and when Milosevic probably got tired of Milan's posing and posturing with the opposition, Milosevic began to move in on that company. We got wind of it because we knew, of course, the manager of the company and we had contacts through Milan's people, including former Ambassador Scanlan. So we knew that the government was about to make these moves and I sent one of my economic officers out to the plant on the day when the goons arrived to seize the company. They were going to just throw the management people out and physically take the plant over. Well, there was quite an exchange, first at the gate when the guards didn't want to let these Milosevic thugs in. When I say thugs I don't mean they were all hoodlum types; you know, some were what would amount to party apparatchiks, if you could call Milosevic's party a party. They were political people and they represented the government, basically. Others were simply goons, simply muscle that was to be employed if necessary. In any case, the Milosevic people finally made their way in through the locked gates. And then there was a kind of a confrontation in what amounted to the boardroom when the Milosevic people simply told the board members that they were dismissed by virtue of this or that Yugoslav law and that they should go home now, this plant now belonged to the workers and there was no further use for a board of directors. My economic officer did the best he could to make it known that this was private property owned by a U.S. citizen and therefore the U.S. government was opposed to any nationalization of the property, no matter what they called it. Of course, his comments were brushed aside. By that time Milosevic was beyond niceties. And so the officer came back to the Embassy and we sent an excellent cable back to Washington on the basis of his observations. I believe I got him an award for it because he was rather brave in the process; he could have been hurt.

I tried to talk to Milosevic myself about the seizure of the plant, but he refused to see me, given the topic. I have to say that this was unusual for Milosevic. I usually had no problem seeing him whenever I wanted to. Finally I wound up with, I believe it was the Minister of Health, who, himself, was a real goon. A Milosevic loyalist to the core. I don't remember his name, but I hope he's been indicted. He was an unpleasant fellow. I was told that I would see him because the plant produced pharmaceuticals. Now this was annoying. This was a political and legal matter and had nothing whatsoever to do with pharmaceuticals. Anyhow, I went to see him and had this bizarre conversation with the fellow and in the end he got up to leave, he had made his little speech and he went to leave and I said, "You know, I'm not done speaking yet. I sat here listening to you, this nonsense that you have been speaking, and it would only be polite if you would sit there and listen to what I have to say." To my surprise, he sat back down again. And I then made my pitch about this being the property of an American citizen and that there were due processes which needed to be followed and American laws which would come into play and ultimately sanctions which might come into play if this were proved to be a nationalization. And that made no impression on him whatsoever and so I said—"Well, you remember Proudhon, who wrote that famous phrase about property being theft. And then I said, "I guess in modern day Yugoslavia theft is property." And he got furious because they were all schooled in Marxism and Leninism and most likely knew who Proudhon was and at that point he did walk out. He said, "I'm not going to sit here and listen to this anymore" and he just got up and walked out. And that

was the title of the cable I sent back to Washington on my conversation: “In Yugoslavia Theft is Property”.

By the way, Milan never did get that damn property back. After the loss of the property in Belgrade he invested a little bit of money in a small pharmaceutical plant in Montenegro and he may still have that plant; I don’t know. I haven’t stayed in touch with him. But even the post-Milosevic government refused to give him the Belgrade plant back.

Q: Yes. Well, what was happening in Montenegro while you were there?

MILES: Well, Djukanovic had served as Prime Minister and then as President. There was a constant rivalry between him and Momir Bulatovic. They had both been protégés of Milosevic but Djukanovic had drifted away from Milosevic while Bulatovic hadn’t. I’ll confess that with the elections and counter-elections in Montenegro, I had a hard time keeping track of the political infighting going on down there. I did see Bulatovic from time to time, just to stay in touch, but 95 percent of my conversations in Montenegro were with Mr. Djukanovic. And I found him very intelligent, very candid, reform-minded, but also a pragmatic political realist.

We did the best we could to help him maintain semi-independence from Belgrade and that was not always easy because Belgrade, of course, was at the same time trying to bring Djukanovic under control and to make him become more loyal to Milosevic than was the case.

There was an Albanian minority in Montenegro. Montenegro is a very tiny place, as you know, and as I recall there were about 40,000 Albanians there. Some had been there for many, many years or decades, others had come over from Kosovo just to escape the tension and the pressure that was there and the IDPs were not doing too badly in contrast to those in Serbia and Kosovo. Unlike the situation in Kosovo, the Albanians in Montenegro participated in the regular structures of government. They participated in the Montenegrin school system, for example, and they paid their taxes; they had their elected city councilmen in those towns which were predominantly Albanian. And they handled the IDPs pretty well. I visited some of the refugee sites, I wouldn’t call them camps exactly; many of them were living in places which had been used by the Yugoslav trade unions to house people who were going to visit the seashore and that kind of a thing, so they were living in reasonably decent accommodations.

Q: Cottages or something.

MILES: Yes. These were pretty austere accommodations but they were not anything like the way the refugees were handled in Azerbaijan where I saw people living in abandoned railway cars and in holes in the ground with boards over the top of the hole. No, these people were actually living in cabins and rooms in what would have been inexpensive tourist cabins before so they weren’t doing too badly. And the U.S. government, through USAID, tried to do what it could to help the Montenegrin government cope with all this and to help them maintain their reasonably civilized policies toward the IDPs. When it became clear that we were headed toward war we began to pay even more attention to what was happening in Montenegro, and the Montenegrins were very much interested in staying close to us too because they hoped to keep the hostilities away from Montenegrin territory to the extent possible. And so, while I’m not an expert on what

actually happened during the war itself, my understanding is that there was very little violence there compared to what was going on in Kosovo and in Serbia itself. So the Montenegrins played a careful game and a fairly wise one.

Now, all that business about Montenegrin independence came after I left and so there isn't much sense in me talking about it. There were public opinion polls before the conflict. Polls were conducted in Yugoslavia all the time and even under Milosevic they were pretty accurate, actually, and so we knew pretty much what public opinion was and public opinion in Montenegro was divided on the issue of Montenegrin independence almost 50/50, with people down toward the coast desiring independence and people inland, that is to say closer to the actual border with Serbia, preferring to remain in some form of political union with Serbia itself. In the end, of course, they did become independent. I spent some time cultivating the Archbishop in Cetinje, the ancient capital of Montenegro, a capital, by the way, where they still can point out the American legation building from the balmy days of 1905-1920.

I used to call on Archbishop Amfilohije and I always found him a very wise person, something of a nationalist, a Montenegrin nationalist but interesting because the Montenegrin church technically was subordinate to the Serbian church and yet historically had always had something of an autonomous status. It was both subordinate and independent at the same time and so it was very interesting to stay in touch with the Archbishop. I always enjoyed those visits to his ancient palace in Cetinje. The electricity was usually off and so oil lamps and candles were lit. Sitting there in his dark room drinking coffee and maybe something a little stronger with the Archbishop in his robes, you had the sense of being back in the distant past.

Q: Was there any concern in Serbia proper about the fact that Montenegro is now beginning to shift and all and pretty soon Serbia is going to be a landlocked country? Did that make any difference in the long run or not?

MILES: They just weren't thinking in those terms. They were thinking more in terms of loyalty to Milosevic and the fact that Djukanovic was being insubordinate. It was more personal and they weren't really thinking in strategic terms. You remember there was the famous Belgrade-Bar railway and I think they believed as long as they had access to that railway one way or the other they wouldn't be terribly isolated. The Serbs aren't a seagoing people and access to the sea isn't part of the Serb mindset.

Q: Did you get any feel for the relationship between Djukanovic and Milosevic?

MILES: Well, they didn't like each other, that was quite clear, and the reason was Djukanovic's independence and his refusal to kowtow to Milosevic and the crowd around Milosevic. He didn't go up to Belgrade very much. I think he was brave enough. I mean, if you're in political power in that part of the world you really have to be reasonably courageous or else you really should get out of the business because you never know what's going to happen. And he had, I think, above average courage, political courage as well as physical courage, so I expect he did worry when he had to go up to Belgrade. He didn't know if he would be arrested. I don't think Milosevic and his people would have killed anyone as prominent and as popular as Djukanovic but Milosevic had

Ivan Stambolić killed and Ivan was even more popular than Djukanovic was. So I'm sure that he was a little bit uneasy every time he went up there.

In the old Yugoslavia, and they kept it up in Milosevic's time, each of the republics had maintained a house, a nice villa, which they used to put their high-ranking people up when they would come to visit Belgrade and they'd also host lunches or dinners there. And the Montenegrins had a rather nice villa near the same street where Milosevic lived and where I lived. So when Djukanovic came he was able to stay in his own place surrounded by his own security people and that probably made him feel a little more secure although obviously Milosevic's people could overwhelm that crowd any time they wanted to.

But the actual contacts between the two were very slight. I may be mistaken, but frankly I don't remember Milosevic visiting Montenegro during the entire time I was in Yugoslavia. I do know that Milosevic didn't travel very much; he didn't seem to care for travel and he stayed pretty much around the Belgrade area. He had a couple of villas at his disposal but he didn't go down to visit Kosovo. He didn't go down to visit Montenegro. And Djukanovic probably didn't come to Belgrade more than two or three times during that three year period.

Q: How did Macedonia fit into the great scheme of things while you were there?

MILES: Hardly at all at that point. The only way it fitted in really was that Dick Holbrooke, who was coming out with increasing frequency as Special Envoy, tapped Chris Hill, who was then our ambassador to Macedonia, to be a kind of an alter ego to Dick in his Special Envoy role and to accompany him when he would go to Belgrade or Kosovo or Montenegro. And Chris was always very good about that, I must say. He always kept me informed of what he was up to. We had known each other before and we joked about Dick Holbrooke's particular negotiating style and because of Chris's sensitivity the relationship worked; otherwise it would have been a disaster in an ordinary situation. It's bad enough for an ambassador to have a special envoy flitting in and out, but to have, in a way, two of them, including one from a neighboring country, made for an unusual situation to put it mildly.

There was some tension between the two churches. The Macedonian church had been autocephalous or independent for years, if not decades, and the Serbian church always resented that and there were still property disputes, particularly the Serb church believing that it still legally owned some of the property down in Macedonia but the Macedonian church also believing that it owned some of the property up in Serbia. And I would listen to the various priests and bishops and archbishops and whatnot on that issue but frankly I chose never to get involved in that one. I mean, that way madness lies. And I remember once when a delegation came up from Macedonia to visit me in my office and I had a young officer sitting in to take notes and he was pretty new to the whole situation and I said, "Now, don't be too surprised when they start out in the 14th century. And, by God, they did. It was so funny I nearly had to keep myself from laughing. And you know, that meeting took about two hours going from the 14th century on forward.

There were, of course, great difficulties during and after the Kosovo War when the Yugoslav forces tried to push the Albanians out of Kosovo. Many of the Albanians fled to Macedonia and

that caused great stresses and strains between the Serbs and the Macedonians and also some strains with us as well. I mean, when the bombing started, for example, there were riots down in Skopje, the capital of Macedonia. Our Embassy was surrounded and Chris and the others had to retreat to a kind of bunker to take care of their own security. This was a dicey situation for a while, but back to your question, the actual relationship between Macedonia and Serbia during the time I was there was, I would say, normal, and neither side wanted to exacerbate any differences that might exist. There were some desultory border demarcation talks going on. There were, as I recall, seven points along the rather lengthy Serb-Macedonian border which were in dispute and those talks had been going on for quite a while involving both civilian and military people and they were—it was almost like how many angels can dance on the head of a pin? There would be like X hill, for example, and the question would be, did the boundary line refer to the top of the hill or did it refer to 50 meters on this side of the top of the hill or 50 meters on the other side of the top and in no case did any of these seven disputed points have any significance whatsoever. They just were part of the slow process of demarcating border lines when they are not very firmly nailed down in documents. No one was getting terribly excited about it.

Q: Were there any, particularly border problems I'm thinking of, of Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria? Was anything happening around them?

MILES: No, no. None at all really. In the past there had been some Bulgarian pretensions on Macedonian territory. It goes back to the pre-World War I period.

Q: Yes, 1912 sort of.

MILES: Yes. And of course Bulgaria, which was an ally with the axis powers, occupied part of Macedonia during the war and there was still some resentment over that. And I remember when I used to follow this business back in the days when Tito was alive, it was always interesting to see how every once in a while someone would seem to say, it's time to crank this up again, and then you'd have some "popular protest" over the fact that this little point in the territory was not properly demarcated, or that Bulgarian children in a border village on the Yugoslav side were allegedly deprived of the right to speak their language or vice versa, you know, little things of that sort. But even when I followed it in minute detail at that time, I always felt that this was pretty silly stuff. And during the period, '96 to '99 when I was there, these issues were totally insignificant. I think everyone realized that there were a lot bigger fish to fry than those silly disputes.

And interestingly enough, when I went to Bulgaria after Yugoslavia, the former issues with Macedonia which used to occupy a lot of people's time had just faded away. The two sides had simply decided that they had more interest in working together to try to resolve some common problems of pollution and smuggling and border crossings and so on than they did trying to exacerbate these almost imaginary issues.

Q: Did Danube traffic raise any issues while you were there?

MILES: I don't recall any specific issues, no. There had been issues, you remember, right after World War II when the Soviet Union, which controlled Danube traffic at that time, tried to install a rather rigid regime on the Danube. But no, I think there was fairly open traffic down the Danube and we used to get the river cruise ships that would come in from Vienna on their way somewhere down river, relatively small boats but carrying maybe 100 passengers, and if I had time I'd go out and give the passengers a briefing. There were a lot of Americans on these ships and I liked to talk to them. And they always got a kick out of it. I always liked being onboard any ship, even a small river boat, any kind of a ship for me is a fun thing. And there was, of course, the constant barge traffic up and down the Danube. Belgrade was actually a reasonably bustling port in terms of river traffic. And there didn't seem to be any specific problems over the Djerdap Dam. You remember Djerdap, a huge hydroelectric project there where they shared the power between Romania and Yugoslavia; that seemed to work pretty well, no particular problems.

Q: Well, as you—you left there—?

MILES: I left on the day the bombing started. March 24, 1999.

Q: Well, I may have asked this before but as you moved up to that point were you kind of walking around town and saying we should get this place and not that? And you know, in a way, you know, a horrible thing picking out targets and that sort of thing.

MILES: No, we didn't get into the targeting business. I deliberately stayed out of it, quite frankly, and I don't want to talk out of school—this is all unclassified, these sessions that we're having, they're unclassified—but the Defense Attaché Office did spend some time looking at communications links. In modern warfare a lot depends on communication nodes and lines of communication and so, again without getting into classified material or anything, I think it's safe to say that our defense attaché people and other people in our Embassy did spend some time on those issues.

Q: I can remember reports, and these were newspaper accounts of when the bombing was over and the agreement to allow NATO troops into Kosovo came about and the Yugoslav army was pulling out and supposedly we had been going after them but at least according to reports saying that sort of—it seemed to be that basically the Yugoslav army hadn't suffered very much from the bombing. It was really the attack on Belgrade and the communication centers that—

MILES: Yes, I gathered that's so. And the big bridge was knocked down in Novi Sad and there was a lot of infrastructure damage in Pancevo, a small industrial town near Belgrade. Yes, I think that's safe to say. The Yugoslavs had a very professional military and, in fact, one which we had helped to build and to supply. So yes, they had a good military and they knew how to conceal their deployments very well.

Now, in the earlier diplomatic and security efforts that were made to defuse the situation, there was an agreement in which Milosevic agreed to reduce the forces that were in Kosovo to a certain limit and also to limit the weaponry. So there would be X number of troops, there would be Y number of armored personnel carriers, there would be no weapons of a caliber above 17.5 mm, for example, and so on. And at that time of the withdrawal, I sent some of our officers down

to the administrative border between Kosovo and Serbia and we actually counted trucks that went by. We knew approximately how many soldiers should be in a truck. Sometimes they would be open trucks, sometimes closed trucks with a tarp over it so there was a bit of guesswork there but it was pretty accurate guesswork. And so for a couple of weeks there day and night we had someone actually sitting there counting to be sure that Milosevic was complying with the agreements that we had reached with him. In the end, that agreement, like all the other agreements, was not good enough and the attacks continued on the part of the UCK and the Yugoslavs began infiltrating men and equipment back in. This was before the outbreak of the war.

Q: Could you describe sort of the last days of your mission there?

MILES: Well yes, and it's interesting because I was the first chief of mission in Europe to go to war since 1941. You know, it happens in other countries, in Asia, in Africa, Central America, South America, but it's unique for our ambassadors in Europe. And so the European bureau was not 100 percent sure how to handle all this and neither was I but I had read about these things. I knew pretty well what had happened to our diplomatic establishments and to our diplomats when we went to war with Germany and Japan, and so mentally I was actually prepared that the hard core personnel in the Embassy—and I'll get to that in a minute—might be interned in the event of war and that it might be a period of time before we would be exchanged. In the end that didn't take place and we were allowed out just before hostilities began.

We actually drew the Embassy staff down, ordered all of the dependents out and reduced the number of personnel to all but the absolutely necessary personnel twice before we finally closed the mission. So we got pretty good at carrying out these withdrawals and actually the State Department later used our experience in their planning for evacuations because we'd really gotten it polished up pretty well. I had a very good Administrative Officer and with all of our efforts I think we did a good job. And the State Department even did a videotape: they interviewed my wife Sharon, among others, about the evacuation experience and how they went about it. The State Department agreed that, in contrast to its usual practice of ordering everyone back to America, they would just have us go up to Budapest, which was only a few hours away by car, and that meant people could take along pets and a lot of junk for the children. And the Yugoslav authorities never gave us any fuss about that, by the way, even though we did it three times.

Q: You were saying you learned things like—

MILES: Yes, like it's better to have, say, three or four separate columns of cars going out, each with a designated head and tail and with radio contact, than to have one big, very long column. The problem with one big, long column is that if you have some child that gets car sick or has to pee, you must stop maybe 100 cars and trucks, where if you have a column of maybe 15 or 20 cars, you're only going to stop that many. And another thing: we learned it was important for morale purposes to take pets out, which is contrary to Department and U.S. Government policy but, again, because we assumed, in all except the last case, that we would be able to come back to our houses and apartments in Belgrade, we decided that we would take these pets out. The hotel in Budapest was very good about accommodating us and having the pets along was an

enormous morale booster for both the children and for the adults as well. And even in the last evacuation, people took their pets out to Budapest, but, of course, they then had to make the necessary arrangements to get them to the States.

Q: Oh God, yes.

MILES: It was very important, really. Some people even carried out goldfish. They drove all the way to Budapest with a bowl of goldfish on their laps. But it was important for morale.

Q: Yes.

MILES: I was always one of the people that stayed behind in Belgrade but my DCM sometimes would go out and I'd alternate sending the DCM or the Admin Officer out, depending on how the situation was. And they learned that it was very important to try to set up some semblance of schooling so that they didn't have children developing cabin fever and driving themselves and the adults out of their minds in these relatively small hotel rooms. Not only did they organize a day school for the children, they also published a small newsletter to keep each other informed and which they sent back to the Embassy in Belgrade—so there was a sense of connection between the spouses and dependents with the folks back at the Embassy. And they organized outings and excursions. There were plenty of cars and vans available so they'd form a caravan and go visit the Herend Porcelain Factory or whatever; there are lots of things to do in Hungary and the Hungarians were very hospitable and Embassy Budapest was just excellent, I must say. Very accommodating.

I'll jump ahead a little bit, but when we finally closed the Embassy and all of us wound up in Budapest, the Department decided to keep us all, men, women and children, dogs, cats and goldfish, in Budapest for about a month. It must have cost them an absolute fortune. And so we formed a kind of an Embassy in Exile and even sent a few cables out; the Embassy in Budapest was kind enough to let us do that. We continued to put out a little newsletter and we delivered it by hand to everyone's hotel room. And we sat in on Embassy Budapest's staff meetings and we took over a fairly good size hunk of the Embassy—they simply cleared out some of the space in the Chancery and turned it over to us. Of course, we didn't try to do everything that an embassy does. Our public affairs people weren't terribly busy there and so on, but the political and economic people, the defense attaché people and others tried the best they could to make their contribution to evaluating what was going on and trying to predict what Milosevic was likely to do so it was really quite interesting. The Communications Section in the Embassy in Budapest both liked us and hated us. As I recall we tripled their cable load because of the incoming and the outgoing cable traffic and it was really exciting. I mean, up to that point, frankly not a whole lot of activity had been going on in Budapest and so the communicators who like to read all this stuff were a little bit bored but they weren't bored after we landed, I must say. They got a kick out of that. But again, just to repeat, Embassy Budapest was very accommodating.

One aspect of the closure of the Embassy that was particularly painful was leaving behind our FSN colleagues—some of them had been working at the Embassy for decades. Thanks to the efforts of the head of our Consular Section, Gil Sperling, we were able to get refugee status for any of our FSNs who wanted to relocate to the U.S. My wife Sharon, who'd been working for

IOM in Belgrade, led a meeting with the FSNs who were with us in Budapest to give some advice on the pros and cons of moving to the U.S. as refugees and to answer questions about the process. A number of our Yugoslav employees did take advantage of this offer.

Let me return to a subject I started some time back. I said earlier in my comments how we had asked the Swedish Embassy to take care of our interests and they agreed and we had never been able to get the Yugoslav foreign ministry to say which protecting power that they would like and so on. The day before we were going to leave we turned the keys over to the Swedish Embassy. They had been briefed on where our properties were, how to turn the heat and the water off and on, and we left the next morning. And at that point the Yugoslavs in America, I don't remember if this was done in Washington through the Embassy or through the UN mission in New York, asked if they could have China as their protecting power and the State Department in Washington said, "No, you can't." And they said, "Well, in that case, you can't have Sweden either." And I won't bore the listeners with the whole story of the back and forth on this; a lot of efforts were made to try to get Switzerland to do it for both of us, to get the Swedes to do Yugoslavia as well as to do America, and so on. And in the end, the Yugoslavs simply were playing hardball and they said, "We want China and if we can't have China then you're not going to have anybody." And so we didn't. What we learned out of that was that you've got to be really careful when you leave your building like that, because that situation went on through the winter of 1999. There was no heat in the building and the water which was on in March froze in December. So when we finally went back into the building, many of those old cast iron pipes had cracked and the water was still running. It was like a jungle in some of those stairwells and walls where whole sections of the wall had rotted loose and so forth. It was really awful.

Q: Why China?

MILES: Why did they want China?

Q: Yes.

MILES: I don't know for sure. One guess is, and it's only a guess, is that Mira Markovic believed she had a special relationship with the Chinese leadership and an almost mystic relationship with the Chinese people. She visited back and forth a lot. For whatever reason of their own, the Chinese were doing things like translating her vapid books into Chinese and circulating them. It was all pretty much bullshit, I'm sure, but that was—I think that was why they asked for China.

Q: Why did the State Department oppose it?

MILES: I asked Tom Pickering that when I got back to Washington. By then he was Under Secretary for Political Affairs. The only answer I got was that the U.S.-Chinese relationship was overburdened as it was. You remember, this was about the time when there was an incident with the Chinese. A U.S. military plane had landed in Chinese territory and the crew had been detained. It may have been something like that although it was an odd response. As far as I know, a requesting nation almost always gets its choice of a protecting power.

Well, the end result was a very awkward situation which could have become very difficult. You remember, we had a couple of soldiers captured at one point. Jesse Jackson went off to negotiate their release—all in the absence of any American diplomatic presence—and we had properties there in Yugoslavia and, finally, we were trying to pay our Foreign Service nationals. In fact the Swedes, bless their heart, continued to pay them. We gave money to the Swedish foreign ministry in Stockholm, they put the cash in their diplomatic bags and hauled it down to Belgrade once a month or so and they would call in, not every FSN, but about one out of every 15 or 20. They had worked out a plan, and these few local employees would receive the salaries for the others and would then go and distribute the money around town. We kept up the payments to all the FSNs in that way and then about October or November we let them know that this was going on longer than we thought it would and that we simply couldn't justify paying everybody a full salary forever and so starting on December 31 we would cut it back to a handful of employees. We wished the others well and we said that we would see where we were when relations were resumed but meanwhile the salaries would stop for most people at the end of the year.

Q: When did we go back in?

MILES: You know, I don't recall. I've been sitting here trying to remember, but as I recall it was about a year after we left. I think it was in the summer of 2000.

By the way, here's a little footnote. I had helped the Marines lower the flag from the Embassy on the day we left and I kept it with me. And when I went back to Washington I told the powers that be that I had the flag, would they like to have; I thought, well, you know, for historical reasons or whatever. And there was no interest in it whatsoever. It was the damndest thing. So I kept that flag myself and I took it with me to Bulgaria when I went to Sofia. So, when Bill Montgomery and his people went back in to Belgrade to reopen the Embassy I sent him an e-mail and said, "Bill, I've got the flag I took down. If you'd like to raise it again, I'll be glad to send it over to you." And he was very gracious. He said, "Why don't you bring it over and we'll raise it together?" So that's what we did. But I was frankly appalled at the attitude of the Seventh Floor in the State Department.

I never met Madeleine Albright when I came back. Now, you'd think that the Secretary of State would want to meet the Chief of Mission from the Embassy in a country with which we'd just gone to war. But apparently not.

Q: Well, tell me. One of the things that you might say almost spurs some of this oral history that I've been doing is the lack of interest in what happened on behalf of the powers that be.

MILES: Yes, they don't look back.

Q: Did anybody say, "While you're here, what did you learn?" I mean, was there much in the way of, I'd say, debriefing of you?

MILES: There was a minimal amount of interest on the part of the State Department. There was considerable interest at the Agency and I went out there a couple of times and there was also some interest over at the NSC and I attended a couple of sessions at the NSC. But at that stage of

the game with the war actually going on, it's understandable that they weren't interested in what had happened or what had gone wrong. They were interested in the present moment—how do we get Milosevic to do what we want him to do? It's understandable. I mean, here we are waging a war. We don't want to keep waging a war which is going to cost people's lives and is very expensive as well. So I understand that but what I don't understand is the failure to understand the symbolic nature of our arrival back in Washington. I know that the Seventh Floor principals had other things to do and I don't want to sound like a whiner and complainer but some kind of welcome for our group would have been nice. I saw Tom Pickering when I got back, but frankly, I think I saw him because I knew him, not because of any great Seventh Floor interest in the Embassy's involvement in the Kosovo situation. In retrospect, I think I should have tried to organize some kind of a welcoming or recognition ceremony for the Embassy staff still in the Washington area. I imagine the Secretary would have come and some of the other principals, but, to my regret, this idea just didn't occur to me at the time.

Q: Well, how were the—before we get to you—how was your staff treated, you know, after it looked like it was going to be war and they have to go somewhere?

MILES: The European Bureau was top notch in that sense and they were very good to keep us the way they did in Budapest during all those drawdowns and the final closure of the Embassy; very good indeed. And then when we left Budapest and began to split up, some already had ongoing assignments. I had an ongoing assignment; I knew before the war started that I was going to be nominated to be Ambassador to Bulgaria. Some others were nearing the end of their tour. Those who were in mid-tour had to talk to their counselors and some really hoped that they could do some interim work until the war ended and then go back into Yugoslavia when we reopened the Embassy. But the Department, rightly, felt that they just didn't know when this would be possible and they couldn't have people just sitting around twiddling their thumbs for that indefinite period of time and so they really needed to reassign people. I think they did the best they could to accommodate people. There was lots of counseling; there were several sessions in which the people who were still in the Washington were able to meet together. I always attended those meetings.

One thing I'm sure you realize is that an Embassy team is made up of many disparate parts—you have the State Department people, you have the Marine guards, you have the Defense Attachés Office, you have USAID and so on. So while you might have a fairly tightly knit team in Belgrade, for example, and even, after evacuation, in Budapest, that team begins to dissolve the minute everyone gets on the plane to the States.

In this context, we did an interesting thing with the mail. All our mail, of course, was earmarked for Belgrade and when we closed the Embassy, all the mail was just held at the Department's mail facility out at Dulles Airport. Well, it was just sitting out there, piling up, actually. No one was making any effort to redistribute it. Admittedly this wasn't going to be an easy task because now the recipients had new addresses all over the United States. Nonetheless, we weren't at all happy with the way the Department mail facility was handling the mail. It just seemed like it wasn't being done well. People were getting dunning notices for unpaid bills—or, worse yet, not getting them. After discussing this at one of our periodic meetings in the Department, we decided to arrange a set time when a few volunteers could go out to Dulles and sort the Belgrade mail

ourselves. Now the Department's mail facility out at Dulles Airport is a strange place. I don't know if you've ever been out there, but it's a huge windowless building in the middle of several other huge windowless buildings and it looks like you might imagine the mythical facilities at Roswell, New Mexico, to look like.

It's quite a place. All the mail that goes to all the Foreign Service posts in the entire world flows in there day and night and flows out day and night. And so we learned how to get our own mail. They were very accommodating, and about once a week we just took over a little corner of the building and we'd sort our mail out according to section and then people from those sections were expected to keep track of where people were and to deliver it to them one way or the other, either in the Foreign Service lounge or sending it over to the Pentagon or USAID or whatever. I mean, you can imagine the difficulties. We had people from the Marine security guard battalion out at Quantico. We had Department of Agriculture people. They all had to get their mail somehow. So that's why the State Department's service just wasn't capable of doing that; it would require more intensive effort and information than they had or cared to obtain. And so our people did it—including Sharon and our son Richard—and actually it was kind of a morale boost to do it ourselves. I complained to the Under Secretary for Management about this. I said, you can't necessarily expect that other evacuees are going to be able to do it the way we did it, where we were willing to pitch in and go out and do it ourselves; you really need to get a handle on this. Evacuations happen all the time, unfortunately. I don't know if the Department ever did get on top of this problem. I hope so.

End of reader